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Ways to enhance comprehension and vocabulary within a whole language framework

Leah M. Luke

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WAYS TO ENHANCE COMPREHENSION AND VOCABULARY
WITHIN A
WHOLE LANGUAGE FRAMEWORK

A Project Submitted to
the Faculty of the School of Education in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the
Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Education: Elementary Education Option

By

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SUMMARY

Traditionally, the language arts program in many schools has been vague and removed from the real world of the child. Within recent years, the "Whole Language" philosophy has emerged and teachers are using literature as the core of their programs. Enhancing comprehension and vocabulary development are critical elements to be considered. For the first time in their academic careers, intermediate grade students are reading more sophisticated literature selections about people, places, and events which may be unfamiliar. They are also expected to read content area texts, and rapidly learn many complex concepts.

With the new state English Language Arts Framework calling for an integrated literature-based holistic approach, learning activities need to be designed to motivate the learner, while offering choice and variety to accommodate differences in ability, learning style, and the interest of each student. When properly chosen and implemented, these activities promote the development of comprehension as well as vocabulary.

This project provides teachers with a variety of activities for enhancing students' comprehension and vocabulary development within a literature-based Whole Language program. The learning activities described in the
Activities Handbook integrate experiences in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Some activities are based on quality classroom discussions guided by the teacher, while others foster student cooperation on group tasks. Strong emphasis is placed on fostering student interest while emphasizing comprehension and vocabulary development.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of the Literature</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Language Framework</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Comprehension and Vocabulary Through Literature</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals and Limitations of the Project</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities for <em>Island of the Blue Dolphins</em></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities for <em>Old Yeller</em></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities for <em>The Incredible Journey</em></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities for <em>Heidi</em></td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities for <em>Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing</em></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities for Be a Perfect Person in 62</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Three Days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Forms</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Results</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Area of Concern

The language arts program in most schools is, all too often, vague and removed from the real world of the child. However, a program based on "Whole Language" philosophy offers no simple definition; it is not a "program" or package, but rather a set of attitudes and beliefs about curriculum, teaching, language arts, and children. A whole language program refers to practical classroom applications from recent research in language and learning (Newman, 1985). Within this "Whole Language" philosophy, enhancing comprehension and vocabulary development is still a critical element in a child's learning process.

Within the California English Language Arts Framework, a listing of recommended reading material is provided. The list is made up of individual titles and is called the "Core Literature Reading List." Each grade level receives its own list of recommended literary titles. Although the Core Literature Reading List identifies books which are to be read, the teacher must plan for each book and the various activities which serve to develop comprehension as well as vocabulary within the whole language framework. The activities for each title should serve not only to motivate the learner, but to offer choice and variety to accommodate
differences in ability, learning style, and the interest of each student. When properly chosen and implemented, these various activities promote the development of comprehension as well as vocabulary and, at the same time, provide motivation for the learner. In addition, activities can be incorporated into other areas of the curriculum. Thus, the problem faced by teachers is one of devising appropriate activities, a time consuming task.

The solution to this problem is not, however, to eliminate the use of literature and return solely to the basal text. This would place a heavy burden on the child who transfers from one school to another, or even one grade to the next, as there would be little opportunity to work with children in the natural development of their comprehension and vocabulary skills. Whole language programs are built on the belief that children should learn to read and write in the same natural way they learned to speak. It is, however, possible to develop a program of activities which will complement the district language arts framework along with each individual book on the Core Literature Reading List and allow for children's natural language development.

Children's literature, with all of its open-ended possibilities, meaningful text, and rich language, creates natural opportunities for moving beyond skills to developing reading activities and for affirming reading as a process of getting meaning from print (Routman, 1988). When educators
have talked about "strategies," the term has been confused with "word attack skills," and word attack skills have generally referred to phonics. Strategies are the thoughtful plans or operations readers use while involved in the reading process; these plans are activated, adjusted, and modified for each new reading situation. Various activities imply high-level thinking, integration, and self-direction. Knowledge of vocabulary, along with basic comprehension strategies, is the key to understanding both spoken and written language (John & Pearson, 1984).

This project centers around the development of various activities which could assist the fourth grade teacher in providing motivational comprehension and vocabulary development lessons for specific core literature titles.

Statement of the Problem

With the new state English Language Arts Framework calling for an integrated literature-based holistic approach, what happens to the development of comprehension, as well as vocabulary? There are no specific guidelines telling teachers how to utilize the core literature to promote students' comprehension and vocabulary. So what are some ways in which teachers may enhance development of students' comprehension and vocabulary with individual books? This is the problem addressed in this project.
The purpose of this project is to provide a handbook of activities which focus on comprehension and vocabulary development. The activities are for use with the titles listed on the fourth grade Core Reading List in the Rialto Unified School District.

The need for this project is demonstrated by Blachowicz' (1987) discovery of the lack of adequate schema-based instructional methods and the lack of adequate vocabulary instruction in the middle grade reading programs. Various activities, when incorporated into the rest of the curriculum, help to aid in the development of comprehension and increase vocabulary acquisition of the elementary student.
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This review of literature is divided into three sections. Section one, A Whole Language Framework, will deal with a whole language framework for language arts and describe beliefs about curriculum and students' learning. Section two, Literature, will focus on the role of literature within the context of a whole language framework for continued development of all the language processes -- listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Section three, Promoting Comprehension and Vocabulary Through Literature, will review current theory on the comprehension process, including vocabulary development.

Whole Language Framework

In recent years, individuals have outlined and described principles of language development. According to Hagan (1988), language learners are involved in an ongoing process of theorizing about, experimenting with, and refining their use of oral and written language. These learning events can be characterized as primitive or sophisticated, although they don't necessarily occur in a set sequence or hierarchy of difficulty.
Hagan (1988) also believed children, in particular, learn about and play with language constantly, seldom making any distinction between language facts (e.g., letters of the alphabet may correspond more or less to spoken sounds); language meanings (e.g., "dance" could be a noun or a verb, depending upon its context); or language values (e.g., being read to by a parent or teacher in a warm, caring atmosphere is a rich experience). In fact, these three levels of learning can take place simultaneously.

Goodman (1986) supported Hagan by describing reading as a selective process involving use of one's language cueing systems -- the semantic, syntactic, and phonographemic -- and calling this process a "psycholinguistic guessing game." He further believed that there is a strong focus on functional oral language experiences and read-alouds as a mean of encouraging students to use their language knowledge to make sensible predictions in constructing the meaning of text.

Holdaway (1989) said that language is language only when it is whole. Whole text -- connected discourse in the context of some speech or literacy event -- is really the minimal functional unit, the smallest whole that makes sense. Educators are encouraged to consider the mistakes of trying to simplify language learning through controlling vocabulary, adhering to strict phonic principles, and altering complex sentence structures, all mistakes made in
previous years. "The result is unpredictable, unnatural, irrelevant and dull," stated Silberman (1989, p. 131). Silberman felt that young children must rely upon experiences of relevance and interest, and experiences which involve the risk of trying new strategies; error is inherent in the process. Therefore, they will comprehend the reasons behind language development.

It was pointed out by Newman (1985) that children come to school with a natural tendency to make sense of the world and bring a rich and fully functioning knowledge of the spoken aspect of language. Because virtually all babies learn to speak their home language in a very short time without formal teaching, Newman stressed the need to make language learning in school as easy as was the case in the home. She suggested that, instead of using carefully sequenced programs, we invite children to use language functionally and purposefully.

Smith (1988) supported Newman by reporting that whole language programs are built on the belief that children learn to read and write in the same natural way they learned to speak. Immersion from birth in a meaningful, language-rich environment affords children opportunities to model the communication processes. Adults who demonstrate oral language in meaningful contextualized situations joyfully reinforce and extend the child's communicative attempts. Language is not broken down into bits and pieces for the
child to decipher. Rather, it always maintains its holistic structure.

