

Voicing Texts, Voices around Texts: *Reading Poems in Elementary School Classrooms*



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There has been little systematic empirical research on how teachers share poetry with children in classrooms, despite the potential of poetry to enhance children's early, pleasurable experience with authentic literary texts. This study examines how 10 kindergarten through 4th-grade teachers shared poems and stories with their students. Analysis focused on how teachers performed the texts, how children participated in reading the texts, and what kinds of discussions and curriculum activities surrounded the readings. Classroom readings of poems differed systematically from readings of stories. Readings of poems were characterized by expressive reading style, multiple readings of a poem in one sitting, children's active participation in reading along, and discussions that were aesthetic and open-ended and to some extent focused on linguistic features of the poetry texts. These findings support a multi-genre perspective on literacy development that recognizes variations in literacy experiences according to different text and activity genres. This study also shows the multiple layers of genre as written texts are voiced and talked about within classroom literacy events. The findings highlight performance and participation aspects of joint adult-child reading events in elementary classrooms, and they suggest the potential of poetry for drawing children's attention to the resources of literate language.

It's always good to read a poem twice. Nice and slowly so you can feel the words.

—(Fourth-grade teacher Mrs. McGuire speaking to her class)

I think what [Eloise Greenfield] was trying to tell us was poems never get worn out.

—(Leslie, a third-grader)

Theoretical Background

Reading and writing poetry has been both privileged and excluded in modern U.S. language arts education. Classical education based on a classical canon included reading and studying poetry seriously in terms of meter, tropes, and meaning. Charles's father, a child of immigrant parents who went to elementary and high school in New York City in the 1920-30s, can still recite poems that he memorized in school. These poems served as a formalized canon of the American language that he grew into.

With the development of experiential, progressive educational approaches, reading and writing poetry has been overtaken by other genres of language arts and content area reading and writing. In the popular imagination poetry is an antiquated vestige of earlier mode of literacy. However, authentic poetry endures in American life, for example, in poems recited at weddings and other ceremonial occasions and in the lyrics of popular songs. Poetry in "the common language" (Rich, 1978) has had a revival in America with the modernist poets (Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams) of the early twentieth century, the New York and Beat poets (Allen Ginsburg, Frank O'Hara) of mid-century, and the poetry slams (oral performance competitions) of the 1990s.

Poetry reading and writing has had a revival in classrooms, too, as the second generation of whole language, process writing, and other progressive practitioners have realized the power of poetry and rhymes in many domains

from developing phonological and print awareness to fostering personal motivation and group bonding experiences. The early work of Holdaway (1979) exemplifies connections in theory and practice among predictable oral and written texts, emergent literacy, and early reading and writing instruction. The reading of poems, songs, and other predictable texts has challenged controlled vocabulary texts in early reading programs (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Bridge, 1986; International Reading Association & National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Poetry reading has also been recommended and studied from a reader response perspective (Karolides, 1992) and in terms of connections between reading and writing (Comstock, 1992).

As literacy researchers and teachers explore the importance of a variety of text genres in literacy development (e.g., Caswell & Duke, 1998; Kamberelis, 1998; Kress, 1999; Pappas, 1993), the time seems propitious to examine the place of poetry in language and literacy development.

Research on Poetry Reading

Literacy researchers have given poetry less attention than stories and other genres. Poetry reading and writing has sometimes been seen as less central to literacy development than stories (Bruner, 1986; Dyson & Genishi, 1994). Poetry is often confined to self-contained units within the language arts curriculum, and children are less likely to read and write poetry on a daily basis

than they are to read and write stories. Studies of reading and writing, as well as of the majority of classroom reading and writing instructional activities, involve narrative and informational texts, not poems. Models of text comprehension (e.g., Spiro & Taylor, 1987; Stein & Glenn, 1979; Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983) focus on narrative and informational text, yielding story grammars and informational text structure taxonomies, with no attention to genres of poetry.

Little empirical study has been published about how poems are actually read in classrooms and how they contribute to literacy learning. For example, there is only one reference to poetry in the *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts* (Flood, Jensen, Lapp, & Squire, 1991) and none in the first or second volumes of *Handbook of Reading Research* (Barr, Kamil, & Pearson, 1984; Barr, Kamil, Mosenthal, & Pearson, 1991). The recently published third *Handbook* (Kamil, Mosenthal, Pearson, & Barr, 2000) does include references to two studies of poetry reading (Beach, 1972; Kintgen, 1983). But few studies document exactly how teachers share poems with their students, how their students respond, and what curriculum connections are made with poems. The present article documents how 10 teachers shared poems (in contrast to stories) with their elementary grade classes.

The limited amount of research that has been done of poetry has tended to use psycholinguistic paradigms and has focused on adult readers of poetry. Kintgen (1983) investigated on-line poetry reading strategies of 6 advanced

English graduate students as they read three difficult Elizabethan and Victorian poems. Kintgen identified 24 operations, including reading parts of the poem; analyzing literary elements such as phonology, form, syntax, and tropes; and connecting poetic elements to world knowledge and to literary history. More recently, psycholinguistic research has investigated the role of phonetic and graphic structure on the poetry reading process (Hanauer, 1995, 1996; Hoorn, 1996; Van Peer, 1986, 1990). This research demonstrates that readers direct attention to the linguistic features of poetry while reading. Comparisons of the reading of poetry and informational texts describe poetry reading as a relatively slow process, involving the direction of attention toward the special linguistic features of poetry and resulting in a relatively strong internal representation of the wording of the poem (Hanauer, 1998, 2001).

Despite the relatively limited amount of empirical research, many books and articles continue to encourage teachers to include poetry, for a variety of reasons, in their classroom language arts programs. Poetry advocates emphasize that poetry is effective in motivating children to read and write (Duthie & Zimet, 1992; Kutiper & Wilson, 1993; Perfect, 1999), in helping them connect reading and writing (Comstock, 1992; Siemens, 1996; Strickland & Strickland, 1997), in teaching them the power and beauty of language (Lenz, 1992; Perfect, 1999; Siemens, 1996; Strickland & Strickland, 1997), in promoting high-level think-

ing skills, understanding of the world and the self, and links across the curriculum (Perfect, 1999), and in promoting children's ability to read (Cullinan, Scala, & Schroder, 1995; Perfect, 1999).

As Gee (1999) argues, fewer studies have been conducted on young children's comprehension development than on decoding development. The development of comprehension strategies has been conceived of very generally rather than as being related to specific genres of texts and of reading activity. The current study of teachers and children sharing different text genres (poems and stories) is aimed at better understanding how children acquire the performance and meaning-making aspects of reading from teacher-mediated encounters with particular texts and text genres.

A Multi-Genre Perspective on Language and Literacy

Recent theoretical conceptions of language and literacy stress the importance of genre knowledge (Bakhtin, 1986; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Freedman & Medway, 1994; Hanauer, 1998; Kress, 1999). The *new genre studies* stress the relationship between situations of use and the formal features of genre (Bazerman, 1994; Freedman & Medway, 1994). From the formal standpoint, genres are "*relatively stable types of . . . utterance*" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 60; emphasis in original); from the situational standpoint, they are "typical ways of engaging rhetorically with recurring situations" (Freedman & Medway, 1994, p. 2). Spoken and written genres act as frames for composing and interpreting

texts and also for constructing a sense of self and for maintaining or challenging the social and political status quo.

The genre perspective on language and literacy use supports a *multi-genre perspective* on literacy development, emphasizing the fact that literacy experiences exist when real readers encounter a variety of different text genres. From this perspective different text genres are realized in different patterns of social interaction. As children learn to read and write different genres, they learn the social and psycholinguistic processes associated with them (Mosenthal & Na, 1980; Pappas & Pettigrew, 1998). This perspective accords with a situated or ideological view of literacy (Boyarin, 1993; Heath, 1991; Street, 1984), which contends that literacy is composed of culturally-situated practices, not of a culturally-autonomous technology or of a universal set of skills. The study of poetry reading can add a new dimension to generic and cultural aspect of literacy.

Genres in Collaborative Reading

From an emergent literacy perspective, the literacy events in which adults (parents and teachers) read books collaboratively with young children can provide sites for the apprenticeship of young children into text-making (Bruner, 1999; Heath, 1991). The shared attention of the adult-child team to textual language and its meanings can form the basis of children's literacy development as well as for advanced oral language development. Researchers have documented shared book reading routines among parents and infants

(Bus & Van Ijzendoorn, 1997; Ninio & Bruner, 1978), between preschool and kindergarten teachers and their classes (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Mason, Peterman, & Kerr, 1989), and to a lesser extent in elementary grade classrooms (Martinez & Teale, 1993). Researchers have studied styles of teacher and parent interaction while reading with children (Dickinson, De Temple, Hirschler, & Smith, 1989; Martinez & Teale, 1993; Sulzby & Kaderavek, 1996) and differences between home and school reading practices (Dickinson & Keebler, 1989; Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1996).

From a multi-genre perspective, a fuller understanding of shared book experiences takes into account joint reading of different types of books. Attention to genre in shared reading experiences has been only recently given and that attention has focused on expanding the perspectives of literacy researchers from narrative to informational texts (Caswell & Duke, 1998; Pappas, 1993). Little attention has been given to the joint reading of poetry.

A few studies do show the influence of text features on joint book reading. Mason, Peterman, and Kerr (1989) studied how kindergarten teachers read aloud three different genres: a picture storybook, an informational book, and a picture–phrase book with limited and large–format print. They found systematic differences among the way teachers shared the three genres. For stories, teachers introduced information about authors and illustrators and emphasized prediction and interpretation of story actions and characters’ motivations. For informational

books, they emphasized vocabulary and concept building by providing demonstrations and concrete examples and leading discussions based on questions that were posed in the texts themselves. For picture–phrase books, teachers encouraged attention to print, word recognition, and reading along.

Pellegrini, Galda, Jones, and Perlmutter (1995) studied how mothers and their Head Start children shared two types of informational book—a book based on the familiar format of toy advertisements and one based on the unfamiliar format of informational trade books that emphasize vocabulary and concept building. They found differences in the quantity and quality of mothers’ and children’s utterances during readings of the two text formats. Smolkin, Yaden, Brown, and Hofius (1992) studied the influence of print format during shared readings. They found that salient print in the form of letters in isolation, letters as 3-D objects, words in speech balloons and in pictured labels, and other environmental print elicited print-related talk from preschool children reading with their parents.

In a previous study, Charles (Elster, 1998) found systematic differences in how preschool teachers read picture storybooks with different text features, including the relationship between text and pictures, the amount and type of repeated language patterns, and the degree of realistic and fantasy content. He found a complementary relationship, related to text features, between levels of book-related discussion and participation by children in reading

along. Finally, Martinez and Roser (1985) studied changes in adult-child interactions during reading of a single text as a function of the inferential demands of the text. They found that book-related interactions between a father and his four-year-old daughter reflected the varying inference demands of three storybooks.

