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A Comparison of Book Choices of Fifth-Grade Pupils Today with Those of a Generation or More Ago

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Sanders,

Anita Dishman

1981

A COMPARISON OF BOOK CHOICES OF FIFTH-GRADE PUPILS
TODAY WITH THOSE OF A GENERATION OR MORE AGO

A Field Study
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Teacher Education
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education

by
Anita Dishman Sanders
Spring 1981

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A COMPARISON OF BOOK CHOICES OF FIFTH-GRADE PUPILS
TODAY WITH THOSE OF A GENERATION OR MORE AGO

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A COMPARISON OF BOOK CHOICES OF FIFTH-GRADE PUPILS

TODAY WITH THOSE OF A GENERATION OR MORE AGO

Anita Dishman Sanders Spring 1981 29 pages

Directed by: D. H. Geeslin, D. E. Ritter, and E. L. Counts

Department of Teacher Education Western Kentucky University

Questionnaires containing the names of ten books, two series, and spaces for titles to be written in were distributed to 482 fifth-grade pupils to obtain data on the following questions: Are trade books that were popular with fifth-grade pupils a generation or more ago maintaining their popularity: Which new titles of children's books have emerged and gained popularity? Are selected series books popular with today's fifth-graders? To what extent do reading interests of boys and girls differ at the fifth-grade level? Interest scores were computed on all titles rated by as many as ten subjects. Only King of the Wind and Wonderful Wizard of Oz, from the list of books popular twenty-five years ago, were popular with the subjects surveyed today. Of the books written in and rated, The Mouse and the Motorcycle received the highest score. The Hardy Boys series met the standard of the study, with the score of the Nancy Drew series being only slightly below. Only King of the Wind of the predetermined books was popular with both boys and girls. There were no books written in and rated by ten boys and ten girls.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Today's children have access to books in a way and in a quantity their grandparents or parents never knew. The children of the present generation are viewed as people with certain rights, among them the right to their own preferences in books.

The heaviest reading period in life may be between the ages of ten and twelve. Interests such as adventure in history or fiction, lives of real people, heroes of mythology and legend; science fiction, and war open up to children, and books can feed these interests. Children's reading in these years is likely to be as varied as it will ever be.

The publishing industry pours out approximately two thousand five hundred new "juveniles" each year. The publishers have given us shorter books geared to the times, faster-moving stories, and better illustrations. Today's book as compared with one from a generation ago is altogether more readable and has a more inviting look.

Review of Related Research

A great deal of research has been published dealing with children's reading interests. According to Furness about two hundred studies have been made and these studies show that three factors inherent in children determine their reading: intelligence, age, and sex.¹ Furness also stated that our knowledge of reading interests in general comes from three sources: first, observations, which include circulation statistics in libraries; second, questionnaires; third, publishers' experimentations with different types of books for children.

Robinson listed several techniques used to identify children's reading interests: various types of forced choice; personal interviews; written logs, diaries, and inventories; records of library books chosen; asking for children's favorites among selections read to them; asking for reasons for choices and/or most interesting episodes or characters; and, tabulating each child's favorite story as he/she recalls it.²

Each of these investigative techniques has limitations in application and in the ways the results can be tabulated. When children are asked to choose among alternatives, it is possible that those presented are all uninteresting. Thus the results may reflect choices among the

¹Edna Lue Furness, "Researches on Reading Interests," Education 84 (September 1963): 3.

²Helen M. Robinson and Samuel Weintraub, "Research Related to Children's Interests and to Developmental Values of Reading," Library Trends 22 (October 1973): 83.

topics of least interest, which are subsequently reported as ones of most interest. An additional problem is that investigators may have defined their interest categories in different ways.¹

The earliest report on children's book choices seems to have been made anonymously in 1889.² The reporter went to a school of sixty boys and inquired into their reading habits. He found that more than half had read Robinson Crusoe, Uncle Tom's Cabin, Swiss Family Robinson, Ragged Dick, and Arabian Nights.

