

THE ABILITY OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN TO DIFFERENTIATE
BETWEEN REALITY AND FANTASY IN EARLY
LITERATURE EXPERIENCES

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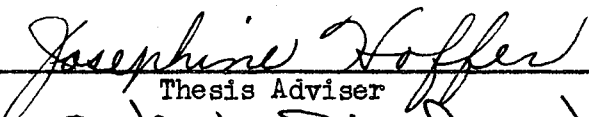
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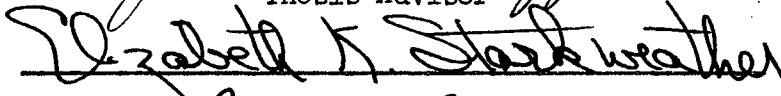
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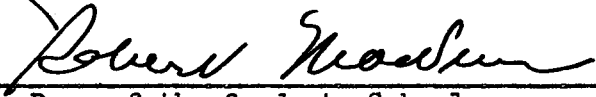
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Dedicated

to

My Mother

Akabrieh

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Are children of preschool age, three to six, able to differentiate between what is real and what is fantasy in a story? The purpose of this investigation was to determine whether children can differentiate between what is real and what is fantasy in their early literature experiences.

Parents and teachers are responsible for the choice of children's experiences through stories. Publishers and authors of children's books are in need of information which may help them to write and publish books which are suitable for the preschool child. Inasmuch as teachers and parents are both faced with the task of selecting books suitable in content for the young child, it is hoped that this investigation will yield information useful to them.

This investigation follows the general design of Baruch's (3) experiment in which she studied twenty-eight children from three nursery school groups. Her purpose, also, was to determine whether preschool children could differentiate between reality and fantasy. To accomplish this purpose Baruch (3) used eight stories in which she attempted to ascertain children's understanding of fantasy and reality by reading stories to the children in which the characters were familiar or unfamiliar. Baruch used two stories to eliminate the children who did not understand the instructions enough to be able to answer her questions.

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stated that every effort was made in these two stories to make the
d understand fully the difference between fact and fantasy involved.
ss her subject could manage to see this difference clearly he was
read the remaining eight stories. Baruch's (3) final subjects were
ty-eight children. Ten had been eliminated for failure to cooper-

Nine of the ten children who were eliminated were under her median
of 3.8. Findings of this earlier study indicated that when the
y was concerned with objects [characters] with which the child was
liar, whether fantasy or reality, that his answers were more often
ect and that where the fantasy element was based on the unfamiliar
e were twenty times as many wrong answers given by her subjects. (3)

It seems likely that in the last twenty-five years the medium of TV
other mass media may have had some effect upon children's under-
ding of what is real and what is fantasy. This assumption, however,
ld be tested but not within the scope of this investigation. The
ose of this investigation was to ascertain information which may
ort or repudiate the earlier study.

Clarification of Terms

Folk tales are accounts that have come to us through the ages
the old civilizations of Egypt, India, Persia, Assyria and other
tries. There is a wide diffusion of the folk tale among these
ps and it is said that there are 350 variations of the story of
erella." Some of these tales go as far back as 400 B. C. where
unts were transmitted from generation to generation. These tales
collected by travelers, missionaries, scholars, and other persons
the oral recitations of those who treasured them in memory.

The term folk tale as it is used in the popular sense refers to stories of the supernatural and romance, stories that have an element of fantasy, and which usually represent a flight from reality to a life of desire.

There are several types of the folk tales. The first and the most type is the accumulative story which is repetitive. Here the story leads up to a climax that serves as a turning point and it returns itself to the beginning. A good example of that type would be "The House That Jack Built", "The Three Pigs", and "Pancake."

The second type is the beast tale in which the animals act and think and feel like human beings. This is exemplified in "The Bremen Musicians", and "Goldilocks."

A third type is known as the droll or humorous. These are realistic tales which are intended to be comic. The fool, or stupid, is the hero and the humor is ridiculous and absurd. "Lazy Jack", "Three Men in a Boat", and "Epaminandus" fall in this category.

A fourth type which is referred to as a Marchen or a nursery tale includes the rest of the folk tales. These include the "Once upon a time", and "Far, far away" stories. Their characters are supernatural, and include the fairy, wicked witch, terrible giant, invisible cloak, magic wand, giant and ogre, shoes of swiftness, the beautiful princess and prince charming. The simplicity of thought, the dramatic action, the similarity of the characters in the various stories, and the presence of the supernatural element characterize this type of folk tale. Myths, legends and fables are elaborate form of the folk tale which are often found in children's books.

Baruch (3) used real-familiar, fantasy-familiar, real-unfamiliar

l fantasy-unfamiliar to describe the different types of stories which
re used in her study. In all of Baruch's stories the characters were
l characters either familiar or unfamiliar to the child. The situa-
n in which the characters were placed were either real or fantasy.
a basis for this investigation, this investigator made an interpre-
ion of these terms and these interpretations follow:

Real-Familiar. Characters in the stories that were labelled as
al-familiar were those real characters in real life situations in
ich it can be assumed that the child had direct contact in every day
ring experiences.

Fantasy-Familiar. In this type of story the characters are the
ne real familiar characters with which the child had direct contact
every day experience, but these same familiar characters were pro-
sted into fantasy situations.

Real-Unfamiliar. The characters in this type of story were real
aracters in real life situations with which it was assumed that the
ild had not had direct contact in real life situations, but that he
y have had contact with those real characters through books and stories.

Fantasy-Unfamiliar. In this type of story the characters are the
ne real-unfamiliar characters in which it was assumed that the child
d not had direct contact in real life situations, but may have had
ntact with these characters in books. These unfamiliar characters
re projected into fantasy situations.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND FOR THE INVESTIGATION

Interest as a Criterion for Selection

When the question is asked what shall be the first literary experience for a young child, the problem of what shall be the content of the stories that are read or told is likely to arise. There is no yardstick measure the worth of the selection to the child, but it seems wise for those who are in a position to give guidance to know, not only what the child's interest is, but to also know what is best for his development and then to provide satisfactory reading material when the child's choice is unsatisfactory in relation to his development.

