

FACTORS THAT RELATE TO CHOICE OF
TOPIC IN A FIRST GRADE PROCESS
WRITING CLASSROOM

By

DOROTHY JANE DIVALL DOUGLAS

Bachelor of Science
University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma
1958

Master of Education
Central State University
Edmond, Oklahoma
1985

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
July, 1988

Thesis
1988D
D733f
cop. 2

FACTORS THAT RELATE TO CHOICE OF
TOPIC IN A FIRST GRADE PROCESS
WRITING CLASSROOM

Thesis Approved:

Martha Combs

Thesis Adviser

Bernard R. Beldue

Kathryn Castle

David S. Lamp

David Yeller

Norman N. Durham

Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express appreciation to Dr. Bernard Belden, Dr. Kathryn Castle, Dr. David Lane and Dr. David Yellin For serving on my graduate committee. Their guidance and support were helpful and encouraging throughout my graduate program.

To a special person, Dr. Martha Combs who continually was a source of inspiration and encouragement. Thank you for your guidance and your friendship!

Thank you to Diane Allen, Carolyn Griffen, Jimmie Russell, Maureen Siera and Becky Swearingen for support and friendship. What a team we have been!

I would like to thank the principal, teacher and children involved in this study. It was truly a rewarding experience working with everyone involved.

Much love goes to my children, Jennifer and Scott! Thank you for your patience and understanding. It was only with your support that this project was possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Research Questions.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	6
Limitations.....	8
Summary.....	9
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	10
Sex Differences and Topic Choice.....	10
Internal and External Influences on Topic Choice.....	14
Type of Writing and Topic Choice.....	18
Summary.....	20
III. METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN.....	25
The Sample.....	26
Research Procedure.....	26
Data Analysis.....	28
Summary.....	35
IV. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA.....	36
Topic Choices of Beginning Writers.....	38
Topic Choice and Sex Differences.....	40
Topic Choice and Race Differences.....	43
Topic Choice and Instructional Reading Level.....	47
Topic Choice and Reading Achievement.....	50
Topic Choice and Receptive Language.....	53
Topic Choice and Expressive Language.....	56
Topic Choice and Social Relationships.....	58
Topic Choice and the Classroom Literature Program.....	61
Summary.....	68
V. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	69
Discussion.....	72

Chapter	Page
Topic Choices of Beginning Writers.....	72
Factors Related to Topic Choice.....	75
Summary and Implications.....	79
Topic Choices of Beginning Writers.....	79
Factors Related to Topic Choice.....	80
Recommendations.....	82
REFERENCES.....	84
APPENDIX A - CLASSROOM DESCRIPTION.....	86
APPENDIX B - LETTER TO PARENTS.....	91
APPENDIX C - INDIVIDUAL DATA ON CHILDREN.....	94

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Comparison of Topic Categories from Previous Research.....	21
2. Comparison of Topic Categories for Present Study with Previous Research.....	29
3. Percentage of Topics Chosen by First Graders....	39
4. Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to Sex...	42
5. Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to Race..	44
6. Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to Race (Boys).....	46
7. Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to Instructional Reading Level.....	48
8. Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to Reading Achievement.....	51
9. Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to Receptive Language.....	54
10. Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to Expressive Language.....	57
11. Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to the Classroom Literature Program.....	63

CHAPTER I

PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM

Researchers of the writing process stress the importance of choice in the selection of writing topics (Calkins, 1980; Graves, 1981; Murray, 1982). This discussion centers mainly around two issues: personal interest in learning and time spent involved in the writing process.

Past experiences have shown us that interest precedes and drives experiences in learning, especially written language (Smith, 1978). Children are highly involved in learning when given ownership and responsibility for their writing (Calkins, 1980; Graves & Stuart, 1985; Hansen, 1987). When assigned topics for which they have little interest or knowledge, children often have difficulty writing (Calkins, 1983). Topic choice is one part of the larger issue of how students come to take ownership of their own writing.

Personal interest in the topic becomes a major factor in time spent on the writing task. Graves (1983) suggests that more time is spent in the development of the writing process when there is free choice of topics

rather than when topics are assigned. Since "writers learn to write by writing" (Graves & Stuart, 1985, p.88), the time spent on writing tasks increases opportunities for children to gain control over the writing process by writing, reflecting, and re-thinking about topics of personal interest (Calkins, 1983; Graves, 1984).

Most young children want to write and will do so when allowed and encouraged (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Templeton, 1986). "Most adults, however, think children don't want to write" (Graves & Stuart, 1985, p.3). In addition, Graves and Stuart state that most adults think that children need assignments, pictures or story starters to get them going with written assignments. It follows that many teachers would express concern with allowing students to select their own topics for fear that students would not be able to generate their own topics (Graves & Stuart, 1985).

Little in-depth examination of topic choice has been undertaken. To date, only three studies of topic choice have been identified. Differences between topic choices for boys and girls (Graves, 1973; Jobe, 1974) and the influence of personal and internal influences

over external influences (Jobe, 1974; Manning, Manning & Hughes, 1987) have been suggested.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to confirm and to enlarge upon previous studies, to provide additional understanding of factors which might be related to topic choice. As additional understanding of factors related to topic selection become apparent, helping classroom teachers feel comfortable with freedom of choice in topics for writing may be more successful. This study focused upon beginning writers, in one first grade classroom, to examine the initial influences upon topic choice.

Statement of the Problem

Opportunity for choice of topic has been discussed as an important part of the writing process (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1981; Murray, 1982). Researchers have urged that students be given freedom of topic choice, however, teachers have expressed concern that students would not be able to generate topics of their own (Graves & Stuart, 1985). In addition, there is a lack of research about topic choice which would help explain

this aspect of writing development and allay the fears of teachers who desire to move from product to process instruction in writing. Therefore, there is a need to examine further the topic choices of students in a writing process classroom. In particular, there is a need to begin to examine factors which might be related to topic selection. Knowledge of factors related to topic choice might enable teachers to plan more effectively for literate environments which support student efforts in gaining control over the writing process.

From the urging of researchers for topic choice in the writing process and the reluctance of teachers to allow freedom of topic choice, two questions arose:

1. When given choices, what topics do writers choose, particularly beginning writers?
2. Can factors related to topic choice, for which classroom teachers would normally possess information and knowledge, be identified?

Research Questions

This study was conducted to determine topics chosen by first grade students and factors which may relate to the selection of such topics. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What topics are chosen for writing by first grade students?
2. Is there a relationship between topic choice and sex?
3. Is there a relationship between topic choice and race?
4. Is there a relationship between topic choice and instructional reading level?
5. Is there a relationship between topic choice and reading achievement?
6. Is there a relationship between topic choice and receptive language level?
7. Is there a relationship between topic choice and expressive language level?
8. Is there a relationship between topic choice and social relationships?

9. Is there a relationship between topic choice and the classroom literature program?

Definition of Terms

Several key terms were utilized throughout this report. The definition of each term has been provided.

1. Classroom literature program: This term refers to the literature, including fiction and non-fiction, read independently by the children and read by the teacher to the children. All books available to the children in the classroom were included.

2. Race: This term refers to racial origin as reported by parents in school records. In this study two racial groups were identified, Native American and Caucasian.

3. Expressive language level: This term refers to the level of language which a child hears and is able to repeat as determined by the Record of Oral Language (Clay, Gill, Glynn, McNaughton, & Salmon, 1983).

4. Instructional reading level: This term refers to the level of placement for instruction in classroom reading materials as determined by informal teacher evaluation.

5. Process writing: This term refers to writing viewed as a whole process, including the origination of ideas, formation of ideas into coherent text, and revision and editing in preparation for sharing of the text with the intended audience. Emphasis is not merely on the product (text), but rather upon the process by which the text came into existence.

6. Reading achievement level: This term refers to level of performance in reading comprehension as determined by scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test (1985).

7. Receptive language level: This term refers to the level of language which a child hears and understands as determined by Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn, 1981).

8. Social relationships: This term refers to friendships within the classroom as determined by observation.

Limitations

The present study had certain limitations that must be identified in order that the conclusions may be regarded in the proper perspective. The following limitations have been identified:

1. The design of the study restricts the interpretation of the findings to inferences about the relationship of the factors under examination. Cause-effect relationships cannot be determined.
2. The present study was limited by the number of students for whom sufficient writing samples were available and can not be generalized beyond that population.
3. Factors that may impact upon topic choice are not limited by those which were selected for examination in this study. Therefore, the factors

studied should not be considered the only influence on topic selection in the writing process for students included in the sample.

Summary

Great emphasis has been given to topic choice by the proponents of process writing. Because of limited research in this area much remains to be learned about the factors that may influence topic choice. The purpose of the present study was 1) to confirm areas of topic choice by beginning writers and 2) to add to the knowledge about the factors that may be related to topic selection in an effort to better understand the process of writing.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Recent research in the area of writing has reflected a growing interest in process writing. Teachers and researchers are interested in the data coming from studies which focus on what writers do during the writing process. This process begins when the writer chooses a topic.

Research concerning the factors related to topic choice of elementary school children during the writing process has been extremely limited. Only three studies have been conducted which identified the range of topics chosen by students when given freedom of choice during writing. Each of the studies identified topics chosen by students during writing. Factors related to topic choice which were reported by the three research studies were sex differences, internal and external influences, and types of writing.

Sex Differences and Topic Choice

In a research study by Graves (1973) an effort was made to gain a profile of the behavioral patterns

associated with the writing process in order to formulate instructional hypotheses. Graves was particularly interested in the effect of the learning environment and sex differences upon the writing processes of selected students.

To examine the effect of learning environment Graves identified classrooms of seven year old children which were considered to have either a formal or an informal structure. Data were gathered through a case study procedure, direct observation, and analysis of writing samples. Four classrooms in a suburban school system were chosen for participation, two of which were identified as formal and two of which were identified as informal. For the case study investigation, two children from each classroom were selected.

During the data collection, of four months, four time segments were established during which the researcher collected assigned and unassigned writing from 94 children in the four classrooms. The eight students selected for case study investigation were interviewed at the end of each time segment. These eight students were also observed during pre-writing, composing and post-writing stages.

In the thematic analysis, Graves found that the

teacher, environment, sex, materials and developmental levels interacted and contributed to themes chosen. Graves used several approaches to delimit this problem so that generalizations could be made about themes that were of interest to children. First, to lessen the effect of the teacher variable, Graves chose to examine only unassigned writing, to determine legitimate student interest in themes. Second, according to Graves, preliminary evidence seemed to indicate that certain developmental characteristics preclude influence of materials, teacher and environment variables.

Graves concluded that sex differences were strongly related to topic choice. In addition, learning environments were found to be highly related to the frequency and length of writing. Graves did not report a relationship between learning environment and topic choice.

The thematic analysis of student writing by sex focused on two developmental characteristics, first person usage and the territorial range of writing content. First person usage of the possessive form was described as developing from a low level of writing about my things to a more advanced level of writing

about my family and my class. The most advanced developmental use of first person was said to be found in the use of I. This usage develops as the child writes about what he is doing to how he feels.

The concept of territorial range was represented in three concentric rings. First person usage fit into the center ring which Graves called primary territory. Primary territory also included themes about home and school. For the next ring, secondary territory, children expanded beyond the home and school with themes such as sports, trucks and explosions. The outer ring, expanded territory, included events occurring on a national and world scale.

Graves concluded that boys more often chose topics in secondary territory. Secondary territory topic choices included hunting, football, trucks, jets, bulldozers, fires, and explosions. Boys, more than girls, chose to write about themes in extended territory. Extended territory choices included Apollo 17, presidents, maps, space, and documented war.

The majority of the topic choices of girls were in what Graves termed the primary territory. Such choices included writing about my things, my home, my dog, my toys, and my teacher. Girls, who were considered to be

more developmentally advanced than other girls, were found to make topic choices in the secondary and extended territories. Graves offered no explanation for this occurrence.