Terman and Washburne's early studies of children in the age range of nine to twelve years revealed that the dominant reading interests were fiction.³ Among the early questionnaire studies was that of A. M. Jordan. In the two studies made of 5,000 children aged seven to eighteen, Jordan found adventure stories and fiction were the most popular.⁴

Marie Rankin studied the circulation of books in eight public libraries located in Illinois, New York, and

¹Ibid.

²"What Do the Pupils Read?" Education 9 (May 1889): 615, quoted in Dorine Geeslin, "Preferred Books, Past and Present," The Florida Reading Quarterly 5 (December 1968): 28.

³Robinson, "Research Related to Children's Interests," p. 89.

⁴A. M. Jordan, Children's Interests in Reading (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), quoted in Furness, "Researches on Reading Interests," p. 3.

Ohio. The libraries were chosen to represent large and small urban and village populations. She reported that the Newberry books selected by adults were not always popular with children. In asking pupils how they selected books, Rankin found that the theme of the book was the most important single factor. The youngsters' favorite themes were related to heroes, mystery, adventure, and rivalry in sports.¹

A study Norvell reported in 1958 was based upon more than 4,000,000 expressions of opinion from 124,000 children.² Twenty-five hundred teachers assisted in this study which was in progress more than twenty-five years. Norvell listed in the order of popularity fifty selections tested in grades four through six. The top five titles were: My Friend Flicka, Daniel in the Lion's Den, Skipper, Bambi, and Ulysses and Cyclops.

Geeslin asked 288 fifth-graders in ten classrooms to submit the names of five books which they had read since becoming fifth-graders and to rate them as "very interesting," "fairly interesting," or "not interesting."³ Black Beauty and Tom Sawyer were the only books recognized by both Terman and Norvell as favorites that were also choices

¹Furness, "Researches on Reading Interests," p. 3.

²George W. Norvell, What Boys and Girls Like to Read, (Morristown, New Jersey: Silver Burdett Company, 1958), p. 193.

³Dorine Geeslin, "Preferred Books, Past and Present," The Florida Reading Quarterly 5 (December 1968): 29.

of these fifth-graders. Geeslin further reported that interest scores were high for My Friend Flicka, King of the Wind, Mr. Popper's Penguins, Pinocchio, Toby Tyler, Emil and the Detectives, Wonderful Wizard of Oz, Bambi, Black Beauty, and Tom Sawyer. The boys expressed interest in Call of the Wild, Huckleberry Finn, and Robinson Crusoe while the girls reported a high degree of interest in Heidi.¹

An informal study of children's reading interests was done by each prospective member of Beta Upsilon Chapter, Pi Lambda Theta in the early 1970s. Each person found ten or more children who volunteered to fill out a Reading Interest form. On the form, each child was requested to record name, age, sex, school, and the title and author of a book he/she had read. The form also carried openended statements which allowed the boys and girls to make brief or extensive comments about why they liked or disliked the books they had read. Eight hundred twenty-five forms were collected and grouped according to age and sex. Excitement and content were the features that appeared from analyzing why ten-year-old boys liked the books they read. Animals and mystery followed by science were the main topics that the boys liked. Factors important for ten-year-old girls were excitement, plot, characters, content, and humor. Topics which

¹Dorine H. Geeslin, "A Descriptive Study of the Current Book Choices of Pupils on Three Grade Levels: A Search for the Effects of Reading Age upon Reading Interests" (Ed.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1967), pp. 81-82.

these girls liked were animals, mysteries, and people, with more than twice as many favoring animals over mysteries.¹

Many writers on children's reading interests state or imply that below the junior high school level the differences in the reading preferences of boys and girls are minor. However, Norvell concluded that from grade three to grade eight sex is an increasingly important factor in children's reading interests.²

Robinson reported that children at the middle-grade level have a greater variety of interests than at a primary-grade level. Sex differences are generally quite pronounced. Boys tend to prefer action and adventure as well as historical and scientific topics. Girls often enjoy realistic and fanciful stories, mysteries, and humor.³

According to Furness, sex differences are in evidence by the age of nine.⁴ Boys more frequently seek information about geology, geography, and rockets while girls tend to seek information about foreign countries, history, and famous authors and artists.

