

**READING PREFERENCES OF BOYS AND  
GIRLS OF DALEWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**BY**

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READING PREFERENCES OF BOYS AND GIRLS OF  
DALEWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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A Research Paper

Presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
Austin Peay State University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Education

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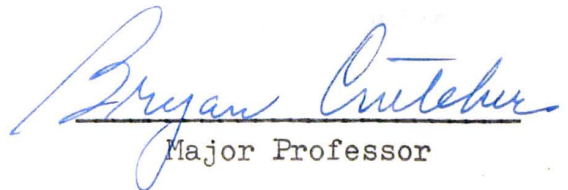
by  
Dorma Jean White

August 1969

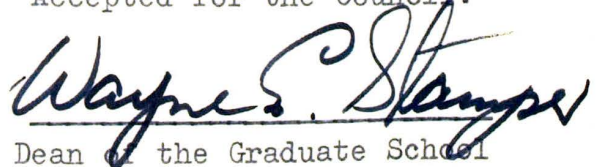
AUSTIN PEAY

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Dorma Jean White entitled "Reading Preferences of Boys and Girls of Dalewood School." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education, with a major in Curriculum and Instruction.

  
Major Professor

Accepted for the Council:

  
Dean of the Graduate School

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Permanent reading habits based on the love of reading should be one of the most important purposes our schools today. While we must admit that the actual reading choices children make are often chaotic, as concerned adults we should continually strive to broaden the choices children make.

The books children read often influence them more powerfully than parents realize. If parents and teachers will assume the responsibility of impressing the love of books and interest in reading, our students should continue the reading habit throughout their adult life.

In order to live effectively as an intelligent citizen it is imperative for the informed citizen to have sustained interest in reading. Children who read well and who enjoy reading will have their lives enriched many times through personal and social development as well as intellectual development.

With these thoughts in mind it is hoped that this study will give us an insight into the books that children select.



## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to describe the reading preferences in the field of fiction and non-fiction of boys and girls. The students were enrolled in five classes of the sixth grade at Dalewood Elementary School in Nashville, Tennessee.

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What were the choices boys and girls most often made in the field of fiction?
2. What were the choices boys and girls most often made in the field of non-fiction?
3. What subject areas were most often selected by boys and girls?

## SOURCE OF THE DATA

There were five sixth grade classes at Dalewood Elementary School with 125 students participating in this study. There was a wide intellectual range with the majority falling into the average and above-average group.

The information for this study was received by the means of personal reading cards made by each student for the school librarian. A random sample was taken three times during the school year: November, February, and May.

### Treatment of the Data

The researcher gave the sixth grade children cards

and asked them to list their preferences for fiction and non-fiction books they had read recently. The cards were collected as the children left the library. A sample is included in the appendix. The reader's cards were sorted into groups of fiction, non-fiction, and subject areas. Many books could possibly be placed in several subject areas, but the most predominant area was used. The Children's Catalog was consulted to determine the correct subject area. An analysis was made of each assortment.

#### IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

With many recent changes children's literature is a rapidly developing field. The physical appearance of books is much more attractive today. Illustrations are bold with contrast and color. Modern methods of printing provide greater quantities at lower costs. There is an abundance of attractive reading material readily available. These improvements should help us to broaden and encourage children's book elections.

Children receive their reading material through intermediaries; parents, grandparents, teachers, librarians, church leaders, and other close friends and relatives. Many of them imagine in terms of the past, that children's literature is a narrow field.

The information contained in this report should give additional help to those interested in book choices children make.

## LIMITAION OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to the sixth grade students at Dalewood Elementary School. The number of individual boys and girls was relatively small.

There is no positive proof that the books withdrawn from the library and recorded were actually read. We can only assume they were read. There is no way of determining to what extent the selections were the results of teacher assignment. During the study there was evidence of controlled reading which included teacher assignments.

Three classes had traditional reading programs. Two classes had an individualized reading program with weekly student-teacher book conferences.

Many of the students attending Dalewood Elementary School were the children of professional people and were preparing for college. The school district was rezoned last year and the newer students had a lower socio-economic background. As a result, there was a wider range of student abilities represented.