Rich (1989) pointed out that the whole language approach to reading and writing has been described as a "top-down" approach. Students begin with a whole text and experience its fullest meaning. Following response to the story as a whole, the child is involved in activities that focus on specific paragraphs, sentences, words, or individual letters. In this way, the teacher is able to teach specific skills in a contextual way important to both reading and writing.

In agreeing with Rich, Routman (1988) advocated that the reality of learning is realized through hypothesizing, risk-taking, predicting, making errors, and self-correcting. Scribbling, reversed letters, vertical placement of words, invented spellings, creative punctuation, and reading and writing miscues are indications of growth toward control of the language process. Central to whole language theory, then, is the notion that learning should go from whole to part, as spoken language is learned. The "whole" is viewed as always greater than the sum of its parts.

Temple (1984) also stated that once students experience the whole they are able to deal more closely with analysis of the parts that comprise it. These parts constitute the many specific language skills important to developmental reading and writing. These skills are taught in the context
of the whole, for only in its entirety does the text communicate its fullest meaning.

In the book *Towards a Reading – Writing Classroom*, Butler and Turbill (1984) implied that in a whole language classroom, teachers surround children with language in a meaningful context. "The print-rich environment includes children's literature in all its variety: enlarged texts for shared reading; curriculum-related music; art, science, and social studies projects; reading and writing material related to all curriculum areas; and books in the reading, listening, and special interest areas" (p.91). Heald-Taylor (1989) further pointed out that whole language empowers children to take responsibility for their own reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking in the learning process. As they take risks to explore the function of language, they interweave each of the language arts in meaningful, purposeful, functional ways. The "whole" text in the form of a story, song, poem, or chant is employed in its wholeness, while the parts are examined in the context of children's own reading and writing.

Moffet and Wagner (1983) expressed the view that it remains a challenge to enable students to understand the connection between skills and their broader application. It is their theory that teachers bemoan the fact that students diligently learn their assigned weekly spelling words, yet fail to spell some of the same words correctly when writing
a story. They may complete workbook pages on the short and long vowel sounds with ease, yet cannot apply phonics principles to decode words in the course of their reading.

Further agreement came from the work of Watson (1988) who stated that "while whole language teaching is not the panacea that will right all these ills, it has the potential of affording students the opportunity to see and more fully understand these skills and strategies within contexts that make sense" (p.86). There is no contradiction between direct skill teaching and whole language learning, according to this writer. She felt that diligent and perceptive teachers, who are in command of their subject matter and all its intricacies, have a clear road map for reaching appropriate curriculum goals, in contexts that are both child- and meaning-centered.

In summary, a whole language philosophy suggests that all components of language must be harmoniously integrated into the instructional program. Skills must be learned, but they must be embedded in meaningful activities. A whole language framework weaves together a theoretical view of language and language learning. It prefers learner-focused curricula and holds to a conception of the "whole child," of the active learner, of the classroom as a community, and of teachers who learn and learners who teach. Within a whole language framework, students' doing should provide them with a chance to introspect on how they went about it so that
they not only learn, but also learn how they went (and how
to go) about learning (Edelsky, Altwerger & Flores, 1991).

**Literature**

A key principle underlying "Whole Language" philosophy
is that students read whole text. This section deals with
the use of literature within a whole language framework.

According to Alvermann (1988), literature-based reading
and writing implies using reading, writing, thinking, and
speaking daily in the real world, with options,
appreciation, and meaningful purposes in various settings
and with other people. An actively literate person is
constantly thinking, learning, and reflecting, and is
assuming the responsibility for continued growth in personal
literacy.

Smith (1988) supported Alvermann in believing that
literature-based reading and writing emerges as a natural
way to tie theory and research into children's continued
learning of all the language processes -- listening,
speaking, reading, and writing. Smith feels, unfortunately,
that the theory and research on how young children learn to
read and write has been largely ignored by the basal book
publishers and many educators. One can only speculate on
why this is so.
It was pointed out by Riddell (1988) that, sadly, what goes on in the schools often does not complement the way children are learning language so easily and naturally at home. Learning is often compartmentalized, put into skills packets, and based on fragmented materials unrelated to the child's reality; there is very little involvement of real language. The school reading and writing experience needs to continue to build on the oral and written language experiences all children enter school with. Riddell believed further that children need to use language purposefully, meaningfully, and naturally — in whole units, not in pieces or for teaching skills in a hierarchy.

Richek (1988) pointed out that literature has proved to be an excellent vehicle for developing, enhancing, and enriching lifelong, active literacy. Compared to the basal text, it works better. The use of literature for teaching literacy is tried and tested, grounded in research, and based on natural learning theory. Richek also stated that New Zealand, the country with the highest literacy rate in the world, has been teaching with literature for over twenty years. Australia has followed suit, refining its methodology for the last fifteen years and continually improving its literacy levels at the same time. Canada and England, in the last ten years or more, have been working towards active literacy, using children's literature as a base. According to Richek, several states in our country
are beginning to respect and utilize these powerful models by pushing real books and making changes at the state levels. For instance, in Vermont, a state that is known to be "wired" for whole language, a whole language background is a requirement for employment of new teachers (Routman, 1988).

Huck (1987), a strong promoter of the use of quality literature in the language arts program, defined literature as "an imaginative shaping of life and thought into the forms and structures of language" (p.36). She believed the experience of literature to be two dimensional, for it involves both the book and the reader.

Herman and Dole (1988) believed that there are many valid reasons for using literature as the mainstay of a language program, all of which serve to motivate and promote lifelong interest in the reading and writing processes. They first pointed out that literature allows meaning to dominate. The beginning reader reads immediately for meaning and views reading as a thinking process. Readable books are predictable in words and outcomes. A story that makes sense is easy to talk about and remember. Secondly, literature use concentrates on the development of readers rather than the development of skills. Students spend most of their time reading continuous text, which allows beginning readers to see themselves as readers right from the start. Research has shown that this has not been the
norm for poor readers who spend most of their instruction
time on skills and decoding. Thirdly, Herman and Dole
believed that literature promotes positive self-concepts in
all readers. Because students see themselves as readers of
books from the first day of school, they develop positive
attitudes about reading and themselves. Regardless of
background, apparent deficiencies, and varying development
levels, they have never had a child fail to begin to learn
to read with the best of children's books. That early
success and confidence flows into other academic and social
areas. Lastly, the two researchers found that literature
promotes language development. Exposure to the variety of
complex syntactical patterns, creative and figurative
language, and imagery found in good literature seems to aid
comprehension of language in general and to enhance
vocabulary development. Since this literary language is not
generally found in basal readers, popular television
programs, or general conversation, it is important that
children -- particularly lower-achieving children who may
not otherwise be exposed to the language of literature -- be
saturated with good books in the school environment. Herman
and Dole reported that vocabulary and multiple meanings of
words are best learned and applied through the context of
books.

In accordance with Herman and Dole, Kolich (1988)
believed that literature promotes fluent reading. When
observing readers reading with fluency from the start, children hear a predictable sadness, and jealousy. They have an opportunity to get in touch with their own emotions in a natural, non-threatening manner. Readers meet characters who have traits like themselves, which makes them feel like an accepted part of the human race. Folktales and fairy tales teach much about individual longings, conflicts, and failings and can stimulate thoughtful discussion. Literature also makes reading fun, according to Kolich. It is one of the primary reasons teachers move from the basal into literature with such relief. Fader, in The New Hooked On Books, made a strong point: "If teachers would see themselves first as purveyors of pleasure rather than instructors in skills, they may find that skill will flourish where pleasure has been cultivated" (p.71).

