

OH, THE THINGS YOU CAN FIND (IF ONLY YOU ANALYZE):
A CLOSE TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF DR. SEUSS' RHETORIC FOR CHILDREN

by

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Abstract

This study seeks to discover the *loci*, or themes, within the post-World War II books of Theodor Geisel, whom generations of American readers came to know as “Dr. Seuss.” A prolific children’s author and social activist, Dr. Seuss penned more than 40 children’s books during the period under investigation. After World War II, Seuss’ books began to merge social themes with his entertaining storylines and trademark illustrations. This thesis applies a methodology that draws from both close textual analysis and topically-oriented critical approaches in order to illuminate *loci* in 10 selected works. Through Cicero’s critical process of invention, relationships between arguments and *loci* are established. Analysis of these “message books” reveals the complex political and ideological themes present in Dr. Seuss’ texts while situating his work within a larger American rhetorical tradition of didactic children’s literature.

Key words: rhetorical criticism, Dr. Seuss, loci, close textual analysis, topical approaches

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Dedication

“Young Cat!

If you keep your eyes open enough, oh, the stuff you would learn.

The most wonderful stuff!”

– Dr. Seuss, *I Can Read with My Eyes Shut*

This thesis is dedicated to the readers of Dr. Seuss with the hope that they will be encouraged to delve into texts and find inspiration, imagination and, possibly, something unexpected.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In 1862, an Oxford mathematics professor, Charles Dodgson, crafted a story about Alice, a young girl in search of a White Rabbit. After following the White Rabbit into his rabbit hole, Alice finds herself the center of a remarkable, twisted adventure that today is known as *Alice in Wonderland*. Written for pure enjoyment and amusement, this tale was the real beginning of literature for children (Huck, Hepler & Hickman, 1987). Children's literature is an ever-changing, transitioning genre. While the nature of children's literature seems obvious, it is surprisingly hard to define. Kutzer's (1981) definition of children's literature is as follows: "literature which is read by or listened to and enjoyed primarily by children, although not necessarily meant for them." Children's literature transcends age boundaries, cultural boundaries, and education boundaries. Children's literature is enjoyed for various reasons, whether the material is educational or purely amusing and entertaining.

Inside to the Mischievous Mind of Theodor "Seuss" Geisel

One unlikely, yet multidimensional writer, activist, editor, cartoonist and advertiser broke onto the twentieth century children's literature scene, and his works still influence countless readers today. Theodor "Seuss" Geisel is no stranger to persuasive messages, as Geisel wrote more than 60 children's books, illustrated successful advertising campaigns, illustrated hundreds of political cartoons, and won three Academy Awards in his lifetime (Nel, 2007). Geisel's higher education at Dartmouth College offered his first opportunity to write and illustrate for the *Jack-O-Lantern*, a humor magazine on campus (Fensch, 2000). At Dartmouth, Geisel adopted

the pen-name “Seuss,” in honor of his mother’s maiden name.¹ Geisel’s Dartmouth mentor, W. Benfield Pressey, professor of rhetoric, encouraged his humorous writings and illustrations, and Pressey had a keen appreciation for Geisel’s raw rhetorical talent (Fensch, 2000). With Pressey’s encouragement, Geisel pursued a Ph.D. at Oxford, but never graduated.

Geisel made himself famous for his advertising campaigns in the 1930s. His famous “Henry, the Flit!” became a national catchphrase and the Standard Oil campaign made him an advertising icon (Nel, 2007). Geisel took a career-detour at the start of World War II to draw political cartoons for *PM*, New York’s home-front activist magazine (Nel, 2007). In 1943, Geisel joined the United States Army’s Information and Education division and became head of the animation department. During his service, Geisel received Academy Awards for his short films *Hitler Lives?* (1946), *Design for Death* (1947), and *Gerald McBoing-Boing* (1951) (Minear, 1999). Minear notes that “Dr. Seuss’ cartoons, films and books of that era take us back into a mind-set that reminds us painfully but usefully of the pitfalls of racism, of the distance we traveled since war in our images of Japan” (264). In his public life, Seuss critically denounced fascism and discrimination against Blacks and Jews. However, he showed support for the internment of Japanese civilians during World War II. In his later years, Seuss relinquished his animosity toward Japan with *Horton Hears a Who!*, an allegory for the United State’s postwar occupation of Japan (MacDonald, 1988).

After being discharged from the army, Geisel resumed writing children’s literature, but something had shifted in Geisel’s mind. After World War II, his children’s books took a political, moral turn (Cohen, 2004), and Dr. Seuss started writing “message books” (MacDonald, 1988; Nel, 2004). The message books depart from the “period of mediocre books” and branch

¹ Theodor Geisel did not pen under the name Dr. Seuss until his tenure as editor of Dartmouth’s humor magazine, *The Jack-O-Lantern* (Nel, 2007). In this criticism, he will be referred to as Dr. Seuss whenever his children’s literature is referenced.

into longer, themed storybooks (MacDonald, 1988). Further, John Hersey's May 24, 1954 article in *Life Magazine* gave Geisel new motivation to write children's books. Hersey exposed high levels of illiteracy in children, which he attributed to the boring content of "bland, idealized pallid primers." Hersey attacked illustrators and asked why children "ought not have pictures that widen rather than narrow the associative richness the children give to the words they illustrate." In response, Dr. Seuss' publisher, Houghton Mifflin, dealt Seuss the following challenge: "Write me a story that first-graders can't put down" (Nel 29 [American Icon]). Nine months and 223 words later, Seuss published *The Cat in the Hat*. This started a trend of books that mirrored Dr. Seuss' earlier writings in rhythm and style, but added political and moral messages.

Rationale

The Big, Biggering Use of Studying Seuss

While appearing simple and elementary, the works of Dr. Seuss often contain complex layers of craftsmanship grounded in thorough knowledge of American and English literature, history and contemporary issues. While written within the genre of children's literature, Dr. Seuss' works boast no single target audience. His books are adored by children and adults alike. Children gravitate to Dr. Seuss' playful humor, characters and stories, while adults appreciate the serious, moral messages delivered without preaching to children. Dr. Seuss became an exemplary writer with a large, multi-generational following.

The literary style of Dr. Seuss transitioned over his long, successful career as an author. Geisel's military service can be seen as an incubation period for more serious (but, still clever and humorous) themes for his future children's works. The numbed, suppressed humor of his military service triggered new inspiration in Dr. Seuss, and after World War II his books took a political, yet effective, turn. After World War II, his "books show a more complex approach to

children and their literature, and more originality” (MacDonald 49). The post-World War II books also began Dr. Seuss’ ascension as a literary giant, and he became a permanent staple in the world of children’s literature. Moving past the *Beginner* and *Bright and Early* books, controversial political themes entered the work of Dr. Seuss. During the last two decades of his career, Dr. Seuss published books thought by some to contain adult themes and specifically adult concerns (MacDonald, 1988). Despite the risk of negative publicity, and the general risk of running adult themes in traditionally beginner books, Dr. Seuss’ later works topped multiple best seller lists.

Dr. Seuss’ influence can be felt in beginner books and message books alike, and he opened doors to other authors who may never have seen publication (MacDonald, 1988). MacDonald cites authors such as Arnold Lobel, Mercer Mayer, Jan and Stan Berenstain, and Richard Scarry to have followed in Dr. Seuss’ path. Some believed that Seuss’ children’s works paved the way for children’s rights. At his 1991 funeral, Jed Mattes, Geisel’s friend and agent, made a case for Dr. Seuss’ contribution to the field of children’s literature (Morgan & Morgan, 1995). Dr. Seuss urged respect for children by giving dignity to their minds, no matter how young. While Dr. Seuss wrote under the umbrella of children’s literature, the works he wrote may be considered a genre unique in-and-of itself. Seuss’ books ventured from pallid *Dick and Jane primers* and children learned to read “from the language of the restless and impudent characters in the books that followed *The Cat in the Hat*” (Morgan & Morgan [Prologue, xvii]). The creativity and writing of Dr. Seuss differed strikingly in form and function from early children’s literature. Seuss’ literature deviated such that it set children’s literature, as a genre, on a new path.

Upon his death in 1991, hundreds of newspapers around the globe mourned with millions of multigenerational readers. “Dr. Seuss, Modern Mother Goose, Dies at 87,” declared the *New York Times*, and publications experienced a “eulogistic upwelling, a spontaneous homage to the reclusive man who had created a whole world” (Morgan & Morgan 290). The *New York Times* tribute described Dr. Seuss as “one of the best doctors to make house calls – some 200 million of them in 20 languages, continuing beyond Dr. Spock to a unique and hallowed place in the nurseries of the world” (Pace, 1991). Maurice Sendak, fellow children’s author, described Seuss as “a bull in a china closet” who “wrote great big noisy books with noisy pictures and noisy language” (Morgan & Morgan 291).²

Today, few know the Geisel behind the Seuss. Theodore Geisel seems an obvious choice for rhetorical criticism, as he made a distinguished public career in persuasion. Dr. Seuss, however, may seem an unlikely rhetorician. The political, persuasive nature of Theodore Geisel cannot be divorced from the wacky, fanciful mind of Dr. Seuss. Central to Dr. Seuss’ legacy is his ability to empower and inspire readers. Whether children are invited to save the environment, prevent racial injustice, or simply read a book by themselves, Dr. Seuss’ children’s books are filled with powerful calls to action. His books are ripe for criticism because they address the political realm and provide clear policy implications. Dr. Seuss employs rhetorical strategies such as symbols, metaphors and allegories to persuade readers on a variety of moral themes including democracy, prejudice, imagination, ecology, war and peace. This study situates Dr. Seuss’ children’s

² Maurice Sendak, like Dr. Seuss, published influential children’s literature after World War II. Sendak’s most celebrated work, *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), received the Caldecott Medal in 1964.

rhetoric within a larger rhetorical tradition, and relies on the words of Seuss himself to examine the following two questions:

- What are the dominant *loci* present in the children's rhetoric of Dr. Seuss?
- What relationships between arguments and *loci* can be uncovered through the application of invention to the children's rhetoric of Dr. Seuss?

Thesis Overview

This study examines rhetorical invention in key children's works by Dr. Seuss and proves there are things you can find, if only you analyze! Chapter one assesses Dr. Seuss' literary significance, the value of his rhetoric to the communication studies discipline, and sets forth the research questions to be addressed in this thesis. Chapter two consists of the literature review. I review literature on the following topics: the function children's literature, politics and ideology in children's literature, and the ways Dr. Seuss has been studied and applied. Chapter three delves into the study's method and artifacts. Research employing close textual analysis and topical approaches is reviewed, and the sample of Dr. Seuss' works to be analyzed is presented. Chapter four contains the rhetorical analysis of Dr. Seuss' texts, and employs the aforementioned methodology. The conclusion, chapter five, includes a summary of the thesis and implications of the study for future scholarship.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This section outlines the existing, relevant literature. First, I review the various functions of children's literature. Second, the link between children's literature and political ideology is explored. A review of how Dr. Seuss' texts have been studied and applied follows. The following six major themes are uncovered in the literature about Dr. Seuss: democracy, imagination, prejudice, pedagogy, character development and ecology.

The Always Changing, Transitioning World of Children's Literature

No two scholars are in absolute agreement regarding the function of children's literature. Several conflicting functions emerged from the literature. However, few scholars disagree that the form and function of children's literature has changed since the eighteenth century. Functions have changed not only in content, but the medium, format and the underlying reasons for producing and proliferating children's literature have transitioned as well. Ewers (2000) noted recent changes in children's literature and identified the following contributing factors: the multiplicity of television programs, the mass increase in personal computers, and the development of high-capacity storage devices. It is important to note the changes in the physical medium of children's literature. New technology and the way children access material is at the core of how children's literature transitions and functions.

The increase of multi-mediated children's literature was originally thought to signal the demise of the children's book; however, scholars find that the application of new media does not endanger the genre, but merely alters its appearance (Ewers, 2000; Clark, 2006). The multimedia revolution in children's literature has included children of pre-reading age (four-years-old and younger), because "children at the pre-reading age nowadays deal with stories and

other media entertainment continually and also at various levels of activity” (Ewers 7 [Changing Functions]). By the age children start to read, they are often already familiar with essential features of classic children’s literature, including heroes and stories they have seen in cartoons. Multimedia options have made children complacent to the “laborious” effort of reading a book, which requires more decoding and effort than they are accustomed to.

Traditionally, children’s literature has served both an educational, didactic function and an entertainment function (Ewers, 2000). “Children’s literature is also succumbing increasingly to a multimedia mass entertainment culture, leading to the formation of new types of books based on function: ‘tie-ins’ such as picture books, comics, or narrative books accompanying a film or television series; computer games; and book series published under the names of media stars and popular television hosts” (Ewers 8 [Changing Functions]). Therefore, reading the book is an accompaniment or “consequence” of a multimedia experience. “Because books, including tie-ins for children, have become a component of the audiovisual media, they are no longer clearly positioned; partly they belong to the world of ‘AV-media,’ and partly they are still placed in the category of ‘children’s literature,’ hence playing simultaneous roles in two systems” (Ewers 9 [Changing Functions]). While the children’s book has lost some autonomy, new functions and genres have emerged in response to the multimedia flood within the children’s literature market.

Children’s literature can function as a medium for acquiring and refining reading skills (Ewers, 2000). The transition of children’s literature from entertainment to education has correspondingly led to the increase in non-fiction, informative books for young readers. The informative nature of books, in turn, has led to an increase in complex characters and investigative, journalistic genres. According to Ewers, “fiction and poetry are also affected by

this: increasingly, novels for children and young people are showing a more informative and analytic characters, which results in a change from narrative forms to documentary novels, into investigative and journalistic novels” (10 [Changing Functions]). This new function is increasingly informative, as entertainment needs are generally satisfied by audiovisual elements on television or the Internet.

Scholars agree that children’s books have always served a didactic, pedagogical function (Ewers, 2000; Ewers, 1992; Kutzer, 1981; Collinson, 1973; Huck, Hepler & Hickman, 1987). Even the earliest children’s literature may have been coined “amusing,” but its main purpose was to instruct or moralize (Huck, Hepler & Hickman, 1987). Scholars have noted that children’s literature seems to have come full circle. In a multimedia society, children’s literature is again being perceived as a medium of instruction or education (Ewers, 2000). But didacticism is not viewed by all scholars as a positive function. To Collinson, “didacticism in children’s books is quite rightly frowned upon, for the harmful thing about didacticism is not that the writer has some clear convictions himself and is anxious to communicate them, but that he does not help you to discover the truth for yourself, he doesn’t stimulate your imagination in such a way that you exclaim, *Yes, of course, that’s it!*” (38). Collinson views the didactic nature of children’s literature as a mold rather than an imaginative compass, suggesting that the reader must fit a specific experience of the author’s “living truth” rather than exploring and interpreting his or her -own unique experience. Collinson believes that books can and do influence behavior, outlook, and belief; however, reading books alone cannot determine a child’s destiny. The responsibility of the children’s writer is to weigh his or her words carefully, because “if a writer has succeeded in getting any imaginative engagement with his young reader, then he has made some small contribution to that child’s development” (Collinson 38).

Collinson (1973) outlined several principles that should be observed in books for children. First, books for children must be truthful and use language honestly. Honesty must be employed by authors and writers, publishers, critics and teachers alike, as all serve a specific function within the proliferation of children's literature. To Collinson, children's literature functions to engage the child's mind and to encourage the pursuit of the truth. Children's literature must also acknowledge the delicate differences between children and adults. "To treat children just as adults is to reveal that one has no understanding of or concern for how children develop, emotionally, conceptually and linguistically... If the writer is not concerned about what children read books for and does not subordinate his talents to the needs of his readers, he may produce a book which could prove a damaging experience, or, more probably, one which the children will simply find unreadable" (43). In this way, children's literature should not function as a place to divulge and struggle with adult problems and hangups. In addition, Collinson holds that adult hangups in books for children are selfish indulgences of authors, and these books lack the "sparkle" necessary to be loved by children. Another principle is to conceal heavy, thick morals. "Words like 'responsibility' have a tone of moral uplift and highmindedness which may sometimes make us forget the *fun* children having in reading ... If it's not fun, they won't read. We should want them to have wholesome fun" (48).

The "wholesome fun" advocated by Collinson mirrors the traditional function of storytelling in children's literature, as elaborated by Ewers (1992). Ewers believes that, "in the field of children's literature, storytelling is still flourishing now as ever: children's literature still constitutes a type of literary culture in which stories are told, recited at social gatherings, or read aloud, and they continue to be silently read late into childhood" (169 [Traditional Art of Storytelling]). Today, storytelling is viewed as an orientation to literacy. Storytelling began as a

form of oral poetry and evolved into an art form, before literacy emerged. Storytelling has outlived epic poetry, also an oral art form, and has survived while orality and literacy coexist. Ewers states that both written and oral stories must be compact, easily remembered and memorized, so they may be passed on. As cultures became more literate, storytelling developed the characteristics similar to fairy tales, “where plot dominates, characters are clearly outlined, judgements are unambiguously antithetical, and neither psychological motivation nor interpretation occurs” (Ewers 172 [Traditional Art of Storytelling]).

Ewers (1992) identified rhetorical argumentation as another purpose of storytelling. Children’s literature demonstrates general principles by giving concrete examples or stories. In this way, rhetorical argumentation in children’s literature exists in the text’s ability to confer “truth” through morals, practical instructions, proverbs, or maxims. Stories should be looked at as vehicles for conferring wisdom, which mirrors the didactic function of children’s literature as elaborated by other scholars (Ewers, 2000; Ewers, 1992; Kutzer, 1981; Collinson, 1973; Huck, Hepler & Hickman, 1987). Ewers argues that “children need stories not only to decipher doctrinal tenets; they also need them because they ‘think’ in terms of stories and are able to discover the fundamental truths revealed by stories long before they are capable of thinking in abstract terms” (176 [Traditional Art of Storytelling]). To be a successful story teller demands a certain type of personality. “A fundamental requirement of the art of storytelling thus is that storytellers be people who are open and sincere, deeply attached and committed to society, not excessively private or withdrawn individuals, caught up in the solipsistic loneliness of the self” (176 [Traditional Art of Storytelling]).

While the functions of children’s literature have obviously changed, the standards for criticism of children’s literature have also changed. Kutzer (1981) identified several standards

by which children's literature should be judged. First, children's literature should be evaluated on whether or not it teaches a child something. This standard, not typically applied to adult fiction, arises from the "recent boom in young adult 'problem' novels – novels dealing in graphic detail with problems such as divorce, incest, alcohol abuse, rape, sexual initiation, and so on" (Kutzer 720). The second critical standard judges social value. Kutzer asserts that many adults hold that the function of children's literature is to help the child become a happy, productive member of society. Rather, children's literature should be judged on how it looks at society and individuals within society. If children's literature functions to prepare children for adulthood, writing should be critically evaluated based on the lessons of social values within texts. Kutzer's final and most important standard of evaluation concerns nostalgia in children's literature. Nostalgia refers to the lingering references of childhood in the adult experience. Kutzer states, "If a book can cast such a spell over a child, one that lasts a lifetime, then perhaps there is something in that speaks to a child audience, something more important than literary style and technique, and if we can isolate that we might have a critical yardstick truly appropriate to children's literature" (722). Kutzer's standards of judgment for children's literature offer critical children's scholars new guidelines by which children's texts can be evaluated.

The Children's Scene: Political Schemes and Moral Themes

Scholars debate over the positive and negative effects of injecting politics and ideology into children's literature, but "the fundamental importance of these characteristics makes it impossible to ignore them" (Harris 147). Politics and ideology become impossible to ignore, because a text's roots are inexplicably linked to the author's political views. Scholars acknowledge that the ways in which a work is received can be shaped by the characteristics of its creator (Harris, 1999; Sutherland, 1985; Wright, 1976; Plotz, 1995). As the didactic, educational

notion of children's literature assumes, children learn from what they read. Often, embedded in what children read are political and ideological messages; however, scholars differ in their opinions of placement, use and acceptance of these messages in children's literature. Regardless of scholars' diverse opinions, the promulgation of political ideology in children's literature is evident. According to Sutherland, "to promulgate one's values by sending out a potentially influential book into public arenas already bristling with divergent, competing, and sometimes violently opposed ideologies is a political act. Seen in this light, the author's views are the author's politics; and the books expressing these views, when made accessible to the public, become purveyors of these politics, and potentially persuasive" (143-144).

Other scholars believe that specific ideologies are "hidden" throughout children's literature, as children are susceptible to both obvious and subtle content of stories (Wright, 1976). Wright suggests that children rely on literature to attain conceptions of right and wrong, and she describes the resulting proliferation of sexism and ethnic, racial stereotypes. Hidden political messages are delivered through the following literary mechanisms: approach and plot, characterization, theme, illustration and setting, and linguistic content. Wright holds that sexism, ethnic and racial prejudices, and political ideologies are exposed, both obviously and subtly, through these vehicles, and often children are persuaded to accept (or adopt) the messages delivered by children's authors.