This study was conducted during the school year 1968-1969. This limits our findings to the present with no long term or growth comparisons. Lack of proper evaluation is another limiting factor.

Although some students selected books from various sources, most of the books were from Dalewood Library. The

school librarian was only present three days per week. The limited sources of the school library was a handicap. This was especially true when enough copies were unavailable to meet the demand for certain books.

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter one gives the introductory statements concerning the problem.

A review of the literature is given in Chapter two.

An analysis of the problem with the data is given in Chapter three.

Chapter four contains the summary and conclusion.



## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### INTRODUCTION

Reading research originated in the laboratories of Europe as early as 1844. Many studies have been made concerning the reading interests of children. Prior to 1910, most of the research in reading was concerned with issues relating to the psychology and physiology of reading. The period from 1911 to 1920 may be characterized as one of transition. It marked the beginning of a broader interest in the scientific study of reading. Since 1920, the scope of research in reading has broadened steadily until it now includes problems that arise before children enter school, that command attention at various levels of education, that grow out of increasing demands made on adult readers in meeting their personal, social, and cultural needs and that relate to reading as a medium of mass communication in society at large.<sup>1</sup>

Since World War II scientific methods have been used with increasing frequency in attacking numerous problems faced in promoting literacy throughout the world. We are

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<sup>1</sup>William S. Gray, "Reading", Encyclopedia of Educational Research, ed. Charles W. Harris (3rd., New York: MacMillan Co., 1960), pp. 1086-1088.

far more conscious today of the complexity of the reading problem and far less certain of the answers to many of them. It is also recognized that research in reading must continue on a broad scale if it is to serve its broadest function as an aid to personal development, scholastic progress and social betterment.<sup>2</sup>

### Reading Research

Research in the teaching of reading, especially that done in recent years, exceeds by far research in other aspects of reading. Its scope is wide and includes research related to the aims and status of reading instruction, reading readiness, developmental reading programs and practices, reading diagnostic and remedial practices.

Prior to the 1960's approximately 300 investigations of reading interests, principally of books, were published. These investigations have more than doubled in the past ten years. Such studies permit several broad generalizations chiefly based upon American investigations:

1. Interest in book reading tends to increase with schooling, at least through early adolescence, and then either to stabilize or to decline.

Interest in newspaper and magazine reading follows a similar pattern beyond the primary grades, the newspaper being read the more regularly and with greatest interest in the

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

comics and sports.

3. Fiction is preferred to factual exposition, and prose to poetry.

4. Specific reading interests vary widely according to age, sex, intellectual ability, social class and reading ability.<sup>3</sup>

Another survey of pertinent research shows that the percentage of children who read books increases rapidly during the early, middle and upper grades. Sullinger found in his survey made in South Omaha, an industrial center, that about 82 percent of the children in grades four to grades eight stated that they enjoyed reading. The data reported that girls as a group read more than boys.<sup>4</sup>

### Reading Influences

There are many factors effecting children's reading preferences; sex, age or maturity, intelligence, special interest factors, classroom situations, teaching methods used and community influences. One is not able to tell if a student has been inspired to read a book because he has heard a teacher mention it casually.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Theodore Harris, "Reading", Encyclopedia of Educational Research, ed. Robert Eleel (4th ed., New York: Mac-Millan Co., 1969), pp. 1069-1104.

<sup>4</sup>Earl T. Sullinger and others, "The Leisure Time Activities of Elementary School Children", Journal of Educational Research, XXXVI (May 1953), 551-554.

<sup>5</sup>E. J. Josey, "Reading: a Clear and Present Danger", Education, LXXVIII (October 1957), 82-84.