Holdaway (1989) pointed out that educators must move beyond skills toward strategies. Because the goal is independence, moving beyond self-correcting into self-regulating behavior, it is the teacher's job to help make the student aware of strategies he/she is using. One can never really know what is going on in the reader's mind in this complex task, but we can facilitate the child's growing fluency and confidence by positively attending to strategies he or she is beginning to use and by modeling strategies he or she needs to be using. Holdaway believed that, by placing emphasis on specific strategies the child is
attending to, the child is given the message that what he/she is doing is important and necessary to the reading process.

In summary, the use of literature is tried and tested, grounded in research, and based on natural learning theory (Routman, 1988). Literature connects us with past and present humanity. Literary reading promotes the language development and thinking that are necessary for educated, cultural society. According to Routman (1988), there are many valid reasons for using literature as the mainstay of a whole language framework. Literature allows meaning to dominate, and its use concentrates on the development of readers rather than the development of skills. Literature promotes language development and fluent reading. It deals with human emotions; exposes students to a variety of story structures, themes, and authors' styles; and puts children in contact with illustration at its best. "Literature makes reading fun" (Routman, 1988, p. 22). Literature has proven to be a superior vehicle for enhancing, developing, and enriching lifelong, active literacy.

Promoting Comprehension and Vocabulary Through Literature

Children's reading comprehension performance, coupled with vocabulary development, concerns all levels of
educators today. More than ever before, educators are devoting much intellectual and emotional energy to help students better understand the texts they are required to read in schools (Pearson, 1985). This section deals with the importance of enhancing comprehension and vocabulary through a literature-based language arts framework.

McNeil (1984) looked at reading comprehension as an interaction between reader and text by which meaning is created. In contrast with the older emphasis on teaching reading comprehension as product by asking pupils to answer questions about their reading, McNeil stated that "newer approaches stress teaching reading comprehension as process" (p. 3). Accordingly, pupils are taught techniques for processing text, such as making inferences, activating appropriate concepts, relating new information to old, creating picture images, and reducing the information in a text to a main idea.

It was believed by McNeil (1984) that there are assumptions underlying the process approach. He felt that what pupils already know affects what they will learn from reading. This prior knowledge consists of knowledge structure, scripts, frames, or schemata. "A schema is a data structure for representing the generic concepts stored in memory" (Guthrie 1981, p. 5). Schemata have variables and can be embedded in one's memory, one within another. Schemata represent knowledge at all levels of abstraction
and represent knowledge rather than definitions. Schemata are active progresses and are recognition devices whose processing is aimed at the evaluation of their goodness of fit to the data being processed (Guthrie, 1981). The schema is a framework of expectations. It allows the reader to take what is directly perceivable and to make inferences about its unseen features.

McNeil (1984) also emphasized the role of background knowledge as consistent with their traditional practices of preteaching vocabulary and providing requisite background experiences. Other newer techniques for activating background knowledge include semantic mapping and student-generated questions, which are also extremely relevant.

Cooper (1986) supported McNeil by describing comprehension as an interactive process between the reader and the text. He believed there are skills that can be taught to help students learn to better use their interactive comprehension process. Research does not clearly support the identification of any set of comprehension skills because comprehension is not a set of discrete skills, according to Cooper. It is a process by which the reader constructs meaning by using clues in the text and relating them to his or her existing background. The teaching of comprehension must be viewed more broadly than the teaching of discrete skills or tasks. According to Cooper, each reader's comprehension process is somewhat
different because each individual has developed different schemata. Further, the ways in which a person makes use of the skills and processes taught as a part of reading comprehension also differ. Cooper believed teachers should focus on the skills and processes that will help the reader get clues from the text and relate those clues to prior experience and also emphasize the process of using the skill rather than teaching the skill for skill's sake.

Blachowicz and Lee (1991) said that though it is clear that wide reading, within a whole language framework, provides students with many rich and meaningful contexts for word learning, vocabulary instruction is extremely important to the comprehension process. They believed that the learner must be active in solving the problem of a word's meanings, and that meaning-focused use and manipulation of the word in many modalities give the learner ownership of the new terms. Repeated encounters with a word, in oral and written language, provide experiences with and clues to the word's meaning that accrue over time and help build and change children's mental structures for word meaning.

Pearson (1985) supported Blachowicz and Lee by pointing out that a concept development approach to vocabulary has an advantage to the more conventional definition and sentence approach. He stated that semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis approaches have been particularly useful, as well as other approaches that emphasize semantic
elaboration. These more useful approaches to vocabulary instruction all emphasize where a word fits in children's semantic repertoire rather than what it means or how it is used in sentences.

Elley (1989) studied vocabulary acquisition from listening to stories. His study was designed to assess the potential benefits of reading stories aloud to children for the acquisition of new vocabulary. He believed that children will process language at deeper levels if they focus on meaning rather than form. Therefore, children will learn a great deal more and retain more from an activity such as listening to entertaining stories read aloud than from working at contrived exercises (McGivern, 1983).

Elley's studies were designed to assess gains in vocabulary with seven- and eight-year-old children. After reading a selected story three times over a seven day period to 168 pupils, it was found that the poorest readers had shown the most vocabulary gain.

The results of this study supported the investigators' assumptions. Stories read aloud in a repetitive manner appear to offer a potential source for ready vocabulary acquisition (Elley, 1989). Of the twenty words tested, the typical child learned about three that were not known before, without any attempted explanation by the teacher.

Blachowicz and Lee (1991) suggested that judicious attention to vocabulary can build knowledge of specific
vocabulary and can have a positive impact on comprehension. Interventions that call for more meaningful uses of words result in learning that is more durable and that affects comprehension. They found that deeper processing can be achieved through discussion, by establishing rich semantic networks, through mapping of semantic features, and from examination of context and production of new uses.

Blachowicz and Lee also believed that engagement can be brought about by playful activities such as word collection contests and dramatizations. They stressed the importance of using vocabulary in an integrated way by using words in retelling, response, artistic, dramatic, or aesthetic ways.

To extend vocabulary and comprehension through literature, Weaver (1988) believed that capitalizing on students' curiosity and innate interest in learning is critical to learning. She found pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading strategies helped students make connections between the content and their own experiences.

Pre-reading strategies are designed to: 1) motivate students to want to do the reading; 2) help them set purposes and find a focus for their reading; 3) bridge the gap between students' conceptual backgrounds and the concepts being presented in the reading; and 4) activate and build on readers' existing schemas for making the material more comprehensible. Weaver (1988) found the latter two strongly increase readers' motivation to read. "When
readers recognize that they already know something about the topic, that the topic is relevant, the reading will more likely occur with greater interest and sharper focus" (Weaver, 1988, p. 285).

Weaver (1988) also stated that proficient reading and comprehending involve not only preparation for reading, but active involvement during reading and the ability to monitor one's own progress. During-reading strategies contain a "monitoring system" referred to as metacomprehension. Metacomprehension, according to Weaver, is a student's awareness of the goal of the reading assignment, what is known about the topic, what needs to be known, and the strategies that can be used to facilitate comprehension. To facilitate metacomprehension, Weaver believed teachers need to help students develop those self-reflective processes that will increase their comprehension and felt that carefully designed and implemented during-reading activities can do that.

Petrosky (1982) supported Weaver on the importance of pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading strategies. When speaking of post-reading strategies, he believed readers need to discuss, write about, argue about, and grapple with the ideas and concepts they are confronted with, and they need to be able to support their opinions from the text and from their own experiences. He did not see critical thinking as a kind of comprehension; he saw it
rather as part of the process of comprehension, a factor that enables comprehension to occur. It is functional within the process, not simply an end result of the process, according to Petrosky. "Anything short of critical thinking during reading results in processing surface structure only (i.e., reading passively rather than actively) with mechanical participation rather than transactional" (Weaver, 1982, p. 300). The obvious strategy for post-reading is to follow up on the pre-reading and during-reading activities.

Routman (1988) believed that an important part of the language arts program are the activities that extend and complement the literature, as well as those that examine the literature more closely. In place of workbooks and worksheets, activities give students exciting, yet challenging, opportunities to interact with books and each other. According to Routman, activities should encourage children to be actively involved in their own learning and to use their own strategies to find answers to open-ended problems.

