

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

**The Family Lamp:
A Case Study of Storybook Reading**

**by
Clare B. Waddell**

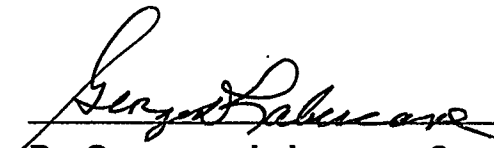
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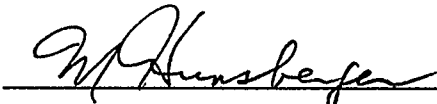
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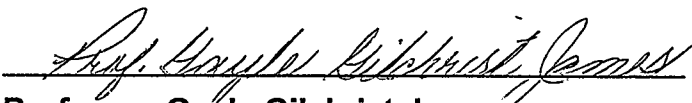
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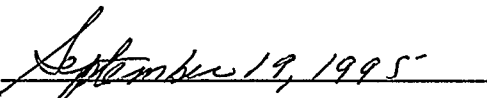
THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, The Family Lamp: A Case Study of Storybook Reading, submitted by Clare Bernadette Waddell in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.


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Abstract

In this naturalistic case study, the storyreading tradition of one family--comprising two parents and four children--was closely examined and described. The purpose of this study was to explore questions relating to familial relationships, rituals and routines of storyreading, and literacy development, within the context of a family storybook circle. Two fields of research, family literacy and reading as aesthetic responding, provided a framework for the exploration of the study questions. Over a five month period nightly storybook readings were audiotaped, providing transcripts of family storytime talk. These data were enhanced by additional ethnographic data collection techniques. Data were read and reread and recurring themes and patterns emerged. Maggie, a six-year old member of the family, emerged as a key informant; a comprehensive analysis of Maggie's storytime talk was followed by a brief look at other family members and their contributions to family literacy.

Significant findings include the way natural familial roles entered the storybook event. These roles were played out within the evening storytime talk. These normal familial relationships allowed evening storytime to be more than simply the reading of stories, but to be a real part of family life, involving lessons in literacy, and in life, itself. Sibling relationships, particularly, were found to play an important role in the literacy development of family members through the interaction that occurred. A wide range of reading interests, abilities, and levels of understanding allowed the multiple perspectives of all the siblings to enrich the kinds of interpretations that were offered up at storytime. Further significant findings suggested a broadened definition of literacy development, beyond mastering the conventions of print. Aesthetic response to stories functioned in the construction of meaning for the children, and allowed the children lived-through experiences in the text-worlds. The children were able to "live in the text," despite being unable, at times, to identify words or letters in the text. Learning to *love* books was as powerful an outcome of the storybook event as was learning to *read* books.

Acknowledgments

Anyone who has ever set out to tell a story knows what a challenging task it can be to undertake alone. How much easier it is, and how much better the story turns out to be when there are friends to help with the telling. Friends can help to organize the chaos of all the story pieces; they can remind the storyteller of all the parts she missed; they can nod and smile with encouragement as they listen to the tale; and friends can nudge the storyteller along with a whispered “Hurry-up and tell it.” I had friends who helped me tell my story and I am proud to acknowledge them now, knowing that my story is a better one for having had their help.

Dr. George Labercane, my university advisor, guided my efforts from the early days of vague ideas and questions about a thesis topic through to the oral examination of this completed paper. George’s wealth of knowledge, his gentle kindness, and wonderful sense of humour made working with him a pleasure. The simple words “thank you” seem inadequate but they are heartfelt.

Peter Waddell became my unofficial--but very much appreciated--technical advisor. Peter willingly shared his computer savvy--opening new files, deleting old ones, retrieving lost ones, printing completed ones--and generally helping me to get my scribbled words into a polished printed document. I thank him for his time and patience.

Dr. Margaret Hunsberger and Dr. Gayle James, members of my examining committee, took the time to read this paper and discuss it with me. I was touched by the interest they showed in my family and the obvious care with which they read my paper. I was grateful for their clarifying questions and editing suggestions, and for the insight they shared in the areas of language education and family life.

Ellen Sears and Deirdre Richardson, colleagues and friends, ploughed through drafts of my paper in efforts to proof-read and edit. I thank them for their time and the care they took in helping to ensure a coherent and “clean” paper.

The staff of the Professional Resource Centre--Jane Webb, Carole Metcalfe, Susan Lachmuth, Vivian Smith, and Avis Cody--helped to make the research part of my paper less intimidating than it might have been. They always made me--and whatever children accompanied me--feel most welcome in their library. I thank them for their expertise and for their warmth.

Dedication

**To John and Bernadette Macdonald,
who, many years ago,
lit a lamp of learning for their five children
and who lovingly tend it still.**

**To Laura, Maggie, Charlie, and Ian Waddell,
who make the task of lamplighting
a most delightful privilege.**

**And to Peter,
my fellow lamplighter
and dearest friend.**

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CHAPTER I

BEGINNING THE STORY: INTRODUCTION

I am sitting on the couch in the living room with Maggie on one side of me and Charlie on the other. Laura sits at one end of the couch with her own novel. For a change, Peter and I are both around for stories but I end up doing the reading while Peter settles into the leather chair to snooze.
(Fieldnotes, October 6, 1993).

Many years ago, before electricity had reached the homes of rural Prince Edward Island, a simple kerosene lamp was lit against the darkness each evening. On winter evenings there were many hours of darkness, and often--so as not to waste the oil--just one lamp was lit for a household. The room with the lamp, then, became the gathering place for the members of the family. It was here they gathered, engaged in various chores or pastimes--knitting, mending, writing letters, reading books, smoking, and talking. It was here, in the light of the oil lamp, that family life was created and lived-through. Decisions were made, news was shared, stories were told, and lessons were learned.

Some years later, when I was a child, our family lamp was lit only on stormy winter nights when the power was off. On those evenings my brother, sisters and I were delighted to experience a taste of what it was like to gather around the light and comfort of the oil lamp. Our parents laughed at our delight and told us stories of family life when they'd been children.

Today my husband and I have our own sons and daughters, and although we have an oil lamp on the top shelf of our bookcase, it has never been used. Our gathering place seems to be the living room couch where we often go before bedtime to read stories. Taylor (1986) suggests "Today, in some families at least, the storybook has become the family lamp" (p.152). And, indeed, so it seems in our family. We gather around the warmth and comfort of storybooks. We read, we talk, we argue, we snooze, we teach, we learn. It is here, around the light of the stories we read, that we create and live through family life.

For the past eleven years--as long as we have been parents--Peter and I have read nightly to our children. When, in a fourth floor rented apartment, we first began to read stories to a small pajama-clad girl, we looked no further ahead than down the hall to her bedroom and to some time of peace for ourselves. We were unaware, in any formal sense, of the research which had been done on the benefits of reading to young children. And we certainly did not intend to read stories every night for the next dozen years.

But little Laura grew older and wiser, and she learned to negotiate and to manipulate. "But I can't go to bed yet. You forgot to read me my story." Habits and routines fell into place. Eventually there were not one, not two, but three small people listening nightly to tales removed--always removed and never replaced, it seemed--from the tall bookshelves. During the autumn evenings of 1993, when it was I who sat sandwiched between the children, I brought with me our fourth child, who was surely learning already to love the stories, heard from a safe and cozy place within me.

This nightly ritual, this family tradition, is a story in itself. I wanted to read this story: to explore it, to enjoy it, and--as we do with all good stories--to share it with others. I wanted to get to know the characters, to listen to their dialogue, to understand the roles they played. I wanted to explore the tensions and conflicts, and uncover the themes in this story, both grand and small. By closely watching this story unfold, by writing it, and by sharing it with others, I hoped to gain, for myself and for the research community, a new understanding and appreciation of a family tradition. I hoped to give others studying in the field of family literacy the opportunity to compare their stories to mine, to look for common threads as well as surprises and to have just one more point of reference. I needed to be, at once, a researcher, a storyteller, and a character playing out my role. While this proved difficult and confusing at times, I felt comfortable with the fact that this was all part of the story I was going to tell.

Although our nightly story reading grew out of an intuitive sense of what was "natural to do," rather than from an informed perspective, I have since gained an understanding of and appreciation for the research which has been done in the area of family literacy. These stories of others have influenced mine.

THE STORIES OF OTHERS

In an attempt to establish a theoretical framework for the telling of my story, I have drawn from two distinct areas of research: family literacy and reading as aesthetic responding. I present here a brief overview of studies from these research areas; a more comprehensive literature review is presented in Chapter II.

Family Literacy

Annicchiarico (1992) defines family literacy as

a term used to describe the intimate, yet extremely complex, verbal and written interactions that take place within the home. Research in emergent and family literacy have provided rich descriptions of cultural and contextual factors that play a fundamental role in the child's literacy development (p. 2).

For several decades researchers have studied young children's literacy development from a home and family perspective, providing us with these rich descriptions of cultural and contextual factors. The complexity of studying home and family literacy has been increasingly recognized over the past several years. Researchers (Leichter, 1984; Taylor, 1986) have tried innovative ways of grappling with the problems of studying and reporting social behaviours without decontextualizing those behaviours. These "stories of others" helped me to think of my own in new ways, suggested new directions for me to follow and, in some cases, validated what I felt I was discovering about the family literacy in my own home.

Durkin (1966), and Clark (1976, 1984) were interested in children who arrived at school already reading. In efforts to explain this early reading these researchers examined--among other factors--the home backgrounds of these children. These studies mark the acknowledgment of a relationship between the storybook reading in the home and reading achievement of children. Doake (1981), with his study of the homes of four preschool children, added to this knowledge and understanding of the relationship between emergent reading and shared book experiences in the home.

Heath's (1983) ethnographic study of three communities contributed much to our understanding of how the home lives of children contribute to their literacy learning. Taylor (1983) spent many hours visiting and talking with members of several families in order to study their learning within a family context. Annicchiarico (1992) conducted a case study of a mother's attempts, through participation in a home literacy program, to enhance her children's literacy learning.

Several researchers (Martinez, 1983; Snow and Goldfield, 1983; Martinez and Roser, 1985; Altwerger et al., 1985; Dombey, 1986; Hoffman, 1986; Yaden et al., 1989) conducted case studies of children and parent shared reading events, examining particularly the interactions occurring during the story readings. These studies collectively shed light on the intriguing questions of how storybook reading in the home influences a child's ability and desire to read.

A number of researchers (Pelligrini et al., 1985; Stewart, 1986; Hayden and Fagan, 1987; Joyner and Ray, 1987; Hoffman, 1989; Phillips and McNaughton, 1990; Lancy and Bergin, 1992; Owens, 1992) conducted systematic studies of parent-child pairs reading together in the home. By coding and classifying the interactions which occurred throughout the observed hours of story readings, these researchers were able to generalize about such issues as attitudes toward reading, gender issues, communicative ability, and the nature of child and parent initiated interactions. Snow and Ninio (1986) examined the lessons about books that children are able to learn as they sit with their parents in read-aloud situations.

A number of studies of large populations (Prater, 1985; Manning et al., 1988; Watt, 1989; Ayers, 1991) and their reading habits gave us insight into questions about frequency of reading aloud in the home, types of books read, time and place for reading, and reasons for reading aloud.

Reading as Aesthetic Responding

As I began to examine the conversations which were occurring around our family storybook reading, I began to see conversations emerging between the children

and the stories themselves. In many cases, what I saw were not simply statements *about* a text but rather an exchange *with* a text. Part of my emerging story, then, had to do with aesthetic response to reading. A central figure in this area of research is certainly Rosenblatt (1978), who suggested the critical role played by a reader in creating a literary work from any text. Contrary to the notion that a reader passively absorbs a text and all an author has to say, Rosenblatt showed us how a reader actively constructs text, drawing on background knowledge, personal attitudes and emotions, and depending upon the purpose one has for reading.

In case studies, Voss (1988) and Wolf (1991) chronicled the effect literature had on their children's lives. Voss noted that characters and language from the books she had read to her son were showing up in his play and his talk. Wolf noted how her daughter Lindsey's response to repeated readings of a favourite story changed over a period of four years. As Lindsey grew and developed, so did her response to literature.

Cox and Many (1992) examined the written responses to literature by fifth-grade children over a period of a year. From the varied responses of these children, the researchers identified three main types of response, the ability to picture and image the story in their heads, the tendency to extend the story and hypothesize about it, and the relating of emotions evoked by the story associated with personal events in their lives. Although these responses were written and were those of children older than my own, I was able to find over and over again examples of these three characteristics in the data collected in our home. It was in such a manner that my story was influenced by those of others.

THE STORY TAKES SHAPE: THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Choosing a Way to Tell the Story

From the outset of this study my goal was to "tell the story." I was eager to describe our family storytime, to tell what was really happening, to tell the complete story in the context of our home and family within which it happened. I felt I needed to try to tell about our family storytime the way I saw it, while

keeping in mind all of the members of our family who helped create it. All of these factors led me to choose a qualitative case study as my research method.

Bogdan and Biklin (1982) discuss the term qualitative research.

The data collected has been termed *soft*, that is, rich in description of people, places, and conversation, and not easily handled by statistical procedures.

[Researchers] tend to collect their data through sustained contact with people in settings where subjects normally spend their time (p. 2).

Sustained contact in natural settings was certainly the situation in which I would find myself, being a member of the very family I wished to study. Within qualitative research there are several research strategies. Case study is one which allows an in-depth study of one particular event, setting, situation, subject, or social practice. And, as I wished to study one family tradition in particular--our nightly storytime--a case study was the obvious choice.

Collecting the Bits . . .

Case study, as a research strategy, uses data collection and analysis techniques from various fields of research. For my study I used ethnographic techniques, such as participant observation, field notes, and open-ended interviews. For a period of five months--October 1, 1993 to March 1, 1994--I observed our family storytime, audiotaping the nightly event and transcribing it the following morning. These transcriptions were accompanied by written comments, these comments surely reflecting multiple perspectives, such as those of a mother, a reader, and a researcher. When I felt I needed more information about what I was hearing on the tapes, I talked with one or more members of my family. Informal discussions and unstructured interviews allowed me to gather points of view from all the subjects.

. . . And Piecing Them Together

While still collecting data from our nightly storytime, I began to analyze those I had found. Examining the data each day, while reading related literature, helped to focus subsequent observation. Beginning questions became more defined and I was able to, if not see more clearly, at least *look* more clearly.

When all the data had been gathered, intensive analysis began. Reading and rereading my data, in light of related literature, allowed me to find recurring patterns of talk. These patterns led me to suggest broad headings and then more specific categories of storytime talk.

BEGINNING QUESTIONS

As I began to explore my story--like others settling in to enjoy one--I entered it with certain assumptions, with certain expectations of what I might find in it, and with certain questions I was hoping to answer. And like all stories, it was quite possible that it might or might not answer all the questions I wanted to have answered. Sometimes new questions were posed as insight was gained. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) speak of this phenomenon of qualitative research. "[Researchers] begin to collect data, reviewing and exploring it, and making decisions about where to go with the study" (p. 59). They liken the experience of qualitative research to that of a traveling friend they have. "We have a friend who, when asked where she is going on vacation, will tell you the direction she is traveling and then conclude with: 'I'll see what happens as I go along.' " (p. 55).

Although I hoped my story would offer me some new directions "as I went along," I did have some initial questions which served to guide my exploration. These were questions which had arisen, in part, from my reading of the research and stories of others before me. They were primarily, however, questions which had grown out of my early observations of and reflections on our family storytime. I wanted to know more about the nature of our nightly story reading. What was really happening, who was saying what, and why? I was interested in finding out more about each of the family members and how they perceived our storytime. I felt, somehow that it was important to place our story reading within the context

of family. And so I needed to examine how, if at all, family life was being created through our gathering for stories.

As I neared the end of my data collection period I read a study by Taylor (1986), in which she addressed the area of family literacy, and, in particular, that of parents reading aloud to their children. At the close of her study, Taylor cited several questions she felt were in need of attention in future research. Several of Taylor's questions seemed to encompass the very questions which were in my head. Taylor's questions and the unfolding of my story led me to the four questions which became my final questions. They were as follows:

1. How are the nuances of familial relationships expressed and explored within the storybook occasion?
2. How do rituals and routines of storybook reading evolve in familial settings?
3. Is literacy development more than mastering the conventions of print? Which features of storybook reading contribute to literacy development?
4. What are the effects of sibling relationships within the storybook occasion on children learning to read?

These were the questions I hoped would help me to gain a new understanding and appreciation of our family tradition. By seeking answers to these questions, I hoped to be able to add a new story to the ones already told about family storytimes in the homes of others.

MY STORY AMONG OTHERS

A rewarding part of experiencing a story comes with the sharing of the story with others. As I stated earlier, my main purpose for telling this family story was to gain, both for myself and for others, a new understanding of and appreciation for our family tradition. Many routines of daily family life are taken for granted, seen superficially, and passed over as having nothing new or exciting to offer in the way of insight for anyone. If we only had the time and interest to look more closely at those routine "normal" events, we might uncover more than we could ever imagine.

Limitations . . .

It sometimes happens that the strength of a case study is also its weakness. Being the mother of the family being examined as well as being the researcher doing the examining gave me easy access to the field. I had insight into the talk and behaviours of the family members that no researcher coming in from the outside could have hoped to have. Being the mother, however, undoubtedly got in the way of seeing and reporting things objectively. I can never really be sure that I did not begin to notice patterns, to observe certain behaviours simply because I was watching for them, nor can I be sure that I did not miss other things simply because I did not wish to see them. And, although tape recorders do not lie--the words I transcribed each morning were truly those which had been spoken the night before--I was the one who made the decisions about the significance of those words, which ones, in fact, I found to be significant and which ones I would ignore. I suppose I could be as guilty as the next mother of telling stories about her children which always place them in the most positive light. I can only say that my story does not claim to be *the one real story*, but only the one real story the way I perceived it to be.

. . . And Significance of My Story

By examining and telling the story of one of our family routines, I hoped to add to the stories others have told of family literacy experiences. Being a member of the family I studied allowed me to see how storytime connected with our family life, particularly how familial relationships entered into the story event. In this way I feel that I am able to offer a wholistic story of a family tradition.

As I look to the stories of others to enhance my understanding of my own, I offer my story to new storytellers in the hope that they can find it interesting and insightful. It is meant to be what one might wish from any good story--an invitation for dialogue and reflection on one's own.

AN OVERVIEW

This story of a family storytime, as told here, unfolds as follows: Chapter II examines the stories of others in a review of related literature. Chapter III presents the shape or design of the story. Chapter IV presents an analysis of the data in an attempt to understand this story. Chapter V attempts to fit my story among others by discussing findings, implications for family literacy, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

THE STORIES OF OTHERS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Nothing exists on its own. Everything is a part of something else. Jardine (1990) speaks of this interconnectedness when he states

While a piece of blank paper lends itself to curricular matters that are proximal to it (e.g., writing, drawing, questions of how it is made), pulling out this piece of paper tugs at the whole fabric of things, without exception. Paradoxically put, every object is a unique center around which all others can be gathered; at the same time, that very object rests on the periphery of all others, proximal to some, distant to others (p.108).

And so it is with stories. Every story is part of many others, and a part of my story has to do with those of other researchers. For several decades researchers have been interested in stories of family literacy (Durkin, 1966; Clark, 1976; Butler, 1979; Bissex, 1980; Taylor, 1983; Wells, 1986; Wolf, 1989, and others). Of the many and varied literacy events which occur at home, one of the most intriguing has been the reading of storybooks by parents to children.

This chapter, traces the development of studies about storybook reading in the home. It was difficult, at times, to choose which trails and paths to follow as I researched these studies. In examining studies which might inform my own, I sought those which looked at, from a variety of perspectives, the sharing of storybooks in the home. I examined studies from two main areas of research, family literacy and reading as aesthetic responding. I review these now in chronological order. These are some of the intriguing stories which have shaped what we know, believe, and value today about family storytime,

Family Literacy Studies

"As the threads of multiple conversations are woven together into family talk, the children are active participants in the web-making process that creates family story" (Taylor, 1986; p.152). Listening to those multiple conversations, capturing those family stories has been a goal of many researchers throughout the years. Family literacy has become an important area of research; home and family are seen as rich sources of data for understanding how children learn. The following studies are those in which the researchers studied the natural setting of the home and community to learn more about family storytimes, about the interactions occurring between parents and children, and how these interactions influence learning and family life.

In the late 1950's, Durkin (1966) became interested in children who come to school already reading. Disappointed by the scant information a literature review was able to shed on this phenomenon, she undertook an exploratory study to examine early reading achievement in a general way. In this first study Durkin identified, through extensive testing, forty-nine early readers and searched for common factors among them.

Durkin (1966) knew that, while some of her questions could be answered through the use of tests, many others could only be answered by having information about the families of the early readers. To this end, she conducted interviews with all the families. Questions centered around three general topics: family background, the early reader, and the early reading ability. One particular question--What kinds of help were given to the early readers?--yielded various answers. One response common to all forty-nine families was that the parents read to their children.

In a concurrent study Durkin (1966) again identified early readers and established a control group matched with these readers for IQ, gender, socioeconomic class, and teacher. As a result of this study she was able to show that IQ and socioeconomic class did not correlate significantly with the children's reading achievement. She pointed to another family feature, that of enjoying storybooks, "the presence of parents who spend time with their children, who read to them; who answer their questions and their requests for help; and

who demonstrate in their own lives that reading is a rich source of relaxation, information, and contentment" (p. 136). Durkin's significant findings paved the way to an understanding of the importance of storybook reading in the home.

Clark (1976) studied thirty-two children who, upon reaching school-age, were identified as fluent readers. She tested these children, explored their home backgrounds, and followed their progress in school in order to try to determine factors influencing their success with reading. Like Durkin, Clark found that factors such as IQ, age, socioeconomic class, and size of family were insignificant. What the children did have in common was that they had all been read to, had parents who read frequently for their own pleasure, and had parents (or other caring adults) who took the time to answer their questions about literacy.

Doake (1981), over a period of several months, visited the homes of four preschool children and observed the shared book experiences these children enjoyed with their parents. Doake identified four questions he wished to investigate in regards to the children's emergent reading behaviours. They were as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of the parents' and their children's behaviour in the shared book experience situation and how do these behaviours relate to the reading development of the children?
2. What are the characteristics of reading-like behaviour as it occurs in preschool children and what contribution does this behaviour make to their reading development?
3. What is the nature and extent of the relationship between the principles which function to govern oral language and those which govern learning to read?
4. What are the roles of environmental language and of learning to write in the reading development of preschool children?

Doake (1981) used a naturalistic mode of inquiry for his investigation, employing naturalistic observation and ethnographic interviews as the main means of collecting data. He visited the homes of the children often enough to establish a comfortable relationship with all family members, and often read to and with the

children. When interviewing the children, he was sensitive to their attention spans and language abilities. He tried to “catch” the information he sought whenever he could, rather than depend on formal questioning. Doake stated,

Throughout the study, numerous interviews were conducted with both the parents and their children. While many of these were informal in nature in the sense that no prepared interview schedule was followed, a number of them did involve the use of previously prepared questions. These interview schedules, however, were always used quite flexibly and the range and type of questions were extended on an impromptu basis, when probing seemed necessary and additional relevant information appeared to be available (p. 145).

In addition to the audiotaped shared book experiences and interviews with the children and parents, Doake had the parents keep a logbook of daily observations of their children’s behaviour with books.

In his examination of the data, Doake (1981) found the children’s emerging reading to be a series of developmental tasks monitored by the children, themselves. It seems the children began to learn to read as a result of being read to, particularly repeated readings of favourite books. Reading-like behaviour was the means by which children began to reconstruct their favourite stories. These emergent “readings” of favourite books enabled the children to come to understand, within a secure environment, certain important concepts about reading, such as directionality, eye-ear-voice matching, and print and letter generalizations.

As a result of his investigation, Doake (1981) was able to consider implications for parents with regard to storybook reading. Dissatisfied with simply repeating the call for parents to read to their children, Doake specified ways parents could enhance the shared book experience. Included in this discussion was the importance of providing a book oriented environment, suggestions for how to read to and with children, the benefits to be had from repeated readings of favourite books, and the importance of environmental print and writing.

Doake (1981) made several recommendations for future research. He suggested that similar studies be conducted with families of different

socioeconomic class than the families in his study and with children of a younger age who belonged to families with more than two children. Doake suggested that researchers might look at sibling relationships within family storytime and the effects of these relationships on children learning to read. This recommendation provided an impetus for my story.

Heath (1983) conducted an ethnographic study of families of three communities in the southeastern United States--a white working class community, a black working class community, and the nearby community of "townspeople" who held power in the schools and workplaces. For nine years Heath lived, worked, and played with the people of these communities, learning about their "ways with words." In two of these communities--the white working class, and the townspeople--parents had an established practice of reading to their children. What was different, however, between the communities, was the type of interaction which accompanied these storytimes. Working class parents tended to ask their children literal "what" kinds of questions, whereas the townspeople asked a greater variety, including "why" types of questions. Heath concluded that, because the latter type of questions more closely approximated questions teachers asked in the upper grades in school, children from these families tended to experience more success than their working class peers when they reached these grades. Heath's (1983) study prompted researchers to examine more closely the kinds of interactions accompanying family storytimes and other literacy events. "Thus it is the *kind* of talk, not the *quantity* of talk that sets townspeople on their way to school" (p. 352).

Martinez (1983) was interested in preschool children's verbal responses to literature during storytime interaction with a parent. She conducted case studies of four preschool children in order to characterize their literature responses and to describe factors related to those responses.

Parents of the four children were asked to audiotape, on a weekly basis, the interaction which occurred during the reading of three books--a familiar book selected by the researcher, an unfamiliar book selected by the researcher, and a favourite book selected by the child. The storyreading took place over a period of several months. Along with the audiotapes, Martinez (1983) interviewed the parents and children and asked the parents to keep a journal, in which they

recorded any talk about the books which occurred outside the taped interactions. From the data, Martinez developed a classification system for examining the storytime talk. She analyzed each utterance according to purpose and provided an overview of the organization of storytime by focusing on characteristics such as the quantity of story talk and non-story talk, who initiated the talk, and the depth to which topics were discussed. As a result of her study, Martinez concluded that young children respond to different elements in stories in a great variety of ways. "In effect, children who have had the opportunity to interact with literature at an early age may have a rich model of the process of meaning construction" (p. 607). Martinez' observations and discussion of the storytime interactions served to illustrate the potential wealth of knowledge and understanding to be gained from this type of study.

Snow and Goldfield (1983) looked closely at the interactions which occurred during a mother-child storytime. They analyzed the audiotapes made over a period of eleven months of a mother and her two-year-old son reading Richard Scarry's *Storybook Dictionary* (1967). The researchers were interested in the influence on a child's language acquisition of reading aloud. By analyzing the speech produced by the child during the storytime interactions the researchers were able to conclude that the bookreading provided a routinized interactive context during which the child could learn utterances previously used by the parent in similar reading situations. This finding had implications for parents and teachers with regard to repeated readings of stories and the importance of the interaction which accompanies these readings.

Taylor (1983), in an effort to understand more about literacy learning from the perspective of family life, studied the home lives of six families for a period of three years. Each family had a child in the first grade successfully learning to read. These families welcomed Taylor into their homes and allowed her to chronicle the literacy events in their lives. Taylor knew several of the six families prior to the start of the study and, as some of the families knew one another, Taylor was able to observe them in a larger social context. Countless hours talking with the parents and other family members, observation of the families in their daily lives, and collection of "literacy artifacts" aided Taylor (1983) in her task, that was "To develop systematic ways of looking at reading and writing as activities that have consequences in and are affected by family life" (p. iv). She

was able to categorize the literacy events under the following chapter headings: Family literacy: Conservation and change in the transmission of literacy styles and values; Family literacy and the social organization of everyday life; Family literacy and the children's emerging awareness of written language; Family literacy in a cultural context; Family literacy and learning in school.

One common area of enjoyment for all these families was storybook reading. The parents all spoke with pleasure of shared reading experiences with their children. And, in some cases, older siblings read to younger siblings, although not with the same frequency as did the parents. Taylor's study opened up the notion of literacy as comprising many everyday family events.

Clark (1984) took a second look at the data from her 1976 study of young fluent readers. Of particular interest to the researcher were the interviews she had done with the parents of these children. This was a case of not simply what the parents could tell the researcher about their children, but rather the way in which they told it that was revealing.

A review of the parents' answers to the questions in the structured interview revealed the parents' pleasure in their families and that they could express that pleasure with quality language, regardless of their social class and however limited their schooling. . . . Most parents had observed significant incidents and could retell them graphically, revealing the quality of the interactions in the family (pp. 124-125).

Another area of interest for Clark (1984), in looking back at her 1976 study, was that of writing. At the time of the study she had not considered looking at the children's writing samples, although she had some available in the form of spelling tests. As a result of subsequent studies by other researchers, particularly Bissex's (1980) description of her son's spelling attempts, Clark revisited the writing attempts of her thirty-two children and found that they, indeed, had shown signs of an appreciation of critical features of words.

Leichter (1984) grappled with the complex issue of the family as an environment for literacy. She dealt particularly with the difficulties of getting access to the several layers of family life and with the idea that one may need to be creative in

one's thinking about and defining of literacy. "Locating literacy events in the stream of everyday family activities is a substantial task, especially if one wishes to avoid defining literacy in terms of previously held conceptions" (p. 42).

Portraying family life to be a dynamic complex environment and the study of it to be demanding but rewarding, Leichter suggested it crucial that, when considering the family as an environment for learning about literacy, it be considered in terms of *family* rather than in the traditional terms of *schooling*. Leichter suggested three ways in which the family environment influences a child's experiences with literacy, these being the physical environment, interpersonal interaction, and emotional and motivational climates.

Teale (1984) reviewed research on the topic of reading to children and suggested some future directions for work in this area, including a need to more carefully define the phrase *reading to children*. He stated that if we are to understand how being read to can help children become literate, we need to understand the nature of the activity. He stated,

. . . factors such as the type of text, the number of times the book has been read. . . . the number of children involved in the reading, and the temperamental characteristics and the sociocultural backgrounds of the participants, as well as the age or developmental level of the child, affect what happens when parents read to their children (p. 113).

Teale (1984) reviewed the research by addressing four questions related to the topic. They were as follows:

1. What is the nature of the activity known as reading to children?
2. What beneficial effects does this activity have on preschool children's literacy development, and how or why does it have these effects?
3. Does story (or narrative) play a special role in the informal development of literacy?
4. Just how important is being read to in the process of learning to read and write?

Teale (1984) concluded that there is overwhelming evidence to support the literacy benefits of reading to children. He suggested that there is much still to

be learned about the nature of the shared book experience and its specific effects on literacy learning.

Altwerger, Diehl-Faxon, and Dockstader-Anderson (1985) studied several mother-child bookreading events over a six month period, tracing how the interactional strategies changed as the children grew from twenty-three months to twenty-nine months. The researchers found that the mothers adapted their reading of the text in order to help their children construct meaning.

As in oral language development, the focus remains steadfastly on meaning rather than form, as the mother expands, extends, clarifies, and even disregards the written language forms chosen by the book's author in favor of a more appropriate text for her child (p. 477).