McCullough says that home influences are potent in establishing the reading habit. How can the school create a reading child in a television-watching family?<sup>6</sup>

To what extent mass communications are influential in the education of children can only be surmised. Radio, television, motion pictures, magazines, comic books, and comic strips all enlist wide participation among children. It has been estimated that boys and girls devote almost as much time to these activities as they spend in school. The most popular in the elementary grades and throughout high school are the radio and television. Going to the movies is almost as popular in grades four to nine, but decline somewhat in appeal for students in senior high school.<sup>7</sup>

Research concerning the influence of television of reading began in the forties and has increased since at a constantly accelerating rate. Of major importance is the fact that as television sets have been introduced into homes, there has been a noteworthy decrease in the amount of reading. As soon as the novelty of television has worn off, the amount of reading as tended to increase again.<sup>8</sup> Children growing up with television spend about the same amount of time reading books as did previous generations of children. Television viewing apparently reached its peak of about twenty-

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<sup>6</sup>Constance M. McCullough, "A Log of Children's out-of School Activities", Elementary School Journal, LVIII, (December 1957), 157-165.

<sup>7</sup>George W. Norvell, What Boys and Girls Like to Read (New York: Silver Burdett, 1958), p. 159.

<sup>8</sup>William S. Gray, op. cit., p. 1090.



five hours per week in the fifth grade.<sup>9</sup>

Various librarians have stated that television encourages children to do more reading in astronomy, handicrafts, and other fields with which programs have dealt. In 1951 a thirteen week experimental series of telecasts was begun in Seattle, Washington. The purpose was to stimulate children to read books. A group of children with their backs to the viewer was shown. They were seated at the foot of the storyteller. The backdrop was an open book with the inscription "Teleadventure Tales-----Once Upon a Time-----". The first half of the program consisted of an episode from a recent book related by the storyteller. Live exerts were included as dramazations, puppets shows, etc. The second half involved a game in which the audience participated. The results were remarkable. By the second program the Seattle Public Library and all its branches reported that every book by the author featured on the first program had been borrowed. The program's influence also extended to the rural areas around Seattle.<sup>10</sup>

Books have felt the competition of television more seriously than any other reading material. Television has slowed the reading of magazines more than newspaper reading which usually becomes more of a habit.

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<sup>9</sup>Mary Jane Gray, "The Effect of Home Televiewing on School Children", Elementary English, (March 1969), 300-309.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

### Types of Books Preferred

Gray states that research justifies three general conclusions:

1. Students in both elementary and secondary schools read more fiction than any other types of material and like it better.

2. Children and young people tend to avoid factual and informational books for recreational reading. However, the amount of such reading has increased steadily during recent years.

3. Students at all age levels, with but rare exceptions, prefer prose to poetry.<sup>11</sup>

Norvell gives us more extensive information in his survey. The books boys preferred were characterized by the fact that they told a story and the dominant character was a male. In addition, boys preferred stories emphasizing adventure (including war), animals, obvious humor and patriotism. Girls preferred good narration and in addition humor, patriotism, mild forms of adventure, animals, sentiment, romantic love, and home and family life.<sup>12</sup>

The most popular types of books among children in England, New Zealand, and the United States are detective and mystery thrillers and novels of good narrative type. Least popular are classics and neoclassics.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>William S. Gray, op. cit., p. 1106.

<sup>12</sup>George W. Norvell, The Reading Interests of Young People, (New York: Heath, 1950), p. 262.

<sup>13</sup>William S. Gray, op. cit., p. 1107.

The unfavorable book preferences for boys are romantic love, home and family, religion, nature, philosophical, and those with dominant female characters. The unfavorable book preferences for girls are war, nature, and those with extended descriptions.<sup>14</sup>

The slum child had difficulty in meeting the demands of schools molded after middle-class standards and needed help in bridging this cultural gap. A random sample of eleven boys and girls was taken from an inner-city school. Eleven student teachers read stories to each child. The stories were taken from books on the family-friends-pets theme and on the city theme. After the reading of all the stories, the child was asked to indicate which story he would like to have read to him again. Contrary to what might be expected, the children preferred the family-friends-pets to the city stories. The same study was repeated later with different children and only four readers. The results were very near the same. Evidently, a family-friends-pets theme is more appealing to inner-city children than a city theme.<sup>15</sup>

### Free Reading Programs

A free reading program assumes that the teacher is committed to the belief that students can and will develop in

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<sup>14</sup>George W. Norvell, The Reading Interests of Young People (New York: Heath, 1950), p. 263.