A literature extension activity is viewed as a meaningful extension of a favorite book, especially when it requires a child to re-examine the text and the illustrations. Routman (1988) believed these activities to take many forms, including: 1) rereading for different purposes; 2) innovations on stories; 3) retellings of stories; 4) collaborations on stories; 5) categorizing
stories with similar themes; 6) comparison charts of different versions of a tale; 7) illustrating favorite scenes and characters; 8) rewriting a story into a play; 9) acting out a story; 10) writing stories for wordless picture books; 11) listing alternative solutions for a problem in a story; 12) making a mural; 13) creating simple puppets for a dramatization of a predictable text; 1) reading with a partner or partners; 15) analyzing all the books by one author; 16) charting the sequence of story events, and 17) using listening posts with tapes of favorite stories (p.127). She also believed an extension activity may be as simple as a discussion of the book or as involved as a class play complete with costumes and scenery. Routman stated that in an extension activity to literature "there is no fill-in-the-blank 'busy work' to keep students quiet; instead they are actively involved in their own learning" (Routman, 1988, p. 67).

In summary, teachers employing appropriate comprehension and vocabulary instructional techniques select literature, vocabulary, and various activities which let the reader relate the information presented by the author to information stored in his or her mind; this process of relating new information to old information is the process of comprehension. An essential part of comprehension is knowing the meanings of words (Cooper, 1986). Therefore, an important component of the instructional program in reading
comprehension must be vocabulary development. Whole language programs encourage children to make the language of the text their own through a series of meaningful, open-ended activities (Johnson & Louis, 1990). Skills must be learned, but they must be embedded in meaningful pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities which promote both comprehension and vocabulary through the literature.
GOALS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECT

Statement of Objectives

Research has indicated that the use of various activities in promoting the development of comprehension and vocabulary is important. It is believed that, when children have had the opportunity to learn through different activities, they will develop a greater understanding of the meanings of the text. With this in mind, this project is designed to supplement the district adopted literary reading series. Activities have been developed for six of the individual recommended titles of children's books on the fourth grade reading list. These activities, when incorporated within the rest of the curriculum, will reinforce and enrich the development of students' comprehension and vocabulary.

Although this project is designed for use by fourth grade teachers in the Rialto Unified School District, the methods and activities can be adapted by other teachers using literature and individual title books at other intermediate grade levels.
Statement of Design

In order to attain the objective stated, a handbook of activities will be developed which can be integrated into the fourth grade curriculum and which will correspond with the core literature books recommended by the Rialto Unified School District's Language Arts framework. This framework was developed by the teachers and administrators of the Rialto Unified School district for use with the adopted literary reading series.

The following are the books for which activities will be provided:

1. Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell
2. Old Yeller by Fred Gipson
3. The Incredible Journey by Sheila Burnford
4. Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing by Judy Blume
5. Heidi by Johanna Spyri
6. Be a Perfect Person in Just Three Days by Stephen Manes

Evaluation

An informal evaluation will be made of the effectiveness of the activities for three of the six books. These books are:

1. Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell
2. Be a Perfect Person in Just Three Days by Stephen Manes

3. Old Yeller by Fred Gipson

This informal evaluation consists of a list of questions to be answered both by students in my classroom and by me.

Results from this informal evaluation will be reported in Appendix B.

Limitations of the Study

This project is designed for use in the Rialto Unified School District, considered to be a very fast-paced and progressive system. With a large influx of new students from various school districts, it is important to provide a variety of activities from which to begin instruction and to integrate into the remaining curriculum areas.

Because this project is primarily designed to meet the needs of one school district, its usefulness will be limited to fourth grade teachers with similar goals in comprehension and vocabulary development. However, other teachers using literature and/or individual title books could take these activities and modify and adopt them to their grade levels.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

HANDBOOK OF ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE COMPREHENSION AND VOCABULARY WITHIN A WHOLE LANGUAGE FRAMEWORK
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to Handbook ......................... 34
Activities for Island of the Blue Dolphins .......... 35
Activities for Old Yeller .......................... 41
Activities for The Incredible Journey .............. 46
Activities for Heidi ............................... 52
Activities for Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing .... 57
Activities for Be a Perfect Person in Just Three Days 62
INTRODUCTION TO HANDBOOK

For each of the six books chosen, the following format has been developed: Book title, author, publisher, and a synopsis of the book. Following this information are activities designed to enhance comprehension and vocabulary. Each activity has been given a title, objective, and an explanation of how to use the activity with the book. For each of the six books, the activities are divided into pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities.

The final section of the handbook includes teacher and student evaluation forms which may be completed after using activities for each book.
Book Title: Island of the Blue Dolphins
Author: Scott O'Dell
Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960

SYNOPSIS OF BOOK

Karana, an Indian girl of twelve, lives with her people on the island of San Nicolas, one of the eight islands in the Channel Islands off the coast of Southern California. Life goes smoothly until the coming of the Aleut ship. The men come to hunt sea otters, and promise Karana's father Chief Chowig, that both will share in the hunt. They do not keep their promise, and during the ensuing fighting, many of the villagers, including Karana's father, are killed.

An elder of the tribe, Kimki, sets out in his canoe to reach the land to the east, where he had once been as a boy. Apparently he is successful, for a ship other than the Aleuts comes to take the people off the island. On board ship, Karana finds that her six year old brother, Ramo, is missing. The ship will not go back for him so she dives into the water and swims back to the island. She and Ramo are alone there.

Ramo is killed by a wild dog pack, and Karana is truly alone. She captures the leader of the pack, tames him, and names him Rontu. They become inseparable, and he is her
faithful companion. After his death, she captures and tames his son, and names him Rontu-Aru.

Karana uses the resources of the island for food, shelter, and clothing. Only once during the eighteen years that she spends there alone does she hear a human voice. This voice is that of a girl that another Aleut ship brings, when they come to hunt again. The two girls meet briefly, using gestures and words in their own languages to converse.

When Karana is 30 years old, a ship of explorers and a priest visit the island. Karana and Rontu-Aru go with them to Mission Santa Barbara, leaving their island home and starting a new life.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

MAP SKILLS To develop students' knowledge of the locale and setting of the story.

Provide the students with a large, blank outline map of California. They will use an encyclopedia or atlas to obtain information. Their task is to locate certain areas, indicate and label them in the correct places on the map, and, in some instances, make drawings. They will locate and label the following:

a. Santa Barbara
b. Los Angeles
c. San Diego
d. San Francisco
e. Rialto - San Bernardino area
f. Pacific Ocean
GEOGRAPHY

To provide students with a knowledge of the location of specific islands, one of which is mentioned in the book.

Using the map provided above, ask the students to find the eight islands that comprise the Channel Island chain, draw them in the right place, and make them the correct size and shape. The islands they will be looking for are:

- a. San Clemente Island
- b. Santa Catalina Island
- c. San Nicolas Island
- d. Santa Barbara Island and Anacaoa Island (Note: both are so small that they are shown together as the Channel Islands National Monument.)
- e. Santa Cruz Island
- f. Santa Rosa Island
- g. San Miguel Island

RESEARCH/ART

To provide students with information about early life on the islands while focusing on the Pleistocene elephant.

On the Channel Islands National Monument, there are fossil remains of marine animals without backbones and of the Pleistocene era elephants. Students will do research to find out what these elephants looked like and what size they were. After doing this, they will make a drawing of a Pleistocene elephant. Underneath the drawing, they will write a few sentences giving general and/or specific information about the animal. Display these in the school library or on the classroom literature board.

RESEARCH/ART

To provide students with information on the many sea animals which are mentioned in the book.