Taken together, these research findings show that joint book reading routines and discussions vary across different genres and different types of books. Some studies also show that during joint reading children participate in the actual reading of the text as well as discussion about its meaning (Doake, 1985; Elster, 1998; Smolkin et al., 1992). The apprenticeship that the young child receives from joint book reading then depends a good deal on what kinds of books are being read and how they are read and discussed. If the model of collaborative book reading activity as a key source of reading acquisition is taken seriously, then it is important to explore how genre influences joint reading and early literacy. In doing so genre can be understood as encompassing both the *text genres* that are jointly read and the *activity genres* (Beach & Phinney, 1998; Christie, 1995; Freedman & Medway, 1994) that adults and children participate in together in classrooms and homes.

Reading Poetry in Classrooms

As we noted previously, poetry reading in classrooms is often recommended by teacher educators (e.g., Cullinan, Scala, & Schroeder, 1995; Dunning & Stafford, 1992; Strickland & Strickland, 1997;

Tsumimoto, 1988). However, there has been limited research on children's and teachers' poetry reading and little systematic study of how poems are shared in elementary classrooms and how poetry contributes to children's literacy development.

One line of poetry research has explored children's poetry preferences. For example, Terry (1974) found that fourth through sixth graders preferred humorous narrative poems on familiar topics as well as poems that included rhythm and rhyme but not imagery or figurative language. This study was based on children's ratings of poems that had been read aloud to them or that they had read on their own. Kutiper and Wilson (1993), using elementary school circulation records as data, confirmed that the most popular poets were Jack Prelutsky and Shel Silverstein, both of whom write humorous and occasionally narrative poetry that does not invite readers to look beyond the literal level. Both of these studies confirm that children's preferred poems are those that are most accessible to their understanding. But neither takes into account the mediation of teachers and other adults in presenting poems to children and modeling appreciation of more challenging poetic techniques such as imagery, figurative language, and free verse organizational structures. Terry found no information on how the teachers shared the poems that the children rated.

In teacher-oriented reports of how poetry is used in classrooms, there has been little explicit and systematic attention to how poems are actually read and

discussed across grade levels or cultural groups. Travers's (1984) study of poetry teachers' behaviors was in fact a review of previous research studies dating back as far as the 1940s. Many of the studies she reviewed were unpublished dissertations or were more general studies of literary reading rather than poetry reading in particular. Shapiro's (1985) study was based on analysis of teachers' guides, not actual classroom practices. However, there is evidence from teachers' research on their own classrooms. Siens (1996) describes reading and writing poetry with her first-grade students. She identifies several poetry-reading techniques: how she asked children to close their eyes while she read a poem and then to discuss what they saw; how the children took turns reading favorite poems aloud in whole group meetings; how, after hearing the teacher talk about how lines and spaces give clues to slowing down and speeding up, the children practiced performing their poems in pairs and groups. She describes how children listened for and made lists of favorite words and phrases from poems and of poetic language from everyday books. What comes through from this report is an emphasis on poetic language and poetic sensitivity rather than on the strict mechanics of poetry.

Duthie and Zimet (1992) describe a poetry unit they did with their first-grade students. They report that they read poems aloud to children; led response-oriented discussions that focused on the literary techniques of the poems; did mini-lessons that focused on these same literary techniques; and

encouraged children to read poems independently, write their own poems, and read aloud to the class the poems they had read and written.

These teacher researchers give little information on how they actually read poems with the children. Their descriptions do give some indication that poems were reread after the initial readings in order to discuss poetic techniques; that children reread poems independently in order to practice before reading them aloud to the group; and that discussions and mini-lessons focused on formal features of poems such as rhyme, repetition, lining, alliteration and sound words. They stress how reading poetry fit into the pre-existing framework of reading-writing workshop, where a variety of genres could be included equally well. They do not emphasize any special aspects of reading and responding to poems as opposed to other literary genres such as stories.

Strickland and Strickland (1997) describe some of the techniques used by poet Michael Strickland as he visits classrooms to conduct one-time poetry workshops. These techniques include encouraging children to participate during reading aloud by clapping, swaying, and chiming in on refrains; rereading poems several times and involving children in different ways each time; accentuating interesting parts of poems while reading by repeating a line, laughing, or sighing; following readings with open-ended questions ("What's on your mind?"); discussing the forms and devices of poetry; and encouraging children to write their own poems, often collaboratively, after hearing poems.

Lenz (1992) describes her performance-oriented poetry program with first and second graders. In her classroom children chose poems, practiced performing them expressively with the help of peer coaches and viewing themselves on videotape, and then performed them for their peers. Children participated in reading poems chorally, engaged in open-ended discussions after these choral readings (“What did the poem bring to mind?”), reread poems numerous times as they practiced for their performances, and marked up copies of poems as they decided how to perform them. The teacher conducted mini-lessons that modeled different ways to perform a poem and to use the voice for expressive reading.

Specifics on how poetry is read in classrooms are also provided in anecdotal descriptions of poetry reading in middle school. Small (1992) describes how two seventh-grade teachers shared the same Emily Dickinson poem with their classes. One teacher had a New Critical approach in which she led the students to her interpretation of the poem’s theme. The other had a reader response approach, helping the students connect the poem to their own experiences and encouraging their aesthetic responses. In both classrooms the poem was read more than once. In the reader-response class the children were asked to read the poem through twice silently and then the teacher read it again aloud before the class discussed it. During the subsequent discussion the teacher asked a child to reread the last two stanzas after a student had commented that the

poem’s ending was beautiful. In the New Critical class a child was called on to read the poem aloud, then the teacher read each stanza aloud before its meaning was discussed.

In summary, these studies of poetry in elementary and middle school classrooms highlight several techniques used by teachers committed to sharing and studying poetry with students. In terms of performance, poems were read expressively, they were read multiple times, and children were encouraged to participate in their performance. In terms of response, discussion tended to be open-ended and aesthetic, and it often focused on the formal features of poems, word choice, and imagery.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to document systematically the ways in which teachers share poems with children in elementary-school classrooms. It is based on a study of classroom reading and discussion of literature in the spring of 1998. The focus was on contrasts between two literary genres: poems and stories. Two research questions are addressed: (1) How does poetry reading differ from story reading in classrooms? (2) How consistent are poetry reading techniques across grade levels and across individual teachers?

Method

Context of the Investigation

Sites and Participants

The study took place in 10 classrooms, grades K-4, in 3 elementary schools in the Midwest. The population of the schools was mixed socio-economically

and culturally due to the presence of a university close to farm communities. Teachers were recruited through two organizations: from members of a local teachers' group that promoted the inclusion of high quality children's literature in classrooms and from one school that had a Professional Development School relationship with the university in which we taught. Thus, some of the teachers may have had a greater than average commitment to and knowledge of children's literature. However, there were no particular theoretical frameworks or instructional methods in the teaching of literature that were imparted to the teachers as a result of either of these relationships.

Texts

The texts that were used in the study were chosen by the teachers and us. We wanted good literature that was age appropriate, that would sustain interest in class, and that represented both stories and poems. A poem was defined as "a metrical [or non-metrical] form of composition in which word images are selected and expressed to create powerful, often beautiful impressions in the listener or reader" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 189). A story was defined as "an imaginative tale shorter than a novel but with plot, characters and setting, as a short story" (Harris & Hodges, p. 243). The teachers and we chose from among picture books we all brought to a work session at the start of the study. In some cases teachers across classrooms chose books or poems in common. All of these texts were illustrated trade books for children. All of the books that we

initially classified as stories were full-length picture books, but only one of the texts we classified as a poem, *Rain Song*, was in the form of a full-length book. The rest of the poems were single pages from poetry collections. Appendix A shows examples of some of the texts.

The texts chosen by teachers actually fell into three categories. The poetry included eight short lyric poems that comprised a single page or less of collections of poems. In most cases poems were metrical in composition and in some cases were characterized by such poetic structures as rhymed quatrains. Three haiku were also included. The stories were eight book-length narratives written in prose and containing plots, settings, and characters. The four mixed-genre texts contained aspects of both poems and stories. These mixed-genre texts included a book-length poem in metrical couplets that, by a combination of the poem's words and the book's pictures, implied a story (*Rain Song*), a book-length prose story with a short poetic song embedded in it several times (*Lizard's Song*), another book-length story with rhymes embedded in it (*Mama is a Miner*), and a book-length story that was not metrical but that had a cumulative and rhythmic language pattern (*Over the Steamy Swamp*). Because of our desire to conduct as naturalistic a study as possible, we used the texts chosen by the teachers despite this blurring of genre differences.

Table 1 shows the 10 teachers (identified throughout this paper by pseudonyms), the eleven poems, eight

TABLE 1
The Teachers & the Texts They Read

TEACHER	GRADE	POEMS	STORIES	MIXED GENRE
1 Mason	K	You Be Saucer (3*)	Dylan's Day Out(3)	Lizard's Song (3) Rain Song (3)
2 Blake	K	You Be Saucer (3)	Dylan's Day Out (3)	Lizard's Song (3) Rain Song (3)
3 Porter	1	Snow in the East (3)	My Apron (3)	Rain Song (3)
4 Nelson	1	Snow in the East (3)		Lizard's Song (3) Rain Song (3)
5 Wells	2	Snow in the East (3)		Lizard's Song (3) Rain Song (3) Steamy Swamp (3)
6 Kirk	2	Snow in the East (2)	Aunt Arizona (2)	Lizard's Song (2) Rain Song (2)
7 Light	2	What Is Yellow You Be Saucer	Chalk Doll Empty Pot	
8 Rollins	3	Feelings Words Things Truck of Dreams	Duck & Owl Moving Days	
9 Vinton	4	Feelings About Words Things Truck of Dreams	Duck & Owl Moving Days	
10 McGuire	4	Three haiku Sun Dancers	Lily & Bowl	Mama Is Miner

* The numbers 2 and 3 indicate that the text was read twice or three times on separate days.

stories, and four mixed-genre texts that were read in the classrooms, and the number of sessions (one to three times) in which each book was read. There were a total of forty readings that were analyzed.

Data Collection

The participating teachers in the study read two or more texts with their students in their classrooms during regular language arts activities. In the younger grades (K-2) the teachers read the texts aloud to a group of children sitting on the floor in front of them. In the older grades (3-4) the children

sometimes read the text silently in addition to teachers' and students' reading it aloud. We asked the teachers to read and discuss the books in their usual ways. In some cases children participated in follow-up activities after the book readings. Shared readings and segments of follow-up activities were videotaped, and copies of texts read and of children's work samples related to the chosen texts were collected.

The only special instruction made to the teachers was for the K-2 teachers to read the texts three times in the course of about a week. We gave them this instruction because we wanted to

do a follow-up study of children's independent readings of the same text (Elster, 2000). Because repeated reading of favorite texts is a common practice in the primary grades, we felt justified in using the data from these repeated readings in our analysis. However, this manipulation of naturally-occurring classroom practices could be seen as a limitation of the study.

Data Analysis

Videotapes of classroom readings of poems and stories and contingent activities were viewed, summarized in writing, and analyzed using micro-ethnographic methods that highlight four aspects of classroom reading: manners of performance, patterns of participation in reading, the talk that surrounds reading, and the curriculum activities that accompany them.

The second and third components

of the analysis—participation and discussions—build on our previous work on teacher-child interactions during read-alouds (Elster, 1995, 1998). Analytic categories were developed prior to the analysis, applied to sample videotapes, then modified and expanded before being applied to the tapes as a whole. We first viewed several tapes that spanned grade levels and then coded and modified the initial categories. After the categories were developed, we individually coded texts. Then we jointly coded several texts again. Disagreements were resolved through discussion. We then returned to the coding we had previously done and adjusted it based on the discussion. Table 2 summarizes participation, discussions, and curriculum activities that were analyzed.