Internal and External Influences on Topic Choice

Jobe (1974) hypothesized that children have ideas of their own about topic choice; that there are influences on these choices; and that given time to make their own choices they may develop the ability to come up with creative topics of their own. The population for this study was 184 children drawn from grades two, four and six in one public school in Canada. After writing daily in their own classrooms for one week, 131 children were selected by their teachers as having the writing ability for continuing writing daily in the project. Subjects were then selected by use of a table of random numbers, resulting in a sample of 90 boys and girls "who could write" (p.32).

The subjects, 15 boys and 15 girls in each of the selected grades wrote for 15 minutes daily for ten weeks. Each child submitted one piece of writing weekly

to be published in one of three creative writing magazines printed for this project. The first and last published pieces were examined for topic and influence. All writings were analyzed by topic. Individual interviews determined the influences on the writings. Students were asked to elaborate on the origin of the idea(s) for a specific piece of writing. In addition, the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking was administered to determine whether those children who were more original in their writing scored higher on this measure.

Jobe concluded that: (1) children were capable of choosing their own, (2), the major topic preferences were fantasy, animals and personalities, (3) the major influence on the writings appeared to be an internal force, with personal experience and books as further influences, and (4) significant differences in scores on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking were found among grade levels in areas of flexibility, originality and elaboration, as well as in the total composite scores as measured. Grade two children were lower achievers on the tests than were grade four or grade six children.

After examining student writing, Jobe identified

the following categories of topic choices: (1) animals, true-to-life portrayals, (2) comic characters, (3) family life, (4) fantasy, (5) feelings, from personal preferences to philosophical abstractions, (6) nature, (7) machines, (8) personalities, other than family members and police, (9) police, (10) recreation, (11) school, (12) science fiction, (13) sports, (14) war, and (15) miscellaneous.

Jobe reported that the largest single group of writings for all grades combined was in the fantasy category (22.98%) followed by writings about animals (19.63%). The third most common topic selected was personalities (14.32%).

Grade two children, particularly the boys, wrote about a greater variety of subject areas than did children in grades four and six. Animals was the favorite topic for both boys (18.18%) and girls (34.50%) in second grade, followed by personalities and fantasy. Fourth grade boys (31.25%) and girls (30.41%) wrote most often about fantasy. Animals and personalities were also favorite topics in this grade. Fantasy was the favorite topic selected by sixth grade boys (22.54%) and girls (24.29%).

Jobe reported that second grade girls chose

animals, a topic in area of secondary territory (Graves, 1973) most often. This finding appears to contradict what Graves (1973) reported concerning selection of secondary territory topics. Jobe's data appear to refute Graves' study in which boys, not girls, most frequently chose topics within secondary territory, such as animals. However, in examples of writing which Jobe categorized as "animals", the content was more of a fanciful representation of animals and should perhaps have been included under Jobe's category of fantasy.

Since Jobe did not have a self category it is difficult to compare with Graves (1973). However, from an example of his feelings category, first person was used to describe feelings. Feelings was a category chosen more often by second grade students than by fourth or sixth grade students. It was a topic that was of more interest to girls than boys.

Interest in writing about family life decreased after second grade, moving from interest in topics related to primary territory to more of an interest in secondary or extended territory by fourth or sixth grade. This shift can be seen in the increased interest in writing about such topics as police, sports and war

in fourth and sixth grades, not only by boys but also by girls.

Through the individual interviews Jobe was able to determine that influences on topic choice were predominately internal, which included dreams, experiences and original ideas. Jobe reported percentages of 58.33%, 43.33% and 46.67% for second, fourth and sixth grades respectively. The factor within the internal category which was most often cited as being an influence was original ideas. Second grade students considered 36.67% of their topics as original ideas, while fourth and sixth grade students reported that 35% of their topics were original ideas.

Personal experiences and books were the next most highly identified influences. Personal experiences accounted for 20% of the topics chosen by second grade students, by 8.33% of the fourth grade students and by 10.00% of the sixth grade students. Books were reported to influence 11.67% of the topics chosen by second grade students, 10.00% of the fourth grade students and 8.33% of the sixth grade students.

Type of Writing and Topic Choice

Manning, Manning and Hughes (1987) recently

studied the contents of journal entries in a classroom of 20 first grade children in a suburban Alabama school. A daily 30 minute block of time was set aside for writing. The contents of each journal entry were studied to determine categories by type of entry and by topic choices. The following categories emerged for types of entries: (1) pictures only, (2) scribbles or random letters (3) labels or descriptions of pictures, (4) lists, (5) copies of texts, (6) retellings of texts, (7) personal content, (8) imaginative content, (9) informational content, and (10) other written forms such as puzzles.

Further examination of the journals yielded categories of topics. Manning, Manning and Hughes formulated the following categories of topic choices for the first grade students: (1) about me, (2) family, (3) other people, (4) pets, (5) feelings for people, (6) feelings for things, (7) feelings for toys, (8) statements of general knowledge, (9) curriculum, (10) holidays, (11) seasons, (11) current events, and (12) questions about content.

Personal experiences and informational content accounted for over 62% of the type of entries made by these first grade students. Within personal content

(34% of all entries), "about me" (42% of personal content, 14% of total entries) stories was the most widely chosen topic, followed by "feelings for things." (21% of personal content, 7% of total entries). In informational content (28% of all entries) both holidays (42% of informational content, 12% of total entries) and curriculum (31% of informational content, 9% of total entries) were the most widely chosen topics. Manning, Manning and Hughes did not identify specific topics choices within the categories they established.

Since no identification concerning topic choices was made by sex, it was not possible to relate results reported by Manning, Manning and Hughes to Graves' (1973) concept of primary and secondary territory.

Summary

Broad categories of topics selected by students in the studies reviewed bore great similarity (see Table 1). When given freedom to choose topics it has been found that children have a wide variety of interests, ranging from topics "about me" outward to topics that would help them understand the world around them. From Graves' (1973) observation of this trend in the writing of seven year olds, he developed his concept of primary,

Table 1

Comparison of Topic Categories from Previous Research

Graves (1973)	Jobe (1974)	Manning, Manning & Hughes (1987)
"I" writing	Feelings	Self
My home	Family	Family
My toys		Feelings for people, toys things
My dog		Pets
My teacher	School	Curriculum
Apollo 17		Current events
Nurses	Personalities	Other people
Ground hog	Animals	
Whales	Nature	
		Seasons
		Holidays
Baseball	Sports	
Football	Recreation	
Hockey		
Camping		
Hunting		

(table continues)

Table 1

Graves (1973)	Jobe (1974)	Manning, Manning & Hughes (1987)
Trucks	Machines	
Bulldozers		
Boats		
Airplanes		
Killing		
Explosions		
Fires		
War	War	
Monsters	Fantasy	
Mysteries		
Ghosts	Science	
Witches	Fiction	
	Comic	
	Personalities	
		Statements of general knowledge
Other		Copies of text
writing		Retellings of text
	Miscellaneous	

secondary and extended territoriality as a way of understanding the potential breadth of topic choices for children.

Within the broad categories of topics selected by students, topic choice was reportedly influenced more by internal factors than by external factors (Jobe, 1974). Original ideas and personal experiences were found to be the most important internal factors that influenced topic choice. Personal experience was further influenced by sex differences. This was seen in the studies of both Jobe (1974) and Graves (1973).

Children write about a wide variety of topics. We know that personal experience and sex difference influence topic choice, however, not much else is known about other factors which might influence topic choice. If we understand factors which might be likely to influence topic choice, we might better understand why topic choice is so important to children and their writing.

To help teachers make decisions about children, is there information available to them that might indicate other influences on topic choice? Information concerning reading and language ability is usually available to teachers. In addition, through observation, teachers may also gather information

concerning the impact of social relationships, racial differences and the literature in the classroom curriculum. This study will examine eight such factors which involve the use of information and knowledge that is usually available to classroom teachers.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The importance of topic choice has been continually emphasized by supporters of the process writing approach (Graves, 1981, Calkins, 1986; Murray, 1982). However, classroom teachers remain reticent to allow student choice of topic for fear that children will lack sufficient background to choose their own topics (Graves & Stuart, 1985).

The purpose of this study was to describe one specific aspect of the writing process, topic choice, for beginning writers. This purpose was accomplished by identifying a first grade writing process classroom where student were given freedom of choice for writing topics. Topic choice was examined from the perspective of factors which may relate to student choice of topic. All writing samples produced by these students during one school year were collected.

This chapter presents an overview of the research study. It includes a description of the sample, the research procedures, and data analysis.

The Sample

The sample for this study were students enrolled in one first grade classroom in a public elementary school in a rural section of north central Oklahoma. Much of the population of the surrounding area could be identified as having low socio economic status. The student population of the school is predominantly Native American. Free lunches were provided for all students.

The original sample included 15 children. However, due to attrition, only 12 students completed the school year. The sample was composed of nine boys and three girls. Of these, eight were Native American and four were Caucasian.

Research Procedure

Prior to the research study, meetings were arranged with the teacher of the process writing classroom (see Appendix A for a description of the classroom) and the principal to explain the study and obtain permission from them to collect data from the first graders in the identified classroom. The parents of the students in the classroom were later sent letters of explanation of the research study along with

a form to be signed granting permission to collect data from their children (see Appendix B). The data would include daily samples of writing as well as test scores that would determine levels of identified factors to be studied in relationship to topic choice. All letters were returned with permission granted.

This classroom was selected as potentially representative of first grade classrooms where the teacher was making a transition from traditional to process writing, allowing for student choice of writing topics. Students wrote daily for 45-60 minutes, beginning with the first day of school. Daily writing samples were kept in personal folders. As the number of compositions increased, the teacher periodically filed completed pieces and provided new writing paper. In addition to collection of student writing, the researcher was also a participant-observer in the classroom. Throughout the year, the researcher participated in the classroom for a portion of at least one day per week. All attempted compositions, whether completed or not, were collected for analysis by topic.

Data Analysis

Topic categories established by the previous studies of Graves (1973), Jobe (1974) and Manning, Manning and Hughes (1987) were combined and used for the initial determination of major categories. Categories which emerged as appropriate for this study were retained. Other categories were deleted (see Table 2).

The writing samples of each subject were classified according to the broad categories established (see Appendix C). There were several instances where categories were collapsed because frequency of choice for the categories was so low. The frequency of choice for categories ranged from pets (15) to machines (189). Remaining categories and frequencies included: literature (163), seasons (145), animals (141), family (108), physical behaviors (79), fantasy (67), friends and other people (45), self (36), nature (34), sports, hunting, fishing (26), fantasy, TV, movie (25), school (19), toys (16) and miscellaneous (5).

To increase reliability, samples from each child's work across the year were also classified by a teacher-researcher. Agreement between the two raters

Table 2

Comparison of Topic Categories for Present Study with Previous
Research

Graves (1973)	Jobe (1974)	Manning, Manning & Hughes	Douglas (1988)
"I" writing	Feelings	Self	Self
My home	Family life	Family	Family
My toys		Feelings for people, toys things	Toys
My dog		Pets	Pets
My teacher	School	Curriculum	School
Appolo 17		Current events	
Nurses	Personalities	Other people	Friends
Ground hog	Animals		Animals
Whales	Nature		Nature
		Seasons	Seasons
		Holidays	
Baseball	Sports		Sports
Football	Recreation		
Hockey			
Camping			
Hunting			

(table continues)

Table 2

Graves (1973)	Jobe (1974)	Manning, Manning & Hughes (1987)	Douglas (1988)
Trucks	Machines		Machines
Bulldozers			
Boats			
Airplanes			
Killing			Physical
Explosions			behaviors
Fires			
War	War		
Monsters	Fantasy		Fantasy
Mysteries	Science		Fantasy
Ghosts	fiction		(TV, movie)
Witches			
	Comic		
	personalities		
		Statements of	
		general knowledge	
Other		Copies of text	
writing		Retellings of	Literature
		text	
	Miscellaneous		Miscellaneous

exceeded 95%.