Many sea animals are mentioned in the book. Using encyclopedias and various reference books, have the students find information about the following and write a brief report about each. To accompany the report, they will make a
drawing of each animal. They will find out about the following:

a. Dolphin  
b. Sea Otter  
c. Abalone  
d. Sea Elephant  
e. Devilfish (Octopus)

Illustrations should be neat and in proportion according to the animal's size. Each should be colored correctly.

MATH

To develop students' understanding of the measurement term "league."

On page 7, Captain Orlov says that the coast of Santa Barbara is twenty leagues away. Ask the students to find out how long a league is in miles. They will find that it is given as 2.4 to 4.6 miles. If the students have not yet learned about decimals in math, have them use only the whole numbers of 2 and 4. If they have had decimals, they should use the whole number and decimal in their computations.

They will use this information and do the following:

a. Find the distance to the coast of Santa Barbara, using both figures.  
b. Using information given on page 9, find the size of the Island of the Blue Dolphins.

DURING-READING ACTIVITIES

SPECULATION To develop students' understanding of cause/effect relationships.

On page 51, Karana says the, "The laws of Ghalas-at forbade the making of weapons by women of the tribe." On page 54, she asks if "...the four winds blow in from the four directions of the world and smother me?...or the earth tremble and bury me beneath its falling rocks?"
...or the sea rise over the island in a
terrible flood?...or the weapons break
in my hands?" What reasons would there
be that would cause the tribe to believe
that women should not make weapons?
Discuss the above questions with the
students, and ask them to suggest
reasons as they think of them. Write
their responses on the chalkboard or
overhead projector transparency.

SEQUENCING

To develop students' understanding of a
sequence of events.

On pages 60-68, there is an account of
Karana's journey in the canoe. The
students will work in cooperative peer
groups. Their task is to choose the
major events from those pages and put
them into sequential order. Let each
group discuss the events and make their
own decisions about what to include and
what to reject. Each group may choose
two to four of the events to illustrate.
When finished, they will mount the
sequencing and illustrations on colored
paper. Display these in the library or
on the classroom literature board.

DESCRIPTION

To develop understanding of description
and its purpose.

On pages 108-111, there is a description
of the fight between Rontu and two dogs
of the pack. Have the students use the
information given and write an account
of the fight in their own words. Remind
them to be accurate and to describe the
scene and events as best they can. If
they wish to make an illustration to go
with the description, they may do so.
SCHEMATIC

To expand students' understanding of specific story concepts.

After reading pages 165-170, have the students define the following as they appear to be in the story, giving complete information.

a. Weather conditions
b. Animal behavior
c. Ocean conditions and movement
d. Land movements

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

USING RESOURCES

To have students summarize natural resources and develop understanding of the term.

Have the students refer to the book and give as much information as they can as to what natural resources Karana used for the following. They should also tell how she made use of them to provide for her needs.

a. Food
b. Shelter
c. Clothing
d. Weapons
e. Making canoes
f. Keeping track of time
g. Taming animals
h. Amusements
## ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title:</th>
<th>Old Yeller</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>Fred Gipson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher:</td>
<td>Harper &amp; Row, 1956</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the 1860's, a family of four was living on the frontier in Texas. They were Papa; Mama; Travis, a fourteen-year-old; and Little Arliss, who was five. They were farmers and also raised cattle. The men of the settlement decided to drive the cattle to Kansas to sell them. This left Travis to be the man of the family for several months.

Travis wanted a horse, but Papa said he needed a dog more. Papa was proven to be right when Old Yeller, a dingy yellow dog who had a bark like a yell, showed up. At first, Travis didn't like the dog, but as time went on and Old Yeller proved his usefulness, they became inseparable.

Old Yeller helped Travis herd the wild pigs so that he could mark them with the family's brand. He saved Little Arliss when a bear charged him. He saved Mama and Lisbeth, a neighbor girl, when they were attacked by a mad wolf. In the process, however, he was bitten by the wolf. The change that he would get hydrophobia was too great to take, so Travis had to shoot his loyal and loving companion.
Lisbeth, however, helped Travis more than he knew, for she gave him a puppy that Old Yeller had fathered. As the puppy grew, he began to exhibit some of Old Yeller's traits, and Travis knew that he hadn't really lost Old Yeller -- he had gained another companion.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

**MAP/SOCIAL STUDIES SKILLS**

To develop students' knowledge of the location and the setting of the story.

Have students locate Texas on a map of the United States. Help students to see why it is called a southwestern state.

Display a topographical map of Texas. The only designation of the locale of the story is "Texas hill country." After students know how to read this map, have them speculate on what part of Texas the family lived in.

Another indicator of the locale of the story is that Abilene, Kansas was about 600 miles to the north. Students can use either rulers or paper cut to the scale of the map to find approximate distances. By measuring south from Abilene, they will be able to narrow the area down even more.

Have students compare the size of Texas with the other states. They should be able to see that it is the second largest, only slightly smaller than Alaska.
RESEARCH

To develop students' understanding of the physical description of the setting of the story.

Students will work in cooperative peer groups. They will use encyclopedias to find the following information:

- a. Present state capital and names and dates of other state capitals.
- b. Highest and lowest elevations. Compare these with the highest and lowest in California.
- c. In what year did Texas become a state? Was this before or after the story takes place? How many years?
- d. What is the distance in miles north to south? East to west? Compare these figures to the distances in California.
- e. Locate and name the four land regions of Texas.

WRITING FORMAT

To have students summarize the setting and develop understanding of the information gained in the previous activity.

Using the information gained in research (from previous activity), each peer group will organize that information into a one-page report.

DURING-READING ACTIVITIES

DIALECT

To develop an understanding of the term "dialect."

On chalkboard, tagboard, or overhead projector, write the word "Dialect." Then write a definition: "Dialect is a regional variety of language distinguished by features of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation from other regional varieties." Explain what this means.
As an example, write the word "pancake." Ask students if they have ever heard another word for it. They may come up with "hot cake" or "flapjack." Elicit any other words used in dialect that they may know.

Point out that, as they read, they will find words and phrases that they may not know.

When students do find these words and phrases, they are to write them in their student book and have them ready for class discussion.

To have students understand the term "colloquial speech" and be able to recognize examples.

Tell students that this book also uses colloquial speech. This is an expression or conversation that is more localized than dialect. An example from the book is when Travis went to cut some "middlin meat." Depending on the region, this could be meat that has hung for a while, or meat that was near the center of the animal.

Students should watch for these, also, and write them in their books.

In addition to class discussion of these words and phrases, it will be helpful for the teacher to pause frequently during reading to elicit responses from students as to meanings. Many times, this can be done from the context.

After discussion, students should write the word, phrase, or expression in their books, and write an explanation of meaning.
WRITE A LETTER  
To have students show an understanding of life in the 1800's.

Write a letter to either Travis or Mama. Tell either of them what your daily life is like. Tell some ways your life is like theirs and some ways it is different.

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

WRITING A DIARY  
To have students develop imagination through writing.

Before doing this activity, discuss with students what kinds of information a good diary entry should have. These might include:

a. Date  
b. Place(s) where event(s) happened  
c. Weather  
d. What happened  
e. Writer's reaction

Point out that diary entries need not be long, but should include the above information, plus anything the writer wants to add.

Students are to keep a diary for one week. They are to be Travis, and react as he might to situations they make up. Do not let them use events in the book. Encourage imagination, coupled with good writing.
ACTIVITIES

Book Title: The Incredible Journey
Author: Sheila Burnford
Publisher: Little, Brown, and Company, 1961

SYNOPSIS OF BOOK

Luath, a young Labrador retriever; Bodger, an old bull terrier; and Tao, a Siamese cat, had, for nine months been living at the home of John Longridge in northwestern Ontario, Canada. Their owners, the Hunters, were in England, where Jim Hunter, the father of Elizabeth and Peter, was a visiting professor. The animals were comfortable in their temporary home, but they yearned for their own family.

