A SURVEY AND EVALUATION
OF THE
LITERATURE ON CHILDREN'S INTERESTS
1939-1949

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The writer of this study can set forth no better introduction to "A Survey and Evaluation of the Literature on Children's Interests" than to point to an article by J. Wayne Wrightstone on Adolescent Reading Interests, in which he affirms:

> Interests arise from and contribute toward the individual's growth as he sets and seeks goals . . . For the modern teacher these goals are basic because they determine the general direction in which the individual will become active and attempt to grow-hence, his interests. Some of these interests are deeply seated in the individual; others are more likely to be affected by the environment. Interests are important ingredients of the modern educative process. More than three decades ago, John Dewey prepared a statement on interest and effort. Some of the basic principles which he pointed out at that time have been changed little by the research in succeeding years and are paraphrased in the following statements. An individual will exert effort and learn in order to achieve his goals, or his interests. Interests may be influenced by one's associates, environment, and changes within his own physical and intellectual self. Interests, therefore, have become the starting point of serious educational enterprise. Without interest, any learning situation tends to become dull, formal and of a questionable value . . . . Origin and development of interests are based upon cardinal principles of individual and social psychology. The individual does not function in compartments, skills in one compartment, interests in another, and thinking in still another. Rather he functions as an integrated organism and various parts or compartments are affected to varying degrees by every act which he performs. In recent years psychological research has discovered certain principles which indicate both the individual and the social origin and development of interests. These may be summarized briefly. The principles which relate more specifically to the individual psychology suggest (1) interests tend to be primarily child centered; (2) interests tend to develop in terms of specific rather than general traits; (3) interests grow in complexity and direction from concrete to abstract forms; (4) interests tend to develop from successful activities; (5) the lower the degree of interests, the greater the

> chance for change in the direction of interests; (6) the interests of male and female tend to be most unlike after adolescence . . .[1]

It is the consensus of many experts that interest is important in order that learning may take place. Furthermore, according to research in the psychology of learning, the most effective learning may be associated with personal satisfaction and that it would be hard to call forth any activity without some degree of interest. It follows that a discussion of children's interests lead to the consideration of rapport, learner literacy regarding needs, wishes, satisfactions, attitudes, motives, goals, preferences, and general interests.

Significance of the Problem

More than three decades ago, John Dewey initiated research in the field of children's interests. Since that time, an immense amount of work has been carried out in widely-varying phases of the same subject.

As the number of studies in the field has rapidly increased and the number of areas covered has multiplied, the need has grown for an accurately comprehensive study, which might draw together all these investigations into a unified whole, to form a nucleus for later useful teacher-study on the entire subject as a composite problem.

Statement of the Problem

The subject of this thesis is A Survey and Evaluation of the Literature on Children's Interests, 1939-1949.

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1. Wrightstone, J. Wayne, Adolescent Reading Interests. New York: The Association for Arts in Childhood, 1943. 24 pp.

The subject transposed into a general question is What evidences can be found in the professional literature of 1939-1949 that bear on children's interests?

In attempting to seek an answer to the question the following sub-problems arose:

1. What are the criteria that may be used to evaluate the the sources of literature on children's interests?

2. What are the interests of children as revealed by the literature in:

   a. Reading and literature

   b. Social Studies

   c. Science

   d. Radio, music art and comics

3. What conclusions can be drawn from this study?

Scope of the Problem

This study is confined to a survey of the professional literature on children's interests and is limited to the areas of: reading and literature, social studies, science, comics, radio, art, and music, for the decade 1939-1949. Furthermore, the study is limited to the elementary school, and, specifically, takes in grades one through six (or the pre-adolescent age). These age limits were chosen because of the negligible degree of differentiation between boys and girls in their normally expressed interests during these years in school.

Method

To avoid duplicating previous work and discover related studies,

the following indices were carefully checked:

Palfrey, Thomas R., and Coleman, Henry E. Guide to Bibliographies and Theses in United States and Canada. Second Edition, Chicago: American Library Association, 1940. 54 pp.

United States. Library of Congress. Catalogue Division. List of American Doctoral Dissertations. Washington: Government Printing Office. 1913 - 1933.

Doctoral Dissertations Accepted by American Universities. New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1933/34 - 1943.

United States. Office of Education. Library. Bibliography of Research Studies in Education, 1926/24 to date. Washington: Government Printing Office 1929 - 1940.

Good, Carter Victor, editor. "Doctors' Theses Under Way in Education," Journal of Educational Research, 1931 - 1944.

Gray, Ruth A., editor. Doctors' Theses in Education: A List of 797 Theses Deposited with the Office of Education and Available for Loan. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1935. 69 pp. (U. S. Office of Education. Pamphlet Number 60.).

Barstad, Anver and others. Register of Doctoral Dissertations Accepted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Vol. 1, 1899 - 1936. Teachers College Bulletin, 28th Series, Number 4, February, 1937. New York: Teachers College, 1937. 136 pp.

New York University. Washington Square Library. List of Doctors' and Masters' Theses in Education, New York University, 1890 - June, 1936. . . . New York: New York University, School of Education, 1937. 117 pp.

Northwestern University. List of Doctoral Dissertations , . . 1896 - 1934. Evanston, Illinois: The University, 1935.

A survey of the professional literature was carried out to tie together that which has been written to date on all the various phases of children's interests in specific fields. None of the works studied gave any evidence of duplicating this present study. This work, therefore, serves in the nature of a summation of existing materials on the subject.

The following references were consulted in order to discover what has been written on children's interests:

Educational Indexes

Readers Guide to Periodical Literature

Library Card Catalog

Bibliographical references in the books already consulted

In order to lend support to the writer's judgment in the selection of outstanding authorities in the professional literature to to examined, the following college and public school specialists were consulted:

I. Miss Edith Huffman, Instructor in Education, Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina.

2. Dr. Eugenia Hunter, Associate Professor of Education, Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina.

3. Mrs. Mary Lee Hunter, Instructor in Education, Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina.

4. Mrs. Chrystal H. Bachtell, Music Supervisor, Greensboro City Schools, Greensboro, North Carolina.

5. Mrs. Callie O. Braswell, Art Supervisor, Greensboro City Schools, Greensboro, North Carolina.

6. Mrs. Margaret Y. Wall, Principal and Science Specialist, Greensboro City Schools, Greensboro, North Carolina.

CHAPTER II

CRITERIA FOR USE IN THE EVALUATION OF LITERATURE ON CHILDREN'S INTERESTS

Introduction

Certain criteria were necessary for the selection of authorities on children's interests. The value of the testimony of any person turns on his training, the position he holds, the recognition accorded him by his co-workers, and others, and the significance of the works he has done. In the light of these criteria the writer has chosen those who have made outstanding contributions in the field of children's interests; namely, reading, social studies, science, art, music, radio, and comics. For the purpose of this survey only their contributions pertaining to children's interests have been included.

All of the authorities quoted have made recent contributions to a better understanding of children's interests, that is, from 1939-1949, and many of them as may be seen from the following account, have extensive backgrounds of educational experience.

Victor D'Amico is the Head of the Fine Arts Department, Fieldston School, Ethical Culture Schools, New York City. He is also Director of the Educational Project, Museum of Modern Art, New York City. He is an Instructor in Fine Arts, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City.

Harold Anderson has had wide experience as an instructor in the University High School in Chicago and as part-time instructor of

education in the same university. At the present time he is Assistant Dean of Students, Division of the Social Sciences at Chicago University.

May Hill Arbuthnot is Associate Professor of Education at Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. She is the author of Children and Books; Elementary Education; Children's Literature and co-editor of the Gray-Arbuthnot Readers. She has been first vice-president of the Association of Childhood Education and is also a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Pi Lambda Theta.

Emmett A. Betts is at present Professor and Director of the Reading Clinic at Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is author of numerous articles published in leading professional magazines as well as author and co-author of many outstanding educational books, such as Foundations of Reading Instruction (1946); Index to Professional Publications on Reading and Related Topics; (co-author) Betts Basic Readers (1948); Betts-Arey Directed Spelling Activities. He is also editor of The American Adventure Series.

Jean Betzner is Professor of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. She received her B. S., A. M., and Ph. D. degrees from Columbia University. One of the most outstanding positions Miss Betzner has held is that of National Vice-President of the Association for Childhood Education. Among her affiliations with outstanding organizations are those of Kappa Delta Pi and the Progressive Education Association.

Jennie Waugh Callihan is the author of the outstanding book on radio entitled Radio Workshop for Children. She is on the faculty at Hunter College, New York City.

Luella Cole is Professor of Psychology at the University of Utah.

She is author of The Improvement of Reading and has contributed many articles to educational and psychological journals.

Gerald S. Craig, Professor of Natural Science at Teachers College, Columbia University, is author of many outstanding books on science and also contributor to numerous educational publications.

Ruby Ethel Cundiff is Associate Professor of Library Science at George Peabody College for Teachers. She has had wide experience as a librarian, such as Baker University. She is also the compiler of Recommended Reference Books for High School Library and is the editor of School Libraries in the South. She is a contributor to periodicals.

Josette Frank is Educational Associate in charge of Children's Books and Radio on the staff of the Child Study Association of America. She is a lecturer and the author of numerous magazine articles and of the book, What Books for Children.

Charlotte Garrison is an instructor in the Department of Kindergarten-First Grade Education at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Dorothy Gordon has been active in radio since its inception. She has been an effective and artistic performer on attractive radio programs that have set children laughing, singing, dancing, and sighing with her in all parts of the country. She is unconsciously a progressive educator, who teaches through thrilling experiences and maximum audience participation. She is a powerful crusader for children's radio programs of the right kind.

William S. Gray is a contributor to yearbooks and leading professional journals, is a director of clinics, and was a member of the symposium on Reading conducted by the National Council of Teachers of

English. He is Professor of Education at the University of Chicago and director of the University's Reading Conference. The proceedings of the conferences are compiled and edited by him each year.

Miriam L. Grimes is Assistant Professor of Elementary Education in Muskingum College at New Concord, Ohio.

Albert J. Harris is Associate Professor and Director of the Clinic at Queens College, New York. He is the author of several leading books. Among the most widely known are How to Increase Reading Ability, Harris Tests of Lateral Dominance. In addition, he has contributed to outstanding professional journals, such as the Journal of Sociological Psychology, American Journal of Psychology, and Journal of Applied Psychology.

George E. Hill is Professor of Education and Director of the Graduate Division at Kansas State Teachers College.

Clarence W. Hunnicut, Professor of Elementary Education at Syracuse University, is a member and leader of outstanding educational organizations and is also the author of Elementary Education and Elementary School Administration.

Paul Eduard Kambly, Professor of Education and Director of Supervision of Teaching at the University of Oregon, is a contributor to Science Education and School Science and Math and is also a member of The Association for Research in Science Teaching, Central Association of Science and Math Teachers and the National Association of Biology Teachers.

Samuel A. Kirk, Director of the Division of Education for Exceptional Children at Wisconsin State Teachers College, is a former president of the International Council for Exceptional Children and also

the author of Teaching Reading to Slow-Learning Children. He is also contributor to educational journals.

George C. Kyte, the author of the following well known books: Problems in School Supervision, How to Supervise; A Guide to Educational Principles and Progressive Practices of Educational Supervision and The Principal at Work, is in the education department at the University of California and also holds membership in outstanding organizations such as the California Educational Research Association.

Joy Lacey is Professor of Education at Indiana State Teachers College in Terre Haute.

