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ADOLESCENT BOYS AND FICTION:
READING STRATEGIES FOR THE JUNIOR HIGH CLASSROOM

By

Mona Esther Rosenberg 

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Department of Secondary Education

Edmonton, Alberta

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **ADOLESCENT BOYS AND FICTION: READING STRATEGIES FOR THE JUNIOR HIGH CLASSROOM** submitted by MONA ESTHER ROSENBERG in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores in-class strategies that might be used to bring adolescent boys back to reading fiction. The literature review considers research that suggests boys are generally not as avid fiction readers as girls are, and describes the situation that boys often find themselves in at school and in the English classroom. I consider strategies that teachers can use to enhance the fiction reading experience of the boys in their classrooms. Some of these strategies are then examined within a junior high classroom with varying degrees of success and some unexpected results. These findings are presented in an anecdotal fashion as they occurred in the classroom. A student questionnaire is used to measure where the students in the study begin with regard to their fiction reading and where they arrive at the end of the study.

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Chapter 1 - Foundations

Rationale

The clock ticks slowly on towards three o'clock. The teacher's voice is a lilting lullaby as the sun's warm rays track the dust through the glaring glass. You've completed the chapter questions and feel free to doze at your desk. Some of your classmates talk quietly or doodle. An isolated few, mostly boys, continue flipping through the book, looking for the answer, not sure what the book is even about, frustrated, and ultimately unsuccessful.

This is the language arts classroom that I grew up in, and that many students are still a part of. If the traditional teacher as lecturer at the front of the classroom seemed to work for our generation, why is there a need to introduce alternative strategies into the classroom? The most compelling reason that I have found stems from the fact that researchers describe adolescence as a time when many children stop reading fiction. (Millard, 1997) Though many girls will become readers again, many boys will not. (Reynolds, 1995) The consequences of being a non-reader can manifest themselves in many ways, including less likelihood of going to university, resulting in less high paying jobs, and more difficult lives. (Boys and literacy: We can do better, 1999) Those who read fiction would seem to have advantages in school and beyond.

> Research shows that readers become readers by reading. It shows that reading assists in language development. It shows that readers learn better and learn faster than non-readers and poor readers. ...children who do not read are disadvantaged in terms of reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, and reading speed.(Royce, p.178, 1998)

It has been well documented by many researchers (Millard, 1997; Jackson &Salisbury, 1996) that boys seem to have more problems than girls

do with reading and the subject of language arts, and that they are the ones who are less likely to return to reading fiction as adults "Adolescent Boys and Fiction: Reading Strategies for the Junior High Classroom" is the title of my project. Having read extensively about and observed personally the number of adolescent boys who stop reading fiction, I have tried to design a study that will address this situation. The objective is to see if teaching strategies introduced into the classroom can alter the attitude and behavior of adolescent boys with relation to reading of fiction. Certainly many boys enjoy other types of reading such as non-fiction. The question in this thesis focuses mainly on fiction though for many reasons. Teachers have access to and use a variety of materials, but the majority of material that is used in the language arts classroom is fiction. The question of whether or not this is a benefit to every student arises within this study. What is of great importance to consider is that in order to achieve success in the average language arts classroom a student's ability to work with and interest in fiction makes a difference. There is a clear rationale as to why fiction material is beneficial as outlined in the background and rationale of this paper.

Research Question:

What are the experiences of adolescent boys when specific teaching strategies related to reading fiction are introduced into the classroom?

Sub-Questions:

In what way will having male role models or a male author reading/talking to a class, affect adolescent boys' experiences of reading fiction?

Will boys read more books or choose books differently, after having access to a classroom library containing a wide range of fiction titles and authors that appeal to them?

How will the fiction reading habits of the girls in the classroom be influenced as a result of the strategies being introduced in the classroom?

Limitations and Delimitations:

The research that I will be doing deals to a great extent with the fact that many adolescent boys read very little or no fiction. (Barrs, 1994; Millard, 1997) My limitations and delimitations relate to my descriptors that are as follows:

1. Adolescent boys and junior high schools 2. Gender and Education
3. Reading and Fiction 4. Reluctant Readers.

1. Although the term "adolescent boys" refers to boys twelve to eighteen years of age, I will delimit this research to boys aged twelve to fourteen in junior high.
2. Gender and education is a vast area that includes many topics. I will delimit this subject to 'boys and reading fiction' and for my purposes I will look at influences upon boys and their reading of fiction within the school and at home, as well as broader societal and cultural influences. I will include biological and psychological reasons that have been identified as affecting boys and their reading of fiction.
3. It is important to note that this study focuses on reading fiction. I will concentrate on this area in researching boys and reading, as research shows there are many benefits that boys derive from reading fiction. (See pages 7-10) I will be looking at novels that are available to boys within a particular school environment, as well as at home.
4. Reluctant readers in this paper will be delimited to those boys who are able readers, but who must be pushed or tempted in order to get them to read fiction. Many adolescent boys with average or above reading skills, who are not reading fiction, can be defined as reluctant readers, even if they are reading other types of material such as non-fiction. These students are capable of handling the material available to them in school, but make the choice, or are reluctant to engage in the fiction and resulting assignments available to them in their classrooms. These are the 'reluctant readers' that I am focusing on.

5. As with most classrooms, this classroom is a mixed gender situation. The girls in the classroom will therefore become a necessary part of the study. It will be important to be aware of whether the girls are affected positively or negatively by the study and strategies. They will therefore be involved in all aspects of the study and its analysis.
6. Many of the students in this school are familiar to me, and know me well. This may affect students' responses and behaviors and may influence results of the study.

In this study I am narrowing the topic of gender and education mainly to the more specific topic of boys and reading of fiction. As described earlier, this area is limited to the influences that come from school, home, society, and culture, or that are biological and psychological.

Background:

I believe that most boys who stop reading fiction, or who read less fiction, do so mainly because of the stereotypical image that society forces upon them. There seems to be a biological disposition towards traits that preclude reading of fiction in some boys that is continually reinforced, both at home and at school as they grow up. It has been documented that adolescent boys on the average read less fiction than girls. (Millard, 1997)

The fact that there are differences between girls and boys is indisputable. The reasons for the differences are varied and to some extent inconclusive. Society, culture and gender all play roles in rendering the boys less likely to continue reading fiction as adolescents. The fact that boys read less fiction and the consequences of this make this area an important one for educators, parents and society in general to look at and respond to. I intend to provide background information relating to adolescent boys and reading fiction, and teaching strategies that may be used to enhance boys' reading of fiction, and adolescent reading in general.

Askew and Ross (1988) discuss masculine traits and how they affect learning. They point out studies that support the view that many traits that we ascribe to males are seen as positive in the 'grown up' work world, whereas very few feminine traits are seen as desirable. While many of these stereotypical traits may not be true, or may be more generalization than fact, they are the ones that society shows to children as desirable and as those they should aspire to. Children are constantly exposed to stereotypes of men and women, whether it is in the way they are treated by their own parents, by the media, in games, with toys or most importantly for the purposes of this study, by fiction books.

Much of the fiction that children are exposed to, whether at school or at home, reinforces the gender stereotypes. In the case of literature, reading fiction is often seen as a 'sissy' activity. It's interesting to look at how children view books about boys who prefer, "...to read books, dress up, play paper dolls, jump rope, and dance" (Thorne, 1993, p. 118). If a book attempts to teach the lesson that this type of behavior is both desirable and positive, young children don't seem to absorb the message. Many boys and girls don't think it's right for boys to behave in this way. The activity of reading books then, is something that even young boys learn is not associated with their masculinity. Conversely, the tomboy is more accepted, though she usually changes as she goes through puberty to a more "...feminine version of herself" (Thorne, 1993, p.113). Girls behaving as boys, while still not accepted completely, are not deemed to be as unusual as boys behaving like girls. The traits the girl retains from her earlier behavior, such as independence and aggressiveness, are seen as positives. (Thorne, 1993) A benefit of exposure to a wide range of fiction is that children are in turn exposed to a wide range of gender roles and images.

Elaine Millard (1997) has done extensive work with adolescents and reading. She discusses many startling facts about boys' reading of fiction, or lack thereof. Going back to 1975, Millard (1997) quotes a report that suggests older boys prefer non-fiction, and the fact that many adolescent boys read

nothing at all for pleasure. While these reports are more than 20 years old, many reports and surveys have shown the same trends occurring right up to the publication of Millard's' book in 1997. The emphasis of her research is that boys do not read as much fiction as girls in and out of school.

Millard focuses upon society when she talks about the "ways in which the social practices of the school and those of the wider community work together to create a context in which the separation of the sexes takes place" (1997, p.77). She deals with three societal groups that she feels greatly influence reading, "family, friendship group in the local community and the peer group in school" (1997, p.77). In her study, Millard found that in the family boys remembered being introduced to reading differently than girls. Boys generally found the learning process more difficult and were not as inclined to read for leisure. Millard's research also found that home and school were equally important in the acquisition of reading skills.

There is only sporadic research and evidence to show that low marks in language arts and a lack of interest in reading fiction affect boys as they grow up and join the work force. Perhaps the perception that doing poorly in English as a subject in school does not impact negatively on many boys once they grow up and become wage earners is an important societal signal. A correlation between reading and success in business and/or professional life, while seemingly obvious, is not discussed in the majority of materials examined for this research. In fact, despite boys' poor performance in reading and language skills tests, more men than women end up in the paid job market.

Another problem is the 'chicken or egg' syndrome that occurs in schools. Adolescents at puberty have a need to define their sex roles clearly. Students' perceptions of what they themselves should be are influenced by what they see when they look at their teachers. Subjects like physics and chemistry are definitely viewed as being in the masculine domain. Students see that the majority of secondary science teachers are male. (Measor & Sikes, 1992) This may be one of the reasons that many girls at puberty are

not attracted to these sciences. The same argument can be used and transferred to the subject of English, under whose domain falls the activity of narrative reading. Students view English as a feminine pursuit partially because they see that the majority of secondary English teachers are female. Boys may become reluctant to be a part of it at this time in their lives. Therefore the process of creating positive role models for girls in science, or for boys in English may be slow in occurring.

Change is possible. The long-term focus on girls and math is evidence of this. In a study done by Measor and Sikes (1992) comparing girls and boys passing varying subject levels first in 75/76, and then in 84/85, important transformations were noted. The gaps in English and science widened, but the gap in math narrowed. This change, in part, points to the success possible if society focuses attention on one area. Though boys are still doing better than girls in the area of math, modifications and improvements are possible.

Society is not the only factor at work when considering the fiction reading habits of boys. The belief that male aggression is biological as opposed to learned is one that is much debated in society. In study and observation, time and time again, boys are seen to be more aggressive than girls, given the same situation. Reading fiction is not considered to be an aggressive activity, which may provide some insight into why it is not considered to be a male activity. (Askew & Ross, 1988)

Why is this situation a concern to us as parents and educators? Will it make any difference in a person's life if he or she doesn't read fiction? Alvermann and Phelps (1998) use a quote from Shirley Brice Heath (1991) to define what they mean by 'reflection on reading' and 'higher orders of thinking'. The definition of a reflective reader that Heath gives provides a framework for a rationale as to why reading fiction is beneficial. She says that, "A reflective reader can talk or write about what she or he has read and, in the process, come up with new meanings and new ideas, often quite different or even opposed to those intended by the author" (in Alvermann &

Phelps, 1998, p.268). Heath considers someone who can read like this to be "an individualist, a reflective skeptic, a questioner, a doubter, an arguer, and an observing bystander" (in Alvermann & Phelps, 1998, p.268). In describing a reflective reader, Heath is not just describing a person who will do well in the English classroom. She is also talking about an individual who has acquired a set of skills and techniques to deal in a thoughtful, positive manner with many life situations that may confront them. What individual would not want to be involved with a curriculum that results in skills and knowledge that will be of benefit both in school and in life?

Alvermann and Phelps (1998) use a small survey of high school students to outline some of the benefits of reading fiction. These include an increase in vocabulary, students learning more when they enjoy a text, the idea that fiction goes beyond fact to issues which helps the reader gain a greater understanding of the text, and the opportunity for students to experience different times and places through fiction. (p.320)

Thomson (1987) provides a rationale for the need to read fiction in discussing what he believes is wrong with television. He has found that the acts of reading or being read to are activities important to language development and learning. He also feels that reading encourages reflection, which is beneficial to children's developing imaginations. (pp.38-40) Thomson (1987) discusses the importance of continuing to read aloud to secondary students and the fact that, "the better we read literature the better we think and the better we use language, ad infinitum"(p.80).

The research is irrefutably clear that generally boys do not read as much fiction as girls do. Why is this a problem, and does it need to be dealt with as a separate issue from the reading of adolescents in general? I believe that it is a concern and should be dealt with separately from other types of reading.

Robert Lipsyte, in a poignant personal narrative, says:

> Many of the books boys read ... merely reinforce the existing condition in this society that encourages boys to grow into men who beat up smaller people.... Boys have to learn what girls already know: that a

> book is something you can make into a cave, and that you can crawl into the cave, roll around in it, explore it, find out what's in it, and what's in you. Someday, there will be books that boys really need -- about how they can be friends with other boys by sharing emotions rather than scuffling, about how they can be friends with girls. (Reed, 1994, page 417)

While it is important for all adolescents to read fiction, perhaps, because of the many male roles and stereotypes that proliferate in our society, it is even more important that we make sure the boys are involved in reading fiction. Many aspects of our society belittle the importance of boys reading fiction. The impact of feeling that 'reading is for sissies' can affect a boy's reading tremendously through the stages of his adolescent life as he focuses on his identity. This is an aspect that the teacher must be aware of, as he/she works with students and young adult literature.

One of the reasons that the area of boys and reading is so difficult to define and pin down is expressed clearly in Thorne's (1993) book. She points out that: "Assertions about gender differences in actual behavior refer, at best, to average differences between girls and boys" (p. 103). The literature repeatedly refers to averages in groups of boys and girls. There is no clear cut-off or reason for the many exceptions to the rules that the researchers attempt to explain. None of the conclusions are true for every boy. When referring to a sample of readers in a study words like most, many, and some are commonly used, and generalizations are often made. The implications for my research are important to consider. Any results and conclusions that come out of this study cannot be considered to speak for all boys.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Part 1: Adolescent Boys and Reading

School Influences

It seems evident from research in the area that adolescent boys are not reading very much fiction. Elaine Millard quotes a 1975 report that states that: "one-third of 14 year old boys of average intelligence read nothing at all for pleasure"(Millard, 1997, p. 14). Boys' interests generally are more in the areas of science, math and facts. Because of material being used in the English classroom, boys are unable to find as much supporting material for their interests at school. There seems to be more material available that is compatible with girls' interests. (Millard, 1997)

One does not need to look far to discover consequences of boys not reading fiction. For example, in Alberta, boys make up the majority of the English 13 classes. (Johnston & Mackey, 1994) This is the non-academic route that students who are challenged by reading fiction and writing usually take in high school. In Johnston and Mackey's article thirty books are suggested to interest students in English 13 classes. Of these, twenty-one are clearly 'boy' books, five lean toward being 'boy' books, but also have a girl featured prominently with the boy lead, and four are 'girl' books. This list suggests two things. The first, that there is already adequate material available for the girls within the classroom, and the second, that there is a definite need to focus on boys and entice them to read fiction.

Millard uses the term "hypothetical readers" (1997, p.75) to describe boys who are not readers of fiction, but who responded to her questions about reading choices in terms of books they 'would' choose if they were to read fiction. These boys' responses suggest there may be a lack of adequate choices for boys available in school classrooms, where the emphasis is not on their interest areas.

Boys bring notions to school about the relationship of boys and girls and reading that they acquire from home and society at large. One of these notions is that reading fiction is predominantly a female activity. (Millard, 1997) The inability of boys to 'talk' to each other, and the resulting lack in verbal proficiency are among the reasons boys are not as capable readers as girls. One explanation for this inability may be that boys are dealing with great "pressures to erect and then protect a 'masculine' façade of hardness, toughness,.... It probably also involves the rigorous denial of anything identified as 'female' within themselves" (Askew and Ross, 1988, p.36). As the act of reading fiction is a physically passive one, and therefore related to femininity, perhaps this is one of the activities that boys must 'deny'.

Millard uses the need of the male to develop a masculine identity within the school in establishing the theory of a barrier for males to the whole literacy process. (1997, p. 29) It seems that the ways reading and writing are taught, and the practices used therein, albeit inadvertently, are strengthening the gender-biased view that the learners bring of themselves to the school setting.

Capacities for learning are not at issue; the question is rather how student learning is facilitated from the time children are born, within society and especially in the classroom. (Askew and Ross, 1988) In a 1986 study, when teachers were asked if boys read less fiction, they answered "that there are sharp and observable differences between boys and girls as readers. Both in terms of reading ability and of the amount of voluntary reading, girls consistently read better and more than boys" (Askew and Ross, 1988, p. 25).

While this literature review focuses on boys and reading of fiction at the secondary level of school, it is significant to note that girls read more fiction than boys do at every age. The discrepancies that occur in the secondary schools are not unique or sudden, and can therefore not be considered in isolation. They are, in part, due to a phenomenon that places boys into a female context early in their education. Barrs notes that "the world of primary education is, by and large, a female world" (1994, p. 5).