John Longridge left on a short camping trip, leaving the animals in the devoted care of a neighbor, Mrs. Oakes. When she arrived two hours after he had left and found no animals, she assumed that he had taken them with him. During the two hours of being alone, the young dog had made a decision -- he and his friends would go home. Home, however, was 250 miles away, through wooded wilderness, lakes, rushing rivers, rough timber lanes, lonely farms, and a few widely-scattered small towns and villages.

The animals encounter many perils. The old dog, exhausted after a very long walk, lies down and is unable to
get up. He is attacked by a bear cub and mauled. His friends come to his aid and save him, driving off the cub and mother bear. The cat is swept away in a raging river. For a few days he rests, eats, and regains strength at the home of a farm family before rejoining his friends. The young dog is attacked by a porcupine, who shoots its quills in his face. The dog is soon unable to hunt, as the quills cause his face to swell and become infected. The cat hunts for him and keeps him alive with the food he brings.

After many adventures and hardships, starving and exhausted, they reach the lake cottage of the Hunter family. Fortunately, they and John Longridge had been spending the weekend there, and there is a joyful and triumphant reunion of the father and the young dog, Luath; Peter and the old dog, Bodger; and Elizabeth and the cat, Tao.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

WRITING PROMPT/ART

To have students develop an understanding of the term "personification."

Write this example of personification on the chalkboard: "The cruel, crawling, clawing sea." Have the students discuss what they feel the words mean, make an illustration showing these features, and write a paragraph of explanation.

WRITING PROMPT/HYPERBOLE/ART

To develop understanding of the term "hyperbole."

Explain the term "hyperbole" as exaggeration of the facts. Read the book Millions of Cats, by Wanda Gag, to the class. Are there really "millions?"
Have students work in cooperative peer groups and brainstorm ideas that suggest hyperbole. After agreeing on one idea, the group illustrates the idea, and writes a paragraph of explanation.

Each group shares art and written work with the class.

To develop understanding of a topographical map and its effect on human life.

Display maps of the United States and Canada together, so that students may realize that Canada is our neighbor.

Locate Ontario, Canada, on a topographical map. Explain how a topographical map shows physical features.

On chalkboard, tagboard, or overhead projector, list headings such as:

a. Mountains
b. Rivers
c. Forests
d. Plains

Elicit student responses as to which of these features are found in Ontario, and write them under the headings.

Students speculate on how these features affect the people, clothing, work they do, and communication. List these responses under the following headings:

a. People
b. Clothing
c. Work
d. Communication

Students work in cooperative peer groups. They are to draw an outline map of the physical features. Finally, they will write three to five sentences about each of the eight headings.
WRITING PROMPT

To summarize and make use of the terms "hyperbole" and "personification."

After students are able to identify personification and hyperbole, they should keep examples of these.

Each student should have a student book and a separate page for each of the two terms. As examples are encountered in reading, they should be entered in the appropriate place.

DURING-READING ACTIVITIES

WRITING/ART

To have students develop an understanding of the term "scene" when referring to a book.

Choose a section of the book to read that describes a particular scene. Students should:

a. Close eyes
b. Fold hands
c. Listen carefully

After the section has been read, students will illustrate what they heard and write a descriptive paragraph of their drawing.

SEQUENCING AND INTERPRETATION

To have students develop an understanding that questions do not always have a "right" or "wrong" answer.

This book lends itself to many questions of "how" and "why" certain things occurred. Some examples are:

HOW did the young dog know which way was home?

HOW did the animals know that John Longridge wouldn't be back for awhile?

HOW was the young dog able to survive after being shot with the porcupine quills?
WHY did the cat stay with the little girl, Helvi?

WHY did the Indians feel as they did about the old dog?

Raise these and other questions. Students work in cooperative peer groups and discuss answers, based on the text.

Have each group write its reasons and share them with the class.

There are not necessarily "right" or "wrong" answers to any question, if students can support their ideas.

To have students understand the importance of word selection to enrich meaning.

When reading to students, stop occasionally to point out a particularly beautiful passage. It may be descriptive, graphic, or words used in usual ways. Do this quite often to help students learn to heighten appreciation for words.

Have the students keep a separate page in their books for these headings:

a. Words
b. Phrases
c. Sentences

As an ongoing activity, have students write examples in the appropriate place as they find them in reading.

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

DESCRIPTION/ CHARACTERISTICS

To have students summarize the main characters and develop understanding of characteristics and physical descriptions.
Students will need four pieces of paper for this activity. They will put each of the following headings on a separate sheet:

a. Tao the Cat
b. Bodger the Old Dog
c. Luath the Young Dog
d. John Longridge

Students then draw a line down the middle of each page. One column is headed "Physical Description." The other is headed "Characteristics."

Students should find as many words as possible that fit into these categories, and place them under the correct heading for each character. This activity should be a cooperative peer group project, as it would involve discussion and cooperation.
ACTIVITIES

Book Title: Heidi
Author: Johanna Spyri
Publisher: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958

SYNOPSIS OF BOOK

Heidi, a five-year-old orphan, is taken by her aunt Dete to live on a high mountain in Switzerland with her grandfather, who is called Alm-Uncle by the villagers below. Heidi grows to love the mountains, her grandfather, and the simple life in his hut. Peter, a goat herder, becomes her friend as he drives the goats daily up and down the mountain. Peter's grandmother lives in the valley and becomes Heidi's special friend. She is old, blind, and lonely, and welcomes the youth and vitality of Heidi.

Aunt Dete, who is in service in Frankfurt, learns that a companion is needed for the sickly, invalid daughter of well-to-do Herr Sesemann. She takes Heidi away from Grandfather to live in that household and to be with the daughter, Clara. Heidi tries to do her best to adjust to a more restrictive household, and achieves some success. She longs for the freedom of the mountains and Grandfather, though, and gradually becomes ill. Herr Sesemann's friend, the doctor, advises him that Heidi should return to the mountains and Grandfather if she is to become well.
The doctor, who has become Heidi's good friend, returns her to the mountains and Grandfather, and she does become well and happy. Clara comes to visit, ill though she is, and in a push chair. With Grandfather's encouragement, goat's milk, cheese, and fresh mountain air, Clara also becomes well, and walks again. Her father is so delighted that he promises Grandfather that Heidi will never be in want. He guarantees that she will always be able to live in her beloved mountains, even after Grandfather is gone.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

SOCIAL STUDIES/SCIENCE/MAP
SKILLS/MATH/CULTURE

To develop students' knowledge of the locale and the setting of the story.

Introduce book and author. If Heidi was first published in 1884, how long ago was that?

Display maps of the world and Europe. Locate Switzerland, its mountains, and Germany. Tell students that Germany was one country until after World War II. How long was it divided? When was it reunited?

Using pictures of Switzerland and Germany for display, have students speculate on and discuss the weather, the mountains, and how they could affect the land and the life of the people.

Display artifacts and historical and cultural materials depicting life in the Swiss Alps and Germany during the 1800's. Discuss differences and similarities of those two countries and the United States.
WRITING PROMPT  To develop an understanding of comparison and contrast.

Students do research on Germany and/or Switzerland. They will write five differences and five similarities between those countries and the United States.

DURING-READING ACTIVITIES

WRITING PROMPT  To have students understand the importance of character description.

Have students write a physical description of the following characters:

   a. Heidi
   b. Grandfather
   c. Peter
   d. Grandmother

Divide students into cooperative peer groups and have them read each other's descriptions. Students cooperatively decide which description of each person most nearly fits the text. The reader from each group reads them aloud to the class.

REWITING  To summarize character descriptions and develop rewriting skills.

On chalkboard, tagboard, or overhead projector, make a heading for each character:

   a. Heidi
   b. Grandfather
   c. Peter
   d. Grandmother

As physical descriptions are read, list descriptions of each in phrases. Elicit responses from students:

   Does description fit the text?
What other words could be used to describe more accurately? More fully? More colorfully?

