

THE ROLE OF READING INTERESTS  
IN THE READING PROGRAM

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM . . . . .	2
METHODS AND MATERIALS . . . . .	3
DEFINITION OF TERMS . . . . .	3
FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE READING INTERESTS . . . . .	4
Interest According to Age and Grade Level . . . . .	9
Interest According to Sex . . . . .	10
Interest According to Intelligence . . . . .	13
Interest According to Socioeconomic Status . . . . .	14
CREATING AND CAPITALIZING ON READING INTERESTS . . . . .	16
Creating Interest in Reading . . . . .	19
Book Characteristics and Interests . . . . .	25
Magazines and Interests . . . . .	27
General Implications for Teachers . . . . .	27
Enriching Reading Interests . . . . .	30
Interests as Used in Basal Readers . . . . .	37
METHODS USED TO DISCOVER READING INTERESTS . . . . .	41
SUMMARY . . . . .	44
REFERENCES . . . . .	48
APPENDIX A . . . . .	53
APPENDIX B . . . . .	55

## INTRODUCTION

The reading habits, interests, and tastes formed during childhood determine to a great extent the adult reading patterns of the future. Building a lasting interest in reading, and developing an appetite for what is worth reading, are two objectives that have tremendous long-range significance. One of the principle aims in a reading program is to develop pupils who are interested in reading as well as pupils who have the necessary skills to read. Therefore, a good reading program must create the desire to read and help the individual to find pleasurable recreation in reading. It should also foster the desire to read for personal development, to learn more about the world, and to gain increasing understanding of people and society.

The development of reading interests is one of the permanent learnings resulting from the reading program. Every teacher must know something of the child's preference for reading and the child's topical interests in reading which he brings to a reading group and accept some responsibility for the interests with which he ends a school year. As Virgil Howes states:

Interest is an all-important basis of learning, whatever the particular level of competence may be. The lack of interest causes many children as well as adults to fail in reading. But when moved by a high degree of interest children show increased energy to work persistently at reading until satisfaction is gained from accomplishment.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Virgil Howes, "Children's Interests--A Keynote for Teaching Reading," Education, LXXXIII (April, 1963), 491.

A teacher with information on reading attitudes and interests of individual children can adjust her teaching to make reading experiences door openers for limitless opportunities for pupil growth. Also, the teacher can build upon present interests and work actively to develop and extend interests. Paul Witty tells us:

Case-studies could readily be given to show the value of the use of strong interests to motivate and encourage effective reading. In case-studies one can show too, large gains in reading skills associated with wide reading based on pupil interest. In some cases the establishment of new interests and the redirection of old ones are necessary. But the value of reading experience chosen in accord with interest and need has been shown repeatedly in case-studies to lead pupils to attain a better understanding of themselves and their social environment. It has been shown also to result in the building of a more suitable ideal of self, including attitudes that lead to more realistic vocational and educational choices.<sup>2</sup>

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this report was to show that a child's preference for reading and his topical reading interests are important aspects of an elementary reading program; to examine some of the factors which influence a child's reading interest; to show how to create and capitalize on these reading interests; and to give some methods used to discover a child's reading interests.

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<sup>2</sup>Paul Witty and Associates, "Studies of Children's Interest--A Brief Summary III," Elementary English, XXXVIII (January, 1961), 34.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

Upon the establishment of the problem, the Education Index was referred to for the purpose of locating the topics of concern. Books and periodicals from the Kansas State University library and from the personal collection of Dr. Leo M. Schell were reviewed on the topics of interests and reading interests.

Since there has been an enormous amount of literature written concerning this subject, this report is limited in its scope of inquiry. The report is also limited to the elementary school, although some of the concepts involved are applicable to all levels of reading.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

### Elementary School, Six-Year

A school for children of elementary school age that normally required six years to complete the work provided.<sup>3</sup>

### Interest

An interest is a characteristic disposition, organized through experience, which impels an individual to seek out particular objects, activities, understandings, skills, or goals for attention or acquisition.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Carter V. Good (ed.), Dictionary of Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959), p. 197.

<sup>4</sup>Jacob W. Getzels, "The Nature of Reading Interests," Developing Permanent Interest in Reading, Supplementary Education Monographs No. 84 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 7.

## Interests

Interests are the objects, relations, skills, goals, and activities that actively engage our selective attention, our concern, or our values.<sup>5</sup>

### FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE READING INTERESTS

There are certain tendencies in reading interests that change as the child's experiences grow and as his imagination and reasoning powers develop. There seems to be a positive correlation between the patterns of physical, mental, social and emotional development and their relations to children's reading activities. These patterns have been discussed by David H. Russell in the book Children Learn to Read.

Dr. Russell states that in the preschool years the child has learned a large number of general motor skills and uses a wide variety of large-muscle activities. From the ages of six to eight, the child begins to place less emphasis on these activities for their own sake. These skills often become useful in the social context. Also at this time the child undertakes an increasing number of activities involving finer muscular co-ordinations. These are developed gradually and at different ages by different children. Another characteristic is the great amount of

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<sup>5</sup>David Kopel, "The Nature of Interests," Education, LXXXIII (April, 1963), 500.

physical activity in which a child engages. Girls at this age are approximately one year more mature than boys. Children in the primary grades need an active program. The fine muscular co-ordinations required in reading must be developed gradually by the teacher with reference to the varying abilities of different children in this regard.

The period from nine to eleven years is usually a continuation of the growth patterns of the previous period. In general boys and girls of this period enjoy a healthy, vigorous life. There is usually a rapid development of ability to make finer co-ordinations and a resistance to fatigue which means that children of this age group can read longer and with greater skill than they were capable of doing previously. Consequently these children do a large amount of reading if materials are accessible.

The ages of twelve to fourteen years are marked by many physical changes. Anatomic and physiological changes may be farreaching, with consequent effect on metabolism, motor skills, and organization of physical traits. Maturation of the sex organs and growth of the secondary sex characteristics are usually important to the person involved. Many experts regard the chief characteristic of the period as the differential growth rate. One constant factor in differential growth rates is the fact that girls ordinarily achieve puberty from one and a half to two years earlier than boys. Girls often gain height rapidly between eleven and

thirteen years, but many boys gain most rapidly between thirteen and fifteen years. Concerning mental factors of child development Mr. Russell states that children of the primary group are essentially interested in the here and now.

During this period their interests broaden so that eight-year-olds may be interested in people and things removed from the immediate environment. However, experiences must be real and related to past experiences if they are to become part of the child's living. Their spontaneous interests are concerned with themselves or topics close to themselves. Thinking in general shows this personal bias. Primary children are realistic and largely engrossed in detail. Their language is generally factual, direct, and specific. The thinking of primary-school children is evolving from the concrete toward some abstract.

Nine- to eleven-year-old children show signs of specialization and differentiation in interests which usually expresses itself as a sex difference in terms of individuals. There is a differentiation between work and play, the creative work is uninhibited, intellectual ability is more mature, and there is a rapid growth in vocabulary. Children begin to organize memory around clues instead of wholes. They increase in ability to see similarities and differences and causal relationships. They make simple generalizations on the basis of concrete experiences and will examine a limited number of facts in making a judgement. Children

now begin to use reading to satisfy their own interests, and individual children may read widely to satisfy curiosity. This is the stage at which the teacher will find many children eager to learn the use of encyclopedias and other reference books.

During the ages of twelve to fourteen teachers and parents can expect more mature performance in application of intellect such as work-type reading, problem-solving, and creative situations. These children still have a general thirst for information and therefore books of knowledge and children's encyclopedias are popular. Associated with general mental development and language development, the abilities to generalize and to reason about personal and social problems improve. The ability to memorize increases, as does organizing ability. The general growth in mental ability means that the teacher can begin to place more reliance on reading as a learning situation.