¹Beta Upsilon Chapter, Pi Lambda Theta, "Children's Interests Classified by Age Level." The Reading Teacher 27 (April 1974): 696.

²Norvell, What Boys and Girls Like to Read, p. 36.

³Robinson, "Research Related to Children's Interests," p. 92.

⁴Furness, "Researches on Reading Interests," p. 5.

More than four decades ago, May Lazar reported "marked sex differences" in books that children selected.¹ For one thing, girls read more books than boys. Both boys and girls ranked mystery stories in first place. Boys chose next, in order, adventure, detective stories, history, invention, science, nature and animals, fairy tales, biography, novels, stories about home and school, and poetry. After mystery stories, girls gave a higher ranking to stories about home or school activities.

Taylor and Schneider studied the book preferences of Chicago public school pupils in grades five, six, seven, and eight. They found a "statistically significant difference between boys and girls in their choice of subject interest."² The boys recorded adventure as their major interest while the girls favored stories classified as "Teenage and Romance."

Paul Witty reported that boys prefer adventure and vigorous action while girls like fairy tales, poetry, and sentimental fiction.³ He further reported that both boys

¹May Lazar, Reading Interests, Activities, and Opportunities of Bright, Average, and Dull Children (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1937), quoted in Furness, "Researches on Reading Interests," p. 5.

²Marion W. Taylor and Mary A. Schneider, "What Books Are Our Children Reading?" The Reading Interests of Upper-Grade Pupils," Chicago Schools Journal 38 (January-February 1957), quoted in Furness, "Researches on Reading Interests," p. 5.

³Paul A. Witty, "Studies of Children's Interests," Elementary English 37 (December 1960): 541.

and girls liked animal stories and that boys read more non-fiction than girls.

Often children of this age will readily read books which run in series. The repetition of familiar characters, names, and situations in another and still another book facilitates reading.¹

There are two kinds of series books: those which serialize the adventures of one hero or heroine and his or her companions and those which are series only in format and title, but actually deal with different subjects in each volume. When children think of series books, however, they usually mean those long lines of stories continuing the adventures of the same person or persons.

The Nancy Drew series which began in 1930 is today the best selling juvenile series in the United States and France.² The creator of the Nancy Drew series, Edward Stratemeyer, was also responsible for the Hardy Boys series which is still sold in many stores.

The Nancy Drew series lends itself to criticism in terms of limited depth of characterization and lack of realism. Stories are formula-fixed and plots are self-evident. Their characters move as if in a vacuum, but they do move and that is what seems important in all of them.³

¹Josette Frank, Your Child's Reading Today, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1969), p. 90.

²Barbara S. Wertheimer and Carol Sands, "Nancy Drew Revisited," Language Arts 52 (1975): 1131.

³Frank, Your Child's Reading Today, p. 90.

According to Frank, the child's reading of these books is not a waste of time. He or she experiences genuine pleasure in meeting again the familiar acquaintances in each succeeding story and wants to share in their further adventures.

Most educators would probably agree that children do outgrow the series books; and teachers, librarians, and parents might capitalize on their interest in them by offering other books which come in series and have more substance. Laura Ingall Wilder's eight books, beginning with The Little House in the Big Woods, Maud Lovelace's Betsy-Tacy stories, and Carolyn Haywood's Eddie books carry the same characters forward toward further adventures and at the same time offer authentic background and fine writing.¹

In 1976, the Children's Literature Association, a professional organization made up of teachers, librarians, authors, and publishers, announced their choice of ten best American children's books published in the last two hundred years as their tribute to the Bicentennial. These books were: Charlotte's Web by E. B. White, Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak, Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain, Little Women by Louisa May Alcott, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain, Little House in the Big Woods by Laura Ingalls Wilder, Johnny Tremain by Esther Forbes, Wizard of Oz by Frank Baum, Little House on the Prairie by Laura Ingalls

¹Ibid.