Participation sequences are occasions when children are involved in reading

TABLE 2
Analysis of Joint Read-Alouds

PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE	TEXT-INTERNAL DISCUSSION	TEXT-EXTERNAL DISCUSSION	LITERARY & INTER-TEXTUAL DISCUSSION	CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
Read along (by children)	Set purpose to read	Relate to life experiences	Discuss genre (local or global)	Language arts - writing, reading, performance activities,
Fill in blanks	Discuss local meaning: characters, actions, settings, descriptions	Relate to world knowledge	Discuss author or illustrator	compose oral songs, riddles, rhyming word pairs
Act out, clap, use instruments, use props	Discuss global meaning	Evaluate content or form of text	Discuss audience, narrator, parts of book	Science & social studies
Predict content			Relate text to other text (song, story, or poem)	Reference skills Arts
Remember content				
Reads text twice in one sitting (by teachers)	Discuss word meaning Discuss pictures Attend to print			

or acting out the text. Children participated in reading by (a) reading along with the teacher, (b) filling in words before the teacher read them (or filling in when the teacher paused to invite such “chiming in”), (c) reading an entire text or part of a text instead of the teacher reading, (d) participating by clapping, making sounds, using musical instruments, or acting out text actions, or (e) predicting, restating, or remembering (from previous readings) the explicit text content.

Discussion is the text-related talk that surrounds the actual reading of the text. Three broad areas of discussion are examined in the current study (see Table 2). Text-internal discussion involves attention to the world within the text in both its local and global meanings. Text-external discussion involves extension of text meaning to the real world of facts, personal experiences, and evaluation in which the text is read. Finally, literary and intertextual discussion focuses on the text as text either in isolation or in relation to other texts. This last area is important because it contains the explicit teaching of literacy and literature that is embedded in or contingent upon the readings.

The last area of analysis involved looking at the kinds of curriculum activities that preceded, followed, or coincided with the reading activity. These behaviors included language arts activities such as writing or word study as well as cross-disciplinary activities related to art, science, and social studies.

During the analysis process, patterns of performance and instances of participation, discussion, and curricu-

lum activities were identified from viewing videotapes and from written summaries of videotapes. As described above, reliability was achieved through our initial joint coding, resolution of disagreements through discussion, and adjustment of individual coding based on the discussion. The coding categories were applied to the three segments in the videotaped sessions—before, during, and after reading. The frequency of different topics and activities was combined across all readings of each text by each teacher and then compared across books, genres (poems and stories), and classrooms and grade levels. It is important to stress that differences in *frequency* of strategy use within reading sessions do not appear in this analysis. Since it only shows whether a strategy occurred in a reading or did not, the analysis does not distinguish between many instances or a single instance of a strategy during a reading.

Based on the performance, participation, and discussion strategies identified through this coding of the videotapes, we looked across readings of each of the genres to generate general categories of strategies for poetry and story reading. Once these were identified, the videotapes were searched again and examples (and counter-examples) of these general strategies were identified and in some cases transcribed. These examples were used to refine the general categories and to determine any sub-types of strategies and exceptions within categories.

Field notes and transcriptions in the article are based on viewing of the videotapes. Videotapes were viewed

several times. In the first viewing videotapes were logged and summarized, with attention to the coding categories listed in Table 2. In the second viewing behaviors of interest were counted and recorded by check marks, resulting in the quantitative analysis in Table 3. The written summaries were then reviewed and examples of common poetry reading and discussion strategies were identified. The original notes were then reviewed, and in some cases the notes were expanded or transcriptions were made. These expanded notes and transcriptions are what appear in the examples.

Results

Comparison of Poems and Stories and a Discussion of Mixed-Genres

In order to describe poetry reading in elementary classrooms, we began by comparing readings of poems and stories according to the analysis system presented in Table 2. The occurrence of each strategy on at least one occasion was charted across all readings of poems and stories in all grades. (A reading was defined as all readings of one text by one teacher in one classroom.)

Table 3 reports the total number and percentage of poem, story, and mixed-genre readings that contained each participation, discussion and curriculum strategy. The third column of numbers reports the percentage difference between poem and story readings.

First, this analysis shows many similar strategies across genres—a repertoire of common strategies that are used in reading poems, stories, and mixed-genre texts. Sixteen of the 25 strategies in the readings—more than

half—occurred in both poetry and story reading. Most notably, all categories of text-internal and text-external discussion occurred in both genres. In participation strategies children predicted and remembered text content during both poem and story readings.

Second, and most important for this study, there were notable differences in how poems and stories were read in the strategies that occurred and in the degree of difference in their occurrence. Almost half of the strategies (11 of the 25 categories) were absent in one or the other genre. First, participation patterns were markedly different. Three of the five strategies occurred only in poetry reading: reading a text twice in one sitting, children's filling in blanks, and children's acting out or accompanying the text. In addition, the only story where children read along was *Dylan's Day Out*, a nearly wordless picture book, so that the children's activity was really re-telling the story from pictures, not truly reading along. Reading along was therefore another participation strategy for poetry that did not occur in story reading. Finally, all of the participation strategies but one (predicting and remembering) occurred in more poetry readings than story readings. Overall, poetry reading was more participatory than story reading except where children participated by predicting and recalling text content.

Thus, collaborative poetry reading can provide young students with opportunities for engagement, enjoyment, and self-confidence in reading. It can also provide opportunities for children to internalize (through participation in

TABLE 3
Participation & Discussion: Poems, Stories & Mixed-genre Texts

	POEMS (16) % (#)	STORIES (11) % (#)	DIFFERENCE %	MIXED-GENRE (13) % (#)
Participation				
Read along	56 (9)	18 (2)	38 p*	92 (12) p
Fill in blanks	25 (4)	0 (0)	25 p*	23 (3) p
Act, clap, instruments	31 (5)	0 (0)	31 p*	38 (5) p
Predict & remember	13 (2)	73 (8)	60 s*	77 (10) s
Read twice one sitting	63 (10)	0 (0)	63 p*	15 (2) s
Discussion				
<i>Text-internal discussion</i>				
Set purpose to read	38 (6)	27 (3)	11	23 (3)
Discuss local meaning	44 (7)	82 (9)	38 s*	85 (11) s
Discuss global meaning	50 (8)	45 (5)	5	62 (8)
Discuss word meaning	50 (8)	55 (6)	5	62 (8)
Discuss pictures	31 (5)	45 (5)	14	62 (8)
Attend to print	25 (4)	18 (2)	7	15 (2)
<i>Text-external discussion</i>				
Relate to experiences & knowledge	56 (9)	64 (7)	8	62 (8)
Evaluate	44 (7)	45 (5)	1	83 (11)
<i>Literary discussion</i>				
Genre	44 (7)	9 (1)	35 p*	38 (5)
Structure (local/global)	31 (5)	9 (1)	22 p*	8 (1) s
Author or illustrator	19 (3)	36 (4)	17	31 (4)
Audience, narrator, etc.	13 (2)	0 (0)	13	23 (3)
Word forms, rhymes	44 (7)	0 (0)	44 p*	15 (2) s
Relate to other texts	31 (5)	27 (3)	4	15 (2)
Curriculum activities				
Writing activity	38 (6)	45 (5)	7	38 (5)
Compose oral songs	0 (0)	0 (0)	0	25 (3) m*
Riddles or charades	0 (0)	0 (0)	0	15 (2)
Science & social studies	25 (4)	18 (2)	7	8 (1)
Reference skills	6 (1)	0 (0)	6	8 (1)
Art	25 (4)	18 (2)	7	31 (4)

Numbers in parentheses represent raw number of readings containing each strategy. In the "Difference" column, differences of 20% or higher are starred, and the letters *p* and *s* represent which genre had the higher frequency. In the "Mixed-genre" column the letters *p* and *s* represent whether the mixed-genre text resembled poetry or stories in the areas of noteworthy difference.

joint reading) the rhythm of fluent reading and the syntax and vocabulary of literary language.

Two discussion strategies occurred only in poetry reading: discussing audience and narrator roles and discussing word forms and rhymes. In addition, two types of literary discussion were more common in poetry reading: discussing genre and discussing text structure. In contrast there was more discussion of local meaning (characters, actions, etc.) during story readings. Overall, story reading discussions seemed somewhat more focused on text-internal meaning and book illustrations, while poetry reading discussions seemed more focused on formal and generic aspects of texts.

There were no noteworthy differences in the types of curriculum activities that were associated with poetry and story readings.

Separating out the mixed-genre texts made the contrast between poems and stories more clear. It also revealed how specific strategies were tied to specific text features. During readings of *Rain Song*, a book-length poem that tells a story, children discussed plot and characters and related the story to experiences in the rain in their own lives. The narrative content of the book brought forth story-like discussion. In contrast, during readings of *Lizard's Song*, a typical story with a short poetic song embedded in it, children chimed in on reading or singing the song; afterwards, 5 teachers related the text to other songs or asked the children to compose their own songs about them-

selves or about another animal. Here the embedded poetic language brought forth poem-like participation. Poetic participation also occurred during readings of *Over the Steamy Swamp*, a story with a cumulative language pattern: Children spontaneously participated by chiming in during the reading of this story as they recognized and responded to the cumulative pattern. Strikingly, teachers reread the poetic sections embedded in *Lizard's Song* and *Mama Is a Miner*. These examples show that teachers and children adopted the strategies appropriate to each genre when its characteristics were incorporated into a mixed-genre text.

Reading Poems

Having distinguished how poetry reading is different from story reading in classrooms, we want to further describe classroom poetry reading. Poetry reading emphasized the performance and aesthetic experience of texts rather than text content. Five characteristics of poetry reading were identified, based on the quantitative analysis contained in Table 3 along with additional examination of the videotapes and written summaries of them. These characteristics are summarized in Table 4. The first three characteristics describe the teachers' performance of and the children's participation in reading the poems. The final two characteristics represent the meaning-making strategies highlighted during discussion surrounding poetry reading. The following sections provide concrete examples and analysis of poetry-reading strategies.

Performing and Participating in Reading Poems

When teachers read poems with children, they promoted involvement with the immediate experience of reading by using three strategies: an expressive reading style, immediate rereading of the poems, and prompting children to read along or act out the poems.

Expressive Reading Style

Teachers often read poems in an exaggeratedly expressive style, a style that contrasted with the less expressive style of reading stories. There were four strategies that constituted the expressive reading style: slow and melodious reading, stressing and elongation of words, expressive variations in reading rate, and expressive accompaniment to reading.

