

STORY RETELLING IN EMERGENT LITERACY

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my always patient and ever understanding family. Doug's support and faith, Lane's encouragement and cognizance of the process, and Kelsey's expertise at the computer, made this work a team effort.

I also dedicate the project to the twenty-four Grade One children in my 1993-94 class. We journeyed together along unknown pathways through the weeks to emerge, enriched.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the value of story retelling as a wholistic and natural approach to literacy learning in a Grade One classroom.

Brown and Cambourne (1987) developed story retelling as a strategy to improve reading comprehension, and writing. The strategy is implemented as follows. After being immersed in a literary genre such as the folktale, the children share what they know in making predictions about the text and vocabulary used in an unfamiliar story within the genre. The children read or hear the story several times, confirming and refining their predictions, and then they write or dictate a paraphrasing of the story without referring back to a copy of the text. The children then share and compare their retellings with others and with the original text.

I explored the potential of story retelling as a language learning strategy through an action research project in my Grade One classroom. The premise of action research for this project was a commitment to improved practice through action, informed by an increased awareness of what actually happened in the classroom as the children were engaged in retelling.

I worked through two action research cycles of three weeks each as modelled in *The Action Research Planner* (Kemmis &

McTaggart, 1981). The fundamental aspects of an action research cycle include- developing a flexible and forwarding looking plan, acting to implement the plan, observing the effects of the action, and reflecting upon the effects of the action as a basis for the planning of the next cycle.

In the first cycle, my plan of action was to have the children read, write and share in pairs of developmentally mature/delayed readers, same gender, and mixed gender. The children advanced to individual retellings as their expertise grew through the first cycle and into the second cycle of the plan. This was a modification of story retelling developed by Brown & Cambourne in Read and Retell (1987) because the children with whom the authors worked were considerably more mature than the six and seven year olds in my Grade One classroom.

Through the retellings, the children demonstrated their comprehension of the story in personal ways. I read and heard a synthesis or re-creation of the original story with a sequencing of events, an attention to main ideas and details, an attempt at inferencing, and a sensitivity to style and form. Often the child's voice was evident in the retelling as well.

In the reflective pause between the two action research cycles I had time to consider my journal entries and I did additional readings from the literature to inform the revised plan.

As I revised the retelling strategy in the second cycle of the study, it became clear that children in the Grade One class were beginning to internalize reading and writing processes. And as they became increasingly familiar with the forms and conventions of written communication, they were edging ever closer to a point where they were more fully engaged in 'pulling up from their linguistic guts all that they know about oral language in order to understand and learn written language' (Halliday, 1986 cited in Brown & Cambourne, 1987, p.27).

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INTRODUCTION

Using an action research model, I wanted to improve the language learning experiences for children in my Grade One classroom by exploring the Brown & Cambourne (1987) story retelling strategy outlined in Read and Retell. In this linking of action with research, I discovered a potential for not only improved practices, but also a more sensitive articulation and understanding of the approach individual children bring to their emerging literacy in "pulling from their linguistic guts all that they know about oral language in order to understand and learn written language" (Halliday, 1986 cited in Brown & Cambourne 1987,p.27).

I dimly remember snatches about learning to read and write. Dick, Jane, Sally and their pets Spot and Puff were the characters in the first Gage readers of the time. There were no real stories in the text because the vocabulary content was carefully controlled. The story was in the pictures and in my mind about what was really happening. I do remember the pride I felt as I 'word called' for my parents the whole first booklet We Look and See which had a vocabulary count of 17 words.

I also remember teetering on the fringe of the reading process. I thought reading must have been meant for someone else because it seemed phoney and sterile to me, not only in its

limited vocabulary but also because all the pictures and stories were about city kids and a Dad who came home from working in an office. My Dad was a farmer and I attended a rural one-roomed school and got there each day on my black Shetland pony, Teddy. I think what really kept me going was anticipating the reading of the section called *Fun At the Farm* from Fun with Dick and Jane. The family visited their grandparents on a farm where there was a pony just like my Teddy.

Writing came much later about Grade Three, and only after many 'Think and Do' workbooks and spelling tests. As a result, I found creative writing to be a frustrating and meaningless experience. For many years, I really thought writing referred to penmanship.

I also starkly remember a nightmarish experience more that twenty years ago as a substitute teacher in a Grade One classroom during the first week of school in September. I developed a deep regard and empathy for Grade One teachers that day.

It seemed like there were a hundred children in the classroom-each telling a story and clamoring for attention at the same time. One child had gone to the washroom but I was so busy with the others that I did not notice he hadn't returned until the principal brought him back red faced, lost and crying. Some children whipped through the worksheets in seconds while others wailed and scribbled with their crayons or ate them.

I remember that I was to teach the letter 't.' I had not thought about all the possible ways of making a down stroke on paper or about the many different ways of crossing the vertical line to make that letter. The children were obtusely ingenious in their interpretations.

I was most bewildered about how to artfully engage these children and I was totally exhausted by the end of the school day. I knew then, that I was not ready to teach Grade One. Those beginners were as challenging as any of my Grade 5 through 9 classes had ever been. Subsequently, I always asked the dial-a-substitute-teacher coordinator if the assignment was for Grade One before agreeing to work in a classroom.

But, this experience was the beginning of my quest about how children learn to make sense of print. My own children were infants at the time and as they began to interact with print I noticed how they used the pictures in a telling of the stories they had memorized. They insisted upon many repeated readings of favourite stories as they chimed in on the repetitive parts. The rhythms of the text had something to do with the appeal of stories and poems and the predictive element seemed particularly satisfying. Sometimes, they sat absorbed in a book- quietly intent and focused for long periods of time- in some internal dialogue. Later when my children were beginning to read and write, I was enchanted by the confidence of their approach- as if

it was something that one just did- and I would ask about how they did that or knew that- as they read, but there were never any significant insights on my part, in helping other children with literacy learning except that rehearsing in its many forms, seemed to be a universal part of a beginner's experiences. Perhaps learning to read and write is like learning to walk and talk. When the time is right and you have the needed experiences, it happens naturally.

Ten years of teaching Grade Two helped me to ease into the world of the beginning reader/writer. Most 7 year olds after a year of experiences at school have, or are taking steps through the threshold of literacy. Some do so in unique ways, like a child who wrote hieroglyphics in his journal on the first day of school in Grade Two. He said that he was just checking to see if I could read the secret code. I had to say that it certainly was a mystery to me which seemed to rather surprise him. When I asked him to translate the message for us, he said it was too secret. Through that smoke screen, I saw a little boy who was ingeniously masking his inadequacy and I saw to what lengths a child may go in sharing with others that print is an unintelligible jumble.

Then five years ago now, and with great trepidation, I became a Grade One teacher. I remember feeling like the children on that first day of school. For some, it was a story of apprehension; a mother and child clinging tearfully to each

other. At the bell, the mother disappeared and the little boy clung to my hand and then to my skirt. All that first month he was like a shadow, never more than a few inches away. Sometimes, it made using the telephone or the bathroom difficult. He was never able to articulate what he was afraid of, but that fear paralysed a bright little boy. Perhaps, I should have forced him to be more independent but the desperation I saw in his eyes made me realize that he was not strong and secure enough-yet.

For other children, school is anticipated experiences and exhilarating independence. I was also sharing in that energy of bonding in the first few weeks of school. It was a magic time; a time in which I learned with the children leading the way, in sharing the pure joy and excitement of beginning literacy experiences.

The most important thing for some children is recess and for others it is learning to read. Six year olds are disappointed if they have not learned to read something by noon of their first day at school. I want to better nurture the optimism and confidence that beginners bring to their writing and reading.

Literature

Children acquire language in a natural and personal way where "function precedes form" (Goodman 1986,p.18). Our son was

about 18 months old the day he climbed the steps of the Cardston Temple and stood at the edge of a high stone wall which protruded over the manicured grounds. We watched in awe, as he raised his hands and took the stance of a public orator. He spoke with great power and passion and although we did not understand a thing he said, the intent of his speech was a certain and poignant communication for the throngs.

Perhaps, "language does not require a special skill in order to be comprehended" for it may draw upon a "general ability that any individual exhibits from the first weeks of life" (Smith, 1985, p. 80). Some say that rhythms of our native tongue are experienced by children even before their birth. Language acquisition and comprehension does however, depend upon prediction as children sort out the ambiguity of their world. Prediction is asking questions, while comprehension is the getting questions answered. In a world of too many ambiguities, children use prediction as a likely interpretation "to avoid becoming overwhelmed. A theory of how the world works and what the world is like for children is in place in their heads" (Smith, 1985 p. 72). This innate world view is a basis for children to make predictions by eliminating unlikely alternatives, in learning more about things in personal and natural ways. And as children read and write they "reshape their view of the world and extend their ability to think about it"

(Newman, 1985,p.2) in building a rich background of knowledge.

Acquiring the worldview that children bring with them to school is also a result of experimentation, something children do "naturally, instinctively and effortlessly"(Cambourne, 1988,p 2). Extending this natural learning cycle where "predicting, hypothesizing and striving to comprehend are as natural as breathing" (Smith, 1988 p. 88) is a story of challenge in "using language from the outset in a whole range of literacy contexts to create the knowledge necessary for fluent reading and writing in the same way that children have developed oral language" (Newman, 1985, p.14).

The problem for teachers and primary education generally, is that most of this knowledge about language is not the kind of knowledge that can be put into words and it is not the kind of knowledge that can be taught directly. It is the kind of knowing that goes on "instinctively, automatically and below the level of conscious awareness" (Smith, 1985, p.85).

However, what children bring to their early attempts at making sense of print can be demonstrated. I watched individual children organize and tap into their intuitive 'print sense' and I tried to understand in some small way, their processes of constructing meaning.

Purpose of the Study

Using an action research model, I attempted to improve language learning experiences for children in my Grade One classroom by exploring the potential of the Brown/Cambourne (1987) story retelling strategy.

At the beginning of the project, the children wrote their retellings of a familiar story cooperatively in pairs. Shortly, many of the children were writing their own retellings while a small group dictating their retelling to an adult. Toward the end of the project, all the children were writing their own versions of the stories with no support.

The project became an elaboration of the Brown/Cambourne strategy in that the retelling part of the experience was integrated with other activities and used primarily as a culmination to the work on a story. Prior to the written retelling, children became thoroughly familiar with a story as they made predictions about its content and vocabulary. They heard the story, read it for themselves and discussed it. Then, they constructed scenes from the story, illustrated favourite parts, and participated in character development activities. They also dramatized or role-played the story.

After the retelling, the children did a modified cloze of a typed copy of one of the children's pieces. Each of the children

shared their retelling with several classmates and they were expected to make comments about the content of the retelling and to ask questions. As an extension, the children wrote new endings to the stories or they wrote about what might happen next.

Through the project, I came to a deeper understanding of Whole Language. The children were using their well developed, speaking and listening skills in a structured and focused way in learning about reading and writing. They thought carefully about what they were communicating as they spoke about the stories and they began to listen reflectively to the responses of others. The children seemed to bring that same reflective posture to their reading and ultimately, to their writing.

The structure of story and the activities the children participated in became the pattern for and the focus of the children's attention in developing a 'language' to learn about language. Facilitating the experiences for the children to explore, as they learned intuitively what reading and writing are about, became the teacher's role.

ACTION RESEARCH

Action research is said to occur if-
a project takes as its subject matter a social practice,
regarding it as a form of strategic action susceptible to

improvement. The project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of *planning, acting, observing* and *reflecting* with each of these activities being systematically and self-critically implemented and interrelated. The project involves those responsible for the practice in each of the moments of the activity, widening their participation in the project gradually to include others affected by the practice and maintaining collaborative control of the process (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p.165).

Action research originated with the work of American social psychologist Kurt Lewin in 1944. It was first used in contexts as diverse as the equalization of opportunity for employment, the cause and cure of prejudice among children, and in the socialization of street gangs. Two premises were crucial to the work: the idea of group decision making and commitment to socio-political improvement.

The value of linking action and understanding was recognized as having potential for educators by Stephen Corey (1953) who worked at Columbia University during the post war years. Under the tutelage of Lewin, the ideals of action research were adapted to an education model in the areas of curricular and collaborative research.

Interest in action research in an educational context faded during the late fifties and in the sixties because action

research ideology did not follow the dominant natural science research paradigm. Action research is aimed more at promoting change in specific situations than in deriving abstract theoretical knowledge. Not that the Lewin model lacked the scientific rigor of traditional research, for he was going one step further to ensure that research ended in real life application. There has long been concern among educators about this apparent gap between research and theory on the one hand and pragmatic classroom practice on the other. Action researchers try to close the gap between research and practice by creating a situation where practicing teachers define their problems and conduct their research in such a way that the results of their findings have direct and useful application in their classrooms or in other educational situations. It fits naturally into what happens in the classroom but to do action research means to work "more carefully, more systematically, and more rigorously at the process and to use the relationships between the *four moments* as a source of both improvement and knowledge" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1981, p.7).

Interest in action research returned during the seventies. Australian Stephen Kemmis in The Action Research Reader (1988) attributed this renewal of interest to several factors including a strong interest among educational researchers in helping teachers deal with the problems of their practice. Other factors

included an interest in defining classroom problems in ways which represent the understandings of the teachers and a growth of collaborative, curricular development and evaluative work.

Action research which emerged during the seventies was a recreation of the Lewian model being re-thought by curricular theorists like Lawrence Stenhouse and John Elliott from Britain.

Emphasis shifted to the idea of practical deliberation, focusing on human interpretation, negotiation and detailed descriptive accounts in place of measurement and statistical analysis. With this trend came, the assumption that the enquiry processes must develop naturally rather than being constrained by preconceived ideas (Kember & Kelly, 1993, p.3).

The goal of this enquiry is emancipation from the traditional ways of thinking and acting, ways that may impede effective action, development or communication. Action research sharpens perceptions, stimulates discussion and encourages questioning.

Elliott says that: Classroom action research relates to any teacher who is concerned about her own teaching; the teacher who is willing to question her own approaches in order to improve its quality. Therefore, the teacher is looking at what is actually going on in the classroom. She seeks to improve her own understanding of a particular problem rather than impose an instant solution upon the query. Having

collected information, it is crucial that time is taken for thought and reflection, although it is implicit in the idea of action research that there should be some practical effect or an end product to the research; but based upon an increased awareness of what actually happens in the classroom (Elliott, 1978, p.1).

Teaching, in this way can be investigated, considered and improved in helping to provide a clearer rationale for what is done in the classroom based upon a teacher's own professional observation and experience.

Kemmis & McTaggart published The Action Research Planner in 1981 as a step-by-step guide to the action research project. Based upon Lewin's model, Kemmis & McTaggart developed an action research spiral for teachers to:

- develop a flexible *plan of action* to improve what is already happening in the classroom
- act to *implement the plan*
- observe the effects of action in the context in which it occurs
- reflect on these effects as a basis for further planning, and subsequent action through a succession of cycles.

In the planning part of the cycle, those affected by changes have the primary responsibility for deciding on courses of critically informed action leading to improvement. Preliminary

observation and critical reflection precede the formation of an action research theme.

Usually, action themes centre around changes to curriculum, *modifications in teaching techniques, adoption of a new strategy, and changes in assessment practices* or there may be changes in combinations of these areas of practice. The plan nevertheless, must be forward looking and flexible, keeping in mind that innovation and change rarely proceed without alterations and backtracking because of the dynamics of the classroom.

Planning must be sufficiently refined and balanced to be tractable and to ensure that the focus is on the most important issues without redefining the problem in such a way that original concerns are not addressed adequately. Instruments used in the various phases on the project must be carefully and reflectively designed to ensure accurate interpretation of the information gathered and yet flexible enough to allow for unforeseen circumstances. The plan is chosen to allow the teacher to act more effectively, wisely and prudently over a greater range of circumstances, all the while being satisfied with modest gains in the improvement of the classroom situation, practice and the understanding of what is happening in the classroom in a deep sense.

Action is the deliberate and controlled implementation of the plan, but it is also has a fluid and dynamic quality

requiring thoughtful, constructive and pragmatic decision making as well as appropriate learner expectations. In this implementation phase or moment, insights about what is happening are likely so minor deviations in the general plan must be carefully recorded and rationalized. Deviations may be incorporated into the current project or recorded for future consideration. It is important for the researcher to have an understanding of where and how change in curriculum, practice, strategy, or assessment will articulate with what is already going on in the classroom. And the researcher must be deeply cognizant of the interaction between the general idea and opportunities, possibilities or constraints of the project as it evolves.

Observations must be "responsive and open-minded"... and a basis for "critical self-reflection" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1981, p.9) within the constraints of classroom reality. The detail and quality of the observations, monitoring, and recording enables the researcher to most effectively assess the action and hence the effectiveness of the proposed changes.

Time taken for reflection helped in the "making sense of the processes, problems, issues and constraints made manifest in the strategic action" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1981, p.9). Thinking through the experiences with the children led me to a reconstruction of meaning and an evaluation of the retelling as

it informed me how to proceed in helping to build a more true and vivid picture of the life and work in our Grade One classroom.

For me, the appeal of action research was that I started from where I was in understanding the complexities of my classroom environment. I improved what I did and I improved the understanding of what I did in linking theory and practice harmoniously in wholistic "ideas in action" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1981, p.15). I used my skills, intuitions, and perceptions and what I value in an eclectic approach to understanding more about how the children learn and the children showed me how they were making sense of what we did so that I was better able to set up optimal learning situations with them.

The voice of the expert directs and supports teachers in the classroom but the teacher as researcher should have a valued voice within the body of legitimate research literature. And that teacher voice should be informed by the voices of the children so that everything is interconnected "in developing a unique way of looking at the complex environments in which children are constrained and in which teachers choose to spend their working lives" (Nixon, 1981, p.7) within our cultural milieu.

EMERGENT LITERACY AND MY CLASSROOM PRACTICE

The making of space for individual learning styles, language acquisition backgrounds, and for the timing of appropriate experiences, seems to contradict curricular and cultural expectations of teachers to expediently produce competent writers and readers. The pressures on young children to read early are pervasive and strong. The Department of Alberta Education Language Learning document outlines, in a general and flexible way, what children will experience in their first year of school and it extends those expectations year by year. Thus, curricular expectations are not the main source of the pressure on young children to learn to read. The pressure comes more from a traditional worldview shared by the adults. I know and appreciate, the expectations of and the demands on elementary teachers in our school system to 'turn out' children capable of performing well on tests like the Alberta Provincial examinations. And it is only natural for parents to internalize those expectations for their children.

Some parents do not realize however, how unrealistic their expectations are. Ken's mother was so disappointed to find that he was still not reading and writing independently by the end of his first year in Grade One. Ken had not attended class regularly enough to establish routines and he had large gaps in his

background knowledge and experience. Ken's mother had not considered his growth since September, from a child who could not hold his pencil or print any of the letters in his name to a child who was beginning to make entries in his journal. He had grown from a child who could not attend to what we were doing for more than a few seconds without flopping around on the rug or falling off his chair to a child who would sit calmly interacting with a book, and from a child who knew none of the common colors of our world (like the sky is blue and the grass is green even though he did not have color blindness) to a child who could string beads in a color pattern. The growth I had seen from the beginning of the year was remarkable and to be celebrated. Ken's self image as a reader/writer was positive and secure. He was interested in seeing his dictated stories in print. He could read back his journal entries on the day he dictated them. Ken was reading rehearsed predictable books by himself and to his group. All his mother focused upon was that his progress was not good enough to get him into Grade Two.