The dependence of the young child, who cannot read, upon others to select for him his reading material throws this responsibility on the parents and teacher.

A limited number of studies have been done in an attempt to discover the child's interests at the different age levels. Terman and Ma (31) found that before the age of five children are interested in pictures, in the picture books and simple story. This same study revealed that children showed the most interest in the fairy tale at the age of eight. Fanciful stories also appeal to the child of this age.

Gates, Peardon and Sartorius (18) also found that surprise was the greatest interest factor; animalness appearing as the third strongest.

Among the conclusions that Dunn (11) drew from her study was the following:

It is not the fanciful of the fairy lore that causes its appeal, but other interest factors which it poses such as surprise, plot, childness, animalness, or familiar experience, and that true or realistic fiction, equally posed of these desirable characters, would be equally interesting. (p. 17).

Cappa (7) reported that illustrations were the greatest interest element with story content next. Information, humor, surprise and reason follow in the foregoing order.

Although interest seems to be an important criterion in the selection of children's stories, content should not be overlooked or left to a child without adult guidance.

A Contrast of Two Points of View Concerning Fantasy In Children's Literature

Opinions of educators who have written concerning this problem seem to vary as to advisability of the child coming in contact early in life, with imaginative and fantasy stories as are found in nursery rhymes and in folk and modern fairy tales. The problem of whether or not to read folk tales to young children has been of major interest to educators for many years, and still is today. There has been sharp differences of opinion in which the folk tale has been a target of much praise and blame.

There are those educators who feel that such verse and prose lead a child out of the world of reality into a world of fiction, of false values, of inaccurate relationships, of magic and primitive science which has no notion of cause and effect. Concern is expressed that if misleading information is to be the child's first contact with literature

fore he has time to build up concepts of reality, it is likely to be confusing and harmful. (3, 35).

These educators who oppose fantasy as content for a child's first literature experiences have expressed that the child is more interested in a world that he knows, a world of reality which lies close about him than he is in a completely ambiguous world about which he has no knowledge. His interest is shown in his questions, the things he talks about and in his play. He is curious, he wants to know about this world in which he lives, and that he is anxious to explore his own environment first. To the child the familiar is more interesting than the adult thinks it is. The adult overlooks many of these familiar things and tries to expose the child with the unreal which is meaningless to the child. Mitchell (26) writes:

Now, the ordinary fairy tale which is the chief story diet of the three and five year olds, I believe does confuse them; not because it does not stick to reality (for neither do the children) but because it does not deal with the things with which they have had firsthand experience and does not attempt to present or interpret the world according to the relationship which the child himself employs. Rather it gives the child material which he is incapable of handling. (p. 24).

Therefore, those who support the foregoing school of thought argue that instead of verse and prose which picture a world of fairies, witches, giants and geni, the first literature of early childhood should portray interesting action in a world of reality, a world of sounds and smells, people and animals, tastes and sights as it is experienced by the child himself with his own familiar self moving in his own familiar environment. Realistic and fantasy stories that center around familiar things but broaden out to include other persons and new experiences have proved to be welcomed by the three and the four year olds.

The value of using realistic content with the child is to teach the

ild a sense of right relationship of himself and the world and of
ersons and things in the world around him. This means that he must
first nourished on the realistic and then gradually introduced to
antasy. When the child has had time to explore the world of reality,
en will he be ready to begin adventuring into the realm of fantasy.
, 26, 35).

Another point of view is expressed by those who would choose the
lk tale and nursery rhymes as the first literature of childhood and
fute these arguments against fantasy by saying that the child lives
a world of unexpected events that are as miraculous and fabulous as
ything to be found in fairyland. The step between imaginary wonders
d those of real life is greater for adults than it is for a child.
is same difference is relatively insignificant to a child of this
e whose highly developed imagination is not confined to the world
ose about him.

This school of thought would maintain that although much that
ppens in the fairy tale is fantastic, life is not distorted. This
terature experience gives the child a chance to meet old friends as
ll as new ones. Moore (26) emphasizes that there are very few fabu-
us creatures in these stories and rhymes and that we should not
rry about confusing the child. This writer further states that a
ild has enough contact with real characters which increase the child's
nowledge in the world of reality and its everyday activities.

It is also pointed out by those who are opposed to the use of
rsery rhymes and folk tales that they abound in contradictions and
congruities. The other side answers that those are very few, never-
eless, those absurdities could be brought to the child's attention by

an adult who is reading or telling the story with a laugh at it together so the child will not be inclined to think the story true. There is no danger of misunderstanding if the reader or teller makes an effort to remind the child that these things, such as the cow jumping over the moon, the dish running away with the spoon could not really happen. In other words, tell the child about the fantasy and join him in laughter, etc.

There are those who feel that nursery rhymes are not adequate as the first literature of childhood, that some of those rhymes are meaningless, dull and beyond the interests of the child. Again the answer comes that not all the rhymes are suitable for children of preschool age. The teachers' or adults' responsibility is to select wisely what ought to be read or told.

There are those who have worked with children who have reported the delight of the child in the tonal quality of the nursery rhyme, the playfulness of the words, the lilting rhymes, the musical end rhyme which is pleasing to their ears is the factor that has preserved these rhymes.