There are women teachers, who set up the classrooms in a way that reflects a 'female culture'. These features include a "home like atmosphere, play corner, emphasis on display..." (Barrs, 1994, p. 5) When the female teacher contacts someone at home to discuss the child, it is usually the mother. The question arises as to why all of the subjects are not affected by the female influence in the same way that reading is. In Division I (kindergarten to grade 3) all of the subjects are predominantly reading based. Because so much of the material in these early grades is reading based the focus on reading and the female teacher is over-determined. Barrs points out that many of the books within the classroom are written by women, edited, reviewed and then chosen by women librarians and teachers. Barrs also points out a study where the girls questioned were pleased with the selection within the classroom, and found it similar to home, whereas the boys were not happy with the choices and would have preferred to have available some of the books that they had at home. (1994, p. 5)

The school situation does not serve to modify the phenomenon of girls reading more fiction than boys, but perpetuates it instead. Researchers have explored a variety of reasons for the dominance of girls over boys in this area. Askew and Ross (1988) found that interpersonal skills of boys, which are generally less sophisticated than those of girls may affect language skills. Millard (1997) found that boys were less likely to feel positive about themselves as fiction readers in school, or about the books they were being asked to read. When looking at books used in classrooms Millard (1997) found that the school focused more on books that related to girls' interests with an emphasis on feelings and relationships. Similarly, Askew and Ross (1988) noted that reading material of interest to girls tends to be fiction, and to deal with people and emotions, whereas reading material of interest to boys leans toward non-fiction and the gathering of facts and ideas. Within the classroom the materials favored by girls are the ones that are used most often. The boys' interests were not as often addressed within the choices made in the English classroom.

Yet these are not the only reasons that the subject of English Language Arts is unappealing to many adolescent boys. The subject is uninviting as well, because it is "literature based, privileging narrative and valuing personal, affective responses"(Reynolds, 1995, p. 16). In his studies of schools in England Reynolds sees a need for "a broader definition of the subject and different methods of presenting and using the presently accepted aspects of English" (1995, p. 16). As an educator and researcher, he considers reading to be an important area because of the discrepancies between boys and girls. What boys like to read is not necessarily part of the English Curriculum, both fiction and non-fiction.

Margaret Meek identified as a problem the fact that many of the informational types of texts boys read are not recognized or validated by schools. (Minns, 1994) She reports a need for schools to recognize and validate boys' reading, so boys can see themselves as competent readers. English classrooms seem to be very focused on using fiction, to the near exclusion of non-fiction or other materials that might be more in keeping with boys' preferences.

Millard introduced additional evidence to support boys' perceptions that reading fiction is for girls. In a study she questioned students about sharing their reading experiences. She found that girls were far more likely to share their books and their interest in them with each other than boys were. (1997) This is partially due to girls' greater level of interpersonal communication skills. The non-fiction, informative types of books that are chosen by boys promote exploration of the external world. Girls are more likely to explore internal feelings through the fiction books that they choose. (Barrs, 1994) One type of reading is not necessarily better than the other but it seems evident that the fiction reading that girls choose more often is the kind that leads to greater success in the English classroom.

Boys' choices of books support the idea that they prefer assertive to passive subject matter. In a study by Millard (1997) boys chose adventure/action books far more than any other genre. More interesting is

that boys chose 'no genre', even more than they chose adventure/action books. This indicates that they did not find any reading choice appealing, or that they chose not to read at all.

The results of the choices of fiction available in the school are that boys are at a disadvantage academically, although contrary to much of the research, the results may not be an indication of how well the boys will do later in life. Millard (1997) reiterates these findings, repeating that boys in school are at a disadvantage because they choose subjects such as adventure, humor and sports, which do not necessarily correlate with choices that the teacher makes in the classroom. They are therefore not reading fiction, and lack the skills needed to perform well in most English classrooms. The indication is that schools are inadvertently reinforcing the boys' choice not to read by offering little that is of interest to them. Furthermore, schools are discounting reading materials that are of interest to boys, choices such as magazines, journals, and comics, which are generally not a part of the classroom. (Millard 1997) This once again points to the need for the English classroom to broaden its scope to include material that is of interest to boys.

Girls are willing to read fiction geared towards boys and get what they can out of it. In so doing they are exposing themselves to "a wider range of fictions and of human and literary experience" (Barrs, 1994, p. 7). They will read both fiction geared towards boys as well as fiction intended for girls, whereas boys are not willing to look at fiction intended for girls. By avoiding fiction intended for girls, boys are "narrow(ing) the range of their literary and virtual experiences to what they can immediately identify with" (Barrs, 1994, p.7). If reading fiction as an adolescent helps boys and girls to learn about themselves in relation to the world, then the girls are gaining an incredible advantage in their willingness to explore areas other than those expressly intended for them.

Charles Sarland (1992) completed a study that addresses the reading interests of boys and girls. He also found that in secondary schools, boys concentrate more on action novels, while girls focus on novels about

relationships. The implication is that reading really does reflect gender identity. (Pidgeon, 1994)

Reynolds (1995) discovered some interesting outcomes in the research he conducted. Traditionally, girls did not do as well as boys in math and the sciences, but Reynolds observes that that gap is narrowing. Unfortunately, Reynolds finds the gap between boys and girls in the areas of reading and writing is continuing to widen. Reynolds objects to schools accepting the 'boys will be boys' conditioning and using it as an excuse for accepting the way things are within the classroom. He believes that activities in the English classroom can help change this inappropriate behavior. He has observed policies about behavior that specifically celebrate academics and challenge bad behavior and low achievement being introduced in some schools. Reynolds believes that a great benefit could be realized if these behavior policies were introduced in most schools. (Reynolds, 1995)

The gender of the teacher and how a teacher perceives and relays the literature become an essential part of the process as well. Though teachers may try to be gender neutral they may be conveying messages to the students about their subject that are not gender neutral. (Barrs, 1994) As an example, in Barrs (1994,p. 11) "The OFSTED report on 'Boys and English' states that 'The crucial factor in boys' attitudes toward English and their performance in the subject was the influence of the teacher.'"

At times the school is responsible for placing less significant value on the act of reading fiction. Students may be rewarded from a young age for doing their math or science, that is their "real" work, with time for art or reading fiction. (Askew and Ross, 1988) This casts reading in the role of an activity that is fun, but not as important as the math or the science. It appears that the male dominated activities are more valued than others are. Askew and Ross sum up the role and responsibility of the school with this comment: "Schools are society in microcosm. Their purpose is to perpetuate the values and ideologies dominant in society, and they are organized to achieve this....

This has clear implications for the socialization and education of boys" (1988, p. 106).

Home Influences

Home and school are inexorably linked when understanding the influences upon boys' reading. Millard (1997) refers to a study by Minns of a male, young, developing reader whose influences at home, particularly his male role model, lead him to adopt

> a view of reading from his father which is concerned about 'finding out'.... Despite a school environment that values and foster an interest in the reading of stories, his individual reading interest at the end of his primary education are turning away from fiction, to the kinds of information books that he identifies with his future adult role,... . The whole area of reading for leisure holds less interest for them [boys] throughout schooling. (Millard, 1997, p. 12)

It is important not to downplay the importance for readers in developing an interest in information books. Millard (1997) suggests though, that as the interest in non-fiction is developing, home influences may be moving boys away from familiarity with fiction reading. Millard discovered that at home boys generally found the learning process for reading more difficult than girls did and were not as inclined to read for leisure. Millard's research also revealed that home and school were equally important in the acquisition of reading skills. Most boys and girls perceived the mother at home to be the heaviest reader. The first place that children's values and opinions about reading were beginning to develop was in the home.

Minns (1994) also sees some of the problems that boys are experiencing with reading as relating to their family. She closely followed the reading experiences of three ten-year-old boys and drew some gender-related conclusions from these studies. She sees the reading habits of the father as extremely influential upon the boys. She feels this conclusion raises some important questions, such as: what happens to boys who don't see their

fathers reading, or boys brought up by their mothers alone? These are areas that would be interesting to persue.

The onus is very much upon the parent to ensure that any child, boy or girl, becomes a reader for life. Paul Kropp (1993) suggests there is a particularily crucial time for the parent to be aware of a child's reading habits. Kropp perceives grades five or six as especially significant times, when either boys or girls may become bored with reading fiction. He sees it as a more serious problem for boys, since he found that girls are more likely to pick up reading again once they are through adolescence, whereas boys are not. Kropp speaks of fiction when he lists several tactics parents can use to keep a boy on track with his reading through these important years, though all of these strategies would work equally well with non-fiction These strategies include

> read to him; listen to his reading when he's young; talk to him about his reading when he's older; organize a quiet time so reading can happen; buy or borrow books and other reading material; work with his teachers at school; serve as a model of adult reading and interest in books... (1993, p. 2)

Lissa Paul (1994) agrees that what the children see at home will affect their reading when they are both young and old. By the time children are five years old parents are already treating boys and girls differently. Younger children often tend to look at books with their parents that deal with gender roles within the family. It is at this point that parents can help both boys and girls go beyond the gender roles within books to appreciate and enjoy the fiction. Paul describes "... conversation, interpretation, and translation, ...the language of negotiation" (1994, p. 79) as part of the parent's role in reading with children. To this end her research indicates parents can help minimize the 'gender wars' and 'gender gaps' that will no doubt occur as the children grow.

Societal Influences

It is difficult to speak about school and home as two different areas because the interaction between the two is indivisible and fundamental. The broader umbrella of society includes both of these areas, as well as many others that touch upon the fiction reading that boys experience. Millard (1997) uses the societal forming of feminine and masculine roles to explain the differences in interests and abilities of boys and girls. She supports the concept of the school as a 'microcosm of society', and explores the concept that gender roles are further learned within that society.

School is a major part of the society that impresses gender traits upon boys and girls but it is not the only one. Outside of school television, video and computer games are definite rivals for reading time among all adolescents, but influence and attract boys to a greater degree than they attract girls. The aggressive nature and behavior of boys draw them to "the active nature of the participation offered" (Millard, 1997, p.67) when they become involved in video and computer games. A correlation can be seen between boys' emphasis on adventure in book choice, as well as in computer and video games.

The passive/aggressive qualities take on new meaning as males and females grow up. It is interesting that many traits that we attribute to males are seen as positive in the 'grown up' work world, whereas very few feminine traits are seen as desirable in the same circumstances. (Askew and Ross, 1988) The most obvious of these is aggressiveness in males, and passivity in females. These stereotypical traits are the ones that society demonstrates to children as advantageous and gender appropriate for adults despite the fact that many males may display passive behavior and many females may possess aggressive traits. Children are constantly exposed to stereotypes of men and women either in the way they are treated by their parents, or how they are portrayed by the media, in games, with toys, or by books. (Askew and Ross, 1988)

Some of the expectations of boys shaped by the stereotypes seen in society include the 'non' relationships boys have with their friends. Because of societal expectations, while girls can hug, boys cannot, while girls can speak about their failure, boys are expected to boast and be aggressive. Because of the messages society imparts about masculine behavior, many constraints are placed upon boys and their relationships with one another. (Askew and Ross, 1988)

These constraints affect the choices boys make when they do read fiction. The choices become a complex interwoven result of the many factors impacting upon them. These gender related choices, which include "informational texts, adventure comics and books, fighting-fantasy books, and the sports page" (Minns, 1994, p. 71), are guided by boys' particular experiences, life expectations, and their network of friends.

Biological and Psychological Influences

None of the factors influencing boys' reading work in isolation. No one factor is, by itself, able to explain comprehensively how children learn what it is to be male or female in a particular society. The belief that male aggression is biological as opposed to learned is one that is much debated in society.

Biological reasons for gender differences, or the argument of nature versus nurture, certainly have implications for boys and their dissimilarity to girls in their reading choices. Research has shown that the more aggressive behavior demonstrated by boys may well depend upon the level of hormones, controlled by the hypothalamus. Boys have been found in studies to respond more aggressively to stressful situations. (Gorman, 1992)

Biological determinists see a definite physiological link between gender and the differences between males and females. Pidgeon (1994, p. 23) puts forth the arguments that "biological differences account for psychological differences" and that "it is hormones that make men more competitive and women more nurturing." She goes on to say that, "Boys are better at visual

and spatial tasks because their brains are better adapted to such tasks" and that "there are differences in function between men's and women's brains that account for gender differences."

Though eminent researchers put many of these opinions forth, the arguments are not definitive. The relationship between biology and social roles is so important yet the research is not conclusive. It can be and is argued that social roles have a strong affect on biological differences.

The biological determinists look at the well-documented gap between boys and girls in math, beginning at about age twelve. In the last twenty-five years, this gap has been noted and studied extensively, and in some cases adjustments to the systems of teaching have been made. Because of this attention, the gap between mathematical achievement of boys and girls has started to narrow. (Gorman, 1992) A gap that has not narrowed however, even with the changes in attitudes about males and females, is an assessment called the mental-rotation test. (Gorman, 1992) This test relates to the ability of individuals to read maps, find directions etc. Do these findings from research mean that hormones and gender really are responsible for some of our differences and changes cannot occur through learning and experiences, or does it say that there are differences, but they can be changed through learning and experiences? If the latter is the case, then the roles of the home and school and society, and their effects on the reading abilities of boys become even more important. If there is a tendency for boys to be more aggressive, to choose books that are different from those that girls choose and to ultimately read less fiction, then the school and home, while accommodating and working with these differences, can also work towards teaching new and different reading habits. Society as a whole, and school as a 'microcosm' of our society, has made some changes, but obviously not enough to make a great difference.

Part 2: Teaching Strategies

Section A and B that follow focus upon strategies that augment and enhance the reading of fiction within classrooms. The difference between the two sections is significant. Section A provides the reader with practical skills and strategies that the teacher can immediately try out within his/her classroom. Section B is a more theoretical discussion of what elements should be in place in order to optimize the effectiveness of the more practical strategies.

A. Specific strategies teachers can use to enhance reading and invite adolescents to read fiction

Linda M. Clary describes practical strategies that many teachers practice regularly in their classrooms. She organizes six categories that illustrate effective motivational techniques to promote student reading of fiction. These include: 1) capitalize on interests, 2) make reading material accessible, 3) build a conducive environment, 4) allow time to read in school, 5) provide significant adult models and 6) use motivational techniques. (1991) These though, are only headings that Clary extends with descriptions that include a variety of activities and strategies that teachers can easily adapt to their classrooms. Much of the research that is available on strategies that can be used within the classroom to enhance the reading of fiction fits easily into the categories that Clary has established. I have therefore used the categories as headings for the sections of this chapter. Many strategies fit into two or more of the categories, as there is a great deal of crossover within the strategies themselves. I have, for the most part, discussed each only once, keeping in mind that these categories are only a method of organization to facilitate the explanation of the strategies.

Capitalize on students' interests

Clary's (1991) first method calls upon the teacher to capitalize on the interests of the students. She talks about two ways of doing this. First the

teacher must know what adolescents like, and second she must know what individuals like. Clary (1991 quotes Carlsen (1980) who says that "teenagers read almost completely for experience - either vicarious experiences that they want to have or ways of dealing with problems that they are having" (p. 342). The teacher must be aware that young adolescents' interests lie in the area of their peers and their problems. The teacher needs to know the young adult (YA) literature and to stress titles that would be appropriate. (Clary, 1991) She also suggests that students may be grouped in heterogeneous groups to "read, discuss, write, and produce an individual or group response project" (p.342).

Each student is an individual with interests, needs and expectations that may differ from every other student in the classroom. Probst (1984) addresses this issue in terms that are as relevant today as they were when he first wrote about them. He speaks about why we teach literature to adolescents. Most students are not going to pursue a career within the area of literature or literature response but they all will need certain literacy skills as they enter the world of adults and work. Most of them will not need to be able to decipher Chaucer or understand Shakespeare to get by. Therefore students may not perceive a need for some of the literature they are introduced to in school; they have "experiences, interests, and a lengthy agenda of ideas, problems, worries, and attitudes, all of which concern and preoccupy them" (Probst, 1984, pp.3,4). This agenda can help the teacher decide where to begin and what to introduce to the students. In other words, using the students' interests is of paramount importance in establishing adolescents as readers of fiction.

Wilhelm (1997) has done extensive research on adolescent reading and agrees that each student is unique and the teacher must be aware of individual interests within the classroom. Wilhelm's research is in the area of the reading process. Based on his research results, he has suggested many response activities involving drama and art to help him reach the less engaged readers. These response activities, focused in the areas that he

perceived as of interest to the targeted students, enabled him to enhance not only the reading experience of the students he was focusing on, but the experience of many other students as well. In the area of drama he used several familiar activities to accompany the reading of the text. Story theatre, meaning using the text as a script, (1997, p.87) was one successful technique that Wilhelm used. He used this technique to "help students experience the world of a text"(1997, p.87). He also used 'story drama ' which involves using the text as a starting point in order "to help them explore the implications and possibilities at the edge of texts" (1997, p.87). His objective was to use dramatic techniques to entice the students into "[taking] on for themselves some of the moves and strategies of more engaged readers. ...., to rethink the nature and possibilities of reading" (1997, p.87). An example that Wilhelm (1997, pp.100-101) outlined involved the use of the story *The Incredible Journey* in a dramatic way. He included the following techniques in order to examine the story:

- Revolving Role Drama - Taking on the roles of characters in the novel and interpreting and enacting scenes.
- Dramatic Play - Starting with a situation or event from the book as a stimulus to completing the story event.
- Guided Imagery - Listening to a part of the story and visualizing it. Then writing about what they saw.
- Snapshot and Tableaux Dramas - Freezing a particular scene and then depicting it either artistically or physically. Adding a headline or caption for the picture. Explaining how they came up with the particular picture. Depicting the entire story or a section using this method.
- Analogy Dramas - Writing and performing a vignette that in some way parallels a part of the story.
- To tell the truth game - Students becoming characters with other students acting as judges and asking them questions.
- Correspondence - Students responding to "diaries, postcards, letters, and advertisements in the role of story characters" (p.101).

- Missing Scene Scripts - Producing scenes that fill in gaps in the story, or producing scenes that create alternative possibilities in the story.
- Newscast - Videotaping news shows that interview characters, editorialize important ideas or decisions.