<sup>15</sup>Robert Emans, "What do Children in the Inner-City Like to Read?", Elementary School Journal. LXIX (December 1968), 118-122.



reading skills and literary taste when they are allowed to read, not just talk about common reading. The teacher must be a reader and he must be excited about books and reading. He must know many books and many levels of taste and difficulty. Individualized reading assumes a ready supply of books. The free reading program assumes that the teacher must keep working, always tactfully and positively, for growth in reading skills, in reading levels and in reading tastes.<sup>16</sup>

A questionnaire study of the free reading preferences of 262 students in grade eleven in general confirms the results of previous studies: a substantial number engage in free reading; the majority enjoy reading; movies and friends are important influences in the choice of reading materials; and students heartily dislike book reports.<sup>17</sup>

### Sex Differences in Reading

Boys and girls show few major differences in their attitudes toward the importance of reading. Girls more often associated reading improvement with personal enjoyment and relaxation than did boys. Girls in the elementary school also seemed more concerned with their ability to read aloud in class. Girls of all ages gave more consideration to the status

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<sup>16</sup>Kenneth L. Donelson, "Free Reading: Another View", Journal of Reading, XII (April 1969), 545-548.

<sup>17</sup>Theodore Harris, Wayne Otto, Thomas C. Barrett, Summary and Review of Investigations Relating to Reading, July 1, 1967 to June 30, 1968", Journal of Educational Research, LXII (March 1969), 291-311.



and social acceptance that are associated with reading proficiency.<sup>18</sup>

Experienced teachers are aware of a wide gap between the reading interests of older boys and girls. Most writers on children's reading interests state or imply that below the Junior high school level the differences in the reading preferences of boys and girls are so minor that they may be largely disregarded. Reading lists for children have usually been compiled and edited in accord with this belief.

Norvell compared reading interest scores for boys and for girls at the following grade levels; grade three, grade five, grade eight, and grade eleven. The results suggests that sex may be an interest factor almost as important in the selection of reading material in the elementary grades as at the higher levels.<sup>19</sup>

#### Education of the Gifted Student

Leading educators with experience in dealing with the gifted student points out the need for special instruction of these students. The bright student does much to help himself but a need for adult guidance is generally felt. The educational program should be flexible. It has been reported that gifted children need special help in reading.

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<sup>18</sup>Ruth Strang, "Students' Reasons for Becoming Better Readers", Education, LXXXIX (November-December 1968), 127-131.

<sup>19</sup>George W. Norvell, "What Boys and Girls Like to Read", (New York: Silver Burdett, 1958), pp. 35-43.

Advanced reading instruction for the bright child has been recommended.<sup>20</sup>

Gifted children read more science, history, biography, travel, folk tales, nature and animal stories, informational fiction, poetry, drama and encyclopedias. They read less emotional fiction and stories of adventure and mystery.<sup>21</sup>

Most of the research shows that mentally superior children usually continue to do much personal reading throughout the secondary school period. Unfortunately, there are exceptions. Gifted children read better types of material than do the less gifted, but the types and rank order vary significantly among them.<sup>22</sup>

The great interest in the gifted student shown in the past decade can be traced to the realization that memorized knowledge alone is of little use in a rapidly changing culture.

Thorndike concludes that in their pattern of reported reading interests, bright children (median I.Q. about 123) are most like a group of mentally slower children (median I.Q. about 92) who are two or three years older than they are. The patterns of interest for bright and slow children of the same age are much alike but the resemblance is increased

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<sup>20</sup>Harold D. Carter, "Gifted Children," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, ed. Charles W. Harris (3rd., New York: MacMillan Co., 1960), pp. 583-590.

<sup>21</sup>William S. Gray, op. cit., p. 1109.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

when the bright children are two or three years younger than the slow group.<sup>23</sup>

### General Conclusion

Reading is a learned activity. Its major correlate is education. For those who learn to read, the printed word possesses unique characteristics as a vehicle of social transmission, sometimes reflecting, sometimes changing society. Reading inadequacies are related to failure in school, delinquency, on-the-job failures, and untimely poor social and psychological adjustments. An improvement in reading skills should have many beneficial side-effects.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>R. L. Thorndike, Children's Reading Interests, (New York: Bureau of Publications, Columbia University, 1941), p. 35.