The folk tale has been similarly criticized for its content. They do not seem to accept the form as being excellent to the extent that they have encouraged modern authors of children's books to imitate it. Several writers have tried to imitate the old folk tale style, but the old folk tale still excels the modern one in style, simplicity, beauty and charm. It is argued, however, that those old tales were not meant to be for children; they portray the philosophy of the primitive man, his religion, values, customs, standards and taboos, beliefs, fears, explanation of the natural phenomena in magical ways and means, which are beyond the comprehension of the child. It is feared that the child

child accept these man invented stories as truths and accept their standards as his own. The folk tale has cruelty, jealousy, crudeness, unethical conduct, unaccepted behavior which might be shocking to a sensitive child or too stimulating to a less sensitive one.

Most of these folk stories that have been told to children have an element of fear, cruelty, trickery and such sad experiences that run counter to standards we are striving to achieve in a child of the pre-school age. Stories such as "Jack the Giant Killer", "Cinderella", "Snow White" and others which have been told to children for several ages.

The counter argument is of the idea that undue alarm has been expressed over the cruelty of those heroes in the folk tale. Children might think of them as clever. For example in the story of "Puss in Boots" the unethical character is a cat and the child might consider the cat as brave and clever rather than as a cat. The group holding this opinion agrees that there are some stories which should not be told to children, nevertheless, they feel that in some stories there are such thrilling episodes that subordinate the cruel element in the story and thus make it suitable for children.

A review of the content of the folk tale revealed that not all folk tales are cruel or contain a vicious element. On the contrary, some of the most popular ones are characterized by a strong emphasis on the values of right conduct. The kind, the gentle, the obedient character given the magic word or favor which he keeps as long as he sticks to these standards and he loses it if he abuses its use. Some of the folk tales have humor in them that amuses the child. Those who favor the fantasy story for children feel that children reject what bores them, that they do not understand, what does not amuse or entertain or what is

to sincere. The educators who hold this point of view believe that children have a hatred for the false and the insincere, therefore children are not likely to be forced to listen.

Maier (24) states that from personal experience she found that if children were given a choice between a modern story and a folk tale, they will invariably choose the folk tale. The first few sentences "Once upon a time", "Far far away" awaken the interest and hold the child's attention. The characters are introduced immediately without lengthy explanations, the plot is simple and it has a pleasing mingling of fact with fantasy which makes it appealing to them.

Another argument favorable to the use of folk tales as first literature of childhood is that it may be used as an escape mechanism (2, 37). Such stories serve as a safety valve for children who are disturbed by unnecessary loads from the world of reality. To eliminate these stories means to deprive many children from a golden opportunity of temporary release from their drab and gray life to wander in a glamorous, colorful world of unreality. These stories represent a light from the real and extend into the life of desire. They are recollectory and entertaining because they release the reader from the monotonous daily routine.

The main purpose of telling a story is to give enjoyment and delight to the child, and in this case the child gets enjoyment through projecting himself imaginatively, and identifying himself with the hero. Through the reflecting mirror of the folk tale the child visualizes himself as he would like to be, beloved, powerful, strong, but guiltless always. He delights in its fantasy because he can express feelings that he would not be able to express otherwise. Every child

considers his mother good and bad at the same time. In the folk tale there are the good mothers and the bad step mothers. Usually the bad is defeated, and the child, identifying himself with the hero, accepts the hero's victory as his own. In this way the folk tale brings joy and satisfaction to the child. After this dream the child awakens with bright eyes ready to face reality again. Without such escape from time to time the burden of life might become too heavy on those little shoulders which could have been helped by those flights. The folk tale is not the only means that could be used effectively for that purpose. (32, 37).

On the other side, the opposing group feels very strongly against children hearing folk tales at this early age, and say that this is the reason why we should not read and tell fairy tales to our children. Children do not need this escape into magic but give their curiosity the scope to investigate the free world and feel that they are an important part of it. The fantasy element is appropriate for those that have reached a certain degree of maturity that would enable them to see the distinction between fiction and truth. Stories that we tell should be capable of furthering the growth of the sense of reality and help to develop a scientific process of thinking and problem solving.

Education today has set as one of its major goals the growth of the individual as a whole, to meet this world of reality and face its situation intelligently rather than escape from it into fantasy. This far reaching goal is not attained by nurturing the child on a diet of falsehood and supernatural power. (36).

Wheeler (36) feels very strongly the inadequacy of using folk tales with children:

And now parents insist on inflicting this primitivism, this pathetic infantilism of the race, on their children forcing them to think causally, magically, miraculously, forcing them to habituate themselves to the technique of dreaming, wish fulfilment rather than guiding them into the noble technique of observation, exploration, experiment and objective achievement. (p. 754-755).

Still a further argument for the retention of folk tales as first literature of childhood is that it is a means of training the child to his imagination. Childhood is the time for encouraging imagination and developing the ability to think in terms of the fanciful. It is to imagine, and the child's own imagination at this early age is as pleasing nor as satisfying as the writer's imagination. It is productive, the child tries to reproduce experiences from the limited world with no effort for change. The younger he is the less likely will he be able to create a world of unreality. After the age of three, it is said that the child's imagination becomes more creative and is characterized by flights of fancy of the folk tale type. But it is never before he can, through his own imagination, create anything as well knit and as fascinating as the folk tale. Therefore, it is wise to use folk and fairy tales to arouse imagination. The folk tale or wonder tale was described by Taylor as the "food that nourishes the spirit; the force which gives wings to the soul." (32, p. 92). The folk tale sweetens and deepens life and strengthens imagination.

As an answer to this argument some writers believe that the child does not need the adult's help to travel into a world of imagination, he can do that on his own. The adult's responsibility is to give him the opportunity to do so and the confidence that he can do it.

Mitchell (26) stated:

Obviously, fairy stories cannot be lumped and rejected en masse. It is merely pleading not to have them accepted en masse on the ground

that they "have survived the ages" and "cultivate the imagination." A child's imagination, since it is his native endowment, will only flourish if he is given freedom for expressions, without calling upon stimulus of adult fancies. It is only the jaded adult mind, said to trust to the children's own fresh springs of imagination, that feels for children the need of the stimulus of magic. (p. 23).