With these very young children the story was often found in the interactions rather than in the text, itself.

Martinez and Roser (1985) conducted case studies of preschool and nursery school children, studying the nature of the interaction which accompanied the readings of selected books. Through the analysis of children's responses during the read-alouds the researchers hoped to learn more about the value of repeated readings. They found four significant changes that occurred as the stories that were read grew from new stories to old familiar ones: Children talked more when they were familiar with the story; the form of their talk changed from more question-type responses to more comment-type responses; the talk changed focus as children were able to concentrate on different aspects of the story; responses reflected more depth of understanding as the stories grew more familiar to them. Martinez and Roser recommended that while parents and teachers continue to read a variety of books to children, they should also expose children to valuable repeated readings of books.

Pelligrini, Brody, and Sigel (1985) were interested in the Vygotskiiian notion that adults act as scaffolds for children as they learn. The researchers sought to further the research previously done in this area by applying it to book-reading situations. Parents of one hundred twenty six children were videotaped reading to their children. Sixty of these children were communicatively handicapped and

these children were matched with sixty others not communicatively handicapped. The storytime interactions were coded and classified according to levels of cognitive demand and directiveness. The researchers concluded that parents' storytime talk becomes less directive and more demanding as age, communicative ability, and IQ increase.

Prater (1985) conducted a nationwide study among parents of children in daycare centres in order to learn about the bookreading habits of working parents with their preschool children. Prater believed there was a need to more clearly define the practice of reading to children. Along with questions on demographic data, Prater questioned parents on frequency, length, and setting of book reading experience, sources of books, person reading, verbal interaction, favourite books and familiarity with favourite storybook characters. Results indicated that many parents, even at the close of a busy day, were taking time to read to their children. Prater did have some concerns about the quality of the books being read, however, as many prominent characters found in children's literature were unfamiliar to the parents questioned.

Sulzby (1985) believed that much could be discovered about the way children learn to read by listening to their read-aloud attempts of familiar storybooks. During two studies Sulzby videotaped emergent readers' attempts at reading their favourite books. An examination of these reading attempts allowed Sulzby to develop a classification scheme of developmental strategies, moving from picture-governed attempts to print-governed attempts. Within the picture-governed attempts categories were labeling and commenting, story form, oral language-like story, written language-like story, reading and storytelling mixed. Print-governed attempts categories included print watched, print related refusal to read, aspectual, holistic, strategies imbalanced, and independent reading.

Sulzby's (1985) findings have added to the growing amount of literature on the benefits of storybook reading by identifying some of the stages children pass through in learning to read independently. She stated "These behaviours and others not yet worked into the classifications schemes indicate that children develop tremendously through interacting with storybooks" (p. 478).

Dombey (1986) audiotaped and analyzed three year old Anna and her mother enjoying a familiar storybook together. Although the book, *Rosie's Walk* (Hutchins, 1968) has only two sentences of printed text, Dombey identified thirty-nine conversational utterances made by Anna and her mother. Dombey analyzed these in terms of story structure and found that the seemingly random and isolated comments were, in fact, very purposeful in the construction of the text. It was the back and forth of the conversation between the two "readers" together with the pictures and the text which made the story a whole story. Dombey concluded that the external conversation Anna engaged in served as a model for the internal conversation she needed to have with the author of the text.

Hoffman (1986) kept a diary of literature events in her son's life over a two year period (2.5 to 4.5 years old). In her diary, Hoffman noted books she read to her son, describing the book reading events, and the uses he made of literature in his life. Early experiences he had with literature included lifting phrases he had heard in storybooks and using them in his own speech and play. Hoffman discovered the important role played by repeated read-alouds in her son's emergence as a reader. The child committed many of these stories to memory and then matched the words he was saying to the words on the page. His learning of decoding skills came in meaningful situations as he needed to learn them, rather than as part of a predetermined sequence of skills taught him. Hoffman's study added to the growing amount of literature which recognized the ability of children to teach themselves to read.

Snow and Ninio (1986) revisited videotapes of mother-child dyads in bookreading situations in order to see how the occurring interactions might have helped the children's concepts important for literacy. The researchers believed that children gain more from having stories read to them than simply letter-recognition and grapho-phonemic kinds of knowledge. Their re-analysis of taped book readings collected for previous research allowed them to identify seven important areas or "contracts of literacy" children are able to learn about through read-aloud situations. They are as follows: Books are for reading, not for manipulating; In book reading the book is in control and the reader is led; Pictures are not things but representative of things; Pictures are for naming;

Pictures, though static, can represent events; Book events occur outside real time; Books constitute an autonomous fictional world.

Stewart (1986), in an effort to expand the knowledge and understanding of storytime interactions, videotaped four mother-child pairs reading together during the summer prior to the child entering Grade One. The taped storytimes--seven or eight for each pair--allowed Stewart to observe both verbal and nonverbal communication. Stewart categorized the interaction according to proportion of total talk each participant contributed, as well as type of talk each engaged in. Stewart concluded that parents use different strategies in order to help their kids, and that the type of interaction which occurs during storytime depends on the intent of the parents.

Taylor (1986) worked with the mother of a young family to try to recreate the events which occurred during a family storytime. Rather than using a more traditional means of reporting the story--a transcript of the interactions followed by a coding and categorizing of the utterances--Taylor chose to make a "prose home movie" of the event. Taylor sat with the mother as together they listened to the audiotape of the mother reading to her three children. The researcher taped the mother's reaction to the audio recording and worked with the mother to get the essence of the storyreading into words.

Taylor's (1986) research method marked a departure from the traditional approach quantifying and analyzing data in an objective manner. She used a narrative approach in an effort to capture the people and their perceptions as well as their recorded voices. "It was such narration that I wanted to explore, for it seemed to me that the humanizing and sensitizing effects of these accounts had value above and beyond their scientific validity" (p. 142).

As a researcher in the field of family literacy, Taylor (1986) attempted to bring a truly family focus to her work. She concluded her chapter with a number of questions she felt needed to be addressed in family storybook reading research. Several of these questions have impacted my work in this present study. These were as follows:

1. How and under what circumstances do parents read stories to their children?
2. How is the occasion perceived by individual family members?
3. How are the nuances of familial relationships expressed and explored within the storybook occasion?
4. How do rituals and routines of storybook reading evolve in familial settings?

Hayden and Fagan (1987) studied the storytime interaction that occurred between twenty-seven Alberta kindergarten children and their parents, in an effort to add to the understanding of storytime as a literacy experience. They were particularly interested in the effects of the gender of the parent and the effects of the degree of familiarity of the story. The researchers had the parents of the children randomly selected for the study audiotape themselves reading two books to their children. One of the books was an unfamiliar one to the child, the other being a favourite book.

Through analysis of the tapes, Hayden and Fagan (1987) found there was no significant difference in the way mothers read from the way fathers read. The degree of familiarity, however, did seem to be significant in the type of interaction which occurred during the storytime. "Familiar and unfamiliar texts tended to have different functions in initiating children into the world of reading" (p. 235). Familiar stories seemed to allow family members to focus on the text at meaning and print levels; unfamiliar stories allowed for an expanded notion of story structure.

Joyner and Ray (1987) were interested in the very early beginnings of storytime enjoyment. They conducted a one-year study of parent-infant pairs during shared book events, in each case beginning on the day of birth. The parents kept journals of their book reading and each pair was videotaped monthly. Data were analyzed according to affective, visual, tactile/motor, and verbal development. Joyner and Ray stated,

. . . it would appear that intentional, consistent, informed parental reading to infants, beginning at birth and continuing through the first year of life, has a

dramatic effect on the development of reading-like behaviors, language development, and positive attitudes toward reading in those infants" (p. 22).

Through the children's section of public libraries in a large urban centre, Manning et al. (1988) selected parents for a survey on home reading practices. One hundred ninety parents participated in the survey through telephone interviews, during which they were asked questions pertaining to who reads aloud, frequency of reading aloud, days and times of day in which reading aloud occurs, length of reading period, place in which reading occurs, initiator of read-aloud, and source of books. A significant finding of this study was a confirmation that many parents read to their children because they learned through outside information that it was good for the children. The researchers were able to recommend that parent education programs are working for, at least, some parents and that these programs should continue, in order to teach parents of the read-aloud experience.

Hoffman (1989) videotaped ten families in order to study the interaction which took place between parents and their first-grade children during storybook reading. Two storybook readings were taped at home--one at the beginning of the year and one at the end of the year--and a third taping was done at school. By analyzing parents' and children's language and behaviour throughout the readings, Hoffman was able to conclude "the language used by parents during the shared literacy events with their children does indeed influence how children perceive themselves as beginning readers and writers" (p. 21).

Watt (1989) conducted a study to examine the effects of reading to young children beginning in infancy. The parents of one hundred sixteen children from kindergarten to third grade responded to questionnaires about their home reading habits. Results of the study indicated that several positive effects could be related to being read to from a very early age. Children who had been read to displayed strong positive attitudes toward books, reading, and being read to. These children enjoyed a larger scope of reading material and had been introduced to reading material of a more advanced level than those of their peers.

Yaden, Smolkin and Conlon (1989) reported two longitudinal case studies of preschoolers, aged three to five years, and their unprompted questions asked while they were being read to by their parents. One study recorded and analyzed questions asked by two children over a two year period; the second study recorded and analyzed questions asked by seven children over one year. Patterns in the questions asked by children suggested that preschoolers ask the most questions about illustrations, followed by questions about story meaning and word meaning, and finally about print. The investigators noted several factors which related to the types of questions children asked. These included parent style, book type, and individual differences in the children, themselves.

Yaden et al. (1989) suggested that story reading aids children's understanding of more than simply the books, themselves.

Thus, story reading may provide an opportunity for children not only to explore many aspects of the book itself, but also to acquire new ways of communicating, and to sharpen, refine, and compare their own view of the world with the perspectives they encounter in books (p. 207).

In studies of the book reading practices of ten New Zealand families, Phillips and McNaughton (1990) recorded and analyzed the parent-child interaction occurring during family storytime. The first study was conducted in order to examine the nature and frequency of storybook reading in mainstream New Zealand families. Upon establishing that it was, indeed, a social practice, the researcher undertook the second study to further examine this activity, particularly the types of interactions occurring. Results of the study seemed to suggest that interaction initiated by both parents and children most often focused on the meaning of the story. They found that little interaction centred around the illustrations or the print.

This study also examined, to a lesser degree, repeated readings of books. The investigators found that parents tended to focus on meaning in the first readings but changed the way they talked to and questioned the children during successive readings.

Consistent with the central feature of the scaffolding model, the expert (the reader) begins to draw back as the novice becomes more able to take on aspects of the task. The adult then begins to concentrate on those aspects of the task not yet under the child's control (p. 210).

Phillips and McNaughton (1990) cautioned that their findings may have been dependent, in part, on the ages of the children.

Ayers (1991) conducted a survey of five hundred elementary school children in order to learn about their perceptions of family storytime events. The children were asked questions pertaining to length and frequency of story reading at home and the types of activities they liked to have accompany story reading. Most children indicated that they liked to have some background information about the story before having it read to them. The majority of children also said that they liked to talk about the story after hearing it. Perhaps the most interesting finding came as a result of the question "What do you like best about being read to?" The responses were many and varied, but several of the commonly recurring ones caught my attention. They were as follows:

"If you don't understand something, you can ask the person reading."

"You can really relax."

"When someone reads to me, I know they care about me."

"You understand the story better."

"I get closer to my family."

"It is easier for me to imagine what is happening."

For eleven months Annicchiarico (1992) followed the journey of Nancy, a mother of three children, as she participated in a home literacy program offered in her Alberta community. Through the use of observation and field notes, audiotapes, a personal journal, home artifacts, and transcribed interviews, Annicchiarico was able to take a close look at Nancy's home, examining and describing the literacy environment there. This close look revealed Nancy as a key figure in the way her family experienced literacy, both as an active model and an interactive mediator. The difficulties which existed in the relationship between Nancy's home and her children's school led Annicchiarico to one of the most significant findings of her study, that being "the fact that home and school must work as

partners if children are to achieve maximum benefit from education" (p. 162). Annicchiarico's study was a valuable one in the area of home literacy in that it provided a mother's perspective of her children's learning, her own attitude toward learning, and her efforts to expand the literacy learning happening in her home.

In a study designed to examine interactions during parent-child joint reading sessions and the relationship of these interactions to a child's reading fluency, Lancy and Bergin (1992) videotaped thirty-two parents reading with their children. The investigators established a coding system which enabled them to analyze the behaviour of both the parents and the children. The authors examined parents' attitudes, the way parents corrected errors, the number of error corrections made, the number of questions asked and answered, and the number of comments made during story reading.

Of these factors, the ones most closely related to the child's reading fluency appeared to be the way parents viewed reading and the way they corrected reading errors. Those parents who viewed reading as fun with the importance placed on meaning and story flow had children who were reading at a higher level than had those parents who viewed reading as a task, where errors were to be corrected through print decoding. The authors reiterated the call for more information to parents about how to read to their children rather than how much to read.

Owens (1992) examined the storybook reading behaviours of sixteen parents with their first-grade children in order to learn more about the nature of home story reading events and about the kinds of book reading decisions made by the parents. Data collection consisted of surveys completed by the parents, interviews conducted with the parents and the children, and audiotapes and videotapes of the story readings. Results of the study suggested that mothers did most of the reading in the home, the most popular genre was picture books, and the public library was the most popular source of reading material.

The most interesting results were found in the parent interviews. Analysis of these interviews allowed Owens to group the parents into one of six kinds of readers (or non-readers), according to the purposes they had for reading to their

children. Because the data suggested that parents perceived reading to children to be a “job”, Owens used metaphors to describe the various kinds of readers. The six categories included Professionals, Artists, Journeymen, Laborers, Craftsmen, and Novices. Owens found it necessary to add one last category, that of Eclectics, parents who read for a number of purposes and used a number of reading styles.

Owen’s (1992) study reminded us that, although the importance of reading aloud to children is recognized by many parents, there may exist many different kinds of reading aloud experiences.

Reading as Aesthetic Responding

Over the past two decades an area of reading research which has grown is that of reader response theory and practice (Martinez and Roser, 1991). They state,

Researchers are now turning their attention to using alternative methods to study the variety of responses produced by young children in order to understand the ways that young readers and listeners come to consider, reflect, manipulate, and verbalize their feelings and opinions about text (p. 643).

Understanding how and why readers respond to text is surely a complex task. We know now that response, although often verbal, can go far beyond overt response (Hickman, 1981). We know also that children continue to respond to repeated readings of the same stories. These responses, although to repeated *readings*, are far from repeated *responses*. Rather they change, expand, and often deepen (Martinez and Roser, 1985), as children become more familiar with the stories.

A family storytime situation seems an ideal place to study response to literature, particularly from an aesthetic stance. As I began to consider my data in this light I looked to studies which have been done on aesthetic response to reading. Although my particular interest lies with younger children, I chose to include here a number of studies which pertain to older readers, both school age children and

adults. This review is not an exhaustive one. Rather, the aim is to highlight those studies which have a bearing on my own research.

Rosenblatt (1978), who could be considered a central figure in reader response theory (see also Iser, 1978; Purves & Beach, 1972; Corcoran, 1979) spoke of the "poem", the unique work that is created as a result of a transaction between reader and text. She brought us the idea that a story, a piece of writing, any work of art exists not in the work itself, but rather in the response of a reader to that work. In the opening lines of her book, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, Rosenblatt states "The premise of this book is that a text, once it leaves its author's hands, is simply paper and ink until a reader evokes from it a literary work--sometimes, even, a literary work of art" (p. ix).

Rosenblatt (1978) felt that throughout history the focus of the reading act had always been on the author or the text, while the reader had played a passive role. She changed our perceptions of the role of the reader and spoke of a reader who actively constructed text.

He was not a blank tape registering a ready-made message. He was actively involved in building up a poem for himself out of his responses to the text. He had to draw on his past experiences with the verbal symbols. He had to draw from the various alternative referents that occurred to him. . . he was also paying attention to the images, feelings, attitudes, associations, and ideas that the words and their referents evoked in him (p. 10).

Rosenblatt (1978) presented two very different kinds of reading--aesthetic and efferent--and saw all readings as falling somewhere between the two extremes. Efferent reading refers to that where "the reader's attention is focused primarily on what will remain as the residue after the reading--the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out" (p. 23). Examples of this sort of reading would be the reading of directions, reports, textbooks and the like. In short, anything read with a purpose.

At the other end of the spectrum is aesthetic reading, or reading for pleasure. This is the type of reading where one reads for the lived-through experience. "In aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living

through during his relationship with that particular text" (p. 25). This lived-through experience might include joy, terror, pleasure or pain. It is that experience of losing oneself completely in the text. Rosenblatt was careful to point out that a reader can take an efferent stance and still derive pleasure from the reading. Likewise a reader can read aesthetically and still "learn" or take something away from the text after the reading is completed. It is a matter of taking a stance somewhere on the continuum between the two positions. She also observed that two different readers can read the same text from opposite ends of the spectrum, lending support for the role a reader has in constructing text.

Just prior to her son's third birthday, Voss' (1988) research drew on this notion of aesthetic response as she began to notice that the literature experiences they had shared together were having an influence on Nathaniel's life. She decided to keep informal notes of activities, comments, and incidents which showed how reading was affecting her son. She noted when characters he had met or language he had experienced in storybooks showed up in his play. After several months of notetaking, Voss was able to conclude that her son learned early print conventions, facts about the world, how to deal with his feelings, and concepts about books, as a result of being read to.

Such a series of references to stories and song made me aware of what had probably been happening for some time in Nathaniel's world. Not only had he begun making connections between print and meaning, but he had been using what he learned from literature to expand his knowledge of the world and the richness of his play (p.273).

Wolf (1991) conducted a case study of her daughter Lindsey's response to literature from age three to seven years. Looking particularly at the repeated readings of a fairy tale, *Hansel and Gretel*, Wolf was able to observe how Lindsey's response to the story evolved over time. She stated "As children grow, their interpretations expand and gather in new information and meet present needs, as well as cycle back to repeat and reflect on older assumptions" (p. 388).

During Lindsey's third and fourth years she enjoyed the story in a physical way, pantomiming scenes from the story and using parts of the story in her play. Her response came in the form of gestures and movements, "she reached inside the story and took what she wanted, often making direct physical contact with the book" (p. 389). As Lindsey grew older her physical response gave way to more verbal reflections. She was able to comment, question, and wonder aloud about the story. She was able to focus more on the author's written text and construct deeper understandings of the story.

Wolf (1991) reminded us that Lindsey's response was not one that would end upon reaching a final perfect interpretation, but rather one which would continue to evolve across time and settings. She reminded us that "Being literate means being thoughtful, not 'right' " (p. 94).

Cox and Many (1992) examined the written responses to literature made by 38 fifth-grade students over a period of a year. Although the responses were all quite different and unique, Cox and Many were able to identify three main characteristics evident in the way the children responded aesthetically to the literature.

One characteristic found in the children's writing was the ability of the children to picture and image the stories in their heads. This was evidenced by such statements as "It made me feel as if this was really happening to me" (p. 30). Children wrote as if they had stepped inside the story and become the characters. A second tendency of the children was to extend the story and hypothesize about how it could be different. In their writing about the stories they had read the children used such phrases as "If. . . I wouldn't have bought one" and, "it made you think about what you would have done if. . ." The third characteristic identified was focusing in on feelings evoked by the story read and relating personal associations to events in the story. All three ways of responding to text reflected response from an aesthetic stance.

Summary

In this chapter I have reviewed a number of studies relating to storybook reading in the home. The two areas of research from which I have drawn these studies are family literacy and reading as aesthetic responding, reviewing the studies in chronological order within each of these areas. In the next chapter I discuss the design of my study. This includes a discussion of the methodology I chose to use, a description of the setting (our home) and the subjects (the members of my family), an explanation of data collection and analysis procedures, and a discussion of validity and reliability, as they pertain to my study.

CHAPTER III

THE STORY TAKES SHAPE: THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

From The Red Carpet (Parkin, 1948)

Maggie: I don't think there's such a thing as the Belleville Hotel.

Clare: Why would they write about it if there wasn't such a thing?

Maggie: Well you know how people make-up things for stories. . .

(Fieldnotes, October 15, 1993).

Do people “make-up things for stories?” Where do stories come from? How much of any story is really true? And what does true mean? These were some of the questions I asked myself as I set out to tell the story of our family storytime. It seemed important to me that I tell the real story, and this wish for the “real story” guided many of the decisions I made about the design of the study.

In this chapter I discuss how the study of our family storytime evolved from an idea to this written story. I discuss the methodology used to conduct the study, describe the setting and the subjects, explain the procedures used for data collection and analysis, and discuss the issues of validity and reliability, as they relate to my study.

METHODOLOGY

Because I wanted to tell this story as truthfully as possible, my first task was to choose an appropriate research design. Research is systematic inquiry into a question or a series of questions. Varied are the types of research and one chooses a design depending, for the most part, on the questions one is asking.

The most basic distinguishing feature of research is whether it is experimental or nonexperimental. Experimental design is called for when a researcher is able to control related variables in order to establish cause and effect. Nonexperimental research, often known as descriptive research, seeks not to explain as much as describe. It depends not on the researcher controlling and manipulating the

environment, but rather on observing and describing an environment as it really is.

As I began to consider our family storytime and how I might study it, qualitative case study began to emerge as the best research design for my purposes. Merriam (1988) defines case study as “an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group” (p.9). Surely this was the kind of study which would help me understand and tell the story of my family storytime.

Yin (1989) discusses the three conditions of a study which would call for a case study. He points out that it is not always clear when beginning a study what method should be used. There are many areas of overlap among the various research strategies and the boundaries between them are not clear and sharp. Yin suggests, however, that it is helpful to examine the type of question posed, the extent of control the researcher has over behavioural events, and whether the focus of the study is a contemporary one or a historical one.

The type of question being posed by the researcher is an important determining factor in selecting the type of study to be done. *What*, *How many*, and *Who* kinds of questions may often be answered through a qualitative deductive study, whereas *How* and *Why* questions need a more exploratory, explanatory type of design. Had I wished to examine our family storytime from the perspective of what books are being read, who does the most of the reading, or length and frequency of event, a case study would have surely been unnecessary. The questions I wished to explore, however, seemed to be more of the *How* type of question--*How are the nuances of familial relationships expressed and explored within the storybook occasion; How do rituals and routines of storybook reading evolve in familial settings;*--and the answers to these questions needed to be traced over time rather than frequencies.

A second condition determining what sort of study should be conducted is the extent of control a researcher has over events to be examined. If the researcher has the opportunity to directly and systematically manipulate behaviour in order to answer questions about behaviour an experimental design might be the preferred method of study. A case study allows a more natural way to study

events as they occur. In fact, Yin(1989) states “. . . the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. In brief, the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (p. 14). It was, in part, this desire to “retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” that led me to use case study as a means of investigation.

The third determining factor in choosing case study as a research method is the degree of focus on contemporary rather than historical events. When the researcher has no access or control over the events--as in historical events--the preferred strategy is a history. Yin states,

the case study relies on many of the same techniques as a history, but it adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian's repertoire; direct observation and systematic interviewing. . . . although case studies and histories can overlap, the case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence--documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations (pp. 19-20).

Case study, unlike other types of research, does not claim its own specialized tools and techniques for data collection. Rather, it uses any of the data collection techniques from other types of research that will contribute to the study of the questions. These techniques may include tests, surveys, interviews, observations and fieldnotes, audiotapes and videotapes. Qualitative case study tends to rely on qualitative techniques such as participant observation and open-ended interviews. Merriam (1988) reminds us that “Naturalistic inquiry, which focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection instrument sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data. Humans are best-suited for this task and best when using methods that make use of sensibilities such as interviewing, observing, and analyzing” (p. 3).

Because qualitative case study is not a step by step hypothesis testing type of research, but rather exploratory and hypothesis generating, it can take many forms and directions. There are, however, certain characteristics which are shared by all qualitative case study. Merriam (1988) refers to four such characteristics as particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive.

Particularistic: The research focuses on a very particular situation or phenomenon, hence “the case.” In the telling of this story the research focuses on our family storytime event, as experienced by each of the members of my family.

Descriptive: The end result of a case study is rich “thick” description of the phenomenon studied. A description of events over time and involving many variables takes precedence over an end “finding.” A large part of case study research, then, is writing or describing the study. “Results are presented qualitatively, using words and pictures rather than numbers” (Merriam, 1988, p.7).

Heuristic: A case study adds to the knowledge and understanding one may have about a phenomenon, an event, a person, an institution. For the reader, a study may alter previous knowledge, confirm tentative understandings, or add insight, expanding understanding.

Inductive: Many qualitative types of research begin with a hypothesis which the researcher seeks to support. The questions are very well defined from the beginning and the researcher gathers data for the purpose of shedding light on the questions. The opposite is the case with qualitative research where data collection guides the researcher in the formulation of questions. “Discovery of new relationships, concepts, and understanding, rather than verification or predetermined hypothesis, characterizes qualitative case studies” (Merriam, 1988, p. 13).

My study reflects aspects of all four of the above characteristics. Several other characteristics of qualitative research need mentioning for they figure prominently in case study research. These include the importance of process and meaning in the study, as well as the integral role played by the researcher through fieldwork and observation. Throughout the research, it is the process of the study itself which takes precedence over outcomes, end products, or “results” of the study. Conserving meaning is of utmost importance in qualitative research, studying questions always in context and often over time.

Understanding, in a meaningful way, the lived-through experiences of the people involved is what case study researchers strive to do.

Because of the desire to conduct a study in the natural environment, it becomes necessary for the researcher to enter the field of study. In order to observe in a natural way, one that would be consistent with the situation being observed, the researcher often engages in participant observation. Participant observation allows the observer to get a sense of things from the inside, conserving the context and getting a more meaningful feel for the lived-through experience. The researcher then becomes the instrument through which information is collected. The same intuition and insight which allows this "instrument" to become a part of this experience colours the data that is collected. This is consistent with the qualitative assumption that the world is one of multiple realities in need of interpretation rather than measurement. This is the framework that guides my analysis.

In keeping with the characteristics of qualitative case study as outlined above, I now describe the setting and characters of my story. I describe these as they were in the spring of 1994, several weeks after I completed the data collection for my study.

THE SETTING (*April, 1994*)

For the past eleven years our family has lived in a four-bedroom two-story house in a southwest community of Calgary, Alberta. Established about thirty years ago, the community has seen one generation of children run in the park, start school, ride two-wheelers, play in the school band, go off to university, and leave home. It is just becoming a young community again with older couples leaving and young families moving in to start the cycle all over. Most of the adults in this community pursue professional careers. In many cases, one income is sufficient to maintain a comfortable standard of living and mothers are able to stay at home with their children. This makes for a high degree of parent involvement in local school and community activities.

Our living room window looks out across the street at a large park, adjacent to the playground of the school which our children attend. The children are able to walk to and from school and come home for lunch each day. The park is the place where they meet their friends to play on the climbing equipment, ride bikes, play soccer and baseball, and, in the winter, skate on the community rink. That same living room window, with curtains drawn at night, is where we read stories before bed. The couch is there, a light overhead, and an old wooden table with legs cut off to make an inviting footstool for all the family feet. Across the room is a floor-to-ceiling bookshelf on which sit approximately seven hundred books, five hundred of them children's picture books and novels. On the lower shelves the books sit five or six to a shelf, the front covers of the picture books visible to the children.

Favourite authors and artists whose books may be seen on the shelves include Jane Yolen, Jan Brett, Stephane Poulin, Charles Martin, E. B. White, Scott O'Dell, and Kit Pearson. Included on the shelves, at any time, are about two dozen books from the public library, all chosen by the children themselves. Among the books that the children own are hard covers received as gifts, paperbacks bought through the Scholastic Book Club, books bought at second-hand book sales, discarded books from the public library, and hand-me-downs from my childhood bookshelves. Selecting a book to have read at bedtime is a very "visible" task and one which the children take seriously.

Although I initially thought that there was little routine to our evenings, on closer reflection I can see recurring patterns in the way we end each day. When supper is over, one of us--Peter or myself--cleans up the table and dishes while the other one heads upstairs to start running the bathtub. The next hour or so is spent on washing dishes and washing children. The first of us to be finished the chores we've taken on marshals the troops for stories. Typical is a call like this, "All right, come on and pick your book. Let's go." And, although the children love to be read to, they don't always welcome the call to come and choose a book for it is also the call that signals bedtime. They do, however, straggle into the living room, Ian in someone's arms, Charlie carrying his blanket and with his thumb in his mouth, Maggie with her terribly tattered blanket and bunny under her arm, and Laura carrying--and reading en route--her own novel, but still ready

to sit on the edge of our storytime, to enjoy the company perhaps and sometimes the story as well.

And so begins the ending of each day. Not always beginning at the same time each evening, not always involving the same parent reading or the same books read, in moods that vary from exhausted to grumpy to patient to silly, there is, nevertheless, a continuity in our storytimes. Our children know that each night we will read to them. At this point I feel it is important to my story to look a little more closely at the people who make these storytimes happen, the people in our family. They are Laura, Maggie, Charlie, Ian, Peter, and myself, Clare. Each has a unique part to play in the making of this nightly family event.

THE SUBJECTS

Laura

Charlie: See, when I'm a grown-up, like Dad, I'll read the newspaper.

Clare: You don't have to be quite a grown-up. Laura reads the newspaper, doesn't she?

Laura: Yup, I sure do.

(Fieldnotes, October 23, 1993).

Laura is a tall slim girl, with straight brown hair cut in a bob, and big blue eyes which look out through a pair of glasses. She has a wide mouth which is often smiling, and almost always talking. Her daily uniform consists of jeans and a T-shirt, apparently the usual garb for her peers in her grade 4 class at school.

Laura has just turned ten years old. Almost a grown-up in so many ways, she is still a child in so many others. Able to diplomatically settle a squabble that arises between our friends' younger children, she still quarrels with her own sister and brother about the prizes in the Cheerios box. Able to watch a documentary on television and discuss it in an adult fashion, she still enjoys playing paper dolls on the floor with Maggie.

Laura has always experienced success at whatever she's attempted. Her personality has almost certainly been shaped by the order of her birth. Being the oldest child, every move she's made has been watched with anticipation and

with delight. She was our first child to walk, to talk, to tie her shoes, to print her name, to read a book. Each of these triumphs was greeted with a cheer and, for this reason, growing up has been a very positive experience for Laura.

Part of who Laura is comes from how others see her. To Maggie she is sometimes a rival and a threat, but also a friend and respected big sister. Not long ago Maggie brought from school a picture drawn of herself and her friends on a school bus. Late that night I took a close look at the children on the bus. There I saw several of Maggie's class friends illustrated. And among them--dressed in identical clothes to Maggie herself--was a bigger girl labeled Laura. To Charlie, Laura is truly a big sister. He will let her read his bedtime story, tie up his skates, and write his letter to Santa Claus. He laughs at her jokes and tells her things about his day. And to Ian, Laura is simply a third parent. She can soothe him when he is crying, and entertain him when he is grumpy.