Lillian Lamoreaux is the Director of Curriculum and Instruction at the Santa Barbara Public Schools, Santa Barbara, California.

May Lazar is Assistant Director of the Board of Education of the City of New York. She is a former member of the War Finance Committee.

Doris May Lee is the co-author of The Child and His Curriculum.

Carl E. Lewis is the Assistant to the Superintendent, Board of Education, Poughkeepsie, New York. The article which he wrote for the Wilson Library Bulletin, entitled "Reading in the Elementary Schools," was given as an address before the New York Library Conference in 1939.

Lucille McCauley is a teacher of first grade in the Bancroft School, Minneapolis, Minnesota. She is the author of "Little Children Love Poetry," which was published in Elementary English in October, 1948.

Paul McKee, Professor of Elementary Education and Director of Teachers College Elementary School at Colorado State Teachers College, is a consultant for city school systems. He is a recognized authority on the teaching of language arts. He is also the author of Reading and Literature in the Elementary School.

Marie Rankin is Assistant Professor in the Kindergarten-Primary Training School in Oberlin, Ohio, and is the author of Children's Interests in Library Books of Fiction, and Child Development and Children's Literature.

David H. Russell, Professor of Education at the University of California at Berkley, was a Carnegie Fellow in London as an instructor in Education, and is the author of Children Learn to Read.

Harold A. Schultz, Assistant Professor of Art Education at the University of Illinois, is the author of Changing the Attitudes of Secondary School Students Toward Artists and Their Art and Expanding Concepts of the Fine Arts.

James Harlan Shores is Associate Professor of Education at the University of Illinois. He is the author of Skills Related to the Ability to Read History and Science, Why Children Dislike Arithmetic, and The Teaching of Art for the Elementary Classroom Teacher.

Robert Ladd Thorndike is Professor of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City. He has had wide experience as an instructor in various outstanding colleges, such as George Washington University and Columbia University. He is also former President of the Division of Evaluation and Measurement of the American Psychology Association.

Franc J. Thyng is a member of the faculty at the Garden City Public School, Long Island, New York and is the author of "They All Like to Read."

Edgar Bruce Wesley, Professor of Education at the University of Minnesota, is the author of Social Problems of Today, Principles of Social Science, Teaching Social Studies and Contemporary Problems.

Roy DeVerl Wiley is the Director of Audio-Visual Aids with the Department of Education in the San Jose State Teachers College, San Jose, California.

Frank T. Wilson is a member of the Institute for Research at Hunter college.

Paul Witty is Professor of Education and Director of Psychological Educational Clinic at Northwestern University. He has written numerous articles on Psychology and Education and is co-author of Reading and the Educative Process. He is also author of Mental Hygiene in Modern Education, Mental Health in the Classroom, and Reading for Interest Series.

J. Wayne Wrightstone has had a varied background of experience in education. He has taught in high school and has been principal. In addition he has been Assistant Professor of Education and Associate Director of Evaluation of school broadcasts for the Bureau of Educational Research at Ohio State. At the present time he is Assistant Director of the Bureau of Reference, Research and Statistician for the Board of Education, New York City. He is the author of many books, such as New Elementary School Practices, Social Studies and the American Way of Life, Basic Study S kills, and Looking Ahead in Education.

The following writers have been included in the study although they are less well known. The justification for inclusion is that their works have appeared in reputable educational periodicals. Their writings would not have been accepted by those periodicals had they not been worthwhile contributions.

Robert A. Davis and Hazel E. Taylor - Educational Administration and Supervision.

Grace L. Dietrich - Elementary School Journal.

Morton S. Malter - Journal of Educational Research.

Marcella Mason - Social Education

Vivian VonQualen - School Science and Math.

M. Estelle Trent - Journal of Educational Research.

In addition to the above mentioned periodicals the following were examined and inclusions made from them.

Childhood Education

Elementary English

Journal of Educational Psychology

Journal of Experimental Education

Peabody Journal of Education

Pedagogical Seminar

Teachers College Record

Wilson Library Bulletin

CHAPTER III

SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE ON CHILDREN'S INTERESTS

This chapter is concerned with a review of the literature on children's interests. The writer has attempted to draw out the material most pertinent to the subject, and to give excerpts designed to show trends in thinking among those who have interested themselves in the problem within the last decade; namely, the years between 1939 and 1949.

Children's Interests in Reading and Literature

The first survey of this study dealt with investigations in the field of children's interests in reading. Lamoreaux and Lee in Learning to Read Through Experience state that:

> A child must have interest in learning to read. If interest is present, there will be learning, and no important learning can take place without interest. Voluntary effort is a measure of interest. But we can not be interested in what we do not know about. The child must then become familiar with the materials of reading, with its possibilities, and through his experiences develop a real desire to read.[1]

They further emphasize:

> Learning to read without interest in learning to read is a next to impossible, or at least an uphill task. Most children want to learn to read, but unfortunate experiences may weaken that desire or create an active dislike. So this stimulation of interest is not a theoretical statement but a very practical, pressing, and continuing problem. What are the factors that promote interest?

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1. Lamoreaux, Lillian A. and Lee, Doris May. Learning to Read through Experience, New York: D. Appleton Co., 1943, p. 14.

The three most important are probably familiarity, success and purpose.[2]

Russell, widely recognized authority on children's reading, shows that:

> Children have a few natural interests, arising largely from biological needs, but early acquire social and cultural interests which may relate to reading. In school the teacher has a dual task to capitalize upon children's present interests as motivation for reading and other learning, and to redirect old interests and stimulate new and productive ones. The reading program is one of the best ways of changing many potential interests to active ones and of developing new and broader interests.[3]

In a statement made by Cundiff, Associate Professor of Library Science at George Peabody College for Teachers, she discloses that:

> Children's reading interests depend upon many things among which are the children's general intelligence; their growth and development in reading skills; their experience: at home, at school, and in their outside world; their likes and dislikes; their environment: rural or urban; their economic level; their supply of reading materials, that is, the availability of books; their social age and sex.[4]

Lazar, widely recognized for her work in child guidance, asserts:

> It cannot be assumed that reading instruction can proceed because a child learns the skills of reading. In addition, he must want to read. It is necessary in these times in which we live, that a program of instruction do more than teach children techniques of reading. The children should receive a lasting interest in the reading of worth-while materials.
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> The present day curriculum helps to direct the growth of reading interests. A curriculum which provides children with a variety of experiences is replete with opportunities for directing their reading interests.[5]

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2. Ibid., p. 112.

3. Russell, David H. Children Learn to Read. New York: Ginn, 1949. pp. 248-249.

4. Cundiff, Ruby. "Children's Reading Interests," Peabody Journal of Education, XXV (May, 1948), p. 259.

5. Lazar, May. Guiding the Growth of Reading Interests. New York: Board of Education of the City of New York, 1945, p. 1.

Lewis, Assistant to the Superintendent, Board of Education, Poughkeepsie, New York, gives a partial summary of some of the investigations in the field of reading interests and preferences:

1. Primary pupils apparently prefer books about 5" x 7½" with many simple illustrations, attractive covers, wide margins, and the general effect of brightness and simplicity.

2. The classroom teachers' preferences influence pupils' choices to a great degree. Interest and inspiration are contagious.

3. Pupil participation in developing standards for use in selecting books seems to influence the choice of books read later.

4. All other things being equal, availability of books is an important factor, but mere accessibility is no guarantee that pupils will be interested or engage in good reading.[6]

Another revealing study was made by Thorndike and Henry. This study was made to compare the reading interests of 107 slow-learning children and 101 fast-learning children in such a way that the pattern of interest would be obscured as little as possible by differences in reading experience and ability.

A comparison was made also between the interests of boys and those of girls. A reading interest questionnaire, made up of annotated, fictitious titles, was used. The summary of differences shows that slow-learning children chose with reliably greater frequency one or more titles in the following categories: (1) useful feminine activities, (2) hobbies, (3) science and invention, (4) biography and biographical adventure, (5) self-improvement, (6) money-making and practical themes,

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6. Lewis, Carl E. "Reading in the Elementary Schools." Wilson Library Bulletin, XVI (May, 1942), p. 721.

and (7) mild adventures of children. It was also found that fast-learning children chose with reliably greater frequency one of the titles on war. These were the only categories in which reliable differences appeared between the ability levels. Large differences between the sexes were found to be common and appeared in many of the categories. ....."Clearly, in a determination of the pattern of reported reading interests, sex is a vastly more important factor than even the large difference in intelligence level characterizing these groups."[7]

Thorndike, in conclusions gleaned in a study based on a fictitiously annotated titles questionnaire, incorporated the responses of 3 000 children as a basis for the following observations:

(1) Within the same sex, the interest patterns of groups differing by several years in age and/or as much as thirty points in average I. Q. showed a substantial positive correlation.

(2) In their pattern of reported reading interests, bright children, median I. Q. 123, are most like a group of mentally slower children, median I. Q. about 92, who are two or three years older than they are.

(3) Sex is conspicuously more important than age or intelligence as a determiner of reported interest pattern, at least within the range of age and ability here studied.

(4) The acceleration of interest in bright children does not seem to be entirely, or even predominantly, a scholarly or bookish precocity.[8]

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7. Thorndike, Robert L., and Henry, Florence. "Differences in Reading Interests Related to Differences in Sex and Intelligence Levels," Elementary School Journal, XL (June, 1940), pp. 751-763.

8. Thorndike, Robert L. A Comparative Study of Children's Reading Interests Based on A Fictitious Annotated Questionnaire. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia Universiry, 1941, p. 35-37.

The importance of interest in reading is expressed in the following quotations by Anderson:

> If people are to learn to read and continue to read, they must be interested in their reading. If we accept this view, one of the major concerns in a reading program in general education is the discovery of the dominant interests of young people and adults. This is not to say that a person's immediate interests should determine all of his reading. On the contrary, the schools must create and stimulate, through the reader's present interests, new interests which are socially desirable. This implies, furthermore, the development of reading tastes, that is, increasing powers to discern and appreciate whatever constitutes excellence in reading materials.
>
> . . . Young people have interests which reading can serve; what is perhaps more important, reading can serve to develop interests which are essential to effective participation in a democracy.

In summarizing Anderson states:

> Reading interests have some significant source or origin. Just what these sources are research has not yet made clear. The phenomenon we call interest is difficult to explain or describe, for reading motives are so complex as almost to defy analysis and description; as a result, attempts to identify and describe them have resulted in mere verbalisms, such as reading for culture, for entertainment, for civic enlightenment, for vicarious experience, for preservation and aggrandizement of the ego. Some of the early investigators attributed reading interests to certain instinctive drives, tendencies, or impulses. They looked for interests in original nature. Children, it was thought, enjoyed adventure stories because of their instinctive love for sudden change and sharp contrast. . . . . Later investigators hold that interests originate in the environment, are produced by the person's total experiences.[9]

As an outgrowth of a survey of approximately 150 investigations on interests, Davis and Taylor found that interests develop gradually from the more simple and active to the more complex and social. Reading interests gradually change from fancy to fact. The very young child likes fairy tales and simple, fanciful stories concerning nature. Boys

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9. Anderson, Harold A. Reading Interests and Tastes. Washington: American Countil on Education, 1940. pp. 217-219.

become interested in tales of active adventure, material concerned with invention and mechanics, hobbies, and lives of famous men. Girls, on the other hand, show interest in stories of home and school life; and with the onset of adolescence, a romantic interest. It was found also that bright children read three or four times as many books as do children of average intelligence; their reading covers a wider range; and it includes material of superior quality.[10]

Children who are beginning to read, writes Harris, enjoy short, fanciful stories about animals, fairies, mythical creatures and realistic stories about children with an element of surprise and humor in them. Interest in the fanciful increases until the age of eight or nine and then declines gradually. In the primary grades sex differences in reading interests are not very marked. Sex differences become apparent by the ages of nine or ten. Boys become absorbed in adventure and mystery, fictionalized history and biography, mechanics, science, invention and materials related to hobbies. The girls begin to enjoy sentimental stories of home and school life and their romantic interests begin to develop between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Some of them like mystery and adventure but do not care much for material related to science and invention. The boys tend to avoid anything that seems definitely feminine. Most children enjoy the comics. There are some differences in the free choices the children make in their reading and that which teachers or librarians recommend.