Mitchell (25) did not advocate the idea of excluding imagination from the child's literature, but she believed that an author who has imagination is capable of relating a real experience by bringing back its essence through pattern and form which makes it clearer and lovelier. Imagination which "makes the young readers more alive to the visual and motor world in which they live, imagination which quickens their images, which makes reality realer." (p. 131).

Mitchell (27) stated: "Make-believe may be more real to a young child than is "reality" as an adult understands that word. ... The ready acceptance as real of whatever is offered to a young child puts heavy responsibility on grownups who are around children, and on writers for children." (p. 7).

Other educators agree that the child's imagination is stimulated by having the opportunity to hear fanciful tales, but we must be aware of the child's readiness to accept them as fanciful. The small child tells tall tales of his own and he delights in his own imagination, so we must keep in mind the fact that we should avoid pushing him fast too far as to make him lose his feeling of security.

Baruch (4) commented: "Reading should supplement experience instead of substituting for it. It should never furnish escape that leads to a state of no returning, but rather a flight that makes return more pleasant." (p. 67). Baruch (3) further wrote: "We want our children to have all the make believe they can handle without confusion." (p. 366)

Summary

A review of the literature revealed two major points of view concerning the advisability of using nursery rhymes, folk and fairy tales with children of preschool age.

There are those who advocated its use, basing their arguments on the following points:

1. Folk tales are a good medium to use in arousing imagination and training the mind to think in abstract relationships.
2. To the world of fairyland the child can escape from the unpleasant situations of real life. In that case the fantasy tale will serve as an escape mechanism for maladjusted children.
3. Children learn values of right since a large percentage of the folk tales is characterized by the stress on those values.
4. Folk tales have a quality of humor that amuses the child. The absurdities in it could be brought to the child's attention by the adult to avoid confusion.
5. Fairy tales have an excellent form; they are simple, dramatic, and entertaining.
6. They are universally liked by children.

These educators are not concerned with telling the child stories of unfamiliar characters for they believe that children live in a world of constant change and surprise, therefore, there is nothing that is likely to harm them in these tales. Life is not distorted and the child meets familiar friends, and thus builds correct concepts about this world of reality.

Arguments against the use of folk tales with preschool children

e:

1. The world has enough things in it that the child needs to learn about before he is introduced into a world of magic and unreality.
2. In this scientific age we need to help the child to think realistically and to be aware of the relationship of cause and effect instead of confusing him by nourishing him on a diet of supernatural and falsehood. Children seek facts.
3. Folk tales encourage him to escape from reality; so when he is confronted with a problem, instead of facing it and solving it with his power of thinking, he escapes to a dreamland.
4. Most folk tales portray primitive cruelty and blood-thirstiness which will instill wrong values in the child as well as fear.
5. Folk tales are not children's stories; they were meant for adults and the child is not expected to understand the abstractions in them because his concepts of things are still vague.
6. Fantasy gives the child a feeling of insecurity because it is beyond his comprehension.
7. Out of fantasy the child may take fiction which he accepts as facts.
8. Children's interest is not the only criterion to determine the selection of books and stories for children.

This group of educators would accept the fantasy tales woven around child's world when they portray the familiar thing in his environment a step further into the fantasy.

The fact that differing points of view have been expressed, most of which were not based on scientific evidence, it seems justifiable to conduct another investigation concerning this controversial issue in pre-school children's literature.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

It should be recalled that the purpose of this investigation was to ascertain whether children of preschool age are able to differentiate between what is real and what is fantasy in a story. Three important phases of general procedure were followed in this investigation (1) selection of subjects, (2) development of the story-questionnaire and the establishment of its validity and reliability, (3) development of the checklist.

Subjects

The subjects for this investigation included all the children in attendance, fifty-two in number, ages three, four and five years, who were enrolled in the Oklahoma State University preschool laboratories during the fall and spring semesters of the school year 1957-58. Seven of these children were eliminated because they failed to respond to any of the stories. Thus the final sample for this investigation included forty-five children.

Table I presents children's ages which ranged from 3.0 years to 5.11 years with a mean age of 4.8. Thirty-one parents of these children were engaged in professional work; eight in forms of business endeavor, and three were students at the time this investigation was made.

TABLE I

CHILDREN'S AGES

Subjects - 45

Mean Age 4.8		Age Range 3.5 - 5.11		
Age	Boys	Girls	Total	
3.0 - 3.5	1	1	2	
3.6 - 3.11	0	3	3	
4.0 - 4.5	3	8	11	
4.6 - 4.11	6	3	9	
5.0 - 5.5	3	2	5	
5.6 - 5.11	7	8	15	
TOTAL		20	25	45

The data were obtained during hours the school was in session. Children were taken individually to a separate room and the stories (Appendix A) were read to them by the investigator.

The investigator to establish rapport with the children spent a few minutes before the story time talking with the child or listening to some things which the child related. Comments such as the child's dress, his "Aggie shirt", his age and interests were topics for conversation.

Development of the Story-Questionnaire

The story-questionnaire for this investigation contained slight modifications of the stories used by Baruch (3). Modifications were changes in the wording of some of the stories, in the number of stories, and in the sequence of the stories.

The two stories (Stories 9 and 10, Appendix A) that Baruch used

pre-test the ability of her subjects to differentiate the fantasy from the reality element were included in the story-questionnaire with the other eight stories for this investigation. Baruch used eight stories, four which involved familiar characters and four which involved unfamiliar characters. The final story questionnaire for this investigation contained ten stories, six which involved familiar characters and four which involved unfamiliar characters. Unfamiliar characters were the ones in which the child had had no first hand experience, or that the characters were familiar to him only through stories.