As a child develops socially we see that from six to eight years of age individual pursuits are gradually abandoned to make way for more social enterprises. His self-assertion dwindles in the face of some desire for group approval. Spontaneous language activity is direct and specific with short sentences and few subordinate clauses. In the early parts of the period much of the speech is a monologue, but later most pupils generally develop ability to participate in discussion. Toward the end of the period,

boys and girls of ten divide themselves into distinct groups for games or other activities. By the end of the third grade the language and ideas of a book or basal reader may affect directly the language and ideas of some children to whom they appeal. About the end of this period boys' and girls' interests begin to change.

Social changes from the age of nine to eleven years old usually are more significant than physical ones. Most children of this age favor activities shared with a friend or a group above individual pursuits. This group may exercise a greater influence on activities, ambitions, and qualities of character than the home. Boys in general avoid participation in any activities with girls. A child may read certain materials just because it is the thing to do. Boys at this period are developing competency in group games, are ready to take chances, are not too concerned with cleanliness, are aggressive and boisterous. Girls at this age are more concerned with being friendly, pretty, tidy, enthusiastic, and good-humored.

The influence of the group continues into the early adolescent period. During these years the individual becomes increasingly aware of self, but he sees himself in the world of his peers. Girls are now more concerned with establishing social contacts with friends of the opposite sex, usually in groups. Their behavior changes from the quiet, docile behavior to rather dominating activity in groups and

the attractive, glamour-girl type of personality. Boys from ages twelve to fourteen remain much more constant. However, from fourteen to fifteen years of age attention getting devices are regarded as rather childish, and more place is given to social poise, likableness, and grooming. The increasing importance of group activities means that the mature person at this age has less time for individual pursuits such as reading. Some individuals may pursue interests and hobbies with great enthusiasm and concentration. This may involve reading on a high level of efficiency and difficulty of material.

These patterns of physical, mental, social and emotional development reveal themselves in the kinds of literature which children prefer to read. The following sections on interest according to age and grade level, interest according to sex, interest according to intelligence, and interest according to socioeconomic status point out the types of books which children are more interested in reading.<sup>6</sup>

#### Interest According to Age and Grade Level

At each age and grade level reading preferences vary widely. F. V. Shankman classified children's reading interests according to age and grade level. In kindergarten and

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<sup>6</sup>David H. Russell, Children Learn To Read (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1961), pp. 80-93.

first grade, ages five and six, children prefer stories of children like themselves, playmates, pets or toys. They also enjoy fantasy, fairy tales, Mother Goose, fairies, talking animals and repetition as could be found in series of stories about the same character. Children in grades two and three, ages seven and eight, respond to fairy tales of elves and giants, fanciful stories especially about animal characters, humorous characters such as Little Black Sambo, series stories such as the Bobbsey Twins, adventure stories of real pets, exciting dangers and fears of animals. Children in grades four and five, age nine and ten, choose stories of humor such as Mary Poppins or The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins, series stories such as Cherry Ames, fanciful stories such as Wind In The Willows, adventure as found in Robin Hood, animal stories particularly horses, and children of other lands. In grades five and six, age ten and eleven, the children prefer fictionalized history and biography, tall tales, biography and travel, hobbies such as stamp collecting, mechanics, science and inventions.<sup>7</sup>

#### Interest According to Sex

Sex as a factor affecting reading interest has been the subject of various studies. Boys and girls have about the same kind of reading interests until the age of eight or

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<sup>7</sup>Florence Shankman, "Developing Permanent Reading Interests in Children," Elementary English, XL (April, 1963), 412.

nine. From this point on boys tend to become increasingly interested in sports and adventure and girls in stories of a sentimental nature. Girls are more interested in reading than boys and therefore seem to read more books than boys.

In 1937 May Lazar presented information which showed that there was a marked sex difference in the books chosen for reading. She pointed out that girls read more books than boys. Mystery stories were ranked first by both boys and girls. Next the boys choose adventure, detective, history, invention, science, nature and animal, fairy tales, biography, novels, stories about home and school, and poetry. After mystery girls chose stories related to activities at home or at school.<sup>8</sup>

Harris made a study in 1955 with 248 first graders to discover their expressed reading interests. In an interview situation he learned that boys and girls are interested in cowboys and Indians, fairy tales, comics and funny stories, pets and other animals. Girls like stories about children, romance and marriage. Boys are more inclined to like stories about adult adventures and exciting events.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>May Lazar, Reading Interests, Activities and Opportunities of Bright, Average and Dull Children, Teachers College Contributions to Education, No. 707 (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1937), cited by Paul Witty and Associates, "Studies of Children's Interest--A Brief Summary II," Elementary English, XXXVII (December, 1960), 541.

<sup>9</sup>James M. Harris, "The Expressed Reading Interest of First Grade Boys and Girls and the Adequacy of Current Basic Readers in Meeting These Needs" (Doctoral Dissertation, Cornell University, 1955), cited by Helen Rogers and H. Alan Robinson, "Reading Interests of First Graders," Elementary English, XL (November, 1963), 707.

In 1958 George W. Norvell surveyed the reading preferences of more than 24,000 children in grades three to six in New York state. As indicated by their responses on questionnaires, boys in these grades favored books which dealt with animals, adventure, physical struggle, humor, courage, and patriotism. On the other hand, boys did not care for excessive description, moralizing, romantic love, sentiment, heroines as the main characters or physically frail male characters.

Girls in Norvell's survey preferred reading about adventure, home and school life, animals and pets, romantic love, mystery, the supernatural, and patriotic deeds. They did not like violent action, fierce animals, excessive description, moralizing, or characters younger than themselves.

Many rhymes from Mother Goose were enjoyed as late as sixth grade; many others were rejected as early as third grade. Aesop's Fables and fairy tales were popular in grades three to five; myths, legends, and hero and folk tales were most popular in grades five to seven. Sex differences in children's choices in reading appeared early, and girls were found to enjoy many boys' books, but boys were not interested in most girls' books.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>George W. Norvell, What Boys and Girls Like To Read (Morristown, New Jersey: Silver Burdett Co., 1958), cited by Paul A. Witty, Alma M. Freeland, and Edith H. Grotberg, The Teaching of Reading (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1966), pp. 49-50.

### Interest According to Intelligence

The effect of intelligence upon interest in reading has been studied by some investigators. Lazar found that titles chosen did not vary much with bright, average and slow children. She also points out that in the intermediate grades slow boys like fairy tales, stories of school life, poetry, and mystery stories whereas bright boys prefer adventure stories and science magazines.<sup>11</sup> Terman and Lima found that bright children read three or four times as many books as average children.<sup>12</sup> Witty and Lehman reported that the voluntary reading of gifted children is extensive and exceeds greatly the amount of reading accomplished by mentally average children.<sup>13</sup>

Stone indicated as a result of his study that the types of reading preferred by slow children varied only

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<sup>11</sup>May Lazar, Reading Interests, Activities and Opportunities of Bright, Average and Dull Children, Teachers College Contributions to Education, No. 707 (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1937), cited by Nila B. Smith, Reading Instruction for Today's Children (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 411.

<sup>12</sup>Lewis M. Terman and Margaret Lima, Children's Reading: A Guide for Parents and Teachers (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1931), p. 131, cited by Nila B. Smith, Reading Instruction for Today's Children (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 411.