Laura lives for books. One holiday season a few years back, I had returned our library books without getting new ones. While turning the car into the library parking lot one morning after several days with no fresh books in the house, I heard Laura in the back seat breathe a sigh of relief. "Thank goodness," she said. "I don't think I could stand another day without words." She began to read in her kindergarten year at school and received her first novel at Christmas of Grade Two.. She often has several books "going" at once and is often seen walking around the house reading.

At ten years of age Laura is really beginning to break out of our tight family circle. She often has friends calling on the phone or at the door to ask her to join them. She enjoys her friends but also enjoys the solitude of silent reading. It is just in the past year or so that Laura has given up choosing a story to have read each night. Instead she quietly reads her books while we read-aloud the books chosen by Maggie and Charlie. She still, however, tends to join us whenever we are reading, perched on another chair or stretched out on the floor across the room. And she still enjoys and appreciates a good picture book; I often hear her quietly chuckle over one or more of the books that come home from the library.

Maggie

Charlie: Yours was first last night so it should be mine tonight.

Maggie: I might not agree on that. Okay--let the little baby go first.

Charlie: I'm not a baby.

Maggie (sighing): Charlie can have his book first.

(Fieldnotes, October 6, 1993).

For five years Maggie has been a middle child. She has had to compete for everything she gets. Negotiation is a way of life for this seven year old. Although Maggie's long wavy hair is usually tied up, she loves to do marvelous things with it when she is around home for the day. On these days--weekends and holidays--I never know what kind of an outfit Maggie will appear dressed in. We laughingly call her the Fashion Queen and she seems to enjoy the joke. With an expressive face, and a personality to match, Maggie is an intense, passionate little person; she feels things deeply and is very able to express her feelings and opinions to those around her. Each of us has, at one time or another, come under Maggie's fire. She keeps us on our toes. Although she is often at odds with one or more members of her family at home, she is very loyal and quick to defend that same person if she senses injustice.

Just as Laura will always be the oldest child, Maggie will always be the second. Within an hour of her birth, a nurse returned from the nursery and told me of seeing Maggie's dad rocking her and telling her of her big sister at home. From that moment on, I suppose, Maggie has had a model to follow for everything she has done. She grew into her sister's clothes, skates, bicycles, and storybooks and has always had Laura ahead of her to show her how to use them.

When I think of Maggie I think of movement. She is the fastest runner in her class, an excellent skater, and plays soccer with the older kids. She strides rather than walks, tosses her head when she talks, and even her large brown eyes seem to dance when she is telling a story. Maggie spends hours in her bedroom listening to her favourite tapes playing over and over on an old tape player her dad gave her. She kneels forward on her bed and bounces to the music, a movement which has given her comfort since she was an infant. She

seems to need this private time alone and asks that we knock on her closed door before entering the room she shares with Laura.

Maggie is becoming a very good reader but has yet to become an enthusiastic one. She was recently excited to get her own library card, and I noticed that day that she borrowed only novels. A few days later she went to a second-hand book fair where she purchased the same type of books. Although these books don't get completely read by her, she loves to have them on "her" shelf.

Charlie

From What Do People Do All Day? (Scarry, 1979)

Peter finishes the story and turns the page.

Charlie: Can you read two stories?

Peter: No, that's it. Done. (ten second pause) What else do you want read then?

Charlie: Only this, 'cause I love it.

(Fieldnotes, November 6, 1993).

In appearance Charlie is a short-haired, younger version of Maggie. Having the same brown eyes and the same smile, they are easily recognizable as siblings. In ways other than appearance, however, they are quite different. Charlie is a rather gentle child who uses quiet but effective persistence to get what he wants. Being a third child, he is a follower and does his best to keep up with his sisters. He can hold his own in most of their games and sports, although he does sometimes take advantage of his position in the family and whines about things not being fair.

When the study began, Charlie was four years old and eligible to start kindergarten. We decided, however, that he would benefit from an extra year at home and he is having a wonderful year of playing quietly with his toys, and reading and hearing books read aloud. He is just now on the threshold of reading; he asks about signs he sees everywhere, what the back of the cereal box says, and how to spell all kinds of words. One of his favourite activities these days is doing "spelling tests."

Charlie has a very serious nature, and I've seen many adults hide a smile when being spoken to so earnestly by this young child. He has a keen sense of the sorts of things that are important in the world; he watches, with interest, the television news each evening and checks out nonfiction books from the library. He has an authoritative ring to his voice as he talks about sharks, aircraft, and dinosaurs. He once made a comment that he hadn't much use for the "beautiful books Maggie chooses." On the other hand, he will sit spellbound listening to one of those books being read aloud.

The serious side of Charlie is balanced out by a slapstick sense of humour. He goes into fits of giggles over a funny television cartoon, and likes to hear funny lines of storybooks repeated over and over, so he can enjoy the giggle again. Charlie began to take books to bed with him when he still slept in a crib. There has always been a collection of them atop his dresser and we often have to stop into his room on our way to bed to pull a book from beneath his sleeping head and turn out his light. Although Charlie is a typical five year old who loves to ride his bike and skate and play with his toys, books remain an important part of his life.

Ian

Peter is out playing hockey tonight and it is my first night to get the gang to bed without him around. I have asked Laura to do the reading tonight as Ian is fussy. Laura is happy to oblige, and Mags and Charlie are content to have her read to them. We settle in to hear the story.

(Fieldnotes, January 16, 1994).

When this study began Ian was only an anticipated member of our family. At that time we referred to the child inside me as "Abit" because we felt that he or she was just "a bit" of a person. Through the autumn the children were filled with questions such as where would Abit sleep, what would Abit look like, and when would Abit really get here. Christmas came and went with no trips to the hospital and it was the afternoon of January 11 when Abit finally arrived and was thereupon re-named Ian Andrew.

As seen in the above journal entry, written five days after Ian's birth, his arrival in our home necessitated some changes in our storybook reading routine. Not being a wonder woman capable of several productive things while breast feeding a baby, I found that even reading a book to the children while I was feeding Ian was not an easy task. During those early days, it was often Peter, and sometimes Laura who did the reading. The children also got used to hearing stories while perched alongside the rocking chair or curled-up on a bed. Interruptions were many and were tolerated with varying degrees of patience. The children were learning to fit this new little brother into all parts of their lives.

It is almost four months later as I write this now. For the past four months, since he was six days old, Ian has accompanied me three evenings a week to my university classes. Ian has had a first exciting spring of being surrounded by literacy events. As is likely the case with many fourth children, these literacy events have rarely been directed toward the baby. Rarely do I take the time to sit with Ian and read to him. I know that he will not have his parents' undivided attention with books and paper and pencils. And, yet, Ian is surrounded by living models of literacy. He sees books in every room of the house. He sees people reading in every room of the house, and each evening he is part of the gathering on the couch where he hears voices read stories, sees coloured images, and feels the rhythm of turning pages.

I feel certain that Ian's role in our family is--and will continue to be--one of fitting into already established family routines, one of learning as an observer of someone else's learning rather than as a direct recipient of "lessons" prepared just for him, one of ease and comfort rather than pressure and expectations.

Peter

From Alphabears (Hague, 1984)

Peter is reading Alphabears to the children. The text actually reads "C is for Charles, a stuffy old bear. He wears a bowtie and a part in his hair." Without changing his expression at all Peter begins to have fun with it.

*Peter(reading): C is for Charles, a snotty old bear. He wears a bowtie and spits in his hair.
Charlie: Dad, read it right.*

Peter: What's the matter?

Peter continues to the end, occasionally throwing in his own words and making the children laugh. As he finishes the last page, Charlie is giggling.

Charlie: Do it again and do it all funny.

Peter: Go away.

(Fieldnotes, February 22, 1994).

Peter is a thirty-seven year old father of four who leaves for his downtown office shortly after six o'clock each morning, returning home at five-thirty each evening. By the time he sits down at night to read stories to the children he often has to struggle to stay awake. Playing with the stories in his own unique fashion is his way of making what sometimes must be a chore into a bit of fun. Although the children sometimes protest when he starts to meddle with their dear stories they always end up giggling and asking for more. All the members of this family have grown accustomed to Dad's teasing; it is often his way of showing interest and affection and it is a part of all aspects of our family life, including bedtime storytime.

Peter is the oldest of two children, born and raised in Prince Edward Island. He graduated from the University of Prince Edward Island in 1979 with a Bachelor of Business Administration Degree. Peter knew that if he wanted to put his degree to use he would probably have to leave the Maritimes. In October 1981, he, like many young Maritime men and women, headed west to Calgary, Alberta. Within weeks he had secured a job with a large oil company and the following spring he flew home to get married and to officially move west.

To much of the outside world, Peter is a quiet private person. Not given much to making small talk, Peter does not go out of his way to charm or impress people. Those who have gained his trust and affection, however, know Peter as a kind, sincere friend with an excellent sense of humour. Confident in his own ideas and abilities, Peter quietly goes about whatever he sets out to do and keeps at it until he has finished it to his satisfaction.

Peter enjoys spending his leisure time with his children. It is often he who is the catalyst for family outings, such as skating, sledding, swimming, baseball, and car trips. He prefers not to organize these outings in any great way but likes to

keep things simple and fun. One of the games the children most liked to play when they were younger was a game they simply called "Playing Crazy." In this game everyone gathered on the playroom floor and the children tried to run past Peter without getting caught. A simple game, to be sure, but one which had everyone squealing with delight.

Although Peter enjoys reading, he doesn't make much time for it in his daily life. He will occasionally begin a suspense novel and will read it hour after hour until he has finished it. It is nonfiction, however, which holds the greatest interest for him and he spends hours reading newspapers and business magazines. The children are accustomed to seeing sections of the Calgary Herald spread all over the table in front of the couch on Saturdays and Sundays. Reading the newspaper seems to be infectious and the table is often a stopping point for several of us as we go by.

Clare

From Fire Fighters (Maass, 1989)

Clare: Okay, who's next and what's it called?

Charlie: Firemen.

Clare: Right. Fire Fighters, and it's by Robert Maass.

Charlie: I just like calling them Firemen.

Clare: Well, I'll tell you the reason I'd rather call them Fire Fighters. When you call them Firemen it sounds like they're all men--and they're not. There are women who are fire fighters, too. Do you see this word? What's this letter?

Charlie: F.

Clare: F. This is what FORD starts with, isn't it? Fire Fighters.

(Fieldnotes, October 11, 1993).

I am a teacher. I think I was born to be a teacher. With a grandmother, a mother, and a father who have been teachers perhaps it was inevitable that I would be one, too. And it seems that I bring this professional career choice to my personal life, as well.

I was born in 1960 in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. My parents brought me from the hospital to a big house in a small village which would be my home for the next twenty years. I was third among five children and grew up in a household where books, music, and family were valued. Throughout my childhood I always loved reading and there was never a shortage of books around the house. I somehow knew that I had a gift for helping others see things, learn things. When I began to think about what career I might choose, a natural choice for me was the field of education.

After graduating from the University of Prince Edward Island in 1982, I married Peter who had been living and working in Calgary. Father Clare, my uncle who married us, referred to the words of scripture which say a man shall leave his mother and a woman leave her home. He joked that he had read nothing about going three thousand miles away from home. The following day we began our drive across the country to begin a new life in Calgary, Alberta.

That September I began my first teaching position with the Calgary Public School Board and have taught for this school board for the past eleven years. I am presently on a one year leave from teaching but plan to return to school in September of this year.

Being a teacher, I think I bring a "teacher perspective" to the raising of our children. I have seen so many children pass through the doors of my classroom and I feel strongly about how to prepare children for life in the classroom and in "the big world." Very important to me are kindness and respect for others, a strong self-confidence, a good sense of humour, and a love of learning. Peter and the children sometimes have to remind me to ease up a little as I try hard to instill those values in those I love.

In many ways, I suppose, Peter and I balance each other out in our parenting roles. Where I am serious, he is funny. Where I try to organize everything from picnics to homework, he tries to keep things simple and fun. Where Peter sometimes gets impatient with the children and their antics, I have the patience of Job.

Children's books have long held a special interest for me. I consider myself to be somewhat knowledgeable about children's authors and illustrators and I thoroughly enjoy sharing my favourites with our children. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than seeing the members of my family enjoying books. I so want them to know the pleasures I have known from reading.

COLLECTING AND ANALYZING THE DATA

Data Collection

When I first began to collect data for this study, Peter and I had been reading to our children for nine years. In September 1993 I tried to step out of the role of participant and into the role of observer. Not wishing, however, to allow my study of this family event to change the very nature of it, I modified my role to one of *participant observer*. This would allow me to collect data while continuing to read to my family.

For two weeks in September I took notes each evening on what had occurred during storytime, notes concerning who read what and the type and amount of talk which had accompanied the reading. It was my university advisor who suggested that I audiotape the nightly readings. He suggested that I audiotape each evening's reading, transcribe these tapes into a double-entry journal and then accompany these transcriptions with my own written reflections. For the next five months--October 1, 1993 to March 1, 1994--I *audiotaped our nightly storyreadings* four to six nights each week. Shortly after each reading session--usually the following morning--I listened to the tape, transcribing it and reflecting on what had occurred during the reading.

This double-entry journal became my principal means of data collection. It provided an objective means of capturing the actual reading event while allowing for my parent perspective--my insight, familiarity with, and understanding of my family--to enhance my interpretation of the data. As I listened to the recordings each morning I wrote in my journal my *reflections on what I was hearing*. I noted

who was saying what, and wondered why things were said. I noticed patterns emerging and I began to watch for certain things to recur.

Because I attended evening classes at the university three nights each week, I was sometimes absent for storytime. Because of this I often found myself seeking clarification from Peter or one or more of the children the next day about something I had heard on the tape. These informal discussions with family members--*member checks*--allowed me insight into how they perceived what I was observing. Now my observations had three layers, the actual transcript of the story event, my reflections of the event from a parent perspective, and comments made by other members of the family on what had "actually occurred."

Data Analysis

All of this taping, listening, reflecting, listening again, wondering, reading, listening again became part of the data analysis. As is common with qualitative research, I began analysis of my data while still collecting them. Reflection on my data guided successive observations and reflections. Merriam (1988) states "The process of data collection is recursive and dynamic. But this is not to say that the analysis is finished when all the data have been collected. Quite the opposite. Analysis becomes more intensive once all the data are in, even though analysis has been an ongoing activity" (p. 123).

The first step in intensive analysis of my data was to become thoroughly familiar with them. I read and reread my data searching for patterns which would help me understand the talk of family members and how, through that talk, family literacy developed. Hickman (1981) captures the nature of this method of analysis.

With ethnographic methods as with net fishing, the real work comes in the sorting and choosing, in deciding what is worth keeping and using and then how it ought to be used. The size of the task is corollary to the breadth of evidence considered. Analysis becomes a search for pattern, a striving for workable

categories from which new perspectives emerge as the interpretation progresses (p. 345).

As I read and reread my journal it wasn't long before I was seeing familiar phrases in the comments and questions of the children and of Peter and myself. "What he could have done is. . . , " "What does that mean?" "Who's first and what's your book called?" "That's me and that's you." It was these oft repeated phrases that led me to begin an organization of storytime talk. I was able to generate broad headings and within these, more specific categories.

Hickman (1981) points out the importance of letting the categories emerge from the data, rather than developing them before data are collected. "If a category system for activities or modes of response had been developed before the collection of data, it is likely that many of the items on the preceding list would not have been predicted, or even recognized" (p.346). From the perspective of one quite new at this process, I would add that my consideration of categories developed by other researchers in this area helped to open my eyes to what was in my data but not recognizable to me. Successful analysis of my data included letting the categories suggest themselves during repeated readings of my journals, while being guided by the ideas of more experienced researchers in this area of study.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

A concern of mine from the very outset of this project was "telling the real story." As it happens, this concern for "realness" is not at all a unique one among researchers. I discuss here the issues of internal validity, reliability, and external validity as they relate to the telling of my story.

Internal Validity and Reliability

Internal validity refers to the degree to which a study's findings match reality. A key word here is certainly "reality." What is reality? Is there just one reality or

are there many realities for different people? And, if the latter, whose reality counts?

An underlying assumption of qualitative research is the notion of multiple realities. When discussing internal validity, or truthfulness, of a qualitative case study, what seems to be important is that the story being told is truly representative of the people involved. Merriam (1988) states,

In this type of research it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening (p. 168).

Reliability refers to the degree to which a study can be repeated and produce the same results. If one accepts an assumption of qualitative research which views behaviour as dynamic and ever changing--depending upon a great number of contextual factors--exact replication of findings may not seem to be desirable or even appropriate.

A researcher conducting a study of a qualitative nature would be concerned less with exact replication of findings than with reporting results that seem dependable, consistent, reliable. To this end, a researcher would endeavour to provide great detail about how the study was carried out so anyone reading the study could make an informed judgment about its reliability. In my study I took several steps to try to understand the perspectives of those involved and to increase the internal validity and reliability of the story I wanted to tell.

Long-term observation of our family storytime assured me that the data I collected were "real." Although the presence of a tape recorder must have seemed unnatural for the children and possibly even caused a change in behaviour during the first few nights it was used, after several nights, weeks, months of the same, it ceased to be a consideration. It captured the natural events just as they always happened.

Checking with members of my family throughout the data collection process helped me feel that the story which was emerging for me was, indeed, the same

story my family members were living. Being with the subjects of my study not only at storytime, but also at breakfast, lunch, and supper time, chore time and playtime, meant that I had ample access to their ideas and perceptions about storyreading, about themselves, and about our family life together.

Reading related literature validated observations I was making throughout my own study. Reading the stories of others both assured me that I was headed in a “right direction,” while nudging me to follow new ones.

Talking with colleagues about my study, about data collection methods, about related research, and about findings helped to bring a balancing external perspective to my work. This often allowed me to see the big picture when I was in danger of becoming entangled in the smaller parts.

Providing a detailed description of how I carried out my study, including methods of data collection and analysis and explanations of how decisions were made, allowed me to leave a clear trail for others to follow should they wish to repeat this study.

External Validity

External validity refers to the degree to which findings of a study can be applied to other similar situations. As with validity and reliability, external validity viewed from a qualitative perspective is somewhat different than traditionally viewed. The purpose of conducting case study research is usually not one of testing hypothesis which can be applied to large populations. Merriam (1988) states “One selects a case study approach because one wishes to understand the particular in depth, not because one wants to know what is generally true of the many” (p.173). That is not to say that qualitative case study research has nothing to offer in the way of significant findings which can be useful to others. Qualitative research has the ability to add significantly to our knowledge and understanding of people, social practices, and events. It broadens our way of knowing.

In order for a reader to generalize or transfer findings from a qualitative case study to a similar situation, the reader must be able to make an informed judgment about what is transferable and what is not. To this end, thick description of all aspects of the study must be offered. If the reader feels quite clear about the design of the study, the setting and the subjects, the ways data were collected and analyzed, and the perspective of the researcher, more informed decisions may be made about what is useful to the reader's situation.

In telling my story, I offer my readers a clear description of these aspects of the story. I tell my story, not to offer generalizations about family storytime, but rather to add to a growing picture about this practice which is a ritual in many families. If others who read it find commonplaces with their own experiences or if parts of my story offer them new perspectives for viewing their own, a purpose of telling this story will have been fulfilled.

SUMMARY

In this chapter I have discussed the design of my study, explaining the steps I took to bring my original ideas and questions to the stage of a written story. This included a discussion of the methodology--that being a multicas e study--, a description of the setting and the subjects as they were in April, 1994, a discussion of analysis procedures, and a discussion of validity and reliability, as related to my study. In the next chapter I present an analysis of the data, organized under the themes which emerged as significant to the family members involved in nightly storytime. I provide excerpts of storytime talk which support these themes and discuss the contributions of each family member to our family literacy.

CHAPTER IV

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY: ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

A word without meaning is an empty sound.

(Vygotsky, 1962, p. 120.)

INTRODUCTION

Although storytime is and was a family event involving each member of our family at one time or another, as I read and reread my data it seemed that it was Maggie and Charlie who were the most consistently present and active participants. Indeed, if not for them, storytime would probably have ceased to exist in our home in any formal sort of sense.

By the fall of 1993 when I began this study Laura had been reading her own books for a couple of years and had long since stopped bringing books to us to read aloud. By this time it was the two younger children, Maggie and Charlie, who were carrying on the tradition of gathering on the couch for stories. And, of these two, it seemed to be Maggie who emerged as the one who talked, questioned, commented, read, and generally interacted the most with her readers, with the texts, and with the authors. Charlie, as well, was a very interested active participant but, being two years younger than Maggie, often joined in and followed along rather than taking on the role of initiator. Never having been to school and possessing little knowledge of print, he was not terribly interested in talk pertaining to such. His agenda during storytime was fairly straightforward and could be summed up with his frequent statement "Just read the book."

Maggie, on the other hand, had just begun Grade One and was right on the edge of becoming a reader. She was quite open to questions about print, about vocabulary, about meaning, and had many of her own questions to ask. The five month period comprising this study saw an immense growth in Maggie's literacy as she developed from a tentative emergent learner to a confident reader. For her this was a period of observing print and discovering how it functioned, of

constructing meaning in the stories she read and had read to her, and of nurturing a continuing sense of personal engagement with storybooks.

This was surely a rich period in Maggie's literacy development. It seemed that a study of our family storytime could be most insightful if done from the perspective of Maggie's response to the stories and to the story reading event. Although I initially planned to tell this story, giving equal attention to all four children, it became evident that Maggie was a central figure of my study, with each of the other members of the family playing supporting roles. I examined Maggie's talk, laughter, and silences, looking for patterns to emerge that would help me to understand what family storytime was for her. An important part of my story was how other family members fit into this storytime, thus making it a study of family literacy. A comprehensive analysis of Maggie's experiences was followed, then, by a brief look at each of the other family members in the context of their contribution to our family storytime experience.

In this chapter I present an analysis of my data, attempting to make sense of the hours of storytime talk engaged in by Maggie and her family. I present excerpts of actual talk, interpreting the talk in light of pertinent literature and in such a way as to present an organized picture of family storytime as seen in the context of Maggie's literacy development. Data are presented under the several headings which emerged as significant aspects of Maggie's engagement with storybooks. These headings include Learning to read; Constructing meaning (from words, from illustrations, and from text); and Responding aesthetically to text (Response to text, and Response to storytime situation). This comprehensive analysis of Maggie's storytime experience is followed by a brief examination of each of the other family members and their contributions to family storytime.

FAMILY LITERACY: MAGGIE'S STORY

LEARNING TO READ

When this study began Maggie was in her second month of Grade One. She had begun the school year having mastered many of the skills needed to read independently but not yet confident that she was able to do so. When examining her part in our nightly storytime--her interactions with the text and with other family members--it seemed evident that she was aware of print and was often keen to decode the print she saw. Three aspects of Maggie's encounters with print stand out in this analysis. The first of these was when Maggie was invited by Peter or myself to read. The second aspect was when Maggie initiated the reading of a piece of text on her own. Finally, Maggie sometimes read spontaneously, as if she made no conscious decision to do so but suddenly found herself calling out words she recognized. In most cases these reading attempts were tied to reading individual words, particularly familiar words.

The following, from *The Daddies Boat* (Monfried, 1990) and *The Ring and the Window Seat* (Hest, 1990), are examples of Maggie's attempts to read because of my or Peter's urging:

Peter: Okay, what's this called?

Maggie (reading): The - Daddies - Boat.

Peter: Very good. It's a new one, this. I've never seen this one before.

(Fieldnotes, November 6, 1993).

Peter: What's this one called?

Maggie (reading): The Ring and the Window Sill.

Peter: No, try it again.

Maggie: The Ring and the Window - it is Window, isn't it?

Peter: Yes.

Maggie tries to sound it out but Peter has to help her with "Seat."

(Fieldnotes, November 8, 1993).

Each of the above examples illustrates a habit Peter has when reading to the children. He always begins each book by asking the child who has chosen it to read the title. This is a little ritual he may not even be aware of, but one which effectively engages the children in the reading of the books. Snow (1983) refers to these rituals as routine interactions with parents which afford children the security whereby they can learn from these experiences. She speaks of the way children can learn strategies for reading through routine recurring situations.

The existence of a strategy like "identify a situation, remember what is said in it, say that yourself the next time the situation recurs" has implications for the nature of the optimal language-learning situation. Clearly, a child can rely on such a strategy only if situations recur, and the strategy will help him more if adults produce predictable utterances at predictable points during the recurrences (p. 567).

In the first example Maggie read the title by looking at the words and at the cover illustration. These were all familiar easy words for her and, although the book was an unfamiliar one, she was able to decode the words in the title independently. In the next example, taken from a few evenings later, she was reading from memory and referred to the print only after an unsuccessful attempt to remember the title.

Sometimes Maggie's reading attempts were self-motivated. Something about the print prompted her to try to read, as the following examples from *Parade* (Crews, 1983) and *What Do People Do All Day?* (Scarry, 1979) illustrate.

I begin to read. There are just a few words to each page. Maggie stops me at an illustration of a concession stand, and reads the words on the stand.

Maggie (reading): Ice-cream, candy(a little trouble with this one), and soda.

Clare: Do you know what soda is?

Maggie: It's a kind of drink.

I continue to read.

Maggie: This would be a good book for me to read.

(Fieldnotes, October 6, 1993).

When we reach a picture of a sign beside a road crew, Maggie stops me to read the sign.

*Maggie (reading): Road Under Construction. (actual text--Road Under Repairs)
(Fieldnotes, October 15, 1993).*

At times such as these Maggie appeared to express quiet confidence in herself, stopping to read on her own and commenting on the reading level of one of the books. This appears to indicate an independent awareness of and attention to print. Teale (1984) suggests that the nature of the social interaction between parents and children changes as the child gains more control over the task. The child is able to take more responsibility for the reading of the book. In both of these examples the print that Maggie attempted to read was what is referred to as "environmental print," or the print that is seen incidentally in the child's environment. In studies of environmental print (Goodman, 1980; Hiebert, 1978, 1981; McGee, Lomax, and Head, 1988) young children demonstrated an ability to read many signs and labels shown to them, the ability declining as contextual factors were removed.

Maggie didn't elaborate on her notion that "this would be a good book," nor did I ask her to, but I feel sure that her reasons had to do with the small amount of text on each page. Perhaps she saw this book as similar to the very simple picture books she brought from school each day for the Home Reading program.

Finally, Maggie sometimes seemed--without really making a decision to do so--to read because of words that leapt out of the page and grabbed her attention. In the following example from *Amy Elizabeth Explores Bloomingdales* (Konigsburg, 1992) Maggie was surprised and delighted when she spied the name of her friend, Elizabeth, printed on a card pocket in the back of a library book.

Maggie picks up her new school library book and flips to the back to show me that she's the first ever to sign it out. She suddenly sees in type on the card pocket

Amy Elizabeth

explores

Bloomingdales

Maggie: Mom, that says Elizabeth, doesn't it? Why does it say Elizabeth?

Clare: 'Cause it's in the title of the book, isn't it?

Maggie (flipping to the front cover): Ya!

She tries to read the title but needs help after "Amy Elizabeth."

(Fieldnotes, October 20, 1993).

To me, as a primary school teacher, it was always an exciting sign of reading when I saw a child recognize a familiar word from among many words. I saw it as a sign of growth toward independent reading, being able to recognize a word in an unlikely place and without the support of context or illustration.

It is interesting to note that Maggie had chosen this book from a shelf in the school library, carried it home, and was preparing to enjoy having it read to her without ever having noticed the word ELIZABETH on the front cover. It was only when she saw it printed in the familiar school style--Elizabeth, with only the first letter capitalized--that the word leapt out at her. This is further evidence of the role of environmental print in word recognition.

An examination of Maggie's storytime talk, her questions, comments, and read-aloud attempts, allows us an insight into the stages of reading through which she passed. In her classification scheme for emergent reading of favorite storybooks, Sulzby (1985) characterizes children's reading attempts by what seems to be the primary source of meaning, picture or print. Within these broad categories are subdivisions which range from "Story not formed", the most simplistic of the picture-governed attempts to "Independent reading", the most sophisticated stage of the print-governed attempts (See Figure 1).

Maggie's storytime talk and reading attempts during the autumn months of 1993 seemed to place her just inside the stages of print-governed attempts in Sulzby's (1985) "Aspectual" stage.

The second sub-category of behavior after children begin to attend to print as what is read is called "aspectual." Before the child becomes an independent reader, s/he often starts to focus upon one or two aspects about print to the exclusion of other aspects. These aspects may be new or may be old items of attention. Now they are tied to print. This seems to be a period during which

Categories of Storybook Reading*

60

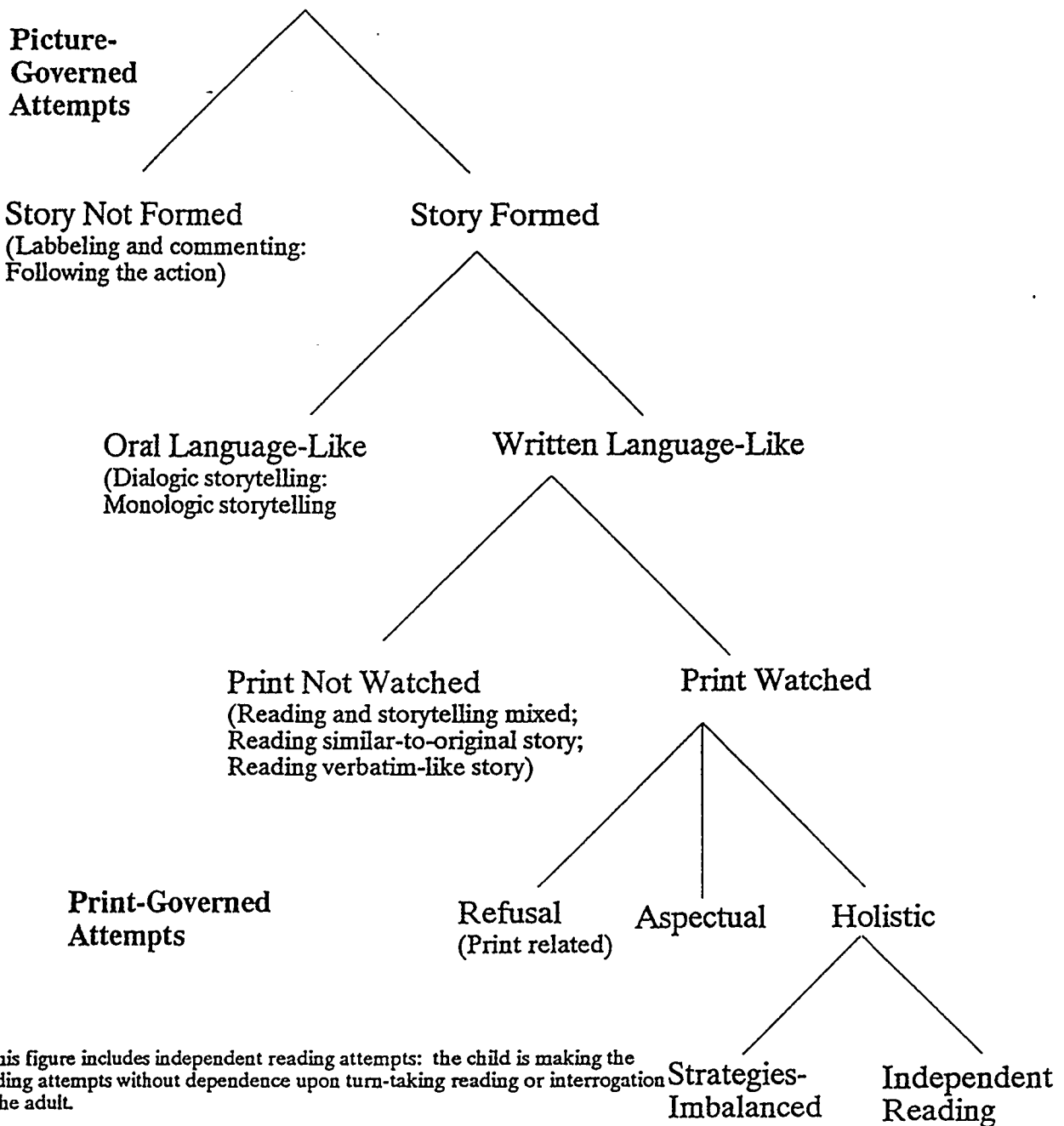


Figure 1 (from Sulzby, 1985, p. 464)

Tree structure categories of classification scheme for emergent reading of favorite storybooks

the child begins to be specifically aware of things that he or she can use as aids or clues in figuring out print. Now the child may focus upon a few known words, or a few letters and associated sounds, or upon the remembered text-- whichever aspect or combination of aspects the child focuses on, s/he attempts to use with print (p. 471).