To ascertain whether or not the children in this region of the country could understand the terminology used in the previous study, a pre-test was conducted. Six children were used in the pre-test which was carried out approximately four weeks before the subjects for the investigation were tested. These children were from the same nursery school group, but they would have passed the age range used in this investigation before the data were collected. The results of this re-test revealed that the wording of the stories seemed to be clear to the children, but the question used to determine whether the story was real or unreal seemed to be misunderstood. Therefore, words such as "make believe", "pretend", "play like" were used by the investigator to ascertain a word that could be understood by the children who were to become the subjects for this investigation before the construction of the story questionnaire was completed. There was evidence that the terms such as "make believe", "pretend", "play like" were not common to the children who were to be used as subjects in this investigation. When there seemed to be no common understanding concerning the use of words which implied "make believe" or "pretend" the investigator read

the same stories and used the questions, "Could he (referring to the character in the story) do that?" This form of question seemed to have universal meaning to the children in the pre-test group and on this basis this form of question was used to evoke responses to the story-questionnaire which was used in this investigation. An example: "Bobbie Joe blew his nose so hard he made it all clean." The question asked by Baruch was, "Could he really?" When the question was asked in this investigation it was stated thus: "Could Bobbie Joe do that?"

This pre-test as well as providing information for the design of the story-questionnaire, also provided opportunity for the investigator to develop skill in reading the stories and in recording the responses.

The Checklist

Table II is an example of the items used in the checklist which was used to record the children's responses. (Appendix A).

TABLE II
ILLUSTRATIVE ITEM FROM THE CHECKLIST WHICH WAS USED
TO RECORD THE CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

Yes	No	Unsolicited Responses	Solicited Responses
-----	----	-----------------------	---------------------

The checklist was used by the following procedure: (1) the investigator read the story and recorded the child's response as yes or no; (2) the comments made by the subjects were recorded immediately following the question which followed each story under unsolicited responses; (3) additional comments made following a question or in response to a remark made by the investigator were recorded under solicited responses. Only the yes and no responses were tabulated and treated statistically.

solicited and the unsolicited responses are reported in Chapter V.

Validity of the Fantasy-Reality Element in the Stories. To establish validity of whether the stories were real or fantasy fourteen college students and four faculty members were asked to read and check 10 stories. There was one hundred percent agreement among these judges.

Reliability of the Story-Questionnaire. The stories were placed in the story questionnaire randomly to avoid biases. Baruch (3) placed 10 stories with familiar characters first and the unfamiliar characters last in her questionnaire. The two stories, in this investigation that described the same character in a different situation were placed together; again the ballot method was used to determine which story should come first, the real or the fantasy type.

To determine the reliability of the story questionnaire, the split-half method was employed. The main advantage of this method is "that half of the data for determining test reliability are obtained upon one occasion; hence variations introduced by differences between the two testing situations are eliminated." (18 p. 334).

The halves were obtained by dividing the stories according to odd and even (previously the items had been placed randomly in order) and the scores were totaled. Thus the reliability coefficient for stories number 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 formed one group and the stories number 4, 6, 8 and 10 formed the other group.

The calculation of correlation was obtained from raw scores by means of the following formula (18 p. 142).

$$r = \frac{N \Sigma XY - \Sigma X \cdot \Sigma Y}{\sqrt{[N \Sigma X^2 - (\Sigma X)^2] [N \Sigma Y^2 - (\Sigma Y)^2]}}$$

The correlation obtained from this formula was for a test of five items. This was converted by the Spearman-Brown "prophecy formula" (18 p.339) to determine reliability for the total test of ten items.

$$r_{nn} = \frac{nr_{11}}{1 + (n - 1) r_{11}}$$

The reliability coefficient obtained was .267 for the ten item test. To be significant at the .05 level of confidence the reliability coefficient for forty-five subjects should have been .288 (18 p. 200).

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this investigation was to determine whether children preschool age, three to six years, accept fantasy stories as real.

The final story-questionnaire for this investigation contained ten stories, six of which involved familiar characters and four which involved unfamiliar characters. These ten stories were classified under four types; the real-familiar and the fantasy-familiar, the real-unfamiliar and the fantasy-unfamiliar.

The children's solicited and unsolicited responses which could not be tabulated in a yes and no answer are described under "Children's Verbal Responses" in Chapter V. In analyzing the data the right and the wrong responses of the forty-five children to the ten stories (Appendix I) were classified under the four types and presented in tables to show frequency and percentages. (These percentages are reported to the nearest whole number.)

Data was treated statistically (1) to find whether significant differences existed between the percentages of right answers for the reality and fantasy situations and (2) to find whether significant differences existed between the percentages of right answers for the familiar and unfamiliar characters.

Table III shows the children's responses to the stories of real-unfamiliar characters in real life situations. The responses to these

ories, with the exception of the first story of "Bobbie Joe" blowing his nose, and making it clean had a high percentage of right answers. The two stories that received the high percentage of correct responses were stories about characters with which children come in contact in their daily living, such as a child eating and a pet playing. The story, however, which was missed by fifteen of the forty-five children seemed to be misleading. Children's comments are discussed in Chapter V.

TABLE III
CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO REAL-FAMILIAR STORIES

Subjects - 45

STORY	<u>RIGHT</u>		<u>WRONG</u>		TOTAL RESPONSES
	No.	%	No.	%	
Bobbie Joe blew his nose so hard, he made it all clean.	30	67	15	33	45
Frisky, the dog, got out from the house and ran in the yard.	38	84	7	16	45
Johnny had a cookie, a delicious cookie. He chewed the cookie and swallowed it, and ate it up.	44	98	1	2	45
TOTAL	112	83	23	17	135

A comparison of Table III and Table IV reveals that the percentage children's right responses to fantasy - familiar stories was as large as the percentage of right responses to the real - familiar stories.