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10. Davis, Robert A., and Taylor, Hazel E. "Significance of Research on Interests for the Classroom Teacher," Educational Administration and Supervision, XXIX (September, 1943), p. 357.

Harris goes further to state that voluntary reading increases until about the ages of twelve through thirteen. Usually bright children read more and have wider interests than the average child. One of the important findings on reading interests is the wide range of individual differences in amount of voluntary reading and in the specific interests that are expressed. Even though a group of children may be similar in intelligence, age, and cultural background, the range of individual preferences is tremendous.[11]

The world of books, Thyng tells us, has much to offer that is rich and satisfying to boys and girls, but the multiplicity of competing interests and distractions of this day and age prohibit the old practice of leaving to chance the provisions for and accessibility to that world of books. In the study of eleven and twelve year olds, it showed that children are pursuing their individual interests and needs. This is indicated by individual concentrations on one theme by some children, the great number and variety of books reported by other children. Individuality is also indicated by many of their written comments, and in the lack of consistency shown between ability and actual reading. The range of reading interest demonstrated in this investigation would seem to indicate that younger children's books are not read by this age group simply because they are easy. It has been shown that the same child will read books above, as well as below, his or her maturity level. It can be assumed, therefore, that for this age-group, the range of reading interest is wide, perhaps greater than

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11. Harris, Albert J. How To Increase Reading Ability. New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1947. pp. 407-444.

for any other age group.[12]

Kirk includes, in his own study, that of Arthur I. Gates on the reading interests of mentally normal children and the interests of mentally retarded children. Gates concluded that materials which are interesting to normal children are also interesting to mentally retarded children, and vice versa; materials interesting to mentally retarded children were uninteresting to normal children. He summarized the elements in children's reading materials which would contribute most to interest as: surprise . . . the unexpected and unforeseen events, happenings, conclusions, and outcomes; liveliness . . . action, movement, and "something doing;" animalness . . . stories which present the actions of animals, their characteristics, and their experiences; conversation . . . the dialogue type of story; humor . . . stories that include humor from the child's point of view; plot suitability . . . stories within the range of experience of the young readers; difficulty . . . stories which are not too difficult in vocabulary and meaning.[13]

Huffman, in Adaptations From Russian Literature for Upper Elementary Grades, includes noteworthy investigations made in the field of children's interests in reading. Among them is this contribution on the interests of both boys and girls:

> In the main, books hold three kinds of interests for children. They evoke memories of the child's own everyday experiences,

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12. Thyng, Franc J. They All Like to Read. New York: The Association for Arts in Childhood, 1943. pp. 1-17.

13. Kirk, Samuel A. Teaching Reading to Slow-Learning Children. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1940. pp. 128-129.

> heightened and interpreted by the power of the imagination. They help the child to enter into imaginary experiences in line with his hopes and desires . . . Finally, books furnish the child an opportunity for projecting himself into new and fuller ranges of thought and feeling.

Certain of the investigators have listed the factors appearing to have the greatest appeal for children. One study of some eight hundred pupils in grades three to seven reveals strong interests in action, exciting adventure, surprise, and humor.

Humphreys investigated the reading interests of six hundred elementary school children. She lists thirty-two reasons why children in grades four through six like their favorite stories. The ten reasons given most often for liking the story are: that it was exciting, funny, interesting or good, about animals, about days of old, about other children, a fairy story, about brave or just deeds, about kind deeds, or a mystery story.

Finding that children's interests vary somewhat with age, Uhl gives by grades the qualities desired by children at certain age levels. The interests of children in grade five, he lists in the order of importance: dramatic action, interesting problems, interesting action, humor, about animals, dramatization, and interesting repetition.

Those qualities most desired by grade six he says are: dramatic action, interesting characters, interesting problems, interesting action, humor, fairy and supernatural, kindness and faithfulness, about animals, dramatization, interesting information, and interesting repetition.

For grade seven he says those qualities that have the greatest appeal are dramatic action, interesting characters, interesting problems, interesting humor, kindness and faithfulness, about animals, dramatiza-

tion, interesting information, and interesting repetition.

The studies of Terman and Lima shows that certain tendencies in reading interests are characteristic of various age groups. The ten year olds begin to lost interest in fairy tales, while books of travel and stories of other lands take on a most striking popularity. Boys of this age begin to read books on inventions and mechanics. Myths are enjoyed. Legends are read, and the legendary characters become very real. The ten year old child will read the narrative that tells in simple style the lives of men and women. This interest in biography brings an interest in history, in the events with which these people were concerned.

At eleven, they, boys delight in tales of adventure and mystery, especially when appearing in series. Their interest in animal and nature stories drops off, while their interest in science and invention increases. At this age girls enjoy stories of home and school life. An inexplicable interest in gardens and flowers is quite apparent. Unlike the boys of eleven, girls retain their interest in fairy and fantastic stories, and still like nature and animal stories. Girls also read many of the boy's adventure stories and begin to show an interest in love stories.

Terman and Lima further state that children of twelve show some interest in almost every field of literature. This is, however, the age of hero worship, when biographies and historical narratives are preferred. Stories of legendary and historical heroes enthrall the reader of twelve or thirteen, who projects himself into the thrilling lives of his heroes. Boys show their greatest interest in biography and history at this time. Stories of adventure and tales of athletic prowess re-

main the chief interest of boys of this age, but the "juvenile" now gives place to the more exciting account of daring feats. Girls of twelve read largely those stories of home and school life. Their interest in fairy tales decreases, and there is apparent a growing interest in boys' adventure stories. Girls are still interested in nature stories, and enjoy bird and flower books. The Bible and Bible stories are also read. With girls of twelve, there is a dawning interest in adult fiction.

Other investigators, finding that boys and girls do not always have similar interests, consider each separately. Jordan's study shows that the major reading interests of boys from ten-and-a-half to thirteen-and-a-half years includes four general types of fiction: (a) books concerned with war and scouting, thirty-two per cent; (b) those concerned with school and sports, twenty-nine per cent; (c) those concerned with Boy Scouts, sixteen per cent; and (d) those concerned with strenuous adventure, twenty-three per cent.

In Children's Interests in Reading, Jordan analyzes the books written by the authors that are most popular with boys of this age, he finds that they appeal most often to the instincts of mastery, love of sensory life for its own sake, and approval and scornful behavior. Boys' interests in biography and history appear to be confined to those authors who can write history and biography in the form of an exciting story.

Another study made by Jordan shows that in grades four to six, boys are chiefly interested in books of mystery and adventure with detective stories running a close third.

In his study of the reading interests of girls of ten-and-a-half to thirteen-and-a-half Jordan finds their principal interest is in fiction which portrays: (a) home, thirty-seven per cent; (b) home and

school, nineteen per cent; (c) school, fifteen per cent; (d) fairy stories, six per cent; (e) stories with historical backgrounds, six per cent; (f) love, seven per cent; and (g) miscellaneous, ten per cent.

In analyzing the stories of the writers most popular with girls of this age group, Jordan finds that the authors appeal largely to those instincts: maternal, kindliness, attention to others, response to approval and scornful behavior, and to a less degree than in the case of boys, to rivalry.

From Jordan's review of research articles about children's reading interests, he concludes that girls in grades four through six are chiefly interested in mystery, fairy tales, and adventure stories.

Witty and Kopel's investigation of the reading interests of children reveals that above grade two:

> . . . boys ranked adventure stories first, and mystery and detective stories second and third. Stories (unclassified), history, throughout the grades; their ranks in the order names, followed those of the categories cited above.

In grades five through seven girls:

> . . . resembled the boys in giving their primary favor to adventure stories. Mystery and other unspecified stories attained second place in the three upper grades; detective stories also were in high favor at these levels. The girls mentioned rather frequently travel, plays, poetry, and history, giving them fifth, sixth, eighth, and ninth ranks respectively.[14]

According to Jean Betzner in Exploring Literature With Children in the Elementary School,

> Literature in all its forms belongs rightfully to children. The accumulated wisdom, desires, uncertainties, and mistakes of mankind recorded in works and signs are the common heritage of all who care to make them their own. There is no doubt of the genuine interest

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14. Huffman, Edith. Adaptations from Russian Literature for Upper Elementary Grades. Masters Thesis. Consolidated University of North Carolina, 1946. pp. 9-14.

> of boys and girls everywhere in these records. Even the most casual acquaintance with children furnishes unmistakable evidence of their eagerness to sit at the feet of a storyteller, to look at pictures for hours on end, and to struggle through the many difficulties involved in handling the mysteries of the printed word.

Betzner gives the duration of popularity as a reliable measure of the appeal of a book. Further the writings of literary people have been scanned for mention of early enthusiasms; titles of childhood favorites have been sought from living men and women.[15]

Nothing is more elusive, declare Betzner and Moore, than the discovery of children's honest preferences in reading. It is a simple matter to discover whether some individual child likes a particular book or not, and it is not at all difficult to gauge the attraction of certain books for a considerable number of children who frequent a library or read independently at school. But the attempt to determine whether a large number of readers rather consistently chooses fiction of a certain kind, or has a strong bias toward informational material, history stories, fairy tales, or poetry has usually proved rather unsatisfactory. There are too many variables involved: the maturity of the readers, ease or difficulty of the selections, cultural background, timeliness of subject, more or less obscure pressures modifying choice and other factors.[16]

McKee asserts that it is important to remember that in order to encourage any child to attack strange words with sufficient vigor, the

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15. Betzner, Jean. Exploring Literature With Children in the Elementary School. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, 1943, p. 1.

16. Betzner, Jean and Moore, Annie E. Every Child and Books. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1940. pp. 112-124.

reading matter he uses must have a strong interest pull for him. The selections to be used in beginning reading must be so interesting that the child will insist upon understanding what they say. This means that each selection contained in the preprimers, primers, and first readers and each home-made selection should tell a story or give information which the child wants. For purposes of instruction in beginning reading, no reading selection, in or out of a book, is one bit better than the interest appeal and literary quality which it contains.

In the criteria for choosing selections in children's literature McKee says: "Each selection must be interesting in its own right. This means that each book, story, or poem chosen must be fun for the pupil to read. There is no place for the dull or insipid selection which does not offer a strong interest-pull."[17]

Arbuthnot declares:

> If we are to find these treasures, the best books for children, of course we need standards for judging the books themselves. But two facts we need to keep constantly before us: A book is a good book for children only when they enjoy it; a book is a poor book for children even when adults rate it a classic if children are unable to read it or are bored by its content. In short, we must know hundreds of books in many fields and their virtues and limitations, but we must also know the children for whom they are intended-their interests and needs.[18]

Arbuthnot gives the following as basic needs for children which certain books can give them: The need for security: material, emotional, and spiritual-material and economic security consists of material comforts.