The following exchange between Maggie and myself illustrates this focusing on a combination of aspects, as she attempted to read the title of the book, *Is Your Mama A Lama?* (Guarino, 1989).

Clare: What's it called, Sweetie?

Maggie (reading): Is Your Mother--no, Mama--A Lama? Mom, I didn't need any help with that.

It was easy.

(Fieldnotes, October 11, 1993).

Maggie seemed to rely here on the memory of this familiar book, hence the "mother" miscue. As she was about to complete the title she remembered, too, that the words should rhyme and she was able to substitute the word "mama."

Clare: Good. What's this say?(referring to the written inscription inside the cover, To Laura.

Love Del. I hope you enjoy reading this.).

Maggie looks at it for a few seconds and then reads quickly.

Maggie (reading): To Laura. Love Del. I hope you enjoy--(She gets stuck here and tries to sound it out letter by letter. This doesn't work too well. Then she discovers the ing at the end.)

Maggie: No, that word is too hard but the last one is "this." Oh! I hope you enjoy reading this.

(Fieldnotes, October 11, 1993).

This exchange shows Maggie to be "aware of things that she can use as aids or clues in figuring out print." She took a bit of time to look at the words, knowing perhaps what kind of words might be in this hand-written message. She quickly picked out the familiar words and tried to decode the troublesome word by sounding out the letters one by one. When this proved unsuccessful she searched for other help and grasped the familiar "ing" ending,. But that didn't help much so she finally just went ahead to the next word, which allowed her to predict what the missing word is. And "Oh!" She got it.

It is important to note that Maggie, even from within the print-governed stage, sought meaning, above all else from stories she read and had read to her. In the following example, I read *The Scrap Doll* (Rosenberg, 1991) to her, a book with which she was already familiar. I stopped in the midst of a sentence, an invitation for her to complete it.

Clare (reading): Lydia felt sorry, too. In her mind she called the doll--(Ugly Old Thing).

Maggie: Scruffy Old Thing.

(Fieldnotes, October 10, 1993).

Maggie did complete the sentence but she did so from memory and with words that made sense to her rather than ones which matched the letters on the page. This attention to meaning which, at times, took precedence over the actual print led me to the next area of analysis, that of construction of meaning.

CONSTRUCTING MEANING

Altwerger, Diehl-Faxon, & Dockstader-Anderson (1985) found meaning construction to be the focus of parents during storybook reading. "...the read-aloud event has as its primary goal the construction of a meaningful, comprehensible, and relevant text for the child, rather than a precise or even approximate reading of the print" (p. 476). An examination of Maggie's storytime talk revealed, over and over, the importance to *her* of making sense of the stories she heard read to her. It seemed that Maggie, while listening to a story, was actively working to make what she heard make sense to her. This is similar to the findings of Yaden, Smolkin, & Conlon (1989) who, in two studies of preschoolers, analyzed the kinds of questions asked by the children as they listened to stories. They found that, next to questions about pictures, the most frequent type of questions asked were inquiries about story meaning. The authors concluded that home storybook reading had more effect on children's development of comprehension processes than on their print awareness.

Martinez (1983) examined the storytime interactions which occurred during the nightly story reading a little girl shared with her father. Martinez identified several kinds of meaning Maria Dolores constructed. These included literal meanings, inferential meanings, evaluative, and personal connections.

These limited observations of one parent and one child suggest that studies of storytime interactions may reveal a great deal about the kinds of meanings children construct in natural situations. Equally important, however, such research may reveal facets of interaction that appear to enhance the young child's comprehension of stories (p. 205).

An examination of Maggie's comments and questions illustrate the different ways she had of making sense of what she heard. I present these now under the following headings: Constructing meaning from words, Constructing meaning from illustrations, Constructing meaning from text.

CONSTRUCTING MEANING FROM WORDS

As Maggie listened to us read, she frequently needed to have clarified the meanings of words she didn't understand. When this happened she didn't hesitate to stop the reader in mid-sentence and say, simply, "What does that mean?" And, in an effort to keep the story flowing, the reader briefly provided the meaning she sought and continued reading. It sometimes happened that a word had multiple meanings and in such a case we explained the meaning relevant to the story we were reading. Following are excerpts from *Canadian Police Officers* (Bourgeois, 1992), *Canadian Fire Fighters* (Bourgeois, 1991), and *Shiloh* (Naylor, 1991) which illustrate a pattern. The pattern appears to be one in which Maggie would interrupt the reader to ask the meaning of a word, the reader would briefly explain the word meaning, and the story reading would continue.

Peter (reading): . . . parked behind an abandoned building.

Maggie: What does abandoned mean?

Peter: Empty--nobody's there--it's just empty.

(Fieldnotes, October 26, 1993).

Peter (reading): . . . the plugs are frayed.

Maggie: What's frayed mean?

Peter: I think worn and the wires are exposed.

(Fieldnotes, November 11, 1993).

Clare (reading) . . . and saw Judd cheat Mr. Wallace at the cash register--

Maggie: What does cheat mean?

Clare: Play a trick on him.

(Fieldnotes, November 20, 1993).

What is interesting about these and the many other instances where Maggie asked for the meaning of a word is why some words got asked about and others did not. Had I predicted, before reading any of these books, which words might get asked about, I would have been wrong most times. It appears that it was not the most difficult words in the stories that got questioned. For example while listening to *Canadian Police Officers* (Bourgeois, 1992), Maggie did not ask about the words commotion, dispatcher, or investigate--words I would think would stump a six-year old listener. Similarly, the same chapter of *Shiloh* (Naylor, 1991) which contained the word cheat also had such words as gristmill and beagle. Yet these words she let pass by.

A reasonable, but perhaps not the only, explanation for this is that the words Maggie chose to have explained were the words she almost understood on her own. It is as though these words were *almost* within her grasp and an extra little boost from us could help her reach them. Of the hundreds of words she heard read aloud each evening many of them were already "owned" by her; many others were unattainable at this time. It was the ones she was *close* to understanding which she questioned.

This seems to support Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the zone of proximal development, the area of knowledge a child is just on the verge of attaining. This information is what is most learnable, that which lies within the ZPD. Also, in terms of Vygotsky's notion, it is the more knowledgeable person, the parent, who assists the child in negotiating the meanings of words, from meanings that he knows something of to more elaborate meanings for words. It would make

sense that storybook reading is a wonderful activity to support this type of learning. Each child listening is able to learn, understand, construct meaning at his own level, while letting that outside his ZPD pass--for now, at least.

Sometimes, in an effort to ensure that Maggie understood the word she was questioning, we spent a little longer time on the explanation. Some words just could not be easily explained in a brief phrase or two. As much as possible, as in the following examples from *What is God?* (Boritzer, 1989) and *The Christmas Story* (Random House, 1986), I tried to connect my explanation to something she could personally understand, something she could associate with her own experiences.

Clare (reading): . . . your religion.

Maggie: What is religion?

Clare: It is what kind of belief you have about God. Our religion is Catholic--we believe certain things about God that other people don't. Peggy is Lutheran. That is her religion. And Vicki's religion is Anglican.

(Fieldnotes, November 18, 1993).

Clare (reading): . . . gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Maggie: What are they--frankincense and myrrh?

I try to explain, referring to the incense used during mass on certain special occasions, but she has no recollection of this.

Clare: Gee, we'll have to find out more about this.

Maggie: We could look it up in the dictionary.

Clare: Yes, we could.

(Fieldnotes, November 29, 1993).

In these exchanges I tried to relate previous knowledge I believed Maggie had to the new meaning she was striving to construct. In the first instance I was successful in connecting the word religion to something familiar to her. Peggy is our next-door neighbour, while Vicki is her sister's best friend. In the second instance I was unsuccessful at making a bridge for her understanding, perhaps because I was really unclear myself about frankincense and myrrh. Easier for me to explain to Maggie was the word smuggle, from *Ida and the Wool*

Smugglers (Alderson, 1987), probably because we had recently had an amusing incident I could relate it to.

Clare (reading): Sometimes a sheep even becomes a smuggler's dinner.

Maggie: Mom, what's a smuggler?

Clare: Smuggle, smuggle means sneak, sneak something that they're not supposed to, like the time Charlie smuggled Laura's chocolate bar upstairs to the bathroom and ate it.

(Fieldnotes, February 20, 1994).

Laura sometimes got involved in the explanation of words and ideas, again using personal experiences to build supports for understanding. During the reading of *Pinky and Rex and the Mean Old Witch* (Howe, 1991) she was able to help support Maggie's understanding with a personal story

Clare (reading): "Let's sue her."

Maggie: What does that mean, Mom?

Clare: What does sue mean?

Maggie: Ya.

Clare: It means when you get a lawyer and you take her to court. Like you take her to a trial. It's kind of a silly thing people do sometimes.

Laura: Mom, we were trying to make Heather go down a small hill on the toboggan today, standing up. And I finally said, "Heather, if you get killed you can sue me and Kelsey" And she said, "Well, I can't sue you if I'm dead."

(Fieldnotes, January 23, 1994).

CONSTRUCTING MEANING FROM ILLUSTRATIONS

Sutherland & Arbuthnot (1986) discuss the important role played by pictures in children's storybooks.

To study or discuss children's literature and not to include an examination of children's book illustration would be to ignore a significant element in the value and the appeal of these booksIllustrations do not necessarily stand on their own but function in relation to each other and to the text to produce a unified whole (p. 132 ff.).

It is clear that the illustrations in the picture books we read played an important part for Maggie in our storytime events. Time and time again she referred to the pictures, in connection to the story that was being read.

It becomes very difficult at this point to really understand the role played by the illustrations; Maggie often referred to the illustrations in order to clarify her understanding of the story events, yet her comments about them often suggested an aesthetic response. In effect, illustrations functioned in a powerful way to engender an aesthetic evocation of the text. This, in turn, served to reinforce and enhance Maggie's understanding of the story. Sutherland & Arbuthnot (1986) suggest the following:

Then and now, artwork in children's books served several functions: to clarify the text or add information that is not in the text, in the case of nonfiction particularly; to enlarge or interpret the author's meaning, to evoke an appropriate mood, to establish setting or portray character in fiction; or simply to be decorative (p. 132).

These functions cover the range on the continuum suggested by Rosenblatt's (1978) notion of stance, from the efferent "to add information that is not in the text, in the case of nonfiction particularly," to the aesthetic "to evoke an appropriate mood."

An examination of Maggie's picture-related comments illustrated all of the above functions at work. For now I will deal only with those functions related to the first, clarifying the text or adding information. I have subdivided this into specific ways that illustrations helped Maggie construct meaning. They are as follows: using illustrations to build a tentative understanding of a story; using illustrations to enhance an understanding of a story; using a combination of illustration and text to confirm an understanding of a story.

Using illustration to build a tentative understanding of a story

One of the wonderful characteristics of picture books is the fact that children can "read" them even before they can read in the conventional sense of the word. In fact, children often select books by looking at the pictures. These pictures go a long way toward telling them about the story between the covers. Ferreiro (1985, 1986) repeatedly found that preschool children initially think that text is simply a written explanation of what is going on in the pictures.

When our children bring new books home from the library they are "read" by them--sometimes several times--before they ever have them read-aloud. This is illustrated in the following exchange from *Maggie's Whopper* (Alexander, 1992):

Clare: What's it called?

Maggie (reading): Maggie's Whopper.

Clare: What's a whopper?

Maggie: A lie?

Clare: A lie! Right, but it can also be something really big.

Maggie: Like this house can be a whopper.

Clare: So, we really don't know which it is, do we?

Maggie: No, but I think it's something real big, because I've looked at this book.

Clare: Okay.

Maggie: She caught a big fish.

Charlie: So that must be the whopper.

(Fieldnotes, October 16, 1993).

In this story Maggie looked through the book before she had it read to her and was able to begin to make predictions, to get a sense of what the story might be about by "reading" the pictures. Nothing was for sure but she did feel that the big fish Maggie caught was somehow important. Out of the many different possible stories this book might tell, Maggie was able to begin to confirm at least some of the possible text through looking at the pictures, and through our talk. Langer (1994) refers to the "horizon of possibilities" that exists each time a reader encounters a text.

There is an ever-emerging 'horizon of possibilities' that enriches the reader's understanding. Readers clarify ideas as they read and relate them to the growing whole; the whole informs the parts, as well as the parts building toward the wholeFrom the moment they begin reading, they orient themselves toward exploring possibilities. . . (p. 205).

Maggie, through the illustrations was able to explore possibilities and build a tentative understanding of the story.

Using illustrations to enhance an understanding of a story

In many cases the illustrations served to add to the information Maggie had gained through the text. At these times the illustrations served as support for the text, as clarifying elements. This is evident in the following exchange from *Have You Seen Josephine?* (Poulin, 1986):

Peter (reading): "I know where she's going," I said. "To Clara's for ice cream." . . . "What are you doing, Josephine?" Clara called to her. But Josephine went right by the store.

Maggie: Which one is Clara?

Peter: That one, I guess.

(Fieldnotes, October 8, 1993).

In this instance Maggie was following the story and had gathered, perhaps, that Clara was the owner of an ice cream store. Pictured in the illustration are several people standing in the street. By establishing which of the pictured figures is Clara, Maggie was able to complete or, at least, enhance her understanding of this character. It is interesting to note that it was Maggie who initiated this question about the picture. It seems clear that she had a need to confirm what she thought she knew.

In the next example Maggie, following Charlie's lead, noticed something in the illustration which helped her to match the two characters in the story to the figures in the picture. In *What Do People Do All Day?* (Scarry, 1979) the mayors from two towns--Busytown and Workville--collaborate to build a new road between their towns. The mayors are shown standing in an office wearing hats

that match the little flags on two trucks outside the door. They also have banners across their shirts; these banners have printed on them the names of their respective towns.

I begin to read on the first page, but Charlie stops me excitedly.

Charlie: Oh! He gots this truck and he gots this truck.

Clare: How can you tell?

Charlie: 'Cause about their hats.

Maggie: No, I think about their clothes.

Clare: Good point.

(Fieldnotes, November 9, 1993).

Again, in this example, the children appeared to be using the picture to add to their understanding of the story. Richard Scarry books are very picture-oriented. The reading of these books almost always involves some reference to the many little pictures which accompany the sometimes sparse text. The text, comprised of prose, dialogue, and labels, invites readers and listeners to attend to the pictures. These kinds of books really support Sutherland & Arbuthnot's (1986) observation that "Illustrations . . . function in relation to each other and to the text to produce a unified whole" (p. 134). And indeed, Maggie and Charlie did respond to Scarry's illustrations in order to construct a "whole" story.

Using a combination of illustration and text to confirm an understanding of a story

At times, Maggie used a combination of illustration and text to confirm an understanding she had reached about a story. One evening I sat in to listen and to watch while Peter read *The Daddies Boat* (Monfried, 1990) to the children. I had read the book myself earlier in the day when I had been listing the books we had just borrowed from the public library. The author and illustrator had collaborated to create a clever story which seemed quite straightforward and predictable until the last page where, in a very surprising ending, the *mother* stepped off the ferry dubbed The Daddies Boat..

As the story ends Maggie appears confused.

Maggie: I don't get it. 'Cause I thought they said it's The Daddies Boat and it carried daddies.

Clare laughs.

Maggie (insistently): That's what they said.

Peter: But she's a working gal - a women's libber.

Clare: So who is on the island?

Maggie: The kid. (Maggie begins to look back through the pictures.)

Peter: Who was with her?

Maggie: The cat.

Peter: And who else?

Maggie: Oh, duh, I get it.

Charlie: The grandma?

Maggie: The dad.

Peter: Right.

Clare: I looked at this book earlier. Look how clever the artist was in never showing the adult's face.

We look at the pictures again.

(Fieldnotes, November 6, 1993).

In this book the illustrations were carefully thought out so as not to spoil the surprise at the end. The pictures are not deliberately misleading, just vague enough to allow the reader to make the wrong assumptions. Rumelhart and Ortony (1977) offer an account of knowledge representation, based on interacting knowledge structures which they refer to as schemata.

Schemata are the key units of the comprehension process. . . comprehension can be considered to consist of selecting schemata and variable binds that will "account for" the material to be comprehended, and then verifying that those schemata do indeed account for it. . . . On having found a set of schemata which appears to give a sufficient account of the information, the person is said to have "comprehended" the situation (pp. 111-12).

As Maggie prepared to hear *The Daddies Boat* (Monfried, 1991), she selected what she considered to be appropriate schemata for constructing meaning from the story. After hearing *The Daddies Boat* read once, Maggie had to change her schemata in order to see the pictures differently. A look back through the

pictures helped Maggie in her struggle to understand what had happened. Gradually it became clear to her and she was able to laugh at herself, "Oh, duh, I get it." We looked through the pictures again, this time through different lenses.

The next exchange clearly shows Maggie using a combination of text and illustration to construct meaning from a story. Peter was reading *Pettranella* (Waterton, 1980). Each of the beautiful pictures by Ann Blades faces a whole page of text so, in most cases, the picture fits only a small part of the text it accompanies. On this evening Maggie was listening to the story and attempting to understand the picture in relation to what she was hearing. They had reached a page depicting a large group of travelers crowded into what could be a room or could be a ship's deck. *Pettranella* is in the midst of the crowd seated on a trunk. The way the trunk is pictured makes it look like a ship's railing. At least, Maggie seemed to perceive it this way.

Peter (reading): . . . and exciting to be going across the ocean in a big ship.

Maggie: Are they in the ship now?

Peter: I think so. Oh, maybe not. I can't tell.

Peter (reading): As they stood at the rail waiting to leave the ship--

Maggie: I guess they are.

(Fieldnotes, January 24, 1994).

Here, Maggie used the text she heard together with the picture she saw to shape her understanding of the story. Yaden, Smolkin, & Conlon (1989) discuss how children move developmentally from pictures to print in their construction of meaning. "Thus we hypothesize that children's concept of the story reading event may evolve from a global response to the pictured events toward a more focused attention upon the story as constrained by the oral text" (p. 209). It would appear from Maggie's comments that, although illustrations still enjoyed part of her attention, she probably focused much of her attention on "the story as constrained by the oral text." The two--illustration and text--worked in combination to enable Maggie to construct the story.

CONSTRUCTING MEANING FROM TEXT

I have indicated that Maggie was able to construct meaning from words and from illustrations, but it is probably whole chunks of text that enabled her to find the most meaning. An examination of data collected over months of storybook reading revealed a number of ways Maggie used text she heard to construct meaning. I discuss these now under the following headings: instructional moments, self-initiated questions, and confirming self-talk.

Instructional Moments

Instructional moments refer to all the moments when we took on the roles of teachers and student, the occasions when, in an effort to ensure Maggie was comprehending what was being read, we stopped to say, "Do you know why she said that?" or, "Why do you think he did that?" Included in this section are moments when Charlie asked a question and Maggie--not unlike a classmate--piped up to answer his question or add to the answer we'd provided. These instructional moments, although usually unplanned, were very purposeful in the sense of comprehension, or constructing a meaningful text from what was being read aloud.

These exchanges seemed to follow a pattern. In the midst of reading a story Peter or myself, as reader, would ask a text-related question; Maggie, as listener, would answer the question, often referring to or even quoting evidence from the text; the story would continue. The following excerpts from *All Those Secrets of the World* (Yolen, 1991) and *For Rent* (Martin, 1986), illustrate this pattern:

Clare (reading): "Go away, you bad man. Don't you touch my mama."

Clare: Why do you think he says that?

Maggie: Because he didn't know him. He was so young when he went away.

(Fieldnotes, October 6, 1993).

Clare (reading): She and Polly were getting along just fine.

Clare: How could she tell that?

Maggie: She invited her in.
(Fieldnotes, November 3, 1993).

A variation of this pattern would be as follows: In the midst of a story Charlie, as listener, would ask a text-related question; Maggie, as a fellow-listener, would respond to the question, referring to or even quoting from the text; the story would continue. Sometimes discussion of the question would ensue before the story went on as we would negotiate an answer. An example of this type of exchange, from *Amy Elizabeth Explores Bloomington* (Konigsburg, 1992) follows:

Clare (reading): Today we must go to the airport, Amy Elizabeth, so that Alexander the Great and I can take you back to Houston.

Charlie: Is the dog actually her dog?

Maggie: Whose dog?

Charlie: The girl's.

Maggie: Alexander the Great? It's the grandma's.

Charlie: No, because it was in the cage.

Clare: Let's find out. I think it's the grandma's because she was the one who had the pooper-scooper in the closet--and the leash. But let's find out.

Maggie: But remember it says "Alexander the Great and I will take you back home."

(Fieldnotes, October 23, 1993).

These two types of instructional moments, when Maggie answered a text-related question posed during the story reading, differ in an important way, that being the purpose behind the asking of the question. Heath (1983) distinguished between the types of questions frequently asked by parents of one community and those of parents from a different community. In one community parents often asked questions for the purpose of checking the level of understanding their children had attained from the story. In another community parents asked "real" questions for the purpose of genuinely seeking answers to these questions. Lindfors (1990) suggests another type of question, one much less meaningful for the construction of meaning. She refers to the "discussions" she encounters in classrooms where children, rather than engaging in exploratory talk, are caught in "tamed and house-trained language."

There is nothing for children to explore, nothing for them to make sense of, in an experience that does not matter to them. . . Like well-trained parrots, the children provide memorized labels on cue. Tamed and house-trained talk; no exploration here. No meaning-making is apparent in the children's talk because there is no meaning to be made (p. 32).

Many of the questions Peter and I asked during story reading events were of Heath's first type. In each of the first two examples cited above--*All Those Secrets of the World* (Yolen, 1991), and *For Rent* (Martin, 1986)--I had a predetermined answer in mind when I asked the question. My purpose in asking the question was not to check literal comprehension but to get Maggie to reflect, in a meaningful way, about events in the story. I was checking not in the context of assessment of learning, but rather with the goal of ensuring Maggie optimal enjoyment of the story. I knew I had the ability to make inferences from the text and I wanted to ensure that she was also able to do so. There was an element of confirmation here, a confirming and articulating what Maggie really did know although she may not have realized she knew it. In the following exchange between Peter, Maggie, and Charlie, Peter's question, asked during the reading of *Rumpelstiltskin* (Tarcov, 1973) caused Maggie to think about something they had noticed occurring in the story. And Maggie's tentative answer suggests that she was still exploring possibilities, using, perhaps, Lindfors' "exploratory talk."

Peter (reading): That evening the king took the miller's daughter into a bigger room. . . "Now spin," said the king. "If you do not spin all this straw into gold by morning, you must die."

Charlie: He always says that.

Peter: And why does he say that, do you know?

Charlie (shrugging): No.

Maggie: Just to make her work?

Peter: Yeah.

(Fieldnotes, November 15, 1993).

An example of the second kind of question Heath discussed - those "real" questions posed to find "real" answers - can be found in the above exchange between Maggie, Charlie, and myself during the story *Amy Elizabeth Explores Bloomingdales* (Konigsburg, 1992). As Charlie listened to the story he was

unsure of who owned the dog, Alexander the Great, and so he asked the question with the purpose of finding out. Maggie and I shared definite ideas about the ownership of the dog and we attempted to explain our reasons to Charlie. I cited evidence which I thought would convince Charlie that the dog belonged to the grandma. Maggie chose to quote a line of text which she felt proved our point.

I feel it is reasonable to assume that behind Maggie's quotation of the text was a certain amount of reflection of the question. Having to explain and defend her answer led her to a clearer, deeper way of knowing. Barnes (1990) refers to "talking as a means of learning." He shows how three students, through their discussion of a piece of literature, are able to work on their understanding of the text. "They are not learning in the sense of adding new facts to their store, but rather they are exploring the interrelationships and significance of the information they have already acquired, rearranging it and considering its implications" (p. 49). The following example illustrates how we, through our discussion of the ownership question, were not adding new information or facts but just sorting through what we had already heard in the text.

Clare: Whose do you think it is?

Maggie: It's the grandma's.

Charlie: No, because it was in the cage. . . .

Clare: Does that explain it to you now?

Charlie: No, it doesn't really.

Clare: See, I think that the grandma is not just taking her to the airport. She's going with her.

Charlie: No, because if she flies back out, that should be her mother, see. . . .

Clare (reading): . . . and Alexander the Great's carrying case from the deep closet in her bedroom-

Charlie:-Okay, yah, that must be it. She had a pooper-scooper and a leash and a carrying case. (Fieldnotes, October 23, 1993).

All of the "instructional moments" cited above seemed to serve the purpose of focusing attention on one or more text-related issues. Being initiated by either the reader or another listener, they probably did not serve to add new knowledge to Maggie's store. They did, however, offer Maggie the opportunity for reflection

and discussion. In this way they served as a means to better understanding the story.

Self-initiated questions

Self-initiated questions form the next category of ways Maggie constructed meaning. These include all the instances when Maggie felt compelled to interrupt the reader to ask a text-related question. Again, a simple pattern of questioning emerged. In the midst of a story Maggie would stop the reader with a brief question, sometimes as simple as "why?"; the reader would respond to her question; the story would continue. Sometimes, if the first answer or explanation did not suffice, Maggie would persist with a second "why?" This pattern is illustrated through the following examples from *The Auction* (Andrews, 1990) and *Canadian Fire Fighters* (Bourgeois, 1991):

Clare (reading): There was nothing to cook and no chairs--

Maggie: Why not?

Clare: Because they're selling everything.

Maggie: Why?

Clare: Because they're selling the farm.

(Fieldnotes, November 3, 1993).

Peter (reading): Shut the door and put towels at the base of the door.

Maggie: Why should you put them at the base of your door?

Peter: To keep the smoke out.

(Fieldnotes, November 11, 1993).

It seems as if Maggie was unable or unwilling to go on to more text without understanding what she had already heard. Stopping us in mid-story the way she did allowed her to prepare for understanding what would come next. It helped her to construct meaning for one aspect of the story and let her move on to the next part. Martinez & Roser (1985) suggest that ". . . as the children gain control over particular aspects of stories, they are able to attend to other dimensions" (p. 785).

Sometimes if Maggie had waited to hear more of the story she would have been able to use context to help her find answers to her own questions. In the case of *The Auction* (Andrews, 1990) above, the story centres on a grandpa who is selling his farm. This isn't clear to readers at the outset of the story as the grandson arrives to find his grandpa sitting in the bare kitchen. The author allows her reader to know only as much as the little boy in the story; Maggie was probably unaware of this and felt that getting clear on this was important before moving on.

The following, from *Heckedy Peg* (Wood, 1987), is another example of Maggie asking for clarification just before the author provided it:

Laura (reading): Leaning out the window, the children looked into the sack. They couldn't believe their eyes.

Maggie: What was it?

Laura (reading): "Gold!" they cried.

(Fieldnotes, November 22, 1993).

In this instance Laura, as reader, let the text itself answer Maggie's question. And Maggie, satisfied with the answer, let Laura continue reading.

When Maggie asked questions about the text it was our responses that helped her to put meaning to what she heard in the story. Our responses also helped her to expand her knowledge of the world as we led her to make connections between story events and real life.

In the following exchange, from *Ida and the Wool Smugglers* (Alderson, 1987), Maggie showed confusion over an unfamiliar phrase. Although I explained the phrase to her, she was still confused because of her lack of knowledge about the way things used to be. With my explanation I helped her to understand the story and a little bit about life on a farm one hundred years ago.

Clare (reading): Tandy was Ida's special pet ewe.

Maggie: Mommy, what do you mean "special pet ewe?"

Clare: Ewe - E W E - It's a mother sheep, that's what it means - a ewe - not a you.

Maggie: But why didn't she take it to her house and maybe let it go in her backyard?

Clare: Her mother and father probably didn't let her. In those days kids weren't really allowed to have pets unless they were working animals, and if it was a sheep they probably said "No, you can't have it."
(Fieldnotes, February 20, 1994).

And during the story *Franklin Fibs* (Bourgeois, 1991), Maggie learned to distinguish between the words *fibbed* and *lied*. Maggie's question to me indicated that she already had a good sense of the word *fibbed* but that she needed a little fine tuning of her understanding. I was able to provide this during the following exchange:

Clare (reading): Franklin had fibbed.

Maggie: Why don't they say lied?

Clare: I guess lie is a more serious word, whereas a fib is just a quick little thing you tell without thinking.

(Fieldnotes, January 5, 1994).

To this point I have discussed two ways--instructional moments and self-initiated questions--Maggie was able to construct meaning from the text she heard. Both of these depended on the support and mediation of Peter or myself, as readers. It is through the questions we asked her, our responses to her questions, and our explanations that we were able to lend support to her learning. We were able to nudge her along, providing the scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978) necessary for her to create meaning from the stories we read.

Confirming Self-talk

It became evident upon examination of the data that Maggie enjoyed many moments of active meaning construction which occurred independent of Peter or myself. These are the times when Maggie made text-related comments aloud as she listened to a story. In many cases these seem to be confirming comments of something she had just sorted out, some understanding she had just reached. I refer to this as confirming self-talk. The pattern for this sort of talk seems very simple. In the midst of a story Maggie makes a text-related comment after which

the reader continues reading. An example from *All Those Secrets of the World* (Yolen, 1991) follows:

Clare (reading): My cousin Michael was seven and I was six and my baby brother, Stevie, just starting to talk when my father came home from the war.

Maggie: And, so, then, she was six when he comes back.

Clare (reading): There were no big ships or waving flags, just a stranger in brown with his arm in a sling unfolding himself from a cab.