Like Wright (1976), Sutherland (1985) suggests the politics of children's literature often remain hidden, because writers express their personal ideologies either consciously or unconsciously, openly or indirectly. Sutherland identified the following three types of political persuasion in children's literature: politics of advocacy, politics of attack, and politics of assent. Children's literature containing political advocacy pleads for or promotes a certain cause,

agenda, or point-of-view. Authors are usually conscious of this type of political persuasion, as it steps beyond passive acceptance to active advocacy of an ideology. Children's authors may employ a variety of advocacy tactics such as "attempting to enforce conformity to a set of behavioral norms; frequently it sets up attractive role models for the young, inducing admiration, and extolling certain values as virtues" (Sutherland 146). Politics of attack are starkly opposite of advocacy, and often involve assault on the ideology opposed by the author. Attacks in children's literature are often on specific targets. Personification of evil, enemies and villains are often literary techniques for attacking opposing ideologies. Third, politics of assent affirms ideologies generally prevalent in society. Sutherland defines "assent" as "an author's passive, unquestioning acceptance and internalization of an established ideology, which is then transmitted in the author's writing in an unconscious manner" (151). Political assent is often hidden to both parties, as it contains neither advocacy nor attack on a specific position and usually reinforces the status quo. Sutherland notes that while political persuasion in children's literature may be hidden, it is no less persuasive.

Zipes (1989) suggests that children's literature may appear sweet and innocent, but it often serves a clandestine, nefarious function. Both Liebs (1986) and Zipes explain the importance of examining different motifs, *topoi* and plots to explain notions of childhood and societal roles children are expected to play. Within German culture, "children's literature has continually disseminated authoritarian, sexist, and orthodox Christian ideas in accordance with political and religious conservatism" (Zipes 501). The political and power struggle within German texts can be explained by the contrasting roles and expectations of children in the literature. Liebs notes that on one hand, children play an *active*, anarchical role and challenge traditional conventions of home. Conversely, children also hold a *passive* role, unable to free

themselves from societal restraints and the inability to live for themselves. Zipes argues that ideology in children's literature often demonstrates to children the need to be civilized. To Zipes, the insertion of politics promoting passivity in children "rationalizes the mistreatment of children and childhood according to dubious notions of civilization" (504).

Political messages in children's literature may also stem from the nature of author's writing for children. Plotz (1995) argues that children's literature has historically been produced by marginalized and often disempowered writers. Additionally, Harris believes that readers and critics alike "miss chances to engage with works of beauty, passion, and creativity when we refuse to sanction creative products because their creators are women, people of color (including women), poor or working class, or untutored in the ways of formal artistic creation" (148-149). Marginalized authors often use children's literature as a means of voicing self-expressive talk (Plotz, 1995). Scholars have noted that children, as a group, are often marginalized and silenced, and therefore children's literature becomes an avenue for them to find a voice. While children may acknowledge the basic emotions associated with marginalization and alienation, they "lack the critical thinking skills and experience to understand the factors that institutionalize preferences for one set of characteristics rather than variety. They only know that outsider status is hurtful" (Harris 153).

In certain instances, as elaborated by Plotz (1995), authors can transcend power struggles to create stories of empowerment. Plotz's example, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, boasts a main character, Rushdie, who "sets himself the task of reconfiguring the position of weakness (the child, the writer) into a position of strength. In the process, he has written an apologia for literature, the genre that turns poetics into politics" (101). Using *Haroun*, Plotz explains how marginalized writers and authors cater to marginalized children, elaborating and explaining

evident power struggles between groups. Every stylistic feature is capable of contributing to these politics, including senseless fun. “Fun is fun in *Haroun* – and every stylistic feature contributes to a poetics of fun – but it is simultaneously politics. Fun in *Haroun* means a play of ideas that is liberal politics, a carnival of diversification that is postmodern anti-authoritarianism” (Plotz 101). Plotz idealizes the fusion of entertainment and pedagogy in children’s literature to promote moral values and politics. Children’s literature often bears a heavy political burden, but advocates morals and values through fun aesthetics and fantastical elements related to childhood.

Finally, scholars disagree on the degree of transference and acceptance of politics and ideological values in children’s literature. Taxel (1988) holds that ideology is almost unquestionably transferred from text to reader, and that definite limits and possibilities exist within specific texts. Aitken (1988) and Fish (1980), on the other hand, argue that precise effects of specific stories and texts are impossible to calculate, and that ideological influence on specific individuals can be difficult to measure. However, Taxel does consider specific audience attributes with regard to acceptance or rejection of political views in children’s literature. For example, Taxel discusses important issues such as reader response in naturalist settings (classrooms) and how response is influenced by gender, class and ethnicity. Taxel and Aitken do agree, to some extent, on the importance of empowering children with the skills necessary to decode content in children’s works and understand groups, ideas and values portrayed in texts. By educating children on the reality of politics in literature, students and young people “begin to understand that in addition to providing us with pleasure and delight, authors either implicitly or explicitly provide us with statements about what it means to be human, about the relative worth of particular kinds of action, about how we relate to one another, about the nature of community, etc” (Taxel 227).

The Many Uses of Geisels and Seusses

A great wealth of literature has accumulated regarding all aspects of Dr. Seuss' books, articles, political cartoons, documentaries and advertising campaigns. Dr. Seuss has also been reviewed and criticized at great length, making the body of knowledge surrounding his works quite extensive. In this literature review, I have identified key (though starkly different) interpretations of Dr. Seuss' children's books. First, I explore the literature on the pedagogical implications of Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*. Second, I survey the literature on Dr. Seuss as an advocate of "the outsider." Next, I cover literature relating Dr. Seuss' *Horton Hatches the Egg* to surrogacy and issues of non-traditional parenthood. The next body of literature relates to perceived adult, sexual themes in Dr. Seuss' works. Fifth, I examine Dr. Seuss' supposed attack on children's imaginations. The last body of literature centers on Dr. Seuss' democratic principles and permissive writing to groom and enhance children's imaginations. Though a review of all relevant literature is near impossible, the studies reviewed here are representative of major themes found throughout the literature.

A close reading of Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* prompted Henderson, Kennedy and Chamberlin's (2004) pedagogical response. Concerned with approaching *The Lorax* from an educational perspective, Henderson, Kennedy and Chamberlin read the children's book for its implications for teachers. Their response sought to "make the Lorax a more effective spokesperson for nature," and to help correct "the errors of the Lorax" as identified by Marshall (1996). A "serious" look at the playful themes in Dr. Seuss also speaks to the "power of children's literature to serve the purpose exemplified by Dr. Seuss' Lorax/Once-ler story, a power we are certain Dr. Seuss understood" (Henderson, Kennedy & Chamberlin 130). Because *The Lorax* may be children's only exposure to environmental issues (Zicht, 1991; Henderson,

Kennedy & Chamberlin, 2004), that introduction would, “unfortunately, be in keeping with the rhetoric of unfinished and unexamined thinking that leaves polar opposition intact and allows foundational, cultural assumptions and practices to go unchallenged” (Henderson, Kennedy & Chamberlin 130). However, as Lebduska (1994-1995) states, “The Lorax’s criticism of materialism and pollution need not be interpreted as insisting on a choice between economic and environmental health, though extending its logic would lead to a reexamination of American lifestyles.”

Henderson, Kennedy and Chamberlin’s (2004) inquiry into the pedagogical implications of *The Lorax* focuses on five central themes – individual greed or community caring, progress, ecopsychology, abdicating responsibility and dialogic barriers. In response to Ian Marshall (1996), Henderson, Kennedy and Chamberlin acknowledge the Lorax’s environmental rhetoric reflects an alternate way of being, of dwelling *with* habitat. Instead, Henderson, Kennedy and Chamberlin suggest the Lorax as representative for an increase in Self-realization, a shift from human-centered beings to ecocentric beings.³ The analysis also draws parallels between the Once-ler’s expansion and the “opening of the American West” (Henderson, Kennedy & Chamberlin 136). Though *The Lorax* takes place in a single location, “there is no doubt that this place exists and is modeled on the American frontier” and the idea of “biggering, biggering, biggering” (Henderson, Kennedy & Chamberlin 136). To the critics, the biggering of the Once-ler indicates a disconnect between inhabitants and nature. “Ecopsychology overtly acknowledges and promotes our biological connection with nature as a therapeutic recovery from our misguided detachment from the Earth,” according to Henderson, Kennedy & Chamberlin (137). From this perspective, *The Lorax* guides children to heal the alienation humans have

³ Henderson, Kennedy and Chamberlin (2004) note Arne Naess’ (1989) distinction between self (lower case) and Self (upper case). The Self includes an “expanded sense of community, a greater enterprise of life (133).”

experienced with the natural environment. If left unattended, future generations may pay for the consequences of this disconnect. *The Lorax*, and other Dr. Seuss books *Yertle the Turtle* and *The Butter Battle Book* are filled with messages of moral responsibility, and *The Lorax* discourages abdicating responsibility. The consequences of continued alienation from nature may lead to tragedy “left for the next generation to resolve, with no guidance from the generation that used the resources” (Henderson, Kennedy & Chamberlin 139).

In Robert Schichler’s (2000) article “Understanding the Outsider: Grendel, Geisel, and the Grinch”, a close reading of both *Beowulf* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* reveals similarities between the villains Grendel and the Grinch. Parallels between the two villains can be found on varying levels, but most prominently in their roles as community outsiders. “Each of these creatures experiences similar torment upon hearing the loud mirth emanating from the community center from which he is excluded” (Schichler 100). Both Grendel and the Grinch take action against the merriment; however, “the Grinch is guilty of lesser offenses: thievery of goods, not men; lying to little Cindy-Lou *Who*; and perhaps cruelty to animals (his dog Max and the mice in the *Whos*’ village)” (Schichler 101). Schichler analyzed the Grinch and found him presented as “a memorable villain: a pink-eyed cave-dweller who, from his frigid abode on a hill to the north of town, glares down at the warm, bright community below him” (90). The Grinch’s cave reflects traditionally evil images – “the landscape of Hell, the habitat of devils” (Schichler 99). Even the Grinch’s name can be linked to evil, harsh elements. Schichler identified two *Oxford English Dictionary* entries for “grinch”: an intransitive verb meaning “to make a harsh grating noise” and a past participle (grinched) meaning “tightly closed” or “clenched” used in reference to teeth.

Dr. Seuss identifies personally with the Grinch. Dr. Seuss' motive for writing *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* was to protest the commercialization of Christmas (Schichler, 2000). In response Seuss wrote *The Grinch*, "producing the book that will hopefully help to put an end to what Christmas has sadly, mistakenly become" (Schichler 102). Dr. Seuss was an outsider on other levels as well. Both as the son of German immigrants and grandson of a brewer during prohibition, Dr. Seuss experienced cultural isolation and was viewed as "kin to the enemy – the Kaiser and the brewer" (Schichler 104). Attending Oxford University further isolated Seuss. "Ted [Geisel] was sensitive about his German background, and since he was neither a serious intellectual, nor an athlete, he spent more of his free time with 'other outsiders'" (Morgan & Morgan 41).

Unlike Grendel, the Grinch has the ability for transcendence, notes Schichler (2000). The Grinch's heart is "two sizes too small," but his heart may allow him to become a kinder, gentler creature. The Grinch ultimately returns the stolen presents to *Who*-ville and becomes the guest of honor at the Christmas feast. By humanizing the Grinch, Dr. Seuss allows "change for the better, and that his acceptance into the community makes for a richer, more joyful and secure, integrated whole" (Schichler 104).

Dr. Seuss has been read closely for application in other disciplines as well. Jill R. Deans (2000) analyzed Dr. Seuss' *Horton Hatches the Egg* as a classic tale of surrogacy. *Horton Hatches the Egg* tells of a "lazy bird" who pawns her unhatched egg off to Horton and flies south for an extended, possibly indefinite, vacation. When Mayzie and Horton are accidentally reunited moments before the egg hatches, Mayzie suddenly re-stakes her claim on the egg. During incubation, Horton sat faithfully on the egg through storm and snow. Upon hatching, an "elephant-bird" emerges and bears a striking resemblance to Horton. Deans (1) found that

“though male, though an elephant, Horton has managed, through faith and endurance, to become the ‘mother’ of the elephant-bird.” In Deans’ view, *Horton Hatches the Egg* “evokes the intricacies of the nature/nurture debate” (1).

Horton Hatches the Egg can be viewed as “Dr. Seuss’ first attempt to promote a particular ‘moral’ to his young readers: a moral is a new thing to find in a Dr. Seuss book, but doesn’t interfere much with the hilarity with which he juggles an elephant up in a tree” (2). The moral – keeping your word, no matter what – is illustrated through Horton’s frequent statement, “I meant what I said, and I said what I meant ... An elephant’s faithful – one hundred percent!” This moral is mirrored in Dr. Seuss’ later book, *Horton Hears a Who!*, when Horton protects *Who*-ville (a speck on a flower) from destruction. Deans notes the moral of *Horton Hears a Who!* is “delivered through its refrain, ‘A person’s a person, no matter how small’, and is balanced by the book’s persistent hilarity; the absurdity of an elephant clutching a wilting flower in his awkward trunk is reminiscent of an elephant keeping an egg warm while perched atop a spindly tree” (3).

Alison Lurie (1990) parallels the two *Hortons* through their political agendas (Deans, 2000). “In *Horton Hatches the Egg* and *Horton Hears a Who!*, a charitable and self-sacrificing elephant protects the rights of the unborn and of small nations and obscure individuals in spite of the ridicule and scorn of his friends” (Lurie 3). Lurie implies *Horton Hatches the Egg* to be an allegory for fetal rights. Deans stated Dr. Seuss’ personal agenda for writing *Horton Hatches the Egg*. The book was likely influenced by Dr. Seuss’ failed “Infantograph”, a patented design that sought to fuse the faces of mother and father to reveal images of potential children. Dr. Seuss never fathered children, and his wife’s ovaries were removed due to illness (Morgan & Morgan, 1995). Thus, *Horton Hatches the Egg* can be read as “a paternal fantasy for the childless father”

(Deans 4). Deans sought to “expose Horton’s irony – the desire for the adopted and biogenetic hybrid – as an expression of the conflict between cultural values that influence the American family” (5). Dr. Seuss wrote *Horton Hatches the Egg* in 1940, and Deans analyzed Horton’s implied “creative ways to parent and conceive ... and sustain competing desires for constructing ‘natural’ lineage” (17). To Deans, “*Horton* demonstrates such portraits can also serve to recall ‘traditional’ values in the discursive formation of the nuclear family. Horton’s circus spectacle is now a media circus, affirming adoptive bonds insofar as they replicate normative family structures and serve a pronatalist agenda” (17).

Other critiques have called attention to sexual innuendos proliferated by Dr. Seuss’ children’s literature (Stong, 1977; Steig, 1983). Stong believes Dr. Seuss “can most certainly be held responsible for the exponentially rising promiscuity rates of our post-beat, early post-hippie generation” that have “served as the generative force for an entire population’s perversions in the erogenous zones of this nation” (34). Stong views all aspects of Dr. Seuss’ prose and poetry to proliferate sexuality. Dr. Seuss’ illustrations are pubescent, florid and burlesque, while his characters are often “covered from head to foot in tremendous growths of hair that can only be described as pubic” (Stong 35).

Though most frequently read as an ecological fable, Dr. Seuss’ *The Lorax* takes a different meaning in Stong’s (1977) analysis. Stong reads *The Lorax* as “the description of a hit and run rapist” who isolates his victim, having forced himself (‘lifted himself by the seat of his pants’) on a woman in the darkness (‘a hole in the smog’)” (37). In *On Beyond Zebra*, Dr. Seuss employs stories by expanding the alphabet beyond “Z.” Stong views the lines surrounding the letter “NUH” to illustrate “a sex starved, violently aggressive civilization that lives on the fringe of society, and yet inhabits the darkness of every man’s soul” (37-38). *Thidwick, the Big-*

Hearted Moose presents “a new way of looking at life, a new way of sharing oneself with one’s fellow creatures both man and beast,” according to Stong (38). Her criticism of other Dr. Seuss works elicits similar analysis. Stong questions Dr. Seuss’ ability to express himself without appealing to sexuality and the “prurient subconscious of his reader protrudes suggestively from this and almost every of the Master’s works.” Close reading of Dr. Seuss, according to Stong, reveals the true implications for our society of the lessons in children’s literature.

Steig (1983) argues that Dr. Seuss’ literature promotes the danger of imagination. After a reading of Dr. Seuss’ *I Wish That I had Duck Feet* in the doctor’s office with his son, Steig concludes the story thwarts childhood imagination by establishing adults as authority who do not tolerate unrealistic daydreams. Steig describes his “disturbance at the story’s didacticism, the message that daydreams about oneself are dangerous” (138). To Steig, the real message of *I Wish That I had Duck Feet* is “the dangers of being ‘different,’ or even imagining yourself to be different – the dangers of nonconformity and the need to accept the realities of a world dominated by adults who generally do not tolerate imagination” (138). Though Steig acknowledges that children may not accept this theme outright, but as an adult he could determine his response almost immediately. He establishes *I Wish That I had Duck Feet* and other Seuss literature (*And to Think That I Saw it on Mulberry Street*) as a “cautionary tale” that “warns against daydreaming and imagining oneself to be different ... because it speaks overtly and directly to childhood anxieties about getting along socially, dealing with social rivals, pleasing the teacher, and pleasing one’s parents” (Steig 140). Unlike adults, who can discern hidden themes quickly, cautionary tales are “directed not at the child’s overt behavior but at his inner thoughts and feelings, and his imagination” (Steig 140). Seuss’ attack on over-imagination is built on the story’s emotional sequence as a “build up to a state of extreme tension, a discharge

in frenzy, and a subsequent depression” (Steig 140). Steig concludes that this depression resolves children to “accept his place in the family and community and consigns his dreams, literally, to the garbage can” (140).

Henry Jenkins uncovers the opposite conclusion and states that Dr. Seuss’ children’s stories “fulfilled children’s needs for spontaneity and change” (196). Jenkins’ (2002) analysis of *Horton Hears a Who!* reveals the democratic imagination of Dr. Seuss. Jenkins agrees with Dr. Seuss’ statement that “books for children have a greater potential for good, or evil, than any other form of literature on Earth” (187). Jenkins identifies several groups in Horton’s “conformist world” who seek to “use chains and cages to crush individualistic tendencies.” Horton’s battle to retain his individuality echoes dilemmas postwar America faced – “conflicting values of community and individualism, frightened by mob rule and, yet, dedicated to democracy” (Jenkins 187). Jenkins sees *Horton Hears a Who!* as a story in which “Horton expresses a nostalgia for the Who-ville like America of the war years, when political differences were forgotten in the name of a common cause and fear over the Wickersham-like conformity of the 1950s” (187).⁴ Horton represents Dr. Seuss’ personal outrage over bullying smaller nations, and created Horton to “challenge his community to show greater concern for the weak and powerless” (Jenkins 188). Dr. Seuss became so outraged during World War II that he abandoned his nonsense, light-hearted writing to contribute to *PM*, a tabloid dedicated to the following prospectus: “We are against people who push other people around, in this country or abroad. We propose a crusade for those who seek constructively to improve the way men live together” (Jenkins 192-193). Dr. Seuss’ general theme of protecting the weak and powerless is obvious to

⁴ The Wickersham brothers represent, to Jenkins (2002), the conformist world. Jenkins (2002) quotes *Horton Hears a Who!* and states that “the Wickersham Brothers and dozens of Wickersham Uncles and Wickersham Cousins and Wickersham In-laws (187)” crush Horton’s individualistic tendencies in guarding the speck containing the Who village.

adults, but Jenkins notes, “Seuss trusts the child to find his or her way to what is ‘fair’ and ‘just’” (188).

Focusing on the “small” allows Dr. Seuss to explore a number of “unheard voices” throughout the community including minorities and “children, who feel overwhelmed by the adult world and need to find their own voices” (Jenkins 188). Voicing the unheard became Dr. Seuss’ way of fostering a democratic culture. Dr. Seuss’ stories were grounded in social, political, and intellectual history, and he often used political terms in his *brat books*. Horton teaches children about the relationship between the individual and the community. To Dr. Seuss, democracy was furthered by “teaching children to respect and trust their own internal responses” (Jenkins 188). *Horton Hears a Who!*, *Yertle the Turtle*, and *The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T* reflect Dr. Seuss’ feelings on democracy, particularly power relations between parents and their children; however, these books are viewed as precursors to his commercial success in *The Cat in the Hat* and *Green Eggs and Ham*. Jenkins illustrates democratic ideals through an example at the end of *The Cat in the Hat* in which Seuss appealed to “children behind their parents’ backs ... inviting children to claim a secret (and unpoliced) space for their imaginative play” (188-189).

Jenkins (2002) notes children’s literature as a way to promote democracy within the domestic sphere. “Democratization” of the family, school, work and community function as “*loci* by which we come to understand what it means to participate within democracy” (Jenkins, 191). In this way, the home became a place for youth to exercise power and rethink core values. Jenkins believes that political education might be more productive if started at childhood. With this in mind, Jenkins believes Dr. Seuss to be a vehicle for children born into a postwar world that can offer “another chance for peace, social equality, and democratic participation” (195). Rather than indoctrinating children, Dr. Seuss sought to “protect them from adults thwarting

control, giving them a sense of their own power and potential” (Jenkins 196). Writers of similar mindset became known as “permissive writers” and dedicated their writings to protecting children’s imaginations. Jenkins believes Dr. Seuss gets at “the absurdity of adult demands which run counter to children’s natures, parental expectations that transform innocent behaviors into misconduct” (198). Innocent play is considered an escape from social control and regulation, and Dr. Seuss certainly advocated free imagination. This free imagination contributes to belief in democracy, and helps “American parents to imagine how domestic life could be restructured along more democratic principles” (203). Jenkins believes Dr. Seuss’ children’s literature to be a powerful tool for social transformation. This transformation is rooted in Dr. Seuss’ “stories that depict worlds where children gain control over basic social institutions and remake them according to their own innovative ideas, where children challenge kings and force them to apologize to their subjects, or where kids lead a schoolhouse revolt against unreasonable teachers” (Jenkins 203).