<sup>13</sup>Paul A. Witty and Harvey C. Lehman, "A Study of the Reading and Reading Interests of Gifted Children," Journal of Genetic Psychology, XL (June, 1932), pp. 473-485, cited by Nila B. Smith, Reading Instruction for Today's Children (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 411.

slightly from those preferred by average or bright children, except that slow children apparently care less for humorous items than do the other groups. They also frequently choose books that were too difficult for them, and so needed special guidance.<sup>14</sup>

Generally the studies indicate that children with a high I.Q. read books that are more difficult and more adult than do low I.Q. children of the same age. Mental age rather than the intelligence quotient appears to be the major factor and it seems to direct interest toward specific areas of content rather than toward reading as distinguished from other activities.<sup>15</sup>

#### Interest According to Socioeconomic Status

The socioeconomic status of children seems to influence their reading interest. However, Smith and Dechant tell us in their book Psychology in Teaching Reading that the exact relationship of the socioeconomic status in determining whether a child will become a "reader" and his choice of reading matter is not clear.<sup>16</sup>

Havighurst made a study of children in grades five, six and seven in an urban school system according to their socioeconomic status. His investigation concerned the

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<sup>14</sup>C. R. Stone, "Grading Reading Selections on the Basis of Interests," Educational Method, X (1931), pp. 225-230, cited by Nila B. Smith, Reading Instruction for Today's Children (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 411.

<sup>15</sup>Henry P. Smith, and Emerald V. Dechant, Psychology in Teaching Reading (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 278.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 277.

leisure time activities of four socioeconomic groups. He found that reading books ranked either sixth or seventh from a total of twelve different activities.<sup>17</sup>

This seems to indicate that the proportion of time spent in book reading is not highly related to socioeconomic status but that the specific type of reading done may be highly related.<sup>18</sup>

Link and Hopf report that the more years of formal education an individual has, the more books he tends to read. A positive, but not as significant, correlation existed between the number of books read and socioeconomic status.<sup>19</sup>

Roster explored the relationship between the reading interests and socioeconomic status of fifth-grade pupils. An occupational index was used to determine the status of the parents, and interests were classified on the basis of responses to a questionnaire. The children were divided into upper-class, middle-class, and lower-class groups. When the reading interests of the pupils were studied and compared as a total group, the choices of the children from the

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<sup>17</sup>Robert J. Havighurst, "Relations Between Leisure Activities and the Socio-Economic Status of Children," Growing Points in Educational Research, Official Report, American Educational Research Association, 1949, pp. 201-208, cited by Henry P. Smith, and Emerald V. Dechant, Psychology in Teaching Reading (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 278.

<sup>18</sup>Smith and Dechant, loc. cit.

<sup>19</sup>Henry C. Link, and Harry A. Hopf, People and Books (New York: Book Manufacturer's Institute, 1946), cited by Henry P. Smith, and Emerald V. Dechant, Psychology in Teaching Reading (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 278.

three socioeconomic class levels were significantly different in eight of the areas studied. Socioeconomic class status was of greater influence in determining reading interests than chronological age, reading grade level or I.Q. Although sex factors influenced choices, the socioeconomic level within each sex group made significant differences in boy-girl interests. Upper-class children were more interested in areas concerned with history and geography, true science, biography, camping and scouting than either of the other two class groups. Middle-class children were interested in the area of airplanes and jets, while lower-class children were more interested in people and children, animals and pets, God and the Bible.<sup>20</sup>

#### CREATING AND CAPITALIZING ON READING INTERESTS

A child's curiosity and his tendency to explore have led him to acquire certain interests. His capabilities have played a big role in developing interests. Cultural factors such as specific religious affiliations, or living in a certain country or specific area of a country have influenced interest. Schools have channeled interest toward certain ends. Social factors such as vocational interests,

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<sup>20</sup>Arlene A. Roster, "An Investigation of the Relationship Between Interests and Socioeconomic Status of Children" (unpublished Ed.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1960), cited by Albert J. Mazurkiewicz, New Perspectives in Reading Instruction (New York: Pitman Publishing Corporation, 1964), p. 395.

influence of parents and friends, influence of persons within a certain occupation, influence of teachers, and hobbies have all helped to develop interests.<sup>21</sup>

Donald Super condensed the determinants of interest to aptitude, social expectations, and need or value. He concluded:

What a person can do well and what people expect him to do limit the activities in which his needs and values will manifest themselves and the preferences which they lead him to formulate. They limit also the development of his interests. What a person needs and values and what people expect him to do limit the outlets which he will find and use for his aptitudes. And what a person needs and what he can do limit his responses to social role expectations.<sup>22</sup>

Three categories of interest which Clay Smith proposed are active interests, social interests, and creative interests. Active interests extend the self more than passive ones. The actual participation and type of participation will determine how effective the activity is to be. Social interests help us expand ourselves. Other things being equal, interests that develop friendships and skill in dealing with others increase our sense of control more than interests that do not involve other people. The more creative our interests, the more they lead to increased understanding. Some interests provide more opportunities for creativity

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<sup>21</sup>Smith and Dechant, op. cit., p. 275.

<sup>22</sup>Donald E. Super, "Interests," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Third ed. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1960), pp. 729-730.

than others. What a person does with an interest is more important than the interest itself. Reading may be a path to discovery and control, providing new approaches to old problems, and new significance to common experiences, or it can be a passive and routine activity which wastes time, dissipates energy, and distracts attention from reality.<sup>23</sup>

Children have a few natural interests, arising largely from biological needs, but they early acquire social and cultural interests which may relate to reading. Psychologists agree that there are only a few natural interests closely connected with children's wants and needs. Most interests, including reading interests, may have some natural basis, but they are largely the result of the content of the child's environment. Thus interests which are a product of the child's interaction with his environment become, in turn, a source of motivation for further activity.<sup>24</sup>

The basic principles of successful work in developing reading interests have been admirable summarized as consisting of "a lure and a ladder." The lure may be any of a variety of ways of enticing children to begin pleasurable reading. The ladder involves providing suitable reading matter which will intensify the child's interest in reading and in which he can gradually progress to reading material of superior quality.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Henry Clay Smith, Personality Adjustment (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1961), p. 184.

<sup>24</sup>Russell, op. cit., pp. 364-365.

<sup>25</sup>Albert J. Harris, How To Increase Reading Ability (New York: David McKay Co., 1961), pp. 483-485.

### Creating Interest in Reading

One of the major tasks in a reading program is the transformation of children whose attitude toward reading has been one of indifference or active dislike into avid readers. The most carefully planned lesson may be disappointing unless the teacher is able to arouse some interest and then nurture it carefully until the child is enthusiastic about reading.

It has been generally agreed that the physical surroundings in the classroom should create an atmosphere favorable to reading. An area of the room with a table or two, a few chairs and book shelves is essential to help create this atmosphere. A good class library should contain at least fifty books. They should range in difficulty from some easy enough for the poorest readers in the class to others which will interest the most advanced readers. A collection of books concerning the current activity unit is important. The books should be of a wide variety from fairy tales to nature study and science, and some poetry. Current and back issues of the good children's magazines should find a place also. A simple classification scheme might be developed to make it easier for children to select books. The daily class schedule must provide some free time for browsing and for independent silent reading if the reading corner is to function properly.