(Fieldnotes, October 24, 1993).

This beautiful story begins with the sentence "My cousin Michael was six and I was four when my father went off to war." Maggie's comment, as the story neared its conclusion, suggests that she had been wondering, or trying to remember from a past reading, how old the little girl is at the conclusion of the story. I suspect that all of this had to do with Maggie, herself then a six-year old, identifying with the little girl in the story. It was impossible for me to know the depth of Maggie's response, but through her self-talk I was able to tell that she was actively constructing the story.

Sometimes Peter or I would respond briefly to Maggie's comments, as in the following example, from *Petey's Pen-pal-manship* (Marino, 1989):

Clare (reading): "Why not learn to write with your right hand?" his father said.

Maggie: Okay, so he broke this arm (indicating her left arm).

Clare (reading): Petey practiced and practiced, and soon his right penmanship was quite neat.

(Fieldnotes, October 24, 1993).

Perhaps Maggie was again identifying with the character in the story. And, again, she had good reason for doing so, being herself left-handed like the little boy. She did not directly state this but it may have been behind her comment and the fact that she actually used her own arm to compare to Petey's.

Maggie's self-talk allowed us insight not only into her understanding of the stories, themselves, but also the understanding she had gained about the authors and illustrators who gave us these stories. This is all part of coming to understand the nature of story, and Maggie paid close attention to those first

minutes of a story reading, when Peter or I gave credit to its creators. One day Maggie revealed an understanding she had just reached about the author/illustrator, Richard Scarry (1973). Ever since Maggie's baby brother Charlie was old enough to sit up in his crib he'd been "reading" Richard Scarry books borrowed from the Public Library. Maggie revealed in the following exchange that she had just come to realize a Richard Scarry book is, indeed, a book written by a person named Richard Scarry:

Clare: This is The Please and Thank You Book and it is written by--

Charlie: Richard Scarry.

Maggie: It's not BY Richard Scarry, is it?

Clare: Yah.

Maggie: Oh, Richard is his first name and Scarry is his last, I guess. Hmm, I wouldn't want to live at his house.

(Fieldnotes, October 9, 1993).

I did not stop here to consider what she meant, or to try to clear up any misunderstanding. Perhaps Maggie will always have the impression of this author living in an old haunted house. Her words "I guess" and "Hmm" suggest a thinking-aloud sort of process as she came to a new understanding of words she had heard many times but had never seen in this way.

Here, from *Sammy the Seal* (Hoff, 1959), is another reference to Maggie's growing awareness of authors and the roles they play in the books she enjoys:

Clare: Okay. Sammy the Seal. Story and Pictures by Syd Hoff.

Maggie: Oh, so she did both things.

Clare: Yah. I have a feeling, though, that Syd is a man.

(Fieldnotes, November 7, 1993).

Again, the "Oh" suggests a "Eureka!" experience, a new understanding. This word is seen again in the following example, from *Mama's New Job* (Berenstain, 1984), where Maggie was able to match up something she saw in an illustration to text that she had heard earlier in the story:

Peter (reading): After about two weeks of hard work, the Bear Country Quilt Shop held its grand opening.

Maggie (pointing to a quilt for sale) Oh, she did that one.

Peter (reading): It was a very exciting event.

(Fieldnotes, February 3, 1994)

Several pages previous to this the text reads "She had some lovely design ideas she wanted to try." The illustration depicts several quilts pictured in Mama's thoughts. When one of these quilts showed up later in the picture of the Quilt Shop grand opening, Maggie remembered it from earlier. Maggie's comment suggests her delight in Mama's having, indeed, fulfilled one of her dreams. The way Peter continued to read the text without any comment probably means he did not even notice what Maggie did. This was like a private moment between Maggie and the text.

Unlike the first two categories I discussed--instructional moments and self-initiated questions--where meaning construction depended to a large extent on our involvement and interaction with Maggie, this third category, confirming self-talk, suggests that Maggie often played a very active and independent role in constructing meaning. Although we, as readers, sometimes did interact directly with Maggie when she talked aloud, it seems to have been an "after the fact" kind of interaction. For the most part she had already figured things out, answered her own questions, and discovered new meaning by the time she spoke aloud.

RESPONDING AESTHETICALLY

To this point I have discussed several ways Maggie was able to take a story she heard read aloud and turn it into a text that had meaning for her. These include constructing meaning from words; from illustrations, and from text. Although these are undoubtedly the most obvious means by which Maggie moved from tentative understandings to clear, meaningful ones, they are certainly not the only means. All these functioned in the service of an aesthetic "reading" of the text.

The aesthetic reading of a text has received attention, in part, since Rosenblatt (1938) first proposed a new way of looking at readers' responses to literature. This perspective shifted the importance away from the text and an interpretation of the text as being right or wrong, and placed more emphasis on the reader and the reader's personal interpretation. This way of looking at literature is known as Reader Response, or Reception Theory. Rosenblatt (1989) states "Every reading act is an event, a transaction involving a particular reader and a particular configuration of marks on a page, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context. . . . Meaning does not reside ready-made in the text or in the reader; it happens in the transaction between reader and text" (p. 157).

Although Maggie was able to "learn" much--about vocabulary, about the world past and present, about story structure, about the conventions of print--from the stories she heard, it was surely the experience of the reading event itself, the transaction between Maggie and the text, that compelled her each night to pull a book from the shelf and bring it to the couch. Rosenblatt (1978) states "In aesthetic reading . . . the reader's primary concern is with what happens *during* the actual reading event" (p. 24). She distinguishes between two extreme opposite stances a reader may take.

At the extreme efferent end of the spectrum, the reader. . . concentrates on what the symbols designate, what they may be contributing to the end result that he seeks - the information, the concepts, the guides to action, that will be left with him when the reading is over. At the aesthetic end of the spectrum, in contrast, the reader's primary purpose is fulfilled *during* the reading event, as he fixes his attention on the actual experience he is living through (p. 27).

As Maggie giggled, chanted, and sighed her way through storytime, as her voice was at times tentative, scornful, wistful, she was surely responding aesthetically to the stories she listened to.

The emphasis of aesthetic response is on the lived-through experience, a phenomenon which is incompatible with a linear perspective (Rosenblatt, 1993). Maggie's interactions with us and with text did fall into personal and solid categories of response. Cox & Many (1992) studied the written responses to literature made by fifth-grade students over a period of a year, and were able to

identify three categories of response. These were Imaging and picturing, Extending and hypothesizing, and Relating Associations and feelings evoked. Given the fact that these children were several years older than Maggie and that their responses were made in written form, one might expect their responses to differ significantly from those of Maggie. Nevertheless, in reading back through Maggie's talk, questions, comments, and my own observational comments, I found evidence for the first two of these categories, as well as aspects of the third.

Another source I found helpful in my examination and analysis of kinds of response to literature was Hickman (1981). She categorized responses evident in classrooms, and of these seven broad headings - Listening behaviors, Contact with books, Acting on the impulse to share, Oral responses, Actions and drama, Making things, Writing - the first four seemed most appropriate for use in examining Maggie's talk and behaviour during storytime. Using Hickman's classification system as a model, I developed my own headings and subheadings according to the kinds of response I found evident in my own data. The classification system which emerged from my analysis includes two broad types of response, each with several subtypes, as illustrated in Figure 2. In this Figure I have given credit to the sources which gave rise to my classification system.

RESPONSE TO TEXT

Imaging and picturing

Imaging and picturing a story or a scene from a story, particularly with herself as a character, is something Maggie regularly did as she listened to stories. Cox & Many (1992) found evidence for this in the written responses of the fifth-graders they studied. "Students' imagings often go beyond picturing the story world created by the author as they actually enter into the world and envision what it would be like to be the characters themselves" (p. 30). Such was the case as Maggie listened to *Have You Seen Josephine?* (Poulin, 1986). Poulin's delightful paintings are filled with details of all one might see on a busy street in Montreal. Maggie's wistful comment, made while listening to the story,

Figure 2 Classification system for observing Maggie's aesthetic response

Response category	Criteria	Examples
Response to text		
--Imaging and picturing (Cox & Many)	Picturing herself as a character in the story	"I was Benji."
--Extending and hypothesizing (Cox & Many)	Extending the story beyond the reality of the text	"What he could have done is . . ."
--Relating to personal experiences (Cox & Many, adapted)	Making connections between story event and personal background and experiences	"Hey, Charlie, we saw one of those, remember?"
--Conversing with text (Waddell)	Answering aloud questions and comments embedded in text	Text: Do you think monkeys have feelings like we do? Maggie: "Yes, I think all animals do."
--Playing with language (Waddell)	Deliberately altering the words in the text for her own amusement	Text: Every morning before I go to school--- Maggie(giggling): "She jumps in the pool."
Joining in refrains and chanting (Hickman)	Joining in on her own to read or chant familiar phrases	Maggie(with text) "Those old familiar words, try, try again."
Response to Storytime Situation		
--Negotiating seating/reading arrangements (Waddell)	Discussing who gets to sit where and which book gets read first	"Okay, who's next and what's it called?"
--Establishing ownership (Waddell)	Establishing who owns the book or who "owns" it for the evening's reading	"That's my story, did you know?"

suggested she envisioned herself in the place of Daniel, high up on the bridge. This was not the case, as I later discovered.

Peter (reading): I like looking down from the bridge.

Maggie: That would be so much fun.

Peter: Maybe.

(Fieldnotes, October 8, 1993).

A day or two after this exchange occurred I asked Maggie about what she'd said. She went to get the book and opened it to the page showing Daniel and his dad standing on the bridge and looking out over the streets and rooftops. Maggie pointed, "There. That's what I meant." Far below, on the flat rooftop of an apartment building lay two sunbathers. Poulin's artwork had lifted Maggie right out of her own two-story home, right out of the story of Daniel and his dad, and had allowed her to imagine the novelty of sunbathing atop a rooftop in the middle of a city.

Apart from illustrating Maggie's aesthetic response to a picture book, I use this example to underline how difficult it is, through simple observation, to understand a child's response to literature. Had I not pursued, through closer questioning, Maggie's comment, I would never have known what she meant. Even the questions I did ask did not allow me to know the depth of her response. At best, we can only guess what children are thinking, feeling, living through during a book reading. Hickman (1981) discusses the difficulty of relying solely on verbal or written response.

But those who work with young children know that language tells only part of the story of what they are feeling and thinking. Not only do young children demonstrate intention and meaning before fluency, but they also characteristically use modes of expression other than language, revealing themselves through gesture and movement, for instance, or in their painting or other art work (p. 344).

In Maggie's case, although she was able to fluently verbalize her thoughts, it still told only part of the story.

Maggie and Charlie often went so far in their imaginations as to point out the characters they were. Such is the case in the following example, from *The Balloon Tree* (Gilman, 1984):

Peter (reading): Then the King invited everyone in the kingdom to the biggest party there had ever been.

Charlie: That's me, that's Laura, that's Maggie, and that's you, Dad.

Maggie (in a pleased voice): That's me?

Peter starts to continue, but Charlie cuts him off as he realizes Maggie is mistaken.

Charlie: No, no, that's you, and that's Laura, and that's me, and that's Dad.

Peter: Where's Mom?

Maggie: She's not with us.

(Fieldnotes, November 1, 1993).

In this exchange Charlie matched the characters in the illustration to members of his family. He felt compelled to share this with Peter and Maggie. Maggie immediately bought into the identifying of the characters. Rather than responding to Charlie with "What do you mean?" or "No, that's the king in the story," she quickly picked up his train of thought and began to sort out his identifications. And when she misinterpreted his matching he felt this was significant enough to warrant clarification, "No, no, that's you."

Something interesting occurred when Peter tried to become a part of what Maggie and Charlie were doing. His question was quickly dealt with as "Mom" was simply dismissed, "She's not with us." I sense here an adult trying unsuccessfully to enter a child's world. Charlie and Maggie were speaking the same language here. It is as if they had actually entered the kingdom in the story and when Peter tried to reach in from the outside grown-up world, he was politely shunned. Dyson (1988) talks about the multiple worlds children live in and, in particular, about the need for them to be able to move back and forth between these worlds in order to create texts.

I argue here that children's major developmental challenge is not simply to create a unified text world but to move among multiple worlds, carrying out multiple roles and coordinating multiple space/time structures. . . And it is our

own differentiation of these competing worlds that will allow us as adults to understand the seemingly unstable worlds, the shifts of time frames and points of view, that children create (p. 356).

A few evenings later, after I had finished reading a book Charlie had chosen, *Oh, Brother* (Lakin, 1987), I asked the children who they were in the story.

Clare: Who were you in the story?

Maggie (quietly): I was Benji.

Charlie points to the big brother.

Clare: You were the big guy?

Charlie: Yah.

(Fieldnotes, November 3, 1993).

In this exchange it was really to Charlie that I had posed the question (part of the ownership issue I will deal with later). Maggie, again without question, understood what I was asking and quietly replied. The quiet tone suggests a reflective note, a sort of thinking aloud. Maggie's three simple words certainly indicate an aesthetic response, a stepping into the story. She did not say, "I would like to be Benji" or "Benji is like me", but simply "I was Benji."

It is interesting to note which roles the children chose, given that Maggie--the older of the two--chose the younger brother role, while Charlie--the youngest--chose the older brother role. I think Maggie's choice reflects her position as Laura's younger sister, with whom she shares bunk beds like the boys in the story. How much of that relationship Maggie shares with her big sister did she take with her into the story as she became the little brother? This is really a matter of speculation. I didn't ask and Maggie probably could not have told me.

In the following excerpt, one of my favourites from my journal, one can almost trace how Maggie's role evolved from that of observer, looking at a picture, to that of a character in the story, caught in a dangerous situation. The book was *Ida and the Wool Smugglers* (Alderson, 1987) in which a little girl finds herself, a sheep, and two lambs caught in an open meadow between two wool smugglers. At one point in the book the illustrator, Ann Blades, gives us a glorious two page spread without text and it is here that Maggie's comments occur.

Maggie: See? There they are. And it's like "Oh, oh." I would put them in front of me. (Her voice drops to a whisper.) But they could sneak.
(Fieldnotes, February 20, 1994).

Maggie's first comments, "See? There they are," indicate she was still on the outside looking in. Then she imagined what Ida might be saying and she said these words aloud, "Oh, oh." Maggie's next step was to imagine herself as Ida and plan what she would do in the same situation, "I would put them in front of me." And, finally, as Maggie's voice dropped to a whisper, we know she had stepped into the story. She had become a part of the story, hence the need for whispering. "But they could sneak."

Langer (1987) talks about the need for readers and listeners to build an envisionment for a text by stepping into the story and moving through it. From observer/listener to standing right in the midst of danger, all in a few short sentences; Maggie's imaging and picturing allowed her to live through Ida's experience.

Extending and hypothesizing

As a child reading storybooks, the stories I read often rolled on in my mind after I'd laid the book down. I would alter circumstances to suit my sense of what should or could have happened. Cox & Many (1992) found this to be a typical response of students to stories they read. "... many students create meaning from what they read by extending the story beyond the actual text or by hypothesizing how the story could have been different" (p. 31).

This phrase "could have" is one which came up again and again in Maggie's response to stories, as she suggested alternative ways of solving the conflicts which arose when she engaged with the text and with the author of the text. The following exchanges, from *What Do People Do All Day* (Scarry, 1979), *Heckedy Peg* (Wood, 1987), and *Little Fingerling* (Hughes, 1989) all include this notion of what "could have happened:"

Clare (reading): The road grader ploughs down the bumps.

Maggie: They could have filled in the hollows and made a high road, rather than plough down the bumps.

(Fieldnotes, November 19, 1993).

Laura (reading): "Gold!" they cried. "For a sack of gold we'll let you in and light your pipe."

Maggie: They really could have taken the gold through the window.

(Fieldnotes, November 22, 1993).

Clare (reading): "Gold!" they cried. "For a sack of gold we'll let you in and light your pipe."

Maggie: Do you know what they could have done? They could have reached out through the window.

(Fieldnotes, January 5, 1994).

Clare (reading): "I will go to Kyoto and make my way in the world," he told himself.

Maggie: What he could have done is he could have just got in that and just paddled.

Clare: Yah. . . .

Clare (reading): "Will you permit me to leave?" Little Fingerling asked the stall owner.

Maggie: What he could have done is like Dad. He could live somewhere and then go each day to work.

Clare: You're right. But maybe it was too far for his little legs.

(Fieldnotes, February 18, 1994).

This type of response--extending and hypothesizing--indicates a personal involvement in the story as Maggie took up the task of problem solving. Thinking beyond the words she heard, she considered possibilities, and made judgments. This surely is the construction of a whole story, a story with more than realities, but with possibilities as well. Bruner (1986) talks about the "narrative mode," the side of the mind that allows a reader to create imaginative possible worlds, that turns good stories into great ones, good dramas into gripping ones. He talks about the hypothetical aspect of story.

I have tried to make the case that the function of art is to open us to dilemmas, to the hypothetical, to the range of possible worlds that a text can refer to. I have used the term “to subjunctivize,” to render the world less fixed, less banal, more susceptible to recreation (p. 159).

As Maggie listened one evening to *The Hockey Sweater* (Carrier, 1984), she was amused by the thought of a possibility:

Clare (reading): “So I had to wear the Toronto Maple Leafs sweater.”

Maggie: Hey, wouldn’t it be funny if they all got them?

(Fieldnotes, January 10, 1994).

Although she had heard this story before and knew this does not really happen, Maggie was able to “leave” the text, as written, for a few moments and enjoy a chuckle from a possible text she had created.

Relating text to personal experiences

Cox & Many (1992) found that for many students literature evoked emotions that they were able to relate to past personal experiences. I found little evidence in my data to suggest that Maggie was able to connect an emotional response to a story, with her own personal memories and experiences. I suspect this recognition of an emotion and what it relates to takes a more sophisticated reader/listener than a six-year old (i.e., Cox & Many’s fifth-grade students). Although I have little doubt that many of the stories read to Maggie did call forth an emotional response, evidence for this is very informal, of an observable nature—a smile, a sigh, a tone of voice, a prolonged silence at the end of a story. She was rarely able to put into words what she felt and never in the data I gathered did I find evidence that she was able to connect an emotional response to a past experience.

This is not to say that Maggie did not bring her personal background and experiences to bear as she listened to stories. In fact, she relied to a great extent on previous knowledge gained through life’s experiences. This is

supported by Rosenblatt (1989), who states, "When we see a set of marks on a page that we believe can be made into verbal signs. . . we assume they should give rise to some more or less coherent meaning. We bring our accumulated experience to bear" (p. 157). As Maggie called up her own memories, she brought forth all the associations connected with these and "read" the text her unique way. Surely here is an aesthetic response as Maggie's thinking and reasoning merged with her remembering and feeling.

One special memory Maggie has from her kindergarten year is a trip the class took to the community fire station. This memory always surfaces for her as we read Charlie's book, *Fire Fighters* (Maass, 1989). One photograph, in particular, calls to mind a fireman from the station.

As we turn the page to the photo of the group of fire fighters, Maggie points to one of the men.
Maggie: This is the one who gave our class the tour.
(Fieldnotes, October 11, 1993).

On this particular evening it mattered not to Maggie that this book was photographed and published in New York City and that the man pictured could not possibly have been the one she remembered. During past readings I had tried to convince her that she was wrong but I didn't bother this time. Why spoil a good memory?

Several months later there was another conversation about kindergarten, this time during *The Berenstain Bears Go To School* (Berenstain, 1978), a story about Sister Bear starting school for the first time. Maggie's year in school allowed her to speak with experience, as she attempted to edit some of the information Charlie gleaned from the story.

Clare (reading): Sister fell asleep at naptime.
Maggie: I didn't have naptime.
Clare: No.
Maggie: Because I could only stay in the morning or in the afternoon.
Charlie: Mommy, now I know what ECS is like. You're supposed to nap, build blocks.
Maggie: No, not napping, but you get to build blocks.
(Fieldnotes, January 23, 1994).

How different the reading of this book must have been for Maggie than it was for Charlie. As Maggie listened she was able to visualize herself in her own old classroom, just as it really was. Charlie, on the other hand, could still only imagine what it might be like.

Sometimes Peter or myself helped the children to understand by prompting them to draw upon their own life experiences. It was our way of building bridges from something familiar to something unknown. The following exchange, from *What Do People Do All Day?* (Scarry, 1979), illustrates this:

Clare (reading): --except when it rained. Then the dirt turned to mud and everyone got stuck.

Clare: Have you ever been on a dirt road?

Maggie: On the way to the beach that we go to with Gram. And also on the way from church to Barb and Peter's cottage.

Charlie: And on the way to Leighton Centre.

Maggie: Leighton Art Centre, yah!

(Fieldnotes, November 9, 1993).

Maggie's earliest and most frequent experiences with dirt roads were the several ones she traveled on during her summers on Prince Edward Island. Charlie was able to bring dirt roads closer to home by reminding Maggie of the one we had just experienced a few weeks previous when we had driven school children to Leighton Art Centre. Reminding Maggie of the dirt roads she had traveled on helped her to smell the dust, hear the pebbles, and feel the unevenness of the road beneath her, even as she sat comfortably on her own living room couch listening to a story.

Although Maggie often used her own life experiences to help her understand what she heard in stories, the reverse could also be true. In the following example, from *Little Fingerling* (Hughes, 1989), Maggie was able to take what she heard in a story, ask a few questions, and make a bit more sense of something she had heard in the news a few days earlier:

Clare (reading): In his place stood a handsome samurai warrior.

Maggie: What's, um, a warrior?

Clare: A soldier.

Maggie: There was something in the news about warriors.

Clare: What country was it in?

Laura: Was it Prince Charles?

Maggie: Yah.

Laura: Yah, they were warriors.

Clare: Oh, okay.

Maggie: Were they just playing?

Laura and I explain about when Prince Charles had been greeted in New Zealand by warriors doing a ceremonial dance. I use the word tradition. The explanation seems to satisfy Maggie.

(Fieldnotes, February 18, 1994).

The examples I've cited in this section illustrate the way Maggie sometimes made connections between stories she heard read and her own personal background and experiences. Although not always of primary focus, certainly a significant aspect of hearing these stories read involved images and associations called to mind. These images and associations merged with the text itself to evoke a unique reading of these stories for Maggie, readings filled with her own personal meanings.

Conversing with text

As Maggie listened to storybooks read aloud she often engaged actively with them by talking aloud--conversing, as it were--with the text. She often entered into a brief dialogue with the author, with the characters the author had created and with the ideas the author had presented. Through her responses to the questions asked and the comments she made we can see how she strove to make connections between her own life and the text. Probst (1988) observed a class of high school children reacting to a book they had read together. Although their teacher steered their talk away from their own personal reactions, Probst could sense the need they had to connect their lives with the text world.

. . . she might have considered the students' questions and interests more significant--they came, after all, from the life, the feeling, the observation, the

vision of the students. They were focused clearly and intently upon the connecting links between the text and their own lives. The story was, for them, implicated with life, itself, and they wanted to consider those implications. . . They could have, if the teacher had allowed it, participated in the making of meaning about their own lives as well as about the text. . . (p. 34).

The following examples, from *Amy Elizabeth Explores Bloomingdales* (Konigsburg, 1992), *The Ring and the Window Seat* (Hest, 1990), and *The Berenstain Bears Go To School* (Berenstain, 1978) illustrate Maggie's participation in the making of meaning about her own life:

Clare (reading): We do the wash one load at a time and don't watch.

Maggie (very quietly): Me either.

(Fieldnotes, October 20, 1993).

Peter (reading): "Every girl should have a place for dreaming."

Maggie (quietly): I don't.

(Fieldnotes, November 8, 1993).

Clare (reading): When summertime ends and the weather turns cool, most little bears are ready for school.

Maggie: I'm not.

(Fieldnotes, January 23, 1994).

In each of these examples Maggie used the words "I" or "me," clearly indicating that she was connecting the storybook events to her own life. In the second exchange, from *The Ring and the Window Seat* (Hest, 1990), Maggie was undoubtedly referring to her great disappointment in life, that of having to share a bedroom with her sister and, therefore, not having any privacy. In most of these exchanges neither Peter nor myself responded to Maggie's comments, perhaps because they were not directed to us. And, yet, Maggie continued to converse with the text, as if she received some sort of satisfaction from doing so.

In the following examples, all taken from one reading of *Canadian Fire Fighters* (Bourgeois, 1991), Maggie was very engaged in learning and sharing what she already knew about fire safety:

Peter (reading): Learn the number for the Fire Department.

Maggie: 911. . . .

Peter (reading): You must stay out.

Maggie: Until they say it's okay to go back in.

Peter: Right. . . .

Peter (reading): If your clothes catch fire, never run.

Maggie: 'Cause if you run, the bigger the flames get.

(Fieldnotes, November 11, 1993).

Maggie was not content with just the simple statements made in the book. Her comments seemed to be made with the purpose of completing the inadequate--to her, at least--statements. With Maggie's additions she really became a co-author of the text, extending it to her standards.

Maggie's conversing with the text seemed to fall into one of two types, commenting reflectively, as above, on some idea raised by a text phrase, or answering questions asked in the text. Included in some kinds of storybooks are questions posed as if to the listener. These questions are written right into the text but are different from questions which form part of a dialogue between characters. Rather, they are questions aimed directly at the listener with the goal, perhaps, of engaging the listener actively in the story. Following, from *What Do People Do All Day?* (Scarry, 1979), and *Busytown Busy People* (Scarry, 1979) are examples of Maggie responding aloud to these sorts of questions.

Clare (reading): Wood is used to make many things. How many things can you think of that are made of wood?

Maggie: Newspapers.

Clare: Good one.

Maggie: Books.

Laura: Almost everything Grandpa makes.

Charlie: And paper.

After several more suggestions I cut them off and continue reading.
(Fieldnotes, October 23, 1993)).

In this instance Charlie and Laura joined Maggie in responding to the question raised by Richard Scarry. If active engagement of young listeners was Mr. Scarry's goal, he certainly was successful as the children discussed wood and its uses. The discussion would have gone on had I not continued reading. There follows two more examples, again from *Busytown Busy People* (Scarry, 1979), of this "text questions - listeners answer" type of exchange.

Clare (reading): Now why did the cat do that?

Maggie: So he could make a boat.

(Fieldnotes, November 14, 1993).

Clare (reading): What does your daddy do?

Charlie: He works for Petro-Canada.

Clare (reading): What does your mommy do?

Maggie: She stays home and watches the kids.

Charlie: She teaches classes.

(Fieldnotes, November 19, 1993).

In the first instance the question was raised in much the same way as Peter or I might have done, not unlike our "instructional moments." It was raised to prompt the listener to think about the reason for the story action. And Maggie, without stopping to consider that she was conversing with a book rather than a person, promptly responded. Perhaps she did this so naturally because it was similar to the type of interaction she was accustomed to with us. It also indicates, I think, a comfort and ease with the book reading experience, an absence of self-consciousness one might feel when talking to a book.

The following two examples of this type of exchange took place during the reading of a nonfiction book, *Zoo Clues* (Gerstenfeld, 1991), about visiting the zoo. The questions asked in this text seem a little more open-ended than those in the Richard Scarry books.

Clare (reading): The mouth is wide open, but the lips cover the teeth - a nonthreatening gesture.

Do you think monkeys and other animals have the same feelings as you do?

Maggie: Yes, I think all animals have feelings. . . .

Clare (reading): Listen to the sounds the monkeys make. What are they trying to say to one another?

Maggie: Beats me.

(Fieldnotes, January 6, 1994).

In the first exchange Maggie's response suggests a thoughtful reflection, as she seriously considered the question. A few minutes later she was less ready to take the question seriously and answered "Beats me," one of her standard answers for what she considers inane questions. Again, I sense a very comfortable relationship between Maggie and the text, a relationship conducive to meaningful dialogue.

Playing with language

One of Maggie's strong personal characteristics is her sense of humour. And it seems only natural that she should have carried this sense of fun into family storytime, a natural part of daily life. This playful treatment of reading stories added delight and pleasure to a family ritual, making storytime much more than just a time to hear stories. As I examined Maggie's play with the text two aspects stood out as significant. These were the tremendous fun she derived from Peter's storytime foolishness, and the fun she had playing, herself, with language.

Perhaps in an effort some evenings to stay awake, perhaps to have some fun or to liven up a dull story, Peter often took liberties with the text of the books he read. He invariably changed the text with the goal of teasing one or members of his listening audience. The children tolerated these digressions to varying degrees but generally chuckled over his play. Even the sometimes protests could be heard interlaced with giggles as they tried to get him back on track. The following examples of the way Peter played with the text and the way Maggie responded are taken from *The Big Parade* (Hefty, 1988), a "Create - A - Book" generic book with the names plugged in to make it specific to a particular

child, *Rumpelstiltskin* (Tarcov, 1973), and *Pinky and Rex and the Mean Old Witch* (Howe, 1991): The underlined words denote the words Peter substituted in, while the words in brackets denote actual text.

Peter (reading): Maggie was fighting (playing) with her friends.

Maggie (laughing): Dad. . .

Peter (reading): Following the band was a beautiful bareback rider named Charles. She was balancing on two prancing white horses with her thumb stuck in her mouth.

(Charlie really protests at this line, while Maggie giggles with great appreciation.)

(Fieldnotes, October 12, 1993).

Peter (reading): So, as most women do, she began to cry.

Maggie (indignantly): As most women do. Huh! . . .

(Peter continues the squeaky voice. When it comes to guessing names, one of the names is Charlie.)

Peter (reading): No, no, not that dumb name.

The kids are really giggling at Peter's antics.

(Fieldnotes, November 15, 1993).

Peter (reading): You stink.

(Charlie giggles. Peter does, as well.)

Peter (reading): Amanda giggled. Charlie giggled.

(Charlie and Maggie are both laughing.)

Peter (pretending to read): Maggie giggled.

(Fieldnotes, January 20, 1994).

Sometimes Maggie enjoyed Peter's humorous treatment of storybooks so much she tried to imitate his methods. While reading *Alphabears* (Hague, 1984) one evening, Peter was faithful to the first line of each page but changed the rhyming line to be funny. Near the end Maggie slipped in one of her own adaptations.

Peter(reading): U is for Ursula, a quite useless bear. She does nothing but just sit and swear(stare). . .

Peter(reading): Z is for Zak, who says that it's true that -

Maggie: - that he needs a potty because he has to poo.

Peter ignores this so she repeats it.

Peter: Hmph.

(Fieldnotes, February 22, 1994).

It is interesting to note that Peter didn't seem to appreciate Maggie's joining his act. And a little later on that same evening, when Maggie was still in her silly mood, she began to alter the text of the next storybook, *Can You Catch Josephine?* (Poulin, 1987). Again, this was not much appreciated by Peter who, perhaps, by this time was getting tired and just wanted to get storytime over with. The situation resolved itself, however, and the children enjoyed a last laugh.

Peter (reading): My cat's name is Josephine. Every morning before school--

Maggie (giggling like crazy):--She jumps in the pool.

Peter (reading): . . . and say good-bye to Josephine--

Maggie (still giggling): And then he licks himself clean.