A comparison of Table V and Table III reveals that the percentage of children's right responses to real-unfamiliar stories was lower than the percentage of right responses to the real-familiar stories. This was the highest percentage of wrong responses of any one of the four types of stories.

TABLE IV
CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO FANTASY-FAMILIAR STORIES

Subjects-45

STORY	<u>RIGHT</u>		<u>WRONG</u>		TOTAL RESPONSE
	No.	%	No.	%	
Bobbie Joe blew his nose so hard, he made it come right off his face.	33	73	12	27	45
Frisky, the dog, flew up into the sky, like an airplane, she flew up, up, up. Frisky dog, flew.	38	84	7	16	45
Johnny picked up a rock from the ground, a great big rock and chewed it and swallowed it, and ate it up.	44	98	1	2	45
TOTAL	115	85	20	15	135

TABLE V
CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO REAL-UNFAMILIAR STORIES

Subjects-45

STORY	<u>RIGHT</u>		<u>WRONG</u>		TOTAL RESPONSES
	No.	%	No.	%	
The great big bear climbed up a tree. He climbed up and up and up a tree.	30	67	15	33	45
The little pig made his nose go dig, dig, dig in the dirt like a shovel.	18	40	27	60	45
TOTAL	48	53	42	47	90

TABLE VI
CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO FANTASY-UNFAMILIAR STORIES

Subjects-45

STORIES	<u>RIGHT</u>		<u>WRONG</u>		TOTAL RESPONSES
	No.	%	No.	%	
The great big bear sat on his chair, and took his fork, and ate his spinach.	29	65	16	35	45
The little pig built a house out of bricks.	22	49	23	51	45
TOTAL	51	57	39	43	90

The high percentage of wrong responses shown in Table V and VI may indicate that the children were confused as to what unfamiliar characters do and what they can not do. In the two stories concerning animals, children more often responded correctly to the story of the bear in the one about a pig. Forty-three percent of the total of 90 responses to these two stories were wrong responses.

TABLE VII
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN'S RESPONSES
TO THE FOUR TYPES OF STORIES

Subjects-45

STORY TYPE	NUMBER OF STORIES	<u>RESPONSES</u>				TOTAL RESPONSES
		<u>RIGHT</u>		<u>WRONG</u>		
		No.	%	No.	%	
Real-Familiar	3	112	83	23	17	135
Fantasy-Familiar	3	115	85	20	15	135
Real-Unfamiliar	2	48	53	42	47	90
Fantasy-Unfamiliar	2	51	57	39	43	90

Table VII reveals the highest number of right answers was obtained the real-familiar and fantasy-familiar stories.

The data were subjected to the Chi-square test to determine the significant difference between the number of right responses to stories with characters in reality situations and the number of right responses to stories with characters in fantasy situations.

TABLE VIII
REALITY SITUATIONS VERSUS FANTASY SITUATIONS

	Percentage of items	Actual	Expected
lity	50	160	163
tasy	50	166	163
Total		326	326

-square = .1104 which is not significant.

The data were subjected to the Chi-square test to determine the significant difference between the number of right responses to stories with familiar characters and the number of right responses to stories with unfamiliar characters.

TABLE IX
FAMILIAR CHARACTERS VERSUS UNFAMILIAR CHARACTERS

	Percentage of items	Actual	Expected
amiliar	60	227	196
'amiliar	40	99	130
Total		326	326

square = 12.295, which is significant at the .01 level.

The analysis of the data revealed evidence for the investigator to conclude that when characters in stories are unfamiliar, as opposed to familiar, children have significantly greater difficulty differentiating between reality and fantasy.

CHAPTER V

CHILDREN'S VERBAL RESPONSES AND THE INVESTIGATOR'S COMMENTS

The children during the "story time" gave unsolicited responses which could not be tabulated but seemed to be of value because they yielded additional insight into the thinking of children. The investigator discussed some of the stories with the children at the close of a "story time". These responses, as well as the unsolicited ones, are related in this chapter.

Responses of Three Year Olds

After hearing the story of the dog that flew, Susan, a three year old, in response to "Could Frisky do that?", opened her eyes wide with surprise as she exclaimed, "No! airplanes do that." But the same child did not finish the story of the pig building his house with bricks by saying, "Yes, and the bad wolf knocked it down."

Nancy, another three year old, did not seem to take much interest in listening to the stories, but a nod was given for the answer. An attempt after "story time" was made to get Nancy to respond verbally. When asked if bears eat with forks, Nancy smiled and said "No". One attempt was made to try to understand why Nancy said that Johnny

: Fictitious names for children are used throughout this writing.

ld eat a rock. "Can you eat a rock?" The answer came back very fast
 o!", but with it came a questioning look to see what the purpose was
 asking such a question. "Why do you think Johnny can?" "I don't
 w," she said as she shrugged her shoulder and left.

An interesting conversation took place with John, another three
 or old.

in dogs fly, John?"

is."

yes your dog fly?"

o."

ly doesn't he fly?"

ecause he doesn't want to."

is't that convincing enough?

The same child said yes to the story of Johnny eating a rock, but
 on asked if he ate rocks, the answer was "No."

Jimmy's response was different.

Jimmy, can dogs fly?"

o, birds can fly."

When the name of Johnny eating rocks was replaced by Jimmy,
 any seemed to change his answer as he said, "No, not me."

One of the most interesting responses was given by Judy who on
 aring the story of the bear eating spinach added correctively,
 ears don't eat spinach, they eat honey." On giving a positive
 sswer to the story of the bears climbing a tree she added, hurriedly
 if to tell me I don't know much about bears, "I saw a kitty cat
 limbing a tree."

Responses of Four Year Olds

Sally, on hearing the story of the pigs digging in the dirt answered abruptly as if that were the silliest thing she had ever heard. "Pigs don't do that. Of course they don't." But the same child was certain that the pig built his house with bricks.