In subsequent panic under this pressure, I have often been unmindful of the children. I have tried to dissect and analyze the reading process, which has been too complex to understand, except perhaps in a superficial and possibly, harmful way. I have in futility, tried to find the magic technique that will surely make reading happen quickly for each child. I have studied and

applied different methods through the years but none has in and of itself, brought me a great deal closer to the optimal way of helping all children learn to write and read well. Most carelessly of all, I have quieted my own intuitive sense about what might work better for children in my haste to follow some arbitrary formula of do's and do not's.

Limitations of a Phonetic Approach to Beginning Literacy

Four years ago in February, five children in the class were not reading independently except for the group stories and other materials that we had rehearsed together. I could not read the pieces they had written with ease nor could they. Being impatient, I put the group into a phonics-based basal reading program for a few months to see if the experience would improve their reading flow, speed and comprehension. At the end of that time, I found they read words better, but I do not think that their comprehension improved at all. They often concentrated on saying the words or 'word called' instead of attending to the sense of meaning in the piece of print. I had, in effect, given these children an erroneous perception of what reading is all about.

In hindsight, I should have let them alone to grow naturally for I think these children needed more time to test their

hypotheses about reading and to make legitimate predictions about story and I had not trusted them to be able to do that. I have felt since that I wasted their time with nonsensical pieces where meaning was sacrificed for phonetic practice. What I did may even have been harmful for it certainly was not a natural way of developing literacy. (Not that learning about the graphophonemic system of our language is wrong but it should be in the context of the reading.) I am not sure that the children I singled out were auditory learners and putting them through the process of decoding material may have been confusing.

This experience left me feeling I had failed these children. I was frustrated and angry with myself when I thought about the possibility that a mismatch between literacy acquisition in a beginner's program and the child's background of linguistic experiences may result in a reading/writing disability. This experience was a powerful motivating force in pushing me to seek other ways of helping children make sense of print in understanding what each child is trying to do and then helping them to do it.

In thinking about experiences like this one and in the frustration of coping with the confinement and prescriptive nature of the various reading methods programs, I moved to the development of an eclectic approach to emergent literacy. In searching to expand and refine this plan, I am ever vigilant of

ideas which may hold potential in adding a further dimension to the program. And so, I explored the "wholistic/natural learning approach" (p.31) to experiencing literacy developed by Brown and Cambourne (1987) in story retelling.

A More Wholistic/Natural Learning Approach to Emergent Literacy

In providing a detailed description my current language learning program, I have tried to explain some of the complexities of its organization and to explore where the retelling strategy might best fit in with other components. Writing about my understanding of not only the philosophy inherent in the program but also the various dimensions of it, helped me identify some of the reasons why I was attracted to exploring the potential of story retelling.

In the language learning program of my Grade One classroom, the children are immersed in multi-modal experiences of literacy. The program is organized around themes so that the learning centres have reading, writing, listening and sharing activities in which the children participate daily.

Each morning there is a message on the chalkboard that deals with the happenings of the day in the classroom, the school and/or the community. The message whets the children's curiosity about what they will be doing or experiencing and through it I

try to model that print has personal and immediate meaning for them in the real everyday world. The children collaborate with each other in using what they know about print and what they know about events happening in and around the school and in the community or wider world to puzzle out what the message says.

Through the message, I incorporate or review concepts in which the children may need further work like: comprehending, sequencing, vocabulary development, sight words, phonetics, sentence structure, syntax, tense, main idea, detail, outlining, punctuation, grammar, spelling, and editing. This is done with lots discussion about how our language works and always with the intent of making meaning.

The study of a story begins with various forms of shared readings. Other whole group activities appropriate to the story may include ideas taken from Johnson & Louis' Literacy through Literature(1987). These strategies include: word framing, inventions, spoonerisms, webbing, plot profiles, dramatizing, model making, riddles, cloze activities and comprehension questions with discussion and justification. Usually the story summary is done as a whole group or I do it as a cloze activity. As a whole class or in groups of various sizes, the children may work at the story ladders, character profiles or ratings, story maps, or specific passage illustrations.

Everyone reads from books of their own choice during DEAR

(Drop Everything And Read) time. There are several literature based reading series from which to choose as well as many levels of predictable books, and a collection of theme books and magazines in the classroom library. Titles are from a wide range of materials gathered over many years of teaching. The classroom library has books of quality, both fictional and factual, and there is no attempt to control vocabulary. Many of the books are shared with the children and oftentimes they re-read their favorites.

The children share something they have been reading with a small group. The sharing includes a telling and an excerpt read in an attempt to inform others about materials to explore, where to find them, and who might be interested in reading them. The telling may vary from a sharing of part of the book or a picture, to an insight about how a child decoded a word or came to understand a passage.

During noisy reading time, I pair children, competent readers with those developmentally delayed, for reading in a more structured way. Competent readers model for their buddies as the pair engage in the reading and discussing.

I read to the children daily from a variety of literary genre. Two children read orally to the class each day from sources in our classroom library, their home libraries, our school library, the public library or from their own writing. The

children enjoy a shared reading time weekly with their Grade Five book buddies.

The Home Reading program books are exchanged daily by parent helpers or other support staff. Titles are recorded in the children's take-home notebooks where parents are encouraged to make comments about their child's language learning progress. I respond to each family, regularly. Parent helpers read with those children whose own parents do not have the time/interest in reading with their children daily.

At their writing centres, the children are encouraged to share their ideas with others in the group and there are opportunities for them to get feedback from each other. Children write stories, poetry, and expository work. When a piece is ready to be shared, children sign up for a reading in celebration during 'comment and question' time. Children will periodically take a piece to publication. Often, published stories are dramatized.

Group pieces are written with our themes in mind. I model the writing process, rehearsing what we might say and how we might say it. The pieces are re-read often and are used to teach a variety of concepts and skills in the same manner as the morning message or the theme story. Favourite group pieces are typed and stored in the classroom library for DEAR time. I have written pieces for some of our themes in an attempt to foster an

elaboration of perspective and to model what I do in the process of writing.

The children write in their journals daily and I write back to them so that we are engaged in a personal written conversation. Often, they share favourite parts of their entries with others. The journal entry sometimes deals with a theme story or poem and the entry is usually written at the end of the day.

Personal dictionaries are used for help with and in checking spellings. The children are encouraged to use temporary or transitional spellings, and to look at room labels, theme word banks, picture dictionaries, and books as sources of words needed. Children also have opportunities to use computer programs which reinforce and extend what we are doing in the classroom.

This language learning program, immersing children in the wholistic dimensions of language use and meaning, makes sense to me. Opportunities for interacting early with print in meaningful vicarious ways, contrast sharply to what I experienced in Grade One both as a student and as a substitute teacher. Children were schooled at a time when "we took apart the language and turned it into words, syllables and isolated sounds. We postponed its natural purpose, the communication of meaning, and turned it into a set of abstractions, unrelated to the needs and experiences of the children we sought to help" (Goodman, 1986, p.7). In contrast, the more wholistic/natural language classroom reflects

most consistently "an instructional philosophy with the view that meaning and natural language are the basis of literacy learning"(Goodman, 1979, p.153).

The Role of Story in Emergent Literacy

The word 'story' is from [L/Gk <historia- a history or an inquiry/asking]. "Story is a primal searching for meaning in a deep sense...for personal knowledge is largely in the form of a story" (Rosen, 1973,p.182). Story reflects the "fundamental structure of our minds"(Levi-Strauss,1966, cited in Egan, 1986,p.2). It is comfort and imagery; intrigue and connection. Thinking thrives on story where creating and exploring "rhythms of expectation"(Egan, 1986, p.10) determine the pattern of events and ideas. And story thrives on dramatic tension for stories are largely about "how people feel" (Egan, 1986, p.29). There is a "game quality to story because its truth lies in places mystical and apart from daily circumstance...and we can learn how to 'be' if we listen to the reality that can be brought back from the story in our real lives" (Livo, 1986, p.14)

Story is the central focus of literacy learning. In whole language experiences, the children explore the rhythmic pattern and cadence of the story potential. Personal stories, group stories, make-believe stories, stories heard, and stories read

are sources of relevance in which children play with print in exploring, expanding, and adapting language.

Children, from infancy and at vastly differing levels of immersion, become familiar with story through the oral culture of their homes and communities. How natural and important it is then, to honor and utilize oral traditions at school in the richness and imagery of story-read or told.

Reading in Emergent Literacy

It may be true that "reading offers a greater scope for engaging in story than any other kind of activity" (Smith, 1988, p.179).

Reading is comprehension (p.158)...for effective readers are obsessed with the meaning of what they have read.

Effective readers confirm this focus on meaning in less direct ways through the quality of their retellings. Their retellings are well organized with evidence of selection and organization of relevant detail. They typically contain the main points and/or essence of the original text. Often their retellings are characterized by paraphrases which capture the original meanings with different vocabulary (Cambourne, 1988, p.173).

If "a young child's ability to re-create favourite stories

is important to reading development"(Newman,1985,p.15) and if "receiving, retelling and composing are different parts of the same process" (Rosen,1973 p.182), I have missed an opportunity by not exploring the children's skills at retelling stories orally and in written form more extensively and formally. Taking advantage of retelling skills seems obvious to me now as I think about times when I had watched preschoolers, as well as beginning readers, comfortably relaxed and fluently reading the pictures in retellings of well loved stories and their own writing.

The Story Retelling Strategy

Retelling < Latin- 'revealing anew'> of what happened in an experience, is something which children do naturally from an early age. It is an expression of a child's world view, bringing personal background knowledge and feelings, as well as understandings of relationships, to an event.

In the (Brown & Cambourne 1987, p.2) retelling strategy, children are asked to react to a title of a story by making predictions, either orally or in written form, about the story content. The story must be about something with which they are familiar, possibly from a theme they are currently exploring and the content should have a predictive component. The children share and discuss their predictions. Vocabulary expectations are

explored in the same manner. Then the teacher reads the story to the children or they read it themselves depending upon their age and level of development or ability as readers.

After the reading, groups of children compare their plot/vocabulary predictions with the text. Children read or hear the text several times until they understand the story. Then, they set the text aside and write a paraphrasing of the story. Those children who are unable to write, may tell the story by drawing pictures or tell the story to a scribe. The children then share and compare their retelling with several other children.

Brown & Cambourne (1987, p.29-35) outline several variations of the story retelling strategy which accommodate the various needs, skills and abilities of most children.

-In the *oral-to oral retelling*, the teacher reads or tells the children a story and they tell it back, collectively or individually with or without prompts from pictures in the story.

-The *oral-to-drawing retelling* is where the teacher reads or tells the children a story and they draw pictures in a sequence to indicate their understanding of what happened. This may be done with children who have limited writing skill due to immaturity or with children for whom English is a second language.

-For the *oral-to-written retelling*, the teacher reads or tells the children a story. The children are provided with a copy

of the story to read as many times as they want. Then, the children write a retelling of the story without referring back to the original script. The children are encouraged to use their own words in the retelling in making it a paraphrasing of the story rather than an attempt at memorization.

-In the *written-to-oral retelling*, children read a story as many times as they want to familiarize themselves with the 'what happened' and then retell it orally to a classmate, or their teacher. Children uncomfortable with the writing may begin with this form of retelling.

-The *written-to-written* form of retelling is where the children read a work (expository, narrative, poetry) until they are comfortable with it and they do a written retelling of the piece in their own words.

Story retelling, approached in this way, helps children focus their efforts not only on the meaning of the text but also on the re-creating of meaning and the sharing of that re-creation in discussion and reflection. The children bring to the retelling their personal understandings of how language works and their individual interpretation of story.

This story retelling strategy appealed to me because it blended well with other components of the language learning program that I have been trying to create in the classroom. It "involves the learner in prediction, justification, argument"

(Brown & Cambourne, 1989, p.96) and meaningful interaction with print in listening, reading, writing, and sharing. Children were engaged in closely examining text as a model for reading and for their own writing and they collaborated with and supported each other during the implementation of the strategy. There were opportunities for children to listen to their peer's interpretations of the text and to compare their own efforts in knowing that what they did, although it may be different from others, was accepted and honored.

There is a good deal of flexibility in the Brown/Cambourne retelling model in accommodating the children, but generally "the processes which underpin the typical retelling session simulate those conditions which have been identified as necessary for successful language learning" (Brown & Cambourne, 1987, p.27).

Conditions for Successful Language Learning

In order to meet the conditions of the retelling model, the Brown and Cambourne theory is that the children must be *immersed* in the concepts, language, and structures of the theme or genre from which a retelling is taken. The print must be meaningful and of good literary quality and there must be enough repetition in it to foster effective learning.

Children need to experience many *demonstrations* of how texts

are constructed and used. Big Books can be particularly powerful tools in demonstrating specific needs based upon observations of the children's language behaviours. Repeated readings of favourite books help children gain insight into the reading process by building fluency of prediction. Teachers, demonstrating how the writing and reading processes work for them, not only help the children with the meta-cognitive aspect of literacy, but may help themselves in verbalizing these processes in creating a collaborative social atmosphere within the classroom culture.

Engagement grows when children perceive themselves as potential doers of activities that further the purposes of their lives, without fear of being wrong. Engagement also deepens when learners' attempts to approximate a desired model are accepted, where everyone involved views mistakes as being essential to learning and when response to the work is supportive, non-threatening, relevant, readily accessible and timely. Full engagement is quality time spent on quality tasks.

The probability that engagement will be enhanced increases when learners *accept responsibility* for making many of their own decisions. When children use and practice new skills in real and meaningful ways, they "discover personal meaning through the activity" (Newman, 1985, p.13) but it was sometimes difficult to ascertain the depth to which children had been able to accept

their responsibility at engaging in the learning. I could not assume that what I set for the children to experience, had met my intent. Through observation and analysis of what/how the children were reading and writing, I got a picture of their needs and their understanding of what they learned and what they yet needed to learn.

The *expectations* children have of themselves are related to the aspirations of those to whom they are bonded for "we achieve what we expect to achieve and we are more likely to engage with demonstrations of those whom we regard as significant and who hold high expectations of us" (Brown & Cambourne, 1987, p.26). The children needed to have a clear idea of what was expected of them and I needed to know each of them well enough to have developed realistic expectations within a mutual bond of trust.

Children need *opportunities to use*, practice and refine their new found skills in reading and writing. Chances to read /write /reflect about their favourite works or to explore new materials independently, help children reinforce and apply what they are learning.

Through *approximation* in the story retelling, children were encouraged to extract meaning from print and to transfer meaning into print in the best way known to them. As beginning readers and writers, the children used what they currently knew about print as a basis to further their growth along a pathway to

literary independence.

Response to the efforts of a child to read or write a piece must be sensitive, honest and genuine. The children were confident in knowing that they were growing in language learning through the retelling experiences, and that their classmates and their teacher were supportive of their attempts.

APPLYING THE STORY RETELLING STRATEGY

The potential for including story retelling "one of the most whole of whole language activities" (Brown & Cambourne, 1989, p.96) as an integral part of my language learning program, and the success of integrating the strategy with other components of the program depended upon how I could make it a natural part of our process of learning about language.

Initially, I worked with the whole class in demonstrating the formatting of the retelling experience using text and concepts in which the children were comfortably immersed. The children made oral predictions about the content of a story from its title. They worked in pairs of- advanced/delayed language development, like gender, and mixed gender- in reading and retelling the story. The children were responsible for how they shared the writing and for the content of the retelling. Pairs of children shared their retelling with two other groups in the

response part of the activity and the whole class came back together for a sharing of ideas in a spirit of acceptance, and affirmation.

From the title of a story, the children were asked to predict what they thought the story would be about on three levels; the *genre* level, the *whole piece* level and the *word* level. If the children were doing a retelling of a folktale, they would bring all their knowledge about the structure of the genre folktale to bear on their predictions. They would expect to hear and read phrases like...once upon a time or lived happily ever after. They would expect to hear and read about events occurring in patterns of three and that events are more important to the development of the story than are the characters. There may be repetitive phrases or chants involving rhyme. There would be a predicament in the story to work through to a satisfactory conclusion as in poetic justice where 'good' prevails over evil for characters are judged by the goodness of their hearts and not by their outward appearance.

It was important that the children be immersed in the genre of the piece prior to the retelling experience so that they felt comfortable about making predictions at the three levels.

The children's retellings were used for summary cloze activities and a basis for creating story ladders, story webbing and character profiles.

From a summary or retelling of the story, children filled in the blanks with pivotal words that had been left out of the text. This is a modification of the traditional cloze where a blank is left for every fifth word of the passage. In a modified story ladder, the children responded to open ended statements from the story at levels of sophistication varying from literal to inferential, although most "early primary children operate at the literal level" (Johnson & Louis, 1987, p.41). Story webbing is a technique where the central part of a spider web shape contains the names of the characters in the story and lines radiate from that point to connect episodes and settings in a visual reconstruction of the story. Character profiles helped the children make informed judgments about some of the personal qualities demonstrated by various characters both directly through their deeds and as a result of their interactions with others.

This retelling project was a modification of the Brown/Cambourne (1987) format, but part of point of action research is to help make new strategies applicable to the individual classroom situation.

First Attempts at Story Retelling

I was not sure that the children would be able to do what I was asking of them. Nor was I sure in my mind what to expect of the retelling strategy. This first attempt was a class experiment in feeling our way together in a new adventure. These six years olds proved over and over again to be a courageous and confident group of little people. Luckily, they did not seem to sense my apprehension. And I marvelled at the whole issue of trust that children and their parents have in their teachers.. to do what is best for the children in their care.

Early in February of 1994, I tried a written retelling with my class of Grade One children. Since this was a new experience for all of us, I chose to try a few parts of the Brown/Cambourne (1987) retelling model that seemed to suit the maturity and skill levels of the children. To reduce qualms of anxiety, I paired competent readers/ writers with those who are finding the print more troublesome. Usually, the children find their own buddies with whom to read and for the most part the arrangements are productive but there are exceptions.

In the Night

I chose a very simple and short piece about a family of bears called In the Night. In this little vignette, all the

members of the bear family raid the refrigerator in the night except for Mother Bear. In the morning Mother Bear calls her family to breakfast but understandably, no one is hungry.

(Appendix A)

The children had experienced a theme about bears in the fall so they were familiar with bears and the many things real bears and imaginary bears might do. The story was taken from the *Sunshine Series* of reading materials published by Ginn. There is a strong predictive component to these simple stories. I showed the children the title page of the vignette which has a picture of a pair of bears sleeping in a bed. In the implementation of the plan the children made predictions about what might happen in the night.

Shane said that 'Goldilocks might come back again.'

Martha said that 'a dragon might go into their cave.' (We were currently doing our dragon theme)

Stewart said that 'the bears are hungry cause I read this story at home'.. as part of our home reading program.

I read the story to the children once and we discussed the predictions the children had made from the title. In this way the children were using the vocabulary and concepts from the story orally before I sent them off in pairs with their copies to read several more times.