Descriptions of the categories were established as follows:

Self: About self (use of I, my)

Family: Related to home and family

Toys: Child's toys

Pets: Child's pets

School: Related to school and teacher

Friends: Friends, neighbors, and others in the community

Machines: Land, air, and water transportation

Sports: Any sporting event, as well as fishing and hunting

Physical behavior: Fights, explosions, crashes, and fires

Animals: Related to all animals, domestic and wild

Nature: Natural events and wild life (volcanos, flowers)

Seasons: Seasonal happenings, as well as holidays

Fantasy: Imaginative creations (talking animals, monsters, excluding the influence of TV and movies)

Fantasy (TV, movies): Imaginative creations related to TV or movie characters

Literature: Retelling of stories, riddles or rhymes (does not include other writings which were visibly influenced by literature)

From the information gained from the classification of the writing samples of each child comparisons were made with each of the factors identified. To determine how sex differences related to topic choice, frequency and percentage of topics chosen by boys were compared to the topics chosen by girls. For further analysis, the concept of primary and secondary territoriality (Graves, 1973) was applied to clusters of categories by sex.

The same type of comparison was made when students were grouped by race, Native American and Caucasian. Within the racial groupings, boys were isolated for further examination, and compared to topic choice by sex. Race was not examined by sex for girls because Caucasian girls were not represented in the sample.

To examine instructional reading level as a factor related to topic choice, the daily reading groups formed by the teacher were utilized. Many informal measures, including extensive observation of student performance in all types of reading situations, had been utilized by the teacher to determine placement in instructional groups. The three reading groups had remained fairly stable during the school year and were considered to represent high, middle and low levels of instruction within the classroom. Frequency and

percentage of topics chosen by these three groups of children were then compared.

Reading achievement and its relationship to topic choice was then analyzed. For the purpose of this study a student's scores on the comprehension portion of the Metropolitan Achievement Test (1985) given in March of the school year was used. A total reading score for each student was not available. The comprehension subtest required students to read and respond to sentences and paragraphs across a range of grade levels, not just first grade level material. The grade equivalents were then grouped into ranges of performance for analysis. Students scoring at 1.7-1.9 were characterized as performing at grade level, for the spring of the year, and assigned to the middle achievement group. Students scoring K.7-1.5 were characterized as performing below grade level and assigned to the low achievement group. Students scoring 2.0-4.0 were characterized as performing above grade level and assigned to the high achievement group. The frequency and percentage of topics chosen by these three groups of children were then examined.

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn, 1981) was used to measure receptive vocabulary of students. Four picture panels were shown to the

student who was asked to respond to a stimulus word by pointing to the picture which best represented the stimulus word. This test yielded an age equivalent score. Like reading achievement, scores were grouped into ranges of scores. Students were then assigned to one group which represented a level of receptive language ability. These groups were then compared according to the frequency and percentage of their topic choices.

The Record of Oral Language (Clay, Gill, Glynn, McNaughton & Salmon, 1983) was used as a measure of expressive language. Students were asked to repeat sentences which represented various levels of syntactic complexity. The scores yielded by the Record of Oral Language were grouped into two ranges which represented middle-high (no clear distinction between levels could be made) and low performance in expressive oral language. Frequency and percentage of topic choice was then compared between groups according to their expressive language.

Observations by the teacher and by the researcher identified social relationships within this classroom. Students were observed during writing time to see the impact of the social interactions upon the choice of topics. Friends often elected to sit together during

writing time. Dated writing selections of friends and students seated in close proximity to reach other were examined for topic similarity.

Observations by both teacher and reseacher helped examine the literature program and its relationship to topic choice. Records were made of literature utilized during various phases of curriculum study. Student selected reading was also recorded. Dated writing samples were then compared to these records to determine the possible influence which literature may have had on choice of topic during writing. Frequency and percentage of topics chosen which showed an influence of the whole literature program were noted.

Summary

An overview of the design of the research has been presented in this chapter. Included in this chapter were descriptions of the sample, the research procedures and data analysis.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to identify topics chosen by first grade students in a process writing classroom. In addition, this study also examined factors related to topic choice of first grade children. The study addressed the following questions:

1. What topics are chosen by beginning writers when given freedom of choice during writing?
2. Is there a relationship between topic choice and sex differences?
3. Is there a relationship between topic choice and racial differences?
4. Is there a relationship between topic choice and instructional reading level?
5. Is there a relationship between topic choice and reading achievement?
6. Is there a relationship between topic choice and receptive language level?
7. Is there a relationship between topic choice and expressive language level?

8. Is there a relationship between topic choice and social relationships?
9. Is there a relationship between topic choice and literature read?

The subjects for this study were 12 first grade students in an elementary school in rural north central Oklahoma. The sample was composed of nine boys and three girls. Of these, eight were Native American and four were Caucasian. All attempted compositions, whether completed or not, were collected for analysis by topic. Topic categories were established by the previous studies of Graves (1973), Jobe (1974) and Manning, Manning and Hughes (1987) and were used to determine major categories.

This chapter includes the presentation and analysis of the data. The data, organized by research questions, are presented in nine sections: (1) topic choices of beginning writers, (2) topic choice and sex differences, (3) topic choice and racial differences, (4) topic choice and instructional reading level, (5) topic choice and reading achievement, (6) topic choice and receptive language level, (7) topic choice and expressive language level, (8) topic choice and social

relationships, and (9) topic choice and classroom literature program.

The data for each research question will be presented and then the analysis of the data will be discussed. The analysis of the data involved calculating the frequency and percentage of topics chosen by each child according to each research question.

Topic Choices of Beginning Writers

Beginning writers, when given freedom to choose topics, wrote about a variety of topics (see Table 3). Some students showed interest in many topics, while others focused repeatedly on the same topic (see Appendix C for individual topics chosen). Machines, which included cars, trucks, planes, rockets and boats, was the largest single group of writings. The influence of the classroom literature program accounted for the second largest category of writing topics. The literature category included retellings of stories and pieces of writing which showed evidence of influence by literature utilized within close time proximity in the classroom. The third most frequently chosen category was seasons, which also included holidays. The category

Table 3

Percentage of Topics Chosen by First Graders

Topic	First Graders (n=12)	
	F	%
Self	36	3.23
Family	108	9.70
Toys	16	1.44
Pets	15	1.35
School	19	1.71
Friends	45	4.04
Animals	141	12.67
Nature	34	3.05
Seasons	145	13.03
Sports	26	2.34
Machines	189	16.98
Physical behaviors	79	7.10
Fantasy	67	6.02
Fantasy (TV, movie)	25	2.25
Literature	163	14.64
Miscellaneous	5	.45
Total	1113	100.00

of animals followed closely and included such topics as whales, spiders, eggs, dinosaurs, and birds. Other categories chosen frequently included home and family, physical behaviors, and fantasy.

Some of the categories were weighted heavily by a few children who chose to write repeatedly about one topic. For example, family was chosen as a topic 25 times by Girl 1 and 24 times by Girl 2. Planes and rockets were chosen 22 times by Boy 1 and 24 times by Boy 8. Boy 9 wrote about trucks 23 times, while Boy 8 wrote about Halloween on 30 occasions.

The topics which emerged from this group of first grade students showed greater variety than topics reported by Graves (1973) and Jobe (1974), but similar to topics reported by Manning, Manning and Hughes (1987). Graves and Jobe conducted studies over a shorter period of time than Manning, Manning and Hughes.

Topic Choice and Sex Differences

When given choice for selection of writing topics, boys and girls wrote about different topics. As early as first grade definite differences in developmental interests were apparent when sex was considered (see

Table 4).

Topic selections by girls focused most often on self, family, pets, school and friends. These topics fell under the heading of "primary territory" that Graves (1973, p.95) had identified, those elements near at hand of concern to children. The theme of home and family, which was also an integral part of the first grade social studies curriculum, comprised almost one-third of all girls' writing. From the content of the writing, it was interesting to note that topics chosen by girls were not influenced by television or physical behaviors at all.

The writing of boys, however, did not focus on topics related to primary territory. Instead, boys focused on aspects of their world which were considered to be "secondary territory", the metropolitan area beyond the child, school and home (Graves, 1983, p.97). Selections made by boys focused on machines, animals, seasons, and physical behavior. Machines and animals constituted more than one-third of the topics selected by boys.

Unlike other topics, writing influenced by literature appeared to be highly selected by both boys and girls. The literature utilized in the classroom,

Table 4

Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to Sex

Topic	Boys (n=9)		Girls (n=3)	
	F	%	F	%
Self	21	2.39	15	6.38
Family	37	4.21	71	30.21
Toys	12	1.37	4	1.70
Pets	6	.68	9	3.83
School	4	.46	15	6.38
Friends	26	2.96	19	8.09
Animals	129	14.69	12	5.10
Nature	28	3.19	6	2.55
Seasons	126	14.35	19	8.09
Sports	25	2.85	1	.43
Machines	187	21.30	2	.85
Physical behaviors	79	9.00	-	-
Fantasy	48	5.47	19	8.09
Fantasy (TV, movie)	25	2.85	-	-
Literature	121	13.78	42	17.85
Miscellaneous	4	.46	1	.43
Total	878	100.00	235	100.00

fiction and non-fiction, could have been classified as related to primary, secondary and extended territoriality. Fantasy also was a topic which appeared to be related to all three territories.

Topic Choice and Racial Differences

Students in this first grade classroom belonged to one of two racial groups, Native American or Caucasian. Girl 1, 2 and 3, Boy 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 were Native American. Boy 3, 5, 7 and 9 were Caucasian. When topic choices were examined by racial origin some differences in topic choices were apparent (see Table 5).

Native American students chose topics in secondary territory more often than topics in primary territory. Within the secondary territory, topics related to machines and seasons were most highly chosen. Family and friends were the most frequently chosen topics in the area of primary territory.

When topics chosen by Caucasian students were compared with Native American students, it was found that the category of machines was also the most highly chosen category. The percentage of selection of this topic by Caucasians exceeded that of Native Americans by 50%. The topic of machines was followed closely by

Table 5

Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to Race

Topic	Native American (n=8)		Caucasian (n=4)	
	F	%	F	%
Self	26	3.75	10	2.39
Family	83	11.96	25	5.97
Toys	12	1.73	4	.95
Pets	9	1.30	6	1.43
School	17	2.44	2	.48
Friends	37	5.33	8	1.91
Animals	66	9.51	75	17.90
Nature	19	2.74	15	3.58
Seasons	93	13.40	52	12.41
Sports	16	2.31	10	2.39
Machines	100	14.40	89	21.24
Physical behaviors	60	8.65	19	4.53
Fantasy	39	5.62	28	6.68
Fantasy (TV, movie)	17	2.44	8	1.90
Literature	98	14.12	65	15.51
Miscellaneous	2	.29	3	.72
Total	694	99.99	419	99.99

choices of topics about animals. Unlike Native American students, Caucasian students did not have strong topic choices in the area of primary territory. Only topic choices about family exceeded 5% of all topics chosen.

Literature was a highly chosen category by both groups. This category appeared to be important to all students, regardless of race.

Since sex differences had been observed in topic selection and since girls were not represented in the Caucasian group it was decided to group for race using only the boys (see Table 6). In doing this, a change was observed in percentages of topics considered to be primary territory. Both Native American and Caucasian boys showed little interest in topics included in primary territory. Therefore, racial differences noted earlier can be explained by the inclusion of girls in the Native American category.

Within the topics related to secondary territory it became apparent that, by removing the girls from the Native American group, boys from both racial groupings had similar interests in machines as a topic choice. Other topics within the secondary territory showed some changes, but not nearly as dramatic as the category of

Table 6

Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to Race (Boys)

Topic	Native American (n=5)		Caucasian (n=4)	
	F	%	F	%
Self	11	2.4	10	2.4
Family	12	2.61	25	5.97
Toys	8	1.74	4	.95
Pets	-	-	6	1.43
School	2	.44	2	.48
Friends	18	3.92	8	1.91
Animals	54	11.76	75	17.90
Nature	13	2.83	15	3.58
Seasons	74	16.12	52	12.41
Sports	15	3.27	10	2.39
Machines	98	21.35	89	21.24
Physical behaviors	60	13.07	19	4.53
Fantasy	20	4.36	28	6.68
Fantasy (TV, movie)	17	3.70	8	1.90
Literature	56	12.20	65	15.51
Miscellaneous	1	.22	3	.72
Total	459	99.99	419	100.00

machines.