With children who have a confirmed dislike for reading

special procedures may be necessary. The teacher might first of all introduce to the child a book that is easy, brief, and will attract and hold his interest. The book should have many pictures, few lines to a page, and comparatively few pages. When choosing the book the content should be in relation to what is known about the child's interests. To introduce the book the teacher might show the book, turn a few pages to show illustrations, and read enough of the story to arouse a desire to know the rest of it. Then the child can be asked to read ahead five or ten pages. If the child continues to read further than suggested the teacher knows that the procedure has been successful. From then on, the problem is one of keeping the child supplied with suitable books. Acquainting the child with a library and helping him to get a library card might be the follow up step. A good children's librarian can be of invaluable help to both the teacher and the child in suggesting suitable books.<sup>26</sup>

To develop an interest in reading for all children, learning to read should be a successful experience. Thorndike's Law of Effect put forth the idea that organisms tend to repeat actions that have been followed by positive reinforcement and have refrained from repeating actions that result in no satisfaction or in real displeasure or

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 483-488.

discomfort.<sup>27</sup> William Eller has paraphrased this Law of Effect so that it might state,

... when students are rewarded through their reading, they will tend to read more in the future; contrariwise, if they are unrewarded or punished by reading, they will be less likely to turn to reading in the future.<sup>28</sup>

Presumably any time a student receives satisfaction from reading, his attitude toward reading and the teacher involved becomes more favorable by some amount. The primary reward in reading comes from the information and/or entertainment which satisfies the reader's motives for reading. A secondary type of reward which may be associated with reading comes from teacher, pupil or parent approval or praise springing from outward evidence of the reading. Social awards, such as giving certificates for the reading of a specified number of books, are often used as a secondary type reward. If a student is to achieve a lifelong interest in reading as a result of the rewards received in school, the majority of these rewards must be intrinsic rather than extrinsic, since the extrinsic type rewards are not so likely to be earned, once the reader has left the schools.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Albert J. Harris, "Influences of Individual Differences on the Reading Program," Meeting Individual Differences in Reading, Supplementary Educational Monographs No. 94 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 20.

<sup>28</sup>William Eller, "Reading Interest: A Function of the Law of Effect," The Reading Teacher, XIII (December, 1959), p. 116.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

Certainly one of the best ways in which a teacher can reward and strengthen a pupils interest in reading is through personal effort to locate materials which will be likely to appeal to the pupil, and to place them in his hands with the suggestion that he will find the contents to his liking. The difficult element in this procedure is the requirement that the teacher know considerable about the interests, habits, and hobbies of each pupil. Once this information is acquired, the teacher can be on the lookout for books and articles of interest to specific readers.<sup>30</sup>

Florence Shankman in her article "Developing Permanent Reading Interests in Children" has stated that there are other factors involved in developing an interest in reading. Among these were the quality and quantity of the reading characteristics of the family, the accessibility and availability of books to the child, the nature of the school curriculum, the attitude of teachers, the opinions of the family, and the experiences the child had with other communication arts such as television, radio, motion pictures and recordings.<sup>31</sup>

Another strong factor in the development of interest in reading is concerned with the situation in the child's home. A favorable home background can serve as a good foundation for later refinement. Teachers might contribute to home influences which affect reading interests in the following ways:

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>31</sup>Shankman, op. cit., p. 411.

- (1) Encourage parents to supply their child with an abundance of books selected in terms of the child's interest and his level of readability.
- (2) Encourage parents to read aloud often to their younger children.
- (3) Encourage parents to work out a time budget with children which allows for physical recreation, studying, television viewing, and reading.
- (4) Suggest to parents that they devote a stated period each evening to their own reading, while the child reads at the same time.
- (5) Recommend to parents that they listen if the child wishes to read.
- (6) If the child does not know a word the parent should tell it to him so as not to interrupt this enjoyable reading situation.
- (7) The parent should not force a child to read, but if he voluntarily makes any gesture toward reading, the parent should handle the situation pleasurable and with interest.
- (8) Parents should be encouraged to foster reading by obtaining good books for the home.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Smith, Reading Instruction for Today's Children, op. cit., pp. 415-416; 532.

It has been further suggested by Amy Jensen that parents might do the following:

- (1) Buy books for children and see to it that they use some of their own money to purchase books.
- (2) Investigate the materials children read and try to substitute good books for the less desirable types.
- (3) Confer with the child's teacher to learn about the needs and interests of their children and obtain suggestions for getting suitable books to answer those needs and interests.
- (4) Attend various programs given by the P.T.A., librarians, and study groups to learn more about children's literature.
- (5) Use magazines, book sections of newspapers, and other sources to read reviews of approved books for children at various reading levels.<sup>33</sup>

Marion D. Jenkinson explains that closely related to the problem of developing interests is that of developing reading tastes. There should be quality as well as quantity in what a student reads. Therefore, the literature and reading matter presented to students in school must be examined carefully if they are to sustain and maintain an

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<sup>33</sup>Amy Jensen, "Attracting Children to Books," Elementary English, XXXIII (October, 1956), pp. 338-339.

interest in reading. Several studies have suggested that a preconceived liking of students and adults for reading material of inferior quality may be a reflection upon and a rejection of the large amounts of uninteresting reading material to which they are exposed in school. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the content of school texts continually, in light of shifts in interests as social and cultural conditions change.<sup>34</sup>

#### Book Characteristics and Interests

The physical characteristics of a book seem to have had an influence upon a child's desire to read the book. B. Goodykoontz summarized these features in 1936. One quarter of the total page space should be devoted to pictures. Children prefer large pictures. They prefer strong colors to black and white or to delicate pastel colors. They like bold central groups, with few but striking details. They prefer realistic to conventionalized pictures. They prefer pictures which show action or humor and tell a story. Young children like a broader range of subject matter than they usually receive. Younger children do not care for pictures of child activities. Older children like pictures

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<sup>34</sup>Marion D. Jenkinson, "The Roles of Motivation in Reading," Meeting Individual Differences in Reading, Supplementary Educational Monographs No. 94 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 55.

related to in-school and informational activities.<sup>35</sup>

Gertrude Whipple stated that fourth grade children prefer illustrations that had a definite center of interest, were colored, and depicted action.<sup>36</sup> Mabel Rudisill found that children preferred realistic pictures in color, but will choose a realistic black and white picture over a less realistic colored one.<sup>37</sup>

The authors of the Readtext Treasury of Literature Series, published by Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., have stated that children wanted their literature well printed, with print that was large and clear, uncrowded pages that could be turned frequently, and illustrations that complemented the reading.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>B. Goodykoontz, "The Relation of Pictures to Reading Comprehension," Elementary English, XIII (1936), pp. 125-128, cited by Albert J. Harris, How To Increase Reading Ability (New York: David McKay Co., 1961) pp. 469-470.

<sup>36</sup>Gertrude Whipple, "Appraisal of the Interest Appeal of Illustrations," Elementary School Journal, LIII (1953), pp. 262-269, cited by Albert J. Harris, How To Increase Reading Ability (New York: David McKay Co., 1961), p. 470.

<sup>37</sup>Mabel Rudisill, "Children's Preferences for Color versus Other Qualities in Illustrations," Elementary School Journal, LII (1952), pp. 444-451, cited by Albert J. Harris, How To Increase Reading Ability (New York: David McKay Co., 1961), p. 470.

<sup>38</sup>Eleanor M. Johnson, and Leland B. Jacobs, Enchanted Isles, teacher's edition (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1960), p. 3.

### Magazines and Interests

Pupil selection of books have been influenced by magazines. Maureen Thur concluded that magazines can tantalize the taste of almost every child for reading. There is something in each issue that will appeal to the interests, ambitions, and creativity of each child, no matter how selective he might be. She stated that boys prefer science and exploration while girls prefer mysteries, folktales and stories with horses, and cooking. Slower pupils have become more interested in reading since they could finish a story or article in one sitting. There is no stigma of "slow reader" attached to a child who reads a magazine.<sup>39</sup> In 1938 Witty and Kapel said that periodicals proved to be popular in every grade above the second in the elementary school.<sup>40</sup>

### General Implications for Teachers

Reading is a complicated process involving the coordination of many physical and intellectual skills, attitudes and interests. Classroom teachers and reading specialists have recognized the importance of these aspects of reading in the learning situation. Several writers have commented on the importance of teachers and authors of basal

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<sup>39</sup>Maureen Thur, "Children's Magazines in the Classroom," The Instructor, LXXIII (May, 1964), p. 19.