Wilhelm (1997) also used art to capitalize on the interests of the less engaged readers. He wanted to come up with strategies for readers who didn't or couldn't visualize. Though there are successful non-visual readers, Wilhelm looked into the theory that readers who couldn't visualize would not be able to create meaning from the text. Wilhelm quoted Eisner (1992) who wrote: "We cannot know through language what we cannot imagine. The image - visual, tactile, auditory - plays a crucial role in the construction of meaning through text. Those who cannot imagine cannot read" (1997, p.120). Wilhelm anticipated that allowing all students, especially those with an interest or talent in the area of art, to make use of visual art in their response to reading would be an effective strategy in enhancing the reading of weak students. To this end, he introduced several activities into his classroom that he believed benefited the targeted students as well as their classmates. These activities included:

- Symbolic story representations - Use of pictures or cutouts to enact or explain the story. "representing essential story elements visually..." (p.122).
- Visual protocols - As students read a story they stop and draw a picture whenever they need to form a visual image, or whenever they need to get a visual image of what is happening clear in their minds. This activity may be cued or not.
- Reading Illustrated Books - Look at illustrated books. Discuss how non-illustrated books might have made use of illustrations.
- Illustrating Books - Illustrate non-illustrated books.
- Picture Mapping - Instead of summarizing or note taking (mostly for non-fiction) use pictures or symbols instead of words.

- Collages - "create poetry and story collages that would represent their response to a particular piece of literature,"(p.124)

The importance of viewing students as individuals emerges again in Hynds' (1997) three-year study of an English classroom. She places a heavy emphasis on the fact that students are individuals and they require choices in their reading of fiction.

In her study, Hynds (1997) came up with alternatives that were in keeping with student interests and choices. Instead of requiring journal responses the teacher told the students they could

> keep doing the journals... or you can have book talks with me personally. You can write another piece of literature, a spin-off from that text in some way. You can share your book in Sharing Circle with us. (1997, p.227)

As this teacher realized the enthusiasm with which the students responded and the increase in responses that she received, she broadened the choices further:

> (You can) illustrate your pieces with someone else's pieces.... (If) you've been working on poetry (you can) switch to plays; if you've been working on plays you can do a commercial; if you've been doing a commercial you can work on a novel chapter. There are things like restaurant reviews and movie reviews, debates, things like that. (Hynds, 1997, p. 227)

In working to enhance or increase the fiction reading of her students, Hynds (1997) asked the teacher "about the difference between "real life" and "text life". She replied: "Text comes from the outside and real life comes from the inside." Convincing her students to become readers of fiction meant finding a way to make literature "connect to the inside" (p.232). In other words, the interests and feelings of the students were an essential element in their interaction with the literature. Relating writing and reading of fiction (pp.234 - 241) became a technique that the classroom teacher in this study found positively affected the reading of her students. She also realized that

students loved to be read to and also loved to talk about books that they had read.

Dorothy Matthews (1987) gathered and published the work of many educators who studied strategies to encourage independent reading of fiction. Much of the research she collected and published pointed to knowing one's students and their interests as being of key importance. In her article "Strategies to Encourage Independent Reading" (pp. 44-46) Kathy Schlatter says, "Obviously, knowing one's students and being sensitive to their reactions is crucial in matching books and students" (p. 44).

In the same article Schlatter (p.45) suggests the "Book-a-Day" activity as one that might appeal to individual students. As a general strategy for reading I don't recommend this activity, but it has value in areas such as familiarization or providing reading incentives. In this activity she literally cuts one book up into chapters. Each student is then handed a chapter to read and relate to the class. Students read silently for 15 to 30 minutes and those who finish early can make notes about their chapter on paper. Schlatter finds that many students become engaged in the reading and listening to find out about their characters. Matthews (1987) also includes Margaret E. Rinkel's article "Oral Reading: Magic and Motivation" (pp. 46-51). In it Rinkel talks about the importance of reading aloud as a strategy to enhance reading fiction, suggesting

> the use of the oral approach for pleasure, for satisfying that instinctive craving for a good story, for fine-tuning the ear to diction, cadence, and rhythm. Reading aloud improves the skills of listening, comprehending, thinking. Reading aloud introduces students to significant ideas, events, and emotions common to human experience, meaningful to daily living. Reading aloud enhances vocabulary, making connections between the printed page and the spoken word. (p.50).

A follow up to the oral reading that is suggested can be adapted for the girls or the boys in the class. Rinkel suggests the teacher "let the reading motivate discussion (student-initiated is often the best), writing activities (reactions, diaries, journals, essays, poems), or other creative activities

(reader's theatre, chamber theatre, acting out, illustrating)" Rinkel also warns that the teacher should "guard against activities that degenerate into mere busy work. Whatever the format, reinforce and clarify the connections between literature and life" (p.51).

Make reading material accessible

Clary (1991) defines the importance of accessibility when she quotes Livaudais. "Adolescents must be able to get to books and periodicals quickly when they decide to read. They will read more when books are physically close to them" (Clary, 1991, p. 342). Clary discusses the need for a shelf of books in the class that relates to the themes being studied, and to the interests of the students.

With accessibility comes the notion that the teacher must be aware of and able to introduce appropriate books to the students. To this purpose, Clary suggests the use of various suitable booklists for young adult readers covering a wide range of reading. In talking about making book or author lists Dorothy Matthews (1987) has included an article by Ken Donelson called "Some YA Authors Worth Knowing, and a Few Books Too" (pp.2-8). He notes the difficulty of creating and maintaining appropriate lists and suggests that one method of addressing specific individual interests is by giving questionnaires to the students. Once students' reading interests have been established, Clary (1991) proposes the teacher assemble a classroom collection based upon these. This is an activity that a classroom teacher can build upon as the school year progresses. He or she can begin with a few books and add as he/she becomes aware of the results of the questionnaire and the interests of the students. An approach like this would be an effective starting point to be built upon with the many published booklists available for teachers to aid in their selection. Examples of tools that are effective and available could include *Literature for Today's Young Adults* (Donelson and

Nilsen, 1997), and a variety of reviewing tools. Compiling lists based on student choices and including a variety of booklist sources from both 'far away and close to home' is an effective way of focusing on students' needs. Local booklists would be significant because they are more likely to contain at least some books that have culturally or demographically familiar settings. Two sources that are suitable in Alberta are *Books for You* (Mackey and Johnston, 1997), and the weekly reviews and/or lists in the local newspaper or on CBC radio. Though there are not many titles aimed at young people in the local newspapers, there are some, and there are often young adult book reviews on the radio.

Build a conducive environment

The traditional classroom that many of us remember consisted of rows upon rows of desks, with the teacher situated strategically at the front. Clary (1991) advocates setting up a classroom in such a way that there are places in addition to the desks for students to sit, relax and read. Couches, easy chairs or pillows on the floor would all facilitate this. This ambiance would make it possible for the classroom to look less like a class so the simulated reading experience is more comfortable for the students. She further suggests plants, posters or mobiles to enhance the environment. Hynd (1997) concurs and relates the results of her research, that students today do not need the "quiet atmosphere" (p. 231) traditionally associated with the classroom. She states that "this ability to work in the midst of what might seem like aural and visual chaos seemed to come quite naturally to many of Meg's students"(p. 229). Something as simple as having a radio playing quietly in the reading corner seemed to contribute to a less structured environment that the teacher found worked well and was conducive to learning. (p.229)

In extending the idea of a 'comfortable' classroom environment, Probst (1984) talks about conditions within the classroom that must be maintained in

order for students to candidly discuss their responses to literature. The students must feel at ease or secure enough with the teacher to know that they are not being led towards specific conclusions, nor likely to be ridiculed if they speak their mind. In speaking about "tentativeness", (p.25) he explains that the students must feel that they can voice an answer that they are unsure of and that this answer will be built on, not put aside or put down. He defines another condition as "rigor" (p.25) whereby the students must be ready to think about their answers, and not be satisfied with an unconsidered or unexamined answer. The teacher becomes responsible then for the progress of the discussion, not leading to a specific answer, but leading to a thoughtful set of contributions and ideas from the class. He describes cooperation of the group (p.25) as a condition as well. Suitable literature is his fifth condition (p.26). He realizes that not everything is for everyone, but also believes that the literature may have something in it that appeals to students who are not initially interested in it. Conversely, it can be stated that even if the students are interested, if the criteria for a 'comfortable' environment are not met, they will not respond.

Another important aspect of the reading environment that Clary (1991) talks about are the projects or requirements that evolve out of the readings. She proposes some books be read and not responded to in any formal way. When there is a need for response, Clary recommends that a variety of methods for sharing be used. This variety is important in dealing with boys, because as Reynolds (1995) argues, many literature response activities within the classroom are geared towards girls and not necessarily towards the skills that boys bring with them. Clary quotes Livaudais (1985) in suggesting many varied ways of dealing with literature responses. These include, "making card files about books for peers, reacting to televised books, choosing casts for mock book videos, doing varied art assignments, and discussing books with peers"(Clary, 1991, p.343). Varied responses from the approaches described by Wilhelm (1997) using art and drama could be designed.

Hynds (1997) describes Literature Circle and Sharing Circle as two strategies the teacher in her study used to create a setting conducive to reading fiction. These were small group activities that the students chose to become involved with or not. The rest of the students were involved in other tasks related to reading or writing. By having various 'centers' available, the classroom became a place where different people could work on areas of interest at their own pace.

Allow time to read in school

Students lead busy lives outside of school. They are 'programmed' into many activities such as sports and music, or working at part time jobs that leave them with little free time. "Adolescents, particularly secondary students, have little free time outside of school for reading, and this is a major cause of decline in free reading at this age" (Clary, 1991, p.343). It is important for teachers to realize this time limitation and provide some reading time for students at school. Clary (1991) describes research that notes that 70% of a student's day is made up of talk, three quarters of which is the teacher's. Clary feels that of this talking time, some should be devoted to both reading aloud to students, and to discussing books with them. A common and important reading time that Clary mentions is the Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading time that many schools participate in by one name or another. The 'read a book in an hour' technique, as described by K. Schlatter and presented previously is also mentioned in the Clary article. She views this technique as a good use of school time for motivating the reading of fiction. While this may not be considered to be real reading it may provide motivation for students to pick up a particular book or similar ones to read on their own.

Provide significant adult models

At school the most important role model that the students see is their teacher. The USSR time is an excellent opportunity for the students not only to read fiction on their own, but also to see their teacher modeling reading (Clary, 1991, p. 343)

Hynds (1997) observed that when the teacher brought in an author working on a novel in progress, or when she brought in her own novel in progress the students became more interested and excited about the books. The idea of an author as a role model would appear to be an effective modeling strategy as well.

In England, 1999 was declared the National Year of Reading. (National Year of Reading, 1999, internet site) One successful program focused on using male role models to encourage boys to read more. Popular sports teams and figures from the areas of football and rugby 'teamed up' with youth to increase literacy levels and reading abilities. Specific programs experienced high levels of success. An example is the Millwall Football Club. They

> developed a reading and sport scheme to run in school holidays, one day each week for local 9-12 year olds. Jim Hicks, ex-professional footballer turned community officer, enthusiastically tackles young people's low literacy levels and self-esteem by introducing them to a range of activities designed to enthuse young readers - alongside their love of football. The treasure hunt has proved a winner: Teams of different age groups work together to find the answers to clues hidden around the club's grounds. Each team ends up with an anagram of a famous footballer - once they've worked out who their footballer is, it's a race back to base. Other activities include fantasy-football-related quizzes; building an ideal team through negotiating sales of players; sports crosswords; using magazines and books to research information about favourite players; and tours of the ground in which participating children have to find evidence of writing, from advertising boardings to the rules of the game in the players' dressing rooms. The sessions are followed by football training. (National Year of Reading, Internet site)

Many of these activities relate to non-fiction, which may be one of the reasons that they are successful with boys, but the benefits can also be transferred and applied in the area of fiction. The activities described are familiar to teachers. The distinction is that they are being introduced by a figure that many boys wish to emulate, and this provides the stimulus or motivation to participate. This would be an extremely accessible activity for many teachers, as the popularity of many sports such as hockey, skating, track and football in Canada would certainly equal the popularity of rugby and soccer (football) in England. As this is a program specifically designed for boys, would bringing a popular male athlete into a classroom be detrimental to the girls in the class? Most likely it would not, as both girls and boys are fans and could enjoy the athlete's presence for many varied reasons.

Use motivational techniques

The idea of using motivational techniques can be looked at from the perspective of knowing the students as individuals and responding to their needs. Many of the previously mentioned techniques could be repeated here as motivational techniques. Drama and art activities such as those described by Wilhelm (1997), alternative strategies as listed by Hynd (1997) and various researcher's strategies as mentioned by Matthews (1987) would all fit into this category.

Some of the motivational techniques that Clary (1991, p. 344) suggests include:

- Review books for the school newspaper or over the P.A.
- Place reviews in the media center.
- Show videos or taped television programs based on books.
- Audiotape readings of parts of popular books.
- Games and contest. i.e. trivia contest, tic-tac-toe, crossword puzzles, charades, concentration games constructed as table board games or on transparency.

- School wide 'Battle of Books' (Clary, 1991, p.344).
- Book talks.
- Conference call (or more likely e-mail today) between readers and authors, requiring funding, reading, writing of questions, carefully planned interview calls and follow-up activities.

Within the Matthews (1987) collection is an article by Elizabeth McMahan: "No More Plot Summaries: Teaching Critical Focus in Independent Reading Responses"(pp. 33-36). Her suggestion for motivating students is to

> try asking your students to write a brief paper focusing on some literary criterion,- character, point of view, setting, imagery, or structure - and to conclude with their understanding of the meaning of the work. In other words, offer them the challenge of writing critically about their independent reading rather than describing or summarizing it. (p. 34).

McMahan feels even weak students can achieve this if the teacher shows them the difference between a plot detail and a critical comment, and then asks them to start each paragraph with a critical comment. By this she is describing a comment that makes a point about the literary work, not merely repeating what it says. This strategy has the potential to be a very traditional activity, catering to only the highly motivated readers. These readers cannot be excluded in a quest to encourage those less engaged. Therefore if used on an individualized basis, in combination with other reader response activities, it could be very effective.

As previously stated, Reynolds (1995) sees traditional responses to fiction as more 'empathetic' than they are 'critical or analytical', (p.17) traits that favor girls over boys. He feels that schools can facilitate the needs of boys and motivate them to become more involved in reading fiction. Using texts that appeal to boys and developing classroom activities that boys find appealing and accessible would be crucial factors. This would mean more focus on analytical activities and problem solving. Planning for a greater variety of outcomes, not just "essays and narrative based responses, but charts, graphs and other visual representations of information, ...oral

presentations" (Reynolds, 1995, p.17) would enhance the experience for the boys in need of alternatives in the class, while still providing all the opportunities previously present for the other boys and girls.

Discussion

None of the strategies introduced are revolutionary or radically different than what is already going on in many classrooms. Three major elements emerge from the research that teachers who may or may not already be using some of these strategies would need to be aware of in order to facilitate their effectiveness. The first is the assumption that there is a necessity to enhance the fiction reading experience of many adolescents, especially boys. The second is the focus upon boys that would influence the reader response strategies the teacher might use in his/her classroom. The third involves seeing and responding to students as individuals.

The elements and strategies suggested above, while not exhaustive form a basis for teachers working towards the goal of bringing adolescent boys back to reading fiction.

B. Three essential ingredients: Young adult literature, reader response and the teacher

1. Young Adult Literature

In order to read fiction, something must pique the interest of the young adult reader. Young adult literature, as opposed to the classics, can be seen as filling this need. In their analysis of literature, Bushman and Bushman (1993) strongly support the classroom use of young adult literature, as opposed to the classics. They say that:

> With these novels, students can do everything that can be done with the classics: make personal responses; become involved in literary analysis; and identify universal themes, specific techniques, and strategies characteristic of the author's craft. The issues raised confront students with ample subject matter for creative and critical

> thinking. Analysis of theme, character development, and plot structure are but a few of the additional literary activities in which students can become engaged. (Bushman & Bushman, 1993, p.25)

Protherough says that "by trying to move them (students) too quickly, however, by presenting texts that are too difficult, (classics) ... we may hamper rather than assist their development" (1983, pp. 40-41). Students need to be exposed to young adult fiction at school in order to provide them with aesthetic reading experiences. In her book, Reed (1994) says "Opportunities for aesthetic reading are important because it is through personal reading that students move to the higher levels of understanding. It is at the personal level that readers deal with the complexity of works"(p.10). Young adult novels provide the types of materials that students can read aesthetically. While students may progress to 'classic literature', to start with these texts would be a disservice to most of the students. Frank Whitehead says, "Adult literary works are being forced on children before they're ready for them" (in Thomson, 1987, pp.31, 32).

Different researchers have outlined various developmental tasks that adolescents face. These researchers believe that young adult literature should reflect the different developmental stages in order to be of interest to adolescents. Erikson says that "the major task of adolescence is the formulation, or reformulation, of personal identity" (in Bushman & Bushman, 1993, p.7). Marcia expresses a similar sentiment in saying that, "Middle and high school students are primarily engaged in the task of answering the question 'Who am I?'" (in Bushman & Bushman, 1993, p.7) Marcia describes a teen's developmental task as a "series of stages (that) represent products of considerable effort at sorting out concepts of self in relation to parents, peers, authorities, and society in general" (Bushman & Bushman, 1993, p.7). Havighurst (in Bushman & Bushman, 1993, p.8) goes one step further in describing his developmental sequence. His detailed stages deal with the all-important 'identity' and 'self', and are then related directly to young adult fiction that deals with each stage. His developmental tasks certainly

follow the others in the idea that teens are looking at themselves in relation to where they fit in. His detailing lends itself to being easily matched up to young adult literature. His eight developmental tasks are as follows:

1. Achieving new and more mature relations with age-mates
2. Achieving a proper masculine or feminine social role
3. Adapting to physical changes and using the body effectively
4. Achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults
5. Preparing for marriage and family
6. Preparing for an economic career
7. Acquiring a personal ideology or value system
8. Achieving social responsibility. (in Bushman & Bushman, 1993, p.8)

As Havighurst (in Bushman & Bushman, 1993, p.8) points out, many young adult novels deal directly with these issues, and in so doing provide one type of outlet that can help adolescents deal with some of the resulting anxiety. No one would advocate books as the only outlet for the confused or unhappy adolescent. Instead they can be seen as a wonderful resource, or starting point for discussion, or even at times for clarification.