Wilder, with Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell and Julie of the Wolves by Jean George tied for tenth place.

A study in 1976 at Breckinridge Elementary School in Lexington, Kentucky, compared these ten favorite American books with the favorite books among the pupils there in grades three through six. Fifth-grade pupils at Breckinridge selected Tom Sawyer, Little House on the Prairie, and Charlotte's Web as their favorites.¹

Almost no book written before 1865 has survived in the reading lists of children today. Four books published between 1865 and 1876 marked the beginning of the contribution of American writers to what was to become modern literature for children. The four surviving books are Hans Brinker, Little Women, Story of a Bad Boy, and The Peterkin Papers.²

Books with a recognized historical setting are seldom referred to by children as out-of-date. Children, until the age of eleven or twelve, have a tendency to view time in two segments: today and long ago.³

Many people believe that the heaviest reading period in life is between the ages of ten and twelve.⁴ According

¹Doris Elliott, "Everybody's Favorite Children's Books," KLA Bulletin 41 (Summer 1977): 13.

²Sara Innis Fenwick, "Which Will Fade, Which Endure?" Wilson Library Bulletin 47 (October 1972): 179.

³Ibid., p. 183.

⁴Ruth Tooze, Your Children Want to Read, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1957), p. 81.

to Ashley, children's reading habits are stabilized by grade five; therefore, the educator's job in promoting higher quality literature cannot begin too soon.¹ The parent must also share in the goal of helping the child develop an interest in reading, a taste for worthwhile material, positive attitudes toward reading, and good reading habits. The child who loves to read is the child who will more nearly approach his reading potential.²

Statement of the Problem

This study was concerned with the comparison of book choices of today's fifth-grade pupils with those of a generation ago. The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Are trade books that were popular with fifth-grade pupils a generation or more ago maintaining their popularity?
2. Which new titles of children's books have emerged and gained popularity?
3. Are selected series books popular with today's fifth-graders?
4. To what extent do reading interests of boys and girls at the fifth-grade level differ?

¹L. F. Ashley, "Children's Reading Interests and Individualized Reading," Elementary English 47 (December 1970): 1096.

²"Helping Children Develop an Interest in Reading," Utah Council, International Reading Association 1 (March 1971): 39.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were basic to this study:

1. It was assumed that fifth-grade pupils have similar interests no matter where they live.
2. It was assumed that fifth-grade pupils would remember and record the books they had read during fifth grade and would tell how well they liked them.
3. It was assumed that reading interests of boys and girls differ.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were basic to this study:

Juveniles. In this study the term refers to books written especially for children.

Reading interests. The types of reading matter that attract and hold a reader.¹

Series books. In this study the term refers to those books which serialize the adventures of one hero or heroine and his or her companions.²

Trade books. The term trade books includes all kinds of books other than textbooks and encyclopedias. The books may be clothbound or paperbound editions, fiction or non-fiction.³

¹Carter V. Good, Dictionary of Education, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1959), p. 296.

²Frank, Your Child's Reading Today, p. 89.

³Patricia Jean Cianciolo, "Encourage Human Variations by Using Children's Books," The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin 32 (Fall 1965): 23.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

This study compared the book choices of fifth-grade pupils today with those of a generation ago. It attempted to determine whether new titles of children's books had emerged and gained popularity, if series books were popular with today's fifth-graders, and the extent to which reading interests of boys and girls differed at the fifth-grade level.