<sup>40</sup>Paul Witty and Associates, "Studies of Children's Interest--A Brief Summary II," Elementary English, XXXVII (December, 1960), p. 543.

readers capitalizing on children's reading interests in constructing and stimulating a reading program.

Teachers should be aware that interest is a dynamic force in reading. Ruth Strang states this relationship in her article "Interest as a Dynamic Force in the Improvement of Reading." According to Dr. Strang interest is closely related to the physical, psychological, social, and ideal self. The closer the interest is to the center of the individual's concerns, the more intense it becomes.

She further explains that intelligence and achievement are associated with these personality factors to create interest. We usually like to do things we can do well; we are interested in books we can read without difficulty, if the book is too difficult we are frustrated and lose interest. The greater our interest, the more rapidly we learn. Also, if a book or article has meaning, use, and purpose for the individual, he will put forth the effort that reading demands.

Interest also regulates the degree of our attention and the span of our attention. If a book appeals to our interests we will continue to read it for a period of time without being interrupted by boredom. Wholehearted interest in a book may have an integrating affect on the child's personality. It is a good experience for a young person to become absorbed for a time in something bigger than himself and beyond himself. Interest in one book may also lead

to further reading.

Comprehension and memory are aided by interest. Some psychological experiments have demonstrated that interesting content is comprehended and retained better than uninteresting content. Interest can also facilitate learning in that it creates readiness for a specific reading assignment and increases the satisfaction of the reading experience.<sup>41</sup>

Florence Shankman recognized some general implications involved in teaching reading. Teachers involved in the reading process need to know about interests of children. They should recognize that reading is part of a complex pattern which should also involve the individual differences. The student's interests should be taken into account instead of prescribing a definite reading program for him. There should be a use of visual aids to build new interests. The role of reading interests in personal development should be more widely recognized.<sup>42</sup>

The teacher has a great responsibility of ascertaining interests and then guiding or redirecting them into worthwhile channels. In order to do this the teacher needs to possess knowledge of books that would further the interests of her pupils. The knack of presenting the proper

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<sup>41</sup>Ruth Strang, "Interest as a Dynamic Force in the Improvement of Reading," Elementary English, XXXIV (March, 1957), pp. 170-172.

<sup>42</sup>Shankman, op. cit., p. 413.

books at the most opportune time must be learned by the teacher.<sup>43</sup> Teachers should also try to broaden children's reading horizons. Children's interests are not fixed; as children get older their interests change. There are many ways in which children's reading interests can be improved and enriched. The worst way is by forcing through required assignments and detailed book reports.<sup>44</sup>

### Enriching Reading Interests

Several authors have many suggestions for creating and capitalizing on reading interests. Lillie Goldberg offered several suggestions. She suggested first of all that teachers should become thoroughly familiar with children's literature and that the teacher should read orally to the class books geared toward their interest level. Reading in an audience situation was advocated since this might encourage other boys and girls to want to read. As the teacher reads certain books she might provide some background about the author. If children realize that authors were real people their attitude could change about the books involved. The idea that printed matter is just talk written down is a concept that children need to realize. Also, children should be helped to feel at home with books. This

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<sup>43</sup>Witty, Freeland, and Grotberg, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>44</sup>Harris, How To Increase Reading Ability, op. cit., pp. 488-489.

can be done by organizing a library club or taking them to public places where books are the center of attention, such as public libraries and book fairs. Teachers should try to involve each child personally in his own program of wide reading for recreation by inviting authors of children's books to come to public schools as speakers or showing movies concerning children's books to stimulate reading.<sup>45</sup>

Jacobs suggests several ways for teachers to promote reading interests. (1) Keep immediately available an attractive and well balanced collection of reading matter that is just right in content, form and readability for this particular group of children. (2) Help the individual child find the reading content that he cannot resist. (3) Encourage children to share their reflections of the reading which they have done. (4) Relate school reading experiences to other communication arts, particularly television, radio, motion pictures, recordings, the comics, and picture magazines. (5) Read to children. (6) Develop with the children suggested reading lists on topics that relate either to content areas, to special interests, to human relations or to personality development. (7) Encourage children to interpret what they have read in other forms of symbolism such as dramatics, painting, dioramas, sculpturing and puppetry. (8) Utilize the facilities of book exhibits and book fairs

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<sup>45</sup>Lillie Goldberg, "Development of Tastes and Interests," Education, LXXIV (March, 1964), pp. 393-396.

for extending children's awareness of the great variety of stimulating reading matter available to them. (9) Have children keep informal records of their independent reading. (10) Use only those evaluating procedures that concretely aid the child to assess realistically his present reading accomplishments.<sup>46</sup>

Bond and Tinker have suggested other methods to promote reading interest. (1) Arranging interesting displays of book jackets and book advertisements is often appealing. (2) Organizing a book club with its own pupil officers could be stimulating. (3) Carefully organized and regularly changed book exhibits in a corridor case may attract children's attention. (4) Very brief book reports may motivate still other children.<sup>47</sup>

McCallister adds still other ways of promoting reading interest. (1) Introduce topics by means of films, visual aids, recordings and other devices that will arouse interest and lead to voluntary reading. (2) Review or refer to books and articles that are relevant to the immediate assignment.

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<sup>46</sup>Leland B. Jacobs, "Goals in Promoting Permanent Reading Interests," Developing Permanent Interest in Reading, Supplementary Educational Monographs No. 84 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), pp. 23-24.

<sup>47</sup>Guy L. Bond, and Miles A. Tinker, Reading Difficulties: Their Diagnosis and Correction (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957), p. 399., cited by Henry P. Smith, and Emerald V. Dechant, Psychology in Teaching Reading (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 287.

(3) Provide class time for reading from the room library. At this time the children can read for enjoyment and can sample many different kinds of reading and explore new interests. (4) Compare the treatment of a subject by two or more authors to excite curiosity. (5) Permit one or more students to discuss books or other references that are not assigned to all members of the class. (6) Arrange for students to report reading experiences in panels or roundtable discussions. (7) Permit friends to work together, because sometimes better readers may help the poor reader.<sup>48</sup>

Nila Smith suggests that children will read books recommended by their peers more readily than they will read books recommended by teachers, parents or librarians.<sup>49</sup> For this reason the teacher might encourage her class to share or advertise books with one another in the following ways, thus stimulating them to read more books of good quality and giving them the opportunity to show their ingenuity and creative ability in art, writing, dramatic arts, and other fields:

- (1) Make posters
- (2) Construct a miniature stage setting

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<sup>48</sup>James M. McCallister, "Using the Content Subjects to Promote Reading Interests: In Grades Ten Through Fourteen," Developing Permanent Interest in Reading, Supplementary Educational Monographs No. 84 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 154.

<sup>49</sup>Smith, Reading Instruction for Today's Children, op. cit., p. 413.