Of particular interest was the change in the category of physical behaviors. By removing the Native American girls, it was apparent that Native American boys wrote about physical behaviors almost three times as often as did the Caucasian boys. This interest centered on fighting, explosions, and fires.

Topic Choice and Instructional Reading Level

To study topic choice and instructional reading level (see Table 7), children were placed in three groups according to instructional reading levels that had been identified by the teacher. Boy 2, 4 and 8 had read in the low group during the year. Girl 1 and Boy 1, 5, 6 and 9 had read in the middle group. Girl 2 and 3 and Boy 3 and 7 had read in the high group.

The low instructional reading group, a group of three Native American boys focused on machines, seasons and physical behaviors. There was some interest in writing about animals also. These topic interests seemed to be consistent with the previous factors of sex and race.

Table 7
Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to
Instructional Reading Level

Topic	Low (n=3)		Middle (n=5)		High (n=4)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Self	11	4.20	10	2.00	15	4.27
Family	9	3.44	42	8.40	57	16.24
Toys	6	2.30	4	.80	6	1.71
Pets	-	-	5	1.00	10	2.85
School	-	-	3	.60	16	4.56
Animals	20	7.63	85	17.00	36	10.26
Nature	12	4.58	8	1.60	14	3.99
Seasons	51	19.46	59	11.80	35	9.97
Friends	17	6.49	9	1.80	19	5.41
Sports	9	3.44	8	1.60	9	2.56
Machines	49	18.70	105	21.00	35	9.97
Physical behaviors	31	11.83	44	8.80	4	1.14
Fantasy	7	2.67	38	7.60	22	6.27
Fantasy (TV, movie)	3	1.14	18	3.60	4	1.14
Literature	37	14.12	60	12.00	66	18.80
Miscellaneous	-	-	2	.40	3	.86
Total	262	100.00	500	100.00	351	100.00

The middle group of four boys and one girl preferred to write about machines, animals and seasons, although these categories can be accounted for by the topic choices of the boys. The family, accounted for the one girl, and physical behaviors, accounted for primarily by one Native American boy, were also chosen as categories for writing.

The two boys and two girls in the high group chose to write in the categories of family and animals. Both boys and girls wrote about topics in these two categories; however, boys wrote more frequently about animals and the girls wrote more frequently about family. School, a topic within the primary territory, was not often chosen as a topic. However, this group chose to write about school more often than either of the other groups. Machines and seasons again were highly chosen topics. Seasons was chosen as a topic by both sexes, while machines was chosen primarily by the boys in the group. The crossing over between primary and secondary territory by boys and girls that Graves (1973) had observed was not observed very often with these highly developed students.

The three groups all wrote in the category of literature. The high instructional reading group showed

the strongest interest in writing in this category. The two girls in the group could account for the strong interest in this area.

When examining the topics chosen by these instructional reading groups, some of the differences appeared to be related to sex. Although boys chose to write about machines, animals, seasons and physical behaviors, patterns began to emerge concerning topics chosen by the boys in each group.

Topic Choice and Reading Achievement

To study topic choice and reading achievement, scores from the comprehension portion of the Metropolitan Achievement Test (1985) were used to identify three groups (see Table 8). This test was administered in March of the first year (1.7). The scores for the low group ranged from K.7 to 1.5 and included Boy 2, 4 and 8. This group was the same as the low instructional reading group. Scores for the middle group ranged from 1.7 to 1.9 and included Girl 1 and Boy 1, 3, 7 and 9. Scores for the high group ranged from 2.0 to 4.0 and included Girl 2 and 3 and Boy 5 and 6. Boy 3 and 7 were in the high instructional reading group but for achievement were placed in the middle

Table 8
Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to
Reading Achievement

Topic	Low (n=3)		Middle (n=4)		High (n=5)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Self	11	4.20	9	2.44	16	3.32
Family	9	3.44	37	10.03	62	12.86
Toys	6	2.30	1	.27	9	1.87
Pets	-	-	6	1.63	9	1.87
School	-	-	1	.27	18	3.73
Animals	20	7.63	45	12.19	76	15.77
Nature	12	4.58	7	1.90	15	3.11
Seasons	51	19.46	38	10.30	56	11.62
Friends	17	6.49	8	2.17	20	4.15
Sports	9	3.44	10	2.71	7	1.45
Machines	49	18.70	78	21.14	62	12.86
Physical behaviors	31	11.83	35	9.48	13	2.70
Fantasy	7	2.67	27	7.32	33	6.85
Fantasy (TV, movie)	3	1.14	18	4.88	4	.83
Literature	37	14.12	45	12.19	81	16.80
Miscellaneous	-	-	4	1.08	1	.21
Total	262	100.00	369	100.00	482	100.00

group. Boy 5 and 6 were in the middle instructional reading group but scored in the high achievement group.

Since the low achievement group was comprised of the same group of boys as in instructional reading group, topics chosen remained the same. These were seasons, machines and physical behaviors.

The middle achievement group chose machines, animals, seasons, family and physical behaviors. As compared to the middle instructional reading group, writing about family had increased, while writing about animals decreased. This can be accounted for by the change of the four boys between the middle and high achievement groups.

The high achievement group chose family, animals and seasons for writing. As compared to the high instructional reading group, the percentage of writing about animals had increased. Again this can be accounted for by the four boys who changed groups. The boys who joined this group wrote about animals more frequently than the boys who left the group. The girls within the group accounted for the topic choices within primary territory. Little cross over between territories was observed by either sex.

Literature continued to be chosen as a category by all groups. Again, it was chosen more often by the high group, even with the change in group membership.

Topic Choice and Receptive Language

To study topic choice and receptive language, children were placed in three groups according to their age equivalent scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn, 1981) (see Table 9). Age equivalents for the low group ranged from 6.1 to 6.4 and included Girl 1 and Boy 1 and 8. Age equivalents for the middle group ranged from 6.8 to 7.7 and included Girl 2 and 3 and Boy 4, 6 and 7. The high group had age equivalents that ranged from 8.3 to 9.1 and included Boy 2, 3, 5 and 9.

The low receptive language group of two boys and one girl preferred writing about machines, seasons, physical behaviors, and family. The girl accounted for almost all writing about family. The boys accounted for writing in the other categories. These results were consistent for sex differences. The boys in this group tended to chose topics in secondary territory, while the girl chose topics in primary territory. Each sex seldom crossed the lines between primary and

Table 9

Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related toReceptive Language

Topic	Low (n=3)		Middle (n=5)		High (n=4)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Self	7	2.39	22	5.50	7	1.67
Family	28	9.56	55	13.75	25	5.95
Toys	-	-	8	2.00	8	1.90
Pets	2	.68	9	2.25	4	.95
School	1	.34	17	4.25	1	.24
Friends	11	3.75	26	6.50	8	1.9
Animals	22	7.51	49	12.25	70	16.67
Nature	7	2.39	13	3.25	14	3.33
Seasons	47	16.04	43	10.75	55	13.10
Sports	5	1.71	7	1.75	14	3.33
Machines	60	20.47	42	10.50	87	20.71
Physical behaviors	35	11.95	20	5.00	24	5.7
Fantasy	15	5.12	22	5.50	30	7.14
Fantasy (TV, movie)	15	5.12	2	.50	8	1.9
Literature	37	12.63	64	16.00	62	14.76
Miscellaneous	1	.34	1	.25	3	.71
Total	293	100.00	400	100.00	420	100.00

secondary territory which was consistent with the findings of Graves (1973), especially for boys in the use of "I".

The middle receptive language group, which was comprised of three boys and two girls, focused on family, animals, seasons and friends. These topics were also representative of the sex differences suggested by Graves (1973). The girls accounted for most of the writing in the primary territory, family and friends. The boys accounted for most of the writing in the other, secondary territory, categories. Seldom did the sexes cross into a different "territory" of writing topics.

The four boys in the high receptive language group chose machines, animals and seasons. Only family, as a topic choice in primary territory, was chosen more than 5% of the time. The patterns in this group were consistent with sex differences suggested by Graves (1973) but not as much with developmental differences. Boys in this high receptive language groups did not show a marked increase in topic choices within primary territory, especially in the use of "I".

Literature was a category of interest for all groups, regardless of receptive language level. The

middle group, with two girls, showed slightly more interest in incorporating literature into topic choices than did groups with fewer or no girls.

Topic Choice and Expressive Language

To examine topic choice and expressive language, children were placed in groups according to a range of scores on the Record of Oral Language (Clay, Gill, Glynn, McNaughton, & Salmon, 1983) (see Table 10). The scores of the low expressive language group ranged from 25 to 28 and included Girl 1 and Boy 4 and 8. The remainder of the scores ranged from 34-40 with no clear break between groups for making a distinction between middle and high expressive language groups. Therefore, this factor was examined with only two groupings of students, low and middle-high.

The topics chosen by the low expressive language group were seasons, machines, family, and physical behaviors. Girl 1 was a member of the low receptive language group, but had not been in either the low achievement or instructional reading group. Her responses accounted for choices in family and literature. Boy 4 and 8 were members of both the low achievement and instructional reading groups, but Boy 4

Table 10
Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to
Expressive Language

Topic	Low (n=3)		High (n=9)	
	F	%	F	%
Self	15	6.70	21	2.36
Family	29	12.95	79	8.89
Toys	1	.45	15	1.69
Pets	2	.89	13	1.46
School	-	-	19	2.14
Friends	17	7.59	28	3.15
Animals	15	6.70	126	14.17
Nature	8	3.57	26	2.92
Seasons	39	17.41	106	11.92
Sports	4	1.79	22	2.47
Machines	29	12.95	160	15.95
Physical Behaviors	23	10.27	56	6.30
Fantasy	8	3.57	59	6.64
Fantasy (TV, movie)	2	.89	23	2.59
Literature	32	14.28	131	14.74
Miscellaneous	-	-	5	.56
Total	224	100.00	889	100.00

was not in the low receptive language group. Their choices were consistent with choices made by low reading groups, whether by achievement or instructional level.

Machines, animals, seasons and holidays and family were favored by the middle-high group, which was predominantly boys. The girls in this group were the members who could account for writing in the category considered to be primary territory, families.

Literature continued to be highly chosen by children at all levels of expressive language. As with receptive language, the girls continued to have a large impact on the literature category.

Topic Choice and Social Relationships

To examine topic choice and social relationships, the teacher and the researcher compared observations made in the classroom. One important observation was that within this classroom all the children were friendly and interacted freely with one another. This could be observed particularly during writing time. There was interaction between those seated near one another or between friends who would arrange to sit together. The dated papers of friends, or those class

members who sat in close proximity of one another and interacted with one another, were then examined for topic similarities (see Appendix C for individual listings and dates of writing topics). Some examples, across the school year, have been provided below.

Writing papers from the folders of Girl 1, 2 and 3 were examined for topic similarities. This was one group, who had been identified as friends. These girls would interact during writing time even though their desks were not placed together. In September, when the family was emphasized in the curriculum and a variety of books were read related to this topic, these three girls wrote about their families. Also, in the second week of September, Girl 2 and 3 both wrote about rainbows. Both girls continued using rainbows as a part of their illustrations. These two girls both chose to write about tadpoles in September, although their writings were a few days apart (September 19 and 24). Girl 2 and 3 both wrote about Valentines in the middle of February. Only one other student chose that topic for writing. These two girls each wrote about Easter, one on March 15, one on March 16. These were the only Easter stories written in the classroom, when given choice. Both girls wrote rhymes on April 21. Girl 1, 2

and 3 all wrote riddles in the middle of February. All three girls wrote retellings of Would You Rather by John Burningham during the first week of May.