Sheridan (1993) discusses Carlsen's stages of development that adolescents go through and the types of literature that they read as they grow older. (p.328) Carlsen likens his stages to 'rites of passage' of reading. His first rite is that of separation, as in 'the separation from childhood'. The second rite would be that of testing as in 'testing and initiation', and the third rite would be that of 'incorporation'. (in Sheridan, 1993, p.329) This description begins with self-interest books, moves on to books that give teens information that helps them deal with potentially confusing changes, and then moves on to helping them deal with 'dilemmas of human life'. Though the descriptions are different, it is easy to see the similarities between this and the other models. Teachers would probably not experience difficulty in suggesting young adult titles that fit into Carlsen's and Havighurst's categories and would therefore be of interest to adolescents. Perhaps the simplest, yet most effective way of stating the need to use young adult literature for the adolescent would be: "The right book brought forward at the

right time can make all the difference to a child's reading development" (Thomson, 1987, p.33).

Thomson (1987) quotes Harding (1972) when he says: "In reading literature, just as in listening to anecdotes of others, we can extend our understanding of ourselves, of other people and of the human condition. " (p.81) The implications in terms of choice of literature are clear. Students want to read about themselves, a desire which is easily satisfied with the use of young adult literature. The implications for the development of the student as a person appear very far-reaching. Put into practical terms, perhaps we can become more tolerant of others who are different, or see new ways to deal with day-to-day life. In other words, through reading maybe we can become more well rounded citizens of the world. Though we say technology makes our world a smaller place, old-fashioned reading fiction has been doing that for a long time. Thomson (1987, p.83) also believes that when students choose books that they can relate to, they can make connections between their world and the world in the book, they can write in response to what they read, and they can grow.

Reed (1994, p.16) has produced a list that explains the importance of young adult literature. It appears as follows:

Why Young Adult Literature Is Important

1. Helps improve the reading skill of adolescents and allows all readers to read good books.
2. Allows adolescent readers to interact with books as equals, thereby developing both reading skills and critical and creative thinking ability
3. Encourages adolescents to read more books, thereby improving their ability to read
4. Helps adolescents understand that there are many reasons to read, thereby encouraging them to keep reading
5. Allows readers to meet egocentric needs while developing aesthetic reading ability.
6. Allows teachers to incorporate more books of interest to adolescents into the curriculum, thereby avoiding the non-reading curriculum or workbooks and lectures
7. Allows teachers to organize classrooms into reading workshops in which students respond to, experience, and share books.

8. Allows for the development of an inclusive curriculum in which a variety of books on a variety of themes and in a variety of genres introduce students to themselves, their world, and the worlds of other cultures.

Protherough's (1983) rationale for teaching fiction covers many of the same ideas, and adds some new ones as well. The importance of using fiction that adolescents can relate to is evident in his rationale. Protherough (1983) categorizes the major function of reading fiction into three areas. The first area is personal, or aesthetic reading. This area develops imagination and provides opportunities for social development. He states that "Socially books can (a) aid personal development and self understanding by presenting situations and characters with which our own can be compared, and by giving the chance to test out motives and decisions" (p.7). He also feels that socially books can "(b) extend experience and knowledge of life ('broaden the mind' and 'widen the horizon') by introducing us to other kinds of people, places, periods, situations" (p. 7). The second area that Protherough (1983) categorizes in his rationale for teaching fiction is curricular. He believes that books "develop the pupil's own use of language" (p.8). He notes that fiction stories "are a basis for other English activities, especially talk and creative written work"(p. 8). As well he discusses the carry over to many other subject areas of reading fiction stories. The third function of reading he explains is literary. (p.8) He describes how reading for enjoyment has the positive effect of making students want to read more, and read more demanding literature as well. He believes that students can appreciate literature more as they learn to understand literary concepts. He considers that books are able to give the reader a broader base from which to "discriminate and evaluate". (p.8) As well he believes that books broaden and help readers understand "the nature of literature and ... the course of literary history" (p. 8).

Protherough's (1983) functional argument for reading fiction focuses on the idea that "it is chiefly fiction which compels children to read, to learn and to continue reading in later life" (p.19). His developmental argument looks more at reading from a life long angle. Children start by listening to

stories and then reading, but we are always looking at them from our own unique prospective as they reflect on our lives. (pp.19,20) Some relevant points that are made in the functional argument include

> claims that such reading has beneficial effects on children's behavior and on their general ability to read effectively and to work in other subjects. Appropriate fiction can significantly affect what is learned in other areas of the curriculum and outside the school. (p.19)

As well Protherough suggests "that adult illiterates were characterized by the fact that they had never developed any sense of pleasure to be gained from reading stories" and that "reading abilities and habits are formed primarily through encounters with fiction" (p.19). These arguments lend further weight to the importance of adolescents reading fiction books that are intended for them.

All of these theorists point clearly to the same conclusion. It is beneficial for adolescents to read fiction, and what they read makes a difference.

2. Reader Response

There are many definitions and descriptions of reader response theory. What emerges from many of the definitions in the educational field is that a working knowledge of reader response provides the most meaningful method of teaching fiction to young adults. Nancie Atwell (1998, p.30) quotes Alan Purves who says: "At the center of the curriculum are not the works of literature... but rather the mind as it meets the book. The [reader] response."

Sheridan (1993) defines reader response as whatever is happening intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically, while the students read. Sheridan also feels it's essential to keep in mind that reading is a process. In other words, all the experiences that a reader brings to the text, all the activities that influence the interpretations, are as important as the reader's interaction with the text. Thomson (1987) tries to clarify the English teacher's

role in developing reader response. (p.16) What stands out for him is that the way a teacher teaches should connect with the way a student responds.

Alvermann & Phelps (1998) use a different term, schema, to describe a similar idea. They describe it as 'how people organize the raw data of everyday experiences into meaningful patterns'. (p.18) Anderson (1984) refines this description. He says: "Schemata are fluid; they overlap and intertwine, and they are constantly modified to assimilate or accommodate new information. Schemata enable people to draw generalizations, form opinions, and understand new experiences" (in Alvermann & Phelps, 1998, p.19).

Though Atwell (1987) does not present the following as a definition of reader response theory, it easily could be considered one. When comparing reading to writing she says:

> Like writing, reading requires the creation of meaning, this time in collaboration with an author. Like writing, reading becomes meaningful only when it involves the particular response of an individual – one's own way of perceiving reality through the prism of written language. And, like writing, reading generates its most significant meanings when the reader engages in a process of discovery, weaving and circling among the complex of behaviors that characterizes genuine participation in written language. (p.155)

Reed (1994) talks about Reader Response Theory, or the Transactional theory of literature as assuming "that the reader is an active participant in the reading process" explaining that "there can be as many responses to a single text as there are readers of the text because the reading process for each reader is unique" (p.332).

Reader response focuses on the emotional response of the readers. In working with adolescent readers, this is a crucial area. If a teacher can focus first on this emotional area, and derive the lessons for literary techniques within the framework of reader response, there will be a greater likelihood that the students will respond positively to their reading.

3. The Teacher

Teacher is a title that everyone is familiar with, but what does it really mean? The definition of what a teacher is becomes relevant in considering how the teacher helps adolescent students respond on an emotional level and become reflective thinkers. To fulfill the needs of the adolescent in the classroom the teacher must be the facilitator rather than the lecturer, the guide rather than the leader, the one who can individualize rather than the 'teach to the middle of the group' person. This teacher is the one who knows, cares for and can work with his/her students, as opposed to the one who is uninterested in the students as individuals and would rather teach at them.

Nancie Atwell (1987), a highly successful teacher, found that when she acted as a 'creationist', starting the year with a curriculum and following it through, she was not as successful as when she became an 'evolutionist', someone who learned and changed with her class. (Atwell, 1987, p.3) That is not to say that the creationist would not experience some degree of success. The difference though would be the bond and the empathy that would form between the evolutionist and the students. Individualization is Atwell's other cornerstone of success. To her, individualization does not mean a kit, or giving groups of students materials at different levels. It means conferring with students one on one and knowing what their interest and needs are. (Atwell, 1987, p.45)

Atwell (1998) has come up with a list that emphasizes the importance of what teachers demonstrate to their students, and how so much of what they learn may not be what we intend to teach. Teachers must be aware of what lessons they are imparting to their students with their actions, whether unintentionally or not.

Twenty-one things teachers demonstrate about reading (Atwell, 1998, pp.18,19)

- Reading is difficult, serious business.

- Literature is even more difficult and serious.
- Reading is a performance for an audience of one: the teacher.
- There is one interpretation of a text: the teacher's.
- "Errors" in comprehension or interpretation will not be tolerated.
- Student readers aren't smart or trustworthy enough to choose their own texts.
- Reading requires memorization and mastery of information, terms, conventions, and theories.
- Reading is always followed by a test (and writing mostly serves to test reading – book reports, critical papers, essays and multiple choice/fill-in-the-blank/short answer variations).
- Reading somehow involves drawing lines, filling in blanks, and circling.
- Readers break whole texts into separate pieces to be read and dissected one fragment at a time.
- It's wrong to become so interested in a text that you read more than the fragment the teacher assigned.
- Reading is a solitary activity you perform as a member of a group.
- Readers in a group may not collaborate; this is cheating.
- Re-reading a book is also cheating; so are skimming, skipping, and looking ahead.
- It's immoral to abandon a book you're not enjoying.
- You learn about literature by listening to teachers talk about it.
- Teachers talk a lot about literature, but teachers don't read.
- Reading is a waste of English class time.
- There's another kind of reading, a fun, satisfying kind you can do on your free time or outside of school.
- You can fail English yet still succeed at and love this other kind of reading.

Thomson (1987) presents a dichotomy between what we are intending to teach and what the students are receiving that is reminiscent of Atwell's list. He is of the opinion that though we are trying to develop a love of reading, our practices prohibit it. He also feels that while we as teachers are trying to 'extend understanding of life', and 'enhance personal development', we are choosing books that don't have meaning to our students. Finally, he believes that we focus too much on 'literary methods', and not enough on 'quality of literary experience'. (pp.152,153)

In one type of strategy that Atwell (1987) uses, namely keeping a journal, she has found she must be "specific and personal". (p.178) In keeping with the idea of the traditional 'teacher' versus the 'facilitator', she sees her response role as that of a guide and a questioner and a 'nudger'.

Another important point that Atwell (1987) makes is that teachers should draw upon their own strengths and interests in order to capture and interest the students. (p.200) An English teacher presenting or discussing a text that she knows and is excited by elicits a response in her students that is dissimilar to the response of the teacher teaching a text she is indifferent to.

In their earlier descriptions of developmental stages that adolescents go through, Bushman & Bushman (1993) make a vital point. Teachers need to know their students as individuals, and know generally what stage of development each of them is at in order to meet their requirements. (pp.19-21) Reed (1994) also talks about the importance of the teacher knowing his/her students. (p.17)

In Protherough's (1983) book, Keith Bardgett describes a case study in which he sees the teacher as an important facilitator. He says that it is "a belief stated explicitly and implicit in the whole approach, that learning is more important then teaching... self-motivation... comes to pupils when they take responsibility for their own work" (p.87). Another of the case studies from Mike Town supports the 'teacher facilitator' idea as well. "This approach... encourages pupils to talk about and try to make sense of what they are reading"(p. 126). Town goes on to explain that "developing a response to fiction, ... demands that the teacher's participation is seminal, that the pupils' own judgments are uninhibited, and that the story is left alive and mysterious"(p. 126).

Implications for teachers using reader response as described by Protherough (1983) include the idea that students should get satisfaction from reading. Teachers should know the students, and what they like and dislike. They should develop a relationship with the students. Students should enjoy the reading process, whether listening to teachers or reading alone. Students should be allowed to respond to the text, without teachers imposing their responses. Students should be able to share in a small group, which is sometimes easier at first, and students shouldn't feel that there is a 'right'

answer. (pp.128 – 131) These outcomes are all within teachers' control, depending upon how they choose to structure their classes.

"The sometimes undervalued teaching ability is responsiveness: reacting to pupils' responses to the text as well as to the text itself, seeing the text as an experience to be shared not as an inert object to be imparted, in a threefold relationship" (Protherough, 1983, p.138). This statement has implications for the way a teacher may introduce a literary element, within the realm of the students' responses, or as a lesson on its own.

Sheridan (1993) also talks about how teachers can facilitate the reader response process "by valuing the responses of individual readers" (p.43). He talks about the tensions between the two roles that the teacher plays in the classroom. These are that of expert, and that of 'coach' or facilitator'. Sheridan (1993) believes strongly that the learning should be student centered, considering at the same time the fact that as experts teachers have a lot to offer their students.

There is no magic formula for a good or great teacher. A teacher's recipe for success would have to include both practical and conceptual areas of learning. Studying, learning, and practicing as well as trial and error and instinct are all part of what make up an effective teacher.

Summing up

The use of young adult literature, reader response methodology, and a facilitator/teacher greatly determine the effectiveness of the enhancement of fiction reading in the English classroom. I see a need to bring a responsive, individualized way of working with and teaching students into the classroom. The teacher must possess a broad base of knowledge in the area of adolescent development and young adult literature. Once a strong foundation has been established in these areas, appropriate strategies, used with the right students with the right literature at the right time, may bring about the results we are trying to achieve: students who enjoy reading fiction, and who can learn through fiction

Chapter 3 – Methodology

Introduction

The research that I conducted was primarily qualitative. Merriam (1988) describes the emphasis in qualitative research as focusing upon the process as opposed to the product and upon the idea that meaning is embedded in people's experience. Because the researcher is the primary instrument of research, all data are mediated through the human instrument. When involved in fieldwork using qualitative research the researcher is intimate with the phenomenon being studied. Description rather than numbers is used to convey the results, and the type of reasoning is inductive.

I used a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques to gather data. The reading logs and questionnaires (surveys) that the students filled out were in keeping with the collection of data for case studies. "A qualitative case study can be defined as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. 16). The strengths of case studies, as outlined by Merriam (1988, pp. 32-32) include the capacity to study complex social units that have many variables in order to understand an event. They afford a meaningful, holistic account and help to clarify meanings as they expand on readers' experiences. Case studies assist in the advancement of our knowledge base and allow for better understanding leading to improved practice. As well, case studies are useful for analyzing educational innovation, for evaluating programs and to inform practice.

Once the data was gathered, I looked for patterns and links between activities and outcomes. I then analyzed and interpreted the data and drew conclusions for the final report. (Stake, 1995)

Overview and Timeline

I approached the English teacher in my son's junior high to work with on my study. I had gotten to know her well over the previous year, and was impressed with her ability to motivate and excite the students in her classes. She was very receptive to the idea of the study. Because of the small class sizes we decided that it would make sense to work with as many students as possible. She expressed some concern about starting the year and establishing herself with the grade 7's. Since I wanted to start as close to the beginning of the school year as possible, I decided to work only with the 8's and 9's. This ultimately involved 28 boys and 19 girls in three small classes.

The timeline of the project logically followed the school year. I met with the teacher in August and September of 1999 to discuss the project. In September of 1999 I obtained ethical permission from the students and parents and in October the students filled out questionnaires reflecting upon their feelings about reading fiction. From November of 1999 to March of 2000 various teaching strategies were introduced into the classroom. Some of these activities such as the classroom library were ongoing, and some activities were periodic. In March of 2000 the students again filled out the questionnaire.

Sequence of Events:

- Students in a junior high classroom were asked to fill out a questionnaire that elicited responses to show how they felt about reading fiction for pleasure. (See Appendix B) – October 1999.
- As well, a system was set up whereby these students kept a record over the school year of what fiction they had read on their own. (See Appendix E) - September 1999.
- Teaching strategies aimed at encouraging and enhancing the reading of fiction, and specifically the male students' reading of fiction were introduced into the classroom. These strategies included enhancing the

classroom library and bringing in male role models or authors. (See Appendix C for sample reading list) - November 1999 to March 2000.

- At the end of the school year students were asked to fill out the same questionnaire that they had filled out at the beginning of the year. - March 2000
- Students' feelings towards fiction reading that were present at the beginning of the year were compared to those at the end of the year.
- Any significant changes in reading of fiction by the end of the year were examined

Data Analysis

Anecdotal and reflective analysis occurred throughout this study. Most of the activities lent themselves to this kind of examination. These activities included the following: 'books come to the classroom', 'a book-a-day', 'the author as a role model', 'the teacher is the thing', 'sports figures as role models', and 'gender awareness'. I was able to record the books in the 'keeping a book list' activity as they were added to the lists. I stayed mainly with an anecdotal method of analysis for this though, in describing how the activity worked, or in this case didn't work with the class. For the 'literature log' I referred to specific titles as recorded from the logs, and then went on to discuss them in a reflective manner. The 'questionnaire' was the only area in which I gathered numbers, analyzed them, and used them to reflect upon the results. I matched the October and March questionnaires for each student and recorded the results. I then chose questions that showed significant change from October to March or questions where the results were unexpected or especially interesting. After making tables of these questions I discussed the results and their possible implications.

Classroom Involvement:

Dee, (pseudonym) is a language arts teacher at an Elementary/Junior High School. She agreed to let me work with her and her junior high

students. All of the students, boys and girls, in the grade 8 and 9 classes were involved in the study. Their participation involved filling in a questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the year, and keeping a list of the fiction that they read for pleasure either in free reading time or outside of the classroom. All students were involved because these were mixed classrooms and the effects of the strategies on the girls therefore had to be considered. Various strategies to enhance and entice reading of fiction among the boys were introduced throughout the year.