Subjects. Table 1 shows the composition of the non-randomly selected group of fifth-grade pupils. The schools were located in four southcentral Kentucky counties: Warren, Wayne, Logan, and Allen. Subjects consisted of 244 boys and 238 girls for a total of 482 pupils in seventeen classrooms.

TABLE 1
COMPOSITION OF SUBJECTS

NAME OF SCHOOL	CLASSROOMS	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
Jones-Jaggers Center	1	14	11	25
L. C. Curry School	2	22	23	45
Wayne Elementary #3	6	91	87	178
Cumberland Trace School	3	31	34	65
Chandlers School	1	13	15	28
Allen County Elementary	3	54	53	107
Oakland Elementary	1	19	15	34
Total	17	244	238	482

Materials. A modification of Geeslin's 1967 questionnaire was used to survey the book choices of fifth-grade pupils today.¹ The questionnaire, a sample of which is found in the Appendix, consisted of a list of ten books which Norvell found to be popular with pupils in the middle grades.² The names of two series and spaces for titles to be written in were also included on the questionnaire.

Procedures. Each subject was given a questionnaire containing the names of ten books, two series, and spaces for him/her to write in additional titles. Each subject was instructed to rate each book, if he/she had read it, by marking the appropriate column. Columns were captioned Very Interesting, Fairly Interesting, and Not Interesting.

The 482 returned questionnaires provided the data used in answering the questions in the statement of the problem. The following procedures were used:

1. Interest scores were computed by the following formula: To the number of reports that a selection is "very interesting" add half the number of "fairly interesting" reports. Divide the sum by the total of all reports on the selection.³ The titles were considered popular with today's pupils if they had interest scores of seventy-

¹Geeslin, "Study of the Current Book Choices," p. 97.

²Norvell, What Boys and Girls Like to Read, p. 193.

³George W. Norvell, The Reading Interests of Young People, (Chicago: D. C. Heath and Co., 1950), p. 13.

five or more and had been rated by as many as ten pupils.

2. Popular new titles emerged when subjects wrote in titles. An interest score was computed on any title written in by ten or more pupils.
3. Interest scores were computed for the series books if they were rated by ten or more pupils. They were considered popular if the scores were seventy-five or more.
4. Interest scores were computed separately for boys and girls on only those books rated by as many as ten boys and ten girls. If any set of scores differed by ten points or more it was reported as differing. Books that were rated by the requisite number of boys, but were rated by fewer than ten girls were listed as an indication of interest variability. A list showing the books rated by ten or more girls, but not rated by the requisite number of boys was included.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Interest scores were computed according to Norvell's formula for all predetermined books on the questionnaire. Table 2 shows the responses which these favorites of the past received. Fifth-grade subjects rated Doctor Doolittle's Post Office, My Friend Flicka, Mr. Popper's Penguins, Toby Tyler, Pinocchio, Emil and the Detectives, Girl in White Armor, and Bambi so low that their interest scores fell below 75.00. Only King of the Wind with an interest score of 79.62 and Wonderful Wizard of Oz with an interest score of 79.33 exceeded the pre-set standard.

Table 2 also shows separate interest scores for all the books for both boys and girls. King of the Wind, Mr. Popper's Penguins, Wonderful Wizard of Oz, and Bambi obtained interest scores above 75.00 from the girls, but only King of the Wind received an interest score above 75.00 from the boys.

The two sets of interest scores differed by at least ten points on Toby Tyler, Emil and the Detectives, Wonderful Wizard of Oz, and Bambi.