- (3) Decorate a jacket or write an advertisement
- (4) Prepare monologue
- (5) Write book review
- (6) Create series of original illustrations for an action story
- (7) Write movie script
- (8) Give a performance
- (9) Demonstrate something found in a "How to Make or Do" book
- (10) State reasons for liking or not liking a story
- (11) Prepare illustrative lecture concerning a travel book
- (12) Make movie
- (13) Vivid oral or written description of a story character
- (14) Write a different ending
- (15) Write or tell most humorous incident
- (16) Mark beautiful descriptive passages, interesting conversations or other special parts for oral reading
- (17) Tell story to musical accompaniment
- (18) Make lists of unusual and colorful words
- (19) Pantomime
- (20) Write letter to friend or librarian to recommend book
- (21) Give synopsis of a story

- (22) Use information to make a scrapbook about a subject or collection
- (23) Put on a puppet show to illustrate story
- (24) Make time linear map to explain a historical book
- (25) Children write questions for another who has read book to answer
- (26) Broadcast book review to a radio audience for a school program
- (27) Dress as one of the people in story and tell what role he plays
- (28) Prepare book review for younger children
- (29) Find out about favorite author and make biography
- (30) Thumbnail sketch bulletin board of children's drawings
- (31) "A Line of Good Books" using a cord and pictures hanging from it
- (32) Clay, soap, wood, plaster or some other kind of modeling
- (33) Construct sand table, diorama
- (34) Dress paper, cardboard, wire, rag and other homemade dolls
- (35) Chalk talk on board or paper using cartooning
- (36) Create a colorful mural
- (37) Plan a living book-tableau
- (38) Write and draw a rebus story

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- (39) Bulletin board with captions about laughter or pictures of someone laughing and excerpts from funny stories rewritten by children
  - (40) Compare one book with a similar book
  - (41) Make original reference book from factual information
  - (42) Think up new adventures, experiences, or incidents to add to a book
  - (43) Write to library board to request book purchase
  - (44) Write an original play about magic of books
  - (45) Show moving pictures of these stories if available
  - (46) Listen to radio reviews
  - (47) Prepare a Book Fair to share books
  - (48) Make a T.V. presentation
  - (49) Visit library or book show
  - (50) Poetry - choral reading, write composite poem, dramatize poems, collect pictures to illustrate, rhythmic accompaniment and activities, poetry parade in costume, add original stanzas to poem.<sup>50</sup>

There are many other methods to promote and enrich a child's reading interests. An ingenious teacher can find ways of suggesting new fields of reading and awakening interest in new books. It is hoped that the child who reads

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<sup>50</sup>Jensen, op. cit., pp. 335-338.

extensively will learn to make his own comparisons and will eventually prefer sound writing and dislike trash. Even if he does not, some reading is far superior to none at all. It takes superior materials and clever salesmanship by teachers to compete with the mass media, such as television and motion pictures, in developing the reading habit. Unless a child does develop some good reading habits, much of the reading instruction is wasted.

#### Interests as Used in Basal Readers

Few people can enjoy reading a book that taxes their skills. One reason children say they do not like to read is because some of the books which they have been given to read have been too difficult to allow easy and enjoyable reading. Many a teacher finds that he has been given books to use as texts and readers which seem to be much too difficult and uninteresting for his pupils. The importance of motivating learning through a utilization of children's interests has been increasingly recognized by today's teachers and text book authors.

Basal readers could be more appealing to youngsters if the following suggestions, by Witty, were followed. He states that stories should be written in a natural, interesting manner presenting a wide assortment of children's literature of varied difficulty. The stories should challenge the imagination of the children and lead to a deeper appreciation of books as sources of pleasure and should

relate to specific but varied areas of interest of the class. A suitable and varied vocabulary is a necessary consideration. Illustrations should heighten interest but not disclose outcomes. Stories should be of increasing length so that children may develop attention and interest spans. These stories should be of increasing difficulty so that children will grow in reading skills. The stories should deal with topics found in content areas.<sup>51</sup>

Whether or not basal readers are taking into account the interest level of children seems to be a subject of debate. Ruth C. Smith made a study of pre-primers and primers compared with reading interest of children as evidenced by free choice selection of reading material from the library. Included in this study were 113 first grade children. They withdrew 566 books in fourteen library visits. This was compared with 859 stories from forty-nine readers. She found that pre-primers and primers showed a narrower span of reading interests than did the children's own choices of library materials. She concluded that the pre-primers and primers which children were required to read and which were supposed to stimulate the interest and desire to read, generally did not really satisfy children's actual reading interest.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Witty, Freeland, and Grotberg, op. cit., pp. 196-197.

<sup>52</sup>Ruth C. Smith, "Children's Reading Choices and Basic Reader Content," Elementary English, XXXIX (March, 1962), pp. 202-209.

Rogers and Robinson conducted a study in Gary, Indiana with 275 first graders. Their reading interests were determined through a questionnaire which had been evaluated independently by three professional children's librarians and two experienced first-grade teachers. Eight possible areas of reading interest were explored with four items representing each area. One of the results found from this study was:

Most basal reader materials at first-grade level seem to feature stories that fall into this category (family activities). Yet there are many other ideas for stories that are rated more interesting by first graders. In fact, only stories with anxiety-causing plots or dealing with today's world were less popular. The results of this study seem to indicate that stories of fantasy, adventure, happiness, humor, and history might generate more interest in reading than do family activities.<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, the authors of the Readtext Treasury of Literature have stated that the selection of their stories and poems was made in terms of the known preferences and desires of children. In their survey of thousands of available selections, first preference was always given to lists of books that children preferred. These choices were then supplemented by and checked against lists prepared by experts in the field of children's literature.<sup>54</sup>

Likewise, the authors of the Ginn Basic Program have stated that their stories cover a wide range of interests.

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<sup>53</sup>Rogers and Robinson, op. cit., p. 710.

<sup>54</sup>Johnson and Jacobs, loc. cit.

They include fairy stories, tall tales, and talking beast stories. Included are stories of rural and city life, of child life far away and long ago, of boys and girls and men and women at work and play. They have made an effort to show people living and working as they naturally do. Because the authors believe that factual material can have suspense, humor, movement, and other qualities which children are known to enjoy, the articles in this series were written from a child's point of view and in the style of the informal narrative.<sup>55</sup>

A reading program that does not seek to capitalize on children's reading interests and to further stimulate their interests and their interest in reading is doing a great disservice to the students involved. Since the basal reader plays such a dominant role in the teaching of reading, teachers need to feel confident that the stories selected for these readers are on the interest level of the class. The teacher must be aware of the interests and reading interests of the class so that other materials can be provided to help stimulate the individuals within the class to other areas of explorations and to further stimulate areas of interest already developed.

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<sup>55</sup>David H. Russell, Doris Gates, and Constance M. McCullough, Roads To Everywhere, teacher's edition (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1964), pp. 29-30.

## METHODS USED TO DISCOVER READING INTERESTS

Many techniques have been used in research studies on reading interests. Circulation data for newspapers and magazines have been compiled, the popularity of books has been studied by counting the number of times each was withdrawn from a library, and elaborate questionnaires have been used. But Harris believes that most of these methods are too complicated and time consuming for the classroom teacher to use, and that techniques which are used must be readily available and from which the results can be ascertained in a short period of time.

One of the simplest and most effective ways of finding out a child's interests is to watch his daily behavior for indications of interests that could be followed up in reading. Children also display their interests in conversation, in play, in drawing, and in other activities that encourage self-expression.

A "hobby club" period can often times reveal a child's leisure-time interests. An enthusiastic report about stamp collecting, a home aquarium, or some other hobby may start several other children on the same activity. Special reading material could be supplied for groups with similar hobbies.

A quiet interview with a child can prove to be revealing. The teacher can encourage the child to talk about his likes and dislikes in games, movies, radio programs, the

books he has read, or what he wants to be when he grows up. Naturally the teacher must be liked and trusted by the children in order to get them to confide in him. Questions such as "Do you enjoy reading?" "Do you like to have someone read to you?" "About how much time each day do you spend reading outside school?" "Do your parents encourage you to read?" will be helpful in the area of reading.