Ethical Considerations:

Dee and I introduced the nature and purpose of the study to the students orally. I also provided a written explanation of the study for the students as well as their parents. The students took home a permission slip, detailing the study, to be signed by their parents. They also signed a slip signifying their intention of participating in the study. (See Appendix A) Student names have not been used in the reporting of the research at any time. Students were assured that whether or not they chose to participate in the study, they would remain in the class, and receive appropriate instruction. Even if students and parents signed the consent form, students had the opportunity to opt out of the research at any time. All students in the class were involved. The main focus of the study was the boys, but the effects of the strategies on the girls were considered as well.

Design

I was an outsider coming into a school, so I found that my research was in part dictated by the willingness of the classroom teacher to accommodate the study. The activities in the study were designed to mesh with a junior high language arts program. These included activities such as:

1) Adding twenty-five to thirty titles to the classroom library aimed at appealing to the boys. (See Appendix D)

2) Asking male role models (ie. sports figures, prominent member of the community, principal or teacher), and a male author to come into the classroom to read, do a book talk or to talk to the students about their own reading.
3) Developing in class activities aimed at enhancing the fiction reading experience.

Specific activities were as follows:

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire (Appendix B) given to the students followed the "One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design" (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The questionnaire was administered to all students in two grades of one school near the beginning of the school year in October, 1999. Activities as outlined in the design section followed throughout the year, and near the end of the school year in March, the questionnaire was re-administered. The questionnaires were matched and the names were then deleted. Answers were recorded and changes in answers from the first questionnaire to the second were noted. Any significant changes that occurred in more than half of the questionnaires were reported upon in the analysis section of this study. Though Campbell and Stanley (1963) cite several limitations of the One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design method, they still see it as being "worth doing when nothing better can be done" (p.7).

Books Come to the Classroom

In early October I went into the classroom with 40 young adult books. The intent was to provide easy accessibility to fiction that would be of interest mainly to the boys, but to the girls as well.

A Book-A-Day

In order to familiarize students with the books of Don Trembath, I tore *The Tuesday Café* and *Alfred the Fly* into chapters. The students read the chapters in pairs and summarized them. They then read their summaries to each other in chapter sequence in order to become familiar with the books. The reason for this was an upcoming visit by the author.

The Author as a Role Model

Don Trembath was invited into the school to speak to all the classes involved in the study as well as the grade sevens. I asked him to speak about himself as a reader as well as his role as an author so that he might serve as a role model for the boys in the class.

Keeping a Book List

This activity was intended as an ongoing activity through the year. The intent was to have a continually updated reading list available to the students, based upon current reading lists from books like those of Donelson & Nilsen (1997), as well as upon the interests of the students.

The Teacher is the Thing

I asked the teacher if I could observe her in a teaching situation with each of the classes. The purpose was to view and record an English classroom where boys were working towards their potential with the guidance of a highly effective teacher.

Sports Figure as Role Models

Members of the Drillers sports team were invited into the school to speak to all the classes involved in the study as well as the grade sevens. As with Don Trembath, I asked them to speak about themselves as readers and of their role as sports figures in order to serve as role models for the boys in the class.

Gender Awareness

In this activity the students were to identify various literary passages as having been written by either a male or female author. The purpose of identifying the gender of the author was to get the students to reflect upon their feelings and ideas of gender stereotyping, and how they felt about reading an author of the opposite sex.

Literature Log

The students had been asked by the classroom teacher to keep a literature log throughout the year of all the fiction books that they read. I asked to borrow the logs in order to gather information on what types of books the students were reading. This provided me with authors, genres, titles and numbers of books read.

All of the above activities were included as part of the students' regular classroom activities, and were of a type aimed at benefiting all students.

Chapter 4 – Activities and Results: Analysis, Discussion and Conclusions

Preparation

In early September 1999, I met with Dee to discuss the process involved in introducing strategies to enhance the reading of fiction for the boys in her classroom. We met once formally, and several times more informally. As an experienced English teacher, Dee was interested in the questions I was asking for my study. She too wondered about what the reading experiences of adolescent boys would be when specific teaching strategies were introduced into the classroom. We discussed the impact of having male role models or a male author reading and talking to her class and how that might affect the boys' experiences of reading fiction. We both wondered whether boys would read more fiction or choose differently if they had access to a classroom library containing a wide range of titles and authors designed specifically to appeal to them. As well, we discussed how the fiction reading habits of the girls in the classroom would be influenced as a result of the strategies being introduced.

We then discussed the logistics and timing that would be most convenient for Dee. My goal was to mesh with her activities, and to provide enrichment and enhancement to an already successful program. The impracticality of some ideas that I had visualized became apparent as we chatted, whereas other ideas materialized and were developed in these discussions. Eventually we came up with an acceptable and suitable list of activities. We realized in discussion that one of my planned activities was an exact replica of something she already had planned to do with her class. That was having them keep a log of the literature that they read during the year. In consultation with her students she very generously agreed to let me copy the literature logs that the students would be keeping. (See Appendix E)

Though Dee was very cooperative and happy to have me there, I could see quite clearly that there were some activities that I would not pursue because this was not my own classroom. For example, though the idea of a reader response activity such as keeping a journal came across quite strongly in the literature, (Atwell, 1987) I did not feel that I could immediately develop a rapport with the students that would facilitate that kind of activity. Though I might have thought of pursuing it at some point in the year, I also did not want to appear to be 'adding-on' to an already full program. Since Dee did not do a journal with the students, I decided that I would not either.

Activities that I presented to Dee included the students filling out the pre and post questionnaire. I planned to develop a classroom library of novels appropriate to the age of the students and needs of my study. I wanted to bring in male speakers who would serve as role models for the males in the class in terms of the students' reading. The plan was to include an author and some sort of sports figure. I also wanted to present some gender awareness activities to the students, as well as to observe the students and their interactions with Dee.

Beginnings

In mid-September I went into the grade 8 and 9 classrooms and spoke to the students about my study. The students were receptive to the idea of being the 'subjects' of a study. I handed out the permission slips (Appendix A) and explained the process to the students. All of them signed and handed back in the student permission slip, and by the end of September Dee had collected 100% of the parent permission slips.

In many schools and classrooms it's not always that easy to collect 100% of anything that requires parent's/guardian's attention and/or signature. Perhaps the ease with which these were collected can be seen as an indication of the type of school, student and community that I was dealing with. Not only was the community receptive to this type of activity, but also

several parents either phoned me or sought me out in the hallways to ask questions or to comment upon the study.

About the Students

This level of interest in the study was based partly upon the demographics of the students involved in the study. The questionnaire did not ask for socio-economic levels, therefore the description of the demographics must be anecdotal, relying upon my personal knowledge of the students and their families. My familiarity with the school is based upon the fact that all three of my children attend there, with my eldest son being in Dee's class. The school is a 'school of choice' in a Public School system. It has an immersion program, with a religious component as well. The classes are kept relatively small. In grade 8 there were two classes with 14 and 15 students. In grade 9 there was one class of 18 students. The population of the school is very static. Though students join or leave the school as their families move to or from the city, the bulk of the student population remains the same. The majority of the students come from middle to upper class homes, where they are encouraged to learn, and where school activities are given a high priority. A smaller proportion of the population is immigrant, coming from two very diverse groups. One is from South Africa, where their economic status is similar to that of the students here and their first language is English. While they experience cultural shock when they arrive here, they are generally able to assimilate into the community quite easily. The other group is from Russia. This group is very different as they are coming in without a lot of money, and often without being able to practice their given profession. They generally speak very little English, so they do a lot of 'catching up' in school. The emphasis put on their schooling though is still very strong. The economics are different within these two groups, but there is great similarity in the priority given to education. Most of the students in the classes in my study come from homes where education is highly valued, with the majority being English first language students.

Questions, Logs and Books Come to the Classroom

In late September, after all the permission slips were collected, I went in again to have the students fill in the questionnaires. (Appendix B) As well, Dee introduced the literature logs (Appendix E) to the students, letting them know that they would serve a dual purpose. They would keep track of the books read not only for Dee, but for me as well.

In the first week of October I went into the school with 39 fiction books and one non-fiction book that reads like fiction (*Into Thin Air*) to add to the school library. (Appendix D) The students were extremely excited to have new books, and we spent some time talking about the kinds of books that they like. While a variety of likes and dislikes came forward, one idea stood out. Many of the grade 9's wondered why there weren't more 'adult' novels in the junior high library. Books by John Grisham, Stephen King and Danielle Steele were among those mentioned by the students. We talked about the reality that the library was geared towards an elementary school as well as a junior high and might therefore seem a bit young, especially for grade 9's. As well we discussed the fact that there are lots of good young adult novels, which they might appreciate as much or more than those geared specifically towards adults. What struck me about this conversation was not the type of book being discussed but the fact that it was almost all girls who participated in the discussion.

Of the forty books introduced into the classroom the majority were written by males. Those written by females had topics that would hopefully appeal to males. As suggested by Barrs (1994), boys generally will not read fiction intended for girls, whereas girls are open to reading literature aimed specifically at boys. If the literature in the classroom has an unequal bias towards feminine literature, introducing fiction that appealed to boys should not impact upon the girls in a negative way. Therefore I didn't worry that I might be alienating them. My goal was to appeal to the boys as much as possible, by providing them with material that was relevant to them. I book talked several of the books and after I had talked to both classes, Dee let the

students start taking the novels out. The purpose of having the books in the classroom was to provide easy accessibility to relevant material for the boys. (Clary, 1991)

A Book-A-Day

In late October as an introduction to the upcoming visit from Don Trembath, I introduced the books *The Tuesday Café* and *Alfred the Fly* to the students. I used the Book-A-Day method described by K. Schlatter. (p.45) I used the books *The Tuesday Café* with the grade 8's and *Alfred the Fly* with the 9's. I tore the book into chapters, and had students either alone or in pairs read and summarize a chapter. Then the students read their summaries in order and came up with a fairly accurate idea of the story. This occurred over a single class period, was interesting and fun for the students, and stimulated several of the students (boys and girls) to ask for other Trembath novels. The purpose of this activity was to have the students familiar with at least one of Trembath's novels by the time he came to present. It was a successful activity with outcomes going beyond familiarization. The students were pleased with the fact that they had become familiar with Trembath's book in one period. I was impressed with how easy it was to get students interested in a particular author.

The Author as a Role Model (Hynds, 1997)

On Thursday, October 28th, Don Trembath came in to talk to all of the junior highs. I included the grade 7's in the talk even though they were not part of the study. I knew the 8's and 9's would have plenty of questions for the author, and Dee and I thought it would be a worthwhile experience for the 7's. Before Trembath came in I gave him background on my project and asked him to talk a bit about himself as a reader, both when he was young and now.

Trembath was definitely the right choice for a junior high group. He appealed to both the males and the females in the group for various reasons.

He spoke about himself as an adolescent reader and related to the boys in terms of all the other interests that an adolescent boy has vying for his attention. He spoke quite openly about his epileptic son, upon whom he based his new novel, and in so doing gained the rapt attention of the girls and boys. His experience as a stay at home dad/writer was conveyed with humour and sensitivity. As a role model for males in the class, I couldn't have asked for a better representation of a person who they might aspire to be like. The students asked at least 45 minutes worth of questions, at which time we had to shut down the discussion. The questions ranged from how much he made as a writer, to how he became a writer, how he knew he wanted to become a writer, to what kinds of books he liked to read, and what books, (besides his own), he might recommend to the students. In an informal count of how many boys were involved in the question asking as compared to how many girls, the boys definitely asked more questions in this situation. I felt that this had been a successful 'textbook' situation involving a male role model for the male students in the class.

Keeping a Book List

A rather less successful activity involved bringing in a book file for the students as described by Livaurdais. (in Clary, 1991) I did this on November 30th and introduced it to the students as an ongoing activity. First I brought in a box containing file folders. Each file folder had a different heading based on the booklist in Appendix C. Within each file folder were several copies of lists of books that made up that category or heading. I let the students know that if they had a particular interest, they could look in the file and take away a booklist with the names of several books that might interest them. Another component of this activity involved them filling in a recommendation sheet naming a book that they had read and adding it to the appropriate category/file folder, with an option to put their name on it. This activity was a dismal failure. I don't believe the activity itself was responsible for the failure, but more the circumstances surrounding the activity. A few students used the

file, and three students actually added their own recommendations to the lists. There was just not enough follow up or reminders in terms of adding to the file when the students had finished a good book. And once the students had taken a look at the list that interested them, there was little incentive to look again, because there were very few additions. I believe the main reason for the failure of this activity was the lack of continuity or reminders from me, or actual 'mark' based reasons for remembering to add to the list. I feel that had this been my own classroom, where I could make this an ongoing activity based on their literature logs or silent reading activities, there would have been a great deal of difference. This, I decided, was one of the activities that required my own classroom, as opposed to the open invitation, yet outsider status, of another teacher's classroom.

The Teacher is the Thing

Based upon the significance of the teacher in the literature, (Matthews, 1987; Probst, 1984; Wilhelm, 1997; Hynds, 1997) and the effectiveness of Dee as a teacher I felt that viewing some of her classes was an essential activity. Dee has an enormous range of effective teacher skills and can therefore engage the males and females in the class to an equal degree. Because of the interest, participation and enthusiasm that she displays and elicits from her students, I believe the males are receiving a great deal of encouragement and many are probably working and reading fiction close to their potential. As stated in the literature review, having a teacher that is in tune with the students as individuals is crucial. Dee is in tune with her students and has an extremely positive relationship with them. I have described two lessons that I viewed and recorded in order to illustrate this.

I asked Dee if I could observe each of the classes involved in the study in an active teaching situation. The purpose of viewing these classes was to record some concrete examples of the teacher being aware of and working towards a positive experience for the boys in language arts. On January 17th I observed a grade 8 class and on January 18th I observed the grade 9's.

What follows is the description of each of the classes, and comments upon all the significant teaching strategies that the boys and girls in the class were continually exposed to.

Picture Books –Grade 8

Dee first gained control of the class in a quiet non-confrontational manner. She stood at the front of the class and waited, saying the name of and making eye contact with a few students. In a very short time the students had taken their desks and were quietly awaiting her instructions. There was no yelling, and the atmosphere felt comfortable and relaxed. Dee had about 40 picture books at the front of the classroom, and asked the students for their impressions of what they might see these books being used for. The students came up with babysitting, babies and descriptive writing assignments as their answers. Throughout this lesson, I kept a casual count of each time Dee called upon a boy or a girl. Though there were a few more boys than girls in both grade 8 classes, the number of times Dee called upon each was almost equal. Everyone in the class was made to feel that their contribution was of equal value to anyone else's. Dee went on to give some background on her personal experience with picture books, and talked about the reasons that the class would be looking at them. This whole process of setting the stage allowed the students to buy into the experience with understanding and enthusiasm, which might have been lost had she just started right into the lesson. Dee's skills engaged all of the students, almost all of the time. Her low-key manner of dealing with classroom management matters didn't interrupt or disrupt the flow of the lesson.

The first storybook that Dee introduced was her personal favourite, *The Dreamer*, by Cynthia Ryland. She explained to the students that she perceived some special meanings from the book, but she didn't want to tell them yet. She wanted them to acquire their own meaning and then they could discuss their diverse ideas. This non-threatening, 'what you get has meaning' approach had the students eager to share their interpretations after Dee read the story. She was able to include metaphor as part of the

discussion, and elicited some wonderful responses from the students in that regard. In trying to draw out information about the next book, *The Wolf*, she again did not just ask for answers. She gave the students various strategies with which to educe a response. There were enough strategies provided that most students were able to achieve success with at least one of them. In all aspects of her lesson, Dee tried to cater to individual nuances and differences within the group, an important aspect of a successful classroom and its teacher. During the discussion phase of the activity students felt safe enough to offer their responses. Dee has a way of positively reinforcing the students for attempting to respond, and then leading them if necessary in a new or different direction. Again, this safe environment and accepting atmosphere within the classroom (Clary, 1991; Probst, 1984) is a crucial element for student success.

A Poetry Response – Grade 9

Viewing the grade 9 class provided more examples of Dee's effectiveness as a teacher. As the students entered and settled down into the classroom, it was clear that there were a number of 'word clues' that the students were familiar with and responded to. Dee also adjusted her 'level of tolerance' with this class, as they were more boisterous and talkative than the 8's, yet still remaining almost completely on task. Her ability to adjust to the needs, mood and atmosphere in the different classes, as opposed to making each class conform to her own needs or expectations afforded further examples of Dee's effectiveness in relating to students.

The activity was in itself a brilliant event. Dee had previously introduced the poem *Two Worlds* to the class. This activity involved a discussion of the two different worlds in the poem and what they meant, in actuality and to the students. Dee provided appropriate short questions and responses to keep the discussion moving quickly and on topic. Dee used phrases like, "If you were going to sum up the first world...", "Do you agree..." "Yes and what do you mean..." "So you think..." "Good point, but do you think..." "Ah, who else saw this... please repeat..." and so on. The

discussion moved along at what can only be described as an exciting pace, with complete student involvement. All of the students had opinions, and all were comfortable in conveying them. Dee calmly dealt with one student who used a swear word albeit appropriately as part of his answer, but obviously not appropriately in terms of Dee's classrooms expectations. It was dealt with so quickly and effectively that none of the other students had a chance to laugh or respond. The discussion just went on. When the students began to talk at once, Dee asked a student with his hand up if he wouldn't rather wait until the others could hear him. They all responded quickly by stopping their own chatter and listening. Near the end of the discussion Dee asked one student to read a response that she had written to a book that was appropriate to this discussion. It was interesting to see the respect that the students had for each other in terms of listening and asking questions. This part of the lesson was student led, with any control that Dee exerted being low key to the point that it felt invisible, yet remained effective. It was clear that in an environment that had obviously been created through the school year, the boys and girls would feel equally comfortable giving emotive answers. In this way the boys were definitely on equal footing with the girls. These groups of students were able to achieve this environment based to great degree upon the effective intuitive style of teaching.