I was pleased to see that the more competent readers were

helping their buddies and that these pairings seemed to work for the most part. The children returned the copy of the story in exchange for their retelling sheets of paper. I left the pairs to decide how they would work out the writing. Most pairs decided to have one person write a small part of the story while the other told it and then they reversed their roles. One pair of children was alternating the writing- one word at a time. In another pairing Mel did not like the way Lana was making her letters, so he erased her sentence and rewrote it- much to Lana's chagrin, understandably. Martha was keeping John on task and Tessa was doing some peer teaching with Kent. Everyone seemed to be engaged in the activity except for one pair of children. This seemed strange because Stewart was the child who said that he knew the story well, having read it at home. He heard it again at school with the other children and then he read it by himself several times.

We had a sharing time (not in the Brown/Cambourne plan) about working cooperatively in keeping with our School District's program emphasis of accepting, supporting, and caring for each other. Through this, Mel and Lana sorted out their ownership problem and we thought it best if Stewart and Chad wrote on their own and in the end Chad told me the story. I was disappointed and puzzled by Stewart's response to the task for his retelling was marginal although he was a competent reader. He had excellent

verbal communication skills, a quality which some educators would say is prerequisite for reading and writing success.

For most of the retelling experience, the children were so actively engaged that I felt, for the first time in the school year, that I could step back and 'kid watch.' No one needed my help, and everyone was so involved that I did not feel it was appropriate to take any one of them aside to do individual work. I was feeling abandoned at first, but quickly realized this was what I had been striving for all these months!

The children shared their writing with two other groups in the post writing share/compare portion of the plan to see where their retelling was similar and where it differed. They commented on each other's work in a positive way and then asked their questions. The children used the same comments/questions format that they regularly use in reacting to each others writing.

Some dialogue was quite perceptive, like the pair that left out the part about opening the fridge door. Their comment was, 'Well, where else do you get food in the kitchen?' And the pair that included a Grandpa in the group of night time fridge raiders with a- 'You can't leave Grandpa out!' (since there was a Grandma Bear in the story).

Of the twelve pairs of children, eight did an adequate job of retelling the story- not a memorization but more of a paraphrasing. Two groups did not consistently follow through with

the pattern of the story. One group missed the important points in the middle of the story and one group was not able to complete the task. All the groups finished the story well indicating that no one, except mother bear, was hungry enough to eat breakfast in the morning.

The mother bear did not go to the kitchen to raid the fridge and she was not up in the night wondering what everyone else was doing, but like so many other images of mother in children's stories, she was there in the morning serving her family. None of the children commented on this-as if it is what mothers are expected to do.

The children were anxious to read their retellings to each other. Their work was easy to read with good transitional and conventional spellings. No groups asked to have words spelled but punctuation was ignored. (Appendix B) I felt as confident as most of the children in carrying on with the project.

In completing the retelling of In the Night the children were meeting some of the conditions of literacy learning outlined by (Brown & Cambourne 1987, p.26).

They had been immersed in print. The children had previously experienced many demonstrations of how text is constructed and used. But, I realized that I needed to do more with the 'think aloud' strategy as I wrote group stories with them.

Most groups were confidently engaged in the writing. I think

they understood what was expected and most groups were responsible decision makers. The writing was a chance for them to use their increasing competence with print. The children risked sharing their work with others and in the responding to questions in an unthreatening way, there was the spirit that mistakes are important for learning to occur.

At our next retelling, I changed the cooperative pairs of children and tried to work more of the Brown/Cambourne model into the experience before asking individuals to try a retelling on their own. I was anxious to see if "linguistic spillover of many of the features of the text which the children had been asked to read and retell when engaged in a retelling procedure were being internalized by the children" (Brown & Cambourne, 1987, p.15). In some cases, Brown and Cambourne were observing a 'delayed spillover' of literary form, phrases, vocabulary, and punctuation in subsequent pieces of the children's own writing, too.

Factors which contribute to an understanding of what is happening when learners engage in written retellings include:

- the relationship between reading, writing, talking, and listening
 - how language is learned
 - retelling as a natural form of language behavior
 - retelling and conscious awareness of language details
- (Brown & Cambourne, 1987, p.23).

The Empty House

Later in February, the children participated the next retelling experience. I found a predictable story in the basal When the Wind Blows from the *Impressions Series* published by Gage which had several repetitive parts.

In The Empty House a child comes home from school to find no one home or so it would seem, as he/she searches each room. Finally, the child checks the backyard where he/she finds everyone has gathered for his/her surprise birthday party.

The children's plot predictions included that the story would be about:

- a haunted house
- someone moving into the empty house,
- cleaning up a house while the people are away.

The children categorized the words they had predicted would appear in the text of the story. (This was not part of the Brown/Cambourne strategy, but it seemed to flow out of the predictions I was getting from the children. Six year olds like to sort and manipulate things, including words.)

- empty, move
- bathroom, kitchen, downstairs, rumpus room, attic, stairs
house
- stove, fridge, sink, bed, dresser, rug, couch
- dog, friends, cat

-in, a, me, my, I, we (Hearing these words surprised me as much as it did the first time the children made predictions. They did not yet, take these utility kinds of words for granted within the text. I wondered, at this point, if I would still be hearing children predict these kinds of words by the end of the project.)

While eavesdropping I heard these conversations as the children worked at their retellings in pairs:

-Was it the living-room after the hall? Are you sure?

- M.. says, 'Did I spell it right?' S..answers, 'Don't put a 'w' it's just like this' and he uses sounds to spell the word.

- one pair rehearses verbally 'but no one was there'

C..writes it down and says 'You write now' to his buddy.

- M.. says to J.., 'You gotta leave spaces between words'

- M.. tells T.. what to do. T.. asks M.. to let him try by himself.

-Ch.. and Sh.. help each other with what to write and how to spell it.

- The writer reads what she had written and then her buddy continues with the writing of the next sentence in the retelling.

Of the twelve groups, nine captured the essence of the story in their retellings. They worked collaboratively at the content and organization of the text, and at the choices of words to be

used; as they read and wrote their way through the retelling. Their beginning sentences set up the problem. They carried the mystery of an empty house through to the conclusion about everyone hiding in the backyard for the surprise birthday party. There was linguistic spillover in the use of the phrases ..'but no one was there' and in the ending of the story about the surprise birthday party.

Stewart worked alone on the retelling because his buddy was absent. When the children in his group heard his retelling, they looked furtively at me and were at a loss about what to say and so was I. Stewart had embellished the story by adding details and changing the context of the text to include 'dinosaurs jumping around' and Stewart 'screaming until his head flew off.'

(Appendix C) Stewart said he thought it was more interesting this way and that I had said he could retell it any way he wanted. Which I had, not wanting him to write a memorization of the text, so this event became an ideal opportunity to open a discussion about what a retelling actually is and why we would bother to do such an activity. It was also an opportunity to talk about using ideas from the retellings as starting points in writing their own stories.

In the end, I found that Stewart could relate an excellent oral retelling of the story (Appendix D) but that he did not see the value in doing this kind of an activity and 'a-ha' the

mystery of why Stewart's first retelling In the Night was poorly done, cleared in my mind.

Stewart's response reminded me that I should have discussed retelling in more detail with the children before embarking on this project but in my haste to begin and not being sure where I was going with it myself, I had not been sensitive to his need for understanding. Perhaps, other children in the classroom felt this same way but were unable to articulate what they were feeling or perhaps they had been enculturated to do what I set out for them without question. I needed to listen very closely to what Stewart's story interpretation was saying about my practice and perhaps about the way I approached story retelling so that all the Stewarts I work with, will not have to 'scream their heads off' to be heard.

There were no formal retellings during the month of March partly because of Easter activities in the classroom and partly because of what Stewart's reaction had been saying to me about the 'dinosaurs jumping around' in my mind. I needed time to think about how I was going to present the retelling strategy and how I was going to motivate the children through the retelling part of their language learning program. I wanted what we did to be a natural outgrowth of vicarious experiences with language as the children listened to each other, talked through their plans with each other and then read a variety of texts before they

approached the written component of the experience.

Children Participating in the Project

The twenty-four participants in this study were from a middle class urban school population. They were six and seven years old and in the eighth month of their Grade One program. There were seven girls and seventeen boys in the classroom. The range of reading and writing competency among the children varied from many levels of independence to several levels of literacy pre-emergence.

The Timing of the Retelling Experiences

Starting after the Easter recess, the children participated in three retelling activities over three weeks. During and after this time, I revised the plan on the basis of what happened during the activities. With the revisiting of the plan, the children participated in a further three weeks of experiences leaving three weeks in June for exploration and extension through the Folktale theme.

DESCRIPTION AND RESULTS

This section of the paper is a description of what happened as we worked through the retelling strategy together. It began as a quest with an indeterminate end for both teacher and children. It was an exciting exploration of language. We came away changed.

Sing a Song of Sixpence (April 11-15)

I decided to begin with something familiar to the children in building the patterning and connections we would be using over the next ten weeks as a part of the project. The children had begun their Grade One year in September with a Nursery Rhyme theme so a revisiting of the rich content and primal cadence would be our focus.

Sing a Song of Sixpence was the theme in our Mathematics unit so it seemed prudent to explore it. On the first day, there were shared readings of the poem from a wall chart and the children learned to sing Sing a Song of Sixpence.

There were discussions about the characters- the king, queen, cook and maid and incidental, age-appropriate detail about the symbolism in the poem. I tried to share a bit of background about the blackbirds reference to the clergy, the queen's distancing herself from the affairs of the court, the maid's involvement and consequence in tattling to the king, and the role

of the cook in the whole intrigue. I doubt if the children are able to comprehend much of the metaphoric significance of the Nursery Rhyme, but they always seem so enthralled with these details that I feel a need to share my limited background knowledge and understanding.

On days two and three, the children read the poem together from Big Books and from other copies of Nursery Rhyme material in small groups. Each group of five children made a model of the Sing a Song of Sixpence scene. The characters were fashioned out of plasticine. The pies had twenty-four plasticine blackbirds. The setting including a cardboard castle with a moat, counting house, parlor, garden, and clothesline with paper laundry hanging from it.

Group members were assigned jobs within the construction of the scene so that all the children worked co-operatively and with much meaningful talk about the authenticity of their scenes. Each group of five children had a collector whose job it was to get materials for the group to use from a central station. The group members had to be effective communicators in order to get what they wanted from the central supply and the collector had to be an effective listener in order to comply with the needs of his or her group. A reporter described the scene to the class as the children gathered around the various display tables. Reporters were the voices of their groups so they had to know what it was

that their group members wanted to communicate about their scene to the rest of the class. It was the reporter's job to respond to comments and to field questions with the help of group members. These roles were rotated through the course of the project so that each child had opportunities to take the role of *collector*, *reporter*, and *group member*. There were many opportunities too, for the children to improve their listening and speaking skills as effective communicators of intent, roles they satisfied to varying degrees, as would be expected.

The children role-played Sing a Song of Sixpence with each group of five children taking the part of king, queen, cook, maid and blackbird. Most of the groups recited their respective lines as they acted the poem but I was pleased to see that the last two groups did more of a retelling of the 'story' in their role-play.

There was much interest in castles, kings and knights, so that prompted reading information about how castles were designed and about the people who lived in and around them. One child brought a large model of a castle to school and shared his expertise about European medieval life. Models of knights on horses, knights in amour, foot soldiers, and beefeaters came to school next so a sand table display emerged in a sharing of the artifacts.

Parents came into the classroom in unusually large numbers for a sharing of the Sing a Song of Sixpence scenes and the

children spoke with great authority and pride about their work.

Playing with language has universal appeal for adults and children alike. In order to enhance the enjoyment and comprehension of the poem and to coerce the children into spending time attending to the details and subtleties of the text, I tried several activities to whet their interest.

The children delighted in fabrications about the poem. In this strategy, obvious "inventions" (Johnson & Louis, 1987. p.19) about the text help children sharpen their powers of observation and comprehension. The children were keen to puzzle out where the misinformation was in each of the excerpts from the poem as though we were sharing some private joke in gaining power over the print. Examples of some of the fabrications from Sing a Song of Sixpence were:

- Sing a song of seven pence.
- Ten and twenty white birds were baked in a pie.
- The queen was in her counting house counting out her money.
- The maid was in the parlor eating bread and honey.
- The king was in the garden hanging out the clothes.
- There came a little blackbird and snapped off his ear.

I tried some "spoonerisms" (Johnson & Louis, 1987, p.20) with the class to see if they could apply their phonetic skills. I am always surprised by the spontaneous interest and aptitude the children display in responding to the sounds of our language.

Examples from the poem included:

-four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie (four and twenty blackbirds paked in a bie)

-when the pie was opened the birds began the sing (when the pie was opened the sirds began to bing)

-the queen was in the parlor eating bread and honey (the queen was in the parlor eating head and broney)

On day four and as a group, the children did "character ratings" (Johnson & Louis, 1987, p.38) for the cook and the king.

They decided that:

-The cook was quite lazy because he didn't pluck the birds

-The cook was happy because he was singing.

-The cook was quite wasteful because he ruined the pie.

-The king was angry because he had no dinner.

-The king was rich because he had a counting house.

-The king was kind because he did not behead the cook.

I was puzzled at the children's logic. They were very polar in their thinking, either on the very negative or very positive ends of the spectrum of the character rating. There was little room for ambivalence in the mind of the 6 year old at this point. For the most part, they seek the good in the characters and they seek consensus. Some of the 7 year olds were just beginning to see more of the facets of character and some children were not making judgments with justification at all.

The children did a modified cloze of Sing a Song of Sixpence by completing the last word in each line of the rhyme. They did the activity with very little prompting. Some of them used the wall chart or the Nursery Rhyme books for words they needed. Others did the cloze without reference to any visual aids. They completed the open ended character statements with ease and variety although their statements were literal summations from the poem for the most part. (Appendix E)

I wrote the following retelling of the poem on the chalkboard to be completed as a cloze activity and found it a challenging task. The poem seemed to lose its power in the retelling because I was moving it from verse to prose and in doing so lost the appeal of the rhythm and cadence in the piece. (I wondered whether the children would have a similar feeling of frustration when they were doing a retelling during the project, and how they would be able to express that feeling of inadequately capturing the spirit of a passage.)

(Cloze activity for Sing a Song of Six Pence) The cook was singing in the kitchen. He was making meat p.....for the king's dinner. He used the rye flour that he had bought for a s..... The cook didn't take the feathers off the b..... and he didn't cook the pie very well either.

When the k.....cut the pie open, the blackbirds began to s..... and then they flew away.

The king went to count his m.....The queen was hungry so she was eating b..... and h..... The m..... was hanging clothes on a clothesline when one of the b..... flew into the garden and bit her.

As a culminating activity, each child illustrated a favourite part of the poem and wrote something about their illustration for the class book of incidents from Sing a Song of Sixpence to be stored in our classroom library for others to read.

Through the Sing a Song of Sixpence experience, I developed a basic set of patterns and activities adapted for use in the subsequent stories as the retelling experiences progressed. The content of this Nursery Rhyme was familiar to the children so that they focused their attention on an elaboration of perspective through the various activities. In building the background for a retelling the children would experience the scene construction and sharing from the story as well as inventions, spoonerisms, character ratings and statements, drawings, modified cloze and the role playing. Now that those activities were more familiar, I hoped that the children would be able to concentrate more fully upon the content of the new stories. Or at the very least, the Sing a Song of Sixpence experiences would be a basic reference point upon which to build. There would be adaptations and extensions of this basic plan as

the children grew in confidence and skill, but having a clear perception of the activities that we would be doing throughout the project, helped direct and focus the children and their teacher.

The Potato Party (April 18-22)

Earlier in the year, we had agreed to explore a theme about trolls, an interest sparked by the coverage of the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway.

In March, the children made potato soup on St. Patrick's Day. They had washed, peeled, chopped, cooked, and mashed the potatoes and stirred the soup until it thickened and ready to eat. In building and expanding upon this experience, I found a story about a potato eating family of trolls.

The Potato Party is a short story about a family of trolls who are tired of their potato diet so one cold winter's day, they cook their entire cache of potatoes in a variety of creative dishes to be served to their trollish neighbors. (Appendix F)

Following the (Brown & Cambourne 1987, p.32-40) Read and Retell model, I read the title of the story and shared the pictures on the title page. Orally, the children predicted at the *title level* that The Potato Party was going to be about some trolls who:

-had a party (birthday)

-found a treasure

- ate potato soup
- were in a winter storm
- lived in a cave
- were freezing

Some of their predictions at the word level included:

trolls, party, potatoes, cave, bridge, eat, cook, hungry, balloons, cake, cold, winter, mountains, trees. (Even after we had talked about trying to list words that might be in a story about trolls and a potato party, I was still getting vocabulary predictions like- 'the, a, and to.' In most cases, these predictions came from children with developmental delays. Perhaps too, the children wanted to be assured of seeing the words they suggested listed from the story.)

I read the story and the children commented on their predictions. They seemed pleased that some of what they had predicted was actually a part of the story.

The next day, there was a shared reading from an experience chart copy of the story where the text was scribed onto a large piece of lined paper so that all the children could follow as the reading progressed. Some of the passages were read chorally while other parts were read by individual children. Some children chimed in on their favourite parts. Everyone took delight in the choral reading of:

- the opening description of 'the wind howling through the fir trees' and 'the long, cold, dark winter'
- the preparation of 'those ridiculous potatoes'

- and the ending with the 'happy eating' so I expected to and did see those parts in their retellings.

Over the next two days, the children drew pictures and wrote sentences for the classroom book about The Potato Party and they brainstormed for a list of what else could be done with potatoes besides eating them.

In the character ratings part of the experience, the children decided that the troll family was:

- clever because they thought of a plan to get rid (or so they thought) of all the potatoes.
- friendly because they invited all of their neighbors to the party.
- not greedy because they shared all of their food with their friends. (no one thought at this point, about what the troll family would eat when the potatoes were gone.)
- a few of the children thought the trolls were hard working because they washed, peeled, chopped and cooked all the potatoes and made a variety of potatoes dishes but most of the children thought the trolls were lazy because they were laying around in the cave before and after the party. (I wondered if the children had developed a mind set about trolls being lazy creatures from their past experience with trolls in the folktale genre because they were quite adamant about a work ethic being uncharacteristic of a troll.)

While looking at their scenes of the story setting, each group of five children did an oral retelling of the story. It was the responsibility of each child in turn, to share the next event in the sequence of the story to its conclusion by passing a talking stick from one to the other. (Children may pass the talking stick without comment. The child holding the stick does the talking.)

Seventeen of the children in the class began their written retellings individually the next day. Some of the children in this group were hesitant about getting started, but after another oral retelling rehearsal in the round, off they went to give it a try. And I breathed a sigh of relief because I was not sure that they had the confidence to work individually, yet. (Appendix G)

I was anxious to see how they were doing but I also wanted to give them some space so working with the group of seven children with developmental delay allowed me to do that. I was pleased with the detail and accuracy of the story events told by the group of weaker students as I scribed for them. They sequenced the story correctly. The vocabulary was in keeping with the author's intent. There was a strong beginning and the children knew the 'punch line' at the end of the story. Some of these children could read part of the retelling back the next day. (Appendix H)

The group of 17 independent writers worked diligently at

their retellings and for the most part, their work was easy to read, although they had no help with spellings or story content. They wrote a paraphrasing of the story with a logical sequencing of events, an understanding of the plot and a strong beginning and ending.