Writing papers from the folders of Boy 7 and 9 were examined for similar topics chosen around the same dates. These boys were identified as friends by the teacher and researcher, not only in school but outside of school as well. Five similar writings about trucks and one about cars occurred beginning on September 3. They both wrote about going to the fair on September 15. Planes and rockets appeared in their writings the last week in September and the first week in October. Trucks reappeared in their writings on November 15, continuing for a week. Both wrote riddles on February 16, and on several days following. They collaborated on a story, using Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse as some of characters, from April 15 through April 27. Both of these boys wrote about animals, however, not at the same time.

Writing papers from the folders of Boy 1, 2, 4 and 8 were examined for similar topic choices. Boy 1, 2, and 8 began the year seated near each other and continued to be friends during the year, even though seating patterns may have changed. Boy 1, 2 and 8 all

chose to write about planes on September 8 and 9 (Boy 4 did not enter school until November). Boy 1 and 8 continued writing about planes and rockets throughout the middle of September. Boy 1 and 2 both wrote about racing cars on October 13. Their interest in writing about cars continued in October, although their writing about this subject did not always occur on the same dates. Boy 2 wrote about volcanos on January 27, while Boy 4 wrote about volcanos on January 28 and 29. Boy 8 chose this topic on March 1. Of these boys, all wrote in the category of physical behaviors in April. Boy 2 and 8 wrote about Godzilla and dinosaurs fighting and other such topics beginning March 5.

Topic Choice and Classroom

Literature Program

To examine the relationship between topic choice and the classroom literature program the contents of the writing papers from each child were viewed to determine whether there was evidence to indicate that the literature read in the classroom could be considered a base for any of the writing of these children in this room. To do this, those books that were read aloud by the teacher for information or

pleasure were noted. Also noted were books displayed for special interests, books used for themes studied in science and social studies and books read by the children in their reading groups and during choice time. The time of the year when these books were read was also considered.

The information gained from examination of the classroom and curriculum was then compared with topics chosen by each child during the school year (see Table 11). The impact of literature can be seen for individual children. The percentage of stories attributed to a literature influence ranged from 25.19% for Boy 1 to 48.45% for Boy 6.

The major percentage of literature related to choice was reflected in the literature category in which all students wrote. This category included retelling of stories, riddles and rhymes. Also included in this category were writings which incorporated a similar theme, structure, language or characters as in literature which had recently been utilized in the classroom.

During the Halloween season one child wrote, "In the Spooky Old House there is a ghost." after having read The Spooky Old Tree by Stan and Jan Berenstain.

Table 11

Percentage of Topics Chosen as Related to the Classroom
Literature Program

Student	F	%
Girl 1	13	30.23
Girl 2	38	35.84
Girl 3	37	45.34
Boy 1	33	25.19
Boy 2	26	31.32
Boy 3	30	37.97
Boy 4	19	30.64
Boy 5	60	41.67
Boy 6	32	48.45
Boy 7	30	37.50
Boy 8	39	32.77
Boy 9	34	30.17
Average		35.59%

Another child, making just a slight change in the text of a Halloween song shared in class, wrote, "Ten little ghosts sitting on a fence" to accompany a picture. The language and pattern of other text was useful to each child in expressing ideas.

From the book Brown Bear, Brown Bear by Bill Martin one child wrote "Little Rabbit, Little Rabbit what do you see? I see an Easter egg looking at me." The child was able to use the structure of the text with a new topic.

From the girls in the classroom there were numerous variations on "Would you Rather?" by John Burningham. "Would you rather go down a slide or would you rather go to a circus? Would you rather be Curious George or would you rather be Amelia Bedelia?"

From the book Fortunately one child wrote "Fortunately we got to go to the Omniplex. Unfortunately the bus' motor was dead."

From the Frog and Toad series by Arnold Lobel one child wrote, "Frog and toad are best friends" to accompany a picture story.

Many children read riddles books. The students then wrote their own riddles. One riddle was "I am pretty. I only come in the summer. I have petals.

What am I?"

There were also retellings of literature shared in the classroom, which included slight variations on a theme, such as "The Frog and the Princess."

Once upon a time there was a beautiful princess. One day she went for a walk. On the way she met a frog. She got so scared that she hollered at the frog. The frog said, "You have to pay me. Take me to your castle..."

During September, the family was studied as a part of the first grade social studies curriculum. For this study, many books were read to the class for both information and pleasure. Eight children chose to write about home and family during that time. Sixteen writing episodes were recorded as being related to the literature program. The girls, particularly Girl 2 and 3 continued to write about home and family after the unit of study had ended. Writings from other months were not included in this count, even though the literature read may have been a possible factor throughout the year. One such story that related to the curriculum was "I love my sister. My mom too. My dad too. We are a family."

Animals were written about by most of the students. Almost one-half of the animal entries

contained content that could be related in close time proximity to books read for the curriculum. Books were read about topics such as: spiders, tadpoles, frogs, toads, whales, dinosaurs, caterpillars, birds (and bird eggs) and rabbits. Examples of writings about animals related to the curriculum included such ideas as "The tadpole is going to turn into a frog" and "Dinosaurs eat plants and some eat meat."

One child wrote an involved story about butterflies, recounting many ideas which had been discussed.

"I like butterflies. They are pretty and they have beautiful wings. First they are a caterpillar. Then they sleep in the winter. They sleep in a cocoon. When they wake up it will be summer and they will come out. They will be a beautiful butterfly."

This story about whales was published for the room library, to be checked out and read by other students.

"I like whales. Whales are dangerous, especially the killer whales. Killer whales will kill you if you are in a row-boat and they jump up from the water and tip the row-boat over. Did you know that whales had flukes? Flukes move the whales. Baby whales are 25 feet long."

The study of whales had been initiated by students, not by the teacher.

Here is an example of writing in the season category. "Fall is when leaves fall down. They change colors and fall. The animals get ready for winter. It gets cold."

One large category, machines, contained repeated writings about cars, trucks, planes and rockets. Informational books about these topics were not read aloud as part of the curriculum. However, because of the high interest in these topics, books concerning these topics were brought to the attention of the interested students. Writings that contained labels or information that students read about in these books were those included in the frequency count as related to the classroom literature program. An example of this is "The U.S. Marine plane is a fighter plane." Another example is "The mirage is flown by Germans."

These examples and the percentages of topics chosen that appeared to be related to the classroom literature program, lend support to the notion that there was a strong relationship between literature that was shared and provided in the classroom program and writing topics chosen by students. Trends across

students indicate that, in general, informational books (such as machines, animals, or seasons) were most influential for boys, while fiction (such as fantasy and stories about families and other children) was most influential for girls. Considering the concept of primary and secondary territory established by Graves (1973), the influence of literature appeared to be consistent with trends of topic choice by sex and levels of development.

Summary

The data were presented for each research question and the analysis of the data was reported in this chapter. A discussion of the data for each problem statement and implications of the results will be presented in the forthcoming chapter. Application with inservice teachers and recommendations for future research will be discussed.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of choice in the selection of writing topics has been emphasized by researchers of process writing (Calkins, 1980; Graves, 1981; Murray, 1982). Personal interest in a topic leads to greater involvement in writing. When students are allowed to choose topics of interest to them more time is spent in writing. This is a major factor in gaining control of the writing process.

Classroom teachers often assign topics or story starters for fear that students can not think of their own topics for writing. In order to provide teachers with additional understanding of factors that relate to topic choice, two questions are raised:

1. What do beginning writers choose as writing topics?
2. Are there factors that relate to topic choice of first grade students?

It was the purpose of this study to identify topics chosen by first graders in a process writing classroom. In addition, this study also examined factors related to topic choice of first grade students.

First graders, when give freedom to choose their own topics wrote about a wide variety of topics. The category of machines, including cars, trucks, boats, planes and rockets was chosen most often.

The second favorite category was literature, which was chosen by all students. The category favored next was animals followed by family, physical behaviors and fantasy.

Given freedom of choice, boys and girls wrote about different topics. Girls focused on self, family and friends. Boys focused on machines, seasons, animals and physical behaviors.

When the factor of racial differences was considered, few differences were revealed except with boys only. The category of physical behaviors distinguished Native American boys from Caucasian boys.

When the factor of instructional reading level was considered, students assigned to the low group wrote about seasons and machines. This group of three boys

also wrote more in the category of physical behaviors when compared with the other groups. The middle group consisted of one girl and four boys. This group focused on machines and animals. The high group was comprised of two boys and two girls. They wrote about family and animals. Differences in this group appeared to be related to sex and level of development. All groups were influenced by literature in the classroom.

When the factor of reading achievement was considered, topics chosen were nearly the same as those chosen by the instructional reading groups. Group membership remained stable which could account for this.

When the factor of language was considered, differences between groups were consistent with other factors examined in the influence of sex and level of development. Information gained from language assessments did not reveal new information concerning topic choice.

When the factor of social relationships was considered it appeared that there may be a strong relationship between social relationships and topics chosen. Students often wrote about similar topics at the same time.

When the factor of the classroom literature program was considered, many examples of student writing were found which reflected influence of this factor. This influence of literature could be seen in all students' writing.

Discussion

The remainder of this chapter will discuss the findings of the study. The discussion will focus on factors that might relate to topic choices and possible implications for classroom teachers.

Topic Choices of Beginning Writers

Problem statement one posed the question: What do beginning writers choose as topics when given freedom of choice? The findings that related to problem statement one and their implications are discussed in this chapter.

The following findings are presented:

1. beginning writers, when given freedom to choose topics, wrote about a variety of

- topics,
2. some students showed an interest in many different topics while other students wrote repeatedly about the same topic,
 3. the category chosen most often was machines which includes cars, trucks, planes and rockets,
 4. the category chosen second was literature. This category reflected the use of literature in retellings of stories and in the writing of riddles and rhymes. Language and theme of the literature was also reflected in their writings, and
 5. other categories that were frequently chosen were seasons, which included holiday writings, animals, family, physical behaviors and fantasy.

Young writers can choose their own topics, when given choice. They are able to write about a wide variety of topics that are of interest to them. It is apparent when examining the students writings that some enjoy writing about topics that are close to them, topics that are quite familiar to them. These

students, often girls, may choose to write about their family, or about experiences at school or with their friends.

Other students enjoy writing about topics about which they have little or no experience, yet have an intense interest and want to learn more about. Topics chosen may include rockets, racing cars or animals. Very often these students are boys.

Since young children when given freedom, choose to write about a variety of topics, can assigned topics be of interest to all children in the classroom? Will children who are not interested in the assigned topic spend time on writing? According to Graves and Stuart (1985) children, when given choice, will write about topics of interest to them and in doing this spend more time on the writing task. This increased time has the potential for helping the child gain a sense of control of the process, as children become more comfortable with their successes in writing.

In addition, there is increased time spent with other aspects of the writing process. Mechanics, such as grammar and punctuation, makes more sense as children find a need for it within the context of their own writing. This was observed in this classroom,

particularly as the children discussed their writing with one another. Calkins (1980) emphasises that children are learning the mechanics of language more effectively as they write than if they were having isolated skills lessons. As children write more they begin to notice and remember the spellings of words. Children also spend time solving problems, organizing and communicating their ideas as they gain control of the writing process.

As children write, they also read. They think and organize their ideas so that they can put them down in print. They read as they write and they read again to see whether they have communicated what they wanted. They read to find out whether their writing makes sense. What a meaningful way to better understand both reading and writing processes.

Factors Related To Topic Choice

Problem statement two posed the question: Are there factors that relate to choice of topic in a first grade classroom?

The findings that related to problem statement two as well as their implications are discussed in this section:

1. sex was highly related to choice of topic,
2. race was not highly related to choice of topic, except when boys alone were considered,
- 3 instructional reading levels, reading achievement, receptive language and expressive language as indicators of developmental level were not highly related to choice of topics,
4. social relationships were highly related to choice of topics,
5. the classroom literature program was highly related related to choice of topic.

Boys and girls in this first grade classroom selected different topics for writing. Girls, more often than boys, chose to write about topics in what has been identified by Graves (1973) as primary territory. Topics under this heading would be those associated with self, home and school, focusing on "I." This supports Graves' study where he found that seven year old girls wrote about topics in primary territory.