Slow reading, stress, and elongation focus readers on the words of the voiced text. For example, Mrs. Light combined slow reading with attention to children's creation of mental images in her reading of the poem "What Is Yellow?" She began by asking students to close their eyes as she read. Her reading was marked by an emphatic beat and frequent pauses. [In all transcripts in which the inflection of the speaker is important to note, capital letters indicate a stressed syllable, a slash (/) represents a pause, periods represent falling tone.] The last six lines were read as follows:

DAN/ de lions/ and DAIsy hearts.//
CUStard PIES/ and LEMon TARTS.//
YELlow BLINKS on SUMmer NIGHTS.//
In the OFF and on of FIREfly LIGHTS.//
YELlow's a TOPaz./ a CANDle FLAME.//

TABLE 4
Five Features of Classroom Poetry Reading

PERFORMING AND PARTICIPATING IN THE POEM

MAKING MEANING FROM THE POEM

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Expressive reading style
Slow and melodious reading
Stressing and elongation of words
Expressive variation in rate and volume
Expressive accompaniment to reading | 4. Aesthetic, open-ended discussion
Open-ended discussion
Aesthetically-oriented discussion |
| 2. Immediate re-readings
To promote children's participation
To highlight text form and meaning | 5. Discussion of the text itself, especially language patterns
Focus on sounds and rhymes
Focus on word meanings
Focus on stanzas |
| 3. Children's participation in reading
Chiming in or reading along with teacher
Children read in place of teacher
Clapping or snapping along with reading
Acting out or accompanying the reading
Predicting what will come next | Focus on rhythm and syntax
Focus on genre |
-

FeLLicity's a YELlow NAME.//
YELlow's mimosa/ AND/ I GUESS//
YELlow's the COLor of HAPpiness.

After reading, one child commented that her reading was still too fast to allow for the picturing of images.

Mrs. McGuire (gr. 4) gave explicit instruction in oral reading aloud:

I need someone to volunteer and read this one nice and loudly. Remember where the ellipses are that means something missing, so your voice should kind of trail off and pause there.

Lisa reread the poem, and Mrs. McGuire complimented her. Mrs. McGuire then reread the poem with special attention to slow pace, stress, pausing, and vowel elongation [indicated by colon after vowel]:

MRS. MCGUIRE: SEA rocks.//
BLOW:N with FO:G.// TIME/
LOCKED/ in MIST.// LO:NG/
LO:NG/ forGOTten.

Mrs. McGuire's explicit attention to reading performance during poetry reading was in line with traditional methods of teaching oral locution as an art form (Allington, 1984).

The use of stress and elongation while reading was tied to specific features of the poems being read. Mr. Porter (gr. 1) used elongation and pitch variation to suggest the moaning sounds of the wind of the approaching storm in *Rain Song* (see excerpt of the poem in Appendix A) as is illustrated from the following excerpt from our field notes:

Mr. Porter uses an especially expressive reading voice, using tempo, volume, pausing and

elongation. He draws out the sounds of the words with sound meanings "quiet MOA::n::ings, far-off GROA::nings." Children imitate these expressive techniques when they read the poems independently afterwards. (Transcription conventions: Upper case represents stressed syllables; colons represent elongated sounds.)

Mrs. Wells (gr. 2) used stress contrastively to highlight the changing words in the highly repetitive stanzas of "Snow in the East" (see text excerpt in Appendix A):

grass on my KNEE CAPS . . . rain on my EYELASHes, . . . night in my OWN BED.

Expressive variations in reading rate were also tied to text features: Several teachers slowed down at the end of poems. Teachers used slowing down to mark words such rhymes, refrains, and ends of stanzas and used changing rate to highlight word meaning as can be seen by Mr. Porter's (gr. 1) reading in Appendix B.

Mrs. Kirk (gr. 2) slowed down at the end of the same poem:

NIGHT in the EAST,/
NIGHT in the WEST./
NIGHT in my OWN bed./
I/ LIKE/// BEST.

She also adjusted her reading speed to suit the words she was reading. She speeded up when reading the word "faster" and the following words (line 2), and she slowed down on the last line of the page (line 3) which contains the final word "rain" that acts as a refrain:

1. DROPS are FALLling,/ MOTHER's CALLling, [read slowly]
2. FASTer, "RUN dear!" / FASTer, "COME dear!" / [read more quickly]

3. Safe inSIDE we'll watch the RAIN [read more slowly]

Expressive accompaniment to reading was an infrequent but striking feature of poetry reading. It was done differently at different developmental levels. In kindergarten Mrs. Mason had children accompany "You be Good" with musical instruments and she also used props to accompany one of her readings of the same poem as our field notes indicate:

On the second reading of *Rain Song*, Mrs. Mason invites the children to play musical instruments to accompany the poem. She assigns a different instrument to each child and instructs them to play their instruments when they hear a certain line. David will moan [no instrument] on "quiet moaning;" Jacob will strike the wooden spoons on "distant rumblings;" Leo will strike sandpaper blocks on "leaves are swirling;" Many will strike cymbals on "cymbals clashing;" and Steve will strike a bucket with a wooden mallet on "big boom bashing." All the children will stamp their feet on "boot are stomping."

In first grade, Mr. Porter had children point to directions and body parts and to make expressive sounds and motions while reading poems. While reading "Snow in the East," Mr. Porter asked children to point to directions and body parts named in the poem. While reading *Rain Song* a second time, Mr. Porter, like Mrs. Mason, instructed the children to make expressive sounds and motions to accompany the poem:

MR. PORTER: Let me read that again.
And this time, when you hear a good sound word, could you help me make that sound? For example,

if I said, "booming—"

STUDENT: BOOMing.

MR. PORTER: Could you make a sound that sounds like booming?

STUDENTS: [make sound effects]

MR. PORTER: One thing you have to do.

You have to make your sound this many times (holds up one finger). So I can move on to the next word.

Thunder booming.

STUDENTS: [make sound effects]

MR. PORTER: [holds up finger]

STUDENTS: [fall silent]

MR. PORTER: So now it's real quiet before the storm starts. [begins reading]

Two similarities are noticeable between Mrs. Mason's and Mr. Porter's encouragement of dramatic and rhythmic accompaniment. First, accompaniment occurred on the second reading, after the children had been familiarized to the text. Second, each teacher carefully controlled the amount of student noise-making so as not to disrupt classroom decorum.

By fourth grade children were preparing their own expressive performances. For example, when reading "Things," Mrs. Vinton's class practiced the poem in small groups, then performed it by acting it out, dancing, and clapping.

In a follow up interview Mr. Porter (gr. 1), who was an especially expressive reader of poetry, commented on his purpose in reading, especially poems:

These poems were, number one, something that they are going to enjoy. These had a lot of words and sounds that they liked saying and were fun to do . . . with other books that are informative, they have to enjoy them as well.

Mr. Porter highlighted enjoyment as a goal, whether reading poems or “informative” books, but the enjoyment of poetry came from saying the words and the sounds—that is, performing the poem. Sometimes teachers adopted an expressive reading style with several components. In a follow-up questionnaire Mrs. McGuire (gr. 4) noted that when reading aloud to children she used the technique of “phrasing”—changes in pitch and rhythm to demonstrate the emotion shown by voice—sometimes using different voices for different characters.

Immediate Repeated Reading

A second aspect of the performance of poems was that teachers and children often read poems more than once in one sitting. In contrast, stories were never read more than once in a sitting. Two factors could contribute to this difference. First, the poems were shorter in length than the stories (all but one poem was on a single page). Thus, in place of using reading time to go forward in a book-length narrative, teachers instead reread a single page in a book of poems. However, the book-length narrative poem *Rain Song* was read twice in one sitting by one teacher, Mr. Porter. The multiple reading of *Rain Song* suggests that it was not only the short length of poems that invited rereading. Another striking example of the connection of poetry to immediate rereading came during Mrs. McGuire’s reading of the mixed-genre book *Mama is a Miner*. When she came to the poetry couplets embedded in the prose text, she reread them.

Immediate rereading performed two apparent functions. The first function was to promote children’s participation in the reading, and the second was to highlight the form or meaning of the words in the poem

Rereading to promote participation. Teachers used rereading to promote participation. For example, Mr. Porter (gr. 1) taught the children a participation game during the first reading, then had them participate uninterruptedly in the second reading (see also Appendix B). Children also participated in the second reading of poems by clapping along (as in Mrs. Light’s [gr. 2] reading of “You Be Saucer”), snapping their fingers (as in Mrs. Vinton’s [gr. 4] reading of “Things”), or chiming in (as in Mrs. Rollins’s [gr. 3] reading of “Truck of Dreams”).

Rereading to highlight words. Sometimes teachers reread portions of the poems rather than the whole poem in order to highlight the rhyme or meaning patterns. For example, after reading *Rain Song* once, Mrs. Blake (kind.) reread segments of the poem to show the rhyming words. After the first reading of “You Be Saucer,” Mrs. Blake repeated each stanza and asked after each what words “go together” semantically (saucer/cup) and in terms of rhyme (cup/up).

In many other instances teachers used rereading to highlight meaning patterns in poems. In the following transcript of Mrs. Light’s (gr. 2) class reading “You Be Saucer,” rereading was used to highlight the hidden story contained in the poem:

MRS. LIGHT: When would you think of this poem? When do you think the author WROTE this poem for you to tell or LISTen to?

STUDENT: (inaudible)

MRS. LIGHT: Okay. Look at the LAST two lines.

(reads rhythmically) “PIGgy back PIGgy back/PICK me UP. CARry me, CARry me/UP the STAIRS. TUCK me in, TUCK me in/NICE and TIGHT.” What do you think is HAPPening in this poem?

STUDENT: It’s going like—they’re saying something so you can DO it, and then like—I don’t know.

MRS. LIGHT: Okay. Who ELSE? Kim?

KIM: It’s going like in ORder. Like “PIGgy back PIGgy back/PICK me UP.” So someone’s picking someone UP, And then “CARry me, CARry me/UP the STAIRS,” So someone’s carrying someone upstairs, And “TUCK me in, TUCK me in/NICE and TIGHT,” First you carry someone up the stairs and then tuck them in.

MRS. LIGHT: So what’s HAPPening here?

KIM: Someone’s picking someone up and carrying them to bed.

MRS. LIGHT: It’s BED time. They’re going to BED. Good JOB.

After the students failed to answer her initial questions, Mrs. Light scaffolded the interpretation by rereading the last two lines of each stanza in order to highlight the hidden story. Kelly then used the same strategy, rereading each section and then interpreting it. Other teachers used the same strategy

of rereading sections of poems and interpreting or soliciting interpretations of it: Mrs. Kirk (gr. 2) when discussing “Snow in the east,” Mrs. Rollins (gr. 3) when discussing “Things,” and Mrs. McGuire (gr. 4) when discussing haiku poems.

Children’s Participation in Reading

The third aspect of poetry reading was children’s active participation in reading or acting out the poem along with the teacher. Teachers typically encouraged children to read along while poems were being read. In contrast, children did not typically participate in reading stories except by predicting or retelling the story content or when reading along with the mixed-genre texts *Lizard’s Song* and *Over the Steamy Swamp*. As noted above, immediate rereading was one way that teachers promoted increased participation in reading. But participation was a feature of poetry reading regardless of whether an immediate rereading had occurred.

Children participated in reading poems in several ways, and they participated spontaneously or after having been invited by the teacher to do so. The most common participation mode was chiming in—either filling in blanks left by the teacher or by reading along with the teacher. For example, Mrs. Mason (kind.) invited the children to chime in on rhyming words. Our fieldnotes of Mrs. Blake, the other kindergarten teacher, reveal a different kind of invitation:

Before reading [“You Be Saucer”] for the third time, Mrs. Blake asks children if they remember anything from the poem. The

children respond by chanting, “piggy back, piggy back, pick me up.” Mrs. Blake praises students on their memory, and invites them to read along.