The (Brown & Cambourne, 1987,p. 33) compare and share portion of this experience was done as a group with a sampling of retellings from children who volunteered their stories. I wanted the children to build and practice their skills at question asking and responding. We discussed how the retelling was different from or the same as the original story. The children aired and clarified their thoughts about 'muddled meanings' and shared the parts of the retellings that they liked.

I did the retelling cloze of the story (Appendix I).Most children read and did the cloze exercise with ease. The open-ended story ladder sentences provided me with an interesting peek at how each of the children perceived the story. Some children simply repeated the information from the story but others were making inferences. Some examples of their inferencing include:

- the trolls were bored
- the trolls were smart
- the trolls liked to share
- the potatoes were delicious

Some of the children wrote extensions to the story and others wrote about what they thought would happen next. These ideas ranged from:

- having another potato party,
- returning the potatoes to their neighbour,
- trading the potatoes in for something else to add variety to their diet,
- stealing food
- to going hunting.

In the dramatizing of the story, several groups practiced using good table manners and making light conversation, like we had done at our school parties- while other groups explored what they thought trollish manners and customs would be like.

Peter and the Wolf (April 25-29)

A youth orchestra visited our school so I used that experience to explore the tone color of the various instruments of the orchestra in our music class. I read two versions of Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf and the children listened to several instrumental versions in whole and in part many times as they acted out the various characters of the story and pretended to play the instruments.

When I began the Peter and the Wolf experience, I had not intended to make it part of the retelling project but as we worked it through, the possibilities for retelling became so strong that I thought it would be worthwhile exploring. I recognized that the children were interacting with the story in

fulfilling many of the criteria for successful language learning that Brown/Cambourne 1987,p. 26) outlined. They were immersed in Peter's story. They were engaged in meaningful activity from the story. And they had shared in demonstrations of print and picture and especially of the music. It felt right to give the children a chance to demonstrate and share what they knew in a more tangible and concrete way.

This story's experiences were far more oral than other stories we had explored partly because of the length of the story and partly because I did not have a version of the story with a text simple enough for most of the children to read independently. Consequently, we spent much time talking about the parts of the story from looking at pictures in three versions of the text and the children watched a video.

This time, I was more specific about what the scene would have in it. The children included all of the characters from the story for each of them had come to have a persona through the music. Central to the understanding of how the events of the story unfold, is the scene in the tree by the wall. So when the groups of five children were constructing their settings for the story, they would comply with the requirements which included having: Grandfather's house surrounded by a high wall, a tree with a branch stretching over the wall, a meadow with a pond, and a forest. The children used their plasticine to construct Peter,

the wolf, Sasha the bird, Sonia the duck, Ivan the cat, Grandfather, and the hunters.

In most of the scenes that the children shared with the class, Peter was in the tree dangling a rope to catch the wolf's tail while Ivan sat on one branch of the tree and Sasha sat on another-not too close to the cat. Grandfather was in his house or the yard and the hunters were in the forest. (It did not seem incongruous for the children to leave Sonia the duck, on the pond when the events of the story indicated that she had already been swallowed by the wolf at the time Peter and his friends were in the tree. There seemed to have an unspoken pact that Sonia had to be included in her natural spot in the meadow.)

Over the week, several groups of children changed their scenes spontaneously with no formal direction and with much discussion so that it became the meadow setting with Peter and his friends around the pond, the wolf in the forest, and Grandfather coming out of yard through the open gate to look for Peter. At other times, the scene would be the triumphant procession at the end of the story when the wolf was taken to the zoo. As I noticed the scene changing happening, it became an opportunity for the groups to share their new settings with the other children so that discussions about ideas and changes to the story settings were spread around the classroom.

In working through the character rating of Peter, the

children thought that:

-Peter was disobedient because he went out of the yard when Grandfather said not to. (One child in particular, delighted in Peter's disobedience for he seemed to have found a kindred spirit.)

-Peter was brave because he was not afraid of the wolf.

-Peter was very observant because he yelled, 'Look out!' when he noticed that Ivan, the cat, was sneaking up on Sasha in the bushes by the pond.

-Peter was very clever because he got a rope to catch the wolf and he told Sasha to fly down and tease the wolf.

-Peter was not lonely because he had his friends the animals, to play with. (Even though I pointed out that it seemed Peter had no children to play with in the story, the class almost unanimously considered Peter not to be a lonely child.)

The children drew pictures of their favourite scenes from the story for the classroom book. I was apprehensive about asking them to do a retelling of such a long story when they had not actually read the entire text for themselves. I did not want them to find a retelling to be a negative and frustrating experience but on the other hand I wanted to see what they would be able to do with all of the background they had in their minds. With some trepidation and after an oral retelling by looking at a set of

sequenced pictures and an oral retelling around their scenes, I sent them off to write for short periods of time spread over three sessions of work.

I scribed the story for six children who were unable to write for themselves and found their story retelling detailed, accurate and in the spirit of the original. These children took turns dictating what I would write with lots of discussion about the words to be put on the paper. The short writing sessions gave the group a chance to re-read and negotiate after reflection about what they wanted their story to say. (Appendix J)

As I read the retellings after each writing session, I felt more confident about the children's ability to do this independently. (Appendix K) I was surprised by the maturity of some of the retellings. It seemed that the children did not need to have worked closely with the written text for they had an oral scaffolding or structure upon which to build their stories. The richness of oral experiencing fostered quality retellings. By the time the writings were finished, I had decided to use one of their retellings in the cloze activity so after asking permission, I typed Curtis' story and by watching the pride and pleasure in this youngster's eyes, I knew it had been the appropriate thing to do. (Appendix L)

During the comments and questions time after the children had completed the cloze activity, Curtis said that the story

didn't look like his work. The children said they liked the whole story (as usual) even though I had been trying to get them to be more specific about what they liked and why they liked certain parts so they said:

H: -'I liked the way you started sentences different.'

Ch: -'I liked how you said the duck was singing inside the wolf.'

M: -'I liked the wolf getting caught part.'

C: - 'I liked how you said -and then there was a wolf.'

S: -'I liked when Grandfather took him (Peter) into the house and shut the gate.'

St: -'How come you forgot parts out?' (I winced at this one but Curtis handled it well by saying he just forgot and that he was thinking about another part. I interjected that not all retellings of stories are the same as we heard when we read different versions of Peter and the Wolf and as we read our retellings to each other. They seem comfortable with knowing that each time we do a retelling of a story, it would probably be just a little different and that is all right.)

A: -'Did you forget the hunters, too?' (C.'s response, 'Yeah, I just left them out and I left out that part about there are wolves out there.')

On the backs of cloze exercise papers some of the children

spontaneously and without formal direction extended the story to include the wolf at the zoo scene or Peter's next adventure.

The Curse of the Troll King (May 2-6)

In this story, two trolls who continue to steal from the villagers are cursed for their errant ways by being turned into stone if the rays of the sun touch them. (Appendix M) I chose this story because of the troll predicament but also because of the concepts that the children had developed earlier in the school year about how shadows work.

The children predicted that the story would be about:

- a sad troll king
- a mean troll king
- mummies (because he had heard about the curse of King Tut)
- a curse or a kind of spell
- a bad, evil troll
- a king who has slaves
- a battle between 2 trolls kings

Predicted vocabulary:

-kill, witch, fight, battle, troll, king, work, poor, spells, steal, throne, pigs, chickens, eat, catch.

I read the story twice- stopping the second time for questions, explanations and comments and the children read the

story in pairs several times. This time I decided to do the retelling more like the Brown & Cambourne (1987, p.32-40) *oral-to-written model* (explained on page 30 of this paper) before all of the oral support work and rehearsal that we had been doing, to see if the level of immersion does affect the quality of the retelling.

I found that there was more reluctance on the part of the weaker children to write. The adults in the class helped seven children with their retellings, either as small groups or as individuals. I tried having the children do the oral retelling in the mushroom created by an air pocket under the silk parachute in the gym. The children told the story- one sentence or part each- while pretending to be in a dark cave. (I seemed to keep changing the approach slightly by adding or deleting things that the children did in order to keep them keen and anticipating what might happen next but that is what I do with most of their activities in keeping the learning fresh and the mind flexible.)

Most of the children who were not able to write well on their own, did a detailed, sequential oral retelling of the story. These children lost their confidence when they were asked to write. The sequence, and paraphrasing structuring was lost in the physical demands of getting the print on the paper. Many in this group tended to write the minute detail from the story instead of concentrating on the whole of the story in order to

write the most important aspects of the what happened when. In the oral retelling however, the weaker children took turns dictating the story to the adults and they were quick to challenge each other if the retelling deviated from the original story. In the momentum that the retelling gathered, there was also a tone of camaraderie, pride and ownership for the piece as they became more patient, and supportive of each other. Most of the children were able to re-read this cooperative retelling on subsequent days. One child did a retelling of the retelling when he was asked to read what the group had written. (Appendix N)

Several other writers did a commendable job of the beginning and the end of the story but the middle part became sketchy and muddled. This group of children seemed to be writing more of a memorization than a paraphrasing of the story, as well. They were among the developmentally delayed readers/writers.

I found that the vocabulary used in the first reading seems to impress upon the children's minds its importance and to be used extensively in their subsequent written work. In thinking about this, I was reminded that first impressions are so important and that introductory lessons are vital in establishing a confident and positive attitude toward an unfamiliar concept or idea.

In doing the pairing up for comments and questions about a classmate's retelling, I found that the children must be able to

read their retellings well so as to capture their buddy's full attention. The children seemed more interested in reading their own stories (Appendix O) to their buddies than in listening to or having to respond to a retelling. I tried getting around this problem by having separate comment and question times so that each child could concentrate on their roles- one time being the reader and the next time being the responder and that helped. But when the stories varied so much in detail and when there was a wide variety of ability and insight as a respondent, the pacing of the comment and question time was difficult.

Comments and questions- M. read his retelling to H.

H. comments: 'I like how you used such good words like I can't stand it any more- when Murkle was in that cave.'

H: -'I liked how you never missed out any parts.'

M. responds- 'I missed out that part about being lazy.'

H: -'Oh...well I liked the ending on the story.'

C.'s retelling was typed for the cloze activity (Appendix P). The class commented:

R: - 'I liked how you made the story different.'

M: - 'I liked how you started the story.'

K: - 'I liked how you said Mog and Murkle had to crawl in the dark.'

I: - 'I really liked how you said Murkle could see the whole world.'

A: - 'I like how you said the part when Murkle slipped and fell.'

Sh: - 'How did you make all the words make sense?

C: - 'I just thought them in my head.'

R: - 'How did you remember the story?'

C: - 'I just got it in my head.'

The children did their scenes from the story by working cooperatively. They recycled some of the castles from Sing a Song of Sixpence so that they had shadowy places where the trolls could hide from the rays of the sun. In these daytime scenes, one would have to look in buildings, under trees, beside rocks or in caves to find the trolls. Some of the groups made a night time or Arctic winter scene so that the cursed troll could be outside. (I had not thought about the potential of daytime and night time scenes...but the children fluidly exchanged moons for suns so that the trolls had more freedom of movement.)

In the character rating, the children decided that the Troll King was:

-very fair because he forgave the troll Mog, when he learned not to steal and when he learned about being a productive member of society. (I had not realized how moralizing this story was going to be when I chose it for the retelling.)
-very strict for he had rules and the trolls must follow them.

-embarrassed because Mog and Murkle were giving trolls a bad name in the kingdom.

-a king who did what he said he would do because he put the curse on Mog and Murkle, which lead to an interesting discussion about consistency and the consequences of our actions.

-a very good king because he forgave the curse on Mog.

Some of the children thought that the Troll King was a bad king for not forgiving Murkle as well. Others seemed to be in the neither or both camp so to get some discussion going and to group the various camps of thought, I had the children sit on the rug together with others who had the same point of view. The children had to justify where they sat and in this way I was able to get responses from those children who had been sitting on the fence about this activity over the last month.

In the dramatization of the story, children picked the next 12 names from the name jar, where each of the children's names is on a slip of paper so that it can be drawn randomly on such occasions. These children decided which characters they would enact. The children added farm animals, villagers, trees and rocks to the cast and with some rearranging of a few chairs, they had created the scene for the play on the rug area in our classroom. Props are minimal in these plays-a few animal masks, hats, shawls, burlap vests and other articles from the dress-up

trunk as well as things from around the room that we could pretend or improvise about. I usually add the tone for the play with some music on the piano. I noticed that 'voice' was becoming stronger as the children wrote/read; and drew/ dramatized. They seemed to be more sensitive in enacting and portraying the personalities of the individual characters within the stories.

The play and the class book of illustrations from The Curse of the Troll King were dedicated to a LCC student who had spent time in our classroom as part of her practicum at our school.

It seemed that the children enjoyed carrying the story on from our experiences with Peter and the Wolf so the open ended conclusion of The Curse of the Troll King was an opportunity for them to write a new ending to the story or to carry the story on to a different conclusion. (Appendix Q) For the most part, the children wrote of a bright future for Mog, the reformed Troll. Murkle, the incorrigible one, fared poorly even in the stories of those children who thought the Troll King should have forgiven him.

Reflective Pause at the Midpoint of the Retelling Project

As expected, the children felt that The Curse of the Troll King was a more difficult retell than previous stories. I believe that the children were feeling less confident because we had not

done all of the oral activity work prior to their writing. It is important then, for primary children particularly, to be thoroughly immersed in the oral aspects of the story or the genre before written expectations are fulfilled for "if we persist in treating speech as a caricature of itself while putting writing on a pedestal, there is no way we will ever come to understand how it is that the human child is able to learn.. for we learn by listening and speaking" (Halliday,1985,p 101).

In doing further readings, I was finding literature that seemed to support the relationships and connections that I saw growing out of the natural language learning. "Reading, writing, speaking and listening are different ways of learning because they are different ways of knowing"(Halliday, 1985, p.97). However, the speaking and listening for the purposes of the project, needed to be a directed, meaningful construct.

Immersion in the story also involved thinking, justifying, predicting, inferring and modelling, dramatizing, drawing- in helping children "find meaning for themselves" (Rosen, 1973, p.123). Providing a variety of activities, helped the children rehearse, in many ways. The various activities also became opportunities for establishing the match of each child with her/his cognitive strength and preferred modality of learning.

Then came the writing which "helps us organize and understand our lives and worlds. Writing is probably the most

powerful readily available form of extending thinking and learning that the human race has available to it" (Cambourne, 1988, p.184). I had come to know the personal power in writing and hoped, in some small way, the project might be a beginning step in helping children tap into the joy of self expression.

"Written and spoken language have the same linguistic system underlying them but they exploit different features of those systems and gain power in different ways" (Halliday, 1985, p.100). "Written language is the world of things...a synoptic view...a product, while spoken language takes a dynamic world view defining the universe as a process...a world of happenings" (Halliday, 1985,p. 93). Through the project, the children were able to practice their writing from the structure of the story model. They were more unencumbered by the mechanics of written expression because they had seen and worked with the text. I think this enhanced the children's confidence as writers and it led them to an understanding of what they were capable of doing with the print. From that point, they were more confident in applying the skills to all their written work.

At this midpoint in the project, I needed to revisit the action research model for I was more cognizant that-

a project begins with one pattern of practices and understandings in one situation and ends with another in which practices or elements of them are continuous through

the improvement process while others are discontinuous (new elements having been added, old ones dropped, transformations having accrued in others.) Understandings undergo a process of historical transformation. The situation in which the practices are conducted will also have been transformed in some ways (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 182).

Our language learning program changed sometimes subtly, sometimes dramatically- with the class leading the way for the project evolved as the children grew and as I became more comfortable with the processes and the potential offered through the retelling as well as the other activities that accompanied the exploration of each story. Our language learning classes were more tactile with the modelling and dramatizations and there was more meaningful talk and listening because of that. The retelling part of the experience was central to what we were doing and evolved naturally out of the immersion activities. But, I think that there was more to be discovered together in "receiving stories as part of the child's cultural inheritance providing...models, patterns, and symbols; figures for personal story making" (Rosen, 1973, p.182) and in coming to know "that we have a theory of what the world is like in our heads" (Smith, 1988, p.8).

At this point in the project too, I felt that I needed some input and feedback from the children's other partners in learning

so I sent a note and the children's portfolios home inviting responses to the project from the parents (Appendix R). Twelve of the twenty-four families did a written response and two others responded orally. The responses were perceptive, insightful, and helpful in rounding out how the parents viewed what we were doing in the project and that in turn helped to inform me how to work individually with each of the children. I generalized from what I heard these parents saying in helping the children whose parents felt uncomfortable about or unable to respond. (Appendix S)

Contests (May 24-June 3)

Mole and Troll were good friends-- and they had their disagreements (Appendix T). I was seeing some of the dynamics of this story among a group of competitive little boys in the class and thought it might be a good way to approach what was happening within our classroom culture for their 'one upmanship' seemed to be affecting all of us. I think I chose this story for retelling too because of the stone skipping contest which resonated with me because of what Halliday (1985, p.99) says about written and spoken language resembling reality in two different ways. "Each is a metaphor for a different dimension of experience. Spoken language happens like the stones in the air and the ripples in the water. Written language is the stone and the surface of the water for- it exists." The children thought contests were:

- where you win something
- when you do something first
- like a water fight
- sometimes when you don't win
- when you do something best
- it's like a race
- riding bikes fast like BMX
- like a pie eating contest
- its like a swim meet

Some contests that the children have participated in were:

- BMX bike racing
- skipping rope
- playing hockey and soccer
- doing gymnastics
- a squirt gun fight
- skate boarding
- digging holes in the sand
- jogging for Terry Fox
- swimming at a meet
- counting jellybeans
- Karate and Tae Kwon-Do
- finding a treasure
- skiing downhill fast
- coloring an Easter Rabbit

Vocabulary the children expected to see and hear in the story included words like: contest, challenge, troll, people, mole, things, gopher, hole, find, rocks, rope, flowers, money, trees, plants, stream, and gold. Most of the words suggested seemed feasible considering the children's background of experiences with contests and trolls and their 'reading' of the picture I had shown them on the first page of the story.

The children read their copies of Contests to each other, to themselves, and to adults. I decided to do more preliminary work before the retelling because of the length and complexity of the story and because of my experience with The Curse of the Troll

King.

The five scenes created were chosen from important episodes in this story. There was a stone skipping scene, an ant counting scene, a mushroom balancing scene, a breath holding scene and a friends again scene from the ending of the story. The children insisted upon having a place or home for the characters even though that was not a part of the plot requirements. They were uneasy about this aspect of their scenes until we read more stories about Mole and Troll and found that Troll lived in a cave and that Mole lived in an underground burrow.

In the character ratings, the children thought Mole and Troll were:

- observant because they noticed the Spring flowers, the stream, and the mushrooms.

- competitive because they had all of the contests to see who was better.

- not very skilled because neither of them could skip stones many times.

- making up excuses because they said they had kinks in their stone skipping arms, and the mushrooms fell off their heads because they bumped into each other.

- still friends because friends do not care who is better at things and neither of them was better than the other anyway.

Over the three sessions of written retelling time, I noticed

more rehearsal, re-reading, and reflective pauses than on previous retellings- more specifically:

-S. says to himself, 'Now sound it out.'

-Ch. says, 'I keep thinking of The Curse of the Troll King.

-M. puts a finger down very deliberately to space his words almost as though he is gaining some think time as he writes.

-Sh. writes, looks away, re-reads, erases a bit and begins the part again.