The boys in this classroom focused on topics in secondary territory, as identified by Graves (1973). This also supports Graves' study where he found boys wrote about topics associated with the metropolitan area and beyond.

The category chosen most often in this study was machines, in secondary territory, which included cars, trucks, planes and rockets. These topics were often chosen by boys. Since there were nine boys and three girls in this study, this influenced the overall topic choices. Topics in primary territory which were often chosen by girls, did not have high total percentages. Again, this was influenced by the number of boys and girls in the classroom.

Race was not a significant factor in this study until sex was considered. Then it became significant in one category for choice, physical behaviors. Writing is a means for expression and may become an outlet for the feelings of some children. This may be related to racial background, however, given the sample size of this study, this was not definitive.

Instructional reading level, reading achievement, receptive language and expressive language can be considered indicators of developmental levels of

children. Little information, beyond that available from considering sex as a factor, was learned about topic choice by looking at these levels. It may be that the quality of writing, rather than topic choice was effected by developmental level. Based upon these measures of development, Graves' (1973) assertion that highly developed children cross territorial lines in topic choice could not be supported. Boys and girls who placed within high ability groups did not show consistent signs of choosing to write about topics in territories other than those consistent with the findings for sex differences.

It was also possible that the measures utilized for development were not the appropriate measures to examine developmental levels as described by Graves (1973).

Social relationships were a definite factor in topics these children chose for writing. This was a social classroom where interaction was encouraged. Interaction between children and between teacher and children was an integral part of the learning that took place. With this kind of environment, there was more opportunity to share ideas.

Literature was a vital part of this classroom. It

was also a definite factor in topic choice for writing. This study indicates the influence that literature can have for topic choice. Literature was used for group reading instruction for these first graders. Much of their school day was spent reading books that were of interest to them. They enjoyed sharing books with one another.

Summary and Implications

Topic Choices of Beginning Writers

Given freedom, beginning writers can and do choose a wide variety of topics. The first grade students in this study were able to generate, from many sources, topics of interest to them and did express their ideas. Teachers should trust writers, even beginning writers, to find topics of interest about which they can write. As Calkins (1986) and Graves (1983) continue to remind us, children do have many ideas which are worth expression.

Children should be allowed the opportunity to write about what is of interest to them. Because of the diversity of topics chosen in this study it is inconceivable that one assigned topic could be of

interest to all children in one classroom. When children are assigned topics for which they have little interest they may not spend as much time on writing. Time spent on writing helps children gain control of the writing process, as well as to learn new information about themselves and their capabilities. The issue of control of learning processes is one of the driving forces behind the whole language movement that is presently taking place in the United States (Calkins, 1986; Hansen, 1987; Smith, 1978).

Factors Related To Topic Choices

Findings in this study indicated that sex, social relationships and the classroom literature program had the strongest influence on choice of topic for the first grade students in this study. Boys and girls consistently chose different topics for writing, regardless of developmental level. Teachers should respect differences between the sexes and allow students to choose topics of personal interest.

Everyone in the class had topic choices which were influenced by the literature that was both made available to students and utilized in the curriculum, with the girls writing in this category slightly more

often than the boys. Even with the use of literature, choices of books were often different. The boys chose to use informational books most often to learn more about topics that were of interest to them, while girls seemed to use fictional texts and poetry most often for writing ideas. To promote opportunity for writing experiences which might be influenced by the classroom literature program, teachers must insure that a wide variety of quality children's literature is available for children. To honor personal differences between sexes in writing topics, teachers should share both fiction and non-fiction books during read aloud sessions and group reading times.

Opportunity for interaction in the classroom during writing, to share ideas and get responses from friends, influenced topic choice. Friends often shared topics, even to the point of collaboration on pieces. Friends sustained one another over long periods of time on single topics to allow for more in-depth exploration. As Hansen (1987) has indicated, children like working together and use each other for support. Interaction during writing should be encouraged, knowing the potential benefit for topic choices and for time spent on the writing process.

Race may be a factor in topic choice, however, with the sample size of this study a definitive statement concerning influence can not be made. This study raised an interesting question about the relationship between race and need for expression of physical behaviors for Native American boys.

Recommendations

The present study resulted in the following recommendations for further research:

1. It is recommended that other age groups be studied to develop an understanding of trends in categories of topic choices across age levels other than first grade. In general, as children develop, do their writing interests change? Does Graves' (1973) concept of territoriality in topic choice hold true for age groups other than for seven year olds?

2. It is recommended that other studies be conducted, across age levels, to develop a better understanding of factors related to topic choices, particularly to see if sex differences, social relationships and the classroom literature program remain important factors. A complex interaction may be at work which requires an in-depth study of the social,

emotional and intellectual factors at work in classroom environments.

3. It is recommended that a longitudinal study of these first grade children be conducted to document patterns of growth and changes in choice of topics over time.

4. It is recommended that racial differences be studied further as a possible factor relating to topic choice. This study was limited by the small sample size and the fact that there were no Caucasian girls in the classroom. A larger population is recommended. It would also be of interest to look at other racial groups to determine whether different backgrounds have different interests and needs for expression. If there are different interests, it would be helpful for teachers in our pluralistic society to have this information.

References

- Calkins, L.M. (1980). One school's writing program. The National Elementary Principal, 59(3), 34-38.
- Calkins, L.M. (1983). Lessons from a child: On the teaching and learning of writing. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Calkins, L.M. (1986). The art of teaching writing. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Clay, M.M, Gill, M., Glynn, T., McNaughton, T., and Salmon, K. (1983). Record of oral language. Exeter, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Dunn, L.M. and Dunn, L.M. (1981). Peabody picture vocabulary test - revised. Circle Pines, Minnesota: American Guidance Service.
- Graves, D.H. (1973). Children's writing: Research directions and hypotheses based upon an examination of the writing processes of seven year old children. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo.
- Graves, D.H. (1981). A case study observing the development of primary children's composing, spelling, and motor behaviors during the writing process. New Hampshire University (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 218 653).
- Graves, D.H. (1983). Writing: Teachers and children at work. Exeter, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Graves, D.H. (1984). A researcher learns to write. Exeter, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Graves, D.H. and Stuart, V. (1985). Write from the start. New York: E.P. Dutton.
- Hansen, J. (1987). When writers read. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books.

- Harste, J.C., Woodward, V.A., and Burke, C.L. (1984).
Language stories and literacy lessons.
Portsmouth, N.H.: Henieman Educational Books.
- Jobe, D.A. (1974). Factors that influence children's
free choices of topics for creative writing.
Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of
Minnesota.
- Manning, G., Manning, M, and Hughes, J. (1987).
Journals in first grade: What children write.
The Reading Teacher, 41(3), 311-315.
- Metropolitan achievement tests (1985). New York:
Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
- Murray, D.N. (1982). Learning by teaching.
Montclair, N.J.: Boynton & Cook Publishers.
- Smith, F. (1978). Understanding reading: A
psycholinguistic analysis of reading and
learning to read, 2nd ed. New York: Holt,
Rinehart and Winston.
- Templeton, S. (1986). Literacy, readiness and
basals. The Reading Teacher, 39(5), 403-409.

APPENDIX A

CLASSROOM DESCRIPTION

CLASSROOM DESCRIPTION

Several aspects of the environment of the classroom in this study will be considered, as important to the results of the study. The physical environment along with the social environment will be described. An example of a day's schedule will be included.

Print was displayed everywhere, in charts, labels, directions for center choices and books. Since literature was the base for learning and reading in this classroom, many books for varied interests were displayed and were easily accessible.

The children had their own desks, in which materials were kept. Children did, however, move about the room freely for many of the daily activities. Children could be seen in pairs or small groups, working together on center choices, writing or reading. They would sit on the floor, as well as at tables or desks.

The centers in the room involved a variety of purposeful reading and writing activities centered on a theme being studied in science or social studies or on other books read. There were hands on activities for math and science. A variety of animals were observed

throughout the year, with special interest in the hatching of quail eggs in the spring. For everything studied a variety of books were read and made available to the children.

Most of the centers incorporated several areas of skills or knowledge. For example, in the restaurant or store center, reading, writing (lists or orders) and math skills were needed. This center was one used during a study of food and nutrition.

Naturally, there was a comfortable library area with many books for reading. As the children published their own books, these were added to the library. There were also listening centers where books could be heard on tape while the text was being followed.

This classroom was a social classroom. Interaction was encouraged. There was a great deal of sharing and use of language for communicating. The children asked questions and expressed ideas and felt comfortable doing so.

The teacher was a good model, questioning, thinking aloud and talking about the act of thinking. She was helping them to become independent learners.

The daily schedule could be viewed in large blocks of time. The teacher adjusted instruction, as needed, with the exception of scheduled physical education, music

and counseling.

After morning exercises, the children wrote for forty-five minutes to an hour . This schedule was followed daily and included discussion about their writing in Author's Chair (Graves & Hansen, 1982). These writing sessions tended to lengthen as the year progressed and the children became more comfortable with their writing.

Following writing, at the first of the year the whole class enjoyed Shared Book. Many books were read by the teacher, with some favorites chosen repeatedly. Soon, small reading groups were formed for instruction. Literature was the base for this instruction. All groups read a wide variety of books. During this time, those children not working with the teacher had a variety of choices for centers involving an integration of language, art, science and social studies.

After lunch the teacher read aloud new books as well as old favorites. Several books, both fiction and non-fiction were shared daily. The remainder of the afternoon was set aside for penmanship, math with math choices, then science, social studies, music or physical education. Usually there was time for paired reading, where the children could read their favorite books.

This was a classroom where thinking and learning were important. Literature was enjoyed and valued. These children were interested in learning more about books, their authors and illustrators. They were learning about the reading - writing connection.

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO PARENTS



Oklahoma State University

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA 74078-0146
GUNDERSEN HALL
(405) 624-7125

Dear Parent:

Last year I participated in your child's class, helping with the writing program. I am interested in learning more about subjects children choose to write about. To do this I would like your permission to look at your child's writing along with his/her reading achievement scores. This information will remain completely confidential with no reference to name, school, or town.

Mr. Stidham and Ms. Rogers have lent their support to this project.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Douglas

Dorothy Douglas

I give permission to Dorothy Douglas to look at my child's test scores and writing. I understand that this information will remain confidential.

Parent Signature

APPENDIX C

INDIVIDUAL DATA ON CHILDREN

Girl 1

Self	Family	Toys	Pets	School	Friends
I	9/22 family	9/16	cat	10/20	friends 9/25
I	9/24 dad	9/29	cat	11/24	friends 9/26
I	10/15 sister	10/14		11/25	
I	11/10 sister	10/15		11/26	
	11/11 sister	10/21			
I	12/23 sister	10/22			
	1/5 dad	10/28			
I	3/11 dad	10/29			
	3/12 sister	10/30			
	sister	11/10			
	sister	11/12			
	sister	11/13			
	cousin	11/14			
	sister	11/17			
	sister	11/18			
	sister	11/20			
	mom	11/24			
	mom	11/25			
	mom	11/26			
	mom	12/1			
	aunt	12/8			
	sister	12/10			
		12/11			
	grandma	12/15			
		12/16			
		12/20			
6	25	-	2	-	2

Girl 1

Animals

Nature

Seasons

Sports

Machines

Physical
Behaviors

--	--	--	--	--	--

Girl 1

Fantasy	Fantasy (TV, movie)	Literature	Miscellaneous
---------	------------------------	------------	---------------

Once upon a time... 1/14		rhymes 1/23	
1/15		1/27	
1/16		1/28	
1/21		1/29	
Once there was a monkey...		riddles 2/24	
1/30		2/25	
2/2		2/26	
2/3		<u>Would You</u>	
2/10		<u>Rather?</u> 5/4	
Story of 2/13		5/5	
Hank 2/16		5/6	
2/17			
2/23			
There was a pretty girl...			
4/22			
There was a witch 4/23			
5	-	3	-