Simple questionnaires or interest inventories that have been published, such as those found in Appendices A and B of this report, by Harris, as well as questionnaires made by the teacher, asking about hobbies, toys, future plans, summer activities, and collections can provide insights into likes and dislikes.<sup>56</sup>

Another method to discover reading interests might be a parent conference. Such questions as "What does the child read at home?" "What does he like to do?" "What does he talk about?" will help in guiding discussions with parents to discover interests. Open-ended compositions or questions where the child must finish the story or sentences with his own feeling or desires can be helpful. Autobiographies may also be used effectively. Examination of previous or cumulative records of a pupil may also provide evidence as to the child's interest. Entries in diaries and logs may be indicative of pupil interests.

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<sup>56</sup>Harris, How To Increase Reading Ability, op. cit., pp. 477-483.

In a study of interests, McCullough had 391 fifth-graders in waterfront, central and hill districts of three social-economic areas of a California city keep logs of their out-of-school activities for one week. She found the group engaged in a total of twenty-six recreations and fourteen work activities. Televiewing was the most popular pursuit of both boys and girls. Next most frequent for boys were sports, caring for pets, games, homework, caring for one's room and visiting friends. For girls, the next most frequent activities were preparing meals, looking after one's room, washing dishes and sports. Book reading was low for all children except in the hill or upper-level district where about half the children reported recreational reading.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Constance M. McCullough, "A Log of Children's Out-of-School Activities," Elementary School Journal, LVIII (December, 1957), pp. 157-165.

## SUMMARY

The modern elementary school looks upon teaching children to read as a primary obligation. The person who cannot read well is seriously handicapped not only during his school years but also in conducting the affairs of responsible citizenship as an adult. It is therefore justifiable to stress that reading be taught as effectively as possible. If a child finds an activity satisfying and enjoyable he continues to be interested in it. Therefore, if a child finds the act of reading satisfying and enjoyable, he continues to be interested in reading.

Interest plays an important role in developing and maintaining the desire to read. In fact, there seems to be no other factor quite as powerful as interest to increase reading skill and to promote the reading habit. The following are the conclusions, based upon the research for this report, which teachers and educators should be aware of in order to develop a reading program that will satisfy the interests of children.

- (1) There are certain tendencies in reading interests that change as the child's experiences grow and as his imagination and reasoning powers develop. There seems to be a positive correlation between the patterns of physical, mental, social and emotional development and their relations to children's reading activities.

- (2) These tendencies are revealed in reading interests according to age and grade level, sex, intelligence and socioeconomic status.
- (3) Cultural factors such as specific religious affiliations, or living in or around a certain country have influenced interest.
- (4) Schools have channeled interest toward certain ends.
- (5) Social factors such as vocational interests, influence of parents and friends, influence of persons within a certain occupation, and hobbies develop interests.
- (6) Active interests extend the self more than passive ones.
- (7) Children have a few natural interests, arising largely from biological needs, but they early acquire social and cultural interests which may relate to reading.
- (8) One of the major tasks in a reading program is the transformation of children whose attitude toward reading has been one of indifference or active dislike into avid readers.
- (9) It has been generally agreed that the physical surroundings in the classroom should create an atmosphere favorable to reading.

- (10) There are intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for reading. The intrinsic reward is the more favorable for developing a lasting interest in reading.
- (11) Parents play an important role in developing a favorable attitude toward reading.
- (12) Closely related to the problem of developing interests is that of developing reading tastes. Schools should be concerned with quality as well as quantity in what a student reads.
- (13) The physical characteristics of a book have an influence upon a child's desire to read the book.
- (14) Pupil selection of books have been influenced by magazines.
- (15) Interest regulates the degree of our attention and the span of our attention.
- (16) The teacher has a great responsibility of ascertaining interests and then guiding or redirecting them into worthwhile channels. Questionnaires, daily observation, interviews, hobby clubs, diaries and logs are a few of the ways to ascertain interests. There are hundreds of different ways in which a teacher could guide or redirect interests through different enrichment activities.

(17) The authors of basal readers and text books should utilize what is known about children's reading interest in developing their books.

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APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A

THE CITY COLLEGE EDUCATIONAL CLINIC  
 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES CHECK LIST  
 By H. H. Abelson and A. J. Harris<sup>58</sup>

Name..... Boy or Girl..... Age.....

School..... Class..... Date.....

Directions: This is a list of things that some boys and girls like to do. Read each one. If you never do that thing, make a line through it. If you like to do it, make a check on the dotted line. If you like to do it very much, make two checks on the dotted line.

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| .... 1. Playing tag               | ....26. Pitching pennies               |
| .... 2. Cops and robbers          | ....27. Just loafing                   |
| .... 3. Ring-o-levio              | ....28. Making bonfires                |
| .... 4. Follow the leader         | ....29. Shooting dice                  |
| .... 5. Hide and seek             | ....30. Teasing                        |
| .... 6. Playing potsy             | ....31. Taking things apart            |
| .... 7. Hop Scotch                | ....32. Playing with electrical toys   |
| .... 8. Jumping rope              | ....33. Building model planes or ships |
| .... 9. Going on swings           | ....34. Experimenting with chemicals   |
| ....10. Roller skating            | ....35. Making things with tools       |
| ....11. Stickball                 | ....36. Modelling with clay            |
| ....12. Baseball                  | ....37. Drawing and painting pictures  |
| ....13. Basketball                | ....38. Singing                        |
| ....14. Football                  | ....39. Playing a musical instrument   |
| ....15. Handball                  | ....40. Woodcarving or leather-craft   |
| ....16. Swimming                  | ....41. Knitting or crocheting         |
| ....17. Going for walks           | ....42. Sewing clothes                 |
| ....18. Riding a bicycle          | ....43. Cooking or baking              |
| ....19. Flying a kite             | ....44. Making fudge or candy          |
| ....20. Walking in the woods      | ....45. Stringing beads                |
| ....21. Going to a museum of art  |  |
| ....22. Going to a concert        |  |
| ....23. Listening to the radio    |  |
| ....24. Going to the movies       |  |
| ....25. Watching an athletic game |  |

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<sup>58</sup>Albert J. Harris, How To Increase Reading Ability (New York: David McKay Co., 1961), p. 478.

- ....46. Playing card games
- ....47. Playing checkers
- ....48. Playing Monopoly
- ....49. Playing guessing games
- ....50. Playing Lotto or Bingo
  
- ....51. Playing with dolls
- ....52. Playing school
- ....53. Playing house
- ....54. Playing doctor or nurse
- ....55. Playing actor or actress
  
- ....56. Reading comic books
- ....57. Reading story books
- ....58. Reading fairy tales
- ....59. Reading sports stories
- ....60. Reading scientific stories
  
- ....61. Going to the library
- ....62. Writing letters
- ....63. Studying
- ....64. Keeping a diary
- ....65. Writing poems or stories
  
- ....66. Making a scrap-book
- ....67. Collecting stamps or coins
- ....68. Collecting shells or butterflies
- ....69. Keeping things neat
- ....70. Going to a museum of natural history
  
- ....71. Visiting relatives
- ....72. Visiting a friend
- ....73. Going to a party
- ....74. Just talking
- ....75. Being with a club or gang
  
- ....76. Social dancing
- ....77. Having a date
- ....78. Driving a car
- ....79. Playing postoffice
- ....80. Being with a group of boys & girls
  
- ....81. Being the leader of a group
- ....82. Arguing with someone
- ....83. Discussing politics
- ....84. Having a fight
- ....85. Being in a debate

Write in any other things you like to do

.....

.....

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APPENDIX B

THE CITY COLLEGE EDUCATIONAL CLINIC  
INTEREST AND ACTIVITY POLL  
Devised by Albert J. Harris<sup>59</sup>

Name..... Class..... Date.....