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17. McKee, Paul. The Teaching of Reading in the Elementary School. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1948. p. 195 and pp. 253-365.

18. Arbuthnot, May. Children and Books. New York: Scott, Foresman, 1947. p. 2-7.

> The old fairy tales were told by people who seldom had enough to eat or were never quite warm enough. Their tales are full of many feasts, bright jewels and fine palaces . . . The desire for material and economic security, then, is always a powerful drive in human behavior and of unfailing interest as a motif or leading idea in stories.

Stories of home life have their appeal for children of all ages. If a book deals with a family, however poor and struggling it may be, bound together in love and loyalty then comes emotional security, the rightness and stability of the affections. Some books give children spiritual security, which neither danger nor failure can destroy. Books of this nature give children a conviction that righteous people will eventually master hardships and evils of all kinds if their righteousness is supported by intelligent and unceasing effort.

> As children grow older, they find their gradually maturing desire for the security of others inspired by the stories of such people as Florence Nightingale and Father Damien. They are moved deeply by stories about parents who make sacrifices to provide for their children, about men and women who give their lives for their friends, and about patriots who perish for their country....

Every child feels the need to belong-to, be a part of, a group. There are books in which a child might identify himself with some character. For example, Hungarian Kate in The Good Master or the adventurous Chinese boy, Young Fu. Books of this type help children on the way to becoming friendly world neighbors. The need to love and to be loved is still another avenue of interest to children. Books can help whether the family background is happy or unhappy. A child might find traces of his own father in "Pa" in the Wilder books. He may recognize his own mother in Mrs. March of Little Women or he may share the brother and sister fun of Caddie Woodlawn. Children may find vicarious substitutes which give them some insight into what families might be if their own haven't been happy ones.

> Stories about wild animals defending their mates or their young or the herd are tremendously appealing. So, too, are stories of pets, steadfast not only in their affection for their own kind but for their human masters as well . . . Finally, the need to love and to be loved, which includes family affection, warm friendship, and animal devotions, begins at last to look toward romance. This budding interest of older children is often concealed or strenuously denied at first while it seeks information and vicarious satisfaction in the romances of moving pictures or radio serials. In children's literature, romance begins early but remains extremely impersonal. The fairy tales, with their long delayed prince or their princess on a glass hill, are little more than symbols of better things to come. They do, however, help little girls to think of themselves in the girl's role and boys to identify themselves with the masculine role, an important task of later childhood. In the old ballads, with battle, murder, and sudden death, all for love's sake, the man and maid are still as nebulous as a dream, but a dream of bright promise. The need to achieve-to do or be something worthy leads to . . . Interest in achievements in terms of idealistic service, devotion to research or a cause leads children to the biographies of such people as Abraham Lincoln, Florence Nightingale and Mme. Curie.

The need to know is a seeking after intellectual security:

> Today teachers and parents realize that the keener the intelligence, the wider are the curiosities. Stars, birds, animals, plants, jungle life, ships, trains, airplanes - these are only a few of the child's interests. The small child is fascinated by a picture book of animals, or he will "read" a train book again and again. Soon he may become absorbed in such books as <u>When the Stars Come Out</u> or <u>They Went Exploring</u> or the <u>Earth for Sam</u>. Still later he will be demanding of the harassed librarian books on every subject from termites to battleships, from hieroglyphics to radar. . .

Arbuthnot says the following categories represent some of the main areas of children's interests in books: Animal stories, Hero tales, Fairy tales and fantasy, Realism, Poetry, Nonsense, and Informational books.

In the area of poetry falls Mother Goose; and the qualities that charm the children are variety, musical quality, action, story interest, humor and illustrations.[19]

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19. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 7.

In a study of young children's favorite stories and characters Wilson shows that: 109 boys and girls from privileged homes were interviewed concerning their favorite stories and characters and reasons for liking them; it was found that 78 were named and only 19 of these being named more than once. These 19 included old children's favorites, such as The Three Bears and Little Red Riding Hood; some of the better modern children's stories, such as Little Black Sambo and Alice in Wonderland; Bible stories, and some of the more mature informational type of material, such as A. Lincoln and Gulliver's Travels.

Very little evidence of marked grade level differences was found, but boys tended, perhaps, to prefer the mature and informational material, while the girls seemed more content with the more traditional, such as The Three Bears and Sleeping Beauty.

A considerable variety of reasons for liking their favorite stories was shown, although adventure and humor were by far the most general for both sexes. Girls expressed somewhat greater discrimination in other respects than did boys.

A similar variety in favorite characters and reasons for liking them was also revealed. Animals and boys were most frequently mentioned, but equally by the two sexes. Girl characters were many more times appealing to girls as to boys, while men characters were nearly twice as often names by boys as by girls. Women, fairies, and babies were decidedly not the most popular.

Sixty-five per cent of the favorite characters were found in fantasy stories, 30 per cent in real life stories, and only 5 per cent in fairy tales.

Comparison of reasons for liking stories and characters showed

that stories were most frequently favored because they were funny and characters because of personal qualities. Many other types of reason, however, were given for the favorite stories and characters.[20]

In another study by Witty the children were asked to name the story they liked best, and the teachers wrote these down. A questionnaire was filled in by children in grades IV through VIII. Space was provided for each to list the five books they had read and most enjoyed. The titles of the books listed were the unrestricted choices of children who regularly attend movies, listen to the radio, and read comic books and strips in their leisure time. Four thousand three hundred forty-three different titles were mentioned. Choices were found to onnform to adult standards as to grade level and quality represented in the children's catalog. Some characteristics of their choices included stories about animals in the primary grades. Tales of this kind thrill many children. Whether wild or tame, real or fanciful, these creatures stir the feelings and imaginations of boys and girls. A sense of intimacy and identification leads children to seek a succession of stories about a well-loved animal character. Such favorites are Donald Duck and Micky Mouse whose fortunes the children pursue in books, in the movies, over the radio, and in comic strips. Second in popularity in the primary grades were fairy tales. Fairy tales in general (no special collections named) received highest ranking (5.0) in the intermediate grades. Humor in narration and in illustration is

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20. Wilson, Frank J. "Young Children's Favorite Stories and Characters and Their Reasons for Liking Them," Pedagogical Seminar. LXIII (September, 1943), pp. 163-164.

characteristic of many of the books chosen by primary children.

A perusal of the favorite titles of the intermediate grades (IV-VI) reveals the gradual maturing of the tastes of these boys and girls. Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse persist as favorites, but they fall back in rank to give place to Lassie Come Home, Mr. Popper's Penguins, Black Beauty and Silver Chief. Intermediate-grade pupils also like plenty of fun and nonsense in their reading as attested by choices such as the Mary Poppins books, Freddy the Detective, Five Hundred Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins, Five Chinese Brothers, and Fast Sooner Hound. Adventure books appear in this list also; namely, Robin Hood, Snow Treasure and Robinson Crusoe. And there are stories of real boys such as Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn and the modern Homer Price and Rufus M. There is also an interest in the children of other lands as shown in Heidi, The Good Master, and Snow Treasure.

It is clear then that these lists are relatively high in merit as is shown by their similarity to lists of meritorious reading. Another evidence of the superiority of the children's choices is the frequency with which the Newbery and Caldecott Awards are cited. In a composite list of the favorites of primary-,intermediate-, and upper grade children, 41.6 per cent of all Newbery Awards appeared. Thus, ten of the twenty-four Award books are listed in the children's choices. And five of the eight Caldecott Awards (62.5) per cent were selected by the children.

It was found that poetry had little favor with the children of this survey. Only one book of poetry, Little Brown Baby, received enough votes to appear in the composite list of favorites. The bulk of

votes for this book came from a large Negro school in Chicago.[21]

Witty included the following statement by Blanck concerning poetry:

> Poetry save for the small doses crammed into the school boy, seems to hold no real place in the reading child's world. Publishers have issued and continue to publish inviting collections of the individual poets and specialized anthologies, but children do not of their own volition turn to poetry.[22]

Witty also includes Betzner and Moore's refutation of this statement:

> This conclusion may be true of the 'reading' child, but not of the 'listening' child, for poetry makes its greatest appeal to the ear. And surveys such as the one made of the publishers' children's book favorites show that even little children name books of poetry when they have had an opportunity to have poems read to them. . . Undoubtedly the encouragement of boys and girls to write their own verses will develop a feeling for poetry and will bring about a greater appreciation of poets and their works.[23]

Anecdotal records revealed the following observations made by Miriam L. Grimes, Assistant Professor Elementary Education at Muskingum College, that a knowledge of the author, his plans and activities while writing a book often adds to the children's interest in the story as well as making the writer seem more real to them.[24]

McCauley, first grade teacher in the Minneapolis, Minnesota schools, conducted an experiment with a wide area of children in the first grade on interests in poetry. The choice of materials was made

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21. Witty, Paul A. "Children's Choices of Favorite Books: A Study Conducted in Ten Elementary Schools," Journal of Educational Psychology, XXXVII (May, 1946), 266-278.

22. Witty, op. cit., p. 275.

23. Witty, op. cit., p. 277.

24. Grimes, Miriam L. "When Children Choose Their Own Books," Childhood Education, XXI (April, 1945), pp. 405-408.

from courses of study, poem books, poems found in first readers, primers, and magazine articles. The poems were grouped under the following headings: (1) poems to promote further study, (2) Mother Goose, (3) in the nature world, (4) highly imaginative and (5) everyday. Ten poems were selected for grouping under each of these five headings. The teacher asked informally about "your first choice," "second," and "third." She also asked occasionally, "Why do you like that poem?" Later, there was a "choosing-day" for poems. Children's choices were summed up at that time. The results were charted. An analysis of the charts showed that children's interests changed after a few months. That indicated that it is an impossibility to measure accurately or scientifically children's feelings or interests in poetry because their tastes change as often as our tastes in desserts change.

Results of this experiment showed:

1. The oftener the child heard a poem, the better he liked it, with a few exceptions.

2. Children's choices were not static. Their favorites seemed to be always favorites, but the position of their choices changed often.

3. The interest in poetry was affected by the following: (a) teacher enthusiasm, (b) parental guidance, (c) a home library, (d) child-made materials, (e) commendation upon good effort with original poems, (f) assembly programs whereby poems were shared with others, (g) the classroom library, and (h) the public library

4. Interest in seasonal poems, like those about snow, sprinkling, or flowers, was greater when that certain season occurred.

5. Poetry had a definite grade (or grades) placement. Some

poems lacked interest because they were not fully understood.

6. Mother Goose was a favorite in every season in the first grade.

7. If a child could recite a poem from memory, he usually said that it was a favorite.[25]

Of the reactions to fifty selected poems, Kyte concludes:

> In general, poems liked by most children were narratives; included humor, dramatic action, and pleasant experiences; dealt with subjects agreeably familiar to the pupils; and were written in a simple style. Dialect, if readily understood, appealed also. Little children liked poems about fairies and food. Boys especially liked adventure, while girls liked the poems dealing with romance. When these various sources of appeal were present, the matter of the length of the poem was a minor factor in its effect on the children's reactions.[26]

Rankin, in a study of the circulation records in eight public libraries for contemporary books of fiction and Newbery Medal Awards, found that contemporary books of fiction were highly popular as judged by circulation figures. Only one of the twenty-two Newbery Medal books was borrowed as frequently as any of the popular books. The reasons set forth were as follows:

1. The setting is American-versus-foreign.

2. The characters are the same age, sex, and vernacular as that of American young people versus adult who speaks in a style uncommon to American youth.