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This chapter outlines the method employed in the thesis, which is a variation of close textual analysis. First, I review the theoretical contributions of rhetorical criticism, as suggested by several close textual analysts. Second, I include an extended review of studies that have employed close textual analysis. The review also outlines several competing perspectives on close textual analysis as a method of rhetorical criticism including the following: classic perspective, dialectical relationship perspective, social phenomenological perspective, argumentation perspective, critical linguistic perspective and iconic perspective. I have included several different perspectives to demonstrate the breadth of application within the method of close textual analysis; however, not all perspectives covered will be employed within this thesis. Perspectives are outlined merely to illustrate the variety of functions within close textual analysis as an overarching method. The chapter also reviews topical systems of invention, including Cicero's *loci* found in *De Inventione*. Finally, I define the close textual method to be utilized in chapter four of this thesis.

Theoretical Contributions of Rhetorical Criticism

One function of the critic is to produce criticism that can function to elicit theoretical understanding of a particular case (Leff, 1986). A debate within rhetorical criticism centers around the primacy of text or theory. Henry (1992) asserts that Michael Leff, one of close textual analysis' foremost advocates, believes that theory building and textual criticism are connected through a tension inherent within the study of critical practice. Indeed, Leff does write that a "dialectical interaction" of theory building and criticism may realize the value of both processes (Leff, 1984; Henry, 1992). Warnick (1983) challenges Leff's "dialectical

interaction” and holds that critics function in one of four ways: as artist, analyst, audience or advocate. Henry views both theory building and rhetorical criticism as valuable to the “extent to which they inform discursive practice and advance our understanding of rhetorical communication.” Rhetorical criticism can contribute to theory and suggest hypotheses “regarding human rhetorical behavior that, when added to the insights of other critics, provide generalizable understandings of the human experience” (Henry 221).

A Closer Look at Close Textual Analysis

Michael Leff and Gerald Mohrmann are no strangers to close textual critical analysis. Leff and Mohrmann’s efforts created exemplars of critical methods that have become the gold standards for close textual analysis. For Leff, illumination of the text on its own terms is paramount (Henry, 1992). Leff writes that “the primary motive for textual criticism is to divert attention away from the theoretical constructions and to focus on the rhetorical action embodied in particular discourses” (378). The lack of rigidity in close textual criticism provides freedom for creative analysis through a variety of perspectives. A closer look at close textual analysis reveals its broad application and multiple perspectives for illuminating a text.

In a tribute piece to Gerald P. Mohrmann, Leff (1986) recounts Mohrmann’s contributions to close textual analysis. Mohrmann felt that contributions to prevailing modes of textual analysis focused too greatly on method and terminology, and he called for “closer attention to the phenomena we studied rather than the generation of abstract methods for its study” (Leff 378). Leff and Mohrmann contended that critics should focus on elements contained in the text itself. Close textual analysis moves critics “from what is given in the text to something that they themselves produce – an account of the rhetorical dynamics implicit within it” (Leff 378). The act of producing criticism requires “judgment at some level of abstraction,

and it eventuates in something we might call theoretical understanding” (Leff 378). The critic can in turn interpret text and identify significant features and relationships between the features.

In Mohrmann’s unfinished analysis of Calhoun’s “Speech on the Reception of the Abolition Petitions,” Leff counted the numerous elements involved in close textual analysis, including the following: “the close reading and rereading of the text, the analysis of historical and biographical circumstances that generate and frame its composition, the recognition of basic conceptions that establish the co-ordinates of the text, and an appreciation of the way these concepts interact within the text and help determine its temporal movement” (380).⁵

Mohrmann’s analysis of Calhoun began with two metaphoric identifications that underline the argument. Leff notes “as these symbols manifested themselves in the text, they reached outward to embrace and impart attitudes toward the things and events they symbolized. Moreover, these symbols were not fictional constructs made to be contemplated within their own self-contained horizons; they were actions on the minds of the audience bearing on its direct experience with public events” (381). Leff (1986) concludes Calhoun’s oratory to be artistically constructed and representative of the public world. Close textual critics view rhetorical texts as historical developments occurring within broader historical contexts. According to Leff, central to close textual analysis is the critic’s ability to breathe life into the concepts in the text and explore them as incentives for action. Leff and Mohrmann alike view the central task of textual criticism as understanding how rhetorical action effects negotiation of understanding, and how the construction of a symbolic event invites a reconstruction of the events to which it refers.

An exemplar of close textual analysis is Leff and Mohrmann’s “Lincoln at Cooper Union: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Text.” The criticism was produced in response to the lack of satisfying accounts of the speech (Leff & Mohrmann, 1974). The method considers the

⁵ Gerald P. Mohrmann suffered a fatal heart attack while writing this rhetorical criticism (Leff, 1986).

background surrounding the oratory, but its prime purpose is to illuminate the speech as a speech.⁶ First, Leff and Mohrmann lay out the rhetorical situation. Lincoln's speech at Cooper Union made him more available, recognizable and acceptable to Republicans. Lincoln had to present himself as an attractive alternative to the Democratic candidate and fellow Republican candidates. Until Cooper Union, Lincoln had reveled in the middle ground between his opponents regarding the issue of slavery in the expanding United States territories. Lincoln believed slavery should be protected, but not extended. At Cooper Union, Lincoln was speaking for his own presidential nomination, and his speech sought to maintain both himself and his party in the middle ground.

Leff and Mohrmann (1974) identified Lincoln's speech as campaign oration, a speech designed to win nomination for the speaker. Several rhetorical elements aided Lincoln's campaign oration. The ultimate goal of the campaign orator is to promote himself, and *ethos* is "important insofar as it lends credence to the subject of the argument" (Leff & Mohrmann 348). *Ethos* appeals keep the focal point on the speaker. "Personal persuasion," another rhetorical tactic employed by Lincoln, attempts to influence audience attitudes about a particular issue (in this case slavery) (Leff & Mohrmann, 1974). Leff and Mohrmann point to Lincoln's use of "ingratiation," a strategic attempt to build rapport and obtain compliance with requests. The fundamental purpose of ingratiation unifies rhetorical elements by narrowing their focus, and awareness of Lincoln's ultimate goal illuminates threads of structure, argument and style.

Lincoln also frequently appeals to rationality when forming arguments and "capitalizes on ... the

⁶ For more background on Lincoln at Cooper Union, see the following: J.G. Randall, *Lincoln the President* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1945), I, 135.; Howard Mumford Jones and Ernest E. Leisy, eds., *Major American Writers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1945), p. 681.; Benjamin Barondess, *Three Lincoln Masterpieces* (Charleston: Education Foundation of West Virginia, 1954), p. 3. R. Franklin Smith, "A Night at Cooper Union," *Central States Speech Journal* 13 (Autumn, 1962), 272.; Andrew A. Freeman, *Abraham Lincoln Goes to New York* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1960).

emotionalism inherent in the topic by assuming a severely rational posture and enunciating a moderate but firm set of principles” (Leff & Mohrmann 348). Through association, Lincoln links “himself and Republicans with the founding fathers and Constitutional principle, and he dissociates rival candidates and factions from the fathers and that principle” (Leff & Mohrmann 355). Unifying the speaker and audience sets up a dichotomy against a common enemy. This antithesis is a channel for ingratiation. Lincoln also pursues ingratiation through *ad hominem* attacks.⁷ Lincoln uses Douglas’ own arguments against him. Leff and Mohrmann acknowledge that “both the direction of the argument and the symbols expressing it are fiercely emotional; yet all is enmeshed in an incisive logical and linguistic structure, and while the tone remains rationalistic and legalistic, it also creates a subtle emotive nexus between the Republican audience and the founding fathers” (351). The positive traits attributed to the founding fathers and the Constitution are therefore transferred to Lincoln himself, and by association the Republican party. Contributing to ingratiation, Lincoln makes sure that “neither opponent measures up to the new and higher self-conception that the speaker has created for his audience” (Leff & Mohrmann 357).

Lincoln outlines a series of arguments while maintaining the delicate balance of all mentioned rhetorical devices. Throughout their analysis, Leff and Mohrmann demand frank attention to the immediate rhetorical motives of Lincoln at Cooper Union. “The political artistry and the rhetorical artistry are functions of each other, and appreciation of this coalescence can only enhance our understanding of the Cooper Union Address” (Leff & Mohrmann 358). Concluding their close reading of Lincoln’s Cooper Union Address, Leff and Mohrmann contend that “the speech is – to put it as crudely as possible – an immortal masterpiece” (358).

⁷ Logicians often define *ad hominem* as a fallacy resulting from an attack upon character of a man rather than the quality of argument (Leff & Mohrmann, (1974).

Dialectical Relationship Perspective

Leff (1992) finds rhetoric both intentionally and extensionally persuasive. Intent concerns the purpose of the rhetor while designing discourse, and extensional persuasion deals with the persuasive effect, or actual impact of the discourse. Intent stresses artistic integrity, while extensional persuasion stresses social impact. Leff suggests that textual criticism is “directly and heavily indebted to pre-modern sources, most notably to the Isocratean and Ciceronian texts that attempt to hold form and content in solution and give pride of place to concrete practice over abstract theory” (224). Close textual analysis provides the critic freedom to move between ideological issues and specific textual features. Instead of keeping ideology and close textual analysis separate, Leff proposes a dialectical relationship between the two methods. Ideology can remind close textual readers that questions of power and social circumstance always enter into texts. Leff acknowledges that the narrow focus of close textual analysis can stifle “scenes of controversy out of which these texts arise and for which they are made” (226). Leff views social circumstance as relevant and reasonable for current critical purposes, and a dialectical relationship can balance the nuanced approaches of close textual analysis.

While close textual analysis is narrowly focused, Leff divorces his perspective from neo-Aristotelian criticism, which he believes “treats classical lore as a collection of taxonomic modules, and ‘criticism’ became an exercise in dissecting texts into so many bits that fitted within this static system” (227). Interpretative work is essential to close textual analysis, and Leff (1992) notes that Cicero’s principle of *decorum*, or appropriateness, provides the flexibility of interpretation. *Decorum* implies a flexible measurement standard for the quality of discourse against the rhetorical situation. This flexibility is necessary, because the dialectical relationship

perspective views form and style as “no longer alienated from form or content. Instead, the two blend within the unfolding development of a discourse, a development that simultaneously holds the discourse together and holds it out as a way of influencing the world in which it appears” (Leff 227). Leff believes the shift to Ciceronian thought achieves “formal/functional criticism.” “This approach is committed to understanding them both as linguistic constructions and as efforts to exercise influence, and it operates through paradigm cases rather than abstract principles” (Leff 228). This perspective branches from the traditional perspectives and opens the critic to new exploratory probes. The dialectical relationship perspective values interpretation, “since metaphors and enthymemes, prose rhythm and topics, hyperboles and examples take on a life within the metabolism of a discourse” (228).

The dialectical relationship perspective focuses on balancing elements applied to the text. This frame preserves the integrity and complexity of specific discourses while preventing critics from closing interpretive pathways. Instead of limiting the critic to a single interpretation, this perspective seeks to establish cooperative relationships with all critical practices that deal in interpretive understanding and evaluation. Leff maintains the importance of close textual criticism’s narrow ability to concentrate on fundamental elements of rhetoric. With too narrow a focus, close reading loses contact with critical elements and the social world. If taken too broadly, close textual analysis loses the focuses needed to read texts with precision. “If it achieves proper balance, textual criticism can offer a theoretically sound and practically useful base for the one activity shared in common by all other interpretive projects – the rhetorical reading of texts” (Leff 230).

Social Phenomenological Perspective

Stanley Deetz (1973) describes criticism from a social phenomenological perspective. Deetz views linguistic entities as representative of other things. Deetz reports three camps of theories speech scholars have based linguistic work on. The three theory camps are as follows: 1) referential – words refer to things, 2) ideational – words call up concepts, and 3) behavioral – symbols elicit behavioral responses (Deetz, 1973; Stewart, 1972). The social phenomenological perspective views language as a tool “used to share experience but is intrinsic to and involved in developing the possibilities for experience” (Deetz 41). This perspective also views the World as interpretive. Deetz explains that understanding correlates directly with the possibilities for our acting in the world. For example, a prisoner seeking escape from prison takes into account everything around him – guards, windows, keys, chairs, bars, etc. – in order to plan his escape. Deetz suggests the language of these objects is not permanent or static, but language illustrates an object’s “serviceability” or action-use possibilities. The prison guard becomes someone to get along with, rather than an enemy. “An object, thus, is essentially ambiguous and without a nature outside of the human encounter and a specific pre-predicative constitutive activity. The object is constituted – given its specific nature – only in the human encounter” (Deetz 44).

The social phenomenological perspective also considers conscious knowledge. Thoughts, emotions and perceptions are not “coded” as words, but thoughts, emotions and perceptions come to consciousness through words (Deetz, 1973). Social phenomenological critics view experiences without language to be short-lived and lacking impact on human consciousness. This view is common to anyone who has ever had the problem of searching for the perfect word to describe an experience. “That which is revealed, understood, and held is *in* language” (Deetz 44). Language also signifies the world as a social place with a history and

future. Without language, objects and Worlds are not significant (Deetz, 1973; Heidegger, 1971). *Logos*, originally meaning “to uncover a possibility” or “to bring forth,” contributes to signification as well. *Logos* is “involved in the being, the very nature of revealed self and things in the World” (Deetz 46). The constitutive nature of language contributes to naming. Deetz holds that “to name a thing is to reveal, illuminate, it in a certain light, in a certain World with particular action-possibilities” (46). The name does not stand in for the object but illustrates how an object can be understood. This perspective maintains that things without words are static entities, and language unveils possible experiences that are designative and creative.

Argumentation Perspective

Another approach to close textual analysis calls for analyzing arguments as paradigms for rhetorical effectiveness. Wenzel (1987) incorporated Leff’s exemplary studies of time and space in texts to create a paradigm for rhetorical analysis, which uses close textual analysis to locate the ultimate sources of rhetorical artistry. This perspective focuses on the Greek notion of *paradeigma*, which takes “inference from one particular case to another, often with the first case taken as a model or pattern” (Wenzel 73). Wenzel holds that the work of a discipline is more dependent upon paradigms than upon abstract theory. The argumentative perspective asserts that “studies of argumentative discourse that yield new insights into the ways in which understanding is created among speakers and listeners (and writers and readers) should be valued highly” (Wenzel 75). Leff (1984) found rhetoric to be “bound to the historic moment of its utterance” and therefore extremely particular; however, “some discourses co-ordinate particulars in such a striking and artistically compelling fashion that they command attention as models of rhetorical excellence long after the particulars have lost any independent interest” (Leff, 1984; Wenzel 76). Wenzel and Leff refer to these cases as “exemplars,” which is fitting as Leff

dedicates his work to masterpieces of rhetoric and oratory. These masterpieces offer “unmistakably clear examples of rhetorical activity” and “possess a high degree of artistic integrity and density” (Leff, 1984; Wenzel 76).

To explain the artistic integrity and density, Leff (1984) studied use of time and space in rhetorical exemplars. Leff found that time constrains rhetoric to the order and relation of events in the world, but time also constitutes the order and relation of elements within its own pattern. Timing in text allows for adjusting temporal perceptions as experienced in the world where text appears. Timing found in trope, metaphor and other rhetorical devices frames the action within rhetorical discourse. In his analysis of Lincoln’s “House Divided” speech, Leff found temporal representations of past, present and future through Lincoln’s shifts, reversals, and use of root metaphors *house* and *machine* (Wenzel, 1987). Leff concludes Lincoln’s use of these elements “dissolves the material frame of the argument into the texture of the historical narrative. Thus woven into the fabric of the time scheme, the frame unobtrusively organizes the details of the argument as it uses them to support its own validity” (86 [in Wenzel]). Space in text represents “distance” between elements in rhetoric. Burke (1975) looked at space in Lincoln’s “Cooper Union” speech and analyzed the distance between the “representative and the electorate and Lincoln’s ideological ‘positioning’ of himself *vis a vis* the ‘Founding Fathers,’ the Republican Party, the Southern states and his rival for office.” Leff assigned priority to time over space, because time conveys rhetorical action in the text.

Wenzel (1987) applied Leff’s time and space paradigm to an essay in *Newsweek* magazine, “Fear of the ‘Great White Plague,’” written by Fred Schmidt. Wenzel notes the piece to be of great interest for rhetorical critics because of its simple and straightforward arguments and its artistic integrity and density. Schmidt’s essay tells the story of tuberculosis’ appearance in

the United States, and illustrates the fear, panic and eventual conquering of the disease. Wenzel notes that while “that story is the ‘content’ of the essay, the subject is unmistakably AIDS, even though the latter disease is only mentioned once and then by its full technical name” (77).

Though this parallel is not explicitly stated, the audience draws correlations between the national experience with tuberculosis in the late nineteenth century and experiences with AIDS as a current crisis. Wenzel applies Toulmin’s model, as elaborated by Ehniger and Brockriede (1963), to illustrate parallel-case reasoning.

“The story of victory over tuberculosis serves as grounds (G) for the implied claim (C) that AIDS can probably be conquered by similarly motivated and organized public and private action. The inferential leap from grounds to claim is made plausible by an implied warrant (W) that the two cases are similar in essential respects. Backing (B) for the warrant consists of all the details concerning tuberculosis that are unmistakably parallel to facts about AIDS and the public reaction to it. The writer does not explicitly qualify (Q) the claim, but the phrase ‘very likely’ seems a reasonable choice to represent the degree of force he intends his claim to have,” (Wenzel 79).

Wenzel also considers salient factors into his analysis. “Schmidt’s emphasis on ‘compassion’ in his later paragraphs makes the factor salient to the line of reasoning” (Wenzel 79). Other rhetorical precepts considered by Wenzel and Leff are as follows: narrative form, *ethos*, audience adaptation, argument grounding and universal archetype. However, it is Schmidt’s use of time and space that furthers Leff’s paradigm. Schmidt’s essay mirrors Leff’s (1984) analysis of Lincoln in that “the speech progresses through time to reconfigure the audience’s perceptions of both space and time relative to public events” (Wenzel 82). The spatial figures in Schmidt’s essay take on greater meaning within the archetype of *separation and reunion* (Wenzel, 1987). Both the timing and space contribute to the climactic, dramatic order of three stages: appearance of plague, crisis and resolution.

Wenzel notes, “my hunch is that other theoretical principles Leff uncovers in these models can be applied to certain other messages as well ... When one encounters a text that seems to have ‘artistic density and integrity,’ it is natural to wonder if it works the same way as acknowledged models of excellence” (85). On this level, textual exemplars can function as paradigms. The argumentation perspective of close textual analysis presents competing paradigms within rhetorical discourse that offer methods of criticism. No single paradigm or method completely encompasses the potential of close textual analysis. Kuhn’s (1970) statement of scientists holds true for rhetoricians and critics alike when he stated, “They can agree in their identification of a paradigm without agreeing on ... a full interpretation or rationalization of it. Lack of a standard interpretation or of an agreed reduction to rules will not prevent a paradigm from guiding research” (75 [in Wenzel]). The argumentation perspective seeks to understand “ways in which arguments get made – and the ways are infinite” (Wenzel 86-87).

Critical Linguistics Perspective

Widdowson (2000) described this perspective in terms of intention, and implores critics to examine textual evidence that can deduce rhetor intention. Intentions may include an ideological significance, and “those committed to a critical approach ... discover ideological intentions which are deliberately disguised to persuade opinion” (Widdowson 11). From this perspective, critics assign significance to texts by interpreting what text might mean to second persons, and “concerns not what can be read from a text, but what can be read into it” (Widdowson 10). Widdowson calls for selecting certain features and disregarding the rest, and he illustrates this idea with the concept of ergativity as elaborated by Stubbs (1996). Stubbs identified “ergativity as a key indicator of ideological stance because ergativity is a grammatical device for encoding agentless action” (12). Stubbs, like Widdowson, is an applied linguistics

researcher interested in close textual analysis, and looks at ergativity and its relationship to other grammatical features in complex ways. Widdowson also considers texts consisting of a single word. Using the example “CLOSED” on a shop window, Widdowson explains the significance of this one word to its audience. First, “CLOSED” signifies a polar opposite of “OPEN”, and the lack of intertextual relations leads the audience assign a stative, passive sense. The word “CLOSED” also alludes that an individual closed the shop as a deliberative, purposeful action. Critical linguists “provide contexts of their own devising which then regulate the interpretation of textual features as appropriate” (Widdowson 22). With this in mind, critical linguistics can offer close textual critics methods and techniques for examining language and sentence structure more closely.

Iconic Perspective

Style, as a rhetorical function, shifted to the foreground of importance with the dissolve of the rational world paradigm and interest shifted to social movements, genre and ideology (Leff & Sachs, 1990). Style became a more general conception for symbolic processes, and with style came reductionism. Reductionism “has established a number of competing perspectives for encountering something that the old rhetoric totally neglected – the long-term cultural and ideological force of symbolic formations” (Leff & Sachs 255). Leff and Sachs state that older neo-Aristotelian models are too rigid and constrained to account for symbolic action in texts. Therefore, Leff and Sachs further a perspective of textual criticism that views text “not as a mirror of reality, but as a field of action unified into a functional and locally stable product” (255). This perspective “creates a complex structure of meaning by imbricating the formal and ideational dimensions of language. A rhetorical discourse, then, becomes a verbal construction that blends form and content into a concrete whole – a whole that assigns meaning to a region of

shared public experience and solicits an audience to embrace the meaning it constructs” (Leff & Sachs 255).