<sup>24</sup>Burl Brim, "Impact of a Reading Improvement Program", Journal of Educational Research, LXII (December 1968), 177-182.

## Chapter 3

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### INTRODUCTION

This study attempted to answer the following question; what were the reading preferences made by a group of sixth grade students in the areas of fiction, non-fiction, and the subject fields?

The researcher gave the sixth grade children cards and asked them to list their preferences for fiction and non-fiction books they had read recently. The cards were collected as the children left the library. These cards were sorted into groups of fiction, non-fiction, and subject areas according to titles. Then an analysis was made of each assortment.

#### Fiction

The most popular book, The Parent Trap by Vic Crume, was a paperback purchased by a classroom from a book club. It is the story of the family life of twin teenage girls and was made into a movie by Walt Disney. It was selected by fifteen students, mostly girls, although it was not in the school library.

There were two books selected by the boys and girls as their second most popular fiction preference. Old Yeller



by Fred Gipson is an animal story that has been shown on Walt Disney's television program and Hello, Mrs. Piggie Wiggle by Betty MacDonald, a humorous story. These two books were each selected by fourteen boys and girls.

The third choice most often selected by boys and girls was Goal To Go. This sports story by Curtis Bishop was selected by thirteen students, all boys with the exception of one girl.

Mystery of the Shuttered Hotel and Mystery of the Bells ranked fourth in order of choice. These two mysteries, by Govan and Moore, each received twelve votes. They were equally selected by boys and girls.

At fifth place in popularity were three books, all of a different nature. E. B. White's Charlotte's Web is a delightful story of family life with farm animals. Robert McCloskey's Homer Price is a collection of six humorous stories concerning the adventures of a young boy. Christine Govan's Mystery at the Haunted House is an easily read mystery. Each book was selected by eleven students.

Three books were also ranked at sixth place. The Long Winter by Laura Ingalls Wilder is the last book in a series about pioneer family life. Ellen MacGregor wrote Miss Pickerell and the Gieger Counter which is a humorous science-fiction story. Centerburg Tales by Robert McCloskey is a sequel to Homer Price which was ranked in fifth place. Each book was selected by ten students.

More all-of-a-kind Family by Sidney Taylor and Freddy and the Flying Saucer Plans by Walter R. Brooks were each selected by nine students to rank in seventh place. Freddy is a farm pig who gets into some humorous science-fiction escapades. Sidney Taylor's book is a family story of five little Jewish girls growing up in New York City before World War I.

There were three books selected by eight children each to rank in eighth place. Mr. Popper's Penguins by Richard Atwater is a humorous story of family life. James Renick's Nicky's Football Team is a sports story which was selected by all boys. The third selection was Mystery in the Apple Orchard written by Helen Fuller Orton.

In ninth place were three books, each selected by seven students. By the Shores of Silver Lake written by Laura Ingalls Wilder is one of a series about pioneer family life. This book is the second one from that series to be selected. In this book thirteen year old Laura, the main character, is living in North Dakota. The author writes of the life she knew and lived many years ago. The Good Master by Kate Seredy is another book about family life. This story takes place on a farm in Hungary where the understanding father, who is the Good Master, is a shining quality. The book was introduced by a classroom teacher who encouraged her students to read it. The Little Leftover Witch by Florence Laughlin is a very easy-to-read story of a little witch who visits a family.

Four books were each selected by six students to place in tenth place. Misty of Chincoteague by Marguerite Henry is a horse story. Ginnie and the New Girl by Catherine Woolley is the story of two best friends and what happens when a new girl comes in the school. All-of-a-kind Family by Sidney Taylor is about a Jewish family. Both of the above books are parts of very popular series. Swiss Family Robinson by Johann David Wyss is a children's classic. It concerns the survival of a family after being shipwrecked on an island. A rather long book, it first appeared in Switzerland in 1913. Undoubtedly, in my opinion, its popularity was renewed after the appearance of the Walt Disney film of the same title.