-A. looks pensive, then smiles and begins to write.

-K. rocks on chair and then asks S. 'how many contests were there?'

-M., A. and H. write and write with few stops.

-I., C., Sh. and R. are rehearsing before they write.

-S. worked 13 of the 20 minutes at the retell centre before coming for support!

In the dramatization of Contests which the children dedicated to our Education 2500 student, there were 5 sets of Mole/Troll characters portraying the 5 episodes from the scenes they had constructed. These pairs of children decided which character they would enact and they had a few minutes of rehearsal time to prepare their improvised dialogue. In the comments and questions that followed the play, everyone thought Tim's animated portrayal of Mole looking for ants on the leaf was perfectly wonderful -and it was. The children performed the play

after the first written retelling session so I was not surprised to see them going back to rewrite the part about the ant counting contest that Tim had enacted so convincingly.

Having an Education 2500 student from the University of Lethbridge in our classroom each morning to run one of the centres, gave me an opportunity to concentrate more fully on the comments and questions the children were sharing with each other in their readings of their retellings. (Appendix U)

S. read his retelling while M. listened.

M. 'I liked that part about the bad eyes.'

S. 'Thanks.'

M. 'I liked your ending about hugging.'

S. 'It (the story) didn't say that. I just put it in 'cause I had it in my head plus I'm trying to get it like the real story.'

T. read while M. listened (not same child as above.)

M. 'I like the part when you said no stupid ants.'

T. 'The story just comed out. It was nice and easy to read and I practice at home.'

M. 'Did you forgot the mushroom contest?'

T. 'I didn't get enough time to write that one. I went slow to make good printing.'

M. 'Did you use your dictionary.'

T. 'No!'

M. 'Where did you get one, two, three?'

T. 'I just looked over there (points to bulletin board with numbers on it) to check if it was right.'

Sh. read to S. (not same child as above)

S. 'I can't read that.'

Sh. 'But I can- it's my story.'

S. 'Okay, I liked when you put another part in. You did good ideas-even better than the real story.'

Sh. ' Thanks, I was just writing with my mind.'

S. 'You did a real nice job on the story. I liked all the numbers you wrote.'

Sh. 'I learned to write big numbers all ready.'

A. read to I.

I. ' You put in words that are nice.'

A. ' Thanks.'

I. ' How did you know to write meadow?'

A. 'Cause it's all the years I been in school using my sounds-like long and short vowels.'

I. ' Your story is funny.'

A. ' I got it from my brain.'

Luke's retelling was typed for the summary cloze and the open ended story ladder responses. (Appendix V) When Luke read his retelling to the group before they did the cloze, he used different voices to portray the characters- spontaneously and to

the delight of the children. Troll had a deep voice while Mole had a high squeaky voice. In the narrative parts between dialogue Luke used his own voice to good effect.

Other comments and questions:

A: 'How did you write the story so well?'

L: 'I have a good memory, but sometimes I forget. And I get it in my mind how I am going to do it and then I just write it down.'

J: 'How come you put yellow in there?'

L: 'Cause I wanted to and I like yellow.'

I was impressed by the 'meta-textual' awareness in some of the children's responses. Cambourne (1988, p.178) says that effective readers can talk about their reading and writing and how/why they do this or that. I was also beginning to feel that the children had some opinions about the organizing and the writing of retellings so I asked them what they thought. Their comments included:

-S. ' It is easy.'

-M.' It is fun.'

-S.' You have to think a lot.'

-A.' It helps me to spell words.'

-M.' When you finish you can read it over and get practice.'

-H.' It helps us learn more.'

-S.' Some of the stories were easy- like The Potato Party

and some were harder like The Curse of the Troll King and Peter and the Wolf was easy and hard.'

K.' I think it is hard to do.'

I asked the children who else thought the retelling was hard to do but few of the children would admit to that openly. I had them close their eyes and raise their hands if they thought the retelling was hard to do so I would have a more unbiased sampling of thoughts. Three hands went up. I knew that there were three other children who were struggling with the retellings so I was not sure what the hand raising meant. Perhaps, their retelling needs were being filled by adult scribes. Perhaps, they were thinking of all the activities that we were doing in association with the retelling like creating the scenes, doing the character ratings, the illustrations and the dramatizations. Perhaps too, they were indicating what they thought I wanted to hear.

The Three Billy Goats Gruff (June 6-10)

I read three versions of this story to the children and they had an opportunity to re-read Paul Galdone's version, the version from Gage's Leapfrog and the McGraw-Hill version in Long, Long Ago. This time, there were multiple texts so the children read directly from the sources.

In discussions about the plot of The Three Billy Goats Gruff in the three versions of the story, the children found that there

were many similarities within the story lines. Some of the similarities they noted included:

- 3 goats that vary in size from little to big.
- a troll living under a bridge which spanned a river.
- goats wanting to cross a river to better grazing.
- the little goat attempting the crossing first followed by his larger brothers.
- the troll threatening each of the goats and being appeased at the thought of a larger meal if he was but patient.
- the big billy goat gruff vanquishing the troll.
- the goats eating their fill on the other side of the river.

I asked the children why the troll did not eat the first goat? Some of their responses included:

- He wasn't hungry enough yet.
- He was a greedy troll.
- It wouldn't be a very good story if he did.

I asked the children to think of other stories or pieces where there were three characters as in the Three Billy Goats Gruff. They thought of:

- The Three Little Pigs
- Goldilocks and the Three Bears
- 'Three Blind Mice'
- The three trolls in The Potato Party
- Peter's three animal friends-Sasha, Sonia, and Ivan

Since the children were familiar with this story, we did not do the usual immersion activities. However, the children dramatized The Three Billy Goats Gruff for the other Grade One classes, the ECS classes and our Grade 5 Book Buddies. They practiced free movement 'dances' to music from excerpts of Edvard Grieg's Per Gynt. The whole class participated in the play in their roles as goats, the troll, the river, or meadow daisies. The river and the daisies told the story as a modified choral speech while other characters improvised their roles as the goats and the troll. We had 3 different sets of characters acting the goats and troll so that many children had a chance to act these roles. We took the performance of the play outside to the adventure playground where there was a high bridge to cross.

I had done this same play with the children for several years but never had the children been able to improvise their parts as goats and trolls as convincingly and effortlessly as this group. I was quite sure that the reason for the ease with which the children performed and the enjoyment they seemed to get out of the dramatization was related to their retelling experiences as storytellers.

In the scene construction from this story, it was interesting to listen to the conversations about how the children would solve the problem of building a bridge. One group opted for a log bridge that the troll could sit beside. One group

persevered with a bridge that the troll could hide under while the three other groups worked out how they would make a bridge that would support the goat(s) and have a spot under it for the troll. Good bridge building ideas spread so quickly that I could not tell if the groups were getting ideas verbally from each other or if they were just observing what others were doing. Several groups had a definite dry grass overgrazed side of the bridge contrasting with the lush green meadow side of the river.

The children did their retellings over three days of writing. Many of the children seemed to have established a cycle for the writing- of reflecting, rehearsing, the physical writing, and then re-reading what they had written before a thinking time again. Some children re-read the same part several times making changes in getting it right. At other times, the same child would write with little re-reading at all. Some of the children were beginning to experiment with using quotation marks in their work so I did some direct teaching of the skill before the summer recess.

Of the six children who were unable to write on their own at the beginning of the project, two remained in this group. One child came from a different culture so the language was difficult for her, and the other child attended school only occasionally over the last 2 months. The others evolved to the point where they have enough courage and confidence to risk using their

physical print skills and their story organizational skills to write a retelling -in varying levels of competence. Two of the group were writing at the point where most of the other children were in the second week of April. The writings of two others progressed more quickly.

For the cloze of the story, I had a difficult time choosing one retelling to type so I did six copies of each of four different retellings. See (Appendix W) for the child's retelling and a copy of the cloze done by another child. The children each chose the retelling from which they would read and do the cloze. Three of the four children chose their own retellings. For the most part the boys/girls chose a boy's/girl's copy to work. There were six exceptions. (The children picked their copies to work as their names were drawn randomly from the name jar.) I helped four children read the retelling they had chosen. Their miscues were reasonable, their monitoring was secure, and they had little difficulty with the cloze.

This time, I broke the class into four groups for the comment and question session around each of the typed retellings. The child whose work was typed began the reaction to the retelling by reading it and reacting to comments and questions.

The children visited a petting farm and were fortunate enough to pet an angora billy goat and to play with some miniature goats, a nanny and two kids.

We had been watching and reading other folktale including- The Gingerbread Boy, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, The Three Little Pigs, and The Little Red Hen in preparation for the next stories. I asked the children what we might do after viewing films and/or filmstrips, and reading these stories. They said:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| -we could do a scene | -we could retell them |
| -we could act them out | -we could read other stories like them |

Four Folktales (June 21-27)

And so, the last phase of the project was the retelling of a favourite folktale of the children's own choosing. Six children worked with each of four tales. Since the children had a chance to view, listen to, and read the four folktale, they knew which one they preferred to work through. The children's names were drawn from the name jar as they formed their folktale groups. There was The Gingerbread Boy group, the Goldilocks and the Three Bears group, The Three Little Pigs group, and The Little Red Hen group.

Each group of children worked to construct a scene that would best depict their story. Some members of each group seemed to be working at home (not my idea) in making things that would enhance their scene. They shared their scenes with the class in our usual manner with a reporter fielding questions and

responding to comments with the assistance of other members of the group.

Since we picked the roles that each of the children would play in the dramatization of their folktale at the beginning of the week, they had some time to reflect about improvising their parts. Several children wore 'child made' costumes that they brought from home (again, not my idea) and several others brought props and costume items for other members of their group. I was feeling more and more as though I was "*leading from behind* by supporting language learning capabilities indirectly through the activities offered" (Newman, 1985. p.5) for the ownership was strong and the immersion was complete and there was an air of poise and confidence in the classroom culture. In the improvisations of the play parts, there was a strong 'voice' of character, and in the narration, a spontaneous flow.

The children, with the exception of one who was absent again, the child who spoke little English, and two children who began their summer a week early; wrote independently with no help from classmates or adults for the retelling. The posture of the reteller was one of determination and confidence for these children knew what they were doing and how to go about doing it. There was power in this 'storying' experience.

I found The Little Red Hen to be the easiest of the four tales to retell and that Goldilocks and the Three Bears was too

long for some of the children, especially when they wanted to include all the details of the story.

Data Analysis of the Folktale

In analyzing the children's folktale, I did a tally description of the retelling from a structural view point and a checklist of quality indicators with an anecdotal comment for the content part of the retelling. (Appendix X)

Folktale Structural Analysis

The criteria used in determining the tally count of various aspects of the structural analysis follows.

Simple sentences had a subject, verb and perhaps an object. Complex sentences included a phrase, clause, or conjunction. If a group of words lacked a subject and/or predicate, it was considered an incomplete thought.

Conventions "have a central role in composing and sharing of meaning because they represent the shared understanding of a community of language users" (Brown & Cambourne 1989 p. 40).

Capital letters were tallied if they were used within written conventions. Those periods used appropriately were counted. Other forms of punctuation were noted if they were used

correctly. They included quotation marks, question marks, apostrophes, and commas.

Conventional spellings were those words spelled correctly. Transitional or invented spellings were those words spelled according to graphophonemic principles.

Children who were struggling with language learning demonstrated a reluctance to risk attempts at transitional spellings in their retellings and in doing so, severely limited the quality of their expression. In the retellings of the more competent readers/writers, there was a consistency in attempts to spell whatever they wanted to say. The most competent of the story retellers demonstrated a high degree of formal structure and conventionality in their writing.

TABLE 1

Summary of the Structural Analysis Data of the Folktale

NUMBER OF SENTENCES WRITTEN BY THE 22 CHILDREN.....	471
simple sentences written.....	276
complex sentences written.....	195
incomplete thoughts.....	17
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SENTENCES WRITTEN PER CHILD.....	21
CONVENTIONS USED BY THE 22 CHILDREN:	
number of periods used appropriately.....	226
number of capital letters used to begin sentences.....	152
number of question/quotation marks, commas, apostrophes....	17
AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERIODS.....	10
AVERAGE NUMBER OF CAPITAL LETTERS.....	7
AVERAGE NUMBER OF OTHER FORMS OF PUNCTUATION.....	<1
TOTAL NUMBER OF WORDS WRITTEN.....	3808
conventional spellings.....	2954 or (77.6%)
transitional spellings.....	854
percentage of logical transitional spellings.....	81%
AVERAGE NUMBER OF WORDS WRITTEN.....	173
RATIO OF CONVENTIONAL TO TRANSITIONAL SPELLINGS.....	3.5:1

Folktale Content Analysis

The key for interpreting the story content checklist included a plus sign for those efforts which seem to be exceeding the expectations that I had of individual children, a check mark if the children were achieving the expectations I had of them and a minus sign if what they were doing with the folktale retelling was below the expected level of competence at this point in the project. I did not analyze the story of the child who was absent for most of the project nor did I analyze the work of the child who spoke very little English. (Appendix Y)

The folktale lends itself to a rhythm in the writing. Those children who were able to establish a story rhythm early in the writing of their pieces were the most successful retellers.

In the retellings of the folktale, there was very little character development. The retellings were more of a relating of the sequenced events of the story. This was due to the very nature of the folktale, and perhaps, to the age of the retellers. Perhaps, too, it was due to the retelling process itself. I suspect that both the nature of the folktale genre as presented in books for little children and the immaturity of the reteller were the major factors here.

Through their writing, several of the children corrected grammatical usage. A child who incorrectly said 'threwed' and

'comed' in his everyday conversation used the conventional form in his writing and another child corrected the sequence of her speech in the written form. For most of the children however, written expression was an extension of the spoken word as in the example of the child whose usage in both written and spoken form was 'the wolf bernt hisself'.

Several of the retellings seem to echo the child's voice in subtle ways..like the child who wrote about the little red hen being a friend and close neighbour of the lazy barnyard animals and the child who wrote of the dominant papa bear in Goldilocks.

In most of the stories, the children seemed to be saying something about themselves. Retelling experiences with the folktale were opportunities for children to "read and interpret in the medium of imagery and word play" (Cambourne, 1987,p.42).

In general, the folktale was comprehended for "the retellings captured the relevant gist, details, and points of argument"(Cambourne, 1988, p.159). The retellings of capable readers are quite different from those of the less able readers in the "quality of their retellings...for effective readers are well organized in capturing the essence of the original text. Their retellings are characterized by a paraphrasing of the original meaning but with different vocabulary"(Cambourne, 1988, p.173).

The Action Research Cycle Revisited

Throughout the observation part of the plan, I kept a journal of what I did and why, and how the children reacted to the lessons, their tasks, and each other. I observed what happened- recording my thoughts about the lessons as they evolved in comparison with the anticipated flow. To enhance the observation quality, I tried rather unsuccessfully because of the sound quality, to audio and videotape the children during the lessons as they interacted with each other and the print. I included dated retellings in the children's portfolios to assess their growth over time and to discover themes or patterns in their writings. I kept a checklist of retelling skill quality indicators (adapted from Brown & Cambourne, 1989, p.99 and other sources) as the children grew in their proficiency to cope with the complexities of story.(Appendix X) As part of the regular anecdotal recordings, I noted evidence that story retelling transferred to or affected other parts of the literacy experience for the children.

Halliday (1985, p.99) developed a metaphor about reading/writing being like skipping stones on water. In extending the metaphor, I thought of each retelling episode as where the stone touched the surface of the water. Retellings created a ripple effect- expanding to encompass all facets of language

learning and in due time overlapping and blending the experiences into something whole. I was aware that the children's skill at reading would very soon be superior to their skill at writing and in the past I took that as a given. Now, I am not so sure that this is a natural developmental progression or whether it is our practice in dealing with writing, that has created an imbalance. Perhaps, as teachers, we need to rethink how we teach children to write and how we think about the writing process itself.

I found that I got as excited about a new idea as I did when I first became a teacher. Each class of children add a depth and a dimension to my practice and I was grateful to these children as we journeyed together. I put my trust in them and in my intuitive sense about how to best proceed. I was more sensitive to what the children were communicating through their persona and I was more attuned to what they were inferring as they spoke. I was relying on them to help guide what we were doing.

I have always tinkered with the way I do things in the classroom--honing and refining and picking the best of experiences along the way. For a long time, I had been searching for a 'something' to make reading/writing more like my 'Math Their Way' program which is tactile, learning-centre based, and child oriented. I thought that there could not be anything

tactile and truly child centered in language learning until my experiences with story retelling. Story retelling as described in this project, seems to be what I had been searching for. But each year, the project will be refined and reworked and adapted-tinkered-- to meet the needs of the current class of grade one children.

I looked back at where I was at the beginning of the project and I saw how far I have come since that time and I looked ahead in anticipating how and what to do next in an ever evolving cycle of experience.

Concluding Thoughts

The project seemed to confirm and support what I believe about language learning for young children. There is a deep importance to *rehearsal in its many forms for reading and writing growth. Children need opportunities to explore their visual and auditory and tactile modalities of learning in building memory and they need opportunities to engage in purposeful talk.* This is the basis of my language learning practice.

Story retelling used as an isolated strategy in the grade one classroom, may not be particularly valuable. More of its potential value was realized in combination with other parts of a wholistic/natural program which immersed children in the

oral/written tradition of our culture. It was like any other new or different technique or strategy, not a panacea, but a valuable tool to be used in combination and union with activities in creating a rich experience in literacy for the children. And I am reminded once again, that there is no magic formula for making reading/writing happen in a profound way. It happens one experience and one insight at a time.

"Meaningful language is transparent. We look through the words for the meaning beyond"(Smith, 1988, p.110). I felt that all of the children were to some extent, reading beyond the text in putting a story together in their own words and that there was personal meaning in that act for them. The retelling project helped me further understand how individual children structured their language experiences in seeing connections and patterns within story. The information gathered extended my knowledge about how children saw themselves as relaters of experience through their own voices as storytellers.

"Readers can read without necessarily being writers or knowing a great deal about writing and how it is done but writers must be readers...for writing encapsulates reading "(Cambourne, 1988, p. 184). Through their writing, the children created their own text in which they brought cognitive language learning processes to their work. Analyzing, synthesizing, inferring, associating, sequencing, and monitoring (from Alberta Education's

Diagnostic Reading Program) are as much a part of the writing experience as they are of the reading process. Readers attend to character, setting, action, voice and audience as writers must. So the retelling seems to be a modelling of or a demonstration through the relationship between reading and writing.

"Sustained engagement with writing also means sustained engagement with reading....and this sustained engagement with written text does something to the way we think, interact, learn and use language" (Cambourne, 1988, p.185). When children apply what they read to their writing, it provides a greater understanding of what it means to both read and to write and leads to a more confident posture in language learning endeavor.

I learned something more about each child and how they were making sense of the print. It was evident that each of the children had his/her own unique approach to and style of writing/reading. I needed to really know the children and their backgrounds in order to effectively help them access their forte. And to help them come to trust in themselves.

Within our classroom culture, the children learned to cooperate with each other -focussed and intent. Personal initiative blossomed into group cohesion- flexible yet strongly grounded.