Bobbie's reasoning to the same story was, "He can't stand on two legs. He stands on four feet. To build he needs two hands." But Jimmy, who seemed to be bored with the other stories, smiled and said, "Yes I have a book about that". And after Sally echoed, "I have a story about that", the question was asked, "can real pigs do that"? "Yes, they can." When on hearing the same story, grinned and added, "No, a play one can do that but not a real one". Jill, however, added another thought to the story saying, "And he built a big roof to it, too". There was Sam who was certain that was absolutely true. "I have a story about that and I know. I have seen it before. In my story it is true." And Ted assured me it was true, too, "because I got a story about it".

The bears' stories did not seem to evoke as much response as the pigs' stories, but a few remarks were made. June, who realized that play pigs could build houses with bricks seemed to realize that "play bears" eat with forks. She was sure that bears "don't eat spinach". Bill, with confidence stated, "that isn't true really. Bears don't like spinach and don't sit in chairs". Bobby, with less confidence than Bill, and with doubt in her voice said, "Bears wouldn't really eat spinach", and for the bear to climb a tree the same child says, "If it is a real strong tree".

The first story of Bobbie Joe cleaning his nose was answered by

few of the children in the negative. On further questioning it was revealed that it seemed like a hard job for them to clean their own shoes. This was revealed from remarks like this: "because it is too tough." "I can't clean mine." "It's hard."

Another story that was supported by reasons was the story of a funny eating rocks. Sally comments, "Rocks don't taste good." George spoke emphatically, as if quoting an authority on the subject, "No! he can't", and with a change in her tone of voice she adds, "If you eat rocks it makes you sick." Shirley, having more confidence in little boys than that says, "Boys don't do that," as if to condemn anyone who accuses little boys of doing such a silly thing. Liz, thinking that's impossible adds, "No, they are too hard." Judy, thinking that's ridiculous, says with astonishment, "No! he couldn't have done that."

Frisky's story, the dog that flew, was accompanied by surprise, sometimes laughter, and responses like these comments:

"No! she doesn't have any wings."

"Dogs don't fly. Dogs can't fly."

"No, they don't have wings. "No---", and laughed.

"No, he couldn't do that, birds can."

"No, because dogs don't have wings to fly."

"No, because my dog can't."

Two children, who answered yes to this question, when asked if dogs can fly, both answered, "no".

Responses of Five Year Olds

This age group was the first group that was used in the investigation. After getting several negative answers for the first

ry of Bobbie Joe, the investigator was curious to know what was the son. When the children who answered no were asked why they did so, was revealed that it was considered a hard job for them to do it; and seemed impossible to clean one's own nose. This understanding was revealed through statements like Carol's, "I can't clean my nose; it covers my face." Susan says, "I can never clean mine." Nancy seemed to think that "there is something hard inside it." Barbara, reviewing her experiences, states, "I don't think he could. I can't clean mine."

In this group there was only one child who pointed out that, "Real bears can eat with forks, not real bears." The same child commented that he had seen bears climbing trees in cartoons. James was trying to make up his mind as to which source of information to believe, TV or the cartoons. He says confusedly, "I don't think bears can climb trees. I see them on TV climb trees, but not in the cartoons."

Sue, on hearing the story of the bear eating spinach, pauses for a few seconds and then says, "I don't know." Then as if trying to venture a guess says, "I think he could." Bob seemed puzzled too about that situation, but with authority in his voice says, "I don't think he can." Chuck, who laughed at the story of the bear eating with the fork threw the question back to me of the bear climbing the tree. He says as if there is a question in his mind about it. "Bears can climb trees, can't they? Cats do and squirrels do too, and squirrels can climb real fast." Sue says, he has seen cats and squirrels and he knows about that but he is doubtful about bears.

Few of the children in this group answered yes to the story of the dog flying. Sally said, "Yes, she can fly in an airplane." Sally was aware that the dog can't fly without an airplane. Tom thinks that's a

ny idea; he laughs and says, "yes", but when he was seriously questioned as to whether he believes that real dogs can fly he said, "No, it's for play." Janie, however, goes on to explain how they can fly, "Yes, they can fly with their ears."

When Steve heard the story of the pig building a house of bricks, he commented, "I've been seeing them on TV, but that is make-believe. Real ones don't do that."

Jack, however, pointed out that he has "a record about it, it's a make-believe story." The make-believe and the real did not seem to be clearly defined in his thinking because on asking him if real pigs do that, he answered, "I think they can."

The same confusion seemed evident in Tina's response to the same story. "I got a story about that." Is it a make-believe story or a real story? "It is a make-believe." "Can real pigs build houses of bricks?" "They may" was her answer. Is it enough to tell them it is make-believe? What does make-believe really mean to a child?

Jill, with confidence in her voice, in reply to the story about pigs building a house, says, "Yes, I have a story about that. I know that is true," but she said, "I don't think he could dig."

Janet, whose answer was positive remarked, "I have a comic book about that," but she did not seem to be confused as to what real pigs do, because she pointed out that "real pigs can't do that."

Bob's reasoning is interesting. The pig can't dig in the dirt because "his nose is not long enough."

Frank hesitates in giving his answer, "no he can't", then changes his mind, and with more confidence says, "yes, he can, he's got helpers, three little pigs."

Three children in this group answered incorrectly on the story of nny eating the rock. When Jim was asked, "Can you eat a rock?" "No!" y do you think Johnny can?" "No, he can't, that was a trick."

Steve, at hearing this silly story with wide-opened eyes, laughed said, "did he really do that?" "Do you think he did?" "No!!!!!"

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND INTERPRETATIONS

This investigator was concerned with determining whether children of preschool age, three to six, accept fantasy in stories as real. The purpose of this investigation was the same as Baruch's (3) study which was to determine whether preschool children could differentiate between fantasy and reality in stories.