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25. McCauley, Lucille. "Children's Interests in Poetry," Elementary English, XXV (November, 1948), pp. 426-441.

26. Kyte, George C. "Children's Reactions to Fifty Selected Poems," Elementary School Journal, XLVII (February, 1947), pp. 331-339.

3. Conclusion implies a happy denouement versus moralizing or didactic.

4. Literary style is dynamic, with little use of pure description and structure of plot stands out clearly; versus diversity in style, and author's attention focused on form rather than on content.

The procedures used in selecting the books were: (1) turned pages quickly; (2) read parts of the text; (3) looked at one or more illustrations; (4) examined chapter headings. Some influential factors were as follows: topic, author's name, book title, illustrations, quality of action, adventure excitement or mystery, and recommendations by other children. When the children were asked to choose between pairs of books after seeing the first illustration in each, they tended to choose the book with the more realistic illustration. After hearing the first paragraph read aloud, the children more often selected the Newbery book.[27]

"In terms of materials," Betts contends, "the study of reading interests calls for the investigation of qualities of reading material, interest elements in prose and poetry, and the physical make-up of books. And, not least in importance, is the problem of developing reading interests and elevating tastes."[28]

Betts declares that a lack of interest in a given reading situation may be caused by the following reasons:

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27. Rankin, Marie. "Children's Interests in Library Books of Fiction," Teachers College Record, XLVI (April, 1945), pp. 461-462.

28. Betts, Emmett. Foundations of Reading Instruction - With Emphasis on Differentiated Guidance. New York: American Book Company, 1946. pp. 259-265.

1. The material may not be suitable.

2. The background of learner experience may be inadequate.

3. The purpose of the reading activity may not be clear to reader.

4. The needs of the learner may be defaulted.

5. An overemphasis may be placed on required reading.

6. Library facilities may be inadequate.

7. The mechanics of the process may be overemphasized.

8. The lack of physiological and emotional readiness for learning activities may characterize the situation.

9. Extrinsic devices may be overplayed by the teacher to the extent that the activity may lack intrinsic value.

10. Instruction may be based on transitory, or momentary, interests which fail to carry through for the learner.

Betts records the following problems in the development of reading interests:

1. The analysis of individual interests.

2. The broadening, extending and enrichment of reading interests.

3. Development of pupil ability and taste in the selection and evaluation of reading materials.

4. Providing encouragement and guidance for parents in the selection of reading materials for the home.

5. Balancing the reading program.

6. Development of adequate procedures for the teaching of poetry and other forms of literature.

7. The relating of reading activities to existing interests.

8. Use of extrinsic and intrinsic procedures for stimulating interests.

Suggestions for the development of reading interests include the following:

1. Surround children with a wide variety of books.

2. Encourage the use of library cards.

3. Stimulate the reading of current events.

4. Vitalize reading material through the use of visual aids.

5. Provide frequent opportunities for the sharing of interests.

6. Differentiate problems and goals in terms of the learner's capacity and reading ability.

7. Orient the learner for the initiation of a new unit of work.

8. Insure the learner's understanding of the purpose, or purposes, of the reading activity.

9. Subordinate the mechanics of reading to the semantic aspects.

10. Provide a browsing corner, or library center, in the classroom.

11. Provide materials that will tend to stimulate and broaden interests.[29]

Lamoreaux and Lee state:

> At the stage of maturation when the child is ready to learn to read he is psychologically self-centered. He is finding out about his own environment and his relation to it. He is interested in his own experiences, and desires to express them. He wants an audience to listen to him. He is not so much interested in the experience of others. What he wants, what he thinks, or

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29. Ibid., p. 264.

what he has done are important, and his major interest is in communicating these ideas. This major interest gives the clue to the reading program. This reading program develops out of the child's experience and his ability to express them adequately in oral language. . .

. . . If there is no interest it is a waste of time to try to teach reading.[30]

Wrightstone declares:

. . . Although the reading interest patterns of children differ widely at respective age or grade levels, certain interests are more characteristic of pupils at one than other levels. In the primary grades, children are generally interested in stories of animals, of children, of familiar experiences, and of nature, as well as stories of the fanciful type and the simpler fairy tales. The average child between the age of eight and ten prefers animal stories of a realistic type. Stories of home and school life, of children in other lands and of adventure become popular choices. Between the ages of ten to twelve, Lazar found that the following elements made a general appeal-action, adventure, animal life and nature, child life, excitement, humor, mischief, thrills mystery, realism, sportsmanship and bravery, and suspense . . . All age levels of interest patterns merge with one another and vary with such factors as mental maturity, sex, breadth of experience, family influence, and accessibility of materials.[31]

Lazar affirms:"A child who has participated in a group effort to reconstruct some phase of pioneer life will read with added interest or critical appreciation about the life of a pioneer hero or a fictional version of pioneer struggles . . ."[32]

Children have many reading preferences in common, she continues. As a result of some general observations made by several teachers they learned such facts as these:

1. Children liked books with large print, gay colors, easy

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30. Lamoreaux and Lee. op. cit., p. 117.

31. Wrightstone, op. cit., p. 24.

32. Lazar, op. cit., p. 3.

stories. They preferred books that were easy to carry and had hard covers. For some reason they did not look upon books with soft covers as real books.

2. The girls liked stories about people while the boys seemed to prefer stories about activities.

3. All the children liked action and adventure stories.

4. Attractive display was a definite factor in promoting interest in a book.

5. Current movies influenced the popularity of a particular book.

6. Special classroom projects in social studies also affected the choice of books. There was a veritable "boom" among books on homes and housing when a neighborhood housing project was being studied by these children.

7. Children's comment and the teacher's own enthusiasm were important factors in influencing the selection of books.

8. They did not try to read the magazine materials on hand.

9. They did not like material that was too "preachy" or technical.

10. They did not like to read books of poetry.

11. Children with poor powers of self-direction and lack of ability to sustain interest could not be exposed to too many books at once. They had to be guided in choosing from a few books which were frequently changed. Some seemed to enjoy "little" books which could be completed quickly and which gave them a sense of accomplishment.

According to Harris, some of the factors which influence reading preferences are these:

1. Physical make-up of a book. Primary children, according to one study, prefer books that are about seven or eight inches high, five inches wide and one inch thick; bright covers (blue, red, or yellow); many illustrations; and have wide margins. Goodykoontz concludes that (1) children like the books that have one fourth of the page devoted to pictures; (2) they prefer large pictures; (3) they prefer strong colors to black and white or pastels; (4) they like bold central groups with few details; (5) they prefer realistic rather than conventionalized pictures; (6) they prefer pictures which show action or humor and tell a story; (7) young children like a broad range of subject matter; (8) young children do not care especially for pictures of child activities; (9) older children like pictures related to in-school and informational activities.

2. Accessibility and availability have influence on choices.

3. Attitudes of teachers influence their preferences.

4. Affected by the movies and the radio.

Many methods have been used in determining the child's interests but the simplest and most effective method is to watch the child's behavior each day. Children display their interests in conversation, in play, in drawing, and in other activities that encourage self-expression. Another procedure is to arrange for a "hobby club" period. Arrange a quiet interview with each child. Still another procedure is through the use of a questionnaire.[33]

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33. Harris, Albert J. How to Increase Reading Ability. New York: Longmans Green Company, 1947. pp. 407-444.

The use of a "lure and a ladder" has been suggested in developing reading interests. The lure may be any number of ways of enticing children to begin pleasurable reading. The ladder idea provides suitable material which will intensify the child's interest in reading.[34]

Harris declares:

> While it is vitally important to help children to find reading matter that is closely related to their present interests, teachers should also try to broaden children's reading horizons. Children's interests are not fixed; they change as children get older, and are susceptible to many environmental influences, not the least of which is the influence of the teacher. There are many good ways in which children's reading interests can be improved and enriched. The worst way is to attempt compulsion through required assignments and detailed book reports.[35]

Children's Interests in Social Studies

The second survey was made on children's interests in the social studies. Wesley, Professor of Education, University of Minnesota, discusses interests in general that may be applied to the social studies:

> Perhaps the most fundamental condition of learning is interest. The pupil must be interested in the material, subject, problem, or unit; this means that he must already know something about it. If he has no background which enables him to start, he is not ready for the material and so he can have no interest in it. The teacher can stimulate an interest by providing new experiences that have a real connection with the proposed material.[36]

In an article titled "Current Events in the Middle Grades," Mason declares:

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34. Ibid., p. 427.

35. Ibid., p. 428.

36. Wesley, Edgar Bruce and Adams, Mary A. Teaching Social Studies in Elementary Schools. Boston: D. C. Heath, 1946. p. 63.

> There are no better guide words in the educational field than those of needs and interests .. . . The fourth-graders have a surprising awareness of current happenings. . . in short, they talk easily and well of things that are of public interest . . . Thus the child has a more intrinsic interest in the information which he brings for verbal contribution because it is part of his thinking and he wishes to discuss it instead of the old extrinsic idea of bringing the clipping because it was assigned. There is no better index of a child's interests than by what he is most anxious to talk about when he first comes to school in the morning.[37]

Some of the things in which the child is most interested, Mason continues, are "changing terminology in the news, location of places on maps, newscasts on the radio during school hours, international news, national, state, and local news, interest in the child's own environment, and the events of the community."[38]

Children enjoy and are interested in stories about the steamboat, the pony express, cotton, silk, coal, iron, wool, rubber, and all of the marvelous things that tell about the progress of civilization.

There are some who think that interest is very important in setting up the curriculum. Lacey, an authority on the teaching of social studies, feels that interest is vital to the school program. She explains it in the following quotation:

> While some have considered subject matter and its organization, others have made elaborate studies of children's interests and needs as a basis for choosing content for the program. A definite attempt has been made to understand child development - intellectually, physically, socially, emotionally. As a result teachers are concerned more with the interests and needs of children than with a series of subjects each with a definite program. There seems to be a feeling that young children need

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37. Mason, Marcella. "Current Events in the Middle Grades," Social Education, VI (January, 1942), pp. 18-19.

38. Ibid., p. 19.

> to be made aware of interesting phases of American life and to face problems of group living in order to accomplish the task of socialization. Children are interested in and much affected by many social forces in their immediate environment-houses, public buildings, recreational centers, transportation, safety, radio programs, movies, tools, newspapers, clothes, food, health, and the like. It is through a study of these that they will develop interest in changing civilization and begin to identify themselves with the social world . . . It is through a concrete approach to some of his own childish problems that the child is able to see how people live and work together; how one group helps another; and how all have rights and privileges that must be respected. All this means that the discovery of children's interests and activities during a free period, during the play periods and the vacations must be utilized as leads into choosing experiences that have social significance to the child and that give training in desirable social understanding, attitudes, and controls. . .[39]

Children's Interests In Science

In some studies made of children's interests in science it was found that children may be interested in a wide variety of scientific phenomena - - living things, mechanics and earth forces.