Sports Figures as Role Models

On Wednesday, February 16th, three players from the Edmonton Drillers Soccer team came in to talk to the entire junior high. While this exercise was interesting and entertaining for the students, it was another one that did not achieve the desired results. In preparing for this activity I had spoken to the Drillers' public relations person and to one of the players who helped organize their outings. While the Drillers regularly went into schools to promote their team and their sport, they rarely did it with a focus on reading as their main topic. In preparation I had asked that they choose players who were readers and that the players come prepared to talk about themselves as

readers, both when they were young and now. I had asked that they try to relate their reading experience to where they were in life and where they were planning on being in the future. I had also asked that they spend a few minutes talking about the kind of fiction that they enjoyed and when they read it , since fiction was what I was focusing upon in the study. I knew it would be a thrill for the boys and girls to see these players no matter what they were talking about. I hoped that while the main discussion might centre on their playing and a demonstration, just knowing that they were readers would be a factor in role modeling for the boys. (National Year of Reading Internet Site, 1999) Unfortunately the messages must somehow have been lost, because the players spent almost no time on their reading when they were presenting. While Dee, the principal and I all asked reading related questions, there was very little in the way of reading role modeling for the boys in this presentation. The students enjoyed the presentation, were involved and engaged throughout, but I'm not sure that they got as much out of the activity as I would have hoped.

Gender Awareness

The next activity was a Gender exercise. I went into the grade 9 class on February 22nd and into the grade 8 classes on February 29th. I introduced the activity by having a discussion with the students about whether they liked to read male or female authors, or if it made a difference. The majority of the girls said they did not really care about the gender of the author. When I asked the girls to put up their hands if their favorite author was a female, all but two in grade 9, and two out of both of the grade 8 classes put up their hands. In discussion the boys seemed a bit more reluctant to admit that they would be happy to read female authors. They seemed to think that for the most part female authors wrote about females or feelings and ideas that would not appeal to them. They mentioned that if there were boys in their books, generally they were probably involved in some sort of 'lovey-dovey' situation with the girl in the book. When I asked them to raise their hands if

their favorite author was a male, several had to qualify their comments. Because of the popularity of the J. K. Rowling books, many of them named her as their favorite author. They argued that she was not a good example, or that she was an exception to the rule, and that they still, all other factors being equal, would choose a male author over a female one.

I set out in this activity to bring to a conscious level the fact that authors could and often did successfully write from a perspective other than their own gender. I chose nine selections, six from young adult novels, two poems, and one play. (See Appendix F) The selections ranged in length from about half a page to just over a page. The students were to read the selections, and then identify whether the author was male or female. We discussed the fact that I might have chosen passages that sounded one way or another, but their task was to identify what they really thought, not to try to outmaneuver me and get the 'right' answer. What follows is an anecdotal account of our discussion after the activity.

For the first selection, *Galax-Arena*, by Gillian Rubinstein, the majority of the students identified the author correctly as a female, though there were many who said male. The concept of 'family' and 'storyteller' were a couple of words that those who said female identified as being clues. The few who chose male said that words like 'multi-national syndicate' and the idea of an adventure were clues that led them to guess as they did. For the second selection, *The Ear, The Eye and The Arm*, by Nancy Farmer, almost all of the students wrongly guessed male. Their reasoning centered mainly around the fact that it was told from a male perspective. They argued that in most cases they believed that a male writer would use a male perspective and likewise a female. Many of them were very surprised by this selection. In the third selection, *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of Nimh*, by Robert C. O'Brian, the students' choice was overwhelmingly female, and overwhelmingly wrong. Again they described the perspective of the protagonist as a clue that threw them off. They also said that they believed a female writer would be more likely to write about families than a male. For selection four, *The Dark is*

Rising, by Susan Cooper, the majority of students identified the author correctly as a female though the numbers were close. Their main clues or reasons for choosing as they did included the descriptiveness of the passage, which they felt was more of a female trait, and the topic of family. Those who chose male did so because the characters in the passage were males. The majority of students chose male for the fifth selection, *The Good Earth* by Pearl S. Buck, though again it was close. Their main reason was that the character was speaking from a male perspective. Those who chose female stated the descriptiveness of the passage and the topic of marriage as their reasons. Most of the students were led astray by the sixth selection, *The Hunk Machine* by David A. Poulsen. The fact that the characters were female, and lots of descriptive language was used were the main reasons cited. One student mentioned the 'relationship' aspect. She thought that the way the author talked about the girl's friendship was an indication that the author was a female herself. Several students agreed with this as well, and said that the passage just had a female 'feel' about it. The next two selections were poetry, and the majority of students chose incorrectly on both of them. In *Southbound on the Freeway* by May Swenson the students thought that the topics of space and cars would more likely be written about by a male author. They felt the poem by Bernie Casey was far more descriptive and figurative, and was therefore probably by a female. The last selection from the play *The Ugly Duckling* by A.A. Milne was almost even. Those who guessed female used the reasons of topic and genre. Some suggested that a female would be more likely to adapt a fairy tale than a male. It was interesting that the idea of humour came up as one that some students felt was a reason to choose male as the author.

There were only a few minutes left to wrap up the activity at the end of each of the classes. A number of the students, mostly male, had a bit of trouble getting past the idea that they had been 'tricked' or that I had used passages that were not representative of the way authors might usually write. With the help of the other students in the class we did get past this and

quickly discussed the idea that in many instances the gender of the author makes little or no difference in terms of the type of book, or the ability for boys or girls to enjoy it. Many girls reiterated the fact that they didn't usually care about the author's gender, and why should the boys. It seemed at least that some of the boys appeared thoughtful as they left the classroom that day. If nothing else a bit of an idea may have 'twigged' with some of them.

The Literature Log

In looking at the literature log (Appendix E) some reading trends among the boys became evident. Initially, upon bringing the new books into the class, many of them appeared several times on the students' literature logs. This did not last long though, as the books became spread out through the classes and not as easily accessible. Some of the titles that maintained their popularity included *Harry Potter* (1997), *Into Thin Air* (1998), (coincidentally, the only book on the list that was not fiction, though it read like one), *The Crazy Horse Electric Game* (1987), *A Fly Named Alfred* (1997), *The Tuesday Café* (1996), *Invitation to the Game* (1992), and *There's a Girl in My Hammerlock* (1993). Conjecture about why these books may have lasted includes the idea of word of mouth, where students may have discussed and recommended the books to each other, and the fact that the author for two of the books, Don Trembath, came into the school to talk.

Books that were not on the list that were also popular (meaning they occurred on at least three or more boys' lists), throughout the year included the following. *The Hobbit* (1938), Michael Crichton books, Tom Clancy books, the first two books of the Phillip Pullman trilogy, *The Golden Compass* (1996) and the *Subtle Knife* (1997), books from the *Redwall* series, *The Giver* (1993) and other Lois Lowry books, and books by Eric Walters, Ken Follet, Clive Barker, Stephen King and Gordon Korman.

The number of male authors chosen by the boys definitely points to the fact that boys tend to read books by male authors. The implications of this result for the 'classroom' library are extremely important. In making reading

material accessible to the students, the needs of the students must be taken into consideration.

Wrapping it up

On March 16th I went into the grade 8 and 9 classrooms for the last time to ask them once again to fill out my questionnaire. I chose this time of year, as the grade 9 class would be gone for the majority of the month of April and would return and be busy with final exams and achievement tests. It seemed to make sense to keep the two grades on the same timing. The next chapter deals with the results and comparisons of the questionnaires from the beginning and end of the year.

Chapter 5 – The Questionnaire:
Analysis, Discussion and Conclusions

What does it all mean?

The purpose of this study was to look at strategies that teachers could use or be aware of within their classrooms to enhance the fiction reading experience of boys. The results of the study were both enlightening and to some extent, surprising. Several significant implications arise from the results of the questionnaires.

The Questionnaire: Background and Appropriateness

The questionnaire I used was adapted from the "Young People's Reading at the End of the Century" study, prepared by the Children's Literature Research Centre at the Roehampton Institute in London in 1996. (See Appendix B) The Roehampton study is made up of five yearly surveys. The purpose of the study as stated in the introduction is "to provide regular 'snapshots' of young people's reading which can be used both to provide information about the particular years covered by each survey, and, perhaps more importantly, ... to make it possible to identify and monitor trends in juvenile reading habits." It is important to note that the study did not concern itself with how well the students were able to read, but with, "finding out what children read; how they come into contact with all kinds of reading matter,... what their preferences are and how these vary on the basis of such things as age, sex and region," as well as looking at many other aspects of young adult reading and beyond.

The areas of the questionnaire that focused upon 'thinking about fiction' and 'choosing fiction' were extremely useful to my own study for a number of reasons. The questionnaire had already been piloted, and any necessary wording changes, age considerations or inappropriate areas had been redesigned based upon the results of the pilot study. From the pilot that the Roehampton Institute had conducted, a yes/no answer scale had been changed to a five or three scale response. This was appropriate to my study as I was trying to measure attitude shifts or changes. Because I wanted to be able to detect small as well as large shifts, I adapted a five-response scale in all of the questions, whether or not they appeared that way in the original document.

I utilized most of the questions in the 'thinking about fiction' and 'choosing books' sections, as they related directly to my research.

Analysis

The grade 8 and 9 students first filled out the questionnaire at the beginning of the school year and then again in March. There were a total of 28 boys and 19 girls in the grade 8 and 9 classes. There were very few areas in the questionnaire that statistically changed significantly from the initial session to the one in March. In order to chart the changes in answers from the first session to the second I matched the questionnaires and sorted them according to gender. For the most part the answers either stayed the same, or shifted up or down one point on the scale. There were a few questions that deviated from this pattern, and were therefore of greater interest than those that did not. These are some of the questions I chose to focus upon in my analysis as they indicated changes that had occurred in the students' reading of fiction through the year.

The majority of students were either 13 or 14 years old with a few being 12 or 15. I did not separate the responses by age, which is something I would do if I were to analyze the data again. I realize after working with the

classes that students at the end of grade 9 are quite different from students at the end of grade 8.

There were a few questions with answers that were stood out and I therefore chose to focus upon them as well. The reason that these questions/answers stood out was either because the answers were unexpected, or there was a noteworthy difference between the girls' and the boys' perceptions.

A. Thinking about fiction

Question 1. How often do you read fiction?

Males: Total number of responses
October –28, March – 28

	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
October	10	12	4	2	0
March	1	9	13	5	0

Females: Total number of responses
October – 19, March – 19

	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
October	9	6	3	1	0
March	5	7	6	1	0

The results of this question were probably the most surprising of the questionnaire. The majority of males started out at 'very often' or 'often' with only four starting at 'sometimes', two at 'hardly ever' and none at 'never'. All but one of the 'very often' and the majority of the 'often' choices shifted down one on the scale when filling out the questionnaire in March. The females shifted down as well, but not to as great a degree as the boys did. Though I had not defined the scale to the students, the perception of the majority that responded was clearly that they were reading less than they had been at the beginning of the year. I found that to be extremely significant. A group of highly motivated, fairly bright, mostly English first language students, with an excellent language arts program read less fiction after several months of

school than they had been reading. Add to this the activities that focused on reading and bringing their reading of fiction to a conscious level throughout the year and the fact that the majority of students read less fiction became even more surprising. One conclusion that seemed to stem from these results was that no matter what these adolescent boys were exposed to, they would still begin to read less fiction as they go through junior high. Because of the small sample size, it is difficult to describe any of the results as conclusive. Any theories arising from these results would have to be tested with other larger groups in order to begin to verify authenticity. There have been cases in different institutional settings where less fiction reading has been noted through the adolescent years. For example in the United States a National Assessment of Educational Progress is published regularly. "The latest [one] shows a marked decline in inferential comprehension among secondary-level readers – and a marked lessening in the degree to which kids value and enjoy reading by the time they reach high school" (Atwell, 1998, p.29). If this actually is a phenomenon within adolescence there may be many varied reasons for it. Adolescence is a time of great change for boys and girls. Different interests, activities and needs may lend a hand in dictating what is happening in terms of reading fiction. What was happening at that point in the school year should also be taken into account. Spring activities, hockey playoffs or any number of seasonal influences could have played a role in the amount of reading occurring. Perhaps the addition of a question in the questionnaire dealing with areas such as variations in activities at different times of the year would make sense when researching with this age group. Or interviewing the students with regard to their perceptions for the change might also be valuable. Some further research would have to be done to see what is taking the place of reading fiction for these boys. And more testing within larger groups would have to be done in order to establish if this is truly a phenomenon or not. In comparing the girls to the boys, the girls started with similar ratings on the scale. While more girls remained at or near the top of the scale on the second session, a number of

them also shifted down one on the scale. This leads to additional questions, such as while there is obviously a lot more taking up the time and attention of these junior high age students, why are the boys moving away from reading fiction more than the girls. Are they choosing to read more non-fiction or moving to other activities? Do the girls come back to fiction as they grow older, and if so why? The research literature seems to suggest that girls do come back to fiction and boys do not. (Reynolds, 1995)

Question 2. Do you like the main character in a story to be: a girl, a boy, an adult, an animal, a machine, a cartoon character, someone from outer space, someone who uses magical or special powers, a monster, someone already known to you from TV/video or film.

This chart refers to males who responded with the answer: a boy.
Total number of responses:
October – 28, March – 28

	Always	Sometimes	Doesn't Matter	Hardly Ever	Never
October	2	13	12	1	0
March	2	12	14	0	0

This chart refers to females who responded with the answer: a girl.
Total number of responses:
October – 19, March - 19

	Always	Sometimes	Doesn't Matter	Hardly Ever	Never
October	0	5	7	5	2
March	0	5	8	4	2

This chart refers to males and females who responded with the answer: someone who uses magical or special powers.
Total number of responses:
October – 47, March - 47

	Always	Sometimes	Doesn't Matter	Hardly Ever	Never
October	8	19	13	3	4
March	9	22	9	4	3

It was more important to the boys that the main character in a story be male, than to the girls that the main character in a story be female. While the

boys' answers were divided fairly evenly between 'sometimes' and 'doesn't matter', with few 'always' and 'hardly ever's', the girls' answers were divided comparatively evenly between 'sometimes', 'doesn't matter' and 'hardly ever', with a few 'nevers' and no 'always'. This may be a function of what they have been exposed to, and of the ability and willingness of girls to read and accept a broader range of literature. (Barrs, 1994) The idea that by junior high, boys might expect to be reading 'boy' type stories, whereas girls have not been accordingly conditioned would be an interesting area of research to pursue as well.

It is fascinating to observe that the *Harry Potter* phenomenon manifested itself in both the boys' and girls' answers. It was evident from the literature logs that *Harry Potter* was very popular and appealed equally to both boys and girls. The majority of students, girls and boys, circled 'someone who uses magical or special powers' either 'always' or 'sometimes'. These books appeal to either gender. These boys were aware that the author was female and were still eager to read the *Harry Potter* series. The fact that the main character is a boy may be one rationalization for the boys.

Question 4. <u>If the main character in a story is a human being, how important is it that he or she: ... is of the same sex as you...</u>

Males: Total number of responses
October – 28, March - 28

	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
October	5	5	6	7	5
March	3	3	9	6	7

Females: Total number of responses
October – 19, March - 18

	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
October	0	2	6	7	4
March	0	1	7	7	3

In order to confirm the bias of males towards male subjects I looked at question 4. A few boys found that it was important 'very often', whereas not

one girl circled 'very often'. The difference between the girls' and the boys' answers, while evident, was not as striking in this question as in question 2. The bias did still exist though, and perhaps the wording or placement of the question made a difference.

Question 5. How often do you read the following kinds of stories/fiction: Adventure stories, fantasy, mysteries or detective stories/fiction, horror stories, funny stories, school stories, science fiction, love stories/romantic fiction, stories about/featuring animals, stories set in the past/historical fiction

	Totals (Oct/March)	Very Often (Oct/March)	Often (Oct/March)	Sometimes (Oct/March)	Hardly Ever (Oct/March)	Never (Oct/March)
Adventure	M – 28/27	9/11	9/8	7/6	3/1	0/1
	F – 19/19	2/1	3/3	6/6	6/7	2/2
Fantasy	M – 28/28	8/6	8/9	6/5	4/3	2/5
	F – 19/19	5/3	6/7	5/6	2/3	1/0
Mystery	M – 28/27	4/4	6/3	6/10	10/8	2/2
	F – 18/18	6/4	8/7	3/4	1/2	0/1
Horror	M – 28/28	11/6	8/17	7/4	0/1	2/0
	F – 19/19	7/5	5/3	4/7	1/3	2/1
Funny	M – 27/27	4/3	7/4	8/9	7/8	1/3
	F – 19/19	2/1	4/3	6/7	6/6	1/2
School	M – 28/28	1/0	3/0	4/6	13/13	7/9
	F – 19/19	3/3	6/8	5/4	3/3	2/1
Sci-Fi	M – 28/28	3/4	14/8	6/6	3/4	2/6
	F – 19/19	2/1	3/3	7/8	5/6	2/1
Love	M – 27/26	0/0	1/0	0/1	8/5	18/20
	F – 19/19	12/9	3/5	3/3	1/1	0/1
Animals	M – 27/27	3/1	0/2	8/3	8/11	8/9
	F – 19/19	2/1	4/5	9/8	3/4	1/1
Historical	M – 28/28	1/0	6/3	12/6	5/12	4/7
	F – 19/19	2/2	6/6	5/6	4/2	2/3

The answers revealed expected results, with some interesting differences between the genders. While there were responses from both genders in all except one category, that being love stories/romantic fiction, from both females and males, the numbers were appreciably different amid the girls' and the boys' questionnaires. The boys' answers fell most heavily in the areas of 'adventure stories', 'fantasy', 'horror' and 'science fiction'. The

girls' preferences fell into the areas of 'fantasy', 'mysteries or detective stories', 'school stories' and 'love stories/romantic fiction'. The only category that both chose heavily was fantasy, which I believe can be explained by the popularity of the *Harry Potter* series as noted in the students' literature logs. This phenomenon and its ability to appeal to both genders equally would be interesting to look at more closely in a future study. The other categories are ones that are fairly predictable based upon male/female perceptions of likes and dislikes.