I was not at all sure at the beginning of the project that six and seven year old Grade One children would be able to do

what I was asking of them. They achieved much more than I expected for many of them began to realized some of the power inherent in the reading/writing experience. Most of the children were confident about their abilities to use reading/writing in a wide range of tasks and I know that some of the children continue to enjoy reading/writing as worthwhile and self fulfilling activities.

Twice since the completion of this retelling project in June of 1994 conversations with some of now Grade two children who were a part of the experiences, lead back to stories we did together. These children wanted to re-read 'that story about those potatoes' and 'remember the one about that troll and that mouse' because it was their intent to use some of the ideas from these stories in their composing now, some nine months later. It would seem that there is 'linguistic spillover' (Brown & Cambourne, 1987 p. 15) for at least a few of the children in the longer term.

I had not observed much of the spillover effect because I was too narrowly involved with the retelling part of the experience. I missed an important aspect of the retelling too, in not having the children try a factual piece. I did not formally collaborate with other teachers through the project so that this aspect of the action research plan was unfulfilled.

But, I learned and continue to learn, about how I can best

use the retelling strategy in a Grade One language learning program as part of a quality experience for children. I have found that I am intuitively preparing the children for this years retelling experiences in subtle ways, for my current group of children in the Grade One program have done much more oral retelling than previous classes. Together we are building the scaffolding and the framework of story, to be filled in with the richness of language.

In concluding the study here, I feel somewhat like Bilbo Baggins as he set out on yet another quest-

*The road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with weary feet,
Until it meets some larger way,
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say.

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In the night,
Dad went into the kitchen
and opened the fridge.
"I am hungry," he said.

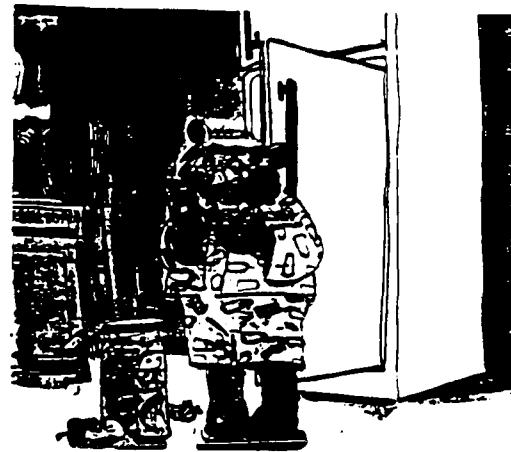


In the night,
Grandma went
into the kitchen
and opened the fridge.
"I am hungry," she said.

10



In the night,
Sister went into the kitchen
and opened the fridge.
"I am hungry," she said.



In the night,
Brother went into the kitchen
and opened the fridge.
"I am hungry!" he said.

12

1



In the morning,
Mom went into the kitchen.



"Breakfast," she said,
but no one was hungry.

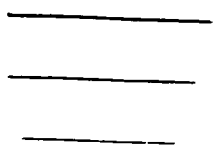
In the night Dad went into
 the kitchen and opened the fridge
 I am hungry he said in the
 night Gramma went
 into the kitchen and
 opened the fridge
 I am hungry she
 said In the night sister went
 into the kitchen and opened the
 fridge I am hungry she said I
 in the night brother
 went into the
 kitchen and said
 I am hungry he
 said In the morning Mom said
 breakfast she said but no
 one was hungry

sister

Feb. 1/04

brother





The empty house
 when I got home I went
 into the house. Dinosaurs
 were jumping a row
 I screamed and screamed and
 screamed till my head flew
 off. I ran and ran. I went
 into the back yard. Every
 one was there. They said
 have beer on to me

Feb. 15/94

Stewart's second retelling of "The Empty House"

When I got home from school, I went into the house. I went in the hall.

No one was there. I went in the living-room. No one

was there. I went into the

kitchen. No one was there.

I went into the bedroom.

No one was there. I went

into the bathroom. No one

was there. I went into the

backyard. Everybody was there.

They sang Happy Birthday

to me. (Scribed)

Sing a song of.....
 A pocket full of.....
 Four and twenty.....
 Baked in a
 When the pie was.....
 The birds began to.....
 Wasn't that a dainty.....
 To set before the.....?
 The king was in the.....
 Count out his.....
 The queen was in the.....
 Eating bread and.....
 The maid was in the
 Hanging out the.....
 There came a little.....
 And snapped off her.....

The cook
 The king
 The queen
 The maid.....

The Potato Party

from The Potato Party and other Troll Tales
Loreen Leedy (1989)

The wind howled through the mountain fir trees as the trolls moped in their cave. It was the longest, coldest, and darkest winter that Tobber had ever seen. "It's gloomy and boring in here," he said crossly. "What's for lunch?"

"Potatoes," said Mama.

"But I'm tired of eating potatoes," complained Tobber.

"And I'm tired of smelling potatoes," added Papa.

"Well, I'm tired of cooking potatoes," said Mama. "But look!"

Potatoes were piled high in a cupboard. Potatoes peeked out of the cookie jar. Potatoes rolled by her toes. "We'll never get rid of them," she said.

"I have an idea," replied Papa. "Let's cook every one of those ridiculous potatoes and invite our friends to dinner."

"We'll have a Potato Party!" exclaimed Tobber.

The trolls hurried to prepare the potatoes.

They added butter and cream and flour and spices and salt. Soon the table held platters of potatoes that were baked, boiled, creamed, fried or mashed.

They scrubbed and scraped and peeled and chopped.

The guests arrived, and they were eager to eat. They gobbled Pink Potato Puffs. They nibbled Sugar-Sprinkled Spuds. They munched Fishtail-Flavored Fries. The troll family grinned as the potatoes vanished.

After everyone left, the cave was quiet. Papa lay snoring, Mama sat sewing, and Tobber sprawled on the floor. Someone knocked—it was one of the guests. "Thank you for the delicious dinner," he said. "Since we ate all your potatoes, we brought over some more. Happy eating!"

the potato party

it was a dark and stormy day
that tober ever seen he said
wait is for dinner moma said potatoes
tober said Im tired of eating potatoes
papa said Im tired of smelling
potatoes Im tired of cooking
potatoes moma said, I got a
idea thes cook of of them papa
said tober said thes have a
potato party wen the guest
arrived they eat and eat til
it was all gone they wer
glad the potatoes wer gon
that was a mock on the
door it was a guest he
said sens we eat of yore
potatoes we brot yore some
more

the END

The Potato Party

It was a dark and stormy night. The trolls were laying around in the cave.

All they had to eat was potatoes. Papa had an idea about how to get rid of all these potatoes. They would have a potato party. They chopped and peeled and washed and cooked the potatoes.

Finally the guests arrived.

They ate all the potatoes.

Finally the guests all went home. One guest came and knocked on the door. He said "The potato party was nice. Since we ate all

of your potatoes, we brought you some more. Happy eating!"

The troll family was spending the long, ¹¹⁸cold, dark winter in their cave. All they had left to eat was potatoes. There were potatoes in the cupboards and potatoes in the cookie jar. The trolls were tired of eating potatoes!

Papa Troll had a good idea. He said "Let's have a potato party. We will cook all the potatoes and invite our friends to dinner."

The trolls sorted the potatoes and peeled the potatoes and chopped the potatoes. They cooked many potato dishes.

The trolls and their friends ate all the potatoes. After the party, the troll family was resting. One of their friends knocked on the door and said, "Thankyou for the dinner. Since we ate all of your potatoes, we brought you some more. Happy Eating."

The trolls wer handworking

The trolls wer friendly

The potatoes got eaten

The troll friends wer egr to get

⑦ The trolls gave the
potatoes to the rane (deer)
The rane deer get
all the potatoes
and got a stumec acko

Group retelling of Peter and the WolfPeter and the Wolf

Once upon a time there was a boy named Peter. He lived in a house surrounded by a high wall. Peter lived with his grandfather. One day ^{he} went into the meadow, and he left the gate open. Peter met his friend the little bird. The little bird said, "All is quiet. All is quiet." The duck came out of the yard and swam in the pond. The bird said, "What kind of bird are you if you can't fly?" The duck said, "What kind of bird are you if you can't swim?"

The cat went behind the tall grass and tried to capture the little bird. Peter said, "Watch out because the cat is trying to catch you."

The bird flew up in the tree. The cat said, "If I climb up the tree the bird will be gone."

Grandfather took Peter by the hand and took him into the house. He said, "There are wolves in the forest." Peter said, "I'm not afraid of wolves." Peter said, "I can catch a wolf." Grandfather locked the gate.

A wolf came out of the forest. The duck jumped out of the pond. - Then she got eaten by the wolf.

The bird flew up into the tree. The cat climbed the tree.

Peter snuck out of the house with a rope. He climbed the wall and jumped into the tree. He tied one end of the rope to ^a ~~the~~ branch. ^{The little bird teased the wolf.} Peter made a lasso at the other end ^{of the rope} and caught the wolf's tail.

The hunters came out of the forest. They were looking for the wolf and they were shooting as thou came.

Peter said, "Don't shoot. We'll take the wolf to the zoo."

Peter led the way. Then came the hunters leading the wolf.

Grandfather walked behind carrying the cat.

The little bird flew up in the sky. If you listen very carefully you can hear the duck quacking in the wolf's stomach because the wolf ate the duck whole.

(Scribed)

child's retelling of Peter and the Wolf 119

1994

Peter and the wolf

Once a upon a time in a small
 house lived a boy
 named Peter. Peter lived with
 his grand father. When Peter was
 Eating with his grand father
 can i go into the meadow
 no said his grand father there
 are wolfs in the meadow
 but the next day in the
 morning Peter went out
 to catch a wolf. well he
 was walking he met a little
 bird. the little bird said
 what are you doing. Peter
 said i am going to catch a
 wolf. ill help you to catch
 a wolf. So they walk until they
 met a duck and the bird said what
 kind of duck are you if you
 cant fly what kind of bird
 are you if you cant swim
 Peter said Lets get on
 to catch a
 wolf. and then Peter saw
 a shadow. it was a big
 shadow it was a wolf. Peter
 said to the bird go down
 and tease the wolf
 so the bird teas the wolf
 and Peter hide in a grass area
 the wolfs tail. three hunter
 wer coming out of the
 meadow they wer looking
 for a wolf Peter
 said cum over heer x

weev got a wolf
the three hunter said lets
take this wolf to the
Zoo Peter was in the
lead the hunter wer
leading the wolf.
Grand father opird the
door and got in the
line and they lived
happily ever after

child's retelling-cloze of Peter and the Wolf 121Child's retelling of Peter and the Wolf

APR 20 1994

Peter lived with his grandfather. Their house... was surrounded by a wall. Outside the wall there was a meadow....

Peter went into the meadow. He met a little bird..... named Sasha. Then they met a duck.....named Sonia. The birds got into a fight. The duck said, "What kind of bird... are you if you can't swim?"

The little bird said, "What kind of bird.....are you if you can't fly?"

Grandfather brought Peter into the house and shut the gate. And then there was a wolf..... Peter ran into the house and got a rope and ran and put the rope over the wall. He climbed the wall and put the rope on a branch and got the little bird.....to fly down and tease the wolf..... Peter tied the other end of the rope around the wolf's tail.....

They had a parade to the zoo and if you listen quietly you will hear the duck... singing from inside the wolf....

Peter ate a wolf

Peter took the wolf to the Zoo

Grandfather got mad

The wolf ate the duck

the wolf is in the Zoo ¹²²

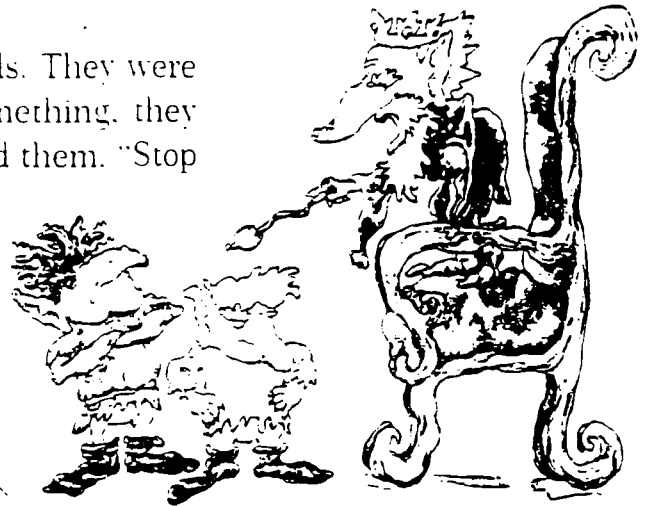




from The Potato Party and other Troll Tales
by Loreen Leedy (1989)

Murkle and Mog lived in the Kingdom of the Trolls. They were much too lazy to work. Whenever they wanted something, they stole it from the village people. The troll king warned them. "Stop stealing, or I'll put a curse on you both."

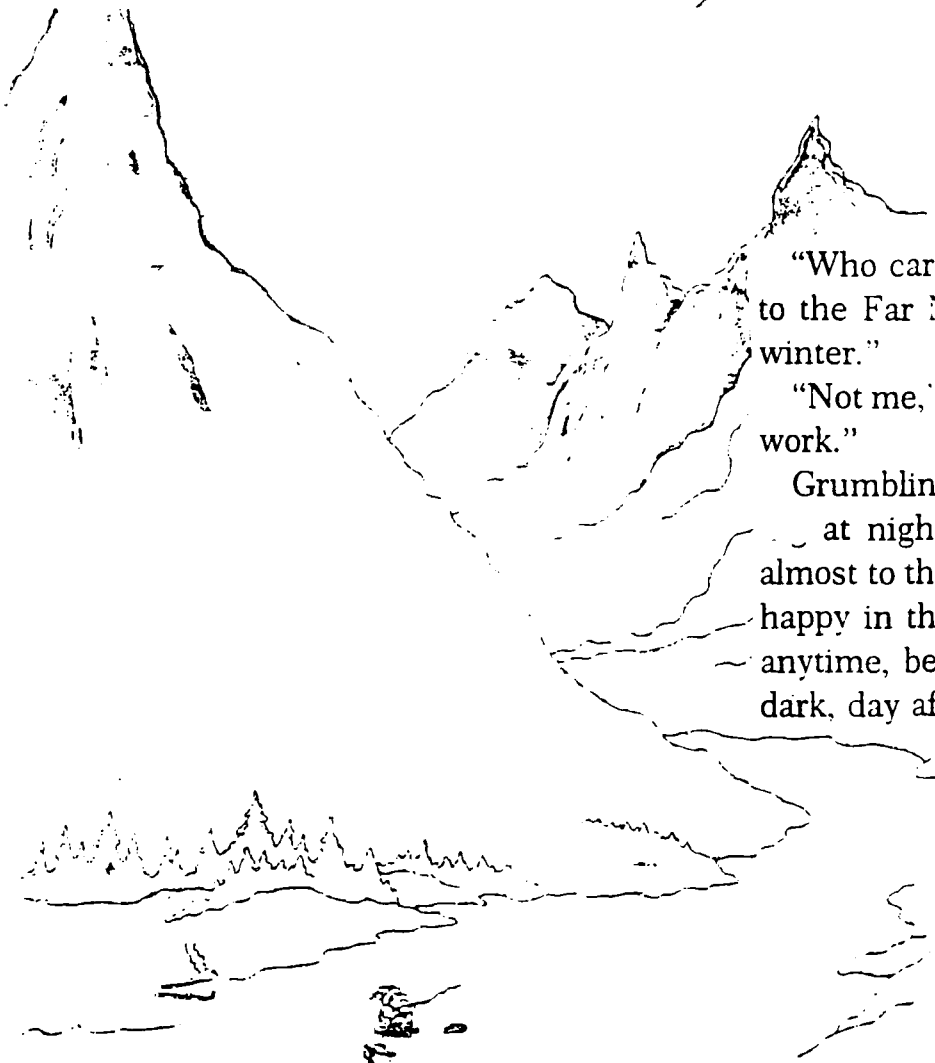
The two were caught stealing again, which made the troll king lose his temper. "Thieves!" he thundered. "You give trolls a bad name, and it's time to pay the price. From now on, you must crawl in darkness. If you are touched by sunshine, you will turn to stone!"

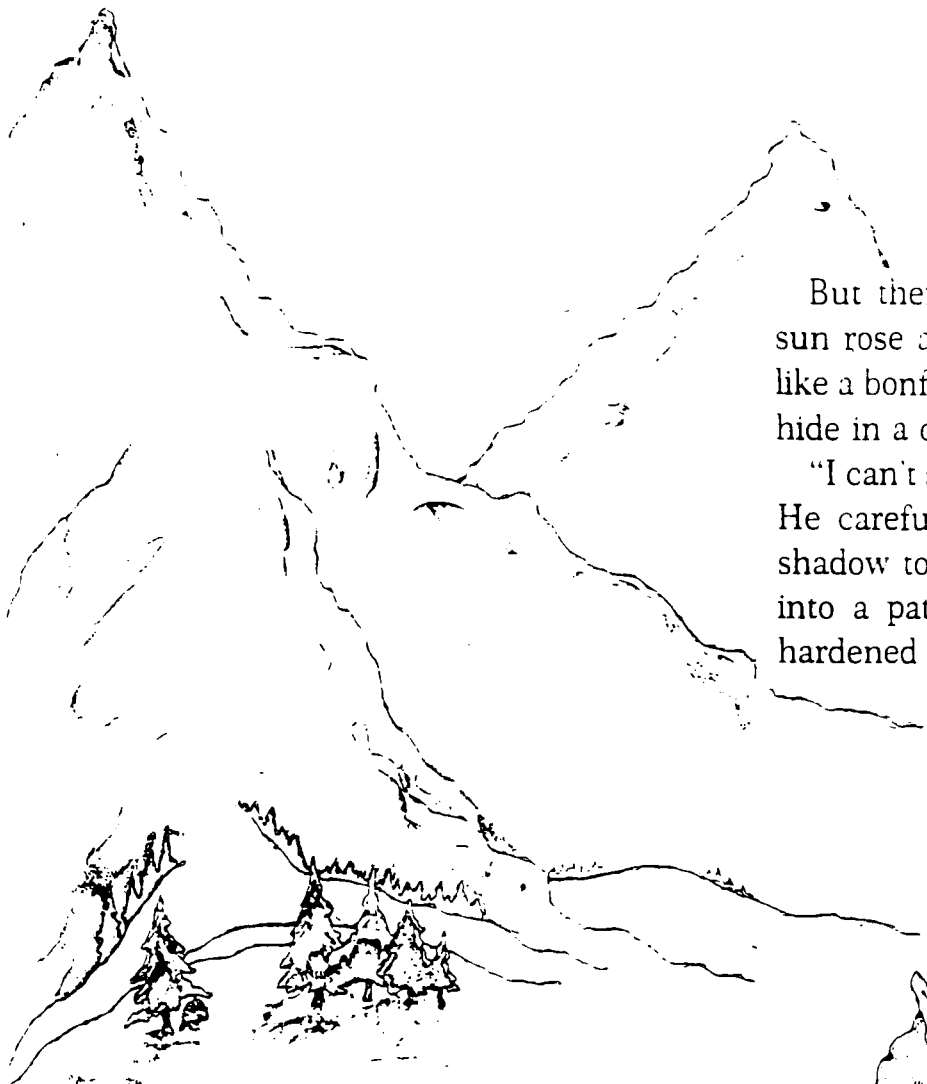


"Who cares?" said Murkle. "We can move to the Far North, where the sun is gone all winter."