Peter: Mags, are you going to be rude? Ya, you will be.

Maggie: I'm just trying to make it funny, Dad.

Peter: Hmmm. . . .

Peter (reading): and ran off again--

Maggie:--into the pigpen

Peter: With Mags.

Everyone laughs.

(Fieldnotes, February 22, 1994).

Joining in refrains and chanting

Wolf (1991) documented her daughter Lindsey's response to literature and noted that

Lindsey's response to the story changed across time and settings. At 3 and 4 years of age, she largely used pantomime to act out her understanding of the story. While she stressed certain key words of the text, it was the gesture, not the word, that communicated her response (p. 388-9).

For Maggie, her expressive response during stories came in the form of joining in on whole phrases, in reading familiar lines, in trying to read what she perceived as easy print, in chanting refrains, in reading lines ahead of the reader, and in

completing lines. Maggie loved to participate actively in the reading of storybooks, and Peter and I, as readers, often allowed and encouraged this participation. Throughout my data are countless examples of Maggie responding to literature in this way. In some cases, *Amy Elizabeth Explores Bloomingdales* (Konigsburg, 1992), *Mortimer* (Munsch, 1985), and *Old MacDonald Had A Farm* (Hawkins, 1991), the nature of the text invited active response. In others, *Pinky and Rex and the Mean Old Witch* (Howe, 1991), and *Ira Sleeps Over* (Waber, 1972), this is not obviously the case. The following is a sample of the kind of interaction Maggie enjoyed with text:

From Amy Elizabeth Explores Bloomingdales (Konigsburg, 1992)

This is a book filled with text, but with a recurring pattern embedded within it. At the second instance of the refrain, I stop to see if Maggie will join in. She does.

Clare (reading): Grandma took her coat from the peg,--

Maggie (chanting):--hat from the rack, scarf and gloves from the drawer.

(Fieldnotes, October 20, 1993).

From Amy Elizabeth Explores Bloomingdales (Konigsburg, 1992)

This is our second time reading this book. As soon as the refrain, "coat from the peg, hat from the rack, scarf and gloves from the drawer", Maggie joins in. This time she also joins in to complete the line, "But it was too late to go to Bloomingdales."

(Fieldnotes, October 23, 1993).

From Mortimer (Munsch, 1985)

Clare (reading): The mother shut the door. Then she went back down the stairs.

Clare (reading) and Maggie: thump thump thump thump thump.

Clare (reading): As soon as she got back downstairs Mortimer sang,

Clare and Maggie (singing): Clang, clang, rattle-bing-bang, Gonna make my noise all day. . .

(Fieldnotes, October 17, 1993).

Clare, Maggie, and Charlie (singing): Old MacDonald had a farm. EE-I-EE-I-O.

This continues to be a very interactive book, with Maggie and Charlie alternately joining in to sing along, to read the speech balloons, to say "What does that say?" They take turns lifting the flap to read the words underneath.

(Fieldnotes, November 20, 1993).

From Pinky and Rex and the Mean Old Witch (Howe, 1991)

Peter begins to read and stops halfway through the second sentence to yawn. Maggie completes the sentence for him.

Peter turns the page.

Charlie: What does the next chapter say?

Peter (reading): Getting Even.

Maggie (reading the sign): Watch out for the mean old witch.

Peter: Very good.

(Fieldnotes, January 20, 1994).

From Ira Sleeps Over (Waber, 1972)

Kendra, our babysitter (reading): But I had a problem. It began when my sister said,

Kendra (reading) and Maggie: "Are you taking your teddy-bear along?"

Maggie continues to join in. She's got it pretty down-pat.

Charlie: Ohhhh! I don't like it when Maggie does that.

Kendra and Maggie laugh and Maggie continues to join in when she can.

Maggie: Oh, can I read the part when the sister says, "Hmmmmmmm?"

Kendra (reading): "How will you feel sleeping without your teddy-bear for the very first time?"

Maggie: Okay, now its my turn. (reading): "Hmmmmmmm?"

(Fieldnotes, October 21, 1993).

In the final example above, Charlie's dislike of someone else reading his book can be seen. This was a book *he* had chosen as *his* book before bed and Maggie's joining in to read did not match his idea of how his book should be read. This brings us to the social issues which often surrounded storytime, that which pertained to the storytime event, itself (as opposed to issues raised by the stories). I called this category Response to Storytime Situations, to emphasize the people and the actual books, themselves, rather than the stories and ideas within those books.

RESPONSE TO STORYTIME SITUATIONS

Negotiating seating/reading arrangements

Any family having more than one child is surely familiar with the squabbling that goes on over seemingly unimportant matters such as who will be first, who gets the front seat, who gets the last piece, . . . This normal part of family life became, not surprisingly, a part of our family storytime. Frequently storytime began with the children arguing over whose book would be read first or who would get to sit next to the reader. The following excerpts illustrate this:

Charlie and Maggie had their usual argument about whose book would be read first.

Charlie: Yours was first last night so it should be mine tonight.

Maggie: I might not agree on that. Okay, let the little baby go first.

Charlie: I'm not a baby.

Maggie (sighing): Charlie can have his book first.

Clare: That's better. That was much better.

(Fieldnotes, October 6, 1993.

There is a little discussion about whose book will be first. Mags and Charlie are both very cooperative about it.

Charlie: Hers can be first.

Maggie: His can be first.

I finally start Maggie's book but -

Charlie: Okay, you can read mine first.

Clare: Make up your minds, you guys.

I start Charlie's.

(Fieldnotes, November 17, 1993).

Charlie and I were lying on his bed to read his book when Maggie came to join us. A problem ensued when it was time to read Maggie's story, as she decided she needed to be beside me. I showed her that she could still see the pictures from where she was.

(Fieldnotes, November 26, 1993).

Maggie: Can I sit there, Charlie?

Charlie: No.

Peter: Come on, Charlie, be a nice guy.

Charlie: But, see, Maggie was supposed to listen to my story.

Peter: She did. She was quiet.

(Fieldnotes, February 7, 1994).

During the autumn of 1993 I began to write in a journal which I shared with Laura, in which I sought her insight and ideas regarding certain family issues. One of the questions I asked her concerned this annoying habit the children had of arguing over whose book would be first. The following is an excerpt from this written exchange:

November 26/93

Dear Laura,

. . . . One thing I've been thinking about is this whole business of who gets their book read first. There is often an argument over that little issue. Do you understand why they argue over who is first? Does it matter, and why? It seems pretty unimportant to me but it seems to be important to them. Any thoughts on it? . . .

Love Mom

November 26/93

Dear Mom,

To answer your first question, why they do it is because they want to have the satisfaction of giving the other one that "They like me better" look. I personally would want to have my book read last but that's just because I always save the best for last. . . .

Love Laura

So it seemed that this was a case of sibling rivalry, of “who is loved more?” And, although Peter and I usually tried to have the children find their own solutions to these arguments, thus avoiding having to choose and thereby indicating a preference, the children still seemed to need to go through this ritual as a preface to settling in for storytime. Perhaps it was because we left them to solve their own squabbles that they were able to feel equally loved and were able to snuggle up beside someone who loved them and settle into a story world.

I included this aspect of family storytime in a discussion of aesthetic response to literature because I felt that it related in a significant way to how the children experienced the storytime occasion. There is so much more to having a story read aloud than just the story itself. Ayers (1991) conducted a study of five hundred elementary school children in order to learn about their perceptions of storytime events in their homes. One of the questions asked was “What do you like best about being read to?” Of the many and varied responses, there were several commonly recurring ones, three of which informed the area of aesthetic response. These were as follows: “You can really relax;” “When someone reads to me, I know they care about me;” and “I get closer to my family.” Surely this notion of knowing someone cares, of getting close to family members was all a part of the storytime experience and of the negotiation of seating and reading arrangements. Probst (1988) talks about the importance of a comfortable setting, if students are to be free to respond in their own way to literature. Although he refers to high school students in a classroom setting, my data suggests that Maggie and Charlie also felt the need to be in a comfortable setting, secure in the knowledge that they were loved, before they felt they could put their own world behind them and enter into the worlds offered them through storybooks.

Establishing ownership

I earlier referred to the issue of ownership, in regard to a question I had posed to Charlie during the reading of his story. There seemed to be something special about owning particular books, or, at least, “owning” them for a particular evening. “This is my book tonight.” Doake (1981) visited the homes of four

preschool children over a period of several months, observing shared reading events and home literacy environments. He noticed a positive relationship between children's attitudes toward books and the degree of ownership they were encouraged to have. The children who had their own bookshelves with books they knew they owned showed more advanced reading-like behaviour than did those who were encouraged to share and jointly own the "family books."

Every night at storytime Maggie and Charlie each chose a book to have read. And each was very possessive about the right to choose independent of anyone else's opinion. One evening, as Maggie saw that Charlie's choice was the library book *The Hockey Sweater* (Carrier, 1984), she scooted over to the shelf and found our copy of another book, *The Boxing Champion* (Carrier, 1991) by this same author.

By this time, Maggie has located another book on the shelf by the same author and with the same characters. She shows it to Charlie.

Maggie: Okay, here's the other one, Guys.

Charlie: Okay, can you take that one?

Maggie: Why? Are you going to look at it in bed?

Charlie: No--but you can choose it so then I will be kind of like the same.

Maggie: No, I don't want to.

(Fieldnotes, January 10, 1994).

Although Maggie thought it was interesting to point out a book by the same author and about the same characters, she was not about to have Charlie choose her evening's book for her. She happily placed this book back on the shelf and made her own choice.

Along with the right to choose their own books came the right to "call the shots" over the reading of them. In the following exchange, as Charlie tried to have the names changed during the reading of *The Big Parade* (Hefty, 1988), Maggie quickly reminded him of whose book this was:

Charlie: No, how about Stephen, Charlie, and--

Maggie:--No, it's my book! Mommy, read the right names.

(Fieldnotes, February 18, 1994).

Although the children had access to any book on the shelf, each tended to choose books which either belonged to him or was a library book borrowed by him. This was not always the case but it seemed to be so more often than not. On most evenings anyone listening to our storytime could guess whose book was being read at any given time. Although the storytime event was open to all family members, Peter and I tended to direct the "reading" of a particular book to the child who had chosen it. If we asked questions or encouraged reading attempts we turned in the direction of that child. The children were very cooperative about this and, for the most part, respected the ownership--even if only temporary--of the book we were reading. This is illustrated through the following example, from *Big Sarah's Little Boots* (Bourgeois, 1987):

This is Charlie's choice, although it is Maggie's book. . . . There is a sequence where Sarah tries various ways to stretch the boots. At the end of each try, is the line, "But nothing happened." After about three of these, Peter leaves the line for Charlie to complete. He indicates that this is for Charlie by turning to him. Maggie stays quiet. Charlie's thumb is in, but he smiles, removes his thumb, and completes the line, "nothing happened."

(Fieldnotes, October 12, 1993).

As in some other families, we have developed the ritual of writing small inscriptions on the title page of each book we give our children. For our children, the reading of these messages is an important part of reading the book. If we forget to read these before beginning a book, we are almost always reminded by one of the children to "read this part first." This is illustrated in the following excerpts from readings of *The Big Parade* (Hefty, 1988), *All Those Secrets of the World* (Yolen, 1991), *Waiting For Noah* (Oppenheim, 1990), and *The Scrap Doll* (Rosenberg, 1991):

Before beginning the next book, Maggie asks Dad if he will make sure he reads the message at the front and the message at the back, as well as the story.

(Fieldnotes, October 12, 1993).

Maggie asks me to read the inscription, which consists of a message to Maggie from me and one from Peter.

Clare (reading): Dear Maggie, I hope you enjoy this story about a little girl who reminds me of you. Love Mom. This is a nice book with a happy ending, the way it should be. Enjoy the book, Little Maggie. Love Dad

(Fieldnotes, October 6, 1993).

I begin the story, first reading the inscription for Maggie.

Clare (reading): For Maggie, who is learning to read her own books.

(Fieldnotes, January 10, 1994).

I turn right to the first page of text but Maggie turns back to our Christmas/91 message.

Maggie: Read it.

Clare (reading): Dear Maggie, Do you remember when you helped me choose this book for Brodie? I tricked you. Love Mom.

Maggie: Oh, I remember that day. You really did trick me. And read this one from Daddy.

Clare (reading): This is a cute book for a cute little girl. Enjoy the book, Mugger. Love Dad.

Maggie: It says Mugger? Where does it say Mugger?

Clare: Right here, see?

Maggie (quietly): It says Mugger? Hmm, Mugger.

(Fieldnotes, October 10, 1993).

It seems that Peter's easy use, in his message, of his pet name for Maggie touched her. I think it is more than speculation to suggest that this little handwritten message on the title page of a book greatly added to the experience of having this book read to her. Watching her face as she thoughtfully pondered the words led me to know how special Maggie felt as she settled in to listen to the story, secure in the knowledge that she had parents who loved her, read to her, and bought her nice books to have for her very own.

FAMILY LITERACY: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

As I began to consider the other family members--Peter, Clare, Laura, Charlie, and Ian--and how they fit into the storytime circle, I was drawn again to Taylor's (1986) metaphor of the family lamp. "Today, in some families at least, the storybook has become the family lamp" (p. 152). I saw an image of our family gathered around the family lamp during the fall and winter months of 1993-94, Maggie sitting right in the central glow with Charlie close beside her; Peter and myself sitting slightly behind them, watching over things and ready to help as needed; and Laura and Ian, off to the side of the group, at the edge of the circle of light. This visual image helped to clarify for me the various roles played by family members as they took part in evening storytime.

In this part of my analysis I will briefly examine the roles of family members other than Maggie, describing their contributions to family literacy through their participation in our family storytime. I begin with Charlie, a central figure in the storytime setting, and go on to discuss the supporting roles of Peter and myself, followed by those of Laura and Ian. Finally, I return to Maggie who, as a key informant, helped to complete the circle and, for whom, the storybook illuminated in a special way.

Charlie

Leichter (1984), in a study dealing with the complex issues involved in researching family literacy, stressed how crucial it is, when considering the family as an environment for learning about literacy, to consider it in terms of *family* rather than in the traditional terms of *schooling*. In examining Charlie's role in contributing to the family literacy of our household, it does, indeed, seem important to consider *family* factors as being significant. I refer to factors such as how many children in the family, Charlie's position in the family, his relationships with siblings and with parents, family traditions and rituals, and family expectations.

At the time this study began Charlie was the youngest child in our family. He, along with Maggie, was the catalyst for each evening's story reading event for, although it was Laura who had begun the tradition years earlier, it was now Charlie and Maggie who asked each night for a bedtime story. And of the two, it was Charlie who ached for a story on the nights that we didn't--for one reason or another--manage to read. The following entry from my journal recounts an evening when I didn't manage to escape:

It's Friday night and we're all really tired - from traveling, sledding . . . We were all ready for bed by 7:30. I was just beginning to think I could get away without stories, but as I was tucking Charlie in he said, "What about my story?" Rather than make an issue of it, I decided to just give in, I sank into the bed beside him, and started to read his book. Before a couple of pages in, Mags caught on, came in to confirm what was going on, took-off, and came back with a book and climbed up beside us.

(Fieldnotes, November 26, 1993).

As it turns out, this spirit of negotiation--of persuasion, of organizing the storytime event in order to get it "right"--emerged as a major theme in Charlie's contribution to family literacy. And this should come as no surprise in light of Leichter's (1984) comments. In all of our daily family life together, Charlie--as a third child--had to work to make sure he got his fair share, so that his older sisters did not exclude him, so that grown-ups listened to him and remembered about him. Time and time again, as I looked through my data, I saw Charlie negotiating for something--an extra chapter, an exchange of a book he chose, a "right" reading of the text. Some nights he was more successful than other nights in his bids for more. The following exchanges occurred during the reading of *Real Race Cars and Race Car Driving* (Slater, 1989) and *What Do People Do All Day?* (Scarry, 1979), and illustrate Charlie's tenacity in seeking "more."

A few pages on, Charlie flips ahead quickly to tell Peter he wants to keep going to the crash page. They stop and have a little negotiation time to agree on how far Peter is going to read. When Peter reaches the appointed stopping page, Charlie looks ahead.

Charlie: There's only five more pages left."

Peter: Sorry, Bud, we agreed.

Charlie: But, look at this page - don't read it, but look.

He points out some other cars on a later page.

(Fieldnotes, October 16, 1993).

This story ends and Charlie turns the page.

Charlie: Can you read two stories?

Peter: No. That's it. Done. (Then, after about ten seconds) What else do you want read then?

Charlie: Only this, 'cause I love it.

(Fieldnotes, November 6, 1993).

On the last few lines I let Charlie complete the lines.

Charlie: Actually I didn't really want that story. I have another one I really want.

Clare: Ha! Well it's too late! If you didn't want it you should have said that before I read the whole thing.

Charlie: Well, when you started to read it, then I couldn't interrupt while you were reading.

Clare: Forget it.

(Fieldnotes, November 7, 1993).

After several pages in, Charlie scans ahead some pages.

Charlie: This wasn't the book I wanted.

Clare: You mean you want to cancel this one?

Charlie: Yah.

Clare: What one did you want?

Charlie: See, I wanted this one with airplanes in it.

Clare: Well, we can read it tomorrow.

Charlie: No, 'cause I just told you that I want to cancel this one.

Clare: I know, but I've already read half of it. You should have canceled it before I started.

Charlie: But see, I just don't like this one.

Clare: Scoot and get the other one and we'll see how long it is. I'm not going to start a new book right from the beginning, okay?

Charlie: Back right quick. It would be the same amount of long.

(Fieldnotes, November 18, 1993).

Charlie had a very strong sense of how his stories should be read, and, again, he did his best to persuade us to do it the "right" way. Wolf (1991) talks about this "inviolability of story for young children."

Parents who substitute words or entire passages quickly find themselves challenged by the child who will brook no deviation from the text. Rather than interpreting this as a child's sense of immutable story, it is an opportunity for the child to share the knowledge she has gained and retain ownership of the story (p. 390).

The following examples from *Canadian Police Officers* (Bourgeois, 1992) and *What Do People Do All Day?* (Scarry, 1979) illustrate this ownership Charlie felt for his stories:

One page shows six different ways police officers get around. Peter reads the first two seriously, then on the third he switches smoothly to "in a wheelbarrow."

Charlie: No, no, Daddy. Just read all of them right.
(Fieldnotes, October 26, 1993).

After changing his mind a few times, Charlie finally chose "Building A New Road."

Charlie: But, don't read it funny. Read it right and read all the words.
(Fieldnotes, January 23, 1994).

One morning after a wonderfully funny reading by Peter the night before of *The Big Parade* (Hefty 1988), Charlie had to resort to a different tactic.

This morning, after the girls left for school, Charlie asked me to read The Big Parade.

Clare: But Dad read it last night.

Charlie: No, he did it a silly way and I want you to do it right.
(Fieldnotes, October 12, 1993)

Charlie's sense of how his stories were to be read included who was to do and, more to the point, who was *not* to do the reading. In many cases it was Maggie and her stilted reading attempts who bore the brunt of Charlie's complaints, as seen in the following examples from *Spot's Big Book of Words* (Hill, 1988), *Amy Elizabeth Explores Bloomingdale's* (Konigsburg, 1992), *Ira Says Goodbye* (Waber, 1988), and *Trouble With Trolls* (Brett, 1992):

Kendra asks Maggie on the next page if she can read some words.

Charlie: No, don't read some words. I don't like when you do that.

(Fieldnotes, October 18, 1993).

I ask Charlie the name of his book. Maggie answers and I accept that.

Charlie: But I don't like when the girls tell stuff that you are going to read to me - that I want you to read to me.

(Fieldnotes, October 20, 1993).

About two pages in, Maggie begins to chime in with Kendra. She's got it pretty down pat but Charlie's ticked-off.

Charlie: Ohhh! I don't like when Maggie does that.

(Fieldnotes, October 21, 1993).

I ask Maggie to do the troll parts.

Maggie (reading in a squeaky voice): I want dog.

Charlie: But, see, I don't want anybody to help. I just want Mommy to read it.

(Fieldnotes, January 7, 1994).

Charlie never intended these comments to be hurtful, nor did Maggie see them as this way. These were his stories being read and he had a good sense of who in the family was able to read fluently and who was just learning. Family storytime, for Charlie, was a time for having stories read in a natural pleasurable way, by someone who could deliver stories in such a manner. Perhaps there was a need for Charlie to re-envision the story each time it was read--in its most realistic form. He did not perceive storytime as a time for literacy learning, for coaching himself or Maggie in reading, or for lessons in vocabulary or comprehension. When he did ask questions or engage in discussion it was because he was genuinely interested in the subject under discussion. Indeed, he was sometimes intolerant of the talk other family members engaged in, his agenda usually being clearly "read the story," as seen in the following excerpt from *Trouble With Trolls* (Brett, 1992):

Clare (reading): Trouble With Trolls, by Jan Brett.

Clare: This author always seems to write about winter.

Peter: Where's she live, Florida?

Laura: No, Ukraine.

Clare: She's from a Scandinavian country, I think.

Laura: Norway, or something.

Charlie: Just read it!!

(Fieldnotes, January 7, 1994).

Although Charlie was sometimes impatient during discussions of other family members, he was well able and willing to sustain a line of thought when it pertained to a topic of his interest. In the following exchange, prompted by *The Big Bunny and the Magic Show* (Kroll, 1986), Charlie was able to take a stand in a discussion about a story character, defending his stand with evidence from the text. In this story a bunny runs off to be in a magic show and his friends, in an effort to win him back, sabotage his show.

As the story ends I cannot help but express my dislike for this story.

Clare: Do you like this story?

Charlie: Yah, do you?

Clare: I think the bunnies who are Wilbur's friends don't act like his friends at all.

Charlie: Yes, they do, they were just trying to get him back.

Clare: Maybe they should have asked him to come back instead of playing mean tricks on him.

Charlie: But, see, that was good because then Wilbur wouldn't want to be a magician. I mean -

Maggie: - Yah, but they could wait until the thing's over and then say, "Wilbur, can you please come home?"

Charlie: No, I mean they didn't want to ask him because he would say no, he would stay here, so that's why.

Clare: I still think that they made him look like a fool and I don't think you should do that to your friends.

Charlie: That was good because then they could get him back because he was happy.

Clare: But maybe he really wanted to be a magician. Did they have any right to decide what he should do?

Charlie: But see he was going to cut the bunny in half and then he would die.

Clare: No, because he was scrunched up in the end. I don't know. Sometimes you just read books that bug you, and this is one of the ones that bugs me.

Charlie: And I liked it.

(Fieldnotes, November 23, 1993).

This discussion is a powerful illustration of the sorts of things that happened regularly in our family storytime. Although primarily an opportunity to read good stories together, our family storytime was also a place to discuss social issues, to discuss literature preferences, to learn tolerance for others' points of view, to learn the importance of taking a stand and being able to support it (Charlie's literary tastes were not changed, not even by his mother). In short, family storytime was a place to learn about ourselves and about how to live together in the world.

Also a place to learn about literacy, about the conventions of print and how one is able to turn print into meaning, storytime nudged Charlie along in his development as an emergent reader. Teale (1987) talks about the appropriateness of the term emergent when used to describe very young children.

It emphasizes the notion that whatever point in development we look, we see children *in the process of becoming* literate. As researchers have increasingly focused on literacy learning in very young children, it has become apparent that it is not reasonable to point to a time in a child's life when literacy happens. Rather, the literacy behaviors and knowledges of one-, two-, three-, four-, or five-year-olds are legitimate parts of the literacy learning process (p. 47).

When considering Charlie's literacy development in light of Sulzby's (1985) classification scheme for emergent reading of favorite storybooks (See Figure 1), Charlie, during the autumn months of 1993, seemed to be functioning within the Picture-Governed category of reading. Examination of his storytime talk and reading attempts suggest he was well along in this category, in the "stories formed (written language-like), but print not watched" stage. Charlie's storytime talk reveals a tremendous interest in the illustrations of the books read to him. He set great store in pictures as a way of knowing and understanding. Yaden, Smolkin, & Conlon (1989) report finding, in the children they studied, similar interests in pictures.

... most of the children in these studies, particularly between ages 3 and 4, asked half of their total questions about illustrations, and only later, from four years old on, began to show much interest in other aspects of the reading;

moreover the most discrete levels (e.g., decoding) never received much sustained attention (p. 209).

The following example from *Parade* (Crews 1983) illustrates this attention to pictures, as Charlie searched for the Canadian flag among those pictured on the page. In the midst of his search his attention was suddenly caught by print as he recognized the word parade. This interest in print was just as suddenly gone as he turned his attention back to the matter at hand:

I turn to the next page, which has many flag bearers, carrying flags from around the world.

Charlie: Mom, we can't find our flag--oh, that says parade.

Clare: Right, how did you know that?

Charlie (shrugs): But, see, we can't find our flag anywhere.

(Fieldnotes, October 6, 1993).

The following examples, from *Trucks* (Eyeopeners Series, 1991) and *What Do People Do All Day?* (Scarry, 1979), illustrate the importance, for Charlie, of pictures and what they tell:

We move on to the Tow Truck page. Charlie points to a little side story at the top of the page which shows, in sequence, several pictures of a tiny car as it breaks down and gets towed away.

Charlie: You see, these are all the same car, he's driving it, then he sees smoke.

(We move on to the Car Transporter page, where Charlie seems to have a Eureka kind of experience.)

Charlie: Oh! So that kind of truck, where the cab is flat, the cab tips over.

(Fieldnotes, October 10, 1993)

We continue reading the road construction page.

Charlie: Mommy--because--see--that thing takes it and he kind of like digs it up with that thing and then pours it into there and he puts that stuff in it and then it gets smashed up and then it goes onto that.

(Fieldnotes, November 9, 1993)

Sulzby (1985) explains the stage of her classification scheme which includes "attempts governed by pictures, stories formed (written language-like)," and specifically the "reading similar-to-original story" stage.

In this sub-category, the child often creates patterns that are like those in the chosen book or even that of similar books. For example, the child may insert “patterns of three” or repetitive language into a story that lends itself to such wording even though the book does not contain these elements. The child’s language is decontextualized and the information is reading-like (p. 469).

Charlie’s reading of *Salty Sails North* (Rand, 1990) is congruent with Sulzby’s findings. Charlie used very expressive oral reading intonation, reading page by page and sometimes using words and phrases from the actual text.

Text:

page 1

Salty scampered up to the boat’s bow, his favorite place to ride. He had been a puppy when Zack built this boat. Now he was a grown-up deep-sea sailor, a real salty dog.

page 6

Gulls followed their boat, and eagles watched from high overhead. Sea lions, seals, whales and porpoises often swam alongside.

page 9

As Zack rowed back to the sailboat, there was a low growl from Salty. He was trembling with excitement as he looked toward land. On shore stood a big grizzly bear peering over low shoreline bushes. Cautiously she moved out onto the beach and pulled the fish scraps back from the tide line just as a pair of cubs raced out for dinner.

Charlie:

Once upon a time, Salty the dog was a grown-up dog.

They saw eagles, dolphins and eagles taking fish up.

Then they went and then when they--then when they were going to another land next morning, they found a fisherman and bears lived there.

(Fieldnotes, October, 1993).

Although Charlie generally paid closer attention to pictures than to print, he would, when nudged by Peter or myself, take note of letters and attempt to match words and letters to the words he thought were on the page. The following examples from *For Rent* (Martin, 1986) and *GumDrop’s Magic Adventure* (Biro, 1984) shows Charlie attempting to read:

Clare (reading): They put up FOR RENT signs on the boat and on the dock.

Charlie: Why do they--okay--what does this say?

Clare: First, can you find FOR RENT, the sign that says FOR RENT?

Charlie: Um, it must start with F--(pointing and reading) For Rent.

(Fieldnotes, November 3, 1993).

I ask Charlie the name of his book. He knows it is Gumdrop, so I ask him where it says Gumdrop. We go through it sounding out the letters and read Gumdrop's Magic Journey. On the title page I ask Charlie to once more read the title.

Charlie (reading): Gumdrop's Magic Adventure. (I let it go at that).

(Fieldnotes, November 22, 1993)

Further to examining Charlie's literacy development, his repeated requests for favourite storybooks reflected the emergent nature of his learning about books and about reading. Teale (1987) talks about the significance of repeated readings in a child's literacy development.

Considerable language acquisition research shows the importance of routines to oral language development. . . . Repetition is important to language and literacy learning. Note also, however, that repetition does not mean *repetitious*. . . . the child has a generalized framework but freedom exists within that framework (p. 62).

Charlie often asked for the same books to be read night after night. Although he often got teased, he persisted with this. With one particular book, *The Red Carpet* (Parkin, 1948), it was quite obvious from my data that Charlie was getting more and more from the story each time it was read to him. The interactions throughout the story reading became more numerous, the questions and comments becoming deeper and more involved. My observations are supported by Martinez & Roser's (1985) study.

As these preschoolers had more opportunities to listen to a story, their range of responses increased. They appeared to have more opportunity to clarify, to fill gaps, and to make corrections. In effect, the children gained increased control over stories they heard more than once (p. 786).

Repeated readings of favourite storybook often allowed Charlie to know the stories “inside out.” He could catch an accidental reading error on my or Peter’s part and he often gently reminded us of these. Wolf (1991) talked of this in the context of a child not allowing any deviations from the text. “Rather than interpreting this as a child’s sense of immutable story, it is an opportunity for the child to share the knowledge she has gained and retain ownership of the story” (p. 390). And, indeed, as Charlie caught us out when reading his stories we were always impressed by the way he seemed to know his stories. The following are taken from *Parade* (Crews, 1983) and *The Red Carpet* (Parkin, 1948):

Clare (reading): . . . and the big brass drums.

Charlie: Oh, I thought it was big BASS drums.

Clare: Oh, you’re right!. How did you know that?

Laura (giggling): I’ve read it to him a few times, Mom.

(Fieldnotes, October 6, 1993).

Clare (reading). . . little dark room.

Charlie: No, no, no, little BACK room.

(Fieldnotes, October 15, 1993)

Clare (reading): . . . the Bayview Hotel.

Charlie: BELLEVUE Hotel.

(Fieldnotes, October 15, 1993)

Much of what I have explored at this point in regard to Charlie’s contribution to family literacy--enjoyment of illustrations, negotiation of storytime event, requests for repeated readings of favourite stories--contain elements of aesthetic response. The rereadings of favourite books, especially, suggest a desire on Charlie’s part to revisit a past experience, to live-through an enjoyable moment once again, to revisit an old neighbourhood, as it were. The giggles, the sighs, the teary eyes that he experienced during the first readings of certain storybooks could be seen and heard again as Charlie got to re-visit, through repeated readings, the text worlds he had created the first time he heard the stories.

There follows a sample of storyreadings during which Charlie's responses gave evidence of his aesthetic response to the stories:

From All Those Secrets of the World (Yolen, 1991).

Clare (reading): *I finish the story and there is silence.*

Charlie: *Phewf that Dad's not in the war.*

Clare: *Why?*

Charlie: *Because he could get killed.*

(Fieldnotes, October 6, 1993)

From Time For A Tale (Kincaid, 1975).