B. Choosing a Book

Question 10. How often do you choose a book because:

-you like the appearance of the cover;

-the title sounds interesting;

-the "blurb" inside or on the cover makes it sound interesting;

-you like the illustrations inside;

-you know the name of the author;

you have heard about it on the radio;

-you have heard about it on TV;

-it is about your hobby;

-someone has recommended it to you/it is part of a series;

-you have seen a film version (on TV movie or video;

-you have listened to an audio tape version;

-you have read a review of it.

Top 5 answers: Totals:

1. Someone has recommended it to you – it is part of a series	M	18/23 (Oct./March)
	F	14/18
2. You know the name of the author	M	16/20
	F	15/16
3. Blurb	M	14/12
	F	10/14
4. Title	M	11/13
	F	7/6
5. Cover	M	10/15
	F	6/10

In this question the students had to identify the way they went about choosing a book. In descending order the five most popular techniques for the boys were: 'someone has recommended it to you--it is part of a series', 'you know the name of the author', and then 'blurb', 'title' and 'cover' were very close in the order. Reasons given by the girls were very similar. There is a correlation between this question and question 13 in that a teacher or friend may be the one that recommends or helps choose the book.

Question 13. Who helps you choose which books to read?

Friend	M	14/11 (October/March)
	F	15/13
Teacher	M	19/23
	F	9/13

The two most popular answers for boys and girls were friends and teachers. If a boy is taking recommendations for his reading from another boy then he may not be trying anything outside of his comfort zone. While trying to help a boy pick a book a teacher might try to find a 'boy' book in order to interest him, especially if he is a reluctant reader. Because of this, the boy may not be challenged to reach beyond his comfort zone. In the gender activity in this study it was revealed that boys often pick books based upon the name of the author. In discussion boys stated that they would more likely choose male authors. Whether or not this would lead them to the type of the novel they are seeking would be another question.

Question 12. When you choose books which are part of a series of similar types of books by the same publisher or author is it because:

-you know what to expect in the story;

-there are many of them in the series;

-you like the way they are written/general style of writing;

-they are easily recognizable;

-they are well displayed;

-you like reading about the same character(s).

			Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never	Totals
You know what to expect.	Male	October	4	15	7	1	1	28
		March	6	13	8	0	1	28
	Female	October	2	10	4	2	1	19
		March	3	9	5	2	0	19
You like the way they are written.	Male	October	3	7	13	3	0	26
		March	6	8	14	0	0	28
	Female	October	14	4	1	0	0	19
		March	18	1	0	0	0	19
You like reading about the same characters.	Male	October	4	6	10	5	3	28
		March	6	7	11	3	1	28
	Female	October	9	5	4	0	1	19
		March	8	3	6	1	1	19

This was one question in which there were considerable differences between the boys and the girls responses. Most students chose more than one answer, and in tallying both genders it became clear that many answers were chosen by each gender. The most popular answer chosen by the boys though was that 'you know what to expect in the story', whereas the girls' top answers were divided fairly evenly among that one and two others, 'you like the way they are written/general style of writing' and 'you like reading about the same character(s)'. There are many questions that this might raise about boys and girls and their differences as readers. Do boys need to know what it is that they are reading more than girls do? Why do boys prefer to be familiar with the material they are choosing? When boys are finished with a series or an author, how do they go about getting attached to another one, or are they at loose ends when this occurs? The need for further research in this area is indicated.

Question 15. Do you enjoy re-reading books you have read with your class at school?

		Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never	Totals
Males	October	0	0	9	13	6	28
	March	0	0	9	15	4	28
Females	October	0	0	6	9	4	19
	March	0	0	6	8	5	19

This last question on the survey was of general interest based upon the extremely negative response of both boys and girls. When asked if they enjoyed re-reading books that they had read with their class at school not one student answered 'very often' or 'often'. Some students answered 'sometimes' or 'never' with the majority of boys and girls answering 'hardly ever'. Does this mean that the books we are choosing to study with the students are not interesting to them? Or does it mean that when we are studying the books we are doing something that turns them off what they are reading? Would more relevant choices have a greater impact on the reading of the boys and the girls in the classroom? Or is it a function of efferent reading that much of the enjoyment is lost in the experience? Perhaps a question that needs to be asked as well is about re-reading in general and whether they ever re-read anything. Nancie Atwell says that:

> Adolescents are ripe to be hooked. With good teaching, this is the age when kids who are going to become interested and excited become interested and excited. When teachers demonstrate passion for our fields, we invite students to believe that learning is worthwhile. (1998, p.83)

One contradiction to the perceptions of the students and the reality of their answers occurred with the novel *The Giver*. This novel was one of the more popular ones on the literature logs, despite the fact that all of the students had done a novel study on this book in grade 7. I was not able to follow up on this inconsistency, but it would be interesting to find out why this particular book did not suffer the fate of most of the other 'novel study' books. Is there a

formula that a teacher can learn and use within a classroom? Can the teacher find or learn the correct balance between the roles of expert, and that of 'coach' or facilitator' in the classroom in order to enhance the fiction reading experience. (Protherough,1984) and (Sheridan,1993)

Questions the Study Leaves Us With

Analysis of the results of the questionnaire seems to have raised more questions than it has answered. The most unexpected result was probably the most meaningful one. That was that most of the boys were reading less fiction as the year progressed rather than more. The majority of these students were above average students in the areas of effort and marks. It would therefore be interesting to find out what they are doing instead of reading fiction. Computers, television, video games, non-fiction/informational reading, friends, time of the year and seasonal activities are some of the possibilities. Another study could explore what students' perceptions are of whether they are reading less fiction, and what they think is taking the place of the reading.

The significance of the *Harry Potter* phenomenon was an unintended issue that arose from the results. Both boys and girls are captivated by the series, which seems to transcend gender differences. A study of what it is about the series that crosses boundaries and appeals to either gender would be interesting to investigate.

Another interesting area to observe arises from examining the choices of books that teachers are recommending to boys. If a junior high teacher were to keep a list of books that she had recommended to boys through the year, what would it show? Would the teacher's list be as restrictive in scope as the books that a boy might choose for himself? Or would the teacher

consciously move away from the area of 'boy books' to try to broaden the experience of the student?

Based upon the gender exercise and the questionnaire it appears that when choosing fiction boys will generally choose male authors. This might necessitate an examination of Young Adult literature. Do male authors of young adult literature satisfy the needs of adolescent boys? Or are their books generally a reflection of what is stereotypically considered a 'boy book'? During the gender exercise it was interesting to note that one boy suggested that perhaps J.K. Rowling was hiding the fact that she was a woman so that boys would choose her books.

In the area of choosing books, it would appear that boys might be at a loss after finishing with a series or author that they liked. A more in depth examination of ways that boys choose fiction would be of benefit to the classroom teacher.

When students made certain choices with regard to fiction, how much of it was a factor of their privileged school set up and how much might have been generalized? I question my choice of group in this regard and wonder if the classrooms I chose should have been more representative of the general population. Further research in this area is needed.

An important question that I did not really touch upon relates to whether teachers might be doing their students a disservice by focusing so strongly on fiction to the exclusion of non-fiction. The nature of this study related to fiction, and the benefits of using fiction were clearly established. Yet the question arises. What if non-fiction were as prevalent or available in the English classroom? Would boys be achieving greater degrees of success? Would the gap between boys and girls be narrowing if material was introduced and used that was of interest and had relevance to boys? Is the whole question of bringing boys back to fiction pertinent, or should the question be more along the lines of whether we can move the English classroom away from mainly using fiction towards the use of non-fiction as well. Lynn Hayward (1998) describes a narrowing of the gap between boys

and girls in reading. She credits the use of non-fiction as a response to some boys' needs as one of the many initiatives or strategies that have helped raise their achievement. (p. 48) This whole area is one that needs to be considered and studied extensively.

A question that should be asked is whether this study itself in any way caused the students to read less as the year progressed. It was also important while conducting this research to enhance the experience of the girls and some of the boys who did not fall under the criteria of the study. The study was not intrusive in nature and the classroom that it occurred in was dynamic and exciting. It would be difficult to discover any way in which the study might have adversely affected any of the students.

The End For Now

As I reached the end of this study I realized that the conclusions were in many ways ambiguous. In some ways the outcomes supported the literature, and in others they did not. What did emerge clearly from the research and the study can be simply summarized. First, adolescent boys and girls need to have easy access to a variety of different genres and reading levels of fiction. Protherough's (1983) comments sum up the importance of focusing on fiction as reading for adolescents. He observes that "'storying' is an essential element in consciousness - indeed is part of what it means to be human - and ultimately that the quality of living is related to the narrative models which have become available to an individual" (p.20). He also describes how different theorists explain that we live through narratives "by turning our lives into stories" (p.20). The developmental implications for the teacher reveal that "the quality of narrative is intimately related to the quality of life. The ultimate importance of the fiction we read to children or put in their hands lies not in any 'moral' it may convey, but in the fact that through it young people are helping to develop a sense of themselves" (p. 20).

Secondly, inviting readers to respond to literature can enhance the experience and raise it to a level of joy and a pleasure.

> When we invite readers' minds to meet writers' books in our classrooms, we invite the messiness of human response – personal prejudices, tastes, habits, experiences. But we also invite personal meaning and the distinct possibility that our kids will grow up to become a different kind of good reader – an adult who sees reading as logical, personal and habitual, someone who just plain loves to read. (Atwell, 1998, p.30)

Lastly, and ultimately, it is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to be aware of and understand the needs of the students as individuals. He/she has the power to introduce "Pleasure. Fluency. Involvement. Insight. Appreciation. Initiative." (Atwell, 1998, p.30) into the reading experience. The sensitive, intuitive teacher with a repertoire of methods to respond to the abilities, interests and skill levels of the individuals in the classroom is the one that will achieve these objectives.

The focus upon and augmentation of these areas will benefit both boys and the girls in relation to the enhancement of their fiction reading experience.

That is what learning is. You
suddenly understand something
you've understood all your life, but in
a new way. Doris Lessing

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Appendix A: Permission Letters

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is Mona Rosenberg and I am a graduate student conducting research into the fiction reading habits of adolescents. _____ has agreed to allow me into her English classroom on various occasions throughout the year in order to carry out this research.

Teaching strategies will be introduced into the classroom about once a month aimed at enhancing the reading activities that the students are already involved in. The extra activities will be non-intrusive and will be of benefit to all of the students. Activities such as book talks and visits from various role models relating their reading experiences will occur at various times throughout the year. Any visitors or new fiction brought in will be approved by _____ and will be consistent with the _____ Education program of studies.

In order to study the attitudes of the students towards reading fiction I will ask the students to fill out a short questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the year. As well, I will provide a system whereby they can keep a record of the fiction novels they read at home and at school throughout the year. None of these activities will be made part of the requirements for marks or for their classroom teacher.

Once the questionnaires and reading lists have been matched at the end of the year, any record of names will be destroyed. This will be done in order to ensure complete confidentiality and anonymity. Student names are not of any consequence to the study. Data from this study will be published in my Master's Thesis and in a report for _____ and for the _____ Public School Board. Some of the data may be presented at conferences and appear in journal articles.

Please be assured that you or your child may choose to withdraw from the research project at any time by simply informing _____ or myself of your intentions. Your child would still be included in the supplemental activities as part of the course of the regular classroom, but would not be required to maintain the reading list or fill out the questionnaire.

If you have any further questions regarding this study you can contact me at 487 8962. I hope you will allow your son or daughter to participate in this research. Please complete and sign the form below and return it to _____ by _____.

Sincerely

Mona Rosenberg

I, _____, hereby consent for _____
(print name of parent/legal guardian or independent student) (print name of student)

to be

- Surveyed in questionnaire and reading list form

by Mona Rosenberg.

I understand that:

- My child may withdraw from the research at any time without penalty
- All information gathered will be treated confidentially and discussed only with your supervisor
- Any information that identifies my child will be destroyed upon completion of this research
- My child will not be identifiable in any documents resulting from this research

I also understand that the results of this research will be used only in the following:

- Research thesis
- Presentations and written articles for other educators
- A report for _____ and the _____ Public School Board

_____ or _____
signature of parent/legal guardian signature of student if 18 years or older

Date signed_____

For further information concerning the completion of the form, please contact Mona Rosenberg at 487 8962

Dear Student:

My name is Mona Rosenberg and I am a graduate student conducting research into the fiction reading habits of adolescents. _____ has agreed to allow me into her classroom on various occasions throughout the year in order to carry out this research.

I will be introducing some extra activities into the classroom about once a month aimed at enhancing the reading activities that you are already involved in. The extra activities will be non-intrusive and will not add to your workload. Activities such as book talks and visits from various role models relating their reading experiences will occur at various times throughout the year. In order to study your attitudes towards reading fiction I will ask that you fill out a short questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the year. As well, I will provide a system whereby you can keep a record of the fiction novels you read at home and at school throughout the year. Neither of these activities will be made part of the requirements for marks or for your classroom teacher.

Once the questionnaires and reading lists have been matched at the end of the year, any record of your names will be deleted. This will be done in order to ensure complete confidentiality and anonymity. Student names are not of any consequence to the study. Data from this study will be published in my Master's Thesis and in a report for _____ and for the _____Public School Board. Some of the data may be presented at conferences and appear in journal articles.

Please be assured that you may choose to withdraw from the research project at any time by simply informing _____ or myself of your intentions. You would still be included in the supplemental activities as part of the course of the regular classroom, but would not be required to maintain the reading list or fill out the questionnaire.

I hope you will agree to participate in this research. Please complete and sign the form below and return it to _____ by _____.

Sincerely

Mona Rosenberg

_____ agrees to be a part of the research study.
(print your name here)

_____ _____
(sign here) (date)

Appendix B: Questionnaire
Questions adapted from: "Young People's Reading at the End of the Century" study, prepared by the Children's Literature Research Centre at the Roehampton Institute in London in 1996.

Male ___ Female ___ Age ___

Please circle the answer that you think reflects your feelings the best.

A. THINKING ABOUT FICTION

1.How often do you read fiction?

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

2.Do you like the main character in a story to be:

-a girl. Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never
-a boy Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never
-an adult Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never
-an animal Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never
-a machine Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never
-a cartoon character Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never
-someone from outer space
Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never
-someone who uses magical or special powers
Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never
-a monster Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never
-someone already known to you from TV/video/or film
Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never

3. Who are your favourite fictional characters: (If you know the name of the book in which they appear, we would like to know that as well).

_____

_____

_____

4. If the main character in a story is a human being, how important is it that he or she:

-lives in the same country as you
very often often sometimes hardly ever never
-comes from the same country as your
parents very often often sometimes hardly ever never
-has the same colour skin as you
very often often sometimes hardly ever never
-lives in the same time as you
very often often sometimes hardly ever never
-has the same interests as you
very often often sometimes hardly ever never
-is of the same religion as you
very often often sometimes hardly ever never
-is of the same sex as you
very often often sometimes hardly ever never
-is of the same age as you
very often often sometimes hardly ever never

5.How often do you read the following kinds of stories/fiction:
-adventure stories very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-fantasy very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-mysteries or detective stories/fiction

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-horror stories very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-funny stories very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-school stories very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-science fiction very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-love stories/romantic fiction

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-stories about/featuring animals

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-stories set in the past/historical fiction

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

6.What are your favourite fictional books: (up to three titles)

_____

_____

_____

7.Who are your favorite authors? (up to three names)

_____

_____

_____

8.Who are your favorite illustrators? (up to three names – if you don't know their names, please write book titles)

_____

_____

_____

9.Do you like books that have:

-short sentences Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never

-short chapters Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never

-long chapters Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never

-chapter headings Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never

-new descriptions of scenery and/or of characters' appearance

Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never

-lots of pictures/illustrations

Always; Sometimes; Doesn't matter; Hardly ever; Never

B. CHOOSING A BOOK

10.How often do you choose a book because:

-you like the appearance of the cover

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-the title sounds interesting very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-the "blurb" inside or on the cover makes it sound interesting

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-you like the illustrations inside

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-you know the name of the author

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-you have heard about it on the radio

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-you have heard about it on TV

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-it is about your hobby very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-someone has recommended it to you-it is part of a series

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-you have seen a film version (on TV movie or video)

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-you have listened to an audio tape version

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-you have read a review of it

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

11.When you choose a book because of the look of/appearance of the cover, is it because:

-the colours are bright very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-it looks up-to-date/modern very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-it looks as if it has "been around for a while"

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-you like the pictures on the cover

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

12.When you choose books which are part of a series of similar types of books by the same publisher or author is it because:

-you know what to expect in the story

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-there are many of them in the series

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-you like the way they are written/general style of writing

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-they are easily recognizable

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-they are well displayed very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-you like reading about the same character(s)

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

13.Who helps you choose which books to read?

-mother very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-father very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-grandparent(s) very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-brother(s) very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-sister(s) very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-other relative(s) very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-shop staff very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-friend(s) very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-teacher(s) very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-local librarian very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-religious instructor very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-I choose by myself very often often sometimes hardly ever never

14.If you borrow books how often do you borrow them from:

-local library very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-school library very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-classroom very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-friend(s) very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-brother(s) very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-sister(s) very often often sometimes hardly ever never

-parent(s) very often often sometimes hardly ever never

15.Do you enjoy re-reading books you have read with your class at school?

very often often sometimes hardly ever never

Use this space if you have any other comments you would like to make about the way you read or choose fiction books, or if you would like to comment further on any of the questions.