Mrs. Mason set children’s participation in the poem’s performance as the goal. She then used the common oral cloze procedure of pausing before rhyming words, signaling for the children to fill in the words. In Mrs. Mason’s class, the children spontaneously chanted one of the rhythmic couplets from the poem during the prereading discussion. Mrs. Blake then linked that spontaneous chant to a read along performance.

Sometimes children spontaneously participated in reading along without an explicit invitation from the teacher. In Mr. Porter’s (gr. 1) class, for example, children spontaneously chimed in on onomatopoetic words such as “plip plop” and “drip drop.” And children in Mrs. Wells’s (gr. 2) class spontaneously read along on refrain words of *Snow in the East*—“I like best”—after they realized the refrain pattern during the first reading. They then read along spontaneously all the way through on the second and third readings.

The readings of the mixed-genre text *Over the Steamy Swamp* in Mrs. Wells’ second grade class gave intriguing evidence that this text was indeed poetic (see text excerpt in Appendix A). During the first reading, children began reading along spontaneously about halfway through the book as they recognized the cumulative pattern. At the beginning of the second reading, two children asked Mrs. Wells if they could read along. Mrs. Wells told them that

they could if they read along quietly so that everyone could still hear and think about the words. The children seemed to gain pleasure from reading along with the mock-suspenseful cumulative pattern.

Children also participated in reading in a number of other ways. Mrs. Light (gr. 2) invited her class to reread “You Be Saucer” while clapping on the beat. After the children performed “Things” in groups, Mrs. Vinton (gr. 4) reread the poem while the children snapped their fingers along with the rhythm. Mrs. Mason (kind.) invited children to accompany the reading of “You Be Saucer” with percussion instruments. Mr. Porter (gr. 1) involved the children in playing a game of pointing to the east and west while he read “Snow in the East.” He also paused before the word that changes at the end of the third line of each stanza and asked children to guess what word would conclude the line (see also Appendix B). In *Rain Song*, Mr. Porter invited the children to imitate sounds suggested by weather words. In the fourth grade classrooms, children read the poem individually in place of the teacher, sometimes accompanying their reading with expressive gestures and dance steps. In general, there was more participation by children, both spontaneously and at the teachers’ invitation, in reading poems than in reading stories.

Making Meaning from Poems

The teachers’ reading performance and the children’s participation in reading were complemented by discussion before, during, and after readings. Discus-

sion around poetry reading had an open-ended quality that stressed readers' aesthetic and emotional experience of the poems. Discussions also focused to some extent on formal features of the poems, such as sound patterns, word patterns, and imagery. In contrast, discussions about stories tended to focus on the text content and its relationship to the outside world of facts and personal experiences.

Aesthetic, Open-ended Discussion

When discussing poems, teachers used open-ended questions that encouraged personal-emotional responses. This type of discussion contrasted with the more content-oriented discussions during story reading. The open-ended discussion during and after poetry reading included non-directive discussion, emphasis on aesthetic experiences and judgments, and emphasis on images. Some discussion, such as that centered on story reading, did emphasize text content, but it tended to focus on overall, global meaning rather than the local meaning (identifying settings, characters, actions, etc.) that dominated discussions of stories.

Open-ended, Non-directive Discussion

Many teachers were non-directive, general, or intentionally vague in their prompts for discussion after reading poems, in contrast to more targeted text content and interpretation prompts after stories. For example, after reading the poem "Snow in the East," Mrs. Wells (grade 2) asked the children for general comments, saying "Talk to me about

the poem." One child noticed a formal feature—word repetition and semantic groups: "It kept going west and east and I like it best." A second child launched into a story about a time he played in the grass with friends. After reading the poem "You Be Saucer," Mrs. Light (gr. 2) simply asked the children "What did you notice?" The children responded by noticing rhyme patterns, word placement patterns, semantic patterns, and word images. Her open-ended, non-evaluative rejoinder after each contribution was "Okay. What else?"

The following transcript shows some of the global meaning discussion that occurred after Mrs. Rollins's third grade class read "Things":

MRS. ROLLINS: All right, let's get some ideas here that you've thought about, that you've talked about, that you've heard other people say, that maybe you agree with or maybe you don't agree with.

CAROLINE: Maybe it's about saving and stuff like that—

ROBIN: I think um that the poem is trying to say to get your brain working.

MARK: Well, you have to read it again. Because like a poem you can read it to other people and you can pass it down and keep it going and it doesn't stop.

CHILDREN: (all talking)

STUDENT: Maybe Jack Prelutsky wrote it.

MRS. ROLLINS: Some of you were singing poems this morning. I heard you back there in the back of the bus singing those poems.

STUDENT: Yeah, it was annoying.

CHILDREN: (all talking)

STUDENT: Yeah, but those songs never end.

MRS. ROLLINS: And sometimes they're written and other times they're just told from person to person, aren't they?

LESLIE: I think what she was trying to tell us was poems never get worn out.

Here Mrs. Rollins began with a global prompt to talk about what the poem meant. She then extended Mark's observation about poems being passed from person to person to draw connections between written and oral literature.

Emphasis on Aesthetic Experiences and Judgments

Many teachers focused their discussion around poems on the feelings of the reader in response to the poem. There were two different directions for this aesthetic talk. One was evaluating the poem. For example, after reading *Rain Song* for the third time, Mrs. Blake (kind.) asked the children what their favorite part of the book was. One child reached forward to the book and pages to the picture of the dog licking the raindrops. After reading "Feelings About Words" and "Things," Mrs. Vinton (gr. 4) asked which poem they liked better and why.

The second direction for aesthetic talk consisted of emotional response to the poem—what feelings the poem evoked for the children. For example, before reading *Rain Song*, Mrs. Wells (gr. 2) told the children to listen carefully in

order to "get the mood" of the poem. When reading "What Is Yellow?" Mrs. Light (gr. 2) asked what feelings the writer conveyed. Then the class discussed what different feelings they associated with different colors.

Mrs. McGuire (gr. 4), who led explicit and systematic study of genre, revealed the primacy of the aesthetic in poetry. While reviewing the characteristics of haiku and hearing the children say that a haiku had three and sometimes four lines, she asked, "How can it be that some [haiku] poems have four and others only have three [lines]?" After a pause and no response from students, she made the following statement: "If your idea doesn't go with the pattern, you go with the idea. Remember the iDEa and the FEELing is more important than the pattern and that's why we said they KIND OF have a set pattern."

Emphasis on Content Meaning

Sometimes teachers made moves in the discussion of poems that resembled those that took place during story reading. For example, Mrs. Light (gr. 2) asked the children to uncover the "hidden story" in "You Be Saucer." After reading "You Be Saucer," Mrs. Blake made the kind of typical text-to-life connection that occurs during story reading, asking: "When you go to bed, do your parents tuck you in or read you a story?"

Occasionally and uncharacteristically poetry reading involved discussion of content area subjects. While introducing "Snow in the East," Mr.

Porter (gr. 1) and his students briefly discussed compass directions (geography) and the temperature of the human body (science). While reading “Things,” Mrs. Rollins (gr. 3) and her class discussed tides and beaches and even got out the encyclopedia for information about tides.

Content-oriented discussion during poetry reading, when it occurred, depended on the content of the particular poems: tides and beaches after “Things,” playing in the grass after reading “Snow in the East,” and imagery after reading haiku and “What is Yellow?”

Discussion Focused on the Form of the Text

Along with aesthetic stance, discussion during poetry reading sometimes emphasized formal features of the poems, in contrast to discussions during stories that focused on text content and its relationship to facts about the world. But teachers varied in how often and how explicitly they led discussion of genre and formal features of texts. Of the 10 teachers Mrs. Light (gr. 2) and Mrs. McGuire (gr. 4) were the ones who were most explicit in their attention to form in poetry. Discussion of formal features dealt with various aspects of poems: sound patterns (rhyme, rhythm, syntax), visual patterns (lines and stanzas, print), word patterns (semantic connections among words), and more general discussion of genre differences.

The most common type of formal discussion dealt with rhyme and with word repetition and semantic connec-

tions among words. Discussion of visual patterns in poems (lines, stanzas, print conventions) and of genre differences were less frequent. Sometimes the attention that teachers and students gave to formal patterns was momentary, vague, or implicit. For example, before reading “Snow in the East,” Mrs. Kirk (gr. 2) simply asked children to “listen for the pattern.” In his discussion of the same poem, Mr. Porter (gr. 1) implicitly highlighted stanza structure by interjecting “here’s the first part,” “here’s the next part,” etc. before each stanza.

In contrast, discussion of formal features of poems was sometimes made very explicit. For example, after reading “Things” and having students write their own poems, Mrs. Rollins (gr. 3) and her class briefly discussed different types of poems: story poems, cinquains, acrostics, and “sneaky poems.” After the second reading of the story *Lizards Song* with its embedded song, Mrs. Wells (gr. 2) led her class in a discussion of differences between poems and stories. Children volunteered that poems are shorter, have shorter lines, and sometimes lack punctuation. Mrs. Wells then wrote these ideas on the chalk board using a Venn diagram format. She then read James Whitcomb Riley’s long narrative poem “The Bear Story” (1982), leading the children to question their previous ideas about differences between poems and stories.

Mrs. Light (gr. 2) and Mrs. McGuire (gr. 4) were the two teachers who explicitly taught formal features of different types of poems and differences between poems and stories. After read-

ing “You Be Saucer,” Mrs. Light (gr. 2) discussed differences between poems and stories:

MRS. LIGHT: What makes this poem different from stories? What makes poems different from stories?

CARRIE: They have a beat.

MRS. LIGHT: They have a beat. Good. You want to try it again? Let’s try it. [The class rereads the poem aloud while clapping their hands to the beat.]

Before reading the haiku Mrs. McGuire and her class reviewed the haiku from a previous day’s lesson, as our fieldnotes reveal:

Students volunteered that haiku are short three- or four-line poems, that they originated in Japan, that they have no rhyme, rhythm, complete sentences, or punctuation, aside from dashes. Mrs. McGuire introduces the term ellipsis.

Mrs. Light also used poetic terms as she extended children’s initial attention to rhyming pairs:

MRS. LIGHT: Do you like this poem?

CHILDREN: YEAH!

MRS. LIGHT: What do you like about it?

TORY: It RHYMES good.

MRS. LIGHT: It RHYMES good.

WHERE does it rhyme? Which words RHYME?

STUDENT: NIGHT and TIGHT.

STUDENT: GOOD and NIGHT.

MRS. LIGHT: Do GOOD and NIGHT rhyme?

STUDENTS: (No response—continue to raise hands to answer 1st question)

MRS. LIGHT: They kind of GO together, but they don’t RHYME. What else

RHYMES in this poem?

STUDENT: PEARS and STAIRS.

CARRIE: CUP and UP.

MRS. LIGHT: You notice anything INTEResting about the words that RHYME here?

RITA: They’re all in the same PLACE.

MRS. LIGHT: They’re all in the same PLACE. What place ARE they?

RITA: Um—first [inaudible] cup [inaudible]. Second [inaudible] last [inaudible].