TABLE 2
 SUBJECTS' RESPONSES TO TEN TITLES SUBMITTED TO THEM

Title-Author	Total Interest Score	Boys' Interest Score	Girls' Interest Score
King of the Wind-Henry	79.62	78.43	80.70
Wonderful Wizard of Oz-Baum	79.33	73.73	84.04
Bambi-Salten	74.91	68.32	80.18
Mr. Popper's Penguins-Atwater	72.61	68.29	76.74
Pinocchio-Collodi	67.94	67.44	68.32
My Friend Flicka-O'Hara	65.07	65.00	65.15
Emil and the Detectives-Kastner	61.11	65.38	55.26
Toby Tyler-Otis	59.83	64.47	52.17
Doctor Doolittle's Post Office-Lofting	56.49	60.00	53.37
Girl in White Armor-Paine	55.20	53.70	57.14

Ten popular titles, both old and new, as shown in Table 3 emerged when the subjects wrote in titles. Interest scores for eight of the ten books were well above 75.00. Only Freckle Juice and Johnny Tremain fell below. The Mouse and the Motorcycle received the highest score with 100.00.

TABLE 3
RESPONSES TO TEN TITLES SUBMITTED BY SUBJECTS

Title-Author	Interest Score
The Mouse and the Motorcycle-Cleary	100.00
Black Stallion-Farley	95.00
My Side of the Mountain-George	95.00
Charlotte's Web-White*	94.28
Black Beauty-Sewell	93.33
Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret-Blume	90.90
Little House on the Prairie-Wilder	88.63
Henry Huggins-Cleary	87.50
Freckle Juice-Blume	67.85
Johnny Tremain-Forbes	15.78

There were no books written in and rated by as many as ten boys and ten girls. As an indication of interest variation Johnny Tremain was rated by the requisite number of boys but fewer than ten girls. Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret, Black Beauty, Charlotte's Web, Freckle Juice, Henry Huggins, and Little House on the Prairie were rated by the requisite number of girls but fewer than ten boys.

The results of this part of the study were based upon 1,334 expressions of opinion from 482 students. They submitted the names of 755 books as shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4
NUMBER OF TITLES SUBMITTED BY SUBJECTS

Titles submitted by	Number	Totals
One boy, no girl	237	- -
One girl, no boy	312	- -
One subject only	- -	549
More than one boy, no girl	60	- -
More than one girl, no boy	79	- -
More than one subject of same sex	- -	139
Both boys and girls	67	67
Totals	755	755

Interest scores were computed for both series books included on the questionnaire. The Nancy Drew series obtained an interest score of 74.29, and the Hardy Boys series obtained a score of 78.09. Table 5 shows the scores that each series obtained from the total group of subjects, from boys only, and from girls only. The Nancy Drew series received a score of 79.14 from the girls and 66.51 from the boys. The Hardy Boys series received a score of 79.81 from the girls and 76.29 from the boys. The interest scores on the Nancy Drew series differed by more than ten points between the boys and the girls.

TABLE 5
RESPONSES TO SERIES TITLES SUBMITTED TO SUBJECTS

Title of Series- Author	Total Interest Score	Boys' Interest Score	Girls' Interest Score
Nancy Drew series- Keene	74.29	66.51	79.14
Hardy Boys series- Dixon	78.09	76.29	79.81

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This study posited the following questions: Are trade books that were popular with fifth-grade pupils a generation or more ago maintaining their popularity? Which new titles of children's books have emerged and gained popularity? Are selected series books popular with today's fifth-graders? To what extent do reading interests of boys and girls differ at the fifth-grade level?

Conclusions

Data consisting of 1,467 opinions from 482 students were evaluated in investigating the first question. It was found that only King of the Wind and Wonderful Wizard of Oz met the standards of the study sufficiently to be termed popular with today's fifth-graders. Bambi's score fell slightly below 75.00 while Girl in White Armor received the lowest score of the ten books which Norvell had listed as the favorites of boys and girls a generation or more ago.

When subjects were asked to write in and rate other books they had read as fifth-graders, old titles as well as new ones emerged. Even though 1,334 opinions were expressed on 755 books, only ten books were submitted by as many as ten subjects. The eight with acceptable interest

scores were: The Mouse and the Motorcycle, Black Stallion, My Side of the Mountain, Charlotte's Web, Black Beauty, Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret, Little House on the Prairie, and Henry Huggins. The Mouse and the Motorcycle was the only book in the study to receive the highest possible interest score.