Craig, a well-known scientist, makes this comment about the interests of children in science:

> The interest of children can be broadened and deepened through a stimulating environment. Books, experiments, excursions can be used to good advantage in opening up new fields for study.
>
> The child is studying about an active universe, a universe which is still new to him. It is a universe of big and little forces - a universe of big and little living things, a universe of materials of varied colors, hardness, and other qualities. It is an intriguing universe; it has intrigued man for thousands of years.
>
> Teachers should expect a wide span of differences in interest in science. Some children will like to study animals; others, electricity and stars . . . It is generally assumed that boys have more interest in electricity, mechanics, and other physical science subjects than girls. What usually is not recognized is that the home and the school normally tend to condition girls from early childhood away from those interests which have been

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39. Lacey, Joy M. Teaching the Social Studies in the Elementary School. Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Company, 1941. pp. 12-16.

traditionally considered masculine. Girls are given dolls rather than electric trains or other mechanical toys; girls are seldom invited by teachers to take leadership in tasks in the classroom which involve manipulation, such as wiring electric bells and lights for a toy house.[40]

Garrison explains how young children react to the field of science:

> Children's interests are broad and varied rather than narrow and intensive-in other words, little children have some interest in many phenomena of science rather than a great interest in a few . . . The field of science holds much that is of definite interest and value for little children; in fact, given the opportunity, children's interest is stimulated as much by the scientific aspects of their environment as by any other . . . Practically every phase of science will hold some interest for children if it is properly presented.[41]

Animals are interesting to children because of their variety and appearance, and because of their behavior. Plant life is interesting to young children, and if they are presented through simple, concrete experiences, and through authentic pictures and stories, the children begin to develop valuable and correct concepts.

> Children's interest in the various phases of the forces of nature is largely in their dynamic manifestations, and in the results of the action of these forces on the lives of people.[42]

VonQualen reports on the specific interests of children in certain grades. A study was made in grades four, five and six at the University Elementary School of the University of Iowa to determint the scientific interests of children as indicated by their choices

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40. Craig, Gerald S. Science in Childhood Education. New York: Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1944. pp. 13-14.

41. Garrison, Charlotte G. Science Experiences for Little Children. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939. pp. 1-67.

42. Ibid., p. 67.

of reading materials. The results were:

1. Fourth grade girls showed most interest in Science and Industry, Transportation, Cloth, Light, and Ancient Animals.

2. Fourth grade boys showed most interest in Ancient Animals and Transportation.

3. Pupils of the fourth grade, considering both boys and girls, showed most interest in Ancient Animals, Transportation, and Science and Industry.

4. Fifty grade girls showed most interest in Weather, Ancient Animals, Living Animals, and General Science.

5. Fifth grade boys showed most interest in Electricity and Magnetism, Ancient Snimals, General Science, Transportation, Living Animals, and Science and Industry.

6. Pupils of the fifth grade, considering both boys and girls, showed most interest in Electricity and Magnetism, General Science, Ancient Animals, and Living Animals.

7. The sixth grade girls showed most interest in Living Animals, Conservation, and Science and Industry.

8. The sixth grade boys showed most interest in Ancient Animals, Living Animals, Transportation, General Science, and Science and Industry.

9. Pupils of the sixth grade, considering both girls and boys, showed most interest in Ancient Animals, Living Animals, and Science and Industry.[43]

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43. VonQualen, Vivian and Kambly, Paul E. "Children's Interests in Science as Indicated by Choices of Reading Materials." School Science and Math. XLV (December, 1945), pp. 798-805.

In considering all the pupils in the intermediate grades of the University Elementary School the most interest was shown in the following subject matter areas: Ancient Animals, Science and Industry, Transportation, General Science, Living Animals, and Electricity and Magnetism. The subject matter areas in which the pupils showed least interest were Conservation, Light, Cloth, Astronomy, Weather, Plants, and Earth's Crust.[44]

The California State Department of Education made a study on the interest of children in certain areas in science. The findings were as follows:

> Many studies have been carried on to determine what types of science subject matter have the greatest interest appeal for children, but it is doubtful if any valid far-reaching conclusions can be based on these studies as yet. For example, some studies indicate that young children are more interested in animals than they are in plants or in the inanimate materials of the physical sciences. Many capable teachers hold this to be true. On the other hand, certain of the studies that have been made lead to the opposite inference. Slavson and Speer in their Science in the New Education express the belief that in situations in which children are free to handle all sorts of materials, the physical sciences provide many more challenging interests than the biological sciences . . . one good thing definitely has come from attempts to evaluate children's interests, namely, the focus of attention has been shifted from traditional subject matter concepts to the child and his needs. In any case, to adopt a bias in favor of either the biological or the physical sciences would be to take an incomplete and highly unsatisfactory view of science in relation to education . . . Provision must be made for meeting the present and future needs of the individual as well as for satisfying his immediate interests. It is admitted, of course, that unless one is interested in a variety of things he may never acquire the knowledge and training that will enable him to satisfy his needs. However, interests are derived behavior patterns in any case. They are not basically inherent or native or instinctive. Interests may be created by appropriate stimulations and experiences. It is necessary to look beyond immediate interests, to foresee

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44. Ibid., p. 805.

needs, and then to strive to arouse the interests that will lead to the satisfaction of those needs . . .

Children show interest in many things, both living and non living, though the breadth and intensity of their interest varies. In general, other things being equal, they show more interest in things that move, than in things that do not move or that show but little motion. A road scraper at work is more interesting than a giant electrical generator in a power plant, that only shines and hums. A monkey in a zoo is more interesting than a sleepy porcupine that spends the daylight hours curled up in a corner of its cage. Children prefer an object they can handle to one they are forbidden to touch. An Indian arrowhead in the hand has more appeal than a dozen in a museum display case. Children enjoy an activity in which they can share more than one in which they can play the role of spectator only. An aquarium stocked with polliwogs collected by the children on a trip to a creek or pond yields more in enjoyment and learning than an aquarium stocked by the teacher and brought to the classroom in an already established condition.

There is more to fire the interest and imagination of a child in an object that can do things than in one that must have things done to it. A magnet is more exciting than a nail. A magnifying glass has more appeal than a window pane. The elements of novelty and surprise appeal strongly to children. Mercury is fascinating because, though a metal, it is liquid; though a liquid, it will not wet wood or glass or copper or iron; yet a tiny drop of it will cling so tenaciously to silver that a drop of it, rubbed on a dime cannot be rubbed off; instead it spreads into a thin film that covers the dime and makes it shine with a luster that pure silver never has. When a finger is pushed into it, the mercury seems to push back as it if were alive. Liquid drops of mercury will roll about on a table top as if they were solid ball bearings.

Children love the mysterious and wonderful. Few things are more incredible than the hatching of an egg or the emergence of a butterfly from its chrysalis. Children delight in make-believe but they earnestly want to know what is true and genuine and real.

Children are interested in the thing that is useful, in the things they can use themselves. . . The book that tells in simple language how to build and fly a model airplane will be worn out by use while another that only discusses planes in general and indefinite terms gathers dust on the library shelves. . .[45]

Children's Interests In Art

The child who carries a certain light in his eyes must have

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45. California State Department of Education, Science in the Elementary School. Sacramento: State Department, 1945. pp. 16-20.

been in that world of enchantment where he sees and has power to express through the medium of art that which will please and delight him and his peers.

Schultz, an eminent authority in the field of art, explains:

> Most teachers have adequate opportunity to know the interests of the children with whom they work but often fail to take advantage of this knowledge. We all know that there is more spirit in the art expression of youngsters if they are permitted to use their own interests and experiences. Boys and girls will respond more readily, and learn more, if they can model, paint, draw or construct something connected with a circus recently seen than they will respond to our Pilgrim forefathers whom they will never see or really understand in a fundamental sense. The world is so new and so exciting to elementary school children that there is a wealth of subject matter in their experiences . . . The subject matter of art must not be limited to the child's immediate experiences. We must develop and encourage new interests too. How else would growth and progress in learning take place? Children can be interested in adult experiences which they can share and understand.[46]

In a study made by Dietrich and Hunnicutt of forty children ages six to nine, the youngsters were asked to indicate by (+) and zero (o) their choices between two pictures presented simultaneously side by side. The investigation was carried on as a game, the child stating which picture he would like to take home with him. Results of this study showed:

> Landscapes were preferred to pictures of interiors, still life, people. Boys preferred seascapes to landscapes; girls tended to prefer pictures of people to landscapes. Seascapes were preferred when matched with pictures of interiors, people, or still life. Pictures of people were preferred to pictures of still life. When interiors were shown in matched pairs with landscapes, seascapes, pictures of still life, or pictures of children, the latter types were preferred. A preference for

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46. Schultz, Harold A. and Shores, James Harlan. Art in the Elementary School. Urbana, Illinois: The University of Illinois, 1948. p. 17.

> pictures of children when matched with pictures of interiors, women, or men was evident. Foreground pictures were preferred to background pictures. Bright pictures were preferred to shadowy. The children liked many objects rather than few. Identification of themselves with their own sex was evident in the showings of the matched pairs of pictures of boys and pictures of girls. This was further revealed in the matched showing of pictures of men and pictures of women. Boys preferred pictures of boys and men; girls preferred to see girls and women. When pictures of adults were shown with pictures of children, the preferences of Grade I indicated a dominant preference for pictures of children.[47]

A study made by Malter was divided into categories:

1. Children were asked to state their preferences for illustrations containing a variety of subject-matter.

2. The children were asked to state their preferences for illustrations containing similar subject matter, but differing in respect to a style or color factor.

The materials used consisted of illustrations selected from books, illustrations especially prepared for the studies, prints, and oil paintings. The children, chose, ranked, rated, compared, and wrote essays about their choices.[48]

> The conclusions indicate that children prefer colored illustrations to those reproduced in black and white. . . Older children exhibit a preference for softer tones and tints. . . Since children's preferences, or interests, are in part influenced by specific cultures, contradictions . . . are understandable . . . Children's preferences must be constantly reexamined and reevaluated . . . Children . . . are interested in a wide variety of things.

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47. Dietrich, Grace L. and Hunnicut, Clarence W. "Art Content Preferred by Primary Grade Children," Elementary School Journal, XLVIII (June, 1948), pp. 557-559.

48. Malter, Morton S. "Children's Preferences for Illustrative Material," Journal of Educational Research, XLI (January, 1948), pp. 378-385.

. . . Story-telling qualities of illustrations appeal to children.

Children preferred good paintings. No definite conclusions were available as to whether children liked abstract drawings. Silhouettes proved unpopular. It was not certain whether sex differences were marked.[49]

D'Amico in his book, Creative Teaching in Art, proposes the following as interests and inspiration to children: the city, the neighborhood, the home, and the school; the things one does or thinks about; what one reads, studies, or imagines. D'Amico explains that a child has to be taught to see the things in his environment, not only with the outer eye but also with the inner eye. When the child begins to see things around him then his interests begin to show in the things he paints or draws. For example, the home and self provide a rich source of interest and inspiration. The week-end experiences of an average boy are full of possibilities; fishing, attending the movies, hiking with friends, using the workshop, taking care of pets, and the like. Continued home interests include father and his evening paper, his dress, and his posture; mother at work, knitting or sewing; sister reclining on the divan, buried in cushions and enthralled in a novel. Unusual and exciting events is a source of interest for the young artist. Likewise seasonal events and special holidays, and the unseen world.[50]

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49. Ibid., p. 383.