The interpretive nature of the iconic perspective focuses on the text itself and rhetorical features embedded within it (Leff & Sachs, 1990). In this way, close textual analysis uncovers “textual content,” an unfolding sequence of arguments, ideas, images and figures that incrementally build meaning (Lucas 249). Unlike neo-Aristotelian methods, iconic close textual analysis does not measure actual audience response, but examines how the audience is invited to respond. “Working from the evidence within the text, the critic proceeds to make inferences about what the work is designed to do, how it is designed to do it, and how well that design functions to structure and transmit meanings within the realm of public experience” (Leff & Sachs 256). Leff and Sachs acknowledge Wichelns’ observation that close textual analysis operates effectively because rhetoric “hovers in the margins between literature and politics” (41).

Iconicity is a linguistic phenomenon that assumes meaning in a rhetorical work results from interaction between discursive form and representational content (Leff & Sachs, 1990). Icons are non-arbitrary representations or signifiers. An icon bears actual resemblance to whatever it signifies. While word meanings can be arbitrary, combinations of words in phrases, sentences, paragraphs and discourses take on levels of iconicity. Above the level of single words, discursive form takes on representational content in icons. Leech and Short (233-243), as reported in Leff and Sachs, identify the following three types of iconicity: chronological, psychological and juxtapositional. Leech and Short also observe that iconicity “has a power much like metaphor: it rests in the intuitive recognition of similarities between one field of reference (the form of language) and another” (233-234). Iconicity, as summarized by Leff and Sachs is a regularly occurring phenomenon that reveals a cooperative interaction between form

and meaning. Iconicity also denies the rigid dichotomous approaches to criticism, because iconicity promises to have important applications in the interpretation of rhetorical discourse.

In their analysis of Burke's "Bristol Speech," Leff and Sachs (1990) conclude that style and content are inseparable. Form and meaning are linked at every level – "the sentence, the paragraph, and the discourse as a whole, and all the elements of Burke's rhetoric interact cooperatively to produce a structure of meaning" (Leff & Sachs 268). The iconic approach seeks consistency on all levels of text and unpacks the connective tissue that holds rhetoric together. In this way, iconicity speaks to the continuity between ordinary usage and literary language. Leff and Sachs conclude that Edmond Burke's "Bristol Speech" shows the "power of discourse to blend form and meaning into local unities that 'textualize' the public world and invite audiences to experience that world as the text represents it" (270).

Topical Approach – Topoi, Loci and Commonplaces

This thesis utilizes both close textual and topical paradigms, therefore a review of topical approaches is relevant. Critics assert a wide gap in research surrounding topical classification (Leff, 1996; Zompetti, 2006; Miller, 1987). Zompetti finds topic studies "mainly focused on historical, descriptive or semantic perspectives on *topoi* rather than discussions on their utility contemporary argumentation theory" (15). *Topoi* essentially function as a classification system of issues within arguments. Miller discusses Aristotle's principles of special topics and "suggests that such topic [classifications] have three sources: conventional expectation in rhetorical situations, knowledge and issues available in the institutions and organizations in which those situations occur, and concepts available in specific networks of knowledge (or disciplines)" (67).

Topoi can be a valuable tool for researchers, and can be utilized in beginning phases of argument search. Exploration of *topoi* enables researchers to quickly develop a vocabulary of relevant arguments and search with improved precision and understanding. *Topoi* can be used to narrow research focus and safeguard against potentially missed arguments (Zompetti, 2006). *Topoi* transcend disciplinary lines and can be used by “students from variety of disciplines to probe more deeply into the issues of controversy surrounding their areas of study” (Zompetti 25).

Similar is Cicero’s system of classification, which he calls *loci*, or “places where arguments lurk.” *Loci* abandon Aristotle’s distinction of special topics (Leff, 1996), and because of their generality, *loci* are available in all circumstances. In this way, *loci* focuses on topics of the person and the act, which provide common materials for all kinds of rhetorical arguments (Miller, 1987). Rhetoricians can benefit from general knowledge of *loci* and use them to judge weak, strong, irrelevant and omitted arguments. Outlined in *De Inventione*, Cicero highlights *loci*’s ability to locate arguments rather than construct them (Zompetti, 2006). The process through which arguments are located is Cicero’s rhetorical canon *inventio*, or invention. Invention enables the critic to foreshadow what possible arguments will be relevant in a given case (Zompetti, 2006). *Loci* rely on relationships of identity, similarity, difference, contrasts, subsumption, causality, analogy, etc (Kienpointner, 1997).

Zompetti (2006) asserts that as one becomes familiar with *loci*, they also become familiar with the most common arguments possible on any given subject. Likewise, Leff (1996) states that *loci* are *common* not because of universal principles, but because *loci* uncover subjects that commonly repeat in discourse. This generality divorces Cicero from other topical systems including Aristotle and Quintilian. In Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, emphasis lies in the premise, inference and enthymeme; however Cicero’s *De Inventione*’s topic system takes on a material

aspect (Leff, 1996). Cicero's *loci* identify argumentative nuggets relevant to a variety of rhetorical situations. *Loci* "act as resources for the discovery of elements that might enter into the construction of an argument. They offer material...that may prove useful in constructing an argument and which, when combined with other resources, contribute to appropriate management of a case" (Leff 447).⁸

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) describe *loci* as headings under which arguments can be classified. These headings can be used to group similar arguments and create a comprehensive outline of rhetorical devices in arguments. Placing arguments under general headings can determine the key characteristics of discourse. *Loci* can also be used to trace argument consistency across texts based on frequently reoccurring themes. Approaching topics and *loci* provides the critic a method for discovering arguments. As Leff said, "that is, the more a topical approach stresses abstract premises and principles of inference, the more adequate it seems to its inventional purpose, which is to develop an independent, largely self-contained, method for generating arguments *per se*" (447).

Method

Bearing in mind the applications of close textual analysis and topical approaches in the methodology literature review, this thesis fuses the two into a single, cohesive critical method. As Cicero defined them, *loci* are "places where arguments lurk." *Loci* are overarching themes, which are constituted by multiple arguments and persuasive messages that make up the support. In other words, *loci* are supported by the arguments lurking within them. As Toulmin notes, it is important to employ a standard system for measuring units of analysis (arguments), "so that

⁸ Leff (1996, p. 447) acknowledges that Cicero used the analogy of *loci* as timber and planks to illustrate the materials useful for constructing arguments. Cicero asserts that *loci* are to be used as an aid to invention, much like *quandam silvam atque materiam universam* (general raw material).

many different kinds of discourse can be compared on the same basis” (Hart 93). It is therefore important to operationalize the term “argument.” For purposes of this thesis, let “argument” be defined as any information that offers explanation of how something was, is, will or should be. In this way, arguments will serve as working “examples” of specific *loci*, and *loci* can therefore be defined and explained based on the recurring types of arguments lurking within them.

Locating *loci* within texts is a technique of the aforementioned Ciceronian canon of rhetoric – invention. Invention aids in argument detection by foreshadowing possible relationships between ideas and messages. Argument detection through invention also allows for arguments to be uncovered in a variety of contexts, as long as relevant relationships between arguments and *loci* can be established. Employing Cicero’s invention works well with close textual analysis, as invention relies on arguments that can be discovered, not created.

The steps for this method are two-fold. First, texts will be analyzed via close textual analysis to determine the individual *loci* for each book. Second, interpretations of relevant relationships between arguments and *loci* will be detailed through Cicero’s process of invention. For this study, invention is a process employed by the critic. The “invention” produced will become the critic’s explanation of the relationships between specific arguments and themes using the words of the rhetorician, Dr. Seuss. While arguments serve as support for *loci*, invention serves as a process to defend connections between arguments in the text and the overarching themes that uncovered arguments support. In this way, invention is a process undergone by critics to produce something new – a critical account of the dominant *loci* across a sample of texts. This interpretation of Cicero’s invention works well in conjunction with close textual analysis, because as Michael Leff states, close textual analysis moves critics “from what is given

in the text to something that they themselves produce – an account of the rhetorical dynamics implicit within it,” (378).

The complexity and breadth of information in Dr. Seuss’ children’s rhetoric does not readily lend itself to analytical methods that rely on identifying specific units of analysis that can be counted and reproduced by multiple critics. This is evident in the vast body of literature surrounding Dr. Seuss. Scholars have criticized his deviance and glorified his patriotism while interpreting the same text. A methodology of close textual analysis coupled with topical approaches allows the critic make abstract judgments regarding rhetorical elements within the text. As elaborated by both Leff and Mohrmann, this method allows the critic to identify significant rhetorical features and help negotiate an understanding of the text. Within this study, it will be the role of the critic to make interpretive judgments regarding the significance of arguments and *loci*. The goal of this method is not only to identify overarching themes, but to interpret them in a way that encourages deeper understanding of the internal and external forces driving Dr. Seuss’ post World War II texts. This deeper comprehension is a result of the invention undergone by the critic. As a critic, my goal for this analysis is to successfully intertextually synthesize the dominant *loci* of Dr. Seuss’ post-World War II message books and produce relevant interpretations of the individual *loci* and arguments.

Which Books Get Looks? – Selected Sample Dr. Seuss Texts

The sample for this study comes from Dr. Seuss’ post-World War II children’s rhetoric. After World War II, Dr. Seuss’ books took a political, moral turn (Cohen, 2004), and Dr. Seuss started writing “message books” (MacDonald, 1988; Nel, 2004). The message books depart from a “period of mediocre books” and branch into longer storybooks with moral themes (MacDonald 147). A number of Dr. Seuss’ message books top the “working list of radical books

for young readers,” complied by Mickenberg and Nel (2008). The political nature of Geisel’s rhetoric makes his messages ripe for rhetorical criticism. Minear suggests a closer look at Geisel “makes us more aware of political messages often embedded within the sugar pill of Dr. Seuss’ signature zaniness” (7).

I have chosen to analyze Dr. Seuss’ “message books,” because these works are housed within a time-frame that represents a significant shift in Dr. Seuss’ works. Between 1947 and 1990, Dr. Seuss produced more than 35 children’s books. Moral themes and ideology did not appear in Dr. Seuss’ works until this time. However, not all of Dr. Seuss’ post-World War II books contain political themes. Several post-World War II books are part of the *Beginner* or *Bright and Early* series. For this study, all sampled books are both written and illustrated by Dr. Seuss.⁹ I have selected 10 books that exemplify significant shifts in the development of Dr. Seuss’ thinking and writing. I will advance through the analysis book-by-book, identifying key *loci* within each, and I will provide relevant discussion of each *loci* uncovered within the text.

This study samples the following post-World War II Dr. Seuss message books:¹⁰

- *McElligot’s Pool* (1947)
- *Thidwick, The Big-Hearted Moose* (1948)
- *Bartholomew and the Oobleck* (1949)
- *Horton Hears a Who!* (1954)
- *The Cat in the Hat* (1957)
- *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* (1957)
- *I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew* (1965)
- *The Lorax* (1971)
- *Hunches in Bunches* (1982)
- *The Butter Battle Book* (1984)

⁹ During this time, Geisel contributed to and produced several works not penned under “Dr. Seuss.”

¹⁰ A full list of Theodore Geisel’s works can be found in: Nel, P. (2004) *Dr. Seuss: American Icon*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis

McElligot's Pool, (1947)

Dr. Seuss' *McElligot's Pool* juxtaposes adults and children, setting them in opposition on several issues. While the text only has two characters, the significant difference in worldview between adults (the farmer) and children (the fisher) become quickly apparent. More than anything, the farmer expresses doubt that the boy fisher will catch more than a boot, tin can or bottle in McElligot's pool. The adult's condescension, doubt and stubbornness are apparent throughout the text. Dr. Seuss writes, "'Young man,' laughed the farmer, 'You're sort of a fool! You'll *never* catch fish in McElligot's Pool!'" The farmer's smug expression, lazy posture, and know-it-all hand gesture, palm up as to casually doubt the boy's intelligence, suggests that he is confident in the boy's failure.

The farmer offers several arguments as to why the boy will remain unsuccessful fishing in McElligot's pool. He explains, "The pool is too small." He informs, "And, you might as well know it, when people have junk here's the place that they throw it." He condescends that the boy "might catch a boot or you might catch a can. You might catch a bottle, but listen young man..." Standing over the boy, showing obvious larger strength and size, the farmer delivers his final doubtful argument to the boy and says, "If you sat fifty years with your worms and your wishes, you'd grow a long beard long before you'd catch fishes!"

Using illustrations, Dr. Seuss makes further arguments for the discrepancy between adults and children. Only in pages when the adult farmer is present, McElligot's pool is filled with junk and garbage. Character's facial expressions remain discouraged and worried in the farmer's presence as well. The farmer's early appearance in the text lingers in the readers mind

as Marco, the boy, experiences a shift in his outlook. Readers remain aware of the adult's doubt as Dr. Seuss makes a case throughout the rest of the book to refute the farmer's condescension. Marco uses the farmer's own words to describe the unlimited possibilities he sees within McElligot's pool.

Marco's outlook on his fishing adventure takes on a new optimism, as soon as the adult character is no longer physically present in the text. The boy briefly nods to the farmer's doubt and says, "'Hmmm...'" answered Marco, 'It *may* be you're right. I've been here three hours without one single bite.'" The boy's wide-open eyes appear to be looking deep within the pond, open to the wonderment and unknown below the surface. Without turning back, Marco's attitude shifts and he states to the farmer, "'There *might* be no fish... But, again, well, there *might!*'" The boy's eyes shift upward to the sky, offering a look of imagination that lacked in the farmer's smug expression. This key argument represents a shift in the rest of the story, as the boy embarks on a fantastical tale of possibilities that may lay beneath the surface of McElligot's pool. "'Cause you never can tell what goes on down below! This pool *might* be bigger than you or I know!'" Within the pool, the boy does not only imagine the grand possibilities of size, but the types of fish he may encounter. Marco argues that patience and cool-headedness can reap rewards, and he says, "If I wait long enough; if I'm patient and cool, who knows *what* I'll catch in McElligot's pool!"

While most of Dr. Seuss' arguments through Marco are general statements of optimism and hope, he does take direct jabs at adult's doubt in children. The farmer's primary claims for the child's inevitable failure include the following: "You'll *never* catch fish in McElligot's pool," "You're sort of a fool," "You'd grow a long beard long before you'd catch fishes," "The pool is too small." Throughout the text, Dr. Seuss argues against these small-minded adult claims

through Marco. First, Dr. Seuss uses Marco's steadfast optimism in the possibility of catching fish rather than garbage. The boy states that his patience will pay off, and that there are a multitude of possibilities that exist within McElligot's pool that will appear long before he has grown a long beard. Rather than accept the farmer's doubt, the boy offers an argument stating, "I *might* catch some fish that would open your eyes!" This statement clearly implies that the adult's eyes are closed to the possibility that may exist within McElligot's pool. Further, the farmer explains that the boy could sit for fifty years and grow a long beard before he caught a single fish. The length of time offered by the farmer suggests an absurd timeframe in which the boy would surely quit; however, Marco's time frame, two or three hours, is more manageable and realistic. The fact that the boy feels he could accomplish in two or three hours what the adult anticipates would take up to fifty years suggests that children retain a youthful optimism lost with age.

Dr. Seuss further juxtaposes adults and children through his use of emphasized or italicized text. The types of words emphasized by certain characters allude to their overall attitude and worldview. For example, words emphasized by the farmer are more absolute and finite in nature. The farmer states that the boy will *never* catch fish in McElligot's pool. The word *never* leaves little room for negotiation and implies an absolute outcome for Marco. In contrast, the language used by the boy represents a worldview focused on possibility, optimism and imagination. Throughout the text, Dr. Seuss italicizes the word "might" more than 15 times. In addition, Dr. Seuss uses other non-absolute words such as "may," "could," and "would." Dr. Seuss actively questions the statement of the farmer through phrases as well. He states multiple times that "you never can tell," and poses questions such as, "well they might, might they not?" Marco blatantly ignores the farmer's closed-minded warning and makes several arguments to the

contrary such as the following: “One doesn’t catch *this* kind of fish as a rule, but the chances are fine in McElligot’s pool,” “To land one so tough might take two or three hours, but the *next* will be easy,” “I’ll catch fifty whales, then I’ll stop for the day ‘cause there’s *nothing* that’s big as whales so they say. Still, of course, it *might* be... that there is something bigger!” The boy ends his tale of impossible possibilities, and the final illustration demonstrates the result his words have had on the farmer. The boy sits casually on the edge of the pool, smiling and gesturing to the farmer. The farmer takes on a more active stance, gazing into the pool with a puzzled look of wonderment on his face. Clearly, Marco has illustrated that McElligot’s pool *may in fact* house more than junk. The boy has made his case against the farmer’s doubt and condescension, and he states, “And that’s why I think that I’m not such a fool when I sit here and fish in McElligot’s pool!”

Within Dr. Seuss’ *McElligot’s Pool*, there are opposing forces at work; however, the overarching theme through the text is the struggle between the possible and the impossible. On a more basic level, Dr. Seuss argues against the notion of impossibility, and Dr. Seuss uses the boy, Marco, to advocate for imagination, optimism and hope. Dr. Seuss takes a stand against doubt and condescension by allowing the child to actively and openly question the adult’s stance. The fact that only the adult character uses absolute language (“You’ll *never* catch fish in McElligot’s pool”, “If you sat fifty years with your worms and your wishes”, “You’re sort of a fool!”) argues that taking an absolute stance is an immature way to approach a situation. Throughout the text, Dr. Seuss sets Marco at odds with the limited worldview of the farmer and allows him to make case for possibility rather than impossibility. The introduction and frequency of non-absolute language (“might”, “never can tell”, “may”, “could”, etc.) through Marco allows the reader to actively question the farmer as well. As Dr. Seuss takes the reader on

a fantastical journey of the possible, the reader begins to actively question the farmer's doubt. *Maybe* there are fish in McElligot's pool, and *maybe* the boy is not such a fool. There *might* be thin fish, and fat fish, and fish filled with strawberry jelly. The *locus* introduced by Dr. Seuss' *McElligot's Pool* is the importance of imagination and optimism. Dr. Seuss argues for appreciation of possibility, and this *locus* is through arguments using non-absolute language, active questioning of doubt and the offering of fantastical, imaginative alternatives to inevitable outcomes.

Thidwick, the Big-Hearted Moose, (1948)

Dr. Seuss makes a plea for the powerless and abused in his moral tale, *Thidwick, the Big-Hearted Moose*. This text boasts a cast of an accommodating moose, Thidwick, and a group of selfish, hard-hearted forest animals who take advantage of Thidwick's soft-heartedness. On the most basic level *Thidwick, the Big-Hearted Moose* illustrates the consequences of remaining passive as others take advantage, and Dr. Seuss uses Thidwick's plight to encourage children to stand up and be assertive.

Thidwick seems a likely character to take advantage of. The moose herd at Lake Winnabango has more than 60 members, and Thidwick is the last moose in line to munch moose-moss. Thidwick encounters a Bingle Bug, who asks a small favor and requests, "It's *such* a long road and it's *such* a hot day, would you mind if I rode on your horns for a way?" One by one, forest creatures set up home within Thidwick's horns, and one by one the creatures in the horns make excuses for more to set up residence. The Bingle Bug, who encourages a bird to build a nest on the moose's head, says, "There's plenty of room, and it's free!" Gradually, the guests' requests of Thidwick become more irrational and rude. For example, in order to make his nest, the bird "began yanking hairs out of poor Thidwick's head. And he plucked out exactly two-hundred and

four!” Another example is as follows: ““They’re yours!’ called the woodpecker. ‘Get right inside ‘em! This big-hearted moose runs a public hotel! Bring your nuts! Bring your wife! Bring your children as well!’” As the creatures justify their selfish behavior (“Don’t worry,” laughed the Zinn-a-zu. “You can always grow more [hair]!”), Thidwick also justifies his sacrifice by stating, “For a host, above all, must be nice to his guests.” As Thidwick’s unwelcome guests cause more chaos atop his head, the moose herd takes notice and shouts, “GET RID OF THOSE PESTS!” After being abandoned by his herd to deal with his horn-guests alone, Thidwick’s outlook plummets and he becomes more obviously distressed.

Dr. Seuss’ actively and directly addresses the audience after Thidwick’s abandonment. Thidwick’s eyes point directly at the reader, and the text reads the following: “Well, what would YOU do if it happened to YOU? You couldn’t say ‘Skat!’ ‘cause that wouldn’t be right. You couldn’t shout ‘Scram!’ ‘cause that isn’t polite. A host has to put up with all kinds of pests, for a house, above all, must be nice to his guests.” With this direct questioning of the audience, Dr. Seuss’ includes readers and asks them to consider Thidwick’s options. Thidwick’s eyes attempt to seek advice, asking the readers if he is correct to justify his rude guests’ behavior.