MRS. LIGHT: Okay. So the FIRST rhyming word is at the end of the SECONd line, ALways. And then where is the word that it RHYMES with? Where is the NEXT rhyming word?

RITA: At the bottom of the LAST line.

MRS. LIGHT: GOOD. So you noticed that this poem has RHYME in it, okay? In the end of the second line and the end of the FOURTH line. What ELSE do you notice?

This type of explicit attention to genres was rather rare in the classroom sessions that we studied. In fact, we found one instance in which a child raised a question about genre differences to which the teacher did not respond.

Word Meaning and Imagery

Poetry uses words in special ways: It uses resources of sound, imagery, and word association to achieve its effects (Pound, 1934). Poetry reading can potentially be difficult if there are unusual words, syntactic patterns, figurative language, or unusual lexical density. These features may account in part for why

the teachers encouraged multiple readings of poems. In a follow-up interview Mr. Porter alluded to the lexical distinctiveness of poetry as a focus of discussion:

Sometimes poetry may have different kinds of words and phrases in it and it may be meaningful to the children. So I do a little bit of talking about that. I sometimes do that before I read and sometimes afterwards. They may even ask afterwards if there is something unusual.

In a questionnaire response to how she shares poems in class, Mrs. McGuire wrote: "I usually ask students to read the poems two or three times silently before we read it aloud and discuss it. Since figurative language is used so often in poetry, we look for 'hidden' meanings."

The emphasis that was placed on words and images depended a good deal on the particular poem (or story) being read. Some poems led to discussion of imagery and unusual semantic juxtapositions. For example, after reading "You Be Saucer," Mrs. Light (gr. 2) and her class discussed images:

MRS. LIGHT: What else do you notice?

RICHARD: You can imagine it.

MRS. LIGHT: Tell me what you imagine.

RICHARD: Where it says . . . in the second stanza I can imagine a pear tree with a whole bunch of pears on it, and on the first stanza I can imagine a cup and saucer sitting on the table. And on the last one I can imagine the mom tucking their kid.

Mrs. Rollins (gr. 3) and her class provided another example when they

discussed semantic anomalies in "Truck of Dreams," such as "boxes of echoes." In yet another example, children in Mrs. Vinton's (gr. 4) class wrote, illustrated, and explained "fun words" before reading the poem "Feelings About Words." After reading, Mrs. Vinton helped the children to notice that some chose words that were "fun" because of how they sound, and others chose words because of what they mean.

Some poems (and stories) led to discussion of challenging vocabulary. For example, while reading the poem "Snow in the East," Mr. Porter's (gr. 1) class discussed the meaning of "grass on my knee bones." While reading *Over the Steamy Swamp*, Mrs. Wells and her (gr. 2) class stopped numerous times to discuss challenging words such as peckish, famished, and hostile. Children used terms such as "a describing word." Mrs. Wells wrote the words on the chalkboard as they discussed them. After reading the poem "What Is Yellow," the children in Mrs. Light's (gr. 2) class asked her the meaning of different unfamiliar words: felicity, mimosa, and Jersey milk. Mrs. Light gave a detailed answer to each question. Mrs. Light then asked the children which images they could picture during the reading.

In the following transcript, Mrs. McGuire (gr. 4) and her class paid attention to word meaning, imagery, theme, and genre conventions:

MRS. MCGUIRE: Anyone know what "mocking" means?

MOLLY: Repeating what people say.

STUDENT: Sometimes when people say something and you turn at 'em and

you go (makes mocking facial expression)—

MRS. MCGUIRE: What is the idea that almost all of these poems have in common? Go back and review the ones we've done, the ones we did yesterday, the ones we looked at today. Real quickly. What seems to be a common idea?

LISA: They all have the same [inaudible].

TOBY: The author always talks about the sea.

MRS. MCGUIRE: Well, but she only wrote three of them. What idea do they all share? We had the "blank page of sand," and the "water's cutting edge." We had "a flashing neon light," we had the "weeping willows" and the "snowfall last night." We had the "daisy that was in the yard," and we had the "sea rocks blown with the mist," and we had the "seagulls." Is there anything that just doesn't belong?

TOBY: The neon light.

MRS. MCGUIRE: Right. What do the other have in common then? If—I look at the sand and the water, the willows and the waterside, the snowfall on the pine trees—

RHIANNA: They all deal with being outside.

MRS. MCGUIRE: Being outside. With nature. Traditional Japanese haiku is based on nature.

Here Mrs. McGuire used a selective rereading strategy to draw children's attention to the imagery of the haiku they had read and to draw from that imagery a common theme that re-

flected the traditional content of the haiku genre.

Putting It All Together

Now that we have shown brief specific aspects of poetry reading, we want to analyze two longer segments of classroom talk (Appendices B and C). These excerpts show how, first, poetry reading involves an orchestration of performance, participation, and discussion, and second, how features of poems are related to the interactions that surround them.

An excerpt from Mr. Porter's (first grade) reading of "Snow in the East" (Appendix B) shows how several types of participation—acting out (pointing), chiming in, and predicting—are combined and orchestrated with teacher-led discussion and how the pattern of participation and discussion conforms to the stanzaic structure of the poem. Mr. Porter performed the four stanzas of the poem (italicized sections) in lines 2-8, 21-27, 32-43, and 45-53. This text performance alternated with discussion, which occurred between the stanzas: An introductory remark linking the text to the book illustration before the first stanza (line 1), a discussion of what happens when a snowflake lands on one's eyelashes after the first stanza (lines 9-18), a discussion of grass stains after the second stanza (lines 27-32), and a remark on the illustration after the third stanza (line 43). Notice that the discussion segments got shorter as the performance aspect of the poem took precedence. In contrast, the focus on children's participation in reading

increased as Mr. Porter led the children to guess where the action occurred in stanza three (lines 36–44) and stanza four (lines 49–53). In fact, after this first reading Mr. Porter and the children went on to read (perform) the poem again without any discussion to interrupt it.

Mrs. Wells' reading of the mixed-genre text *Over the Steamy Swamp* (Appendix C) shows how a poetic text that is very different from "Snow in the East" led to a very different kind of interaction while reading. *Over the Steamy Swamp* is noteworthy for its striking illustrations of swamp animals, its unusual vocabulary, and its rhythmic and cumulative sentence structures. These text features resulted not only in children's spontaneous participation in reading along (not shown in this segment) but also in discussion that focused on pictures and word meaning. In line 2 Philip misheard the unfamiliar word "peckish" as "piranha" because he was looking at the illustration showing a fish with sharp teeth. This led to an extended child-initiated discussion of piranhas (4–17). Mrs. Wells used the opportunity to turn the reading into a vocabulary lesson by writing the unfamiliar word on the chalkboard (10–12). The children went back to their discussion of piranhas (13–22). Then Valerie and several other children spoke up for the vocabulary agenda (24–27), even using the sanctioned language arts term "describing word" (which Mrs. Wells echoed in line 47). Mrs. Wells resumed the reading (performance) of the text in line 28 after Leanna asked her to go back and reread the previous sentence.

This rereading was tied to the cumulative sentence pattern—the discussion interrupted the flow of the text, unlike "Snow in the East," which had natural text breaks at the ends of stanzas. Again the reading was interrupted by a child's vocabulary question (line 37), which led to vocabulary discussion (38–46) and to Mrs. Wells's adding to the vocabulary list on the board (line 47).

These two excerpts illustrate contrasting interaction patterns that relate to two grade levels (first and second grade), two reading styles (Mr. Porter's more tightly controlled style and Mrs. Wells's looser style of following the lead of children's responses), and two texts (a short lyrical poem in stanzas and a book-length narrative with poetic features). Therefore, the contrast between poetry reading and prose reading, while useful, is far from exhaustive in explaining differences in how texts are read in classrooms.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of this study show systematic differences in how poems and stories are performed and discussed in elementary school classrooms. These results add to the field's understanding of the place of poetry in reading-language arts and literature education. They also raise issues related to conceptions of reading, genre, and classroom interactions.

Reading Poetry

We have documented a repertoire of poetry reading strategies used by teachers and children in elementary grade classrooms. These poetry reading strate-

gies mirror some of those suggested by poetry experts and documented in teacher research. Strickland (Strickland & Strickland, 1997), a poet and specialist in sharing poetry with children, and Shapiro (1985), who reviewed poetry reading recommendations in sixth-grade basal readers, recommend encouraging children to participate during reading aloud, rereading poems several times, following readings with open-ended questions, discussing the forms and devices of poetry, and encouraging children to write in response to poems.

Our results also mirror some of the poetry reading operations documented by Kintgen (1983) and others (Hanauer, 1998, 2001), most notably commenting about one's personal and emotional responses, analyzing rhyme and form, discussing word meaning, deducing what a poem means (as distinct from what it says), and making connections to other literary works. However, the performance and participation strategies shown in our study are quite different from Kintgen's study of the solitary, highly interpretive reading of expert poetry readers. These developmental and situational differences are important aspects of future studies of poetry reading.

The results reported here also mirror research showing that young children participate more in reading along with predictable language books. In a previous study, Charles (Elster, 1998) found that preschool children participated more in reading storybooks with predictable language patterns, while readings of books without these patterns were characterized by a greater

amount of text-related discussion. The poetry reading activities reported here also resemble the joint reading of simple picture-phrase books that emphasized children's participation in reading along in Mason, Peterman, and Kerr's (1989) kindergarten study.

This latter resemblance suggests that poetry reading is similar to instructional reading, at least to some extent: Both emphasize participation and predictable text patterns that can be exploited for classroom language arts activities (Bridge, 1986; Holdaway, 1979). The present study, like Holdaway's work, points out that aesthetic appreciation and early reading instruction can be profitably linked. However, Strickland and Strickland (1997) note the potential conflict between the aesthetic appreciation of poetry and the exploration of poetic forms and devices in classroom activities, a contrast between reader response and New Critical approaches to poetry seen in Small's (1992) middle school study. Likewise, aesthetic approaches to poetry and the use of poetry to teach reading may also conflict. Future work on this issue is needed.

In any case, the poetry reading we have described highlights the importance of performance as an aspect of early literacy experience, as advocated by Lenz (1992) and Strickland and Strickland (1997). Performance opportunities can be powerful scaffolds for children to observe and participate in reading in the early years (Cambourne, 1988; Erickson, 1999). Our findings highlight performance and participation aspects of joint adult-child reading

events in elementary classrooms, while previous research on joint adult-child reading has analyzed the type and content of discussion that surrounds the actual performance of texts (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 1984; Dickinson & Keebler, 1989; Martinez & Teale, 1994).

However, while joint language performance is cooperative (Grice, 1975) and rhythmic (Erickson, 1978), culture-specific rhythmic and rhetorical conventions sometimes cause interethnic miscommunication in institutional settings such as schools (e.g., Collins & Michaels, 1986). Cultural differences in the performance of classroom conversations can interfere with communication and learning in intercultural teacher-student situations. Likewise, differences in developmental levels, background experience, and generic expectations might interfere with teachers' and children's co-performance of texts in class. These issues also deserve further study as they relate to the interactive performance of poetry in classrooms.