Clare (to Maggie): *Did you like it?*

Maggie (nodding affirmative.)

Clare (to Charlie): *Did you?*

Charlie (with tears in his eyes): *He got burned in the fire. . . .Then the children can't play with him anymore.*

(Fieldnotes, October 15, 1993).

From Mirette on the High Wire (McCully, 1992).

Before the story starts Charlie confuses us by asking Dad not to read the part where Bellini crosses on the high wire. We finally narrow it down to mean the part where Bellini goes over the ocean, a story within the story. The book gives only gives us a picture and a hint of what happened.

Clare: *Why?*

Charlie: *Because it just makes me angry.*

Clare: *Why?*

Charlie: *Because it doesn't tell us everything that happens.*

(Fieldnotes, November 4, 1993).

From The Auction (Andrews, 1990).

As I close the book, Charlie makes a comment.

Charlie: *The Auction is so pretty.*

(Fieldnotes, November 14, 1993).

From The Foundling Fox (Korschunow, 1984).

Peter (reading): And so, the little fox was no longer a foundling fox. He was the vixen's kit, and she was his mother. . . The vixen and the little fox belonged together. He stayed with her until he could care for himself--as all little foxes will.

(There are several seconds of silence, then Charlie takes his thumb from his mouth and sighs.)

Charlie: I love that story.

(Fieldnotes, November 16, 1993).

In sum, what the data revealed about Charlie is that he, as an emergent reader, worked to negotiate the meaning of the text, but, in particular the amount and kind of text to be read. Charlie was into a "correctness" model of literacy development; there was a need for a faithful rendering of the story. Obviously, too, only one person satisfied as an appropriate candidate to deliver it. Charlie's reading attempts and storytime interaction revealed he was still very picture-governed in the way he constructed meaning. He would attend to print when encouraged by us. Charlie was also able to read aesthetically. His comments--and silences--reflected growth in terms of his ability to "get inside" a story.

Peter and Clare

Each evening at twilight Peppe took the long stick of the lamplighter and passed through the streets. He reached high for the first streetlamp, poked open the glass, and set the lamp aflame. Then one by one he lit them all--and each one Peppe imagined to be a small flame of promise for the future.

(Peppe the Lamplighter, Bartone, 1993).

"Lighting a small flame of promise for the future" lends such an air of dignity and worth to what Peter and I did each night as we read bedtime stories to our children. I must confess we had no such worthy goals in mind when we began this tradition ten years ago. Indeed, it was not then a tradition, but just a peaceful, routine way to get little Laura to bed each evening.

In the fall of 1993, when this study began, Peter and I were just doing what we always did each evening as part of family life. After supper one person cleaned up the kitchen while the other organized the baths and bedtime preparations. Depending on how elaborate supper had been, or how wild the children seemed to be, we sometimes had to bargain for who did what. "Well, you do the baths and the stories and I'll clean-up this mess and vacuum." More often than not, reading stories seemed to be just one more chore that had to be completed before we could get to bed. And, just as often, reading stories turned out to be a treat, a time to put our feet up, laugh with the children, and relax and forget about the day. This is illustrated in the following *What Do People Do All Day?* (Scarry, 1979) and *Rumpelstiltskin* (Tarcov, 1973) excerpts:

Peter (reading in an obviously bored voice): Building A New Road.

Part of the way through the first page Peter gets into the story, reading labels, and signs, and making conversational remarks along the way.

(Fieldnotes, November 6, 1993).

Maggie brings her book to Peter, who looks through it.

Peter: Oooh, this is an awfully long one, Mags. . . .

Peter puts on a comical squeaky voice for Rumpelstiltskin. . . .

By the second evening of guessing the names are silly and the kids are really giggling at Peter's antics.

(Fieldnotes, November 15, 1993).

Probably the first and most basic role we played was that of facilitator, meaning we smoothed the way for storytime to become a family tradition in our home. Although it was the children who prompted us to read to them each evening, Peter and I, through certain actions and behaviours, facilitated the event. Whenever possible we served as models of reading, not because we meant to but because we both grew up loving to read and, as adults, liked to read for pleasure when time allowed.

It was the two of us who, for the most part, provided the children with their books, giving them books as Christmas and birthday gifts and taking them regularly to the public library. Having, myself, a passion for good children's literature, I enjoyed sharing my knowledge of books, authors and illustrators with the

children. And, while it was the children who chose their books from the library and decided each evening what books to have read, I feel certain that I had influence over what was there to choose from.

It was Peter and I who reminded the children when it was time to get their books each night (knowing that if we didn't remind them the hour would get later and later), and it was us who read the stories, setting the limits and guidelines for storytime, unofficial though they may have been. These limits and guidelines which had evolved over the years and which we tried to enforce included each child getting to choose one book to have read, and that same child having the "say" over the reading of that book. In effect, we set the parameters for the reading; who was to do the reading and when and where it was to take place. In the following exchange, from the reading of *The Big Parade* (Hefty, 1988) Charlie tried his best to have his name included in the story, as was Maggie's, and their cousins Stephen's and Morgan's. I defended Maggie's choice to veto Charlie's suggestion, reminding him that he had the same rights over his choices.

Clare (reading): Margaret was playing with Stephen, and Vicki, and Morgan.

Charlie: Mom, can you say "Charlie?"

Clare: Instead of one of them, you mean?

Laura: How about "Charlie and Ian and Laura?"

Charlie: No, how about "Stephen, Charlie--"

Maggie:--No, it's my book. Mommy, read the right names.

Clare: Well, what do you think, Charlie?

Charlie: "Charlie," I think.

Clare: It is Maggie's story, isn't it? . . . Okay, would you like if I was reading a book to you if Maggie told me how to change it and I did?

Charlie: Yah.

Clare: I don't think you would. I'm going to read it Maggie's way because it's her choice. You don't have to listen. That's fine.

(Fieldnotes, February 18, 1994).

Apart from the role of facilitator of the storytime tradition, a more significant role we played was that of supporting guide, that of lamplighter, "lighting small flames of promise for the future" (Bartone, 1993). My data clearly indicate the supportive nature of our storytime participation, showing us asking questions,

answering questions, providing explanations, building bridges to new understanding, and nudging the children on in their knowledge and understanding of the world, or, as Peppe's small sister explained, "scaring the dark away" (Bartone, 1993).

Part of the supportive role parents play for their children is in making decisions about how best to read to their children. Altwerger et al. (1985) studied several parent-child bookreading events over a six-month period, noting how the parents often adapted their style of reading to a form they thought was most appropriate for their children.

As in oral language development, the focus remains steadfastly on meaning rather than form, as the mother expands, extends, clarifies, and even disregards the written language forms chosen by the book's author in favor of a more appropriate text for her child (p. 477).

In this observation of Peter reading *What Do People Do All Day?* (Scarry, 1979) to Charlie, I noted Peter choosing the most appropriate way to deliver the text:

Peter starts to read. Three sentences in Charlie asks about a label, so Peter reads, "Tree Trunk." Even when he finishes this page, he goes back to read all the labels, in a sort of conversational tone. Peter continues to read, a sort of mixture of reading and chatting. He uses the words, but "speaks" the text. On the next page a paper mill is shown. Peter "talks through" the milling process.

(Fieldnotes, November 6, 1993).

A close examination of the types of interactions in which Peter and I engaged with the children reflect a significant difference in ways we offered support. Although we often seemed to have common goals in mind (i.e., to increase our children's knowledge and understanding), we went about reaching these goals in different ways. Ever the tease, Peter would often answer the children's questions in such a way so as to get the point across but also to get a laugh, as in these examples from *Canadian Police Officers* (Bourgeois, 1992).

Peter (reading): . . . and to decide on a punishment.

Charlie: What's a punishment, Daddy?

Peter: Um, what they'll do to them. It they were doing something bad, they'll punish them, put them in jail, beat them up, shoot them or hang them.

Laura (sarcastically): Yah, right, Dad. . . .

Peter (reading): Officers investigate crimes and traffic accidents -

Peter: Like when Mom goes through a stop sign or something.

(Fieldnotes, October 26, 1993).

Peter has always placed a high value on having a sense of humour and he has certainly passed this on to his children. I, on the other hand, have occasionally been accused of taking things too seriously. Ever the teacher, I tried to grab the "teachable moment" when I sensed its presence and I tried to hammer in a lesson whenever I could. As the story *For Rent* (Martin, 1986) ended I found the opportune moment to discuss islands.

Clare: And why did they need to travel by boat?

Charlie: Because they needed to go--no, because when Miss Eve Birdle came she needed to bring a boat.

Clare: That's right. Why did she need to bring a boat?

Charlie: Because there wasn't a road past this way. . . .

Clare: Well, do you know what an island is?

Charlie: A place.

Clare: Yes, a place. Mags, do you know what an island is?

Maggie: It's a piece of land all surrounded by water.

Clare: Wow, good going. (To Charlie): Do you know what that means?

Charlie: Yah, it means they don't have a road to that place.

Clare: They don't have a road because it's land, like Maggie said. All surrounded by -

Charlie: Water.

(Fieldnotes, November 3, 1993).

As Peter and I contributed to the literacy development of our children we subconsciously attempted to work within a Vygotskian (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981) framework, providing our "expert" assistance to the children as they reached the point of needing to go that next step. Providing just as much help and support as needed, and removing it when it is no longer needed is known as scaffolding and this type of approach is evident in the following examples taken from *What*

Do People Do All Day? (Scarry, 1979). The children were looking at the clothes on the men and could figure out through the hats which man matched which truck. I wanted to bring Charlie's attention to the printed banners on the shirts of the two town mayors in the picture. I felt that he could "read" enough to figure out who was who.

I pick up on their idea.

Clare: Which town is Busytown and which town is Workville?

We spend a few minutes guessing which is which, then I point out the banners on their shirts.

Clare: What does this banner say?

Charlie (with no hesitation): Busytown.

Clare: How do you know?

Charlie: Because it starts with a "B."

Clare: And what does this one say?

Charlie: Workville.

Clare: How do you know that?

Charlie: Because it starts with "W."

Clare: And what sound does "W" give you?

He makes a blowing sound and I help him to shape it into a /w/. I remind him of our last name.

(Fieldnotes, November 9, 1993).

In addition to supporting our children in their literacy development, an important part of our role, as parents, was surely that of inviting and nurturing aesthetic response. We didn't think of what we were doing in those terms. We were simply hoping to give the children pleasure, to invite them to share in what we knew to be the wonder of storybooks. We wanted to help the children feel something, experience some emotion, some reaction to the stories we read them. For Peter it was usually laughter he sought; it made him laugh to hear the children laughing. For me it was more of a thoughtful silence at the end of a story that I was hoping for. When it happened I felt that together we had evoked a poem (Rosenblatt, 1978) from the text we had shared.

In my written journal with Laura I asked for her perception of how her dad's reading of a story did or did not differ from my reading. Her succinct response confirmed what I'd thought.

November 26/93

Dear Laura,

. . . . One other question. Is there any difference in your opinion in the ways Dad and I read? Think hard on that one. I mean, when Dad reads a book is it a whole different experience than when I read - or do we both do basically the same thing?

Love Mom.

November 27/93

Dear Mom,

. . . . To answer the second one, I'd say "Yes." When Dad reads he sets you giggling but when you do you sort of hypnotize us to listen to the story. There are your answers.

Love Laura.

In sum, the data reveals that Peter and I, although very much a part of family storytime, acted in a supportive capacity. We were the ones who facilitated the storytime each evening, providing the children with plenty of books from which to choose their evening stories, and setting guidelines for the story reading event. Peter and I provided scaffolding for their meaning construction, questioning them and answering their questions, providing information during teachable moments. Although Peter and I shared a goal of increasing our children's knowledge and understanding, we went about reaching this goal in different ways, Peter with his teasing and I, from more of a teacher's perspective. An ongoing goal of Peter and myself was to provide pleasure for our children through the storybooks we read to them. Inviting personal aesthetic response was important to us, as we tried to actively engage them in the lived-through experience of the storyreading event.

Laura

In the fall and winter months of 1993-94 Laura, although part of family storytime, was less involved than other family members. Nine-year-old Laura, who had once been a central figure sitting in our laps and by our sides, pointing to pictures and calling out words, chanting refrains and completing sentences, had learned to read. She had moved out of the warm glow at the centre of the lamplight and was content to make do with the softer light at the outside edge. Far from giving up reading, however, Laura read more than ever before. She had reached the wonderful age a child reaches when able to read almost anything on the shelf, old enough to not have to wait for someone else to have time for her and young enough to have all the time in the world to spend with storybooks.

Laura enjoyed a wide range of reading materials. For the most part, she read junior fiction books, also enjoying magazines, newspapers, and comic books. And, although she had moved beyond children's picture books, she had never lost her love for them. Indeed, many of these picture books were like old friends and Laura would often greet them as such when she saw a familiar one come home from the school or public library as part of Maggie's or Charlie's collection.

I carefully chose the image of Laura sitting away from the central glow of the lamp, but still within the larger circle of light to convey the nature of Laura's participation in storytime. Each evening would find Peter or myself (sometimes both) sitting and reading with the younger children on the living room couch. Somewhere close by--in an adjacent chair, stretched out on the runner in front of the book shelves, or perched on the old wooden table--would be Laura, immersed in her own fat book.

There were many other rooms in the house Laura could have gone in order to have a quiet place for reading. Yet, although she wanted to quietly read her own books, the need to remain a part of the family circle outweighed any desire or need to be alone. Hickman (1981), while observing children's response to literature in elementary classrooms noted differences in patterns of response according to age level of children. "In the 4-5 class, the single most characteristic response event was intensive attention to books. Only at this level

did readers grow so engrossed in a story that they became oblivious to their surroundings. . . .”(p. 350). Laura, in Grade 4 at the time of this study, exhibited this intensive attention to books, able to silently read her own books while others around her were reading and talking aloud.

Strangely enough, while Laura often displayed this intent attention to her own stories, she was also able to keep one ear on what we were reading and discussing. Immersed in her own text world, she was occasionally called by voices from another text world and she would blithely cross from one to the other. When this happened she almost always physically moved closer to us, moving her body, as well as her mind, from her story world into ours. This is illustrated in the following excerpts from *Is Your Mama A Llama?* (Guarino, 1989), and *Christopher, Please Clean Up Your Room* (Sadu, 1993):

Clare (reading): "Is your mama a llama?" I asked my friend Rhonda.

"No, she is not," is how Rhonda responded.

Laura, who has been reading at the dining room table, comes over to make a suggestion.

Laura: Mom, the rhyme of Rhonda with responded would work better as Rhonda with does responda.

Maggie: Laura is so weird.

And back Laura goes to her reading and we carry on.

(Fieldnotes, October 11, 1993).

Peter (reading): . . .the sandwich behind the door grew fungi, the room was so untidy, the shoes smelled funky funky and the fish bowl stank.

Charlie gets the giggles and the rest of us laugh at him laughing.

Laura comes over to the couch.

Laura: Mom, Mr. Whitaker's kids left a moldy sandwich once behind their couch and he found it six weeks later. . . .

At a page break, Laura comes over and jumps in to tell Dad her Mr. Whitaker story.

(Fieldnotes, January 19, 1994).

Sometimes Laura's ear picked up errors or omissions we made while we read. When this happened she quietly corrected us and went back to her own reading, as in the following excerpts from *Amy Elizabeth Explores Bloomingdales*

(Konigsburg, 1992), and *The Berenstain Bears and Mamma's New Job* (Berenstain, 1984):

Clare (reading): The Sunday Chimes is a newspaper.

Laura: Mom, isn't that the Sunday Times?

Clare: Oh, yah, I guess so.

(Fieldnotes, October 20, 1993).

Clare (reading): I saw hundreds of tall buildings, some bridges, two rivers, and a very large park.

Laura hears an omission I make. She is not watching the text but interrupts and comes over.

Laura: Mom, I thought it said "I also saw New Jersey."

Clare: Yah, you're right.

(Fieldnotes, October 23, 1993).

Peter (reading): It was a great success--

Laura: Don't forget to read this page.

Peter: Sorry, I missed this one.

(Fieldnotes, February 3, 1994).

Sometimes, partway through a book, Laura would permanently put aside her book and join the reading group. She very much enjoyed sharing her expertise with us on matters which arose from the books we read. Her youth undoubtedly enabled her to bridge gaps which might have impeded understanding had we tried to explain things to Maggie and Charlie. And she pointed out things that we might not have thought important. This is illustrated in the following, from *Fire Fighters* (Maass, 1989), and *Trouble With Trolls* (Brett, 1992):

Clare (reading): One of these tools is called the "jaws of life."

Charlie: When Dad got stuck in the elevator they used that to get him out.

Maggie: Maybe.

Clare: I think the picture we looked at in the newspaper this morning was really the "jaws of life."

At this point Laura has come to partake in the discussion and speaks about an explosion in the World Trade Center. She explains that this tool had to be used there. . . .

Clare (reading): Sometimes fire fighters lose their lives in fires.

Charlie: Mom, how can fire fighters get killed?

Maggie: Sometimes--

Laura: --they fall.

Maggie: Or sometimes they lose air.

Laura: Because the smoke from the fire has poisonous gases in it and they need air to breathe.

(Fieldnotes, October 11, 1993).

On the second page, Charlie points out the trolls' house at the bottom of the picture. I hadn't noticed it. We comment on the fact that it is underground. Maggie disagrees but Laura points out that it really is. . . . I finish the story. Laura comes over to point out which of the cotton plants can be recognized as trolls.

(Fieldnotes, January 7, 1994).

An experienced fluent reader by the time this study began, Laura knew the thrill of reading a good book to an appreciative audience. She sometimes asked if she could do, or at least help with, the reading, as in the following examples from *Sleep Out* (Carrick, 1973), *Machines, Cars, Boats, and Airplanes* (Snow, 1989), and *Heckedy Peg* (Wood, 1987):

Peter moves right into Sleep Out. He asks Maggie first if this is the one she's reading.

She says no, this is her choice for him to read to her. Laura is perched there beside them. Peter opens the book.

Peter: Oh, no, small print, too.

Laura: I'll read it.

Maggie: No, Dad can read it.

(Fieldnotes, October 1, 1993).

Clare (reading): Cranes are used on the dock to load and unload ships.

Laura: Ooh, I love this page. Can I read the speech balloons, Mom?

(Fieldnotes, October 23, 1993)

Clare (reading): Heckedy Peg, by Don and Audry Wood.

Laura asks to read this one. At first, I don't want her to but the other two are in agreement, so I give in. Laura really gets into this, using lots of expression. . . . As Laura reads, it sounds halting until I see she is pausing to find, with the others, the small pictures that match the text.

Laura(reading): Your shoes are dirty. . . Your socks are dirty . . .your feet are dirty.

Charlie and Maggie both giggle and Laura responds to this by getting even more animated. . . .Near the end the three have a discussion about which child is which. They finally identify them all and Laura continues reading.

(Fieldnotes, November 22, 1993).

In the final example above Laura did a wonderful job of reading the book. Perhaps being a child herself and recently having loved to be read to gave her insight into just what Maggie and Charlie wanted from a reading of this story. Laura read from a unique perspective. She read like an adult--fluently and accurately--but participated herself like a child in the ritual picturing and imaging activities. Where Peter and I would have simply tolerated the discussion, waiting to move on, Laura became a part of it and the three were like equals playing together in another world.

Laura contributed in a significant way to our family storytime at moments outside of the actual storytime event. Several times, as we read stories, it emerged that Laura had read the story earlier and had already explained a concept or discussed an idea with Charlie and/or Maggie. Apart from the times Charlie actually explained, "Laura read this already," I have no way of knowing how often this occurred. Many times during the day the children "read" books together or on their own. At no time did I ever try to keep track of who was reading what and to whom. The fact that this regularly occurred meant that many favourite books were read and reread even more than my journal reflects.

Another way that Laura had an influencing effect on family literacy was through modeling the reading process. The younger children regularly saw her reading for information and for pleasure and knew that one day they would be able to read like their big sister. Being able to read independently was surely a goal Maggie and Charlie were inspired to reach.

In sum, Laura's role was that of family member who, although seldom directly involved in family storytime, contributed in a meaningful way to the family literacy which grew out of it. When she did step into the midst of storytime, it was often in a supportive way, to recount a connected story, to remind us of an error or omission we had made, to help explain something arising from the text, or to

help answer a question. She loved to join in on the reading of stories, sometimes offering to do the reading and always cooperative when asked to read. Laura contributed to family literacy by reading and discussing books with Maggie and Charlie outside of storytime and by modeling reading for information and pleasure. Finally, Laura's position at the edge of the group support the notion that she was moving outside the circle to find herself inside the large circle of independent literacy.

Ian

When the study began Ian was just "Abit" of a person, not yet born but certainly anticipated. At this time Ian's most significant contribution to our family storytime was by raising our consciousness to situations involving babies. Because of his "almost" presence in our lives, we read stories in a different way than had we not been expecting a baby. Rosenblatt (1978) speaks of the way readers link their own lives with the text they are reading.

The reader's attention to the text activates certain elements in his past experience--external reference, internal response--that have become linked with the verbal symbols. Meaning will emerge from a network of relationships among the things symbolized *as he senses them*. The symbols point to these sensations, images, objects, ideas, relationships, with the particular associations or feeling-tones created by his past experience with them in actual life or in literature. The selection and organization of responses to some degree hinge on the assumptions, the expectations, or sense of possible structures, that he brings out of the stream of his life. Thus built into the raw material of the literary process itself is the particular world of the reader (p. 11).

The following excerpts from *All In One Piece* (Murphy, 1987), *Oh, Brother* (Lakin, 1987), and *Waiting For Noah* (Oppenheim, 1990) illustrate how our reading of these texts had meaning in our particular worlds.

Peter opens the book but stops at the first picture.

Peter: How many kids are there?

Maggie (counting): Four.

Peter: Right, like we're going to have. . . .

There is an illustration on the very last page of the elephant children going up to bed.

Maggie names each one and what each is doing.

Maggie: . . . and there's Abit in his diaper.

(Fieldnotes, October 14, 1993).

Clare: You were the big guy?

Charlie: Yah.

Clare: How would you like to have a little brother? Maybe you will.

(Fieldnotes, November 5, 1993).

Clare(reading): "Next, Nana, what happened next?"

"Well, evening came. And still . . . you hadn't come."

Peter: Sounds familiar.

Clare: Doesn't it?

(Fieldnotes, January 10, 1994)

The final excerpt above took place during the reading of a story where a grandma tells her grandson her memories of the night that he was born. When I reached the point in the text where "Still he hadn't come," Peter spoke aloud our thoughts of our own baby who, at that point, was keeping us waiting. The following day, January 11, Ian was born, and on the evening of January 13 we, all six of us, were back home reading bedtime stories on the living room couch. At this point in the study Ian took on a more visible (and audible) role in storytime as he joined our group in person.

For the final several weeks of the study Ian's involvement in our storytime was, naturally enough, of a rather disruptive nature. Who did the reading and whether or not the reader got all the way through the book without having to stop reading often depended on Ian. On one typical evening, while I was doing the reading, Ian began to cry. Although Peter tried to soothe him I finally had to stop to feed Ian. At first, I tried to smooth things over by adapting the text of the story, *Little Fingerling* (Hughes, 1989), to fit the situation.

Clare (reading): At last their prayer was answered and a son was born to them. He was indeed very tiny, but (inventing text here) he cried alot in the evenings and his father wrung his hands and tried to stick the sou-sou in his mouth to get him to stop.

Charlie (laughing): Mom, don't do that. (more seriously): Mom, don't do that.

Clare: Sorry. I think I'm going to have to stop and feed him.

Charlie: No, just keep reading.

Clare: But we won't be able to enjoy the story with him like that. Hang on and I can keep going as soon as I get organized with him.

(Fieldnotes, February 18, 1994).

On many evenings when the reading was left for me to do, I asked Laura to take over. She was pleased to be able to do this and Maggie and Charlie were content to have her read to them, as in the following example from *Pinky and Rex and the Mean Old Witch* (Howe, 1991):

Peter is going to play hockey and I've been in class but the kids and I are all on the couch for stories now. Laura is reading again. Ian is crying a bit, so I start to feed him.

(Fieldnotes, January 17, 1994).

A less tangible but significant role Ian played in the development of family literacy was that of completing the family circle. Ian gave the other children--especially Charlie--the sense of growth, change, and continuity. With a tiny baby in the family Charlie was reminded of, or perhaps learned about, his own infancy. His own literacy development was evident in contrast to Ian's. Sometimes after Laura had read to him Charlie would comment that when he got older he would read to Ian. He would point out that Ian would "read to our next baby and keep going and keep going." A person needs to see the defining borders of a circle in order to get a sense of being a part of that circle. In the circle of family literacy, Ian gave us that sense of where we within it, where we had come from and where we were going.

In sum, Ian's (Abit's) early role in the development of our family literacy was that of helping to shape our perspective, as readers. The anticipated arrival of a baby in our family shaped, in part, how we responded to the storybooks we read. Ian's actual presence was sometimes of a disruptive nature as we all learned how to carry on a family ritual in the face of all the changes a new baby can bring

and the demands a baby can make. And, finally, Ian brought us a sense of our family circle, growing and learning together through our daily life, of which storytime was a significant part.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented an analysis of the members of our family storytime circle and the interaction they engaged in each evening throughout the reading of storybooks. Maggie, as key informant, contributed greatly to the storytime talk and literacy development which grew out of this talk. Her role was not that of an individual listening to stories, but rather of a member of a family circle. She asked questions and responded to the questions of others. She discussed with other family members--arguing with one, supporting another--story events and ideas raised. She contributed to the knowledge of other family members and modeled learning to read for Charlie. Each of Maggie's family contributed to family literacy in their own unique and meaningful ways. It is the involvement of all family members, the sum of each one's unique contribution that makes up the story I first set out to tell. In the next and final chapter I present my understandings of this story and discuss how I see them fitting among the stories of others. I present my findings, discuss their implications for family literacy, and make recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

MY STORY AMONG OTHERS: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*No one story by itself is meaningful; it becomes meaningful
as it connects with others' stories and then becomes a part of
this multiperspectived view of the way things are.*

(Dyson, 1990, p. 195.)

THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

Two years ago, in August 1993, I set out to study something happening in our home which had become a family tradition, that of reading stories each evening to the children before bed. As I considered this tradition I began to see it as a story--a story with a setting, characters, conflicts, and themes, a story about literacy development and growing and learning, a story about family. Dyson (1990) says "Like the children, we, as educators, organize our experiences through stories" (p. 193). I, too, wanted to organize through story our family experiences with storybooks, in order to begin to understand it and to be able to share this understanding with others. Sharing through story our experiences with storybooks called for more than simply participating in the story. It seemed to require, as Dyson suggests, some sort of organization on the part of the storyteller. The purpose of this study, then, was to systematically observe our established tradition of family storytime, and to organize these observations in such a way that I could share them with others.

Although certain broad questions came early--Who are the characters in this story; What are they saying; What roles do they play; What are the tensions and conflicts--it was not until late in the data collection period that I was able to focus my questions on specific family literacy issues. It was at that time I read a study by Taylor (1986), in which she addressed, within the context of family literacy, the area of parents reading to children. At the conclusion of the study Taylor suggested several questions to be considered for future research in this area. I felt strongly about the importance of considering our storytime within a family literacy framework, of considering all the family factors alongside and intertwined

with the literacy factors--the way they occur naturally in a home setting. Several of Taylor's questions seemed to address my desire to view the literacy development of our children, the enactment of a family tradition, and the living-through of family life in a wholistic fashion. I used four of Taylor's questions to frame my study. They are as follows:

1. How and under what circumstances do parents read stories to their children?
2. How is the occasion perceived by individual family members?
3. How are the nuances of familial relationships expressed and explored within the storybook occasion?
4. How do rituals and routines of storybook reading evolve in familial settings?

As my story unfolded, the focus of my attention changed somewhat. Questions 3 and 4 still seemed to be important ones but I felt the need to look also at literacy development as it emerged for certain family members. A critical exercise when considering literacy development was determining a definition for it. Also, with a family of four children at my fingertips I felt the desire to consider Doake's (1981) suggestion of the need to study sibling relationships and their effects on a child's learning to read. The four questions which became the final ones are as follows:

1. How are the nuances of familial relationships expressed and explored within the storybook occasion?
2. How do rituals and routines of storybook reading evolve in familial settings?
3. Is literacy development more than mastering the conventions of print? Which features of storybook reading contribute to literacy development?
4. What are the effects of sibling relationships within the storybook occasion on children learning to read?

The stories of other researchers were a valuable part of the story I had to tell. Reading related literature helped me to view my observations from new perspectives. Reading and learning about the findings of other researchers gave me insight into what I saw happening within our own family. As I began to

investigate the questions I had chosen as my guiding questions, the field of research which had already emerged as a framework for my study was that of family literacy. The other research area which seemed necessary to explore was that of reading as aesthetic response. The first question, particularly, seemed to call out for an exploration of the lived-through experience of family members gathering at the end of a day to read storybooks together.

THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Because the purpose of this study was to observe an already established family tradition as it occurred naturally in our home, the naturalistic paradigm seemed most suitable. Case study, appropriate for an in-depth study of one particular event, setting, situation, subject, or social practice, seemed right for my purposes. I employed ethnographic techniques--participant observation, fieldnotes, open-ended interviews--to collect data for my study. From October 1, 1993 to March 1, 1994 I observed our nightly family storytime and audiotaped the event.

On many of the evenings I was present for stories and participated in my usual way as the story reader; other evenings, when I attended university classes, I was able to observe only through the means of the tape recorder the following morning. As I listened each morning to the recordings of the previous evening's storytime, I transcribed the interactions which occurred during the reading. I added my own reflections on the evening's events in the form of written comments. These comments sometimes reflected information I gleaned through informal discussions and unstructured interviews held with family members. For a brief time I engaged in a written dialogue with Laura, our oldest daughter, in which we referred to family matters as they pertained to storytime. Laura's insights were also reflected in my observational comments.

The written comments I made represented the beginning of analysis procedures, as I began to notice recurring patterns in my data which allowed me to sort them into workable categories. Examining my data within these categories helped me to find answers to my four framing questions. In this chapter I present my findings and discuss recommendations for future research.

SHARING MY STORY: THE FINDINGS

How are the nuances of familial relationships expressed and explored within the storybook occasion?

Familial relationships are the stuff of everyday life. How family members feel about themselves and about one another, how they treat one another, how they perceive their own roles and those of other family members--all of this pervades daily family living. Storytime, as a natural part of family life, was hardly immune to the influences of familial relationships.

Sibling rivalry, for example, has always been an ongoing issue in our family. Each child has the need to feel special, to feel loved, and to feel that he is being attended to. This need was expressed time and time again in the negotiation that went on among the children as to whose book would be first read, who got to sit next to the reader, and who got to answer the questions asked. The ownership issue, as well, was an expression of this need to be one's own person, in a family of four--to own special storybooks and to "own" the right to say how they would get read.