Write responses from students under correct headings. Be certain that student understand different words used. Explain if necessary.

Then ask students to rewrite their descriptions, using new words as well as their original ones. The idea is to edit first, then improve writing as much as is possible for each student.

CHARACTER

To develop students' understanding of the terms "courage" and "trust."

On chalkboard, tagboard, or overhead projector, write the words "courage" ad "trust." Discuss the meanings and applicability of the words to each of the characters used in the previous two activities. Elicit as many responses as possible from students; write the responses.

Have students work in their cooperative peer groups, and write one group project for each of the characters. They are to cite examples from the text, showing how each person showed "courage" and "trust" toward the others.

EXAMPLE: Heidi showed trust in a grandfather she had never met by not being afraid to stay with him.

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

SPECIFIC To develop students' use of imagination
VOCABULARY and understanding of terms.
DEVELOPMENT/ ART
Read phrases from the story which help students form a picture in the minds' eye. Request students to:

a. Fold hands
b. Close eyes
c. Enjoy the quiet
d. Think about the words and make a picture in their minds

Students choose two phrases and illustrate each phrase.

**TALKING MURAL**

To have students develop an understanding of sequencing.

Give each cooperative peer group a piece of white butcher paper approximately 2 x 4 feet. Assign each group a section of the story to illustrate. Captions may be printed above, below, or in boxes or bubbles (as in the comics) on the illustrations.

Make this an on-going activity, and allow students plenty of time to work. Encourage students to show attention to detail and color. Many of the words in this book pertain to different colors, and students should refer to the text to be accurate. This is also a good way to get them to re-read.

Put the finished products in sequential order, so that the story can be read from the captions. This makes a good bulletin board or Open House display.
SYNOPSIS OF BOOK

Peter Warren Hatcher is the "Fourth Grade Nothing" of the title. He lives in New York City with his father, mother, and younger brother, Farley Drexel, who is called Fudge. Peter's father works for an advertising agency, and his mother stays home to care for the children.

Fudge, who is almost three years old, causes a great deal of trouble in the family. He causes his father to lose an important client by bringing Peter's turtle to the dinner table and frightening the wife of the client. Later, he shows up in Peter's gorilla Halloween mask and frightens her again. The client and his wife depart and take their business elsewhere.

Fudge decides not to eat, and his mother tries various tactics, but to no avail. Finally, father decides that he will "Eat that cereal or wear it." When Fudge refuses, father puts him in the bathtub and pours the cereal over him. That's the end of the hunger strike.

Peter has his trouble with this brother. Fudge scribbles over his almost-completed school poster; he knocks
out his two front teeth while Peter and two friends are in charge of him; he refuses to ride a Toddle-Bike for a commercial, and Peter has to help out to get him to perform.

By this time, Peter is feeling sorry for himself, and like a "Fourth Grade Nothing." Fudge gets all the attention and he is left out. If he is included, it is usually to help his mother get Fudge to do something. The final insult for Peter comes when Fudge swallows his turtle, Dribble. Fudge gets all the attention at the hospital and from his parents. After Fudge is well and home again, Peter finds that his father and mother haven't forgotten him. Father brings home something that Peter has wanted for a long time -- a dog. As a reminder of all the events, Peter names his dog Turtle.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

SOCIAL STUDIES/ MAP SKILLS/ MULTI-CULTURAL SKILLS

To develop students' knowledge of the locale of the settings of the story.

Most children have heard of New York City, but not all know where it is. Display a United States map and have children locate it.

Have students compare the size of the state of New York with that of California. Tell them that almost as many people live in New York State as do in California.

Display pictures of high-rise buildings in the city. Help students to see that because New York is a smaller state than California, space is more limited and taller buildings have been built.
Point out that Peter and his family live on the twelfth four of an apartment building, and that he must ride an elevator to get to their apartment.

Have students discuss differences between their homes and Peter's. How are they the same? What problems might there be with living on the twelfth floor? Would they like to live this way? Why, or why not?

**WRITING PROMPT**

To have students reflect back on specific incidents with their younger siblings.

Have each student write a short composition about the worst time they had with a younger brother or sister. What were the circumstances? What happened? What did they do? What were the results?

**ART**

To have students summarize details into a picture.

After finishing their compositions, student are to illustrate a particular part and write a sentence or two explaining their illustration. Display compositions and illustrations on bulletin board.

**DURING-READING ACTIVITIES**

**READ AROUND GROUPS**

To provide students with the chance to read aloud for understanding.

Each chapter is a separate entity, and does not depend on the preceding or following one to carry on the narrative. The language is easy, and students should have little difficulty with reading it.

Students work in cooperative peer groups. Each group will be responsible for reading a chapter aloud to the total class.
The group chooses who will do the speaking parts and who will be the narrator.

ART: TALKING BOOK

To have students develop understanding of a scene.

Each group, in addition to reading a chapter aloud, will make a large mural which will show the locale of the chapter. Give each group a piece of butcher paper approximately 4 x 6 feet, paints, colored construction paper, crayons, glue, and scissors. Direct them to use the materials in any way they see fit to show the scene. They will use large letters and numbers to print the chapter number and title.

After each chapter has been read aloud to the class, display the talking book on a bulletin board.

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

CHARACTERISTICS

To develop students' understanding of character traits.

Have class discussion as to what constitutes characteristics of a person. Write responses on overhead projector transparency, and ask students to explain, or give an example from the book, as to why they think as they do.

After discussion, give students five pieces of paper. Have students write each of the following headings on a separate page:

a. Peter
b. Fudge
c. Mother
d. Father
e. Sheila

Have students list as many characteristics for each character as they can. Remind them that they are free to use the book.
After work is completed, students meet in cooperative peer groups. Students will each read their list for Peter.

Group reaches consensus as to five to ten characteristics that Peter shows. Recorder writes them down.

They continue in this way for the rest of the characters. When work is completed, the reader for each group reads the list for Peter, then Fudge, and continues in this way until all characters have been read.

To provide students with an understanding of character development.

As a result of swallowing the turtle, Fudge had to go to the hospital. Do you think he was different after he came home? Do you think he was better behaved? Was he easier to get along with?

Have class discussion about the above possible change in Fudge. Elicit reasons why students think as they do.

At the end of the discussion, direct students to write two ways they think Fudge may be different, and two ways they think he will be the same. Each cooperative peer group will choose one way they think he will be the same to illustrate.
ACTIVITIES

Book Title: Be a Perfect Person in Just Three Days
Author: Stephen Manes
Publisher: Bantam Books, Inc., 1983

SYNOPSIS OF BOOK

Milo Crinkley didn't set out to be perfect, but when a library book bearing the title How to Be a Perfect Person in Just Three Days fell off the top shelf and hit him in the head, he decided that it might not be such a bad idea. It didn't look as if it would be too hard, either, because it only took three days to become perfect, according to the author, Dr. K. Pinkerton Silverfish.

Milo manages the first day without too much difficulty, but day number two is quite a problem because he can't eat. However, he does make it through day two. Day three is the real problem. According to Dr. Silverfish, he is to do absolutely nothing -- not eat, not sleep, not read, not watch TV -- NOTHING!

While doing "nothing," Milo decides that perfect people lead dull and boring lives, and that he doesn't really want to be perfect. Much to everyone's relief, including his own, he returns to being the imperfect Milo he was before, and decides that it's not such a bad way to be after all.
PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

WHAT IS A PERFECT PERSON?
To have students define and understand the term "perfect person."

Before any of the book has been read, ask the students what they think a perfect person would be like. Ask them to think in relation to these things:

- a. What character traits a perfect person would have.
- b. What would a perfect person like to do?
- c. What would perfect person NOT do?

A PERFECT WORLD
To provide students with the understanding that a phrase may have many definitions.