50. D'Amico, Victor. Creative Teaching in Art. Scranton, Pennsylvania: International Textbook Company., 1942. pp. 2-215.

The foregoing statements show some of the subjects the children are interested in. The next phase has to do with the media. Almost every child likes to paint; it is one of the best media for stimulating creativeness. D'Amico continues:

> The brush is more natural to him than the pencil. In his use of the brush the child is relaxed and free; his movements are poised and rhythmic, he is drawing with his arm and body . . . From the ages of six to ten, as the child grows into the representation and communication of ideas the teacher can help to stimulate him by planning trips to the zoo and aquarium, or visits to places of interest in the neighborhood-the bakery or fruit market, the pet shop or flower nursery . . . In the upper years of elementary school, especially in the fifth and sixth grades, the child becomes a conscious designer, that is, he consciously seeks and considers the elements of design-line, mass, and color . . . By the time the child is nine or ten years old, he has usually developed a good sense of dark and light value and some sense of pattern or texture. . . There are few media to which a child responds more quickly and enthusiastically than color . . . The urge to model and build in three-dimensional materials is as strong in most children as the will to draw or paint. However, expression of this urge varies with the age and type of child, and the technique of developing it will vary with the individual and the environment surrounding him. . .
>
> In the primary grades children show an intense interest in plastic expression . . . The interest in sculptural media and expression grows throughout the elementary school years . . . Other things in which the elementary pupil is interested are the graphic arts and as stage artist and as designer and craftsman.[51]

The boys and girls differ somewhat in their choices of pictures in Berry's book, Art for Children.

> Boys are generally more interested in the selection of "Ships," or in that of "Legends" and "Adventure," whilst girls, on the whole, prefer "Angels" and "Fairies," and the "Portraits," yet the pictures of "Animals" appear to draw the greater number of favourites . . . not a few preferred the pictures that had a story. And several gave no other reasons for a favourite than its beauty.
>
> Habits and tastes generally influence a boys choice. One boy preferred the chinese tiger. 'It looked so alive,' and 'he

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51. Ibid., p. 28.

> was going in for shooting big game when he grew up,' he explained. Another who came from a sporting family thought race horses the best picture of galloping horses he had ever seen . . . A lover of Homer was thrilled by the "Return of Ulysses" and by "The Trojan Horse," and one who wrote stories about pirates, by the pictures of galleons on a rough sea.
>
> Now it is a fact that every child, all the world over, loves to draw and paint, and model in clay. And that the very first thing that he draws, paints or models, are his friends the animals. . .[52]

Children's Interests in Comics

The comics have a certain fascination for children. Some well known educators have made studies of their appeal.

Hill and Trent make the following revealing statement:

> . . . The comic strip is a distinctive and revealing feature of our American culture. Something of the extent to which it affects us all is suggested by the fact that there are over 1200 different comic strips and that comics are published in almost all of our newspapers. . .
>
> . . . That children enjoy the comics almost goes without saying. They seem to prefer them to many other forms of amusement and read them whether or not they read the other parts of the newspaper. . . .[53]

Three thousand school children were asked to make paired comparisons to determine the relative attractiveness of listening to the radio and doing nine other things. Reading the funnies was rated as preferable along with going to the movies and listening to an orchestra on the stage. Twenty-five hundred children indicated their preference for comics over any other section of the newspaper. Looking at the Sunday "funny" paper is more common to both sexes from the

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52. Berry, Ana M. Art for Children. New York: The Studio Publications, 1942. pp. 1-9.

53. Hill, George E. and Trent, M. Estelle, "Children's Interests in Comic Strips," Journal of Educational Research, XXXIV (September, 1940), pp. 30-31.

ages of eight to fifteen than most of their activities.

Beyond such expressions of preference as these, we know very little about children's interests in comic strips. . .

A survey was made using 256 children in grades four, five, and six of Philadelphia elementary schools. Two questions were asked: "What comics do you like best?" and "Why do you like these comics best?" These children also took a 30-item multiple choice test covering facts regarding those comic strips revealed to be most popular. Reasons given for their preferences for certain comic strips were: exciting, mysterious, and thrilling; full of action and fighting; they tell interesting stories; they present characters whose bravery, strength, beauty, and unfailing ability to master all difficulties appeal to the young heart and mind. " The element of humor, from which these cartoon stories derived their name, is mentioned in only seventeen per cent of their explanations."[54]

Other reasons given, in the Hill-Trent study, for the preferences in comics were interest in aviation, romantic interest of girls, interest in strange lands and planets, educational value, and connection with familiar fairy tales. Some liked a certain comic because it was sad. Boys were attracted by action, adventure, fighting, feats of strength and daring, fantastic tales of life in other lands and planets, and thrilling escapades in the field of aviation. Girls showed an interest in the same things but were also attracted to the element of romance and family life.

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54. Ibid., pp. 34-35.

> . . . There is a marked similarity between the comic strip preferences of the boys in the present study and the reading interests of boys as shown by various investigators.
>
> . . . Sex differences in comic strip preferences seem to be of the same sort as in the field of reading interests but are not so pronounced.
>
> It is of interest to note that children prefer certain comic strips for reasons very similar to those for which they prefer certain radio programs and movies. If we eliminate the music of the radio, children like radio programs if they are exciting, interesting, full of action and funny, reasons very similar to their reasons for preferring certain comics. Also children of the ages considered seem to prefer movies that embody much the same appeals.[55]

A vivid description of the appeal of the comics to children is shown in the quotation to follow by Cole:

> . . . Everytime one goes to the corner drug one finds at least one small urchin sitting on the floor in front of the magazine rack completely absorbed in Superman or Joe Palooka or Little Orphan Annie. Books of comics are among the favorite reading matter of children, even of those who also read good literature. . . The chief appeal of the comics, as revealed in individual interviews, rests upon the child's love of excitement, adventure, mystery, sport, and humor. Moreover, books of comics are easily available and cheap. Children can collect them and swap them in a way quite unlikely with real books . . . This type of reading, like most types popular with children, gratifies certain of the child's drives and expresses his interests, his desire to acquire knowledge, his love of phantasy, adventure, and mystery. Reading often is, and should be, a form of release and fulfillment of emotional drives and interests.[56]

Witty, a noted educator at Northwestern University, made a study of a certain number of boys and girls. The results of this study are shown below:

A study of 334 boys and girls in grades four, five and six reveals that reading the comics is one of the pupils favored leisure

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55. Ibid., pp. 35-36.

56. Cole, Luella. The Elementary School Subjects. New York: Rinehart and Company, 1946. pp. 120-121.

activities. In fact, it appears to be the most popular of all reading pursuits.

Interest in the comics appears in many forms. Reading comic books or magazines is a popular pastime. The average number of magazines reported to have been read was about thirteen. Of these an average of three magazines were read regularly; and three more were read often. Boys were inclined to show greater fondness than girls for comic magazines. The most frequently mentioned magazines were Superman, Batman, and Famous Funnies; issues of these were favorites in all grades.

Another indication of the interest in comics was found in the responses of the boys and girls to the comic strip. The average number of comic strips reported to have been read by the boys and girls was about twenty-five. Thirteen of these were regularly, and an additional four or five were often, read. Occupying the first three ranks of favor in grades four, five and six were Dick Tracy, Smiling Jack, and Blondie.

A final indication of the influence the comics exercise on boys and girls was revealed by their tendency to make original comics. This tendency was clearly shown in the fourth grade, where about two-thirds of the youngsters reported participation in this activity. In grades five and six, the interest persisted: about 60 per cent of the children in these grades indicated that they found pleasure in making their own comics.

All these activities seem to satisfy the middle grade child's desire and need for experiences that are adventurous and exciting. These elements seem much more important than the item of humor, since

many widely read comics are devoid of humorous situations or incidents.

Children's interests in the comics are similar to those found in other forms of reading, in the cinema, and in the radio. The appeal of all three media is identical.[57]

Frank sets forth her ideas in the following quotation concerning the awareness of children to various forms of entertainment with emphasis on the comics and radio:

> Comics, radio, movies, and television-these are a part of our children's world today. They are among the ways by which words and ideas, our culture and our thinking, are being passed along to our children. Yet many view these new developments with misgivings, and yearn for the good old days when a child could sit down with a book without being distracted by the voice of the radio and the ever present lure of a comics magazine.[58]

"What is the fascination of the comics? Probably the greatest common ingredient is action. Children like things to happen, and in the comics they do, fast and furiously . . ."

Frank continues by describing further interests children have in the comics. The action is easy to follow and the pictures are easy to understand. Reading is a difficult skill to master to the point of enjoyment, therefore this is no small factor in the interest and popularity of the comics.

The biff bang variety of action is pleasing to the youngster to whom physical encounters are always fascinating and forbidden.

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57. Witty, Paul A. "Children's Interests in Reading the Comics." Journal of Experimental Education, X (December, 1941), p. 103.

58. Frank, Josette. Comics, Radio, Movies and Children. New York: Public Affairs Commission, 1949. pp. 1-12.

This fits into the child's own games of playing soldiers; the "dead" soldiers are expected to pick themselves up after the fight and join the play.

The pattern of repetition of theme and character offers a certain security for the youngsters. They always know that everything will turn out as they would have it. They know that the "good guys" will defeat the "bad guys," no matter what the odds.

Many children identify themselves with the hero or the villain. They fancy themselves strong and powerful, clever and wicked. Perhaps they find some escape from the frustrations that go along with being "small fry" in a world full of people bigger and stronger than they are. It gives them a release for pent-up feelings of hate, anger, fear, and aggression.

The younger children prefer the gentler animal fables and cartoons. Later on, they turn to the more fantastic and magical, and thence to the more realistic "could be possible" tales.

> Radio attracts children for many of the same reasons as do the comics. . .
> . . . In radio listening, just as in comics, movies, and other interests, children's tastes differ. Some boys and girls avoid the thriller, preferring the milder entertainment of music or comedy, or the more thoughtful quiz or forum discussions. There can be no doubt, however, that the largest audience is attracted to the blood-and-thunder adventure serials . . . Like the comics, adventure programs provide for many children escape from the humdrum of ordinary living . . . They (the children) seem to prefer programs with plenty of action, sound effects, suspense, and violent happenings . . .[59]

Children's Interests In Radio

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59. Ibid., pp. 8-12.

One of the favorite pastimes for children is listening to the radio. The following writers have given their opinion concerning the interests the children have shown in radio programs.