As parents who tried to be fair about such matters, Peter and I left it to the children to work these problems out with little interference from us. We stood by, however, ready to step in if we felt it was necessary, playing out our role of mediator and protector of rights. This playing out of parent roles can be readily seen in my data. Peter and I, as guardians of our children, struggled in our attempts to light the way for them. We helped them to construct meaning in the stories we read them, and to connect the stories to their own lives. We mediated not only during their brother-sister arguments but as they grappled for meaning from the text, as well. And, we helped them learn to read, using teachable moments to introduce and reinforce letters, words, and the conventions of print. As we parented through each day, so we continued to parent each evening when we sat down to read stories together. We guided, taught, scaffolded, corrected, encouraged and praised--all in an effort to light "small flames of promise for the future" (Bartone, 1993).

The children, although forming one family unit, held their unique places within that unit. The way they saw one another within the larger family group had an effect on the storytime event. Laura was seen as a big sister, who could read well, who read fat books on her own, who was wise and knowledgeable about many topics, and who, when necessary, could pinch hit for Mom or Dad, as reader. When Laura stepped into the storytime circle with some information to share, when she offered to read to the children, and when she sat hunched up in the red chair, oblivious to the rest of us around her, Maggie and Charlie accepted her as the big sister, an “almost grown-up.”

Maggie, although Charlie’s big sister, did not enjoy the same sort of status in Charlie’s eyes that Laura did. When Maggie offered to read, Charlie protested, clearly knowing the difference between a beginning reader and a fluent one. For Charlie it was important to have the finished polished production. The hesitant, halting re-enactment seemed to get in the way of his anticipated envisionment of the text. Maggie was accepted by Charlie more as a peer and together, through their back and forth discussions of who was whom, they enjoyed picturing and imaging, extending and hypothesizing, entering a text world and living through story experiences. This storytime relationship reflected the one Maggie and Charlie enjoyed during their daytime play. While Laura was always the big sister, the one who could pour milk, tie shoes, read a storybook aloud, Maggie and Charlie were friends. They played school, shared secrets, and “read” books quietly together.

Storytime brought out in each of us the roles we were used to playing within everyday family life. Peter, ever the tease, brought this role with him into storytime. He altered the text, substituting his own words, in an attempt to tease the children and me. When Peter read he did so for fun; if “learning” happened as well, so much the better. This fun and play with books was conducive to the children’s aesthetic enjoyment of the story, in the sense that the children had wonderful fun during the storytime, laughing and giggling through the reading. His teasing, however, sometimes got in the way of the re-enactment of a favourite text, as on the morning Charlie asked me to read a book over again because Dad had “read it wrong” the night before.

I brought my teaching perspective to storytime, using any and all opportunities to teach lessons about print, about books, about life. Eeds and Wells (1989) talk about the fact that children are often exposed to “gentle inquisitions” when “grand conversations” should be the goal. When I imposed my “lessons” upon the children, I sometimes interrupted the grand conversations there could have been. When I relinquished my teaching role and allowed the talk to follow the lead of the children, they were able to respond more fully to the stories.

Responding aesthetically to the stories we read allowed the children to explore familial relationships as they entered into other storybook worlds and became different people. Lines such as “I was Benji,” and “That’s you, Maggie” often reflected a taking on of a different role. Storybook worlds of possibilities invited exploration in a secure setting as the children lived-through different family scenarios, always able to return at the end of storytime to the real one. It seems that these explorations were only possible when there was a possible world to enter, and when that world was made attainable by the storyreader successfully creating that world for her listeners through a kind of staged performance. As we entered those worlds, as we laughed together and sat still together, we shared a common literary ground. We discussed writers and artists and artwork and ideas, making memories for later years. And underneath all of storytime, indeed running throughout our daily lives, was the seldom talked about knowledge of the love we shared as a family.

My data show that the familial relationships were expressed and explored within the storybook occasion just as they were expressed and explored through daily living. So storytime entailed much more than just sharing books. It was sharing life and lifeworlds together. It was, in a sense, a chance for our family to enact scenarios that helped us engage in lived-through experiences of life together--to love, to laugh, to cry, to create, to recreate--all within the proverbial safety of the family circle. One night, as I was about to begin Charlie’s book choice for the evening, he stopped me on the first inside page to read the hand-written messages. The one from Peter was signed, “Love Dad,” and mine was signed, “Love Mom.”

Charlie: What do you mean “Love Mom?” You mean you love Dad?

Clare: Well, Dad put “Love Dad,” on his and I put “Love Mom,” on mine. It means we love you.

*Charlie shrugs and sticks his thumb in his mouth.
(Fieldnotes, October 10, 1993).*

Love was not something important enough to talk about, particularly when a good book awaited Charlie's full attention. But it was there.

How do rituals and routines of storybook reading evolve in familial settings?

Family life is a dynamic complex environment (Leichter, 1984), constantly changing and evolving. Even as established routine events are being enacted, change is present. Change in family life is like an ocean tide, slowly but steadily coming in. No change is noticed while it is happening until you think to stop, have a good look around, and find some benchmarks for comparison (a piece of driftwood on the sand, the large clam shell, the point of land down the beach). Suddenly you see the whole landscape has changed for, even while you were there playing on the beach, the tide has come in.

So it is with the rituals and routines of storytime. For several years Peter and I were central figures in our family storytime. From night to night there was a constancy about what we'd done, in how the storybook occasion unfolded. Favourite books were brought to be read and reread. "That one again? We read it last night, Bud"(Fieldnotes, October 14, 1993). Peter usually started off the evening reading with "What's this called?" and ended it with a final definite slap of the book cover and a "That's it! Upstairs!" And, like the tide creeping in on a beach where we were playing, no change seemed evident.

Today, in August, 1995, I am able to stop and look around. I look for certain benchmarks--who is the central figure of storytime, what are other children doing, who is reading to whom, what is being read, how have our roles changed/remained the same--to help in my assessment, and I see how rituals and routines of storybook have changed over the past two years.

Storytime in our home on these August/95 evenings looks quite different than it did two years ago when this study began. In fact, storytime as it happened then;

no longer exists in our home. When bedtime rolls around Laura and Maggie head upstairs to the room they share, where they climb into single beds and read silently until they are too tired to read anymore. There are precariously stacked piles of books on the dresser, books stashed between the mattress and footboards, and books on the floor. These books are a mixture of Junior fiction and Young Adult fiction from the public or school libraries. Laura now works at the school library so has an "in" when it comes to borrowing books. The girls have wall-mounted lamps above their beds and they stretch out beneath these lamps, absorbed in their books for hours. Their lamps sometimes stay on long past the time when Peter and I have turned ours out. A familiar quiet exchange which may be heard around 11:00 is, "Girls, it's time." "Okay, just wait. . ."

Charlie still asks for a story every night, but somewhere along the way the place for this story to be read switched from the living room couch to his bed upstairs. A school boy now, Charlie is exhausted by 8:00 each night and happy to enjoy his story in the comfort of his own bed. Charlie has switched entirely away from what he once dubbed "Maggie's beautiful stories"(Fieldnotes, January 5, 1994). He still enjoys nonfiction and has latched onto the *Goosebump Series* (Stine), novels of the Horror/Mystery genre and a recent fad of elementary school-aged children, particularly boys. He checks out these books from the public library and proudly went off to a birthday party on Saturday, bearing a Goosebump book wrapped for his six-year old friend. Charlie points out that these are good books for us to read in his bed at night because there are no pictures for him to be looking at.

Eighteen-month old Ian is now carrying on the tradition of picture books in the family. He has not begun to ask for a story before bed, rather he asks for one anytime a family member is sitting down. Peter recently growled that he can't sit down these days without having Ian in his lap with a book. The books Ian brings to have read are from the bookshelves in the living room, always picture books and usually small ones he can nicely handle. He does have his favourites which appear day after day.

What is interesting these days is who is now reading to whom. Once upon a time it was Peter and I who read to our children. Simple. We still read to them, but in addition to this Laura now reads to Charlie and Ian, Maggie reads to

Charlie and Ian, and Charlie sits beside Ian and they silently read their own books together. (Charlie still believes he can't *really* read yet, perhaps from within Sulzby's [1985] print-governed refusal stage.) And Charlie, who once scorned Maggie's early reading attempts, is now quite content to have her read to him. Last night when Peter fell asleep in Charlie's bed after reading only one chapter of *Say Cheese and Die!* (Stine, 1992), Maggie carried on for six more chapters.

How has our warm, close-knit storytime circle evolved to this loose non-event? Our children have grown. Their needs have changed. Just as Laura, in 1993, was moving away from the family circle, seeking privacy and independence, so has Maggie gone the same way. I think they still need to know of the family love and security there for them; perhaps their beds, blankets, and lamps provide reminders of this now. But they need the privacy to read stories on their own, stories about girls like themselves, growing-up and changing. Surely this is as it should be, the supports being removed as the children are able to stand without them.

Maggie is able to join Laura now because of her literacy growth. As she has grown and her abilities have changed, so have her storybook needs changed. This is not to suggest that she would no longer benefit from being read to. It has been shown that being read to increases the interest elementary school children have in books (Porter, 1969; Mendoza, 1985; Watt, 1989), and benefits their general language development (Cohen, 1968; Doake, 1981; Harste, Woodward, and Burke, 1984; Teale, 1984; Feitelson, 1988; and others). Most likely Maggie would benefit academically and would very much love to be read to still. Sadly, because it is no longer a pressing need of hers and she doesn't initiate it, we no longer take the time to read to her and her sister. Now we support her reading in other ways, by discussing favourite authors and books, by sharing books even, and talking together about the book events. The girls are learning to take their places by our sides, as peers in a grown-up world, rather than the "little ones" of yesterday.

Charlie enters Grade One this fall and is now beginning to read. The early months of Grade One will bring the beginning of the Home Reading Program, a school-based initiative to encourage parents to listen each night to their children

read. This will undoubtedly be the springboard back into a more formal type of storytime. And I suspect that before Charlie edges away from the storytime circle, Ian will have captured us for nightly bedtime stories. It will be fascinating to see who will come around, perched on table tops and couch arms to share in Ian's favourites.

In sum, storytime rituals and routines evolve as the family evolves. As children grow and learn, their storybook needs change. Books take on no less importance to family members but the ways they are experienced change. At the risk of stretching a metaphor too far, I suggest that our children are lighting their own lamps from the light of ours. They are carrying them off into other rooms of the house and enjoying the light of their lamps independently. A hope of mine is that our children will one day eagerly light and tend lamps for their own families.

**Is literacy development more than mastering the conventions of print?
Which features of storybook reading contribute to literacy development?**

Sulzby's (1985) classification scheme of reading attempts describes the stages a child goes through in learning to read. The stages are broadly categorized according to Print-governed or Picture-governed and the independent reading stage within the print-governed category is the most sophisticated stage. Although Sulzby's classification scheme seems to accurately describe how young readers develop, it is perhaps not broad enough to address all that literacy development embodies. Leichter (1984) suggests that "Locating literacy events in the stream of everyday family activities is a substantial task, especially if one wishes to avoid defining literacy events in terms of previously held conceptions" (p. 42). My analysis of data relating to Maggie suggests that her literacy development included far more than attention to print.

The majority of Maggie's comments, questions, and storytime talk seemed to have, as its purpose, construction of meaning. Noticing letters and attempting to read words were activities Maggie engaged in on a regular basis but, for the most part, her talk concerned story meaning. Learning that pictures match only a small part of story text, that an author's choice of vocabulary can change

nuances of meaning, that reading *between* the lines of print is a part of reading--all became important aspects of Maggie's literacy development. She learned to "read" the illustrations, to glean story sense from them. She learned to listen to the context which surrounded new vocabulary, in order to understand it. And she learned to connect storybook events to events in her own life, thus constructing her own personal meaning from the stories that were read to her.

Aesthetic response to stories was a critical part of Maggie's storytime experience. Moreover, what was clearly evident was that her ability to engage with texts/stories was a function of her "living in the text" despite the fact that she was unable, at times, to identify letters, words, and even larger parts of the text. In other words, no matter which stage she was at in Sulzby's (1985) classification system, she was still able to engage with the text aesthetically. Even if she asked questions about word meanings she was still able to engage with the text aesthetically. For Maggie, learning to *love* books was surely as powerful an outcome of our storybook reading as learning to *read* books. Reading books is a skill one learns; loving to read books is more a frame of mind one develops. Maggie learned to laugh with appreciation at Monfried's (1990) way with humour, to feel anger at Shiloh's cruel owner (Naylor, 1991), to feel the thrill of danger as Ida felt it (Alderson, 1987), and to feel a deep sense of contentment at Little Fingerling's kindness and loyalty to his aged parents (Hughes, 1989). Knowing to respond to literature, feeling free enough to enter into the worlds of storybook characters was surely an important part of Maggie's literacy development.

To say that Maggie learned all this--constructing meaning from illustrations, from vocabulary, from text; responding aesthetically to stories, entering text worlds--is not to suggest that she was formally taught these lessons. Rather, these lessons occurred naturally throughout the storybook occasion. Sometimes Maggie learned because of the questions she asked or the points we raised. But more often than not, Maggie learned through the stories, themselves. As she listened to the stories, to the language of the authors, as she wandered in and out of possible worlds, as she sat in silence at the end of a story, she was becoming a more literate person.

What is the effect of sibling relationships within family storytime on children learning to read?

Although many researchers (Durkin, 1966; Clark, 1976; Holdaway, 1979; Teale, 1978; Doake, 1981; Baghban, 1984, and others) have documented the benefits of parents reading to their children, few have examined the benefits of two or more siblings experiencing storytime together. A storytime circle involving several members enjoying books together constitutes a "community of readers." Hepler and Hickman (1982) used this term to describe what they observed in middle grade classrooms as children discussed with one another the books they read. They pointed out the importance of talk in negotiating meaning and that talk was much easier among children who had shared the books in the same context.

In our home the talk which preceded, accompanied, and followed nightly storyreading truly reflected a sense of community. The children shared many similar characteristics and points of view, coming from the same family background. The "community" was enriched, however, by the different ages, interests, and stages of literacy development represented within the group. These differences--the unique qualities that each sibling brought to the storybook occasion--made for a rich variety of the types of books selected and the type of talk engaged in. Charlie brought his nonfiction books and Maggie her "beautiful stories." Laura brought along her knowledge of "the best books." These distinct differences each child brought to storytime and the fact that we all had to learn to live with these differences set the stage for negotiated learning and responding.

There were many conversations about the kind of books and authors each liked best, and why. Although these exchanges were sometimes of a negative nature, as in "I don't like the books she picks," and although the option to leave the room during the reading of their siblings' choices was always there, rarely did the children choose to do so. In fact, it often turned out that the children enjoyed one another's choices. This kind of no pressure exposure to different interests, different genres, different authors, and different levels of books proved an excellent way to broaden the literacy horizons of the children in our family and raise their interest levels in many kinds of reading. Enticing them with varied kinds of reading material and making them familiar with the characteristics of

each moved them along the path to independent reading. I can think of no way a parent could offer such variety of reading material in a single child-parent storytime except for the adult to impose his own selections upon the child, a decision which would surely have a negative impact on issues of ownership and choice.

Language learning is social and collaborative (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). A storytime circle that involves several family members offers opportunity for a tremendous amount of social interaction. It was through this interaction that the children were able to voice tentative understandings and have them confirmed and enhanced by other family members. Whenever Laura stepped into the circle she often restated our explanations and answers to questions, adding to them or modifying them in hopes of clarifying Maggie's and Charlie's understandings.

It was the discussion the children engaged in that allowed them to negotiate meaning for the stories we read. These negotiated meanings had multiple interpretations due to the different ages, understandings, and levels of ability of the children. That is to say, a meaning that Charlie could construct on his own could be enhanced by something Maggie might say, allowing him a deeper or broader understanding. Laura's contribution might add another dimension to the understandings Maggie and Charlie had constructed, so that at the end of a discussion of a concept or an issue raised by a storybook event the children had a store of knowledge and understandings about that concept or issue that was made up of many levels of meaning. The multiple perspectives of all the siblings assisted in enriching the kinds of interpretations that were offered up at storytime.

Sibling relationships influenced Maggie's and Charlie's emergent reading abilities through the modeling of reading. Maggie was able to see Laura reading and so she knew that it was something she herself would be able to learn. Seeing an adult read does not promote the same confidence in one's own ability as does seeing a peer or sibling read. Seeing an adult read is just natural, because, well, adults just do. But seeing an older sister read--that same sister you watched learn to skate and roller-blade and ride a bicycle--now that is different. "If she can do it I guess I can, too."

For Charlie, this inspiration was even more tangible. At the beginning of October Charlie was aware of Maggie's limited reading abilities. As the weeks went on he watched her participate more and more in reading bits and pieces and whole portions of text. Now, two years later, Charlie enjoys having Maggie read his paperback novels to him. And with his big brotherly sense of family cycles, he knows that he "will soon be reading to Ian and keep going and keep going."

Being able to sit next to but not directly involved in the language "lessons" that went on during storytime was a very low-risk and natural way to learn language skills. My data show Maggie and Charlie sitting still when questions were posed to the other about letters and words. This patience often turned into a squirming "I know" sort of posture as the seconds ticked away. We all remember days in the classroom when we knew the answers to all the questions we *weren't* asked, only to struggle when the spotlight was shone on us. Maggie was able to benefit from the language lessons we directed toward Charlie and Charlie was able to benefit from those directed toward Maggie, each secure and comfortable in the knowledge that he was just a spectator.

In sum, having siblings a part of family storytime each night had several positive influences on Maggie and Charlie learning to read. The family members who comprised storytime experienced a true sense of community. These members shared and discussed their favourite books, authors, and genres, offering one another the opportunity to get to know them, too. This always occurred in a positive, no pressure kind of environment. The social interaction integral for language learning was facilitated by our family storytime. The children were able to discuss the story events together, negotiating meaning for the stories we read, enhancing one another's understandings and deepening their own. Seeing siblings read and learning to read independently proved as powerful motivators for Maggie and Charlie. They came to an understanding of reading as a skill to be learned and one they would certainly be able to do, given that older siblings had mastered it. Finally, having siblings present at storytime meant that Maggie and Charlie were each able to sit back at times and watch the language lessons the other was engaged in. This occasional distance from the spotlight allowed the children to benefit from the lesson being "taught" without having to be successful.

LEARNING FROM MY STORY: IMPLICATIONS FOR FAMILY LITERACY

In this section I discuss the implications my story might have for other parents engaged in reading books to their children. My findings suggest that lighting the family lamp of literacy requires that parents do the following:

Invite family members to come hear the stories.

It is parents who must initially extend the storytime invitation. By establishing a time and place, by setting the parameters for the storytime occasion, by calling the children to come for stories, parents can make storytime happen in their homes. Once the routines of storytime have been established, parents must maintain an open door for the comings and goings of the family members. It is this open door that will allow the nature of the storytime occasion to evolve as the family evolves. If children feel free to join in for some stories and sit out for some, to sit on the edge of the group, to talk when they need to and stay silent when they don't, they will feel more comfortable about responding to the stories in natural ways. Storytime will be their lamp and will eventually lead them to light their own.

Offer children good literature and let them own their stories.

It takes some effort and commitment to ensure a steady supply of good storybooks coming into the home. Part of book selection is knowing where to go and what to choose. A reputable book store and a public library are good places to start. Seeking the advice of teachers, librarians, and other parents can guide parents toward books that are worth reading. Once a supply and source of books have been established children need to be able to choose their own from within these. Allowing children to make choices will help them to learn about book selection and will allow them to become stakeholders in the storytime tradition. Allowing choice welcomes children into the world of authors, artists, and genres, as they consider all the choices there are and they discover their own preferences.

Accept familial relationships as an important part of the storytime occasion.

Although sometimes seeming to intrude on the storytime event, familial relationships are a part of family life and should be allowed to be a natural part of storytime. As the unique roles played by family members during daily life begin to emerge during storytime they bring a normalcy to the event. Parents who strive to make storytime an idyllic occasion with readers always reading and listeners always listening or making appropriate comments at appropriate moments are missing out on the tremendous benefits to be had from natural family interaction. In the words "family storytime," the "family" part has equal importance to the "story" part. A parent attempting to take this study as a sort of recipe for enhancing family literacy, in an effort to ensure that their "children, too, could enjoy the benefits and pleasures of reading aloud!" must be cautioned that it was not simply the reading of good books, nor the repeated readings of those books, nor the discussion which accompanied the story readings, nor the sitting together on a couch each evening that made storytime what it was in our family. Rather, it was a combination of all of these occurring within the context of a loving--sometimes squabbling--family where everyone was allowed to be his own person, contributing naturally to the storytime event.

Encourage the wanderings that help make storyreading a lived-through experience.

If children are to have lived-through experiences with stories they need to be free to respond to them in ways meaningful to them. Responding aesthetically to stories in immediate natural ways allows children to create new stories that are their own. Aesthetic response sometimes includes changing direction, leaving the beaten path, wandering off, as it were, to unexpected places and possible worlds. Encouraging these wanderings means being flexible as a reader. Sometimes leading, sometimes following, sometimes teaching, sometimes learning, parents must be ready to let their children express and explore their own responses. Laughing, crying, singing, chanting, imagining, are all forms of response that turn a story from a simple read-aloud to a lived-through experience.

NEW QUESTIONS FOR NEW STORIES: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

One story often leads to another and so it is with mine. As my story unfolded my mind often wandered off to ask other questions and seek connections with other possible stories. These are some of the questions I recommend now for future research in this family literacy field of study. There are many possible questions one could ask and avenues one could explore. Three which intrigue but which were not within the limitations of my study are as follows:

What lies behind the picturing and imaging some children naturally do when they listen to stories?

In my analysis of our storytime talk I noticed that the children frequently stepped into stories by identifying themselves with story characters. All three of our children did this on a regular basis. Evidence of this came in the comments they made, "That's me and that's you," "That's Kenny and me in the boat. Our boat is bigger than theirs." I have no way of knowing how often the children saw themselves as storybook characters but I suspect that their comments spoken aloud represented only a tiny part of what they were experiencing. There is a need for future research into the phenomenon of how it is that children enter into an initial envisionment of the text (Langer, 1987).

What are the links between family literacy development and school-based literacy development?

All the while that Maggie was growing and learning through our evening family storytime, so was she growing and learning through the months of Grade One at school. She read and listened to books with us at night while she drew pictures, read books, solved problems, wrote stories, and talked with classmates during the day. Of course there were connections between literacy lessons at school and those which grew out of storytime. To explore these connections was too immense a task to undertake as part of this study. A study similar to this present one could focus specifically on the influences of school lessons on storytime

experiences and the influences of storytime experiences on school achievement. Such a study would call for fieldwork in the classroom and school, as well as in the home.

How does storybook reading transpire in homes having family situations significantly different from ours?

Certain aspects of our family situation facilitated storytime unfolding the way it did in our home. Having two literate parents in the home, the means to buy and borrow books, the time to read each night, an interest in children's literature, and a desire to nudge our children along the paths to literacy are just some of the factors which influenced our experiences with storybooks. What about homes with single parents, or families where children go back and forth between two homes, or immigrant families where children and parents struggle with English--how do children who grow up in these homes experience storybooks? Our understandings of family literacy would be greatly broadened by studies describing storybook events in such homes.

A FINAL WORD

Many years ago, before electricity had reached the homes of rural Prince Edward Island, a simple kerosene lamp was lit against the darkness each evening. As family members gathered around the lamp they found there relaxation after a hard day's work, a chance to talk and laugh together, and a sense of family. In our home storybooks light our rooms each evening. Storybooks gather us together, illuminating our family lives. Telling the story of our family lamp has given me a new appreciation of an old family tradition. Our storytime circle is changing and will continue to change as our family does. This story is not over; even tonight as I struggle to complete the telling of this story, the living of the story continues. Three times Ian has appeared by my side, bearing a grin and a copy of *Franklin Fibs* (Bourgeois, 1991). Our family lamp still burns.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Sample of Initial Storybook Reading Event

Thursday, October 14, 1993

Peter, Maggie, and Charlie are sitting on the couch to read. Laura is in the rocking chair and I am still at class.

(The Red Carpet, Parkin, 1948)

Peter: Okay, who's first?

Charlie: I am. This one.

Peter: That one again? We read it last night, Bud.

Maggie: Anyway, I want to take it back to the library tomorrow.

Peter: Good!

Maggie: Okay, Charlie?

Charlie shrugs.

Peter: What's it called?

Charlie: The Red Carpet.

Peter starts in, for the second night in a row. He comes to a line with an obvious completion and pauses for just a second. Maggie jumps in and completes it.

Peter (reading): . . . as it whizzed by the statue of General Lee!

Charlie: They try to make the people, so that people will remember them.

Peter: Oh, okay. The statues, you mean?

Charlie: Ya, the statues. They make statues kind of like people and then they try to make people remember them.

Peter: Right. Will there be a big statue of you some day after you die, do you think? With a big truck on it?

Charlie shrugs.

A bit later Peter tries to make alarm rhyme with calm, by leaving out the /r/ sound.

Maggie: Just a minute, Daddy. Is it *alam* or *alarm*?

Peter: Well, this is a rhyming book but these words don't rhyme very well so I made them rhyme.

They reach a page where there are two signs. One leads off to water in the distance.

Maggie: This one says "Ferry" and this one says "New York."

Peter: Right.

A page shows the motorcycles jumping across the water.

Charlie: Look at the motorcycles. They're really jumping.

Peter: They're really flying, eh? Okay, Maggie, where's your book? What's this called?

(*All in One Piece*, Murphy, 1987)

Maggie: All -- in -- one -- piece.

Peter: Right.

Peter begins but stops at the first page.

Peter: How many kids are there?

Maggie: Four.

Peter: Right. Like we're going to have.

This is a fairly short book. They go straight through with no interaction. There is an illustration on the very last page of the elephant children going up to bed.

Maggie: There's Laura, carrying Charlie on her back, there's me reading a book in my pajamas. And there's Abit in his diaper.

Peter: Okay, hit the sack.

Appendix B

Sample of Storybook Reading Event Near End of Study

Friday, February 18, 1994

(Little Fingerling, Hughes, 1989) .

- Charlie: What's that one called?
 Clare: Do you remember?
 Charlie: Little Fingerling.
 Clare: Yah. Do you know who wrote it?
 Charlie: No.
 Clare: Monica Hughes.
 Charlie: Oh, one time--we have two of them.
 Clare: Right. But we gave the hard cover one to Stephen for Christmas. And who did the pictures? Brenda Clark. And she's the one who does the pictures of Franklin.
 Charlie: Oh, Paulette Bourgeois must have wrote this.
 Clare: No, a different lady wrote it--Monica Hughes. She's a Canadian, too.
 Maggie: I know, I say Paulette Bourgeois writes alot of books and so I say, "Oh, it must be--" but then Mom says, "No, it's a different author."
 Clare: This is a Japanese folktale. Do you know anybody Japanese?
 Maggie: Yah, Yuko.

Laura and Mags discuss the various Japanese families at school.

- Clare(reading): Once upon a time, in old Japan, there lived a childless couple.
 Clare: Do you know what a childless couple is?
 Maggie: Yah, Mom, I know. We are a hot tub-less couple.
 Clare(laughing): Right. We don't have a hot tub. So a childless couple is a family who doesn't have a child.
 Maggie: We are a teenagerless couple.
 Clare: Do you know any childless couples?
 Charlie: Grandma and Grandpa.

Clare: Yes, except they had children and they grew up. What about Casey and Theresa?

Clare(reading): . . . a son was born to them. He was indeed very tiny but (inventing text here) he cried alot in the evenings and his father wrung his hands and tried to stick the sou-sou in his mouth to get him to stop.

Charlie(laughing): Mom, don't do that. (more seriously) Mom, don't do that.

Clare: Sorry, I think I'm going to have to stop and feed him.

Charlie: No, just keep reading.

Clare: But we won't be able to enjoy the story with him like that. Hang on and I can keep going as soon as I get organized with him.

Clare(reading): "I will go to Kyoto and make my way in the world," he told himself.

Maggie: What he could have done is he could have just got in and just paddled.

Clare: Yah.

Clare(reading): "Will you permit me to leave?" Little Fingerling asked the stall owner.

Maggie: What he could have done is like Dad. He could live somewhere and then go each day to work.

Clare: You're right. But maybe it was too far for his little legs.

We turn to a page showing the nobleman's children.

Maggie: This is a boy, this is a boy, and this is a boy. I know it looks like a girl.

Clare: Oh, I see.

Maggie: Boy, boy, boy, boy, the mom, the dad.

Clare(reading):. . . especially the nobleman's daughter, whose name was--

Maggie: --Plum Blossom.

Clare(reading): In his place stood a handsome samurai warrior.

Maggie: What's, um, a warrior?

Clare: A soldier.
Maggie: There was something in the news about warriors.
Clare: What country was it in?
Laura: Was it Prince Charles?
Maggie: Yah.
Laura: Yah, they were warriors.
Clare: Oh, okay.
Maggie: Were they just playing?

Laura and I explain about when Prince Charles had been greeted in New Zealand by warriors doing a ceremonial dance. I use the word tradition. The explanation seems to satisfy Mags.

Clare(reading): . . . had become a samurai sword.
Charlie: What's a samurai sword?
Clare: It's a sword used by a samurai soldier.
Charlie: And why is it so, like, round?
Clare: Oh, that's just the scabbard. That's the scabbard that the sword fits into. (I explain a bit more.) So do you understand what a scabbard is?
Charlie: A thing that you put a sword in.

Clare(reading): . . . brought his parents from their farm so that he might care for them honourably in their old age.
Maggie: I like that ending.

Charlie: But that was actually way in the olden days.
Clare: Yah, in a different country. Do you remember what country?
Charlie: Kyoto.
Clare: Kyoto was the city and the country was Japan.
Charlie: Japan. People speak the same language as us in Japan.
Clare: No, they don't. They speak Japanese, don't they?
Maggie: Yuko speaks Japanese, but not to us. Here's my book.

(The Big Parade, Hefty, 1988)

Clare(reading): Just then the phone rang. It was the mayor of Calgary!

Clare: The mayor was on my flight to Toronto Wednesday night.

Maggie: Did you talk to him?

Clare: No. He was just in front of me in the line though. He had his kids with him.

Clare(reading): Margaret was playing with Stephen, Vicki, and Morgan.

Charlie: Mom, can you say "Charlie?"

Clare: Instead of one of them, you mean?

Laura: How about Charlie, Ian, and Laura?

Charlie: No, how about Stephen, Charlie, and--

Maggie: No, it's my book. Mommy, read the right names.

Clare: Well, what do you think, Charlie?

Charlie: "Charlie," I think.

Clare: It is Maggie's story, isn't it?

Charlie: See, but I want to do "Charlie," because I never get to do it.

Clare: Well, how about if we read it tomorrow with "Charlie," but right now it's Maggie's bedtime story.

Charlie: But see, every book, it doesn't say Charlie in it.

Clare: Okay, would you like if I was reading a book to you if Maggie told me how to change it and I did?

Charlie: Yah.

Clare: I don't think you would. I'm going to read it Maggie's way because it's her choice. You don't have to listen. That's fine.

I continue reading to the end. Charlie does stay to listen.