The writer was interested in the popularity of two series of books; consequently, Nancy Drew books and the Hardy Boys series were added to the questionnaire submitted to children. The latter met the study's standard with an interest score above 75.00, the score of the former being only slightly below. Their treatment according to the sex of the respondents will be discussed in a subsequent paragraph of this chapter.

All predetermined books on the questionnaire were rated by as many as ten boys and ten girls; therefore, interest scores were computed on all of them. King of the Wind was the only title to receive an interest score above 75.00 from both boys and girls. It was also the only title to receive a score above 75.00 from the boys, but Mr. Popper's Penguins, Wonderful Wizard of Oz, and Bambi received interest scores above 75.00 from the girls. The two sets of interest scores differed by at least ten points on Toby Tyler, Emil and the Detectives, Wonderful Wizard of Oz, and Bambi. There were no books written in and rated by as many as ten boys and ten girls. However, Johnny Tremain was rated by the requisite number of boys, and

Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret, Black Beauty, Charlotte's Web, Freckle Juice, Henry Huggins, and Little House on the Prairie were rated by the requisite number of girls. The Nancy Drew series received a score of 79.14 from the girls and twelve points less from the boys. The girls gave the Hardy Boys series a rating of 79.81, higher than the rating given that series by the boys. Apparently boys and girls have been reading the same series books; however, the girls have enjoyed those published primarily for boys more than boys have enjoyed the "girls' books."

Limitations of the Study

1. The schools and classrooms were not randomly selected, but selected because their teachers and librarians were willing to cooperate in the study.
2. The schools were located in predominately rural areas.
3. It is impossible to ascertain what influence television had on the subjects' responses.
4. It is not known whether or not all listed books were available to all subjects.

Implications

Boys and girls in rural Kentucky are reading old favorites, but are not limiting their reading to them. New titles are also popular.

Other than the Little House books, a series that teachers and librarians have encouraged children to read, no series titles other than Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys were well-rated. This evidence is not conclusive, however, that they are no longer read and liked.

Boys and girls select different favorites. Girls are more likely to enjoy books written about boys than boys are to read and report as interesting books about girls.

Recommendations

Additional research dealing exclusively with the popularity of the series books could very well shed additional light on the book choices of grade school children. Perhaps the Bobbsey Twins series and the Encyclopedia Brown series should appear on the questionnaire and subjects should be encouraged to write in other titles and rate them.

A wide variety of books, including old titles and new, should be available to children both at school, at home, and in public libraries. Their teachers and parents should not discourage their interest in the series books that they choose to read. Parents and teachers can avoid remarks that categorize books as "for boys" or "for girls," permitting each individual to make his/her own choices freely.

APPENDIX

FIFTH GRADE

Pupil's Name _____ Circle one: Girl Boy

Teacher _____ School _____

To the Pupil: If you have read any of the books listed below, mark the column that shows how interesting you thought the book was. Please mark a column for a series if you have read any title in the series. Blank spaces have been left at the bottom for you to write in titles of books and their authors that you have read since entering fifth-grade. Mark the column that shows how interesting you thought each of these books was.

Title of Book	Very Interesting	Fairly Interesting	Not Interesting
Doctor Doolittle's Post Office by Hugh Lofting			
My Friend Flicka by Mary O'Hara			
King of the Wind by Marguerite Henry			
Mr. Popper's Penguins by Richard and Florence Atwater			
Pinocchio by C. Collodi			
Toby Tyler by James Otis			
Emil and the Detectives by Eric Kastner			
Wonderful Wizard of Oz by Frank Baum			
Girl in White Armor by Albert B. Paine			
Bambi by Felix Salten			
Nancy Drew series by Carolyn Keene			
Hardy Boys series by Franklin W. Dixon			

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