In eleventh place were five books. Each book was selected by five students. Will James' Smokey is a horse story that won the Newbery Award in 1927. This award is presented annually for the most outstanding book for boys and girls. Christine Govan wrote Mystery at Signal Rock which marks her third appearance in this study. The Secret Garden by Francis Burnett is the story of two children who discover a secret garden and who learn many other important things about each other and growing up. Pippi Longstocking by Astrid Lindgren is the adventures of a nine year old girl in Sweden. The Witch of Blackbird Pond was written by Elizabeth George Speare. It received the Newbery Award in 1959.

In twelfth place were nine books. These were selected by four students each. Up a Road Slowly by Irene Hunt is the story of a young girl growing up and her romance leading



to marriage. The Newbery Award was presented to Irene Hune in 1967 for this book. Freddy the Pilot by Walter Brooks is the second book by this author to be selected in this study. Little Women by Louisa May Alcott is a children's classic. It is a very long book about the New England home life of the four March sisters. This book was selected entirely by girls. Follow My Leader by James B. Garfield is the story of a seeing-eye dog. The Black Stallion by Walter Farley, Understood Betsey by Dorothy Canfield, Ellen and the Gang by Frieda Friedman, The Secret by Elizabeth Coatsworth and Twenty-Third Street Crusaders by John F. Carson were also selected by students to rank in the twelfth place.

The remainder of the fiction preferences chosen by less than four students are listed in Table I, pages 22-24.

### Non-Fiction

Spooks, Spooks, Spooks by Helen Hoke was the most popular non-fiction selection. It was chosen by fifteen students, and it circulated continually throughout the year. This is a popular collection of scary stories about spooks.

In second place is Stories from Old Russia by Edward and Marguerite Dolch. This also is a collection of short stories about life in Russia many years ago. The Dolch's have written many books of this type. Several were selected by the students but this particular book was chosen by ten students to place it as the second most popular non-fiction



Table 1

Most Popular Fiction Titles Selected by Boys and Girls

Rank	Book Title	Times Selected
1	The Parent Trap	16
2	Hello, Mrs. Piggie Wiggle	14
2	Old Yeller	14
3	Goal To Go	13
4	Mystery of the Shuttered Hotel	12
4	Mystery of the Bells	12
5	Charlotte's Web	11
5	Homer Price	11
5	Mystery at the Haunted House	11
6	The Long Winter	10
6	Miss Pickerell and the Gieger Counter	10
6	Centerburg Tales	10
7	More all-of-a-kind Family	9
7	Freddy and the Flying Saucer Plans	9
8	Mr. Popper's Penguins	8
8	Nicky's Football Team	8
8	Mystery at the Apple Orchard	7
9	The Good Master	7
9	By the Shores of Silver Lake	7
9	The Little Leftover Witch	6
10	Misty of Chincoteague	

Table 1 (continued)

Rank	Book Title	Times Selected
10	Ginnie and the New Girl	6
10	Swiss Family Robinson	6
10	All-of-a-kind Family	6
11	Mystery at Signal Rock	5
11	The Secret Garden	5
11	Smokey	5
11	Pippi Longstocking	5
11	The Witch of Blackbird Pond	5
12	The Secret	4
12	Little Women	4
12	The Black Stallion	4
12	Understood Betsey	4
12	Follow My Leader	4
12	Twenty-third Street Crusaders	4
12	Ellen and the Gang	4
12	Freddy the Pilot	4
12	Up a Road Slowly	3
13	Journey to Nashville	3
13	Fast Circuit	3
13	Crackerjack Halfback	3
13	Lassie Come Home	3
13	Miss Osborne the Mop	3
13	Gone With the Wind	3

Table 1 (continued)

Rank	Book Title	Times Selected
13	Stuart Little	3
13	The Adventures of Tom Sawyer	3
13	A Wrinkle in Time	3
13	Hit and Run	3
13	Fast Sooner Hound	3
13	Thee Hannah	3

choice. This selection was evidently influenced by the classroom assignments.