The subjects for this investigation were forty-five children, age three to five, who were enrolled in the Oklahoma State University preschool laboratories during the school year 1957-58. The data were collected during hours that school was in session. The stories were read to the children individually and their responses were recorded verbatim on a checklist which had been designed for this investigation.

Eighty-three percent of the responses to the real-familiar and eighty-five percent of the responses to the fantasy-familiar were answered correctly by the children. The real-unfamiliar received fifty-three percent of right responses and the fantasy-unfamiliar received fifty-seven percent right responses.

Statistical analysis of the data revealed sufficient evidence to conclude that when characters in stories are unfamiliar, as opposed to familiar, children have significantly greater difficulty differentiating between reality and fantasy.

Recommendations for Further Research

The investigator recommends that this investigation be repeated when the following conditions are met: (1) a larger sample of subjects which are more representative than a college preschool laboratory group of children are available. (2) the reliability of the story questionnaire has been established. (3) the standardization of procedure has been clarified for the child to understand just what is expected of him before the story-questionnaire is administered.

Interpretations

The investigator recognizes certain weaknesses in this investigation: (1) too small a sample. (2) the element of familiar and unfamiliar in regard to the characters in the stories was not validated. (3) the number of stories involving familiar characters was not equated with the number of stories involving unfamiliar characters.

This limited investigation, however, indicated that when the children studied were familiar with the characters, whether the situations were real or fantasy, their answers were more often correct. This does not mean the exclusion of fantasy from children's literature, because fantasy is an important part of the child's every day experience. This study implies that the element of fantasy should be introduced to the child through a character that is familiar to him.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

THE STORY-QUESTIONNAIRE

I'm going to tell you something about Bobbie Joe.

Bobbie Joe blew his nose so hard, he made it all clean. Could Bobbie Joe do that?

I'm going to tell you something else about Bobbie Joe.

Bobbie Joe blew his nose so hard, he made it come right off his face. Could Bobbie Joe do that?

I'm going to tell you something about big bear.

The great big bear sat on his chair, and took his fork and ate his spinach. Could big bear do that?

Now I'm going to tell you something else about big bear.

The great big bear climbed up a tree. He climbed up and up way up a tree. Could big bear do that?

I'm going to tell you something about Frisky.

Frisky, the dog got out from the house and ran in the yard. Could Frisky do that?

Now here is another story about Frisky.

Frisky, the dog, flew up into the sky like an airplane. She flew up, up, up. Frisky dog, flew. Could Frisky do that?

I'm going to tell you something about little pig.

The little pig built a house out of bricks. Could little pig do that?

I'm going to tell you something else about little pig.

The little pig made his nose go dig, dig, dig in the dirt like a shovel. Could little pig do that?

I'm going to tell you something about Johnny now.

Johnny picked up a rock from the ground, a great big rock, and chewed it and swallowed it, and ate it up. Could Johnny do that?

Now I'm going to tell you something else about Johnny.

Johnny had a cookie, a delicious cookie. He chewed the cookie and swallowed it and ate it up. Could Johnny do that?

SUMMARY SHEET

Number of Right and Wrong Responses to the Ten Stories

Story	Type	Boys		Girls	
		Right	Wrong	Right	Wrong
Bobbie Joe blew his nose so hard he made it all clean.	Real-Familiar	15	5	15	10
Bobbie Joe blew his nose so hard, he made it come right off his face.	Fantasy-Familiar	12	8	21	4
The great big bear sat on his chair, and took his fork, and ate his spinach.	Fantasy-Unfamiliar	14	6	15	10
The great big bear climbed up a tree. He climbed up and up way up a tree.	Real-Unfamiliar	13	7	17	8
Frisky, the dog, got out from the house and ran in the yard.	Real-Familiar	16	4	17	8
Frisky, the dog, flew up into the sky, like an airplane. She flew up, up, up. Frisky dog flew.	Fantasy-Familiar	17	3	21	4
The little pig built a house out of bricks.	Fantasy-Unfamiliar	10	10	12	13
The little pig made his nose go dig, dig, dig in the dirt like a shovel.	Real-Unfamiliar	4	16	14	11
Johnny picked up a rock from the ground, a great big rock, and chewed it and swallowed it, and ate it up.	Fantasy-Familiar	20	0	24	1
Johnny had a cookie, a delicious cookie. He chewed the cookie and swallowed it, and ate it up.	Real-Familiar	20	0	24	1

APPENDIX B

RAW SCORES - CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

X Scores are odd

Y Scores are even

X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
4	3	16	9	12
4	4	16	16	16
5	4	25	16	20
4	3	16	9	12
3	5	9	25	15
4	3	16	9	12
4	3	16	9	12
5	4	25	16	20
3	3	9	9	9
4	4	16	16	16
3	4	9	16	12
1	3	1	9	3
3	4	9	16	12
3	2	9	4	6
2	4	4	16	8
5	5	25	25	25
4	4	16	16	16
4	3	16	9	12
4	4	16	16	16
5	4	25	16	20
5	3	25	9	15

RAW SCORES - CHILDREN'S RESPONSES (CON'T)

X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
4	2	16	4	8
5	3	25	9	15
4	5	16	25	20
4	3	16	9	12
4	3	16	9	12
2	3	4	9	6
3	4	9	16	12
4	4	16	16	16
5	4	25	16	20
3	4	9	16	12
4	5	16	25	20
3	4	9	16	12
4	3	16	9	12
1	4	1	16	4
2	3	4	9	6
4	4	16	16	16
2	4	4	16	8
3	3	9	9	9
3	3	9	9	9
4	5	16	25	20
5	4	25	16	20
4	4	16	16	16
<u>163</u>	<u>162</u>	<u>637</u>	<u>610</u>	<u>592</u>

VITA

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Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE ABILITY OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN
REALITY AND FANTASY IN EARLY LITERATURE EXPERIENCES

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