In addition to suggesting the potential for classrooms to harbor authentic and pleasurable reading of poetry, our study also suggests the potential of poetry for drawing children's attention to the powerful resources of literate language. Poetry was, historically, the earliest oral literature. Its resources of sound effects (rhythm, rhyme, alliteration) and stark semantic and rhetorical effects (apostrophe, metaphor, circumlocution, word and phrase repetition, and storytelling) permitted the memorization and oral performance of texts as they were transmitted intergenera-

tionally in societies that lacked widespread written language resources (Lord, 1965). Thus, the formal resources of poetry serve to draw the reader's attention to the language itself (Jakobson, 1960). Despite the fact that modern poetry is written down, it takes advantage of those oral and linguistic resources to impersonate on paper monologic and dialogic voices that speak, declaim, and sing.

Poetry has the potential to unite teachers and learners through explicit collaborative performance of highly patterned language. Attention to poetic language can be accomplished through a variety of methods that relate to the age and background of the students and the interests and talents of the teacher. Thus, Mr. Porter's emphasis on the enjoyment of poetry seems well-suited to first graders. Mrs. Light and Mrs. McGuire, working with older students, emphasized the analysis of poetic meaning and form as tools for the enjoyment of poetry. The kind of explicit attention to reading performance during poetry reading seen in Mrs. McGuire's teaching makes the traditional link between reading and oral locution seen in Charles's father's childhood experience that we cited at the beginning of this article. Mrs. McGuire's teaching focused her fourth graders' attention on literary language and literary response in a serious way.

The results of this study also show apparent historical changes in approaches to poetry in the classroom. The teachers in this study had a more aesthetic approach to poetry, an approach more similar to that of Siemens

(1996) than to that reported by McClure, Harrison, and Reed (1989) and Shapiro (1988). Both of the latter studies were done in the 1980s, while Siemens's approach is from the 1990s. This study provides empirical evidence that teachers do use these poetic reading strategies, although not consistently across teachers, or as much as they might. For example, explicit discussion of the forms and meanings of poems and other genres, which is advocated by some *new genre* advocates (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 1993), was initiated by only a few of the teachers.

Voices of Genre

In addition to the implications our study has for the teaching of poetry, it also has broader implications for a theory of genre. First, the results support a *multi-genre perspective* on literacy development, emphasizing the fact that literacy experiences exist when real readers encounter a variety of different text genres. Second, our study shows a *multi-layered aspect* to how text genres are enacted through speech-activity genres in classrooms and presumably outside classrooms as well.

A Multi-Genre Perspective

In this study different text genres—poems, stories, and mixed-genre texts—were realized as different patterns of interaction in classroom settings. Following the line of work exemplified by Mason et al.'s (1989) kindergarten study, we have identified contrasting styles of poetry and story reading that seem to correspond to contrasting functions and frames (Beach & Phinney, 1998).

The slower, more emphatic poetry reading style emphasizes the formal features of the text (word sounds and rhythms) while the faster, less emphatic story reading style emphasizes story content and the forward movement of narrative. These contrasting styles of performing poems and stories lend socio-psychological reality to the theoretical construct of genre differences.

Reading literature is an activity that most people have experienced within and outside classrooms. The primarily aesthetic stance (Rosenblatt, 1978) of such readings contrasts with the primarily efferent stance taken when informational texts are read and studied in the content areas (science, social studies, etc.). Thus, different *genres of reading* are well recognized. But this study shows that there are also different sub-genres of reading (reading poems and reading stories) within the genre of classroom literature reading.

It is important to note, however, that the appearance of mixed-genre texts among the books used in this study argues against a simplistic dichotomous view of genre as poetry or prose narrative, fiction or non-fiction, aesthetic or efferent stances. These terms represent ends of a continuum, and in many cases various genre features and practices can co-exist in texts and literacy events. For example, there are many narrative poems such as Edward Lear's "The Owl and the Pussycat" and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and the combination of prose and verse sections in one text can be seen in medieval texts such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Furthermore, genres are not fixed but

dynamic entities (Freedman & Medway, 1994) so that the development of new genres that blur old genre lines is a characteristic of literary history. In terms of the performance of texts in classroom, the distinction between poetry reading, with its emphasis on performance and participation, and story reading, with its emphasis on informational discussion, is also a continuum, with many literacy events combining aspects of both ends.

The range of teacher practices in this study suggests the potential of these practices to influence student knowledge. Readers use genre knowledge to “to decode what texts mean and to generate multiplexed, layered predictions at the local and global levels” (Pappas & Pettigrew, 1998, p. 41). Young children become literate through participation in joint reading activities with teachers and other adults. Presumably, they learn different aspects of language and literacy as they participate differently and hear different foci of discussion.

For example, previous research on children’s poetry preferences has shown that children prefer humorous poetry of poets such as Prelutsky and Silverstein (Kutiper & Wilson, 1993; Terry, 1974). However, in order for children to progress from easily accessible to more challenging poems, they require the guidance of adults (Kutiper & Wilson, 1993). Small (1992) reports that a seventh-grade teacher taught her students how to read poems: Read it through twice, once straight through, then a second time “to think about the ideas and words” (p. 4). Mrs. McGuire

and Mrs. Light did similar activities. The collaboration between teachers and children in reading and discussing poems documented in this study constitutes a “poetic zone of proximal development” (Comstock, 1992, p. 267). Within this zone are balanced the accessible and engaging musical aspects of poetry (rhythm and sound patterns) and the sometimes less straightforward diction and themes of poems.

Recently theorists and researchers have begun to apply genre theory to early literacy development and classroom practices (Chapman, 1999; Donovan, 2001; Elster, 1998; Kamberelis, 1999a, 199b; Shine & Roser, 1999). Pappas (1999) found that children’s talk during joint readings of informational books matched the kind of texts they were discussing in syntactic and lexical features. Kamberelis (1999b) takes a Bakhtinian perspective on speech genres as codified patterns of discourse and social practice that delimit possibilities for seeing, conceptualizing, and being. He documents how fifth graders in a science class construct their social selves by adopting *social languages*: prototypical structures and roles that are current in the discourse community, including question-answer sequences, lab talk, and a popular culture version of doctors’ operating room talk. Children appropriate and use for their own purposes discourse patterns that surround them in face-to-face talk, popular media, and books—sub-genres of discourse and pieces of popular culture.

A full understanding of literacy development, then, has to take into account how children learn to control a

variety of genres. Whole class read-aloud time is a creative speech genre that can support a broad range of teacher-directed and child-directed talk and activities. These activities can impact children's attitudes toward language, literacy, learning, and themselves as people (Kamberelis, 1999b). Pappas and Pettigrew (1999) call for language arts teachers to teach *contexts in the mind* and to involve children in "opportunities to read and write various written genres as part of their everyday experiences in school" (p. 42). We would add that these genre experiences should include narrative, informational, and poetic texts.

Multi-Layered Genre Analysis

Classroom literary discourse, like other communal literacy activities, is *double-voiced* (Bakhtin, 1986), mingling the voices of writers (as represented in written texts) and their readers. In his study of religious literacy practices, Boyarin (1993) referred to "voices around the text," which occur when a new configuration of readers re-creates a text through collaborative performance and interpretation (p. 12). In the present study classroom readings of poems, stories, and mixed-genre texts recontextualized received text genres into new combinations of aesthetically and instructionally motivated literacy events.

The multi-layered view of genre presented in this study—text genres that are voiced in collaborative performances—fits with recent theoretical conceptions of genre that stress the

relationship between situations of use and the formal features of genre (Bazerman, 1994; Freedman & Medway, 1994). From the formal standpoint, genres are "*relatively stable types of . . . utterance*" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 60; emphasis in original); from the situational standpoint, they are "typical ways of engaging rhetorically with recurring situations" (Freedman & Medway, p. 2).

From this perspective, text and context do not comprise a simple dichotomy, but rather a series of "onion skin" layers (Barthes, 1977): a particular text genre (poem or story) situated within an activity genre (Beach & Phinney, 1998) or what Christie (1995) called a curriculum genre, such as joint teacher-class book reading, which is in turn situated within a particular classroom culture created by a teacher and group of learners. This collection of classroom activity genres is in turn situated within an institutional educational context composed of what Beach and Phinney call activity systems, the intertwined systems of activities that define classroom, school, and socio-cultural life.

New conceptions of genre see written texts, spoken texts, and human activities as generic. So, while oral and written language uses can be viewed as creating distinctly contrasting genres (Pappas & Pettigrew, 1998), collaborative reading in classroom settings can involve literacy events in which genre emerges out of a combination of oral and written discourse patterns. In the classroom performance of literature, literary genres are given voice by par-

icipating teachers and students, and the kind of voice they are given depends on functions for which genres are created.

In his follow-up interview Mr. Porter commented on connections between text genres and speech genres when we showed him data that suggested that poems were read more slowly and expressively than story. He responded:

That's something sort of natural, where a poem has its own meter and rhyme going, but the story has more structured sentences and their own rhythm of rise and fall. There is a striking difference between the poems we read and the stories, so I would expect to find a difference in the reading of them. The poem is going to keep their attention and be more contemplative, it's something that has a lot of movement in the sound, whereas in a story they can listen more to the ideas that are in the words. You don't necessarily have to be that animated with your voice jumping all over the place.

Here Mr. Porter acknowledges the connection among text features, their oral performance, and different functions for reading: The formal features of texts seem to call for a particular style of reading.

In tracing the replacement of oral reading by silent reading in schools in the early twentieth century, Allington (1984) notes a similar relationship among reading instruction in schools, reading habits in the general population, and reading materials:

The rise of silent reading practice in and out of schools seemed due to changes in the nature and availability of materials to be read, the decline in the number of listeners as literacy was expanded, and the changed purposes for which reading was used. (p. 829)

Allington goes on to note:

Initially silent reading behaviors were cultivated in the upper grades. . . . the popular opinion at that time had been that silent reading for studying informational texts was appropriate and should be developed once the child had mastered the process of reading orally. (p. 831)

Allington's comments suggest different reading styles tailored to different texts, situations, and developmental levels.

From the direction of text production, genres also link formal features and communication situations. Examining the historical development of genres, Bazerman (1994) illuminates the relationship between the formal and situational aspects of genre:

Over a period of time individuals perceive homologies in circumstances that encourage them to see these as occasions for similar kinds of utterances. These typified utterances, often developing standardized formal features, appear as ready solutions to similar appearing problems. Eventually the genres sediment into forms so expected that readers are surprised or even uncooperative if a standard perception of the solution is not met by an utterance of the expected form. (p. 82)

As Bazerman (1994) notes, the formal features of genre develop out of the needs for communication in situational contexts. Eventually these formal features may "sediment" into rigid forms. However, as Freedman and Medway (1994) note, genres continue to be dynamic and changeable as new situational contexts arise and as language users bend the received forms of genres to create new genre expectations.

As Bakhtin (1986) notes, genres are more flexible than grammatical forms.

As shown in this study, a rich activity genre such as joint book reading can voice a variety of text genres, and it can include a wide range of practices that highlight different parts of texts, of meaning, and of community-building among text users, both those present at the site of reading and those such as authors and illustrators who are present in the words and images they have left behind.