"Not me," said Mog. "I want to learn how to work."

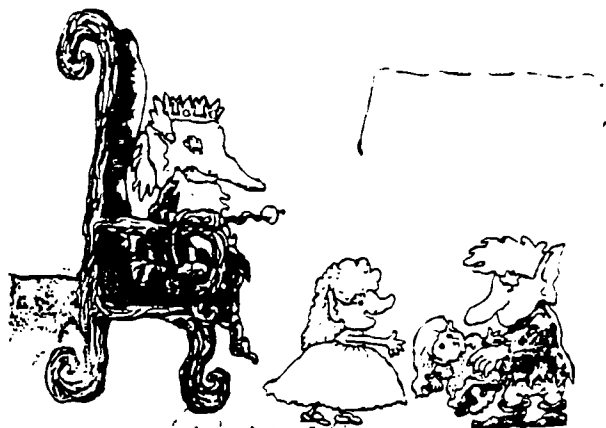
Grumbling, Murkle left by himself, travelling at night. He hiked further and further, almost to the top of the world. At first, he was happy in the North. He could hunt and fish anytime, because the winter sky was always dark, day after lightless day.





But then summer came, and the shining sun rose again. Even at midnight, it burned like a bonfire in the sky. Murkle was forced to hide in a dark cavern for weeks.

"I can't stand it anymore!" he wailed at last. He carefully crept outside. He moved from shadow to shadow. Then he slipped and fell into a patch of sunlight. Instantly, Murkle hardened into a cold, gray stone.



Mog had stayed behind in the kingdom. He always kept out of the sun. During the long hours indoors, he learned to carve wooden dolls. After many months, he gave a dimpled doll to the princess. The troll king smiled as he said, "You are forgiven. The curse is removed. But up in the Far North, Murkle must remain a stone forever!"

Group retelling of 'The Curse of the Troll King'

The Curse of the Troll King

Murkle and Mog were stealing.

The king said, "You get caught stealing again and I will put a curse on you

both." They were caught stealing again. The Troll King ~~grumbled~~

as he said, "If you get touched by a patch of sunlight, you will turn into stone."

Murkle said, "Who cares! I will go up to the far North where the sun isn't shining all winter."

Mog said, "No, I do not want to go with you. I want to stay here and learn how to work."

Murkle went up to the Far

North. He fished and hunted.

The long winter passed by and summer ~~came~~
 and the sun rose like a beaming

hot bonfire. ^{Murkle went into a cave for days} Murkle said, "I

can't stand this anymore," so he

went from shadow to shadow. He

slipped into a patch of sunlight,

and ~~hardness~~ turned into a cold gray stone.

Back in the troll kingdom Mag

learned to make wooden dolls. A month

ago he gave a wooden doll to the

princess. The king smiled and said,

"The curse is forgiven!"

Back in the Far North, Murkle

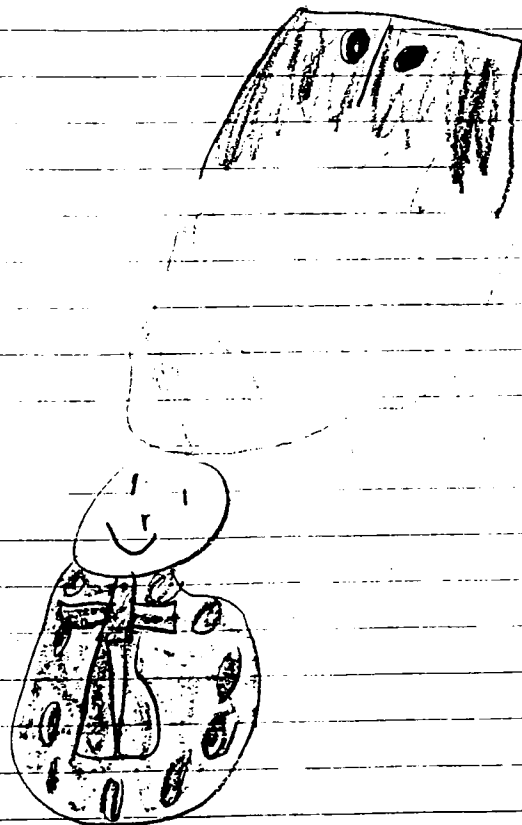
remains a stone forever.

(scribed)

child's retelling of 'The Curse of the Troll King'

The Curse of the Troll King
 Murkle and Mog were too lazy
 to work. When ever they
 wanted something they steal
 it from the villege
 people. The king was mad
 he said "next time
 I will put a curse on you both
 if you are caught stealing
 again. A curse on them both
 you'll be in the dark if you
 touch sunlight you will turn
 to stone. Murkle said who
 cares I'm going to the
 north were it is dark
 all winter. How bright you
 said. Murkle no said
 Mog I want to learn
 how to work. So Murkle
 left. He looked like he
 could see the hole world
 he could fish whenever
 he wanted, but then
 summer came. Murkle
 said I can't stand it
 any more but then
 he slipped into the
 sunlight. Murkle turned into
 a cold gray stone. back in

The kingdom Mog
 learned to carve
 wooden dolls after
 mounts and mounts Mog
 gave a wooden doll
 to the princesses The
 troll king said The
 curse on you is removed
 but down in the North Muckle
 must remain a stone
 for ever.



child's retelling-cloze of 'The Curse of the Troll King'

The Curse of the Troll King told by C

Murkle and Mog were too lazy to work. Whenever they wanted something, they ~~stole~~ ^{told} it from the village people. The Troll King was mad. He said, "Next time ~~you~~ ^{you} are caught stealing, I will put a ~~curse~~ ^{curse} on you both.

They were caught stealing again. The Troll King put a curse on them b~~oth~~ ^{oth}... He said, "You must crawl in the dark. If you touch sunlight you will turn to ~~stone~~ ^{stone}."

Murkle said, "Who ~~cares~~ ^{cares}... I'm going to the North where it is dark all w~~inter~~ ^{inter}.....How about you?"

"No," said Mog, "I want to learn how to w~~ork~~ ^{ork}..." So Murkle left. It looked like he could see the whole world. He could ~~fish~~ ^{fish} whenever he wanted.

But then s~~ummer~~ ^{ummer}... came. Murkle said, "I can't stand it anymore." And then he slipped into the sunlight. Murkle turned into a cold, gray ~~stone~~ ^{stone}.....

Back in the kingdom, Mog learned to carve wooden ~~dolls~~ ^{dolls}.... After months and months, Mog gave a wooden doll to the ~~prince~~ ^{prince}. The Troll King said, "The curse on you is removed but up in the ~~North~~ ^{North}... Murkle must remain a ~~stone~~ ^{stone}... forever."

Mog... ~~made a doll for the prince~~ ^{made a doll for the prince}

Murkle... ~~stayed a stone forever~~ ^{stayed a stone forever}

The Troll King... ~~was mad~~ ^{was mad}

children's new endings to 'The Curse of the Troll King'

A New Ending to the Curse
of the Troll King.
After myrtle tried to stop
mog married the Prentiss.

The troll King removed the
Curse. The troll King said

that only mog married with

myrtle for one day.

and prove you can not

steal. He got caught stealing

again and tried to stop.

The end

The Curse of the Troll King

Mog married the Prentiss
and they had five children
they were married and
Chikengot a family it had

Appendix "Q 2"

A New Ending +
 to the ^{the} curse of the Troll King
 In 1990 MURKIE
 broke his hands and feet
 out of the stone Meg
 got married to the
 princess ^(day) but on
~~the~~ ^{the} way home they
 sleeping Murkie came
 and stole the animals
 when Meg and the
 princess wake up ^(day)
 want to see the ~~the~~
~~the~~ ^(day) ~~the~~
 got the troll king
 so him he put a
 curse on him but
 it didn't work cos he was
 a stone ol' gee.

A New Ending to The
 Curse of the Troll King
 (after Mike had ^{been} ~~followed~~ a
 garbage bag ^{interchange} forever and
 Syn g id - es to and after the
 wedding Mag (S + O) pig from
 the farmer and Mike stole a
 chicken. and the troll king
 had them both in a stone
 THE END

letter to parents inviting their responses to the retelling
experience

May 9, 1994.

Dear,

We have been working at our story retelling project for several weeks.

These retellings are done without the aid of the text of the story and without any assistance with spellings or content.

I would be glad to read the stories and my retellings of them to you and I would like to talk about them, too. Ask me about the story scenes we have made at school and about acting the stories out.

Please feel free to comment about my reading and writing progress in a note or a phone call (328-9965 or 329-4711) or a visit.

I need my portfolio back at school by Thursday, May 12. Mrs. Prenevost will be sending all the portfolios home to stay at the end of June.

Love,

.....

responses to the retelling project from parents

J.-----'s story retellings were interesting. He had a bit of trouble reading his retellings back to me, mostly due to his spelling & punctuation. His printed words were not spaced enough & one word would run into another.

J.----- says he enjoys doing this project, but that he found the story The Case of the Troll King too long, but not hard. He liked writing the new ending to the Troll King story. I think this kind of project ~~is~~ at this grade level will help the children with their creative writing at higher grade levels.

May 10-94.

We are really impressed with the progress M.----- has made in her story-telling. What an improvement since our interview in March. She has certainly come a long way. She truly enjoys writing stories - she comes home and writes stories about her friends and different things that happened at school. We are also noticing that her spelling has improved, has not scared to try and spell anything.

M.----- is also gaining a lot of self confidence in her reading. She will read things out of magazines and newspapers with very little help from us. She is not nearly as timid about reading in front of others (eg. grandparents, aunts + uncles) as she used to be and we feel this has a lot to do with how well she reads.

Over all - the improvements we see are great and are very happy with how M.----- is coming along.

THESE STORIES TO ME. HE REMEMBERED THEM
IN GREAT DETAIL, BUT HE COULDN'T READ
HIS OWN WRITING. I THINK HE DID HIS
BEST, AND THAT'S ALL I ASK OF HIM.

May 10/94

A story retellings are quite close to the actual story. I was impressed to see he is listening so well. He had a little trouble reading back his own retelling because his printing is such a challenge. Even so, he could retell the story well.

He makes good use of descriptive words such as "the guests were eager to eat" in the Potato Party story. He had no problem making up a new ending with an unusual twist for "The Curse of the Troll King"

A spellings are a lesson in creativity for me! He doesn't leave spaces between words so everything is just one continuous line of letters making his printing very difficult to read!

A seemed to enjoy telling me the stories. He even acted out the part of Muckle that he played in The Curse of the Troll King that the class put on.

I have enjoyed his retellings and he seems to have enjoyed the process as well. Thank you for sharing these stories!

from Happy Birthday Mole and Troll
 Tony Johnston (1979)

136



CONTESTS

Flowers were blooming.

The stream was bubbling.

The sun was bright.

"Hello, spring," said Troll.

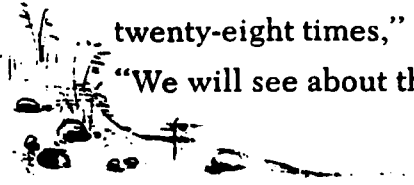
"Hello, stream. I feel so good,

I bet I can skip this little stone
 twenty-seven times."

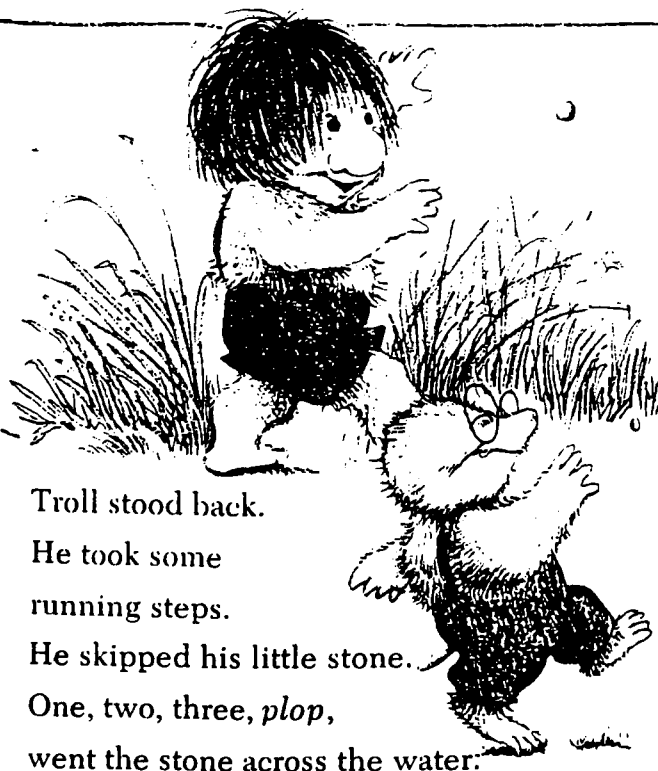
Mole came along. He felt good too.

"I bet I can skip this little stone
 twenty-eight times," he said.

"We will see about that," said Troll.



7



Troll stood back.

He took some
 running steps.

He skipped his little stone.

One, two, three, *plop*,
 went the stone across the water.

Then Mole stood back.

He took some running steps.

8

One, two, three, *shplop*,
 went the stone across the water.

"I was just warming up," said Troll.

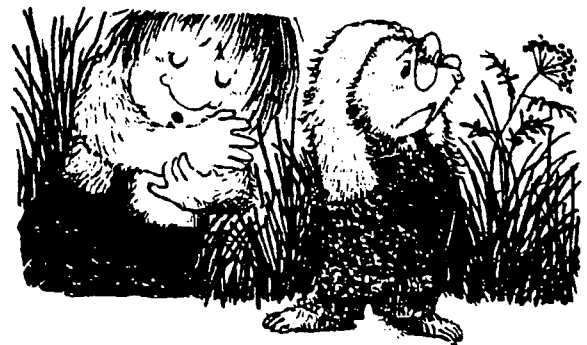
"Me too," said Mole.

"I had a kink in my skipping arm."

"I am tired of skipping stones
 anyway," said Troll. "Let's see

who can count the most ants on a leaf."

"Fine," said Mole.



9

Troll saw some ants carrying things across a leaf. He started counting. "One, two, three, four, five . . ." "What are you counting?" asked Mole. "There are no ants on that leaf." "Fifteen, sixteen, seventeen . . ." "Troll, there are no ants here!" shouted Mole, peering at the leaf. "Thirty, thirty-one, thirty-two . . ."



10



"Stop counting! That is nothing but a big green leaf with NO ANTS!" "There are exactly ninety trillion, nine hundred ninety-nine million ants carrying things on that leaf," said Troll.

11



12

"There is not one single, stupid ant on that leaf!" shouted Mole. "Then you cannot see at all!" yelled Troll. "Right," said Mole. "Moles have bad eyes. Let's do something else." "Fine," said Troll. But he did not feel fine. He felt mad.





"Let's see who can balance a mushroom on his head the longest," said Mole.
"I am good at that."
"Okay," said Troll.
"But you better watch out, Mole, because I am great at that."

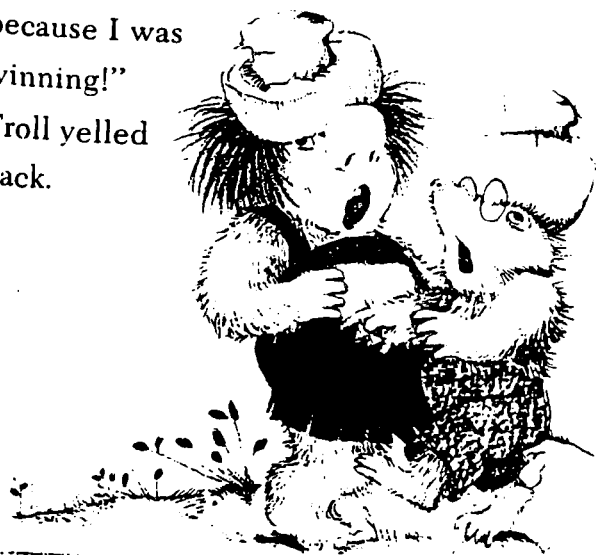
14



Mole chose a good mushroom for balancing.
He put it on his head.
Troll chose a good mushroom for balancing.
He put it on his head.
They walked everywhere, trying to keep their mushrooms on their heads.

15

Then, *boff*, they walked into each other.
"You did that on purpose to knock my mushroom off!" yelled Mole.
"My mushroom would have stayed up there forever!"
"You bumped into me because I was winning!"
Troll yelled back.



16



"My mushroom was steady as a rock!"
Mole and Troll were angry.
"Okay," said Troll.
"This is the last contest.
This will show who is best once and for all."

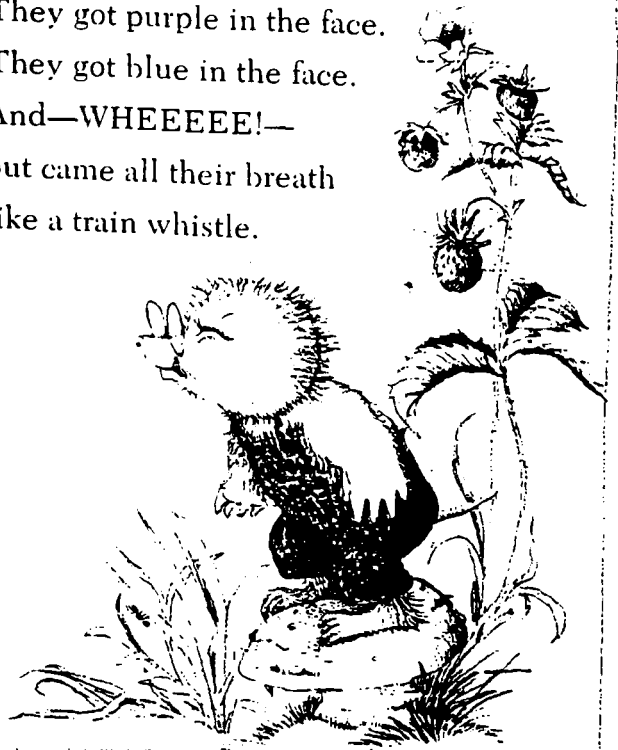
17

We will see
who can hold his breath the longest.”
“I can do that for an hour,” said Mole.
Troll took out a big stopwatch.

Mole and Troll watched
the little hand go round and round.
Then Troll
shouted,
“Go!”



They held their breath for dear life.
They got red in the face. 139
They got purple in the face.
They got blue in the face.
And—WHEEEEE!—
out came all their breath
like a train whistle.



“Mole,” said Troll.
“Yes, Troll?”
“I feel bad.”
“Well, I feel worse.”
“Stop that,” said Troll.
“It doesn’t matter who is best.”

“Right. It doesn’t matter since
I can beat you at everything.
We are still friends.”
“Mole,” said Troll, “are you fooling me?”
“Yes, I am,” said Mole.



child's retelling of 'Contests'

Flowers^{can-ests} were blooming.

The steam was boiling

The sun was bright.

Hello spring said troll

Hello steam. I feel

so good I bet I can skip

this little stone twenty seven times. Mole came along

he felt good too. I bet I

can. Skip this little stone

twenty eight times he said.

We will see about that said

troll. Troll took some running

steps he skipped his little

stone one two three plop.

went the stone across the

water.

Mole took some running steps
 he SKIPPED his little stone
 one two three skip went
 the stone across the water.