If a perfect person could live in a perfect world, what would it be like? What would make up a perfect world? You might want to narrow the focus to other things, such as a perfect school or a perfect community. Let the students discuss these ideas for a short time. Then tell them to choose one of the three ideas (world, community, or school) and write their ideas about what would make this a perfect place. They may make a listing of points, or they may include them in a unified composition. Tell them to be as specific as they can, rather than general in their thinking.

DURING-READING ACTIVITIES

SPECIFIC INFORMATION
To have students analyze and summarize specific passages from the book.

Read chapter four, then ask the students what Milo gained by wearing broccoli. Dr. Silverfish mentions three specific things. What are they? Does he really mean that wearing a stalk of broccoli will cause a person to gain these things? Could it be that he is saying
that if a person has the courage of his/her convictions he/she will achieve the same result?

DISCUSSION
To have the students look beyond the obvious information which is given to them.

Guide the discussion in this general vein, and try to get the students to see beyond the obvious. Mark Twain once said that "The best way to get people to see the truth is to write it in humor." Ask the students to think about the quote, then ask them to comment on it. Do they think Mark Twain was right or wrong? Why do they think as they do? Is it possible to say or write about serious things in a funny way? Discuss these and related ideas that the students may suggest.

WRITING PROMPT
To develop students' understanding of "serious to funny" relationships.

Tell the students that, as a result of the discussion, they are to write about a serious idea in a funny way. They will write one paragraph, and they will choose their own topic.

FORMULATING LISTS
To have students understand "desirable" vs. "undesirable" qualities in people.

Have students work in cooperative peer groups. Their task will be to formulate lists. The specific topics they will use will be:

a. What qualities and characteristics are desirable in a person?

b. What qualities and characteristics are NOT desirable in a person?

c. What examples can they think of that show the difference between just "getting by" and doing one's best?
POST-READING ACTIVITIES

READ ALOUD

To develop oral reading skills by reading to an audience.

Arrange a time with at least one primary teacher (Grades 1-3) when your class may visit that classroom and read their book to the younger students. If a short time is needed, you may wish to have your students read one-to-one with the primary students. If so, it would be a good idea to leave the books there for a time, so that eventually all students will have read all of the books. If possible try to have your class visit more than one primary classroom.

A PERFECT MENU

To have students develop the use of detail when writing.

Point out that it is easy to see from the book the Milo liked to eat. Reread page 53 to see what he had for dinner. Note the variety of foods, and the amount.

Tell the students to think of all their favorite foods: ones they especially like and ones they would consider to be "perfect." They will write a menu for a breakfast, a lunch, and a dinner that they would consider to be "perfect." They should list the amounts of each food, how it would be prepared, and specific types of ingredients.

EXAMPLE: Students may list a bologna sandwich. They need to be more specific. What kind of bread? Lettuce or not? Mayonnaise or mustard? How many slices of bologna? Tell them to be specific.
APPENDIX B

EVALUATION
Teacher Evaluation Form

Book Title: ____________________________________________

I. Activities I felt aided most in developing comprehension and vocabulary -- and reason(s) why.

II. Activities which I felt did not aid as much in the comprehension and development -- and reason(s) why.

III. Things I would do differently when using the activities again for this book.
After you read the book: ____________________________

1. Which activity did you enjoy doing the most?

2. Why did you enjoy doing that activity the most?

3. Which activity did you enjoy the least?

4. Why did you enjoy that activity the least?

5. Of all the activities you have done with this story, which ones helped you understand the book better? Tell how they helped you to understand better.
Informal Teacher Evaluation

After implementing and using the activities given for the books *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, *Be a Perfect Person in Just Three Days*, and *Old Yeller*, and observing students while they were completing the activities, I found the results to be extremely favorable for the development of comprehension and vocabulary.

All of the activities for the three books seemed to aid in the development of both comprehension and vocabulary. The students were engaged in activities in which key terms, which were unfamiliar to them, were constantly being used either orally or in writing. I noted also that the students continued to use the words and terms both in and out of class.

The activities appeared to promote all of the language processes -- listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The students were constantly engaged in activities while, at the same time, they were covering all areas of the curriculum. The integration of literature throughout the curriculum made for an exciting and stimulating learning environment. Since all of the activities appeared viable, I would not suggest deletion of any of them.
When using the activities, I suggest not to "rush" through them and try to complete them all within a certain time frame. I tended to rush through many of the activities and found the students to be "rushed" also. It is suggested, with time permitting, to let the students get thoroughly involved and have them decide when they have completed an activity. The only drawback I found in using the activities was the time constraint in using and completing all of the suggested activities for each of the books. If I were to use these books again, I would select fewer activities in order to be able to spend more quality time on each activity.

Overall, all of the activities for the three books evaluated aided in the enthusiasm of the students. The learning environment became one of cooperative learning and friendship, while developing the students' comprehension and vocabulary.

Informal Student Evaluation

After completing all the activities for the three books being evaluated, the 34 fourth grade students individually filled out the evaluation form. The results of these evaluations follow:
STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF *ISLAND OF THE BLUE DOLPHINS*

Question #1: Which activity did you enjoy doing the most?
Answer: The activity which was enjoyed most by the students was Activity #4, Research/Art (p.37), in which they researched the various sea animals and drew them themselves.

Question #2: Why did you enjoy doing that activity the most?
Answer: The students mentioned they liked Activity #4, Research/Art, the best because they learned information about the sea animals they had not known before.

Question #3: Which activity did you enjoy the least?
Answer: All 34 students listed "none." The response was simply, "Because we liked doing them all. There really weren't any we disliked."

Question #4: Of all the activities you have done with this story, which ones helped you understand the book better? Tell how they helped you to understand better.
Answer: Overwhelmingly, all 34 students responded that all of the activities helped them to understand the book better. As one student said, "They made the book much more interesting."
STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF OLD YELLER

Question #1: Which activity did you enjoy doing the most?
Answer: The activity listed as most enjoyed was Activity #6, Write a Letter (p.45).

Question #2: Why did you enjoy doing that activity the most?
Answer: The students said they enjoyed writing the letter because they actually felt like they became that character.

Question #3: Which activity did you enjoy the least?
Answer: Thirty-four out of 34 students said that there was not an activity which they did not enjoy.

Question #4: Of all the activities you have done with this story, which ones helped you understand the book better? Tell how they helped you to understand better.
Answer: All of the students responded that all of the activities which they did with Old Yeller helped them to understand the book better. According to one student, "All of the things we did made it more fun, so I paid more attention and really learned a lot."
STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF BE A PERFECT PERSON

IN JUST THREE DAYS

Question #1: Which activity did you enjoy doing the most?
Answer: The activity which was most enjoyed was Activity #6, Formulating Lists (p. 64).

Question #2: Why did you enjoy doing that activity the most?
Answer: Thirty-three out of 34 students said they liked this activity because they really thought about themselves and whether or not they had desirable or undesirable qualities. They wrote that they learned a little more about themselves.

Question #3: Which activity did you enjoy doing the least?
Answer: All 34 students overwhelmingly responded that there was not one single activity which they disliked. They liked all of them.

Question #4: Of all the activities you have done with this story, which ones helped you understand the book better? Tell how they helped you to understand better.
Answer: Thirty-four out of 34 students answered that all of the activities helped them tremendously to understand this book better. One student responded with, "I really got
into this book. All of the fun things we did made the book easier to understand. I even went home thinking about it."
Conclusion

In this informal evaluation, there was agreement by both the teacher and the students that the activities were valuable. There are many reasons why this was found. First, the activities were based on "hands-on" learning. The students were actively involved at all times, keeping their interest level up and their minds focused on what they were doing. Very rarely were the students passive listeners. Secondly, the activities which accompanied the literature tied all the curricular areas (math, language arts, science, art, and social studies) together. This integration helped to establish a language environment. The students were learning in all areas, but kept continued interest, due to a variety of activities.
RESOURCES


Reuse, R. B. (1977). All it takes is a little incentive. Media & Methods, 13, 59.