Limitations and Future Research

The study that we conducted has three main shortcomings. First, it involved a limited sample of teachers. This limitation was a pragmatic result of the extensive videotape analysis that we did. However, it raises the question of how representative these teachers are of teachers throughout the country. The range of reading and teaching approaches we documented even in this small sample deserves further study. What is the impact of different grade levels, different cultural orientations, and different types of teacher preparation for language arts and literature instruction?

Second, we got little information about the teachers' and students' perspectives on their own practices with different texts, aside from a single interview (with Mr. Porter) and a single follow-up questionnaire (with Mrs. McGuire). This added layer of participants' own interpretations of their actions would have added depth and validity to the findings, and it should be part of future work on classroom reading practices.

Finally, the study did not investigate the effects of teachers' reading practices on children's reading and writing development. What did the children learn about reading from the different genres that the teachers shared? Investigation of the connection between joint reading and independent reading of different genres (see Elster, 1995) should be the subject of future work.

Recently there has been increased interest in bringing a wider range of text genres into reading and language arts instruction (Caswell & Duke, 1998; Pappas, 1993). These efforts have most often been aimed at including more informational text alongside narrative literature or on including digital texts alongside traditional print texts (e.g., Reinking, Labbo, & McKenna, 2000). However, little attention has been paid to poetic texts. It is also important to ask what place reading poetry has in today's world and what place it should play in the language arts curriculum. Ethnographic studies of poetic language in modern life might bring to light the practices of reading or reciting poetry at ceremonial occasions such as weddings, funerals, and religious services; the reading and writing of poetry during courtship; the private reading of poetry by individuals; and the place of popular music song lyrics in people's lives. Understanding of these authentic uses of poetry might lead to productive goals and strategies for sharing and studying poetry in schools.

Our study of poetry and story reading in classrooms, if it has value,

calls for additional empirical work on teaching and learning practices in classrooms, work that is grounded in an understanding of the importance and interconnection of spoken and written

language in the accomplishment of teaching and learning. It also calls for a continued appreciation of the complexity of genre and of how genres mediate communication and learning.

Authors' Notes

This article is dedicated to "Mrs. Wells," a dedicated and talented teacher who died a year after the data were collected. We and her colleagues miss her and mourn her untimely passing. We wish to thank all the participants in the study—the teachers, children, and administrators. Finally, we thank Xiaoning Chen, Dory Shnick, and Julie Patterson for assistance in transcribing, coding, and analyzing the data. Please direct correspondence to the first author at Department of Curriculum & Instruction, BRNG 1442, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907; email elster@purdue.edu.

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Children's Literature

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APPENDIX A: EXCERPTS OF POEMS, STORIES, AND MIXED-GENRE TEXTS

Poems

You be saucer,
I'll be cup,
piggyback, piggyback,
pick me up.
You be tree,
I'll be pears,
carry me, carry me
up the stairs. . . .
You Be Saucer

Snow in the east,
snow in the west,
snow on my eyelashes,
I like best.

Grass in the east,
grass in the west,
grass on my knee bones,
I like best. . . .

Snow in the East

Stories

. . . My Uncle Adam wears a white apron. The apron has a big pocket in front. He is a plasterer. He plasters houses, inside and outside. I want a white apron with a pocket. And I want to help my Uncle Adam.

My Aunt Elizabeth measures me. She cuts a piece of cloth and sews an apron with a pocket for me. "Thank you, Aunt Elizabeth. I love my apron." . . .

My Apron

Mixed-Genre Texts

Distant rumblings
stomach grumbings
quiet moaning
far off groaning
breeze is stirring
leaves are swirling
sun is fading
dark clouds waiting . . .

Rain Song

Lizard lived in the mountains of the west.
He liked it there and lived on a big flat rock.
He was so happy living there that he often made up songs.
They were not fancy songs, but they were his.
Almost every day, he would dance about
on his rock singing a song:

“Zoli zoli zoli – zoli zoli zoli

Rock is my home – rock is my home

Zoli zoli zoli – zoli zoli zoli. . .”

One day Bear heard him singing. Bear was the kind
Who, when he saw something he liked, took it.
Bear liked Lizard’s song and he wanted it. . .

Lizard’s Song

. . . And the dragonfly was too interested in the mosquito to notice (turn page) a famished frog watching him watching the mosquito. But the frog was so excited she didn’t see (turn page) a peckish fish watching her watching the dragonfly watching the mosquito. And the fish was too busy thinking about the frog to notice (turn page) a hungry heron watching her watching the frog watching the dragonfly watching the mosquito. . . .

Over the Steamy Swamp

Portions of “What Is Yellow?” by Mary O’Neill reprinted from *Hailstones and Halibut Bones* with permission from Random House Children’s Books. Portions of “Snow in the East” and “You Be Saucer” excerpted from *You Be Good and I’ll Be Night* by Eve Merriam. Copyright ©1988 by Eve Merriam. Used by permission of Marian Reiner.

APPENDIX B: EXCERPT OF FIRST READING OF “SNOW IN THE EAST,” MR. PORTER, GR. 1

- 1 Porter: NOW. It’s NICE to have snow in the EAST and snow in the WEST, because people like to go SKIing. But this is going to tell us where THIS little girl likes to have snowflakes.
(shows picture)
- 2 “Snow in the EAST”
- 3 Children: point
- 4 Porter: “Snow in the WEST”
- 5 Children: point

6 Porter: "Snow on my EYELashes" (points to his eye)

7 Children: point to their eyes

8 Porter: "I like best."

9 Did you ever have a snowflake land on your EYELashes?

10 Children: YEAH.

11 Porter: What HAPpened?

12 Child: It TICKles.

13 Child: It MELTS

14 Porter: It TICKled and then it...

15 Child: MELTed

16 Porter: It MELTed. How hot is your BODY?

17 Child: Like ninety-seven perCENT.

18 Porter: Ninety-eight deGREES.. So you MELTed that old snowflake.

...

19 Porter: Well let's see what ELSE this girl likes. Are you ready to point in the right diRECTION?

20 Children: YEAH!

21 Porter: Here's the NEXT part. "GRASS in the EAST,"

22 Children point

23 Porter: "GRASS in the WEST,"

24 Children point

25 Porter: "Grass on my KNEE bones"

26 Children point to knees

27 Porter: "I like best." How did she do THAT?

28 Children: GRASS stains.

29 Porter: GRASS stains. You think she's gonna get in TROUBLE?

30 Children: YEAH!

31 Child: I do.

32 Porter: I HOPE not. Here's anOTHer one. "LIGHT in the EAST,"

33 Children point

34 Porter: "Light in the WEST,"

35 Children point

36 Porter: Where do you think she's gonna like-

37 Children: EYES!

38 Porter: On her EYES? I like THAT idea.

39 Child: In her EARS.

40 Child: On her HAIR.

41 Porter: "Light in my WINDow"

42 Children: OH!

43 Porter: "I like best." See the lights in the WINDow? (shows picture)

44 Children: YEAH.

45 Porter: Here's the LAST part. "NIGHT in the EAST,"

46 Children point

47 Porter: "Night in the WEST,"

48 Children point

49 Porter: Where do you think SHE might like it?

50 Children: BED!

51 Porter: Let's SEE. "Night in my OWN ..."

52 Children: Bed.

53 Porter: "...BED./ I like best." Ready to do it real FAST?

54 Children: YEAH!

Mr. Porter goes on to read the poem again while the children point to the directions "east" and "west", and to their eyelashes and knees. On the last line, the children mime going to bed.

**APPENDIX C: EXCERPT OF WORD STUDY IN
"OVER THE STEAMY SWAMP" (MRS. WELLS, GR. 2)**

- 1 Wells: "But the FROG was SO exCITed SHE didn't see...(turns page) ...a PECKish FISH watching HER WATCHing the DRAGONfly -"
- 2 Phillip: What do you MEAN piRANha?
- 3 Wells "WATCHing the mosQUIto. And the FISH -"
- 4 Alex: That's not a piRANha.
- 5 Wells: "was too busy THINKing about the FROG -" PHILLip, are YOU asking about that WORD that describes the FISH?
- 6 Phillip: YEAH, I think it's piRANha.
- 7 Child: NO it's NOT. Piranhas have sharp teeth like JAGuars' teeth.
- 8 Wells: So you're looking at the PICTure and saying it's not a piranha.
- 9 Child: No fish has teeth as big as a piRANha's.
- 10 Wells: Well you know WHAT? I'm going to put this word up on the BOARD since you MENTIONed it.
(gets up and writes "peckish fish" on chalkboard)
- 11 Child: It's not a piRANha.
- 12 Wells: It's used right NEXT to the word FISH, And it's the kind of word that certainly beGINS like piranha. And a piranha IS a kind of FISH, isn't it?.
- 13 Child: BUt it's NOT BLACK.
- 14 Child: And it CAN'T live in the COLD.
- 15 Wells: Maybe his TEETH are what makes Phillip think this word might be piRANha.
- 16 Child: But it's NOT.
- 17 Phillip: It SHOULD be.
- ...
- 18 Wells: It SHOULD be. IfYOU were writing this story it would be pirANha.
- 19 Child: A pirANha's teeth is WAY BIGGer.
- 20 Child: And SHARPer in the MIDDLE
- 21 Child: And it could BREAK through FLESH.
- 22 Child: In the MIDDLE they do. But they have two big teeth right HERE. (points to corners of mouth)
- 23 Wells: I bet we could find it in a FACT book about FISH.
- ...
- 24 Valerie: I think it's a deSCRIBing word.
- 25 Wells: Valerie thinks it might be a deSCRIBing word.
- 26 Child: I think it IS a describing word. Like peckish is FOOLsih.
- 27 Child: Peckish is kind of SMALL.
- ...
- 28 Wells: Leanna wants me to read this whole SENTence again. "and the FISH was too busy thinking about the FROG to notice...
(turns page) ... a HUNGry HERon WATCHing HER WATCHing the FROG WATCHing the DRAGONfly -"

- 29 Child: LOOK at the FISH. (points at picture)
- 30 Wells: “WATCHing the mosQUIto. The HERon was too busy thinking about DINner to notice... (turns page)
- 31 Children: OH! YEAH!
- 32 Wells: “... a STARVing SNAKE WATCHing HIM WATCHing the FISH WATCHing the FROG - “
- 33 Alex: It says STARVing SNAKE.
- 34 Wells: “WATCHing the DRAGonfly “
- 35 Children: WATCHing the mosQUIto.
- 36 Wells: “WATCHing the mosQUIto. But the SNAKE was so STEALTHily SLITHering - “
- 37 Alex: What does THAT mean?
- 38 Wells: POINT of QUESTion. Alex wants to know - what word gave YOU a puzzle? Was it one of these S words?
- 39 Alex: Yes.
- 40 Wells: Was it SLITHering? What does SLITHering mean? Make your arms SLITHer.
- 41 Children: Make slithering motions with their arms
- 42 Alex: It's that OTHer one.
- 43 Child: SLImy.
- 44 Child: STEALTHily.
- 45 Wells: STEALTHily.
- 46 Child: That means like kind of QUIet.
- 47 Wells: AnOTHer desCRIBing word that is a PUZZle. Now we have TWO words that describe - (gets up and writes “stealthily slithering snake” on the chalkboard.

The reading and discussion continue. Mrs. Wells continues to write words and phrases on the board.