The purpose of these questions is to find out what kinds of things boys of your age like and what kinds of things they dislike.

1. Who is your favorite movie star?.....
2. Who is your favorite radio star?.....
3. Who is the greatest man in the world today?.....
4. What things do you like to do most in your spare time?  
     (1).....  
     (2).....  
     (3).....
5. (a) About how many comic books do you read a week?.....  
     (b) What comic books do you like best?  
         (1).....  
         (2).....  
         (3).....
6. What famous man would you most want to be like?.....
7. What magazines do you sometimes read?  
     (1)..... How often?.....  
     (2)..... How often?.....  
     (3)..... How often?.....  
     (a) What do you like most in the magazines?.....  
         .....  
     (b) What do you like least in the magazines?.....  
         .....
8. How many books have you read just because you wanted to  
     in the past 3 months?..... What were their names?  
     How did you like them?  
     (1)..... Like?.....  
     (2)..... Like?.....
9. If you had one thousand dollars (\$1,000), what would you  
     do with it?  
     (1).....  
     (2).....  
     (3).....

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<sup>59</sup>Albert J. Harris, How To Increase Reading Ability  
(New York: David McKay Co., 1961), pp. 480-481.

10. (a) About how many hours a week do you spend listening to the radio?.....
- (b) What are your favorite radio programs? List the one you like best, first.
- (1)..... (4).....
- (2)..... (5).....
- (3)..... (6).....
11. What three changes would you make, if you could?
- (1).....
- (2).....
- (3).....
12. (a) What newspaper do you read most often?.....
- (b) What other paper do you read sometimes?.....
- (c) Make a 1 in front of the part of the newspaper that you usually read first. Now make a 2 in front of the part that you read second. Now make an X in front of any other part that you sometimes read.
- |                         |                   |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| ...sports news          | ...war news       |
| ...comic strips         | ...fashion news   |
| ...editorials           | ...crime news     |
| ...store advertisements | ...financial news |
| ...movies and theatres  | ...radio programs |
| ...political news       | ...headlines      |
| ...columnists           | ...news pictures  |
13. (a) About how often do you go to the movies?.....
- (b) Make an L in front of the kinds of movies that you like.
- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| ...adventure pictures | ...comedies         |
| ...love stories       | ...sad pictures     |
| ...musical pictures   | ...murder mysteries |
| ...war pictures       | ...Western pictures |
| ...travel pictures    | ...cartoon pictures |
- (c) Name the three pictures that you have liked most in the past two years.
- (1).....
- (2).....
- (3).....
14. Here are the names of some books that you might like to read. If you think that you would like to read the book, make an L in front of it. If you do not know if you would like it or not make a question mark (?). If you are fairly sure that you would not like to read the book, make a D.
- |                                    |                                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ... 1. Wonders of the Electric Eye | ... 7. Secret of Lost Gold Mine    |
| ... 2. Famous Football Games       | ... 8. Modern Miracles of Medicine |
| ... 3. 1,001 Things You Can Make   | ... 9. Dick Jones, Fullback        |
| ... 4. War in the Desert           | ...10. How to Draw and Paint       |
| ... 5. The Vanishing Corpse        | ...11. Flying Against Japan        |
| ... 6. She Married the Boss        |                                    |

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| ...12. Murder at the Movies           | ...26. Ford of the F.B.I.               |
| ...13. The Stolen Kiss                | ...27. Romance on the Range             |
| ...14. Famous Voyages                 | ...28. Big Game Hunting                 |
| ...15. The Earth & The Stars          | ...29. Wild Animals and<br>Their Habits |
| ...16. Winning Plays in<br>Basketball | ...30. Life of Joe DiMaggio             |
| ...17. How to Take Good<br>Pictures   | ...31. Inside an Airplane<br>Factory    |
| ...18. How to Defeat<br>Germany       | ...32. Great Battles of<br>History      |
| ...19. Famous Ghost Stories           | ...33. The Spider's Revenge             |
| ...20. Dancing Sweethearts            | ...34. Boy Meets Girl                   |
| ...21. Exploring African<br>Jungles   | ...35. The Texas Rangers                |
| ...22. The Story of Steel             | ...36. Heroes of Science                |
| ...23. The Home Run King              | ...37. Hold That Line!                  |
| ...24. How to Repair Furni-<br>ture   | ...38. How Engines Work                 |
| ...25. A Bomber Pilot's<br>Story      | ...39. Heroes of Guadalcanal            |
|                                       | ...40. Famous Bank Robberies            |
|                                       | ...41. The Dream Princess               |
|                                       | ...42. Mountain Climbing<br>Adventures  |

15. What kind of stories do you like? Make an L in front of each kind of story that you like. Place a D in front of each kind that you do not like.

- |                       |            |              |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|
| ...science            | ...war     | ...romance   |
| ...love               | ...flying  | ...adventure |
| ...how to make things | ...spy     | ...cowboy    |
| ...nature             | ...travel  | ...fighting  |
| ...sport              | ...history |              |
| ...crime              | ...murder  |              |

THE ROLE OF READING INTERESTS  
IN THE READING PROGRAM

by

SHARON ADELE CODY

B. S., State College at Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1961

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

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The purpose of this report was to show that a child's preferences for reading and his topical reading preferences are important entities of an elementary reading program; to examine some of the factors which influence a child's reading interest; to show how to create and capitalize on these reading interests; and to give some methods used to discover a child's reading interests.

Library research was used to bring out the importance of reading interest in the reading program and to develop the above mentioned objectives. Since there has been a tremendous amount of literature written concerning this subject, this report is limited in its scope of inquiry. The report is also limited to the elementary school, six-year, although some of the concepts involved are applicable to all levels of reading.

Certain tendencies in reading interests change as the child's experiences grow and as his imagination and reasoning powers develop. A number of factors have been identified that influence these interests; some of these are age and grade level, sex, intelligence and socioeconomic status. Other factors such as health and physical development, school environment, home training, attitudes of parents and teachers, religious background, cultural background, and hobbies also have a bearing on the development of a child's interest.

The "lure and the ladder" have been used to summarize the development of reading interest. The lure may be a

number of ways of encouraging children to begin pleasurable reading. The ladder illustrates providing reading material to keep the child interested in reading. To develop an interest in reading, learning to read should be a successful experience. Thorndike's Law of Effect can be paraphrased to be applicable to the reading situation.

Reading is a complicated process involving the coordination of many physical and intellectual skills, attitudes and interests. Classroom teachers and reading specialists have recognized the importance of these aspects of reading in the learning situation. Several writers have commented on the importance of teachers and authors of basal readers capitalizing on children's reading interests in constructing and stimulating a reading program.

The teacher has a tremendous responsibility of ascertaining interests and then guiding or redirecting them into worthwhile channels. Numerous techniques have been suggested for ascertaining interests, some too complicated and time consuming for most classroom teachers. Some of the simpler methods might be to watch a child's daily behavior, to take note of self-expression activities, to promote a hobby club, to conduct an interview, or to use simple questionnaires or interest inventories, either published or teacher-made.

Text books should also be of interest to the children that are required to read them. Therefore it is essential that authors of basal readers take into account the various

interests of children and also the physical characteristics of a book which most often will attract a child to that book. Whether or not the basal readers are written on the interest level of children seems to be a subject of controversy.

Interest plays an important role in developing and maintaining the desire to read. The teacher should be constantly alert to ways of determining a child's interests, so that these interests can be used to motivate the child in greater reading efficiency. The reading materials and basal readers should have a high level of interest to help build favorable reading attitudes. There seems to be no other factor quite as powerful as interest to increase reading skill and to promote the reading habit.