Girl 2

Self	Family	Toys	Pets	School	Friends
self 10/15	mom 8/26	toy 9/24	cat 11/6	teacher 10/20	play 8/25
I 11/10	love 8/27	kite 9/19	cat 11/7	school 10/22	friends 9/2
I was 12/11	family 8/28	toy 11/21	dog 11/17	teacher 10/	friends 9/15
sick 12/12		toy 1/5	cat 11/20	school 10/23	friends 9/16
			pet 11/	school 10/27	friends 9/17
I 12/15	9/4		dog 2/2	school 10	friends 9/18
I 12/16	trip 9/5		dog 2/3	teacher 12	friends 9/19
	family 9/				friends 9/22
I 12/17	cousin 10/12				friends 9/23
	family 10/21				friends 1/13
	dad 10/				1/14
	baby 10/24				1/14
	dad 10/28				friends 1/28
	home 10/29				1/29
	mom 10/30				
	mom 10/				
	home 11/4				
	baby 11/7				
	mom 11/10				
	home 11/12				
	mom 11				
	family 11/18				
	11/19				
	brother 11/				
	family 12/2				
	12/3				
	12/4				
	mom 12/				
	mom 1/9				
	1/12				
	1/17				
	mom 5/4				
5	31	4	7	7	11

Girl 2

Animals	Nature	Seasons	Sports	Machines	Physical Behaviors
tadpole 9/24 alligator 9/26	star 9/2 rainbow 9/6 flower 9/12 rain 11/13	turkey 11/24 turkey 11/25 Valentine 2/16 snow 1/9 Easter 4/15 Easter 4/20	basketball 11/5	boats 9/- rocket 1/-	
-	3	-	-	1	-

Girl 2

Fantasy Fantasy Literature Miscellaneous
 (TV, movie)

monster 12/22		<u>Brown Bear</u> 8/29 <u>Spooky Old</u> <u>House</u> 9/8 9/9 9/10 <u>Brown Bear</u> 10/13 retell 11/11 rhyme 11/12 rhyme 11/19 <u>Brown Bear</u> 12/8 <u>Green Eggs</u> <u>and Ham</u> 1/6 1/7 1/8 jokes 2/4 riddles 2/17 riddles 2/18 riddles 2/23 riddles 3/2 riddles 3/4 <u>Martha and</u> <u>George</u> 3/13 3/16 3/20 3/31 4/1 4/2 rhyme 4/15 rhyme 4/21 rhyme 4/22 Amelia 4/27 Bedlia 4/28 4/29 4/30 riddles 5/5 <u>Would You</u> <u>Rather?</u> 5/6 5/-	
1	-	25	-

Girl 3

Self	Family	Toys	Pets	School	Friends
I played 9/	family 8/25			teacher 8/26	friend 9/5
I 11/6	home 9/3			school 9/2	friend 9/16
I like 1/5	home 9/5			school 10/12	friend 12/
I went 3/9	baby 9/10			school 10/20	friend 12/
3/10	baby 9/11			teacher 12/4	friend 1/7
	family 9/15			teacher 12/5	friend 3/6
	family 9/17			school 12/	
	family 9/18			school 12/	
	sister 9/25				
	mom 9/29				
	family 11/7				
	family 11/10				
	family 12/				
	sister 1/				
	family 3/				
4	15	-	-	8	6

Girl 3

Animals	Nature	Seasons	Sports	Machines	Physical Behaviors
bunny 8/27	rainbow 9/5				
tadpole 9/19	weather 11/11	jack-o- 10/14			
9/22		lantern			
guinea pig		pumpkin 10/28			
9/23		Halloween			
spider 9/24		10/29			
horses 11/24		carve 10/			
bird 12/4		pumpkin			
butterflies		Halloween			
1/12		10/30			
1/13		pumpkin 10			
dinosaurs		turkey 12/1			
2/5		Santa 12/2			
		Christmas			
		12/8			
		12/10			
		Santa 12/11			
		Christmas			
		12/12			
		Valentine			
		2/16			
		Easter bunny			
		4/16			
10	2	13	-	-	-

Girl 3

Fantasy Fantasy Literature Miscellaneous
 (TV, movie)

<u>Bears in the</u>		<u>Brown Bear</u>	<u>Friday the 13</u>
Night 9/22		9/9	3/13
Part 2 9/24		retell 1/28	
Hello 10/13		1/29	
chick and		2/3	
duck 11/10		riddle 2/	
giant flower		retell 2/24	
11/14		2/25	
cat and party		riddle 2/	
11/		riddle 2/	
horse, not		alphabet 3/30	
real 11/25		3/31	
11/26		rhymes 3/12	
turtle turned		3/13	
into 2/2		rhyme 4/9	
2/3		<u>Brown Bear</u>	
2/4		4/13	
Bubbleland		4/15	
2/18		rhyme 4/21	
2/24		<u>Would You</u>	
Hank 2/9		<u>Rather?</u> 4/30	
2/10		5/1	
Time to Swim		5/4	
bunny 4/27		5/5	
4/28		riddles 5/11	
4/30		jokes 5/13	
The Wild Duck		5/14	
5/			
Witch took me			
5/28			
5/29			
13	-	14	1

Boy 1

Animals	Nature	Seasons	Sports	Machines	Physical Behaviors
horse 8/26	volcano 8/27	Halloween	boxing 11/13	plane 9/2	crash 9/15
horse 10/21		10/	basketball	plane 9/3	crash 9/16
cheetah 11/19		spook house	12/13	plane 9/4	fight 9/17
bird 11/21		10/20	running 3/	plane 9/5	fight 9/18
parrot 11/25		spook house		plane 9/8	fight 9/19
dinosaurs 3/4		10/		plane 9/9	fight 9/
dinosaurs 3/		Halloween		plane 9/10	fight 9/
dinosaurs 3/		10/14		plane 9/11	fight 9/
birds 3/		Halloween		plane 9/12	fight 9/
baby birds		10/29		rocket 9/	car blown up
3/19		Thanksgiving		rocket 9/	10/
dinosaurs 3/		11/20		car 9/22	fight 10/
zoo 3/		Thanksgiving		plane 9/23	fight 11/
dinosaurs 3/		11/26		truck 9/26	fight 11/
cobras 4/		turkey 11/		car 10/	tank 11/
		Christmas		car 10/	plane shot
		12/		car race	12/2
		Santa 12/4		10/13	crash 12/3
		Rudolph 12/16		plane 10/15	monster
		Christmas		car 10	destroys 1/5
		12/		race car	fight 3/
		Santa 12/		car 10/	fight 3/
		St. Patrick's		car 10/	fight 3/3
		Day 3/		car 10/	blow up 4/
				boat 10/	battle 4/13
				plane 11/6	fight 4/14
				rocket 11/7	kill shark
				plane 11/	5/
				car 12/	
				plane 12/8	
				plane 12/9	
				plane 12/10	
				plane 12/11	
				plane 12/	
				race 1/12	
				car 1	
14	1	15	3	34	25

Boy 1

Fantasy	Fantasy (TV, movie)	Literature	Miscellaneous
cat, mouse - not real 10/ magic 10/ make believe creature 10/ robot 2/ Hank 2/ robot 2/ dragon 3/11 bunny - not real 5/	Wolfman 10/ creature 10/ Darth Vader 10/22 Captain America 11/11 Big Foot 11/ movie 2/24 Spiderman 3/16 Captain America 3/ Ice Man 3/ Electro Man 3/ Spiderman 3/ Captain America 3/ Captain America 3/	<u>Green Eggs and Ham</u> 1/7 about Curious George 1/13 1/14 1/15 about Curious George 1/21 1/28 about Encyclopedia Brown 2/ about Encyclopedia Brown 2/6 retell 2/ riddles 2/ rhymes 4/ rhymes 4/ rhymes 4/ <u>Amelia Bedelia</u> 5/ retell 5/11	no smoking 2/
8	13	12	1

Boy 2

Self	Family	Toys	Pets	School	Friends
I I	10/20 10/27	family 9/ family 9/ cousins 12/8 12/9 family 4/21 mom 4/2	toy 12/1 ninja 12/2 cars - toy 12/10 transformer 1/5 toy 3/30 new toy 3/31		friends 9/23 play 3/2
2	5	5	—	—	2

Boy 2

Animals	Nature	Seasons	Sports	Machines	Physical Behaviors
dinosaur 2/2	volcano 8/27	Halloween	weights 9/22	car 8/25	tank 9/
2/4	volcano 9/10	10/14	football	rocket 9/2	crash 11/
2/5	volcano 9/21	spook house	11/10	plane 9/8	wreck town
shark 3/18	9/22	10/	football	rocket 9/9	1/29
3/19	volcano 1/27	ghost 10/20	11/13	plane 9/10	1/30
sharks 3/20		bat 10/24	basketball	plane 9/11	animal fight
shark 4/22		pumpkin 10/	12/18	hot rod 9/	2/24
monkeys 4/8		ghost 10/29	basketball	hot rod 9/	2/25
4/9		pumpkin 10/30	12/22	hot rod 9/	2/26
4/13		Thanksgiving		hot rod 9/17	animal fight
4/14		11/21		hot rod 9/	3/13
		turkey 11/24		hot rod 9/	3/16
		turkey 11/25		hot rod 10/13	3/20
		turkey 11/		plane 10/	Godzilla 3/5
		turkey 11/		car 10/	fight 3/6
				truck 10/22	3/7
				truck 10/23	dinosaur
				truck 11/	fight 4/16
				rocket 11/13	animal fight
				rocket 1/7	4/27
					4/28
5	4	12	5	20	8

Boy 3

Animals	Nature	Seasons	Sports	Machines	Physical Behaviors
monkeys 8/26	volcano 1/27	spook house	fishing 8/25	boat 9/3	crash 9/15
zoo 8/27	volcano 1/29	10/15	fishing 9/	plane 9/12	
monkeys 9/2	rocks 4/	witch 10/16	fishing 9/21	helicopter	
tiger 9/8		ghosts 10/	basketball	9/16	
animals 9/10		monster 10/20	12/	cars 11/3	
turtle 9/		Halloween	fishing 2/17	cars 11/4	
tadpole 9/19		10/21	hunting 3/11	cars 11/5	
rabbits 9/29		Halloween	3/13	cars 11/6	
snake 11/		10/	Karate 4/20	car race	
dog 11/13		Valentine		11/7	
alligator		2/13		car race	
11/				11/11	
tiger 11/14				car race	
				11/	
tiger 2/23				cars 1/30	
dinosaurs				2/3	
2/24				2/4	
14	3	7	7	11	1

Boy 3

Fantasy Fantasy Literature Miscellaneous
 (TV, movie)

dog and snake	Godzilla 9/25	Frog and	math facts
not true 1/7	Thundercats	Toad were	4/8
1/8	9/26	9/11	math facts
1/9	King Kong	red is -	4/9
laid egg -	10/2	10/24	
not true 2/5		retell 10/27	
dinosaur and		10/30	
tiger - not		retell 11/11	
true 2/9		song 11/24	
sharks - not		song 12/1	
true 2/17		12/2	
2/18		12/3	
whale ran		12/4	
away 2/25		12/5	
2/26		retell 12/20	
2/27		song 12/22	
3/2		retell 1/20	
3/3		rhyme 1/	
duck and		retell 3/9	
rabbit - not		3/10	
true 4/5		<u>Dark, Dark,</u>	
		<u>Room</u> 4/12	
		rhyme 4/22	
		rhyme 4/26	
		rhyme 4/27	
		rhyme 4/28	
6	3	16	2

Boy 4

Self	Family	Toys	Pets	School	Friends
I moved	dad	bike			friend
11/5	12/8	4/			12/15
	brother				play
11/6	3/12				1/9
I					friends
11/7					1/12
I					1/13
11/10					friend
I	aunt				3/2
11/14	4/28				3/3
I	wedding				friend
12/1	5/2				3/10
12/2					3/11
I					3/12
12/					friend
I					4/
1/8					friend
					4/29
8	4	1	-	-	7