Issues of democracy creep into *Thidwick, the Big-Hearted Moose*, as the creatures gang up to decide the fate of Thidwick without his input. As Thidwick attempts to cross the lake with the herd to save himself from a harsh, moose-moss-less winter, the following scene occurs: ““STOP!’ screamed his guests. ‘You can’t do this to us! These horns are our home and you’ve got no right to take our home to the far distant side of the lake!’ ‘Be fair!’ Thidwick begged, with a lump in his throat... ‘We’re fair,’ said the bug. ‘We’ll decide this by vote. All those in favor of going say, ‘AYE,’ and all those in favor of staying, say ‘NAY.’ ‘AYE!’ shouted Thidwick, but when he was done... ‘NAY!’ they all yelled. He lost ‘leven to one.’” The democratic concept of

voting and majority brings up interesting questions. At what point does the benefit of one override the basic right of another? At what point does Thidwick get to determine his own fate? To what degree can the powerful control the powerless? What responsibility does one have to care for another, and to what extent? To Dr. Seuss, clearly Thidwick's "guests" have crossed the line and taken advantage of the vulnerable moose's accommodating ways.

As the text progresses, Dr. Seuss situates Thidwick within a variety of emotions, and Thidwick's gradual transition is apparent through his breaking-attitude and his facial expressions. Thidwick spirals through various emotions including happiness, confusion, worry, exhaustion and terror. In this way, Dr. Seuss illustrates the mindset and attitude of a human being broken down by selfish, self-advancing individuals. Only when Thidwick is at his lowest, terrified point, cornered by hunters, does his self-defensive instinct emerge. For the first time, the selfless moose takes an assertive stance against his greedy tenants. Dr. Seuss illustrates the human ability to harness power and defend oneself through Thidwick in the following text:

"Thidwick was finished, completely... *or WAS he...?* Finished...? Not Thidwick! **DECIDEDLY NOT!** It's true, he was in a most terrible spot. *But NOW he remembered a thing he'd forgot!*"

Dr. Seuss' word choice demonstrates the power to dictate one's own fate rather than be subjected to the will of others. Dr. Seuss advocates courage to remain steadfast and assertive against those who take advantage of kindness. With powerful force, Thidwick sheds his old horns and throws them to the hunters. "Today was the day, Thidwick happened to know... *that OLD horns came off so that NEW ones can grow!* And he called to the pests on his horns as he threw 'em, 'You wanted my horns; now you're quite welcome to 'em! Keep 'em! They're yours! As for ME, I shall take Myself to the far distant side of the lake!" For the first time, Thidwick demonstrates powerful language to defend himself. Rather than calling the forest creatures

“guests,” Thidwick, for the first time, calls them “pests.” When referring to himself, Thidwick becomes assertive, capitalizing “ME” and “Myself” to emphasize his new dedication to his own livelihood, happiness and safety. For the second and final time in the text, Thidwick’s eye looks directly at the reader as to prepare them for a change in his behavior. His sly, clever expression harnesses curiosity in the reader, until the page is turned and Thidwick liberates himself from his pesky, greedy “guests.”

Of note is Dr. Seuss’ emphasis on “old” versus “new” in *Thidwick, the Big-Hearted Moose*. Thidwick makes an active decision to shed his *old*, vulnerable and accommodating self with his *old* horns. Dr. Seuss’ statement that “*OLD horns came off so that NEW ones can grow!*” illustrates that shedding of old habits and growth of new. Thidwick’s horns become a rhetorical symbol of powerlessness, and though Thidwick now has no horns at all, he has a fresh start and fresh new dose of self-confidence and independence. Dr. Seuss’ stance on the “pests” becomes quite clear in the last passage of text: “His *old* horns today are where *you* knew they *would* be. This guests are still on them, all stuffed, as they *should* be.” Dr. Seuss offers another reference to the “old” and indicates that the pests who took advantage of the *old* Thidwick got what they deserved. For the second, and final time, Dr. Seuss also addresses the audience directly, as to confirm what readers had been thinking all along (“Where *you* knew they *would* be.”). Dr. Seuss’ opinion is clearly understood in the last sentence of text, and he implies what the reader should have felt all along, that Thidwick’s “guests” are “all stuffed, as they *should* be.”

Dr. Seuss offers several overarching morals in *Thidwick, the Big-Hearted Moose*. First, Dr. Seuss offers a lesson regarding the tension between selfish and selfless behavior. Thidwick noticeably experiences anxiety over his “guests” selfish, greedy behavior; however, Thidwick continues to accommodate. He is convinced that “for a host, above all, must be nice to his

guests!” As the selfish requests grow larger and more dangerous, the reader learns of the gradual breakdown in Thidwick’s spirit. The once-happy moose becomes a saddened host, catering to the needs of his guests while ignoring his own instinct to defend himself. Dr. Seuss’ exact stance on the selfish behavior of the forest creatures is known in the last passage of text, but readers are first taken through a journey of mixed emotions about Thidwick’s plight. Because Seuss’ exact stance is unknown until the end, Dr. Seuss indicates that he values the narrative and experience readers undergo before arriving at a decision. The rhetoric makes a strong case against selfish, hard-hearted behavior, and believes those who undergo such lifestyles will suffer the consequences they deserve.

If the *locus* of *Thidwick, the Big-Hearted Moose*, boiled down to a single statement, Dr. Seuss would advocate that his audience should stand up for themselves and not take advantage of others. Dr. Seuss uses arguments to define the line between being big-hearted and a pushover. Dr. Seuss illustrates the effects of succumbing to selfish “guests” through Thidwick’s inner-battle between independence and accommodation. This text is meant to serve as a lesson to readers that one may get caught up in serving others, but at some point our own interests must come into play. The general, “take-home” lesson from *Thidwick* is the necessity to strike a balance between selfishness and selflessness, between hard-heartedness and big-heartedness.

Bartholomew and the Oobleck, (1949)

The lasting impression left by Dr. Seuss’ *Bartholomew and the Oobleck* is one of hope that individuals have the ability to challenge powerful leaders and tyranny. The unlikely opposition to the king’s powerful reign is Bartholomew Cubbins. Bartholomew Cubbins, a young page, stands up to the king on behalf of an unsuspecting kingdom doomed to destruction

by the king's ranting ways. Through Bartholomew Cubbin's perseverance and unrelenting desire to do the right thing, Dr. Seuss positions this childhood hero in a place to challenge power.

Dr. Seuss uses the king to illustrate the harm that comes with limitless, unchecked power. The King of Didd rants and raves that he is bored with the same old "stuff" coming out of his sky. The king constantly ranted, and "all year long he stared up into the air about his kingdom, muttering and sputtering through his royal whiskers, 'Humph! The things that come down from my sky.' All spring when the rain came down, he growled at *that*... All summer when the sunshine came down, he growled at *that*... All autumn when the fog came down, he growled at *that*... And that winter when the snow came down, he started shouting! 'This snow! This fog! This sunshine! This rain! BAAH! These four things that come down from my sky!'" The use of possessive pronouns in relation to the sky indicates that King Derwin is taking ownership of the sky above his kingdom. Even as Bartholomew Cubbins attempts to reason with King Derwin, explaining the natural order of the sky, the king replies, "'Boy, don't you dare tell me what I can or cannot have! Remember, Bartholomew, I am the King!'" In this quote, Dr. Seuss starts his argument for the irrationality of King Derwin's unchecked power.

Dr. Seuss illuminates several counter-arguments to King Derwin's unrealistic expectation that he can rule the sky. Bartholomew Cubbins repeatedly pleads with the king, attempting to settle his "terrible rage." Bartholomew states, "You rule all the land. And you rule all the people. But even kings can't rule the *sky*." Here, Bartholomew clearly states that there are some things, the land and the people, able to be ruled; however, the emphasis of *sky* indicates that there are elements unable to be controlled. As if challenged, the king retaliates against the boy's questioning and states, "'Well, maybe *other* kings can't do it, but maybe I'm the one king who can! You mark my words, Bartholomew Cubbins, I *will* have something new come down!'"

Though the king alone cannot make something new fall from Didd's sky, he stops at nothing until he has satisfied his own selfish intentions, and he makes further powerful demands. The king solicits his magicians to fulfill his request, even at the warning of Bartholomew Cubbins, as seen in the following quote: “‘Why, of course!’ He began laughing. ‘*They* can do it for me! Bartholomew Cubbins, blow my secret whistle. Quick! Call my royal magicians!’ ‘Your *magicians*, Your Majesty?’ Bartholomew shivered. ‘Oh, no, Your Majesty! Don’t call *them!*’ ‘You hold your tongue, Bartholomew Cubbins! You do as I command you. Blow my secret whistle!’”

Bartholomew Cubbins was right to encourage King Derwin to think twice about summoning his royal magicians, and Bartholomew warned the king, “‘Your Majesty, I still think that you may be very sorry.’” Upon the arrival of the royal magicians, Dr. Seuss’ changes the tone of the text to dark and dreary. Scenes of dungeons, spells and chanting dominate the text. The reader becomes aware that the consequence of this summons will mean nothing but disaster for the Kingdom of Didd. The kingdom, unaware of its leader’s request, slept soundly while “‘there was no sleep for Bartholomew, the page boy. All night he stood in the King’s window, staring out at the Mystic Mountain Neeka-tave. Somewhere up there, Bartholomew knew, the magicians were working their terrible magic.’” This quote illustrates the ability of common individuals to anticipate the consequences of leaders with limitless power. Bartholomew Cubbins, a common child and page boy, was able to foresee the negative impact of the king’s ridiculous request. It becomes evident that small pleas and arguments may not be enough to deter powerful tyrannical leaders from making decisions that negatively impact the livelihood of powerless constituents.

Dr. Seuss offers another solution, rather than arguing and pleading with unrelenting powerful leaders, individuals are encouraged to take action! Bartholomew, whose cries and arguments fall upon the deaf-ears of King Derwin, recognizes the tragic events about to unfold and takes action. As oobleck, the substance created by the royal magicians, begins to fall from the sky, Bartholomew alerts the kingdom by ringing the “great holiday bell.” “‘Someone’s got to warn the people!’ cried Bartholomew. ‘Got to wake ‘em and warn ‘em to stay inside their houses! I’ll tell the royal trumpeter!’ he shouted. He turned and slid like lightening down the bell tower ladder.”

The oobleck created by Dr. Seuss symbolizes the mess often created by leader’s selfish actions. King Derwin, out of boredom and rage, creates a messy substance that halts life in the Kingdom of Didd. Dr. Seuss describes the oobleck as “greenish molasses.” The following are arguments for its detrimental effects: “Look at that poor robin down there in that tree! She’s stuck to her nest! She can’t move a wing! That oobleck’s gooey! It’s gummy! It’s like glue... If that green stuff sticks up *robins*, it’ll stick up *people*, too!” King Derwin is unable to understand the consequences of his actions, as he celebrates his selfish success, and he states, “‘Oh, that beautiful oobleck! And it’s mine! All mine!’” The size of the oobleck grows parallel to the growing troubles within the Kingdom of Didd. First, the oobleck falls from the sky “as big as greenish peanuts.” As the situation becomes precariously worse, the oobleck grows in size in the following order: “as big as greenish cupcakes,” “as big as slippery potatoes,” “as big as greenish baseballs,” “as big as greenish footballs,” “as big as greenish buckets full of gooey asparagus soup.”

The oobleck and the problems it causes grow exponentially and simultaneously throughout the text. As a result of King Derwin’s neglect and selfishness, it becomes impossible

warn the people of Didd. “Too late to warn the people of the kingdom! There were farmers in the fields, getting stuck to hoes and plows. Goats were getting stuck to ducks. Geese were getting stuck to cows. Outside the palace it was piling up, great greenish tons of oobleck, deeper and deeper on every roof in the land.” The oobleck eventually penetrates both outside and inside, and the king eventually realizes the result of his ranting. “It was in the throne room that Bartholomew found him. There he sat... Old King Derwin, proud and mighty ruler of the Kingdom of Didd, trembling, shaking, helpless as a baby. His royal crown was stuck to his head. The seat of his royal pants were stuck to his royal throne. Oobleck was dripping from his royal eyebrows. It was oozing from his royal ears. Unable to remember the magician’s chant to reverse the oobleck, the king is stuck (literally) with the consequences of his actions. ““Oh, what are those words my magicians says...? *Shuffle...duffle...muzzle...muff...* That’s all I can remember and they won’t do any good! The oobleck keeps falling harder!””

The primary *locus* of Dr. Seuss’ *Bartholomew and the Oobleck* is the individual’s ability to take action. This *locus* is supported by a variety of arguments within the text. Through the text, it is apparent to readers that the consequences of unchecked power create sticky, harmful situations; however, through Bartholomew Cubbin’s perseverance, the ability of the individual to rectify selfish decisions is apparent. Bartholomew stops at nothing to warn the Kingdom of Didd about the harmful effects of oobleck. “Bartholomew went tearing through the zigzag palace hallways. ‘I’ll get the King’s horse! I’ll ride through the country! I’ll warn the people of the kingdom myself!’” Furthermore, Dr. Seuss unmistakably argues about the dangers of blindly following the wishes of powerful leaders. Unlike Bartholomew Cubbins, the people of Didd blindly followed the King’s orders and were oblivious to the harmful effects of his policies. The Captain of Didd, ignoring Bartholomew’s warnings, said, “Nonsense! Lad, are you trying to

frighten *me*? Captains, my boy, are afraid of nothing! That stuff's harmless. I'll show you. I'll eat some."

Dr. Seuss also speaks to another *locus* in *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*, the importance of accountability for one's actions. Bartholomew alone holds the king responsible for the situation in the following quote: "Bartholomew Cubbins could hold his tongue no longer. 'And it's going to keep on falling,' he shouted, 'until your whole great marble palace tumbles down! So don't waste your time saying foolish *magic* words. YOU ought to be saying some plain *simple* words.' 'Simple words...? What do you mean boy?' 'I mean,' said Bartholomew, 'this is all *your* fault! Now, the least you can do is say the simple words, 'I'm sorry.''" Bartholomew Cubbins, a child, an unimportant page boy, demonstrates the importance of holding leaders accountable for decisions that effect large numbers of people. The selfish king, offended by the impossible suggestion that he is wrong, states, "'What!' he bellowed. 'ME...*ME* say I'm sorry! Kings *never* say 'I'm sorry!' And I am the mightiest king in all the world.'" However, as the king becomes increasingly aware of the precarious situation in which he has found himself, turns to Bartholomew and cries, "Come back Bartholomew Cubbins! You're right! It *is* all my fault! And I *am* sorry! Oh, Bartholomew, I'm awfully, *awfully* sorry!" Instantly, Dr. Seuss demonstrates the power of accountability upon the king's utterance of these simple words. Dr. Seuss simply argues the following: "Maybe there *was* something magic in those simple words, 'I'm sorry.' Maybe there *was* something magic in those simple words, 'It's *my* fault.' Maybe there was, and maybe there wasn't. But they say that as soon as the old King spoke them, the sun began to shine and fight its way through the storm. They say the falling oobleck globs grew smaller and smaller and smaller. They say that all the oobleck that was stuck on all the people and on all the animals in the Kingdom of Didd just simply, quietly melted away."

The *loci* apparent in *Bartholomew and the Oobleck* do not suggest that consequences never arise; however, activism and accountability are themes that demonstrate ability to rectify and set things right. Dr. Seuss' readers are left with hope and optimism that there is light at the end of the darkest tunnels. Bartholomew argues to readers that the littlest person can make a difference in holding powerful leaders accountable for actions. Bartholomew also argues that even the powerless have the ability to make a difference. The children (and adults) who absorb these *loci* feel empowered that even the smallest of actions or admittance of fault can have powerful results. Dr. Seuss does not suggest that hardships will never arise, but he does offer arguments and avenues for reconciliation.

Horton Hears a Who!, (1954)

One of Dr. Seuss' famous quotes sets the stage for major *loci* found in *Horton Hears a Who!* Dr. Seuss argues for the weak and powerless when he states, "A person's a person, no matter how small." As previously noted, scholars have found *Horton Hears a Who!* to be a powerful allegory for Dr. Seuss' personal feelings toward Japan after World War II. The text's dedication from Dr. Seuss is as follows: "For my Great Friend, Mitsugi Nakamura of Kyoto, Japan." A close look at the text of *Horton Hears a Who!* reveals deep-seated political arguments for defending the weak and helpless among us.

Within the jungle of Nool, Dr. Seuss situates a kind-hearted elephant, Horton. While Horton may appear scattered and distracted, he is perceptive and trusts his instincts. While bathing, Horton hears a "small yelp" come from a speck of dust floating by. Rather than ignore this seemingly impossible event, Horton immediately proclaims, "I say! I've never heard tell of a small speck of dust that is able to yell. So you know what I think? ... Why, I think that there must be someone on top of that small speck of dust! Some sort of creature of *very* small size, too

small to be seen by an elephant's eyes..." Through Horton, Dr. Seuss sets up a series of arguments advocating for protection of the smallest of the small. The huge size discrepancy does not distract Horton from his goal, and he states, "... some poor little person who's shaking with fear that he'll blow in the pool! He has no way to steer! I'll just have to save him. Because, after all, a person's a person, no matter how small." In this quote, Dr. Seuss begins his famous refrain, and, through Horton, he argues on behalf of the small.

Obviously, Horton is not without opposition on his journey to save the speck, and he meets an obstacle in the "sour" kangaroo. The kangaroo thinks Horton "the biggest blame fool in the Jungle of Nool!" Carrying the speck to safety, Horton encounters episodes of mockery from many animals in the Jungle of Nool. From the treetops, the monkeys jeer, "He talks to a dust speck! He's out of his head! Just look at him walk with that speck on that flower!" The Wickersham brothers shout, "What rot! This elephant's talking to *Whos* who are *not!* There *aren't* any *Whos!* And they *don't* have a Mayor! And *we're* going to stop all this nonsense! *So there!*" The animals' mocking turns from playful banter to plots against Horton and his clover. The determination of the jungle animals to destroy the speck causes Horton to undergo extreme adversity to prevent the clover's demise.

Horton personally withstands extreme conditions of exhaustion and emotion to save the clover's inhabitants, the *Whos* of *Who*-ville. A black-bottomed bird, Vlad Vlad-i-koff, steals the clover and flies through the night, looking for the perfect place to hide the clover. "And at 6:56 the next morning he did it. It sure was a terrible place that he hid it. He let that small clover drop somewhere inside of a great patch of clovers a hundred miles wide! 'Find THAT!' sneered the bird. 'But I think you will fail.' And he left with a flip of his black-bottomed tail." Horton's unceasing determination drives him to search until noon, through three million clovers, and until

he is “more dead than alive.” Though he eventually finds the clover and *Who*-ville, Horton’s happiness is short lived as the animals again plot the *Whos*’ destruction. The kangaroo appears and proclaims, “With the help of the Wickersham Brothers and dozens of Wickersham Uncles and Wickersham Cousins and Wickersham In-Laws, whose help I’ve engaged, you’re going to be roped! And you’re going to be caged! And, as for your dust speck... *hah! That* we shall boil in a hot steaming kettle of Beezle-Nut oil!” Here, Dr. Seuss exemplifies the extreme risk that protectors of the powerless may face. Horton faces imprisonment, while the helpless *Whos* face possible annihilation.

Throughout the text, Horton remains the lone-voice advocating for the livelihood of *Who*-ville against the tyranny in the Jungle of Nool. As Horton faces persecution and *Who*-ville is sentenced to destruction, the elephant remains vigilant and argues for their existence. In response to the kangaroo and Wickersham’s threats, Horton argues, “Oh, that you *can’t* do! It’s full of persons! They’ll *prove* it to you!” Horton’s leadership in conjunction with *Who*-ville’s Mayor riles the *Whos* to make their presence known to the non-believing animals of Nool. Horton states, “Mr. Mayor! You’ve *got* to prove now that you really are there! So call a big meeting. Get everyone out. Make every *Who* holler! Make every *Who* shout! Make every *Who* scream! If you don’t, every *Who* is going to end up in a Beezle-Nut stew!” Though the *Whos* are miniscule, their voices remain silent until the smallest *Who*, Jo-Jo, joins the chorus and shouts “Yop!” Jo-Jo, the smallest *Who*, held the voice that saved *Who*-ville. “That one small, extra Yopp put it over! Finally, at last! From that speck on the clover *their voices were heard!* They rang out clear and clean. And the elephant smiled. ‘Do you see what I mean? ... They’ve proved they ARE persons, no matter how small. And their whole world was saved by the Smallest of All!’” Upon this realization, the kangaroo and animals accept Horton’s argument,

and the kangaroo says, “And, from now on, you know what I’m planning to do? ... From the sun in the summer. From the rain when it’s fall-ish, I’m going to protect them. No matter how small-ish.”

In *Horton Hears a Who!*, Dr. Seuss fights to protect the smallest, powerless societies. Dr. Seuss situates Horton as a hero. Through Horton, several arguments are established for this *locus*. First, Dr. Seuss argues that society should be open to the existence of smaller, maybe miniscule peoples. In *Horton Hears a Who!*, it takes an unlikely elephant to advocate for the existence of *Who*-ville. An entire society dwelled on a speck on a clover, and Horton not only believed in their existence, but he relentlessly protected them through great adversity. In the text, Dr. Seuss advocates this unrelenting perseverance through arguments such as the following: “‘Believe me,’ said Horton. ‘I’ll tell you sincerely, my ears are quite keen and I heard him quite clearly. I *know* there’s a person down there. And, what’s more, quite likely there’s two. Even three. Even four. Quite likely a family, for all that we know!’” Horton only momentarily considers abandoning the speck in the following passage: “‘Should I put this speck down? ...’ Horton thought with alarm. ‘If I do, these small persons may come to great harm. I *can’t* put it down. And I *won’t!* After all, a person’s a person. No matter how small.’” Several times, Horton offers assurance to the *Whos*, such as the following: “‘You’re safe now. Don’t worry. I won’t let you down,’” and “‘Of course I will stick. I’ll stick by you small folks through thin and through thick!’”