Four books were ranked third in popularity of the non-fiction choices. Each was selected nine times. Slot-car Racing by Bob Braverman and Bill Neumann was selected predominantly by boys. Ask Me Another Riddle by Ralph Underwood is a very popular book of nonsense chosen by boys and girls. Fighting Gear of World War II written by C. B. Colby is a popular book for boys concerning army equipment. Witches, Witches, Witches by Helen Hoke is a collection of short stories, fairy tales and poetry about witches.

In fourth place were three books of equal popularity. Each was selected by eight students. Two of these books were written by C. B. Colby. Civil War Weapons and S A C both have great appeal for boys. Papier Mache and How To Use It by Mildred Anderson was selected by students who used this book for a school assignment upon the recommendation of their teacher.

Three books were selected by the students as their fifth place choices. Six children each selected these books as their non-fiction preference. Ghost and Goblins by Wilhelminia Harper is a collection of short Halloween stories with some poetry. The First Book of Jokes and Funny Things by Frances Chrystie is a popular book containing jokes, riddles, tricks, jingles, tongue twisters and funny things to make and do. The last book mentioned in fifth place is a biography by Robert N. Webb. The Living



J. F. K. has beautiful photographs to enhance the text about a very popular president.

In sixth place five students each selected a biography and a collection of Indian stories as their non-fiction preference. Helen Keller by Anne and J. W. Tibble and Pueblo Stories by Marguerite and Edward Dolch were their choices.

Babe Ruth by Gurnsey Van Riper and Betty Crocker's Cookbook for Boys and Girls were the choices of boys and girls to rank in seventh place. Four girls selected the cookbook and four boys chose the biography of Babe Ruth.

Four books placed in the eighth rank position as the most popular non-fiction selection. These were Holiday Hobbycraft by Willard and Elna Waltner, Dinosaurs by Herbert Zim, The Golden Book of Chemistry Experiments by Robert Brent and The First Book of Magic by Ed Stodard.

The remainder of the non-fiction preferences selected by less than three students are listed in Table 2, page 27-28. In this large group were two books by Edward and Marguerite Dolch. Several different biographies were each elected by two students including another sports hero.

### Subject Areas

The subject areas of preference were established by carefully considering each book title. Each title was classified according to the main theme of the story. Many books could have been classed in more than one area, but

Table 2

Most Popular Non-Fiction Titles selected by Boys and Girls

Rank	Book Title	Times Selected
1	Spooks, Spooks, Spooks	15
2	Stories from Old Russia	10
3	Slot-Car Racing	9
3	Ask Me Another Riddle	9
3	Fighting Gear of World War II	9
3	Witches, Witches, Witches	9
4	Civil War Weapons	8
4	S A C	8
4	Papier Mache and How to Use It	8
5	Ghosts and Goblins	6
5	First Book of Jokes and Funny Things	6
5	The Living J. F. K.	6
6	Helen Keller	5
6	Pueblo Stories	5
7	Babe Ruth	4
7	Betty Crocker's Cookbook for Boys and Girls	4
8	Holiday Hobbycraft	3
8	Dinosaurs	3
8	The Golden Book of Chemistry Experiments	3
8	The First Book of Magic	3

Table 2 (continued)

Rank	Book Title	Times Selected
9	Crazy Horse	2
9	Clipper Ships and Captains	2
9	Tasha Tudor's Favorite Stories	2
9	Rodeo Roundup	2
9	The Story of Pocahontas	2
9	Pilot Jack Knight	2
9	Bart Starr	2
9	Space Stations	2

when this situation arose, the book was placed in the area which was particularly outstanding. Where there was definite doubt concerning the theme of any of the books the Children's Catalog was consulted to determine the correct subject area.

An examination of the subject areas reveals that the **most** popular area was mystery and detective stories. It was interesting to note that this area was popular with both boys and girls.

Animal stories was ranked second in preference by the students. However, in examining the readers cards in this subject area assortment several observations can be drawn. The most popular type of animal story was the horse story. Dog stories ranked second in preference within this area. Also included were various farm animals and wild animals.