Appendix C

'Boys' book list' (Donnelson,1997, and Mackey & Johnston,1997)

The following list is an example of books that may in some way appeal to adolescent boys. The criteria for inclusion on this list is as follows: some are written by male authors, some with a male voice, some have a male character as one of the main or as the main character, and some are on subjects that boys have expressed interest in. The books are categorized by genre, and some are placed in more than one category. The list is compiled directly from Donnelson (1997), Mackey and Johnston (1997) and my 12-year-old son's bookshelf (1999). This list is not intended in any way as a complete or definitive list for boys. It is instead intended as an example of a suggested list, or a starting point for looking for books. A number of these books appeared on Alberta Learning's Junior High reading list at the time of the study

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MYSTERY/ADVENTURE

Disneyland Hostage by Eric Wilson, HarperCollins Publisher Ltd., 1982 ('Tom and Liz Austen Mystery Series')
The Ear, the Eye and the Arm by Nancy Farmer, Puffin Books, 1994
The Curse of the Blue Figurine by John Bellairs, Puffin Books, 1983
Ghost Canoe by Will Hobbs, Avon Books Inc. 1997

HISTORICAL

The Samurai's Tale, Erik Christian Haugaard , Houghton Mifflin, 1984
The Inheritance, Claudia Von Canon, Houghton Mifflin, 1983
War Comes to Willy Freeman, James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier, Delacorte, 1984
The Road to Chlifa, by Michele Marineau, Red Deer College Press, 1995
Gulf by Robert Westall, Mammoth, 1993

SCIENCE FICTION/FANTASY

Invitation to the Game by Monica Hughes, HarperCollins, 1992

The Golden Compass by Phillip Pullman, 1996

Redwall by Brian Jacques, Red Fox, 1986

Hunter in the Dark, Monica Hughes,Atheneum, 1983

The Nature of the Beast, Janni Howker, Greenwillow, 1985

Meredith Ann Pierce, Birth of the Firebringer (1st of trilogy), Four Winds, 1985

Dragon's Blood, Jane Yolen, 1996

The Isle of Glass, Judith Tarr (Book 1 of Hound and the Falcon Trilogy), 1986

Lord Valentine's Castle, Robert Silverberg (Volume 1 of the Majipoor Chronicles), 1995

The Sleeping Dragon, Joel Rosenberg, (Book 1 in Guardians of the Flame Trilogy), 1993

A Spell for Chameleon, Piers Anthony, (Xanth Trilogy =8 books), 1987

Arcade, Diana G. Gallagher, 1995

Ender's Game, Orson Scott Card, 1985

Dune, Frank Herbert, 1974

Hitchhiker's guide to the Galaxy, Douglas Adams, 1979

Practice Effect, (David Brin), 1997

Singularity, (William Sleator), 1995

Tunnel in the Sky, Robert A. Heinlein, 1955

The Ear, the Eye and the Arm by Nancy Farmer, Puffin Books, 1994

Space Demons by Gillian Rubinstein, Pocket Books-Simon & Schuster, 1989

Galax-Arena by Gillain Rubinstein, Mammoth, 1995

ANIMAL

The Flight of the Cassowary, John LeVert, Atlantic Monthly, 1986

Shiloh by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, Dell-Yearling,1991

COMING OF AGE

Tangerine by Edward Bloor, Scholastic Inc., 1998

The Nature of the Beast, Janni Howker, Greenwillow, 1985

The Impact Zone, Ray Maloney, Delacorte, 1986

Dead Bird's Singing, Marc Talbert, Little, Brown, 1985

Shabash! By Ann Walsh, Beach Holme, 1994

The TV Kid, by Betsy Byars, Puffin Books, 1979

Dear Bruce Springsteen, by Kevin Major, Dell, 1987

Tears of a Tiger, by Sharon M. Draper, Aladdin Paperbacks, 1993

Smash!, by Robert Swindells, Puffin Books, 1997

The Deadman Tapes, Michael Rosen, Lions Tracks, 1989

The Mcintyre Liar by David Bly, Tree Frog Press, 1993

Last Chance Summer by Diana J. Wieler, Western Producer Prairie Books, 1986

Looking for a Hero by David Boyd, Rubicon Publishing, 1993

Journey to Jo'burg by Beverley Naidoo, HarperTrophy, 1988

Crash, Jerry Spinelli, Alfred E. Knopf Inc.,1996

Maniac Magee, Jerry Spinelli, Harper Trophy, 1990

Step By Wicked Step by Anne Fine, Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1995

The Giver by Lois Lowry, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc., 1993

The Accident by Todd Strasser, Dell-Laurel-Leaf, 1988

The Car by Gary Paulsen, Dell-Laurel-Leaf, 1994

SPORTS

Athletic Shorts by Chris Crutcher, Dell-Laurel Leaf, 1991

Ironman, by Chris Crutcher, Dell-Laurel Leaf, 1996

Shadow Boxer by Chris Lynch, Harper Trophy, 1993

The Screech Owls' Northern Adventure by Roy MacGregor, McClelland & Stewart, 1996 (part of 'The Screech Owl Series')

Running Loose, Chris Crutcher, Greenwillow, 1983

Crash, Jerry Spinelli, Alfred E. Knopf Inc.,1996

Maniac Magee, Jerry Spinelli, Harper Trophy, 1990

Rebel Glory by Sigmund Brouwer, (Book I of 'Lightning on Ice Series')Word Publishing, 1995

Appendix D

Books brought into Dee's classroom for study.

Forbidden City (1996)	Bell
The Mcintyre Liar (1993)	Bly
Bone Dance (1999)	Brooks
The White Mountains (1988)	Christopher
The Crazy Horse Electric Game (1987)	Crutcher
The Watsons go to Birmingham (1997)	Curtis
Heart of a Champion (1993)	Deuker
Hindenburg 1937 (1999)	Dokey
Sees Behind Trees (1997)	Dorris
Tears of a Tiger (1996)	Draper
Stranger on the Run (1992)	Halvorson
The Way of a Boy: A Memoir of Java (1995)	Hillen
River Thunder (1997)	Hobbs
The Watcher (1997)	Howe
Invitation to the Game (1992)	Hughes
Lifter (1986)	Kilian
Medicine River (1990)	King
California Blue (1994)	Klass
Danger Zone (1996)	Klass
The Harmony Arms (1992)	Koertge
Into Thin Air (1998)	Krakauer
The Tricksters (1986)	Mahy
Eating Between the Lines (1991)	Major

The Last Mission (1981)	Mazer
The Road to Chlifa (1992)	Marineau
Tomorrow When the World Began (1995)	Marsden
Harry Potter and the Philosopers Stone (1997)	Rowling
Jaguar (1997)	Smith
There's a Girl in my Hammerlock (1993)	Spinelli
Wringer (1997)	Spinelli
Doing Time: Notes From the Undergrad (1997)	Thomas
Rats Saw God (1996)	Thomas
A Fly Named Alfred (1997)	Trembath
The Tuesday Café (1996)	Trembath
Stranded (1998)	Walters
Trapped in Ice (1997)	Walters
Andy Nebula Interstellar Rock Star (1999)	Willet
The Book of Changes (1995)	Wynne
Lord of the Fries (1999)	Wynne
The Maestro (1996)	Wynne
Dragonwings (1975)	Yep

Appendix E (Actual literature log that Dee used with class)

LITERATURE LOG

#	DATE	TITLE	AUTHOR	GENRE	# PGS	RATING

Appendix F – Gender Selections Exercise

Selection one

So today while I was sitting dizzy with tiredness and anxiety in a school I don't even know the name of, among kids who have no idea how lucky they are, the idea came to me that I might as well write the whole story down. Because no matter how we try to forget, it really happened and it's still going on. No one's going to try to stop it. No one's going to do anything about it. We couldn't do anything to stop the others disappearing. We couldn't do anything about getting an inquiry going. What hope does our family have against the big multinational syndicates that run the world? We've ended up being totally helpless, hiding in isolated towns, always terrified someone's going to catch up with us. Hayden says we should be thankful there still are such places left in Australia.

I can't stand the idea of spending the rest of my life like this. The only thing I've ever been any good at is seeing the truth, so the only thing left for me to do is try to write it down. And when I've got it written down, I'm going to go back to Aunt Jill's to live. I don't care if they come and find me there. At least I will have done the only thing I know how to do which is to see the truth and tell it.

It's right that I should end up the storyteller, because in the old days, I was always the one who was the audience. I spent the first thirteen years of my life on the fringe of Peter's story, watching it unfold dazzlingly, watching my unusual, gifted brother excel without trying in everything he did. And as if that wasn't enough to keep me on the sidelines, since I was seven there was Liane coming up from behind, with her perfect face and her orphan history and her special place in my mother's heart. My parents adopted her after the Hong Kong debacle – she was one of the last refugees allowed in to Australia.

Selection two

Someone was standing by his bed, a person completely unlike anyone Tendai had ever met. In the predawn light his features were unclear. He was simply a presence of darker blue than the sky behind him. But there was about him a scent of woody smoke and new leaves and the honey of far-off, unseen flowers. The presence pointed at Tendai and said, "You!"

The boy woke up at once. The first rays of dawn were sliding over the garden wall, and the window was empty. What a strange dream, thought Tendai. He pulled the sheet over his head as he tried to remember it better. The image faded away, leaving a strange sense that something important was about to happen. His ancestors must have felt this way before a big hunt.

Tendai imagined them lying on the warm earth of their huts, feeling it tremble with destiny. Their shields and spears lay ready by the door. Not like me, he thought. He snuggled into a soft bed in one of the finest mansions in Zimbabwe. Around the house were a large garden and a wall studded with searchlights and alarms. The automatic Doberman growled as it made a last tour of the lawn before retiring to its kennel.

Selection three

Mrs. Frisby, the head of a family of field mice, lived in an underground house in the vegetable garden of a farmer named Mr. Fitzgibbon. It was a winter house, such as some field mice move to when food becomes too scarce, and the living too hard in the woods and pastures. In the soft earth of a bean, potato, black-eyed pea and asparagus patch there is plenty of food left over for mice after the human crop has been gathered.

* * *

Although she was a widow (her husband had died only the preceding summer), Mrs. Frisby was able, through luck and hard work, to keep her

family – there were four children – happy and well fed. January and February were the hardest months; the sharp, hard cold that began in December lasted until March, and by February the beans and black-eyes had been picked over (with help from the birds), the asparagus roots were frozen into stone, and the potatoes had been thawed and refrozen so many times they had acquired a slimy texture and a rancid taste. Still, the Frisbys made the best of what there was, and one way or another they kept from being hungry.

Then, one day at the very end of February, Mrs. Frisby's younger son, Timothy, fell sick.

Selection four

"Too many!" James shouted, and slammed the door behind him.

"What?" said Will

"Too many kids in this family, that's what. Just too many." James stood fuming on the landing like a small angry locomotive, then stumped across to the window-seat and stared out at the garden. Will put aside his book and pulled up his legs to make room. "I could hear all the yelling," he said, chin on knees.

"Wasn't anything," James said. "Just stupid Barbara again. Bossing. Pick up this, don't touch that. And Mary joining in, twitter twitter twitter. You'd think this house was big enough, but there's always people."

They both looked out of the window. The snow lay thin and apologetic over the world. That wide grey sweep was the lawn, with the straggling trees of the orchard still dark beyond; the white squares were the roofs of the garage, the old barn, the rabbit hutches, the chicken coops. Further back there were only the flat fields of Dawsons' Farm, dimly white-striped. All the broad sky was grey, full of more snow that refused to fall. There was no colour anywhere.

Selection five

It was Wang Lung's marriage day. At first, opening his eyes in the blackness of the curtains about his bed, he could not think why the dawn seemed different from any other. The house was still except for the faint, gasping cough of his old father, whose room was opposite to his own across the middle room. Every morning the old man's cough was the first sound to be heard. Wang Lung usually lay listening to it and moved only when he heard it approaching nearer and when he heard the door of his father's room squeak upon its wooden hinges.

But this morning he did not wait. He sprang up and pushed aside the curtains of his bed. It was a dark, ruddy dawn, and through a small square hole of a window, where the tattered paper fluttered, a glimpse of bronze sky gleamed. He went to the hole and tore the paper away.

"It is spring and I do not need this," he muttered.

He was ashamed to say aloud that he wished the house to look neat on this day. The hole was barely large enough to admit his hand and he thrust it out to feel of the air. A small soft wind blew gently from the east, a wind mild and murmurous and full of rain. It was a good omen. The fields needed rain for fruition. There would be no rain this day, but within a few days, if this wind continued, there would be water. It was good. Yesterday he had said to his father that if this brazen, glittering sunshine continued, the wheat could not fill in the ear. Now it was as if Heaven had chosen this day to wish him well. Earth would bear fruit.

Selection six

I shivered. It wasn't cold but I shivered just the same. The house gave me the creeps. It was big and brown and ugly. Some of the upstairs windows were broken and the roof sagged. The porch was the worst part. The paint was faded and it looked like it was attached to the rest of the house with a couple of thumb tacks.

If I was trying to decide where the town ax-murderer would be most likely to live, this place would have gotten my vote. As soon as I saw it I figured it was time to leave. And I would have if Pepper hadn't grabbed my arm.

Pepper McKenzie is my best friend...most of the time. There are two things that aren't so great about having Pepper for a best friend. One is her nickname, a really dumb idea her dad had when she was about three years old. Since we hang around together, guess what a lot of the kids at school call me. Yeah, Salt, get it? Salt and Pepper. Jeez, people can be dumb.

But it's the second thing about her that can be really irritating. Pepper has a knack for coming up with some pretty crazy ideas about things we should do. The only thing weirder than those ideas is that I usually go along with them.

Like when she said, "Let's check out the house where the fire was." Right then and there I should have told her I couldn't, that I had to wash my hair or watch Oprah or something. But I didn't.

Which is why we were standing in front of the creepy house as the sun was going down with Pepper holding onto my arm so I couldn't escape.

Selection seven

A tourist came in from Orbitville,
parked in the air, and said:

The creatures of this star
are made of metal and glass.

Through the transparent parts
you can see their guts.

Their feet are round and roll
on diagrams or long

measuring tapes, dark
with white lines.

They have four eyes.
The two in back are red.

Sometimes you can see a five-eyed
one, with a red eye turning

on the top of his head.
He must be special-

the others respect him
and go slow

when he passes, winding
among them from behind.

They all hiss as they glide,
like inches, down the marked

tapes. Those soft shapes,
shadowy inside

the hard bodies – are they
their guts or their brains?

Selection eight

Look at the rain.
One drop at a time.

Look at a tree.
One leaf at a time.

Look at the grass.
One blade at a time.

Look at the people.
One person at a time.

Selection nine

SCENE: *The Throne Room of the Palace; a room of many doors, or, if preferred, curtain-openings: simply furnished with three thrones for Their Majesties and Her Royal Highness the* PRINCESS CAMILLA – *in other words, with three handsome chairs. At each side is a long seat: reserved, as it might be, for His Majesty's Council (if any), but useful, as to-day, for other purposes. The* KING *is asleep on his throne with a handkerchief over his face. He is a king of any country from any story-book, in whatever costume you please. But he should be wearing his crown.*

A VOICE. (*Announcing.*) His Excellency the Chancellor! (*The* CHANCELLOR, *an elderly man in horn-rimmed spectacles, enters, bowing. The KING wakes up with a start and removes the handkerchief from his face.*)

KING. (*With simple dignity.*) I was thinking.
CHANCELLOR. (*Bowing.*) Never, Your Majesty was there greater need for thought than now.

KING. That's what I was thinking. (*He struggles into a more dignified position.*) Well, what is it? More trouble?

CHANCELLOR. What we might call the old trouble, Your Majesty.

KING. It's what I was saying last night to the Queen. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," was how I put it.

CHANCELLOR. A profound and original thought, which may well go down to posterity."

KING. You mean it may go down well with posterity. I hope so. Remind me to tell you some time of another little thing I said to Her Majesty: something about a fierce light beating on a throne. Posterity would like that, too. Well, what is it?

CHANCELLOR. It is in the matter of Her Royal Highness' wedding.

KING. Oh... yes.

CHANCELLOR. As Your Majesty is aware, the young Prince Simon arrives to-day to seek Her Royal Highness' hand in marriage. He has been traveling in distant lands and, as I understand, has not – er has not-

KING. You mean he hasn't heard anything.

CHANCELLOR. It is a little difficult to put this tactfully, Your Majesty.

KING. Do your best, and I will tell you afterwards how you got on.

CHANCLELLOR. Let me put it this way. The Prince Simon will naturally assume that Her Royal Highness has the customary – so customary as to be in my own poor opinion, slightly monotonous – has what one might call the inevitable – so inevitable as to be, in my opinion again, almost mechanical – will assume, that she has the, as I think of it, faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly –

KING. What you are trying to say in the fewest words possible is that my daughter is not beautiful.

CHANCELLOR. Her beauty is certainly elusive, Your Majesty.

KING. It is. It has eluded you, it has eluded me, it has eluded everybody who has seen her. It even eluded the Court Painter. His last words were, "Well, I did my best." His successor is now painting the view across the water-

meadows from the West Turret. He says that his doctor has advised him to keep to landscape.

CHANCELLOR. It is unfortunate, Your Majesty, but there it is. One just cannot understand how it can have occurred.

KING. You don't think she takes after me, at all? You don't detect a likeness?

CHANCELLOR. Most certainly not, Your Majesty.

KING. Good... Your predecessor did.

CHANCELLOR. I have often wondered what happened to my predecessor.

KING. Well, now you know. (*There is a short silence.*)

Key

Selection one: Female -- *Galax-Arena* (1993) by Gillian Rubinstein

Selection two: Female – *The Ear, the Eye and the Arm* (1994) by Nancy Farmer

Selection three: Male -- *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of Nimh* (1971) by Robert C. O'Brien

Selection four: Female -- *The Dark is Rising* (1973) by Susan Cooper

Selection five: Female -- *The Good Earth* (1931) by Pearl S. Buck

Selection six: Male -- *The Hunk Machine* (1997) by David A. Poulsen

Selection seven: Female -- Poem-Southbound on the Freeway by May Swenson

Selection eight: Male -- Poem by Bernie Casey

Selection nine: Male -- Play- The Ugly Duckling by A. A. Milne