Two quotes most clearly argue for the text’s primary moral. As Horton chases the black-bottomed bird to save *Who*-ville, he argues, “‘Please don’t harm all my little folks, who have as much a right to live as us bigger folks do!’” This statement, coupled with Horton’s refrain that “‘a person’s a person, no matter how small,’” encompass the key arguments made by Dr. Seuss in

Horton Hears a Who! Throughout the text, in many ways, Horton attempts to make this simple argument – though the *Whos* may be small, they are important. The entire text can be viewed as a larger argument for this simple concept. For example, as the *Whos* attempt to voice their presence to the animals, together they shout “WE ARE HERE! WE ARE HERE! WE ARE HERE!” This argument illustrates the *Whos* desperate need to be recognized as a valued people, worthy of protection and autonomy. The *Whos* make this plea out of fear, willing the other animals to think of their safety.

Thankfully for the *Whos*, Horton’s arguments prevail, and *Who*-ville is spared from destruction; however, readers are left with lingering questions about this story on both a larger and personal scale. Dr. Seuss makes an argument that no matter how small the person, society or circumstance, parties deserve equal opportunity to life. Looked at this way, *Horton Hears a Who!* can be viewed as an argument for any oppressed group of people, whether they be an entire nation, a child, a family or those too small to be seen. Dr. Seuss’ rhetorical play with size clearly demonstrates that physical mass is irrelevant in issues of importance and influence. Horton’s moral, “a person’s a person, no matter how small,” argues that one’s worth is determined by mere existence, rather than stature, size or strength.

How the Grinch Stole Christmas, (1957)

Dr. Seuss’ classic tale, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, has been a holiday staple for generations. The story is usually interpreted as a parable about the dangers of materialism; however, close textual analysis of the text reveals unforeseen *loci* and more complex content than a simple Christmas story. The Grinch, portrayed as an isolated outsider, foreign to the warm, welcoming culture of *Who*-ville, seeks to destroy the source of the *Whos*’ happiness – Christmas. Analysis of the text reveals that Dr. Seuss utilizes the characters of the Grinch and

Whos to exemplify the differences in worldview. The unknowing outsider, the Grinch, resents the *Whos* lifestyle and puts into motion a plot to destroy it. From the start of the text, Dr. Seuss makes it apparent that “every *Who* down in *Who*-ville liked Christmas a lot... But the Grinch, who lived just north of *Who*-ville, did NOT!” The *Whos*’ appreciation of Christmas is contrasted by the Grinch’s utter detest of the holiday.

The extent of the Grinch’s hatred and unhappiness is apparent through many passages in the text. ““And they’re hanging their stockings!’ he snarled with a sneer. ‘Tomorrow is Christmas! Its practically here!’ Then he growled, with his Grinch fingers nervously drumming, ‘I MUST find some way to stop Christmas from coming!’” His solution, Dr. Seuss describes as an awful idea. “Then he got an idea! *An awful idea!* THE GRINCH GOT A WONDERFUL, AWFUL IDEA!” The Grinch fastens a Santa Claus costume and transforms his dog, Max, into a reindeer. The Grinch plots, “What a great Grinchy trick! With this coat and this hat, I’ll look just like Saint Nick!” He loads old empty sacks on his ramshackle sleigh and mashes to *Who*-ville, where the unsuspecting *Whos* “lay a-snooze in their town.” While robbing the *Who* houses, the Grinch encounters Cindy-Lou *Who*, a small *Who* described as “not more than two.” Upon questioning the Grinch’s intentions for her family’s Christmas tree, the lying Grinch replies the following: “He thought up a lie, and he thought it up quick! ‘Why, my sweet little tot,’ the fake Santy Claus lied, ‘there’s a light on this tree that won’t light on one side. So I’m taking it home to my workshop, my dear. I’ll fix it up *there*. Then I’ll bring it back *here*.’” Upon deceiving Cindy-Lou, the Grinch cleans out all of *Who*-ville, leaving nothing but crumbs “even too small for a mouse.” “When he packed up his sled, packed it up with their presents! The ribbons! The wrappings! The tags! And the tinsel! The trimmings! The trappings! Three thousand feet up! Up the side of Mt. Crumpit, he rode with his lead to the tiptop to dump it!”

Not only does the Grinch attempt to destroy Christmas, he anticipates and revels in the impending sadness of the *Whos* on Christmas morning. Merely depriving the *Whos* of their Christmas materials is not enough for the Grinch, and here Dr. Seuss argues the true depth of his hatred. “‘Pooh-Pooh to the *Whos!*’ he was grinch-ish-ly humming. ‘They’re finding out now that no Christmas is coming! They’re just waking up! I know *just* what they’ll do! Their mouths will hang open a minute or two then the *Whos* down in *Who*-ville will all cry BOO-HOO! That’s a noise,’ grinned the Grinch, ‘that I simply MUST hear!’” To the surprise and dismay of the tight-hearted Grinch, “the sound wasn’t *sad!* Why this sound sounded *merry!* It *couldn’t* be so! But it WAS merry! VERY!” Despite the Grinch’s awful plot, the *Whos* stood hand-in-hand singing, with no presents in sight! Dr. Seuss’ argues that presents, tinsel and trappings don’t make Christmas, and the absence of material possessions “HADN’T stopped Christmas from coming! IT CAME! Somehow or other, it came just the same!”

Dr. Seuss sets the Grinch and *Whos* in opposition through his choice of both adjectives and verbs describing the different characters. For example, the respective dwellings of the Grinch and *Whos* are starkly different. The Grinch resides in a cold, dark cave 3,000 feet north of *Who*-ville. The *Whos* live in communion with one another, in “warm-lighted houses” decorated for the Christmas holiday. The Grinch lives alone, situated on a mountain overlooking *Who*-ville below. The adjectives used to describe the Grinch’s mentality are also negative. He sports a “sour frown” and thinks “awful ideas.” His actions are deceitful, his possessions are “old,” “empty,” or “ramshackle.” When the Grinch is described as “so smart and so slick,” it is within the context of robbing the *Whos* of Christmas joy. Dr. Seuss argues that the Grinch’s “wonderful, awful idea” is exactly the opposite. The “joy” the Grinch might have felt from destroying Christmas leaves him with a “shocking surprise.” The Grinch stands “puzzled three

hours, till his puzzler was sore,” about his inability to destroy the *Whos* spirit. The verbs and actions of the Grinch and the *Whos* are also in opposition. The following are verbs describing the actions of the Grinch throughout the text: hate, snarl, sneer, growl, slither and slink. The text highlights multiple occurrences of the Grinch “taking” something. For example, “He slunk to the icebox. He took the *Whos*’ feast! He took the *Who*-pudding! He took the roast beast! He cleaned out that icebox as quick as a flash. Why, that Grinch even took their last can of *Who*-hash! Then he stuffed all the food up the chimney with glee. ‘And NOW!’ grinned the Grinch, ‘I will stuff up the tree!’” Dr. Seuss sets the Grinch’s detestable actions opposite of verbs describing the *Whos*. The text illustrates the *Whos* executing the following verbs: feasting, playing, singing, dreaming, standing hand-in-hand, and standing close together. The difference in action of the *Whos* and the Grinch argue for the difference in their worldviews, positive versus negative respectfully. Dr. Seuss leaves the reader to decide the reasons for the worldview disparity between the *Whos* and the Grinch.

The text reveals possible reasons for the Grinch’s hatred of Christmas such as: “It *could* be his head wasn’t screwed on just right. It *could* be, perhaps, that his shoes were too tight.” Dr. Seuss, using a first-person statement, indicates the real reason to be the following: “But I think that the most likely reason of all may have been that his heart was two sizes too small.” Throughout the text, the reader is left with this lingering explanation, but questions remain. Why is the Grinch’s heart two sizes too small? Is this deficiency a product of his self-inflicted isolation, or his unwillingness to participate in the *Who*-ville festivities, or is it something more? Regardless of the reason, the text clearly argues that the Grinch is miserable and hateful. “Whatever the reason, his heart or his shoes, he stood there on Christmas Eve, hating the *Whos*, staring down from his cave with a sour, Grinchy frown at the warm lighted windows below in

their town. For he knew that every *Who* down in *Who*-ville beneath was busy now, hanging a mistletoe wreath.” This deep-seated resentment creates a barrier between the reader and the Grinch; however, Dr. Seuss’ portrayal of the Grinch leaves the audience feeling pity upon the outsider. Dr. Seuss makes a case that the Grinch, able to witness but not participate, is unhappy due to his exclusion from the visible happiness below.

Two important *loci* emerge from Dr. Seuss’ *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. First, Dr. Seuss argues for the inclusion of others. The Grinch’s character flaws result from a lack of inclusion in the *Whos*’ society. His outsider status contributes to his detest and hatred for the community fellowship experienced within the borders of *Who*-ville. The Grinch does not enter *Who*-ville for any reason other than to destroy their society and the source of *Who*-happiness. The transformation of the Grinch’s heart from two-sizes too small further illustrates this argument. Upon recognizing that he cannot destroy happiness by merely kidnapping material possessions, the Grinch’s heart grows three sizes. The text states, “And what happened *then* ... ? Well ... in *Who*-ville they say that the Grinch’s small heart grew three sizes that day! And the minute his heart didn’t feel quite so tight, he wizzed with his load through the bright morning light and he brought back the toys! And the food for the feast!” The Grinch’s jealousy lapses, and he realizes that the source of happiness is not presents, but community. Upon this comprehension, the Grinch redeems his actions and joins the festivities, enjoying his newfound inclusion. Dr. Seuss points out that “... HE HIMSELF...! *The Grinch carved the roast beast!*” The content expression on the Grinch’s face, seated at the table of *Whos* for the feast, concludes the argument that outsiders’ hateful ways can be transformed amidst inclusion and community. This *locus* simply argues that readers be aware and include others.

The second *locus* found in Dr. Seuss' *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* mirrors the first theme and argues the dangers of isolation. Dr. Seuss argues that the lifestyle of the Grinch, alone, cold and isolated, is no way to live. Though the *Whos* do not intentionally isolate the tight-hearted Grinch, their lack of inclusion leads to the Grinch's hateful worldview. An argument is visible for the pain and suffering undergone by the Grinch as he witnesses the closeness of *Who*-ville. The *Whos* stand hand-in-hand, stand close together, sing and commune with one another. Dr. Seuss leaves the reader to question, whom does the Grinch have to associate with? The Grinch's lack of community and fellowship with others contributes to his evil persona. The text's turning point, the Grinch standing atop Mt. Crumpit with a sleigh-full of *Who*-Christmas paraphernalia, illustrates this argument. Awaiting the cries and sadness of the *Whos*, "the Grinch put his hand to his ear. And he *did* hear a sound rising over the snow. It started in low. Then it started to grow..." Upon recognition that the sound is *merry*, rather than *sad*, the Grinch begins to reflect on his own isolation. He puzzles, "Maybe Christmas ... perhaps ... means a little bit more!" This revelation sparks a change in the Grinch, and through this transformation, Dr. Seuss argues that happiness is derived from interaction and fellowship with others.

A cursory glance at *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* may inform readers of the dangers of materialistic lifestyles; however, a critical look reveals relationships between outsiders and the communities from which they are excluded. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* is less a story about holiday materialism, and more a moral tale arguing against isolationism. Through the Grinch, Dr. Seuss argues that outsiders, left alone to envy and detest inclusive communities, pose a danger to themselves and others. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* is a cautionary tale that illustrates the transformation of a villain from outsider to active society participant. Through the

Grinch's inclusion into *Who*-life, he transforms his worldview and his heart (literally) grows to accept and love others.

The Cat in the Hat, (1957)

Dr. Seuss' *The Cat in the Hat* sparked a children's literary revolution. In just 223 words, Dr. Seuss created a text packed with rich themes and ideas. *The Cat in the Hat* not only sparked children's interest in literature, but countless readers have learned to read through the texts melodic rhymes and rhythms. The text's primary purpose, encouraging literacy in children, falls secondary to the *loci* argued throughout the text. Dr. Seuss utilizes *The Cat in the Hat* as a vehicle to argue for the necessity of imagination and playfulness in children. Anti-authority tones also emerge; however, the text's primary argument is for play, possibility and fun!

Undertaking *The Cat in the Hat*, the first judgment a critic must make is on the literal existence of the cat. Does the cat take real form to the children, or is he a figment of imagination created to take the edge off a boring, rainy day at home? Dr. Seuss uses the Cat in the Hat as an "imaginary friend" of the children. The Cat represents the possibility of fun despite the dreary forecast, and the children create him to demonstrate their imaginative resilience. The sudden appearance and disappearance of the cat illustrates this argument. The text opens with the children sitting idly, staring at the rain outside. "Too wet to go out and too cold to play ball. So we sat in the house. We did nothing at all. So all we could do was to sit! Sit! Sit! Sit! And we did not like it. Not one little bit." A bump occurs, and suddenly the children turn to look as the cat appears. "We looked! Then we saw him step in on the mat! We looked! And we saw him! The Cat in the Hat! And he said to us, 'Why do you sit there like that?'" Dr. Seuss poses this question to the reader, but it can also be viewed as a question the children ask themselves. The cat's question is an argument illustrating the possibilities of play that can arise through

imagination. The children concoct the cat's existence as a form of entertainment and fun while their mother is away. The cat can also be viewed as a vehicle to surmount the obstacle the children face, the cold, rainy weather that prevents them from playing.

The text also speaks to forces that oppose imagination and play. Dr. Seuss views imagination as something to be unhindered and appreciated, and Dr. Seuss argues that playful activities are important for children. Though no adult is present throughout the text, the fish takes on the role of the parent and attempts to police the situation. The fish argues that the cat's activities and games are destructive, and he says, "No! No! Make that cat go away! Tell that Cat in the Hat you do NOT want to play. He should not be here. He should not be about. He should not be here when your mother is out!" Within the text, Seuss' imaginary cat struggles with the fish's rationalizations. This tension illustrates the internal struggle of the children to hold on to their imagination. The following demonstrates this argument: "'You SHOULD NOT be here when our mother is not. You get out of this house!' said the fish in the pot. 'But I like to be here. Oh, I like it a lot!'" said the Cat in the Hat to the fish in the pot. 'I will NOT go away. I do NOT wish to go! And so,' said the Cat in the Hat, 'so so so ... I will show you another good game that I know!'" At times, the children face tension and regret at their imaginative creation. The fish's arguments impact the young boy's imaginative conscious, and he harnesses the Cat in the Hat's game. The boy says, "Now you do as I say. You pack up those Things and you take them away!" The cat sadly states, "'Oh dear!' said the cat. 'You did not like our game. Oh dear. What a shame! What a shame! What a shame!' The he shut up the Things in the box with the hook. And the cat when away with a sad kind of look." This remorseful exit of the cat argues the children's unwillingness to hinder their imaginative power; however, under pressure from the fish, the children are convinced that his departure is best.

The text illustrates that imagination and play can have consequences; however, the consequences are not irreconcilable. The make-believe activities in *The Cat in the Hat* appear to have created a horrific mess, which seemingly justifies the policing arguments of the fish. “‘That is good,’ said the fish. ‘He has gone away. Yes. But your mother will come. She will find a big mess! This mess is so big and so deep and so tall, we can not pick it up. There is no way at all!’” The imagination and make believe that landed the children in this “mess” comes back to the rescue in the form of the Cat in the Hat. “And THEN! Who was back in the house? Why, the cat! ‘Have no fear of this mess,’ said the Cat in the Hat. ‘I always pick up all my playthings and so ... I’ll show you another good trick that I know!’” The cat restores the house to its proper condition, “and then he was gone with a tip of his hat.” These passages argue that imagination has the power to both entertain and rectify. Dr. Seuss argues that through imagination, anything is possible and make believe empowers children to have fun, despite pressure or weather.

The primary *locus* of Dr. Seuss’ *The Cat in the Hat* encourages unhindered imagination in children. Dr. Seuss argues that make believe transforms unfortunate circumstances into opportunities for fun and play. The *Cat in the Hat* represents the possibilities that arise through the use of imagination. The children’s imaginary “cat,” argues against the sedentary, passive behaviors that oppose imagination and playfulness. The cat’s first question to the children illustrates this argument, as he asks, “Why do you sit there like that? I know it is wet and the sun is not sunny. But we can have lots of good fun that is funny!” The cat symbolizes possibility, and his games argue for the benefits of imagination. Dr. Seuss also argues that children should not be ashamed of their imagination. The final passage reads as follows: “Then our mother came in and she said to us two, ‘Did you have any fun? Tell me. What did you do?’ And Sally and I did not know what to say. Should we tell her the things that went on there that day?”

Should we tell her about it?” Their successful make-believe fun had been protested throughout the text, and the children question whether it is worth explaining to their mother. Dr. Seuss addresses the reader directly on this issue, and the text states, “Well... What would YOU do if your mother asked you?” This question posed to the reader asks whether it is worth justifying imaginative activity. Dr. Seuss argues that make-believe fun is often the result of imagination, and it is unnecessary to explain or justify this form of entertainment.

Though *The Cat in the Hat* is a beginner book, Dr. Seuss teaches children to have fun. Through the text, not only does reading become fun, but readers are encouraged to exercise other vehicles of entertainment by using their brains and imagination. Dr. Seuss argues against the sedentary, monotonous existence of children and advocates that children remain active, playful and imaginative. In its time, *The Cat in the Hat* became a landmark for children’s literature, and its legacy is still felt in the hearts and minds of children today. Dr. Seuss sparked the imagination of readers and encouraged them to keep dreaming, imagining and playing. The text of *The Cat in the Hat* equips readers with the skills necessary to concoct possibilities in situations that seem impossible. The text argues that imagination and playfulness have the ability to transform “how I wish we had something to do,” into fun and endless possibility!

I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew, (1965)

I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew tells the story of a resilient young creature who had never encountered any troubles. Dr. Seuss describes him as, “real happy and carefree and young.” The text, told in first-person, unveils the creature’s first experiences with trouble. “I lived in a place called the Valley of Vung and nothing, not anything ever went wrong until ... well, one day I was walking along and I guess I got careless. I guess I got gawking at daisies and not looking where I was walking...” Though carelessness seems to be the source of his

newfound problems, the creature's troubles grow exponentially larger as the text unfolds. Each trouble is accompanied by a consequence, as well as a statement, realization or promise made by the creature. His initial trouble unfolds as follows: "And that's how it started. *Sock!* What a shock! I stubbed my big toe on a very hard rock and I flew for the air and I went for a sail and I sprained the main bone in the tip of my tail!" He recovers, and vows to avoid future troubles and promises, "If I watch out for rocks with my eyes straight ahead, I'll keep out of trouble forever." He quickly learns that trouble seems unavoidable. The text reads, "But, watching ahead ... Well, that didn't just work. I was watching those rocks. Then I felt a hard jerk. A very fresh green-headed Quilligan Quail sneaked up from *in back* and when after my tail! And I learned there are troubles of more than one kind. Some come from ahead and some come from behind." Again, the creature pledges to be careful to avoid troubles. "So I said to myself, 'Now I'll just have to start to be twice and careful and be twice as smart. I'll watch out for trouble in the front and back sections by aiming my eyeballs in different directions.'" As trouble begins to attack the creature from all angles, a Skritz at his neck and a Skrink at his toe, he happens upon a chap in a One-Wheeler-Wubble who suggests a new avenue for avoiding trouble.

Throughout the text, Dr. Seuss makes multiple arguments that trouble is inevitable. This *locus* argues that hardship is unavoidable, a common struggle that all creatures face. At this point, Dr. Seuss begins to unveil that though trouble is inevitable, it is how one deals with trouble that sets him or her apart. The creature, upon the suggestion of the chap in the One-Wheeler-Wubble, sets on a journey to Solla Sollew. The chap states, "'Young fellow,' he said, 'what has happened to you has happened to me and to other folks, too. So I'll tell you what I have decided to do... I'm off to the City of Solla Sollew on the banks of the beautiful River Wah-Hoo, where they *never* have troubles! At least, very few.'" To this point, the main character

still feels that avoidance of trouble is possible; however, Dr. Seuss presents multiple arguments that hardship is, in fact, inevitable. The following are a series of troubles encountered by the creature on his journey to Solla Sollew, the place promised to have few troubles. First, the camel pulling the One-Wheeler-Wubble gets sick and starts to bubble. The creature and chap pull the Wubble until they find a doctor able to treat camels. The camel, in bed for 20 weeks, delays the trip, and the creature heads to the Happy Way Bus to Solla Sollew. “The bus stop was there. And that part was just fine. But tacked on a stick was a very small sign saying, ‘*Notice to Passengers Using Our Line: We are sorry to say that our driver, Butch Meyers, ran over four nails and has punctured all tires. So, until further notice, the 4:42 cannot possibly take you to Solla Sollew... But I wish you a most pleasant journey by feet. Signed Bus Line President, Horace P. Sweet.*’”

The creature’s journey to Solla Sollew appears more troublesome than the creature’s home, the Valley of Vung. Each trouble the creature encounters can be viewed as an argument supporting the *locus* that hardship and trouble are unavoidable. Whether the creature is left alone to fend off a valley of Poozers, survive the early-Midwinter Jicker, or travel a frightful black tunnel, his journey is disastrous and troublesome. While traveling to Solla Sollew, the creature encounters the following troubles as well: “At least eight thousand times, I fell smack on my face. I injured three fingers, both thumbs and both lips, my shinbone, my backbone, my wishbone and hips! What’s more, I was starved. I had nothing to eat. And damp! Was it damp! I grew moss on my feet.” The creature’s personal suffering in his journey for no troubles begins to look foolish to the reader.