Boy 4

Animals	Nature	Seasons	Sports	Machines	Physical Behaviors
tiger 11/10	mountains 1/6	Thanksgiving	fishing 4/7	truck 11/12	crash 11/11
dinosaur 11/17	volcanos 1/28	11/21	fishing 4/9	truck 11/13	fight 1/6
11/18	1/29	Thanksgiving		plane 11/	1/20
tiger 11/19		11/25			1/21
dinosaur 11/20		Rudolph 12/10			fight 1/22
11/21		Rudolph 12/			1/26
gerbil 11/26		Rudolph 12/16			1/27
dinosaur 12/		Christmas			fight 1/29
tiger 3/		12/18			1/30
		12/19			fight 2/6
		Christmas			fight 2/9
		12/22			dinosaur
					fight 2/10
					2/11
					dinosaur
					fight 2/12
					2/13
					fight 4/1
					4/2
					animal fight
					4/13
					4/14
					4/15
					fight 4/22
					animal fight
					5/26
					5/27
					5/28
					5/29
					fight 5/11
					5/12
					5/13
					5/19
7	2	7	2	3	13

Boy 5

Self	Family	Toys	Pets	School	Friends
I	11/26	family 8/25	toy 10/	school 8/27	friend 3/2
I	/12	aunt 9/15	Ninja 12/1		
		home 9/22	12/2		
		dad 9/			
		brother 9/			
		family 10/			
		brother 10/			
		family 10/			
		dad 1/5			
		dad 1/6			
		family 3/12			
2	11	2	-	1	1

Boy 5

Animals	Nature	Seasons	Sports	Machines	Physical Behaviors
turtle 8/26	volcano 8/26	vampire 10/	basketball	helicopter	destroying
dinosaur 9/8	volcano 8/29	pumpkin 10/12	12/	9/2	9/9
dinosaur 9/10	volcano 3/11	Halloween	baseball 3/26	helicopter	crash 10/
animals 9/	volcano 3/19	10/		9/3	shot down
animals 9/		witch 10/14		plane 9/	11/
animals 9/23		Halloween		car 9/5	shot 11/
alligator		10/15		truck 9/	shot 11/12
9/		Halloween		truck 9/10	grizzly shot
animals 10/		10/		truck 9/12	11/
animals 10/2		Halloween		helicopter	
horses 11/		10/		9/	
horses 11/		Halloween		plane 9/	
tiger 11/19		10/24		plane 9/	
tiger 11/20		Halloween		plane 9/	
tiger 11/25		10/		plane 10/	
horses 11/		Halloween		helicopter	
birds 12/5		10/		10/	
cats 12/12		Halloween		truck 10/	
turtles 12/		10/30		truck 10/	
deer 12/		Thanksgiving		truck 10/	
animals 12/22		11/12		helicopter	
squirrels		Thanksgiving		11	
12/		11/21		helicopter	
birds 12/		turkey 11/		11/14	
zoo animals		angels 12/10		plane 11/1	
1/12		Santa 12/15		plane 11/4	
1/13		Santa 12/19		plane 11/5	
dinosaurs		Santa 12/		plane 11/	
1/26		reindeer		plane 3/16	
1/27		12/			
dinosaurs		Santa 12/			
1/28					
1/29					
dinosaurs					
1/30					
1/31					
2/2					
big cat 2/3					
panther 2/6					
tiger 2/7					
dinosaur 2/8					
animals 3/3					
eggs 3/19					
4/3					
4/6					
snakes 4/7					
4/8					
tadpole 4/					
34	4	20	2	23	6

Boy 5

Fantasy Fantasy Literature Miscellaneous
 (TV, movie)

unicorn 12/	Back to the	rhyme 9/	
unicorn 12/	Future 2/17	rhyme 12/8	
unicorn 1/6	Karate Kid	rhyme 12/	
unicorn 1/7	and Ninja	<u>Morris and</u>	
unicorn 1/8	3/26	<u>Boris</u> 1/	
unicorn 1/9	3/27	rhyme 1/16	
mean 2/	3/30	rhyme 1/22	
trapped 4/1	4/1	riddle 1/	
Bruiser	4/2	rhyme 1/26	
Bunny 4/4	4/3	rhyme 1/27	
4/5	4/4	Fortunately,	
dinosaur -		Unfortunately	
not real 4/7		2/	
4/8		rhymes 2/16	
4/9		riddles 2/26	
4/13		riddles 2/27	
4/15		retell 3/3	
dinosaur -		retell 3/	
not real 4/22		<u>Where the</u>	
Dinosaur -		<u>Wild Things</u>	
not real 4/28		<u>Are</u> 3/	
4/29		riddles 3/13	
		Riddles 3/	
		<u>The Ugly</u>	
		<u>Duckling</u> 3/	
		riddles 5/	
		riddles 5/12	
		Amelia Bedelia	
		5/11	
		Amelia Bedelia	
		5/13	
		riddles 5/	
12	2	24	-

Boy 6

Self Family Toys Pets School Friends

		toy 1/5 remote control cars 1/6 1/7 1/9		class 12/19 12/22	
-	-	2	-	1	-

Boy 6

Animals	Nature	Seasons	Sports	Machines	Physical Behaviors
bee 8/25		little ghosts 10/12	football 9/	car 9/5	fire 8/25
turtle 8/26		haunted house 10/14	football 9/23	boat 9/12	fire 9/2
dinosaur 9/4		Halloween 10/22	hunting 2/12	car 9/17	crash 9/9
turtle 9/10		pumpkin 10/	2/13	truck 9/	town 3/
dinosaur 9/11		pumpkin 10/24		car 9/	destroyed
animals 9/25		turkey 11/21		car 9/23	
alligator 10/2		turkey 11/24		plane 10/	
snake 11/		Santa is coming 12/9		plane 10/	
cheetah 11/				plane 10/30	
birds 11/25				car 11/4	
kangaroo 12/				car 11/10	
animals 1/16				car 11/13	
animals 1/20				11/14	
1/21				truck 11/18	
1/22				truck 11/	
eagle 2/2				truck 1/29	
2/3				1/30	
jaguar 2/5					
whales 2/17					
animals 3/30					
4/1					
horses 4/2					
4/3					
4/6					
4/7					
horses 4/13					
sharks 5/21					
20	-	8	3	15	4

Boy 6

Fantasy	Fantasy (TV, movie)	Literature	Miscellaneous
---------	------------------------	------------	---------------

under water	Spiderman	Jungle Book	
car 10/	3/13	12/10	
pet		Jungle Book	
dinosaur 3/5		12/11	
3/9		riddles 2/	
3/10		riddles 2/23	
3/11		riddles 2/27	
race 4/		riddles 5/11	
Hare and Bear		riddles 5/19	
4/15			
4/16			
4/20			
4/21			
at zoo 5/27			
5/28			
5	1	7	-

Boy 7

Animals	Nature	Seasons	Sports	Machines	Physical Behaviors
bird 8/26	thunder 8/27	spook house	Baseball 5/	trucks 9/3	tank 8/26
zoo 9/16	volcano 8/29	10/14		hot rod 9/5	animal fight
tiger 9/	beehive 10/2	witches 10/15		truck 9/6	1/28
snake 9/23	snow 12/3	Halloween		truck 9/9	fight 3/16
spider 9/26	volcano 3/	10/		truck 9/	
9/27		Halloween		truck 9/15	
chipmonk		10/23		car 9/17	
11/26		Halloween		truck 9/	
12/1		10/29		rocket 9/27	
12/2		Bethlehem		rocket 9/	
lion 1/27		12/4		rocket 9/	
1/28		Christmas		plane 10/3	
baby animals		12/5		plane 11/10	
2/		Santa 12/10		truck 11/11	
eggs 3/27		Christmas		truck 11/12	
3/28		12/18		rocket 11/13	
kangaroo 4/3		12/19		train 11/14	
4/6				truck 11/	
				car 1/13	
				car 1/14	
				1/15	
				truck 2/16	
				truck 2/17	
10	5	9	1	22	3

Boy 8

Animals	Nature	Seasons	Sports	Machines	Physical Behaviors
bird 9/13	flower 8/26	pumpkin 10/1	football 5/	planes 9/5	fight 2/26
dinosaur 9/22	sun 8/27	ghost 10/2	baseball 5/	planes 9/8	2/27
dinosaur 9/24	flower 9/12	ghost 10/3		planes 9/9	3/2
dinosaur 11/20	volcano 9/23	ghost 10/6		planes 9/10	dinosaur and
11/21	sun 10/2	pumpkin 10/7		planes 9/11	Godzilla fight
dinosaur 11/24	volcano 2/1	ghost 10/8		rockets 9/12	3/5
		ghost 10/9		rockets 9/15	3/11
sharks 3/19		ghost 10/10		rockets 9/16	3/12
3/20		ghost 10/13		rockets 9/17	3/13
sharks 4/3		ghost 10/14		rockets 9/18	Ninja fight
4/7		ghost 10/15		rockets 9/19	3/26
4/9		pumpkin 10/16		rockets 9/22	3/30
sharks 4/13		ghost 10/17		rockets 9/24	4/1
		ghost 10/20		rockets 9/25	4/2
		ghost 10/21		rockets 9/26	dinosaur 4/14
		ghost 10/22		rockets 9/29	fight 4/15
		ghost 10/27		rockets 11/17	4/21
		ghost 10/28		rockets 11/18	4/22
		haunted		rockets 11/19	4/30
		house 10/29		rockets 11/20	
		ghost 10/30		rockets 11/21	
		ghost 11/3		car 11/	
		ghost 11/4		rockets 12/5	
		ghost 11/5		rockets 12/8	
		ghost 11/6		rockets 12/9	
		ghost 11/7		boat 1/5	
		ghost 11/10			
		ghost 11/11			
		ghost 11/12			
		ghost 11/13			
		pumpkin 11/13			
		turkey 12/2			
		12/3			
		Christmas			
		12/15			
		12/17			
		12/19			
8	6	32	2	26	10

Boy 9

Self	Family	Toys	Pets	School	Friends	
I I	1/20 1/26	home home home	8/25 8/26 9/3	cat and dog 8/25 cat 2/ Snowball 3/12		fair with friend 9/15 fair with friend 9/16 friend 9/17 friend 9/18 friend 9/
2	3		3	-	5	

Boy 9

Fantasy Fantasy Literature Miscellaneous
 (TV, movie)

dragon 1/8	movie 2/	retell 9/23	Friday 13th
gerbil and	Bonald and	retell 2/5	5/13
eagle - not	Mickey 4/14	riddles 2/	
true 1/13	4/15	riddles 2/23	
1/14	4/21	retell 2/25	
1/16	4/27	riddles 3/2	
lion and		riddles 3/12	
horse - not		riddles 3/13	
true 1/		riddles 3/15	
duck and		riddles 4/	
friend 2/3		riddles 5/6	
witch 5/		rhymes 5/7	
talking horse		riddles 5/	
4/2		riddles 5/	
4/3			
horse 4/6			
bunny race			
4/15			
4/16			
4/17			
8	2	14	1

VITA

Dorothy Jane DiVall Douglas

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Dissertation: FACTORS THAT RELATE TO CHOICE OF TOPIC IN
A FIRST GRADE PROCESS WRITING CLASSROOM

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Shidler, Oklahoma, November
3, 1936, the daughter of Frank L. and Ruth
DiVall.

Education: Graduated from South Pasadena - San
Marino High School, South Pasadena, California
in June, 1954; received Bachelor of Science
Degree in Elementary Education from the
University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma in
May, 1958; received the Master of Education
Degree from Central State University, Edmond,
Oklahoma in May, 1985; completed requirements
for the Doctor of Education Degree at Oklahoma
State University in July, 1988.

Professional Experience: First grade teacher,
Oklahoma City Public School District, Oklahoma
City, Oklahoma, August, 1958 to May, 1959;
first grade teacher, Hobbs School District,
Hobbs, New Mexico, August, 1959 to January,
1960; first grade teacher, Oklahoma City Public
School District, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma,
January, 1960 to May, 1966; Teaching Assistant,
Department of Curriculum and Instruction,
Oklahoma State University, August, 1985 to May,
1988.

Professional Organizations: International Reading
Association; National Reading Conference;
Organization of Teacher Educators in Reading;
Oklahoma Reading Council