Callahan, in her recent book, declares:

> . . . They (the children) know what they want to hear. Most of all, they want good stories, well done. Their requests are specific. 'Lots of stories about great people before they were grown.' 'More on science in everyday happenings.' 'More of the real things on aviation, not just sound effects.' 'Programs that talk less.' 'More suggestions for what I might be when I grow up.' These requests suggest the desire of children to use radio broadcasting in self-education. They enjoy learning by radio, just as they enjoy being entertained by it.[60]

Roy DeVerl Wiley discloses some interesting information in the following paragraphs:

The young listeners take radio stories literally just as they do other tales of fantasy and make-believe. When the child is older he has a desire for realism or pseudorealism, however, they do not particularly appreciate simple tales of real life doings; they would rather have the escapades of supermen. In radio programs, as in books, children like action, melodrama, and the suspense of continued narratives; they dislike programs which to them are silly, improbable, repetitious, preaching, or excessive in love interest. Humor ranks high and most of the time comes first in preference. However, there are not many comedy programs designed for children. Their favorite comedians listed were Jack Benny, Bob Hope, and Danny Kaye. As a child grows his desire to laugh and to be entertained increases. An important observation is the fact that children seem to desire extremes of adventure. The mystery play ranks high with comic dialogues,

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60. Callahan, Jennie Waugh. Radio Workshop for Children. New York: McGraw Hill, 1948. p. 291.

skits, and dramatic plays almost equally popular. It seems that the child wants either of two emotional extremes, intense excitement or the relaxation of joy and humor.[61]

> Children's taste in radio programs parallels their taste in other forms of entertainment: they want excitement, mystery, danger, perilous action. It is a time for imaginative exploration among the most harassing and tempestuous pursuits. Radio crime and mystery stories are special favorites. Not only do children follow those designed for juvenile acceptance, but with uncanny skill they ferret out the most vehement crime tales directed to adults. Broadcasters have encouraged this preference by catering to childish credulity and thirst for adventure. . . . Psychologically much of the interest in extremes of radio crime and adventure may be easily understood and often justified. These programs provide a form of escape from reality, a stereotyped day-dream leading to unknown, exciting vistas . . .[62]

Dorothy Gordon, in her book All Children Listen, brings together the following information from various groups:

Children's preferences in 1940 as shown by surveys by Child Study, Library and Parent Groups in various parts of the country: Let's Pretend, Billy and Betty, Singing Lady (Irene Wicker), Yesterday's Children (Dorothy Gordon), March of Games, Jack Armstrong, The Lone Ranger, Uncle Don (by very young children).

The reasons for preferences were given as follows: programs were entertaining, humorous, adventurous, educational, thrilling, or exciting, or gave especially new light on current events.

Reasons for dislikes: silly, not original, too much slang and poor English, not sincere, too frightening.

Children's suggestions: more programs from four to eight p. m., more "Cavalcade of America" programs, Bible stories and fairy tales, history of our country, history of each state, children's

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61. Wiley, Roy DeVerl and Young, Helen A. Radio in Elementary Education, Boston: D. C. Heath Company, 1948. p. 11-12.

62. Ibid., p. 12.

classics, famous people, news of and for children, and music.

In the 1940 survey as compared to one in 1934 the children became increasingly interested in programs about foreign countries, in nature stories, in music and opera. The war and the fast moving events of our times have awakened a keener interest in news: but the children state that they find the news as analyzed by the commentators far too difficult for them to understand, and they ask to have it simplified for them. ". . .The consensus of opinion is that even at an early age children listen largely to what is available over the radio. Children's programs are by no means the only programs listened to by children . . ."[63]

Children's Interests In Music

The writer of this work in delving into children's interests in music, has consulted a study by the California State Department of Education on the subject. The study has a variety of ramifications.

Young children, this work reveals, are interested in many of the essential elements of music. Whenever a complete musical composition is put before children and one special element is brought out, the children become interested in it, and it is more easily recognized and enjoyed. If one element at a time is brought to the child's attention he will begin to appreciate the entire music. For example, even young children may sing a melody and respond to its rhythm at the same time. Teachers should keep in mind the fact that good music demands the presence of all the various elements. Included in this

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63. Gordon, Dorothy. All Children Listen. New York: George W. Stewart, 1942. p. 47-66.

category is rhythm, melody, and harmony. It may be said that interest may center in the following aspects of music appreciation:[64]

1. Melody. Through the playing of recordings the children already know is an easy step to an appreciation of the same songs played by various instruments and similar melodies in new instrumental selections.

2. Instruments. The next step from the interest in the tune or melody is to interest children in the instrument or voice used. If there is an interest in instruments it would likely lead to a desire to play one. This would increase enjoyment in listening to orchestras and enjoyment of radio programs.

3. Rhythm. Progressive interest in rhythm starts in the lower grades. Little children enjoy expressing themselves in running, skipping, marching, or walking according to the music.

4. Mood. Children love to listen to music and then try to recognize moods, whether it be happy, serious, quiet and restful, lively and restless, weird, or sad. They are much interested in the story-telling element the composition contains.

5. Melodic design or form. The interest in this is likened to a plot in a story. The order in which things happen.

6. Composers. The composer will be interesting to the child if he has become interested in the music selection. Stories of the lives of composers, particularly of their childhood are fascinating.

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64. California State Department of Education. Music Education in the Elementary School. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1939. p. 74-75.

7. Nationality in music. The love of one's country creates some interest in music of this type. Usually, the composers of this type of music have lived so close to the common people and have retained an interest in their native folk songs and popular musical art. It is the type of music which represents the soul of a nation.[65]

Many references were perused by the writer of this thesis, in an effort to find further investigations on interests specifically pointing to music. Although many fine music-critics, musicians, and music-teachers have written of theories and devices in the general field of music as related to children amazingly few have contributed the results of concrete investigations in the field of children's specific interests: hence, the paucity of references given here.

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65. Ibid., p. 75.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The writer has attempted in this study to survey the professional literature published on the subject: A Survey and Evaluation of the Literature on Children's Interests, 1939-1949. The areas reviewed are reading and literature, social studies, science, comics, radio, art, and music. The study is limited to the elementary school, and specifically includes grades one through six. In perusing this subject certain sub-problems arose:

1. What are the criteria that may be used to evaluate the sources of literature on children's interests?

2. What are the interests of children in the areas already mentioned?

3. What are the conclusions to be drawn from this study?

The justification for the problem lies in the importance of bringing together all of the worthwhile professional literature on children's interests into a composite whole in order that it might be more usable.

The professional literature reveals a wide variety of interests in some of the areas and a much smaller range in others. The emphasis is on the first area:

Reading and Literature

It is the consensus of many of the authorities that interest must be present for learning to take place and also that children's interests are not fixed, they are susceptible to environmental change.

The review of the literature reveals that reading interests depend upon: general intelligence, growth and development in reading skills, experiences at home and at school, the outside world, likes and dislikes, the economic level, supply of reading material, social age, and sex.

Several authorities agree that the interest patterns differ at age or grade levels. In the primary grades the interests are centered chiefly in the children themselves, animals, familiar experiences, nature, simple, fanciful fairy tales, mythical creatures, and stories with an element of surprise and humor in them. The sex differences in this particular grade are not very marked. In the intermediate grades the interests vary somewhat. The children begin to lose interest in the fanciful after eight or nine years of age. The ten-year old boys like mechanics and inventions; myths are enjoyed; biography brings an interest in history. There is a tendency on the part of the eleven-year old boys to like book series on adventure and mystery. The twelve-year old boys interests run along the line of invention, athletic prowess, and hobbies. They avoid anything definitely feminine. On the other hand, the girls like adventure, stories about home and school life, fairy tales, stories with an historical background, and romance. Both sexes prefer biography as a springboard into history. One authority reveals that at the ages of eleven and twelve the range of reading interest is very wide, even greater than any other group.

The physical make-up of a book, the authorities contend, is an important factor in the selection of a book by the children. Some of the characteristics mentioned are books with large print, gay colors, easy stories, easy to carry, and hard covers. Other factors

that influence the choice of books include the following: teacher preferences, availability, maturity of the reader, cultural background, timeliness of the subject, breadth of experience, and knowledge of the author.

Some authorities found that differences arise between the fast-learning child and the slow-learning child in their choices of reading materials. The slow-learners chose with greater frequency certain interests which the fast-learners overlooked. It was revealed also that bright children read more and have wider interests. The material which they select is usually of superior quality.

Literature available on interests in poetry is small. Only three authorities are quoted and two of them do not agree. One authority maintains that children do not of their own volition turn to poetry. Another authority agrees that this may be true of the reading child but not of the listening child because poetry makes its appeal to the ear.

Social Studies

The three authorities quoted in this area are in agreement that interest is a fundamental condition of learning.

One of the authorities reported on the awareness of fourth graders to current happenings. She states that they talk easily and well of things that are of public interest. She declares further that the information which the children bring to class for verbal contribution has more intrinsic interest because it is a part of their thinking.

The changing terminology in the news, location of places on maps, newscasts on the radio during school hours, radio programs, interest in the child's own environment, steamboats, pony express, cotton, silk, coal, iron, wool, rubber, houses, transportation, safety, movies, tools, health, and public buildings are the things which interest children in the social studies according to two of the authorities quoted. As a result of the study of these interests the children will develop an interest in the changing civilization and they will be able to see how people live and work together and how one group helps another.

Science

One well-known scientist observes that the interest of children can be broadened and deepened through a stimulating environment; that the child is studying about an active universe; and that teachers should expect a wide span of differences in interest in science.

One authority discovered that the scientific interests of girls overlapped those of the boys. However, the boys showed a wider choice of scientific materials. The girls chose as their interests the following: science and industry, transportation, cloth, light, ancient animals, weather, living animals, general science and conservation. In addition to the above mentioned, the boys showed interest in electricity and magnetism.

The biological and the physical sciences were the subject for discussion in one study. It was the judgment of one authority that young children are more interested in animals than they are in plants or in the inanimate materials of the physical sciences. On the other hand,

other studies revealed that if children were left free to handle all sorts of materials, the physical sciences provide challenging interests.

It was noted that children show an interest in many things, both living and non-living. In general they show more interest in things that move than in things that do not move. They prefer an object they can handle to one they are forbidden to touch. Children enjoy an activity in which they can share more than one in which they play the role of spectator. They love the mysterious and wonderful. Finally they are interested in the thing that is useful, and the things they can use themselves.

Art

Two authorities were in agreement that children prefer colored illustrations to those of black and white. They list the following as preferences: seascapes, ships, angels, fairies, portraits, landscapes, pictures of people and foreground pictures. Children prefer good paintings. There was very little evidence as to whether sex differences were marked.

Another artist listed the following as interests for subjects used by the child in expressing himself in art: the city, the neighborhood, the home and the school, the things one does or thinks about, what one reads, studies, or imagines. The child has to be taught to see things in his environment. The media with which the child is interested are: paint, design, color, modeling and sculpture. Other things include the graphic arts, stage artist and craftsman.

Another authority sums up his findings by stating that the world is so new and so exciting to elementary school children that

there is a wealth of subject matter in their experiences.

Comics

An important observation was made by one authority concerning the boys interest in comics. He stated that there is a marked similarity between the comic strip preferences of the boys and the reading interests of boys as shown by various investigators.

Most of the authorities quoted agree on the type of comics that interest children, which are as follows: love of excitement, adventure, mystery, sport, humor, action, easy to follow, and pictures easy to understand.

Another interesting observation was the fact that the element of humor was mentioned in a small per cent of the explanations given by boys and girls as their reason for liking the comics.

Two authorities give the following reasons for children's choices in reading the comics: interest in aviation, romantic interests of girls, interest in strange lands and planets, educational value and connection with familiar tales. Some liked a certain comic because it was sad. Boys were attracted by action, adventure, fighting and feats of strength and daring. Another outstanding observation was made which showed that sex differences in comic strip preferences seem to be of the same sort as in the field of reading interests, but not so pronounced.

Most of the authorities quoted agree that reading comic books or magazines has become a popular pastime.

Radio

In radio programs, as in books, the authorities found that children like action, melodrama, and the suspense of continued narratives, humor, adventure, and mystery.

A later survey was made to compare with an earlier one and it was found that children became increasingly interested in programs about foreign countries, in nature stories, in music and operas. One authority held that children listen largely to what is available over the radio. Children's programs are by no means the only programs listened to by children.

Music

Only one authority was found in this area and he lists the following as children's interests in music: melody, instruments, rhythm, mood, melodic design or form, composers, and nationality in music.

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