The creature’s arrival at Solla Sollew begins a series of arguments Dr. Seuss makes to support the second *locus* of this text. Dr. Seuss argues that the grass is not necessarily greener on

the other side. The creature arrives with high hopes that his troubles will be left behind. The promise made by the chap with the One-Wheeler-Wubble lingers, and he expects Solla Sollew to hold solace from future hardship. His first sight of Solla Sollew illustrates this argument and reads, “There it was! With its glittering towers in the air! I’d made it! I’d done it! At last I was there! I knew that I’d left all my troubles behind when a chap at the doorway that shimmered and shined waved me a wave that was friendly and kind.” The door-keeper affirms the creature’s hopes and greets him by stating, “Welcome, my son, to this beautiful land. Welcome to sweet, sunny Solla Sollew, where we never have troubles. At least very few.” However, troubles inevitably lurk in Solla Sollew, and his entrance is immediately prohibited. “And this one little trouble, as you will now see, is this one little trouble I have with this key... there is only one door into Solla Sollew and we have a Key-Slapping Slippard. We do! ... Since then, I can’t open this door any more! ... And why no one gets in and the town’s gone to pot. It’s a terrible state of affairs, is it not!” The faint promises of Solla Sollew fade with the realization that the creature’s troubles have only grown exponentially since journeying to Solla Sollew.

The creature, who left the Valley of Vung in search of no troubles, has found the opposite. The gatekeeper to the trouble-less city confirms the creature’s fear, and he presents the creature with an option. The text reads as follows: “‘I’m leaving,’ he said, ‘leaving Solla Sollew on the banks of the beautiful River Wah-Hoo, where we never have troubles, at least very few. And I’m off to the city of Boola Boo Ball on the banks of the beautiful River Woo-Wall, where they never have troubles! *No troubles at all!* Come along with me,’ he said as he ran, ‘and you’ll never have *any* more troubles, young man.’” As the offer is presented, Dr. Seuss makes the most compelling argument thus far. The creature, promised a trouble-less future, starts to follow but hesitates. He ponders, “So I started to go. But I didn’t. Instead... I did some quick thinking

inside of my head.” Here, Dr. Seuss argues that experience should teach us something about trouble. Not only is trouble inevitable, but the grass is not necessarily greener elsewhere. The creature decides that empty promises probably lurk in Boola Boo Ball, just as empty promises laid in Solla Sollew. Though readers never learn if Boola Boo Ball actually houses no hardship, the creature ventures back to the Valley of Vung. Dr. Seuss argues that the creature’s previous experiences should serve as a lesson – trouble cannot be avoided, and trouble can deliver great appreciation of times without hardship.

The text also argues that perseverance through hardship is crucial. Dr. Seuss’ arguments support this *locus* in various ways. The creature’s journey to Solla Sollew is filled with trials that seem insurmountable; however, the creature perseveres. Several times, Dr. Seuss argues that the creature’s spirit is broken, and each time the creature is vindicated by his initiative to keep going. For example, after floating twelve days “without toothpaste or soap, I practically almost had given up hope when someone up high shouted, ‘Here! Catch the rope!’ Then I knew all my troubles had come to an end and I climbed up the rope, calling, ‘Thank you, my friend!’” Another argument is as follows: “Then, just when I thought I could stand it no more, by chance I discovered a tiny trap door! I popped my head out. The great sky was sky-blue and I knew, from the flowers, I’d finally come through...” Dr. Seuss’ illustration of the creature’s resilience supports the perseverance *locus*.

Three key *loci* are uncovered through close textual analysis of Dr. Seuss’ *I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew*. First, Dr. Seuss argues that hardship is inevitable. This *locus* is supported by the variety of troubles the creature encounters while doing his best to avoid tribulation. Though trouble is inevitable, Dr. Seuss argues that lessons can be learned through the experiences hardship brings. The creature, who endured his fair share of problems, learned

that he will inevitably experience problems, but those problems must be dealt with. Through the creature, Dr. Seuss argues that people have a choice to succumb to problems or confront them head on. The creature resolves to solve his troubles and states, “I’m all ready, you see. Now my troubles are going to have troubles with *me!*” Dr. Seuss’ arguments also support the second *locus*. Dr. Seuss demonstrates that one does not necessarily find solace from troubles by seeking new outlets to avoid them. As life hands out hardship, attempting to outrun problems can only lead to more trouble. The creature’s empty promises of Solla Sollew and Boola Boo Ball illustrate this argument. Leaving the Valley of Vung, where his hardships were limited and petty, only introduced the creature to exponentially larger problems. Dr. Seuss argues that quick, timely confrontation of problems can avoid this mess. Similarly, Dr. Seuss’ arguments support the third *locus* – perseverance. The three *loci* uncovered in *I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew* center around a single premise. While unavoidable, Dr. Seuss believes that trouble can be tackled and surmounted. Quite simply, Dr. Seuss argues that trouble can break us, but trouble can also make us stronger.

The Lorax, (1971)

The cautionary tale, *The Lorax*, is one of Dr. Seuss’ most political post-World War II message books. While other message books’ *loci* may lay below the surface, Dr. Seuss makes arguments apparent on the surface of *The Lorax*. Close textual analysis of *The Lorax* reveals serious concepts including the following: materialism, capitalism, social engagement, activism and preservation. *The Lorax* is unique in that Dr. Seuss makes arguments on all levels of maturity, and both adults and children take away the same concepts.

The text opens to a deserted scene in which signs of past growth and beauty are still visible. “And deep in the Grickle-grass, some people say, if you look deep enough you can still

see, today, where the Lorax once stood just as long as he could before somebody lifted the Lorax away.” The lone inhabitant, the Once-ler, holds the secret to the Lorax’s mysterious disappearance. Dr. Seuss explains, “You won’t see the Once-ler. Don’t knock at his door. He stays in his Lerkim on top of his store... And on special dank midnight’s in August, he peaks out of the shutters and sometimes he speaks and tells how the Lorax got lifted away.” For the price of fifteen-cents, a nail, and the shell of a great-great-great grandfather snail, the Once-ler will share his secrets via Whisper-ma-Phone, “for the secrets I tell you are for your ears alone.”

The conflict between the Once-ler and the Lorax houses the main arguments for this text’s underlying *loci*. The tension between the greedy Once-ler and cautionary Lorax falls on many levels. First, tension exists surrounding the Once-ler’s intentions for the Truffula Forest. From the moment the Once-ler notices the Truffula Trees, readers become aware that they become his primary goal of attainment. The Once-ler states, “But those *trees!* Those *trees!* *Those Truffula Trees!* All my life I’d been searching for trees such as these. The touch of their tufts was much softer than silk. And they had the sweet smell of fresh butterfly milk. I felt a great leaping joy in my heart. I knew just what I’d do! I unloaded my cart.” The Once-ler sets up a small shop, chops down a Truffula Tree, “and with great skillful skill and with great speedy speed, I took the soft tuft. And I knitted a Thneed!” The Thneed knitted by the Once-ler becomes a symbol for greedy materialism, and the Lorax makes his first appearance in opposition of the Once-ler. “I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees. I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues. And I’m asking you, sir, at the top of my lungs... *What’s that THING you’ve made out of my Truffula tuft?*” The Once-ler’s response illustrates his extensive greed and lack of discretion for the use of the forest’s resources. The Once-ler replies to the Lorax, “Look, Lorax. There’s no cause for alarm. I chopped just one tree. I am doing no harm. I’m

being quite useful. This thing is a Thneed. A Thneed's a Fine-Something-That-All-People-Need!" Dr. Seuss uses the Lorax to argue that the Once-ler is greedy and immoral in the following quote: "The Lorax said, 'Sir! You are crazy with greed. There is no one on earth that would buy that fool Thneed!'" The Lorax stands defeated as the Once-ler immediately sells his first Thneed, and he jeers the Lorax, "You poor stupid guy! You never can tell what some people will buy!" The Once-ler's insult to the Lorax seemingly justifies his selfish actions. Furthering his greedy actions, the Once-ler formulates a plan to "get mighty rich!"

The Once-ler's "get mighty rich" plan involves the construction of a factory. The whole Once-ler family became "just as busy as bees," who were "all knitting Thneeds... to the sound of the chopping of Truffula Trees." The text continues to elaborate the growing Thneed business at the expense of chopping Truffula Trees. At this point, the text shifts from arguing against greed to arguing against the "biggering" of business at the expense of others. For example, the Once-ler invents a "Super-Axe-Hacker," which "whacked off four Truffula Trees with one smacker." Despite the Lorax's protests, the Once-ler family continues its devastating business. To justify his deceitful actions, the Once-ler states, "BUT... business is business! And business must grow!" Dr. Seuss acknowledges that the Once-ler may have originally meant no harm, but Dr. Seuss also argues that mindless big business, if left unchecked, can lead to devastating results. For example, the Once-ler says, "I meant no harm. I most truly did not. But I had to grow bigger. So bigger I got. I biggered my factory. I biggered my roads. I biggered my wagons. I biggered the loads of the Thneeds I shipped out... I went right on biggering... Selling more Thneeds. And I biggered my money, which everyone needs." This passage illustrates Dr. Seuss' most influential argument against materialism. The Once-ler's business continued to grow; however, the business expanded at the expense of the forest. The villainous Once-ler remains

oblivious to the consequences of his biggering business, and even yells at the Lorax, “Now listen here, Dad! All you do is yap-yap and say, ‘Bad! Bad! Bad! Bad!’ Well, I have my rights, sir, and I’m telling *you* I intend to go on doing just what I do! And, for your information, You Lorax, I’m figgering on biggering and BIGGERING and BIGGERING and BIGGERING, and turning MORE Truffula Trees into Thneeds which everyone, EVERYONE, *EVERYONE* needs!” Dr. Seuss argues that the Once-ler’s business grows parallel to the destruction of the Truffula Forest. For each Truffula chopped and each Thneed knitted and sold, and equivalent, negative consequence is inflicted on the forest. The Once-ler’s greed illustrates the devastation caused by unchecked relentless capitalism.

In opposition of the Once-ler’s greed and immoral business, Dr. Seuss utilizes the Lorax as a symbol arguing for social activism and preservation of nature. The Lorax foresees the impending consequences and symbolizes a voice of reason, a voice ignored by the Once-ler. The Lorax’s refrain is his primary argument against the Once-ler. He frequently states, “I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees. I speak for the trees for the trees have no tongues.” The Lorax becomes the voice of the powerless. His activism and engagement with the Once-ler illustrates the need to stand up against powerful, harmful business. The trees, Brown Bar-ba-loots, Swomee-Swans and Humming-Fish have no voice or choice in the matter, and the Lorax becomes the opposition against their destruction. Though the Lorax’s persistent warnings do not deter the Once-ler, his final action sets the Once-ler on a path to remorse and regret. As the “*very last Truffula Tree of them all*” falls to the ground, the Once-ler family packs up the factory and drives away. “Now all that was left ‘neath that bad-smelling sky was my big empty factory... the Lorax... and I.” The Lorax leaves one last warning to the Once-ler, as he “said nothing. Just gave me a glance... just gave me a very sad, sad backward glance... and lifted

himself by the seat of his pants. I'll never forget the grim look on his face when he heisted himself and took leave of this place, through a hole in the smog, without leaving a trace." The Lorax's last argument to the Once-ler is profound. The text reads as follows: "And all that the Lorax left here in this mess was a small pile of rocks, with the one word... 'UNLESS.' Whatever *that* meant, well I couldn't just guess." The word "UNLESS" is Dr. Seuss' last argument for social engagement and activism. The open-endedness of "UNLESS" advocates the reader to consider future possibilities for restoring the once-pristine Truffula forest.

One rhetorical device implemented by Dr. Seuss in *The Lorax* is the juxtaposition of past, present and future tenses. The text begins in the present tense, describing the scenery of the once-inhabited town of the Once-ler and Lorax. "At the far end of town where the Grickle-grass grows and the wind smells slow-and-sour when it blows and no birds ever sing except old crows... is the Street of the Lifted Lorax." The Once-ler's tale uttered through the Whisper-ma-Phone describes the past state of the town. "Way back in the days when the grass was still green and the pond was still wet and the clouds were still clean, and the song of the Swomee-Swans rang out in space..." The adjectives used to describe the present and past state of the land argue that something grave occurred in the land to cause the current "sour" state. Creatures once inhabited the land, including Brown Bar-ba-loots, Swomee-Swans, Humming-Fish, and most importantly, Truffula Trees. The land appeared pristine, untouched and clean. As the Once-ler's narrative reaches present time, the adjectives describing the land gradually transition to just the opposite. Gradually, the land is tarnished and the creatures, one-by-one, leave the Truffula Forest due to the destruction. For example, the once "wet pond" becomes gummed and glumped. "You're glumping the pond where the Humming-Fish hummed! No more can they hum, for their gills are all gummed. So I'm sending them off. Oh, their future is dreary. They'll

walk on their fins and get woefully weary in search of some water that isn't so smearable." In addition, "Once-ler! You're making such smogulous smoke! My poor Swomee-Swans... why, they can't sing a note! No one can sing who has smog in his throat... Where will they go? I don't hopefully know. They may have to fly for a month...or a year... to escape from the smog you've smogged up around here." The transition of the narrative from past to present illustrates the exponential damage caused by the Once-ler. The end of the Once-ler's story brings the reader back to the present. "That was long, long ago. But each day since that day I've sat here and worried and worried away. Through the years, while my buildings have fallen apart, I've worried about it with all of my heart." The Once-ler's present worry translates into possibility for future action to repair the consequences of his past actions.

Dr. Seuss' cautionary tale, *The Lorax*, speaks to *loci* including capitalism, greed, social engagement and activism. Through the Once-ler's tale, readers understand the potential consequences associated with unchecked power and greed. Dr. Seuss creates the Lorax in opposition of these negative powers, introducing a character dedicated to preserving nature and acting in the interests of others. Dr. Seuss' strongest argument lies at the end of the text. Dr. Seuss addresses readers directly and provides a take home message, meant to rectify the negative emotions induced throughout the text. *The Lorax* ends on an uplifting note, and the reconciled Once-ler experiences a change of heart. The Once-ler understands the meaning of the Lorax's warning, "UNLESS." "But *now*," says the Once-ler, "Now that *you're* here, the word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear. UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." The audience sees a connection between themselves and the boy listening to the Once-ler's narrative. Dr. Seuss provides the audience with a powerful call to action. The Once-ler deposits a Truffula seed into the hands of the child and encourages, "It's a

Truffula Seed. It's the last one of all! You're in charge of the last of the Truffula Seeds. And Truffula Trees are what everyone needs. Plant a new Truffula. Treat it with care. Give it clean water. Feed it fresh air. Grow a forest. Protect it from axes that hack."

Dr. Seuss' take home argument in *The Lorax* is one of vindication and hope. Through social engagement, activism and hard work, the negative consequences of capitalism can be undone. Dr. Seuss argues that actions are not irreversible. Readers of *The Lorax* learn that while bigginger business may come at detrimental cost to nature, activism has the ability to rectify the harmful actions of others. Through continued care and preservation of the environment, nature can be restored. Dr. Seuss argues that one Truffula seed, the last of them all, has the ability to re-grow an entire forest. *The Lorax* demonstrates that actions, no matter how small, can have a positive impact, and through continued engagement, "the Lorax and all of his friends may come back."

Hunches in Bunches, (1982)

Indecision plagues the character in Dr. Seuss' *Hunches in Bunches*. *Hunches in Bunches* is less a story than Dr. Seuss' other post-World War II books and speaks to only one overarching *locus* – personal intuition. In *Hunches in Bunches*, Dr. Seuss argues that personal intuition reigns over other types of influence, or "hunches." The main character, a young boy, struggles with a multitude of "hunches" that try to persuade him to make up his mind. The boy's indecision forces his mind to begin dreaming up hunches. "My trouble was I had a mind. But I couldn't make it up. It's awfully awfully awful when you can't make up your mind!" He lists a multitude of possible activities such as: "Do you want to kick a football? Or sit there on your behind? Do you want to go out skating? Fly a kite? Or climb a tree? Do you want to eat a pizza? Take a bath? Or watch TV?" Dr. Seuss explains that indecision is unpleasant, but worse,

it leads one to question their own judgment. “Oh you get so many hunches that you don’t know ever quite if the right hunch is a wrong hunch! Then the wrong hunch might be right!”

Indecision, Dr. Seuss contends, is the opposite of personal independence.

Indecision hinders personal intuition and self-reliance by introducing feelings of doubt. Doubt can creep into one’s mind, clouding decision-making. Dr. Seuss argues that hunches can hinder mental-clarity in the following passage: “A new voice interrupted. ‘That mind of yours,’ I heard him say, ‘is frightfully ga-fluppted. Your mind is murky-mooshy! Will you make it up? Or won’t you?’” Further, Dr. Seuss explains the ramifications of avoiding personal intuition and succumbing to hunches. For example, the text reads as follows: “Will you make it up? Or won’t you? If you won’t, you are a wonter! Do you understand? Or don’t you? If you don’t, you are a donter. You’re a canter if you can’t. I would really like to help you. But you’re hopeless. So I shan’t.” Dr. Seuss connotes to readers the negative effects of falling into the category of “wonter,” “donter,” or “canter.”

The audience views glimmers of resistance and self-reliance in the boy, as he struggles against indecision and apathy. For example, one “hunch” suggests the boy go four ways at once. He replies, “But I didn’t fall for *that* one. I am not that dumb a dunce. I knew where I would end up if I tried a thing like *that*... Most likely on some dead-end road in West Gee-Hossa-Flat!” The boy argues that he is too smart for the “Four-Way Hunch,” but the next thing he knew, he was “following a Nowhere Hunch, a real dumb thing to do! Everybody sometimes does it. Even me. And even you. I followed him in circles till we wore the rug right through.” Eventually, the hunches begin to take over. “Then things got really out of hand. Wild hunches in big bunches were scrapping all around me, throwing crunchy hunchy punches.” Through the boy’s trying situation, Dr. Seuss argues that reliance on oneself is the only way to avoid such predicaments.

“Make your mind up! Get it done! Only *you* can make your mind up! You’re the one and only one!” The text explains that personal independence is the solution to dissonance associated with indecision and negative outside influence. Relying on one’s own intuition and staying true to oneself can resolve the problem.

Dr. Seuss acknowledges that indecision is a common feeling experienced by all. The text’s beginning confirms this statement and reads as follows: “Do you ever sit and fidget when you don’t know what to do...? Everybody gets the fidgets. Even me and even you.” By arguing that indecision is a common battle, readers note that they can also defeat “hunches in bunches.” The boy ultimately resolves to make the decision on his own, ignoring the “Up Hunch,” “Down Hunch,” “Happy Hunch,” and “Real Tough Hunch.” The boy decides to confront his indecision head on, and sorts the matter through in his own mind. “It took an awful lot of me. It took a lot of yelling. It took a lot of shoving and hot bargaining and selling. We all talked the hunches over, up and down and through and through. We argued and we barg-ued! We decided what to do.” The internal battle to decide leaves the boy exhausted; however, Dr. Seuss argues that eliminating outside “hunches” and resolving to oneself allows for independent decision-making. Though the boy continued to have internal struggle, he worked out the situation independently. Dr. Seuss describes the boy’s ultimate decision as the “best hunch of the bunch,” arguing that hunches made independently are obviously better than those relying on outside opinion.

Dr. Seuss’ *Hunches in Bunches* speaks to the audience’s desire to remain autonomous and maintain personal resolve. The text’s main *locus*, personal independence, remains at the forefront of the text. This text is less a story than a lesson in self-reliance. Readers of *Hunches in Bunches* learn that outside opinions and “hunches” can be overruled by personal resolve and decisiveness. Dr. Seuss does not argue that “hunches” are always negative; however, Dr. Seuss’

primary argument remains that personal independence should override outside influence. Dr. Seuss argues that personal independence should supersede the countless opinions of what others desire for us. Rely on yourself, argues Dr. Seuss, and retain personal independence. By trusting our own intuition, Dr. Seuss argues that we can cut through the clutter and listen to *our own* “hunches.”

The Butter Battle Book, (1984)

Dr. Seuss wages war against intimidation and intolerance late in his career with *The Butter Battle Book*. Two societies, rather than coexist, set out to destroy one another. *The Butter Battle Book* has been noted as an allegory of the Cold War and nuclear arms race; however, Dr. Seuss primarily argues against the causes of such dire circumstances. Dr. Seuss speaks to two primary *loci* in this text – acceptance and intolerance. The Yooks and Zooks, peoples separated by a large wall at their borders, despise the other society’s bread and butter habits. This petty difference sets the stage for the text, and Dr. Seuss makes arguments against their paltry discrepancies. Through *The Butter Battle Book*, Dr. Seuss implores readers to answer the question, are minute cultural differences worth waging war?