I was just warming up said
 Troll me to said Mole I
 had a kink in my SKIPPING
 arm im tired of SKIPPING
 stones anyway said Troll:
 lets do something else.

Lets see who can count
 the most ant on a leaf

OK said Troll Troll
 saw some ants carrying
 stone across a leaf he

started counting one two
 three four five what are

you counting asked Mole fifteen
 sixteen seventeen what
 are you counting asked
 Mole there are no ants here
 thirty thirty one thirty
 two troll there are no
 ants here then you can
 not see at all right
 said Mole Moles have bad eyes
 lets do something else said
 Mole all right said troll
 lets see who can balance
 a mushroom on there head
 the longest said troll
 Mole chose a good mushroom
 for balancing. troll chose

a good mushroom for baking
 they walked and walked until
 baff they walked into
 each other 'lets do something'
 else ok said troll but he did
 not feel fine. He felt mad.

We will see who can hold

there breath the longest

said Troll ok said Mole. Troll

took out a big stop watch

go! he said they held

there breath for ~~eleven~~ life

they got red in the

face they got purple in

the face they got blue in the
 face and wheepee

out came all there breath like a train
 whistle ~~and~~ we still friends yes

said Mole as he gave troll a

hug.

child's retelling-cloze of 'Contests'

Contests' retold by M. . . .

One day Troll said, "I bet I can skip this little s.t.p.o.o.k. twenty-eight times."

Then Mole came along and said, "I bet I can skip this little s.t.p.o.o.k. twenty-nine times." So they had a c.p.h.t.e.s.t. Troll took some running s.t.e.p.s and he threw the stone. One, two, th.v.e.plop went the stone across the water. Then Mole took some running ..g.t.e.p.s and he threw the stone. One ,two, three, kerplop went the stone across the w.v.t.e.r. "I was just warming up," said Troll.

"Me too," said Mole.

"Let's do something else," said Troll.

"Okay. Let's see who can count the most a.n.t.s on a leaf," said Mole.

Then Troll started counting, " One, two, three, f.o.u.r. five."

"What are you c.o.n.t.i.n.g Troll?" said Mole.

"Twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three," said Troll.

"There is nothing there but a stupid green l.e.g.e...." said Mole, "let's see who can balance a m.u.s.h.r.o.o.m on his head."

Troll got a good mushroom and put it on his head. Mole got a good m.u.s.h.v.o.o.w....and put it on his h.e.d..... They bumped into each other. "You bumped into me because I was w.i.k.i.n.g" said Troll.

"So did you," said Mole, "let's see who can hold their breath the l.o.l.g.e.s.t."

"And that will see who is the b.e.s.t." said Troll.

Troll got his stopwatch and said, "G...o..." They held their breath for dear l...i...e... They got r...ed in the face. They got yellow in the face and they got p...l...e... in the face and wheeeeeeee--out came all their breath like a t...r...a...e whistle.

"I feel b...a...b..." said Troll.

"Me too," said Mole.

"It doesn't matter who is b...e...s...t..." said Troll, "since I can b...e...e...x... you at everything."

"Are you kidding me?" said Mole.

"Yes," said Troll.

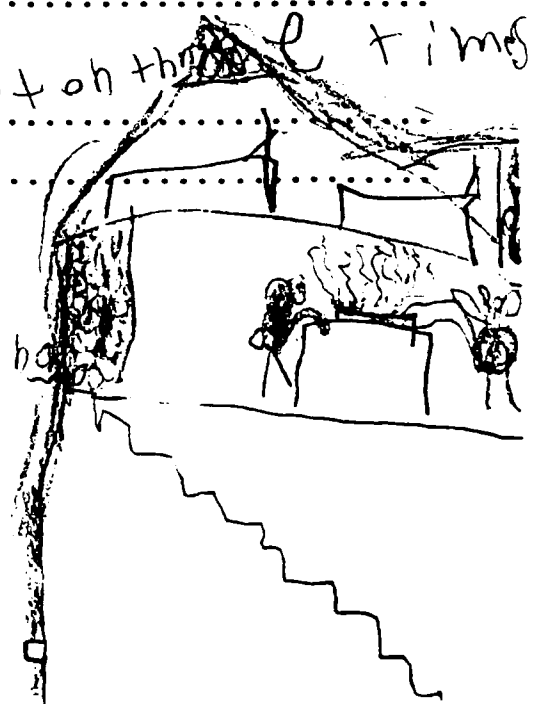
Troll... got mad a lot.

Mole... has bad site.

Troll... has a good friend.

Mole... skipped his stop watch times

troll
his cooking
(kake) for
Mole



retelling-cloze samples from The Three Billy Goats Gruff

The Three Billy Goats Gruff told by A.....

Once upon a time there were three billy goats and they wanted to cross the bridge to eat Grass in the meadow.

First the Little Billy Goat Gruff went across the bridg.
Trip trap, trip trap went the bridge. Then up jumped a troll.

"Who's that trip trapping across my bridge?" roared the Troll.

"Oh, its only I, the littlest Billy Goat Gruff," said the Little Billy Goat Gruff.

"You better run, because I'm coming to gobble you up!" said the Troll.

"No, wait for the second Billy Goat Gruff. He's much fatter than me," said the Little billy Goat Gruff.

"Be off with you then," said the Troll. Then the Troll jumped back under the bridge.

Then the Second Billy Goat Gruff came. Trip trap, trp trap went the bridge.

"Who's that trip trapping on my bridge?" Said the Troll.

"It's only I, the Second Billy Goat Gruff," said the Second Billy Goat Gruff.

"You better run because I'm coming to gobble you up!" said the Troll.

"No don't eat me. Wait for the Big Billy Goat Gruff. He's much biger than me," said the Second Billy Goat Gruff.

"Be off with you then," said the Troll and he jumped back under the bridge.

Then the big Billy Goat Gruff came across the bridge. Trip

trap, trip trap went the bridge. Then up jumped the Troll.

"Who's that trip trapping?" said the Troll.

"It's the Big Billy Goat Gruff," said the Big Billy Goat Gruff.

"You'd better run, because I'm coming to gobble you up!" said the Troll.

"Oh no you aren't. I'm coming to gobble you up!" said the Big Billy Goat Gruff. Then the Big Billy Goat Gruff butted the Troll in the river and the Big Billy Goat Gruff went across the bridge. But when Big Billy Goat Gruff knocked the Troll off the bridge, the troll was never seen again.

Big Billy Goat Gruff

butted the troll with his horns

Second Billy Goat Gruff

said please
don't eat me

Little Billy Goat Gruff

crossed the
bridge first

Troll

lived under the
bridge



child's retelling of The Three Billy Goats Gruff

The three billy goats gruff.

was a long a time there was three billy goats.

And they wanted to cross the bridge to get

the grass in the meadow. First the little

billy goat went across the bridge.

trip trap trip trap went the bridge.

Then the giant a troll. Hoos that trip

trap across my bridge. Over its only

I. The little billy goat. You see

ran because he was coming to go

you up. No way for the

secret billy goat gruff. He's under

fast than me. Be a troll with you.

Then the troll jumped back under

the bridge. Then the secret billy

goat gruff came. Trip trap trip

trap. (We went the bridge. Hoos that trip

trap trap on my back. Its only I
 the secret billy got graf. You
 back ran. Decas in coming to go
 you up. No dont eat me. Wake
 for the big billy got graf.
 Has man later than me. Back with
 you. Then he jump and
 the trap. Then the big
 billy got graf. Can.
 across the. Here. Trap trap
 trap trap went the back.
 Then a jump the trap.
 Has that trip. Vaning. Its
 the big billy got graf.
 from back ran. Decas I'm
 coming to god you up.

one no you are not. I'm coming
 to guide you up. Then
 the big billy got to get
 down him in the
 river. And the big billy
 got to want across the
 bridge. but when the
 big billy got to get
 down the toll of
 the bridge the toll
 wasn't seen a gun.

1966

The Three Billy Goats Gruff told by Shakespeare.

Once upon a time, there lived three billy goats. And they wanted to cross the bridge because they wanted to get fat. But they couldn't because there was a troll under the bridge.

Trip trap, trip trap went the first Billy Goat Gruff. And the Troll popped up and roared, "Who's that trip trapping over my bridge?"

"It's just me, the Little Billy Goat gruff" said the Little Billy Goat Gruff.

"I will gobble you up!" said the Troll.

"No, please don't eat me, I'm too small," said the Little Billy goat Gruff.

"Fine, be off with you," said the troll.

Trip trap, trip trap. "Who's that trip trapping over my bridge?" roared the Troll.

"It's just me, the Middle billy Goat Gruff," said the Middle Billy Goat Gruff.

"I'm coming to gobble you up!" said the Troll.

"No, don't take me, I'm too small," said the middle Billy Goat Gruff, "wait for the Big Billy Goat Gruff. He's much bigger than me, am."

"Well, be off with you," said the Troll.

Trip trap, trip trap, went the heavys and the Big Billy Goat Gruff went over the bridge. The Troll popped up and said, "I'm coming to gobble you up!"

"No you're not," said the Big Billy gote Gruff, "I'm going to gobble you up!" He butted the Troll off and he joined his brothers. So snip, snap, snout, this tale's told out.

Big Billy Goat Gruff

butted big billy gote gruff
the troll off the bridge.

Middle Billy Goat Gruff

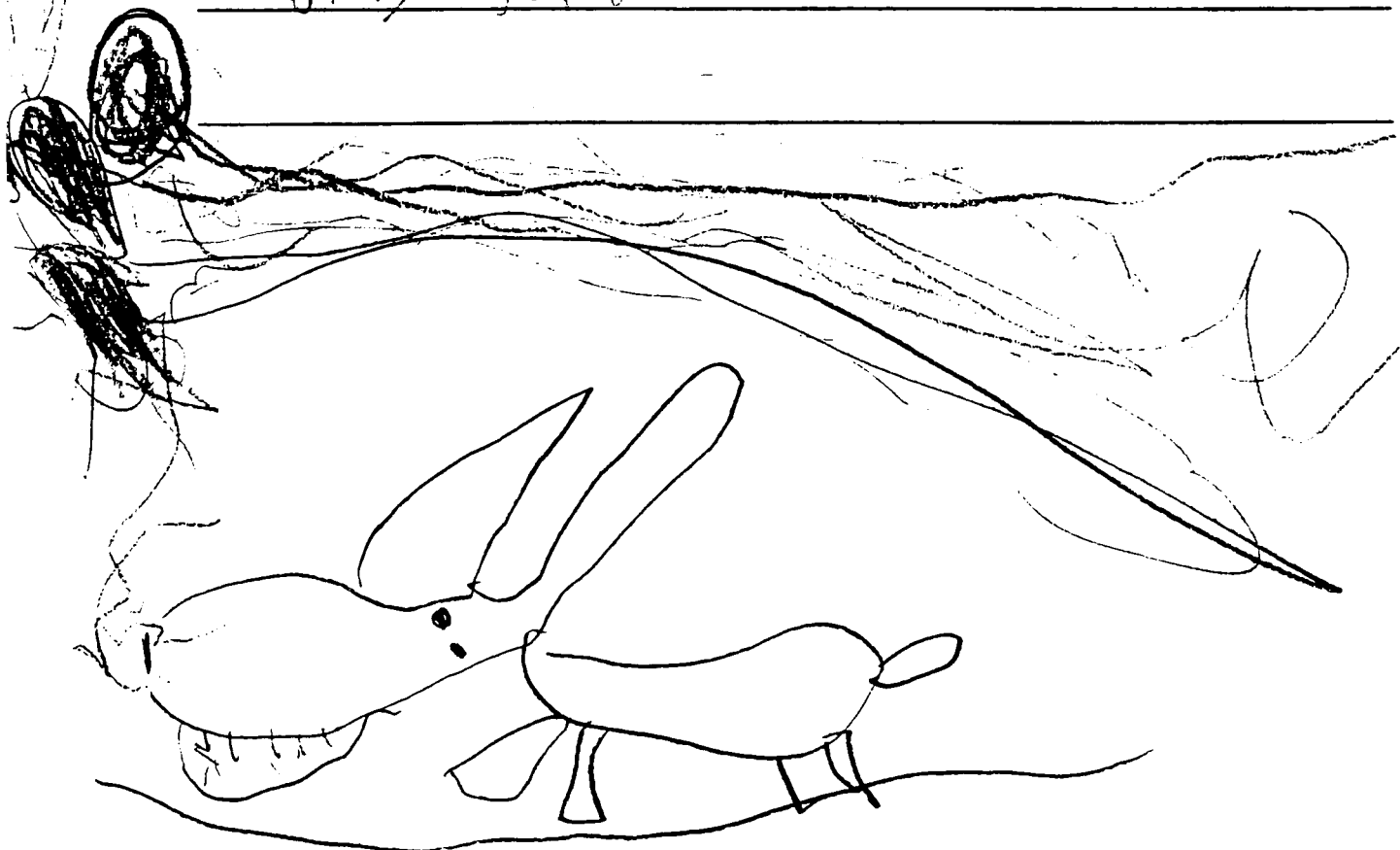
was the second to cross
the bridge.

Little Billy Goat Gruff

gote mite of got as far as the
second billy gote when he was
his normal size

the Troll

tried to eat the big
billy gote.



ONCE UPON A TIME THE THREE GRUFF BILLY GOAT
 LIVED. THREE BILLY GOATS
 AND THEY WANTED TO CROSS
 THE BRIDGE BECAUSE THEY
 WANTED TO GET FAT BUT
 THEY SUBMIT BECAUSE
 THERE WAS A TROLL UNDER THE
 BRIDGE. TRIP TRAP TRIP TRAP
 WENT THE FIRST
 BILLY GOAT GRUFF
 AND THE TROLL POPPED UP
 AND SCREAMED. THE TROLL
 SAID, "WTF? THAT TRIP TRAPING
 CREEPY BRIDGE?" SAID THE TROLL,
 THE LITTLE BILLY GOAT
 GRUFF. I WILL ANHIE YOU UP

No Please Don't Eat

me I'm so Small. Fine

be off with you.

trip, trap, trip, trap,

whos⁶⁶⁷⁹ that Trip trap

over my brige? ⁹⁹ said the

trill. Its just me

the middle billy goat

gruff. For I gommeing

to gobbe you up.

No don't take me

I'm so small.

Wate for my big

billy goat gruff.

hes much bigger

that's it.

Will be off with you.

Trip, trap, trip, trap,

went the bridge and

the big billy goat

went over the

bridge. The frog

popped up and said,

"For I'm coming to

gobble you up." No your

not. I am going to

gobble you up and he

buried him off and

he buried his bottle!

Snip, snap, snort, there

tails told out,

structural analysis and story content assessment

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS (tally description)

SENTENCES			PUNCTUATION			SPELLINGS			
#	simple	complex	incomplete	periods	capitals	other punct.	conventional	transitional phonetically sound	
								yes	no

STORY CONTENT (+ exceeding expectations, ✓achieving expectations, - below expectations)

	confident writer	
	engagement in the retelling	
	knowledge of the genre	
	meta-textual awareness	
	organization of the writing	
	essence of the story	
	ability to paraphrase	
	relevant detail included	
	clarity of expression	
	character development	
	description	
	vocabulary growth	
	logical sequence	
	strong beginning and leads	
	strong ending	
	evidence of proofreading	

child's retelling of 'The Gingerbread Man'



the gingerbread man

JUN 21 1994

The old women want to have a gingerbread
man. The old women made a chap of the
gingerbread man and put him in the oven
and took him out and the ginger
bread man jumped out of the pan and ran out
of the door. The old man says stop I
want to eat you. No no you never
catch me I'm the gingerbread man.

The horse said stop I want to eat you
no no you won't catch me I'm the ginger
bread man. He ran and ran and came to
the cow. I want to eat you. No no
you won't catch me I'm the gingerbread

man. The gingerbread man came to the fox.
The fox said that's a deep river jump
on my tail. No jump on my back. My
tail is itching. No jump on my nose.
The fox threw the gingerbread man
in the fire and ate him.

child's retelling of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'

Goldilocks and the ^{July 22 199} Bears
Log-log ago there was
a little house. the
three Bears lived
in it. Mamma made
porridge. it was hot
the three Bears
went for a walk
in the woods.
Goldilocks found
the little house
she went into
the house.
she saw a
table with
some porridge
in it

She tried to eat
the Big porige.
it was too hot.

She tried to
eat the
mid size
porige. it

was too
cool. Then

she tried
to eat

the little
porige and

it was
just rite

and she eat

②

it all up. She
found three chairs
she sat on the
Big chair it was
to Big she
sat on the

midsize chair
it was to

soft. she
sat on the
little chair
and it was
jush
rite crash
down went
goldilocks

She broke the little
chair - she went up
stairs to a bedroom
with three beds -
she layd on the
Grat Big bed. It was
to high - she layd
on the Midale
size bed. it
was to soft.
then Goldilocks
layd on the
little bed.
It was just
rite and fel
fast a sleep. the three

Bears came home.

Popa Bear said who's

Ben eating my porige
in his lowd vovs.

Moma Bear said

who's Ben eating
my porige in her
middsize vovs.

who's Ben eating my
porige and it aet it
all up.

Popa

said who's Ben
siting on my chair

said Popa who's

Ben siting on

my chair and who's

Ben sitting on my
chair and it is broken.
They went up stairs.

Papa said who's

Ben sleeping in
my bed. Mamma

bear said who's

Ben sleeping on

my bed and

baby Bear said

who's Ben sleeping

on my bed

and there she

is. When

Goldilocks heard

the three bears. She ran

away and never
came back. The end

child's retelling of 'The Three Little Pigs'

June 21/94

The three little pigs.

Once upon a time there

was three little pigs. they

decided to build their

own houses. the first

house was made his

house of straw. then after

it was built the wolf

came and said little pig

little pig let me in.

not by the hair of my chin

chin chin then he blew your

house in and he huff and

he puff and blow the

house away and ran to his

second brother house.

it was made out of
 sticks and a little wire
 later the wolf came
 to the house of stick and said
 little pig little pig
 let me in, I'm not by
 the door of my chimney
 chimney than all hot and puff
 and blow your nose and
 he huff and puff
 and blew the house in.

then the two little pigs
 ran to the third little
 pig's house. Little wire later
 the wolf came and said
 little pig little pig
 let me come in, I'm not by the
 door of my chimney than all

huff and puff and
blow your house in
and he huff and puff
but he could not blow
the house in so he climbed
on to the roof. the pigs
saw him. they put a
fire under the chimney.
he fell in the fire
that was the last of
the wolf. the end

child's retelling of 'The Little Red Hen

The Little Red Hen June 21/94

The little Red hen askt her frends how weL help me plant thes weat. "Not I said the pig"

"Not I said the cat" "Not I said the duck"

then I weL do it my self, the sun and the rain help. the heat. It was reley

in time to be cut. how weL help me cut

the weat. "Not I said the pig" "Not I said

the cat" "Not I said the duck" then ol do my

self, and she ded. how weL help me bring the

weat to the mill. "Not I said the pig" "Not

I said the cat" "Not I said the duck"

then I weL do it my self, and she did. how weL

help me COOK the bread. "Not I said the pig"

"Not I said the cat" "Not I said the duck. then

I weL do it my self, and she ded. how weL

help me eat the bread. I weL said the pig I weL said the

cat. I wel said the duck. Da No you will
NOT. you didnt do enething.