The third outstanding reading preference area for boys and girls was in the field of adventure. Boys seem to prefer books with the dominant male character. Army action and war stories were other popular preferences within this subject area for boys. Girls preferred milder adventure stories.

Books of humor ranked fourth in subject area preference by the students. The area was popular with both boys and girls. Stories with obvious humor are included in this area along with joke and riddle books which are classified as non-fiction.



In fifth place the reading preference was in the field of family stories. Girls read much more in this area than boys and therefore selected it more often than boys.

Ghosts, spooks and witches is the outstanding reading preference ranked in sixth place. This area is popular with both sexes. Many of the titles included in this area are collections of short stories in the non-fiction classification. Some of the titles are classed as fiction.

Biography was ranked in seventh place in subject area preference. This is another area popular with both boys and girls. Several different people were chosen by the students from sports heroes to Presidents. Biographies at this age level may be used as hero stories in form and treatment. There was some evidence of teacher encouragement in this area.

In eighth place among popular reading preferences, the students selected sports stories. This area was chosen predominantly by boys. Included were stories concerning football, basketball, and baseball.

Hobbies was selected as the ninth most popular reading preference in subject areas. Both boys and girls preferred this subject area. These books were in the non-fiction classification; included were cookbooks, books on magic, hobbycraft, and slot-car racing.

In tenth place in the subject area assortment was Science-Fiction. This area was popular with boys and girls. The books were novels classed in the fiction area.

Religion, fairy tales, legends, and myths were all included in one subject area which ranked in eleventh place. This area was popular with boys and girls. It included only one Bible story. Fairy Tales and legends made up the majority of the selections in this area.

Science ranked twelfth in the combined reading preferences of boys and girls. The major part of this reading was done by the boys all in the non-fiction area.

The thirteenth and last place in subject area preferences on non-fiction is History. This area was chosen by only one girl as her reading preference.

### Summary

This study brings out the fact that boys and girls prefer to read fiction rather than non-fiction. Boys read more non-fiction than girls. As a librarian, it was interesting to note the outside influences upon the selections the children made. The influence of parents, teachers, friends, movies and television were noted.

The Parent Trap by Vic Crume was the most popular book selection and mystery and detective stories was the most popular subject area choice.

Table 3

Most Popular Subject Areas Selected by Boys and Girls

Rank	Subject Area	Times Selected
1	Mystery and Detective Stories	72
2	Animal Stories	64
3	Adventure Stories	49
4	Books of Humor	44
5	Family Life	39
6	Ghosts, Spooks, Witches	33
7	Biography	28
8	Sports Stories	25
9	Hobbies	21
10	Science Fiction	18
11	Religion, Fairytales, Legends, Myths	15
12	Science	9
13	History	1

## Chapter 4

### SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Reading materials for children have an excellent chance for popularity when they combine several of the favorable interest factors such as action, humor, animals, and mystery. In order to succeed to the greatest extent, books must be free of the unfavorable factors such as only history, religion, fairies and science.

In this study it was found that the areas of pre-dominant interest for boys and girls in the sixth grade were mystery, animals, adventure and obvious humor.

From an analysis of this study it may be stated that boys and girls prefer to read fiction as compared to non-fiction. The non-fiction area was preferred predominantly by boys.

It should be noted that some authors have more than one book included in this study. Many children evidently read books in a series.

### Conclusion

This study was undertaken with the purpose in mind to discover what book titles and subject areas were most popular with boys and girls. It is realized that reading research must be a continual and ongoing process because



reading interest change. Television and movies seemed to influence reading choices.

It is hoped that the results of this analysis will prove helpful in book selection to teachers, librarians, and parents particularly interested in this age level child.

In working with this age group perhaps more than at any other level we need to know the basic area of interest, as well as specific titles and authors, which are not only currently popular with boys and girls but which have remained popular, and have been enjoyed over a long length of time. It should be our business to guide boys and girls into more mature levels of understanding through the enjoyment of books which will broaden and increase their vision of the world and of human understanding.

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## APPENDIX

Virginia French  
The Black Stallion's Courage  
Walter Farley

Leven Jones  
S.A.C. By C.B. Colby