The primary, petty difference between the Zook and Yook societies in *The Butter Battle Book* is the position of the butter on their bread. This unimportant cultural difference is the root of the societies’ intolerance for one another. For example, a grandfather explains to his grandson, “It’s high time that you knew of the terribly horrible thing that Zooks do. In every Zook house and in every Zook town, *every Zook eats his bread with the butter side down!*” The italicized emphasis in the text implies the gravity of this “offense,” while readers are left wondering the severity of this claim. The Yook society takes pride in their butter-side-up tradition, and the text reads as follows: ““But we Yooks, as you know, when we breakfast or sup,

spread our bread,' Grandpa said, 'with the butter side *up*. That's the right, honest way!'" The elder Yook, obviously proud of his country's butter-side-up tradition, explains the severity of this difference. "So you can't trust a Zook who spreads butter underneath! Every Zook must be watched! He has kinks in his soul!" The underlying pettiness of this charge is Dr. Seuss argument for the stupidity of this conflict.

Dr. Seuss makes further arguments to illustrate the ridiculous nature of the Yook/Zook conflict. Both the physical appearance and physical proximity of these peoples argues this point. Apart from their respective garments, the Yooks and Zooks' appearance is exactly the same. Both have light skin, dark, scraggly hair and protruding noses. The only physical difference lies in the color of their military uniform, Blue Yooks and Orange Zooks. Their physical proximity to one another further illustrates this argument. The societies border one another, only separated by a wall, suggests that their lands were once run together. Their ability to speak freely with one another implies the use of a common language, only further illustrating their similarities rather than differences. Dr. Seuss' situation of these two cultures as more alike than different further highlights the unnecessary conflict surrounding their butter-placement practices. Through the formation of these characters, Dr. Seuss argues that intolerance, rather than actual conflict, is the root of this stupid situation.

Throughout the text, propaganda-like references can be found. These propaganda posters are internal arguments to the characters, advocating for continued intolerance of Yook/Zook society. Members of each respective country are bombarded with messages illustrating differences rather than similarity. For example, Dr. Seuss places propaganda signs at key places during the text. While the grandfather Yook denounces Zook practices to his grandson, several Zooks are displayed eating beneath a sign that reads, "Butter Side DOWN!" On the Yook side

of the wall, another propaganda piece is prominently displayed that reads, “YOOKS are not Zooks. Keep Your BUTTER SIDE UP!” The Yook flag displays a piece of bread with butter on top, and the Yook band is named “The Butter-Up Band.” These political messages reinforce the minute differences between the Yook and Zook societies to the reader.

The negligible cultural difference between the Yooks and Zooks remains unapparent to participants within the text, and the situation escalates to dangerous levels. Rather than reconcile and accept their differences, each society invents increasingly modern and technologically dangerous weapons to destroy the other. Fueled by ridiculous intolerance, the Yooks vow to “end that terrible town full of Zooks who eat bread with the butter side down.” Superfluous threats from both sides include the following: “You may fling those hard rocks with your Triple-Sling Jigger. But I, also, now have *my* hand on a trigger,” “My wonderful weapon, the Jigger-Rock Snatchem, will fling ‘em right back just as quick as we catch ‘em. We’ll have no more nonsense. We’ll take no more gupp from you Yooks who eat bread with the butter side up,” and “Just wait till you see what they’ve puttered up now! In their great new machine you’ll fly over that Wall and clobber those Butter-Down Zooks one and all!” The text ends in a standoff, unresolved between the two cultures. The text reads as follows: “Grandpa leapt up on that Wall with a lopulous leap and he cleared his hoarse throat with a bopulous beep. He screamed, ‘Here’s the end of that terrible town full of Zooks who eat bread with the butter side down!’ And at that very instant we heard a klupp-klupp on the feet of the Wall and old VanItch klupp-ed up! *The Boys in HIS Back Room had made him one too! In his fist was another Big-Boy Boomeroo!* ‘I’ll blow you,’ he yelled, ‘into pork and wee beans! I’ll buter-side-up you to small smithereens!’” This unresolved stalemate is Dr. Seuss’ final argument for acceptance rather than intolerance. The grandson watches his grandfather in the standoff, and Dr. Seuss leaves the

reader in suspense. The final passage of text is as follows: “Who’s going to drop it? Will *you*...? Or will *he*...? ‘Be patient,’ said Grandpa. ‘We’ll see. We will see...’”

Dr. Seuss’ *The Butter Battle Book* highlights the triviality of intolerance. This *locus* is illustrated through the ridiculous conflict between the Yook and Zook cultures. Rather than settle their differences, each culture creates more powerful and dangerous weapons to wipe out the other. Each new weapon can be viewed as an argument for the danger of intolerance. Dr. Seuss’ exemplification of Yook and Zook intolerance leads the reader to accept the next *locus*, acceptance. Insignificant differences, Dr. Seuss argues, should be accepted rather than highlighted. *The Butter Battle Book*’s conflict argues for peaceful coexistence between cultures and societies. The open-ended conclusion of the text further illustrates this *locus*. Dr. Seuss deliberately leaves this text unresolved. Rather than annihilate one culture, Dr. Seuss teaches readers that there are alternatives to violence. Acceptance and coexistence are substitute conclusions to this narrative. *The Butter Battle Book* advocates that instead of highlighting differences, unconditional acceptance of cultural differences can resolve conflicts before they arise. The quick escalation of the Yook/Zook conflict illustrates the harm of blind intolerance, but Dr. Seuss argues that tolerance is a better policy. Should the Yooks and Zooks look beyond their butter-placement differences, they may see that they are actually more alike than not.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

In chapter one, the following research questions were posed:

- What are the dominant loci present in the children's rhetoric of Dr. Seuss?
- What relationships between arguments and loci can be uncovered through the application of invention to the children's rhetoric of Dr. Seuss?

In response to those questions, this thesis supports the following conclusions. First, through close textual analysis, unforeseen *loci* emerge in Dr. Seuss' post-World War II rhetoric for children. The following five dominant *loci* emerged from the analysis:

- Possibility and imagination
- Personal independence
- Resilience and perseverance
- Activism and engagement
- Acceptance and tolerance

In response to the second research question, chapter four revealed common arguments and relevant relationships entwined throughout the sample. Concepts mirror one another, revealing the dominant *loci* of Dr. Seuss' post-World War II message books. It can be argued that common arguments uncovered in the analysis become the vocabulary of Dr. Seuss' (and therefore Theodor Geisel's) personal worldview. The analysis revealed that dominant *loci* can be traced across various sample texts, and the *loci* are expressed in a variety of ways. The breadth of *loci* application supports the usefulness of invention as a critical tool for determining intertextual relevancy between various arguments. Simply stated, invention explains the usefulness of *loci* in any given circumstance. Dr. Seuss' dominant *loci* take on various forms and arguments, and invention allowed for the seamless interpretation of themes across the sample as a whole.

Dominant Loci

McElligot's Pool demonstrates Dr. Seuss' desire for possibility rather than impossibility, and he illustrates this *locus* through non-absolute language. *Thidwick, the Big-Hearted Moose* advocates for balance between selflessness and selfishness, big-heartedness and hard-heartedness. Dr. Seuss also utilizes *Thidwick* to show the importance of self-assertiveness. Individual activism and accountability are the dominant *loci* uncovered in Dr. Seuss' *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*. Through Bartholomew Cubbins, Dr. Seuss demonstrates the ability of the individual to provoke big change. Dr. Seuss' lovable elephant, Horton, demonstrates protection of the powerless in *Horton Hears a Who!* In *Horton Hears a Who!*, Dr. Seuss also elaborates for the powerless' right to life and existence. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* reveals the relationship between outsiders and the communities from which they are excluded. Dr. Seuss advocates for inclusion of others and warns his audience about the dangers of isolationism. Dr. Seuss' infamous *The Cat in the Hat* advocates for play, fun, imagination and possibility! The *loci* uncovered in *The Cat in the Hat* illustrate Dr. Seuss' works as both educational and fun. *I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew* explains that trouble and hardship are inevitable; however, Dr. Seuss elaborates a redeeming *locus* – perseverance. The ecological tale, *The Lorax*, speaks to more than the environment. *The Lorax* elaborates *loci* such as greed, capitalism, social engagement, activism and preservation of resources. The ninth book, *Hunches in Bunches*, warns against indecision and encourages readers to remain independent and intuitive by relying on their own "hunches." Finally, *The Butter Battle Book*, warns against intolerance. Dr. Seuss argues that intolerance highlights trivial cultural differences, differences that can hinder cultural acceptance and peaceful coexistence between societies.

In the following paragraphs, through Cicero's critical tool invention, the five aforementioned dominant *loci* are explained and interpreted as grander themes within Dr. Seuss' rhetoric. The dominant *loci* become overarching themes that illustrate the worldview proliferated by Dr. Seuss as a rhetorician.

Invention & *Loci* Synthesis

Possibility and Imagination

Dr. Seuss' dominant *locus* of possibility and imagination is evident in several sample texts, primarily *McElligot's Pool*, *The Cat in the Hat* and *The Lorax*. These books exemplify Dr. Seuss' dedication to play and fun while preserving the integrity of children's minds to understand the ramifications of such themes. Dr. Seuss frequently advocates for unwavering optimism. For example, Dr. Seuss creates characters such as Marco, the boy fisher in *McElligot's Pool* and the Cat in the Hat to demonstrate the importance of maintaining a positive attitude and worldview. The texts illustrate ample possibility in seemingly absolute circumstances. Marco continually fishes in a pool others are convinced contains only garbage. The children in *The Cat in the Hat* demonstrate imagination and possibility by concocting an imaginary cat, determined to have fun and defy the rainy day. *The Lorax* displays an extremely convincing argument for possibility. Even though the Once-ler has caused catastrophic detriment to the Truffula forest, Dr. Seuss explains the possibility for redemption. The Lorax's parting message, "UNLESS," argues that recovery is possible. Dr. Seuss entrusts the last Truffula seed to a young boy for a reason. Dr. Seuss wants readers to believe that reconciliation is a possibility, and through imagination and hard work, the Truffula forest may be restored.

Other texts subtly play to this dominant *locus*. For example, readers may not initially view the actions of Bartholomew Cubbins as an argument for possibility, but a deeper look reveals otherwise. Bartholomew demonstrates to readers the possibility of individuals to make

an impact. Another example is found in *Horton Hears a Who!* Horton defies odds against him and demonstrates the possibility of overcoming oppression. *Hunches in Bunches* informs readers that imagination has the ability to produce unlimited “hunches.” This *locus* is incorporated throughout Dr. Seuss’ post-World War II texts, and illustrates Dr. Seuss’ unrelenting dedication to optimism and fun.

Personal Independence

Personal independence is a *locus* not elaborated in isolation, as American thinkers have elaborated messages of self-reliance since Ralph Waldo Emerson. Dr. Seuss takes a different approach to proliferating messages of personal independence. Dr. Seuss relays these messages to children through his likeable characters and striking storylines. Rather than state this *locus* outright, Dr. Seuss allows readers to observe and make interpretations about other character’s choices to remain personally independent. Three texts speak to this *locus* – *Thidwick, the Big-Hearted Moose*, *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*, and *Hunches in Bunches*. *Thidwick, the Big-Hearted Moose* argues for personal independence via assertiveness. Through Thidwick’s troubles, Dr. Seuss’ readers come to admire the selfless moose’s hospitable characteristics; however, readers transition with Thidwick and he is ultimately revered for standing up for himself. In this way, Dr. Seuss advocates for retaining one’s personal independence from oppression of others. Dr. Seuss also argues for personal independence in one’s attempts to stick up for others. Dr. Seuss utilizes Horton the elephant as an argument for personal independence on one’s chosen life-journey. Horton obviously elects to save *Who*-ville from destruction and is persecuted for this decision. In this way, Dr. Seuss actively argues that Horton’s decision is correct, and he lifts Horton up as a hero. Horton’s unrelenting dedication to *Who*-ville ultimately reveals his dedication to his personal independence. Lastly, Dr. Seuss suggests that personal intuition and decisiveness are vital to retaining personal independence in *Hunches in Bunches*.

Dr. Seuss acknowledges outside pressure and influence through his illustration of “hunches.” In this text, the main character ultimately resolves to avoid outside influence and rely on his own hunches.

Resilience and Perseverance

As seen in the analysis, Dr. Seuss never suggests that trouble and hardship can be avoided in life. Dr. Seuss’ acknowledgement that adversity exists sets the stage for this dominant *locus*. The sample comprises of texts illustrating many ways in which adversity can be overcome through resilience, resolve and perseverance. This dominant *locus* appears more frequently throughout the sample. One-way Dr. Seuss exemplifies resilience and perseverance is through narratives of redemption. Dr. Seuss frequently creates characters that experience hardship and ultimately overcome trouble. For example, Dr. Seuss created Thidwick the moose to illustrate perseverance against unwelcome, greedy individuals. Thidwick’s ultimate resolve and dedication to his own safety illustrate the need to be flexible, yet steadfast. In Dr. Seuss’ *I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew*, readers find a character chronically plagued with trouble. Dr. Seuss vindicates this character, though his road to happiness is filled with hardship. Throughout this text, the creature experiences extreme circumstances, danger and emotions, yet Dr. Seuss illustrates the benefits of remaining committed and unwavering throughout trouble. Other characters also demonstrate perseverance in their pursuit to protect others. For example, Bartholomew Cubbins remains diligent about protecting the Kingdom of Didd from King Derwin’s dreadful creation, oobleck. Horton the elephant dedicates himself to the salvation of *Who*-ville despite persecution, ridicule and personal-endangerment. Dr. Seuss exemplifies this *locus* primarily through characters who overcome someone, something or some circumstance. Dr. Seuss’ illustration of perseverance and resilience demonstrates his dedication to instilling his readers with the encouragement they need to overcome tough situations in their own lives.

Activism and Engagement

Dr. Seuss illustrates the importance of activism and engagement through the most unlikely characters. This *locus* serves as an underlying theme throughout the sample. More general, diverse *loci* can be found throughout the sample, but this *locus*' frequency and potency are enough to designate it as dominant. Bartholomew Cubbins in *Bartholomew and the Oobleck* surmounts obstacles associated with his low-societal stature. Though just a page-boy, Bartholomew Cubbins argues the importance of remaining involved in decisions that affect others. Challenging authority, engaging powerful leaders and holding them accountable become the responsibilities of Bartholomew, far reaching responsibilities outside the breadth of a common page-boy. Likewise, the Lorax stands up to big business and capitalism in Dr. Seuss' ecological cautionary tale. The Lorax's steadfast engagement with the Once-ler demonstrates his dedication to preserving resources and nature. The varying circumstances associated with this *locus* illustrate the importance of this theme to Dr. Seuss' overarching worldview. Dr. Seuss clearly advocates that individuals have the ability to alter unfortunate circumstances. Dr. Seuss empowers his readers to engage and act, daring them to try and affect their society for the better.

Acceptance and Tolerance

This dominant *locus* serves as the primary theme of *The Butter Battle Book*; however, themes of acceptance and tolerance are visible in the background of texts throughout the sample. This *locus*' frequent appearance as both a subtle and overt theme categorizes it as a dominant *locus* contributing to the worldview of Dr. Seuss. As a person, Theodor Geisel dedicated himself to eliminating prejudice and fighting ethnic, religious and racial intolerance. In *The Butter Battle Book*, Dr. Seuss blatantly illustrates the need to tolerate and peacefully coexist with other cultures. The frivolity of the Yook/Zook discrepancy illustrates this argument. On a more "hidden" level, Dr. Seuss utilizes this *locus* in *Horton Hears a Who!*, *How the Grinch Stole*

Christmas, and other texts. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* illustrates the importance of acceptance of differences. Through both the Whos and the Grinch, Dr. Seuss argues the importance of looking for the best in others. *Horton Hears a Who!* demonstrates the necessity of valuing others. Despite their differences, Horton ultimately convinces the animals in the Jungle of Nool that *Who*-ville and its inhabitants are valuable. Dr. Seuss consistently endows his characters with a common trait – the ability to give others the benefit of the doubt. Seuss’ characters exhibit characteristics admired by readers, allowing his audience to understand that tolerance and acceptance lead to more peaceful, happy outcomes than continuing cycles of intolerance and prejudice.

Implications

The persona “Dr. Seuss” became a vehicle for Theodor Geisel to proliferate his moral agenda, an agenda well developed and seasoned throughout a long career in persuasion and rhetoric. The man behind the pen-name “Seuss” simultaneously created works of fantastical fiction and produced fierce political propaganda. Does Seuss’ pen-name discredit the persuasive abilities of a man who made his career in political rhetoric? Absolutely not, and further the pen name “Seuss” allowed Geisel to be increasingly persuasive. Few knew the rhetorical Geisel behind the imaginative Seuss; but the two cannot be divorced from one another, because scholars have noted that texts are inextricably linked to the author’s political views (Harris, 1999; Sutherland, 1985; Wright, 1976; Plotz, 1995). Therefore, Dr. Seuss’ publication of moral *loci* becomes a “political act,” and a promulgation of Theodor Geisel’s political views (Sutherland, 1985).

With their publication, Dr. Seuss’ post-World War II message books became political acts, and his works exemplified ideological *loci* through politics of advocacy. Politics of advocacy, as elaborated in the literature review, promotes a certain cause, agenda or point-of-

view (Sutherland, 1985). Sutherland also notes the author's conscious decision to include politics of advocacy, therefore Dr. Seuss' texts fall into this category of political persuasion in children's literature. While subtle political messages may appear "hidden" to readers, this study demonstrates Dr. Seuss' conscious attempt to proliferate a certain agenda by highlighting dominant *loci* within the texts. Dr. Seuss wrote and illustrated with a deliberate and meaningful hand, always cognizant of rhetorical elements and their ability to persuade the audience. Dr. Seuss' politics of advocacy typically demonstrate the negative effects of the behavior being advocated against. For example, Dr. Seuss illustrates the importance of ecologically-friendly behavior through the Once-ler's detestable existence. His politics of advocacy also generate attractive models of behavior through the redemption of likeable characters from recurring problems linked to undesirable causes.

As previously noted, scholars are split on the positive or negative effects of injecting political ideology into children's literature. For example, Collinson (1973) frowns upon didacticism for hindering the audience's ability to decipher the truth or make personal interpretations of unique experiences. However, this study has shown that politically didactic children's literature can advance the audience's ability to formulate personal interpretations of the truth. As shown in the analysis, Dr. Seuss frequently addresses the audience personally, encouraging thoughtful consideration of the characters and imploring readers to make their own judgments and interpretations. Dr. Seuss' active engagement with his audience demonstrates that didactic works can encourage children to explore unique experiences, rather than solely promulgate the author's "living truth" (Collinson 38). Dr. Seuss' message books build an active understanding of the truth by injecting moral *loci* and giving them audience room to make personal reflection on the messages in the texts.

Disgusted with boring *Dick and Jane* books, Dr. Seuss created fanciful works that challenged and intrigued both child and adult readers. Through his powerful books and reverence of children's minds, Dr. Seuss became a catalyst, setting literature for children on a new path. Dr. Seuss maintained both the style of a children's writer and persuasive integrity of a rhetorician, fusing influential themes and far-fetched stories into a single genre. In this way, Dr. Seuss' texts enabled post World War II children's literature to transcend its "pallid" roots and become morally empowering. Not only did Dr. Seuss facilitate children with reading skills, a traditional function of children's literature, but he provided his audience with powerful calls to action. The new children's genre established by Dr. Seuss' post-World War II message books served an all-inclusive function – fun and education, while enabling children with decision-making skills necessary to interpret their own life experiences. Dr. Seuss' wacky words and illustrations proved that children's literature can boast both didactic and entertainment functions.

This study has illustrated close textual analysis' ability to uncover unforeseen *loci* in uncommon rhetoric. This study's greatest contribution to the field of communication studies is the application of an additional critical perspective or tool to close textual analysis. This study relies on close textual analysis for the discovery of dominant *loci*; however, the addition of a topical tool allows for intertextual synthesis. The discovery of dominant *loci* allows the critic to establish a "vocabulary" of common arguments within a given text; further, the productive-focus of Cicero's invention allows the critic to analyze relationships between uncovered arguments and dominant *loci* across texts. The addition of a topical perspective allowed this study to take on a productive focus of its own, and moved from merely analyzing texts to producing a unique work of invention, a synthesis of intertextual dominant *loci*. This study demonstrates that coupling close textual analysis with another critical tool allows for additional avenues for analysis. Future

studies should note the method's vast applications and consider the addition of a topical tool to further close textual criticisms. This specific methodology lends well to studies seeking to define a set vocabulary of arguments on a given topic, time period, genre or rhetorician. Scholars determined to illustrate common themes should be encouraged to add a topical element to their criticisms. Close textual analysis coupled with topical approaches has the ability to infer context, allowing critics to consider rhetors' intentions and personal politics. This method, however, is not without its limitations. This methodology lends well to textual artifacts; however, rhetorical works that lack words may be hard to analyze via this method. Also, this method lends best to studies that require a close proximity to text. Topical tools rely on the text itself to explain relevant arguments and relationships, and studies hovering farther in proximity will lose the specificity necessary to benefit from close textual analysis coupled with topical approaches.

This study has also demonstrated the importance of examining children's literature in close proximity to the text. As noted, persuasion in children's literature can remain hidden (Wright, 1976). Remaining close to the text enables the critic to remain open to hidden persuasion in unlikely rhetorical circumstances. Dr. Seuss' post-World War II rhetoric may seem an improbable artifact selection for rhetorical criticism; however, this thesis has demonstrated the method's diverse applications. Undoubtedly, Dr. Seuss would applaud this method and encourage rhetorical critics that there are things you can find, if only you analyze.

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