

THE READ-ALoud AS PRIMARY EXPERIENCE

GAYLA LANGUIR

B.A. University of Alberta, 1976
B.Ed. University of Alberta, 1980

A Project
Submitted to the Faculty of Education
of the University of Lethbridge
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA
February 2003

I dedicate this work to
my mother and father
who read to me
and to
all of the children
who have shared their books with me,
especially Erin and Mitchell.

Abstract

The act of teachers reading aloud to children has become an increasingly common experience as more teachers use literature-based reading instruction. This study examines the significance of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom through a phenomenological account. It includes a brief history of phenomenology as a research method into pedagogic practice. The lived experience of the Read-Aloud is analyzed through the six research activities recommended by van Manen (1990) in the book *Researching Lived Experience*. Audio taped read-aloud sessions in a grade one / two classroom are combined with adult memories of being read to. Four themes emerge as essential to the experience of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom. These themes are: pleasure, enhanced vocabulary, the ability to move beyond the here and now through imagination and an increased understanding of the real world. The study concludes with a discussion of the responsibility of the pedagogue in light of what was discovered about the experience of the Read-Aloud.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Chapter 1: Phenomenology and The Read-Aloud.....	1
Chapter 2: The Research Activities.....	10
Asking the Question.....	10
Wandering Around.....	17
Thinking About It.....	19
Writing It Down.....	19
Keeping the Purpose in Mind.....	20
The Forest and the Trees.....	22
Chapter 3: The Experience.....	24
Pleasure.....	25
Words.....	32
Travel.....	35
Reality.....	40
Chapter 4: Truth and Beauty.....	48
References.....	57

Chapter 1: Phenomenology

Literate parents read to their children. In 1399 the Tuscan notary Ser Lapo Mazzei wrote to a friend, the merchant Francesco di Marco Datini, asking him for the loan of *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis* to read aloud to his sons. (Manguel, 1996, p. 117)

Before children cross into the world of the reader, the worlds in literature, adults are able to share books, to share the worlds in literature with children, by reading aloud. Many adults have smiled over stories of children who expressed disappointment upon returning home after their first day of school because they had not yet learned to read. In a literate society, an important milestone in a child's life is the acquisition of literacy. One might assume that children acquire this desire to read by watching adults read and by listening to adults read to them. The term *Read-Aloud* describes the act of one person reading a book to another person or a group of people. Reading aloud has other purposes besides that of opening the world of books to those who are illiterate. However, hearing the written word from the voice of another before one can decipher the print for oneself, is often the first reading experience that a person has. It is a *primary* experience in the life of a reader.

The experience of the Read-Aloud is a life experience common to many people. It is often most common in childhood. Parents read aloud to their children and teachers read aloud to their students. The term *primary classroom* refers to a classroom of children from kindergarten through third grade or from age five through eight. Reading aloud in a primary classroom is becoming an increasingly common phenomenon.

As a teacher in a rural public school in western Canada, I have read aloud to many children in many primary classrooms. Usually I sit on a chair, with a book held open so that the children can see the illustrations, and I speak the words printed in the book. The children sit on the floor listening. We are together in a way that is different from every other way that we are together during the day. Thousands of teachers and millions of children repeat this experience every day. What does it mean? How are my actions and the presence of the children significant?

From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings...the act of researching is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to *become* the world.

(van Manen , 1990, p. 5)

I wanted to know about the experience, to understand the phenomenon of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom. My question, “What is the essence of the experience of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom?” guided the method that I chose to conduct this research. I chose hermeneutic phenomenology to guide my inquiry into the common shared-book experience of teachers and young children in classrooms.

Choosing research methodology is not an easy task. There is life and there is finding meaning in life. This search for, or making of, meaning appears to be a universal human pre-occupation. It invades every discipline, every development, and every idea. An infant’s first cry and a person’s last breath are part of the search for meaning and understanding of life. It is the sense that each of us has made of living that pulls us out of sleep to wakefulness and guides our choices through the day. We call those who attempt

to make meaning for the rest of us the shamans, the intellectuals, the priests, the scientists, the philosophers, and the poets. The search is universal but the methods vary widely.

The word *research*, meaning to search again, comes from the old French word ‘cerchier’ that means, “to wander around.” Some researchers, wandering around, looking for meaning, prefer the scientific method with rigorous controls on variables and numbers and findings that can be labeled significant. My daughter is fond of the scientific method and numbers. She likes to know that she has the *right* answer. Her profession is pharmacy. She calculates how much of a particular drug is required to change the chemistry within a particular body. In the choices she must make, and in her way of understanding the world, the scientific method works best. My profession is education. Education is life, it encompasses all other disciplines, and it is not surprising that there has been debate over the appropriate methodology for understanding education. Many educational researchers prefer the scientific method. Like my daughter, they are eager to find the right answer. Others are also looking for meaning but they do not believe that numbers necessarily hold all of the answers. They are fond of words. The debate between the believers in numbers and the believers in words has been going on for some time. “Only recently have most educational researchers made their peace ...with the legitimacy of both [positivistic and naturalistic forms of research]” (Anderson, Herr & Nihlin, 1994, p. xx).

I wanted to search for meaning, to wander around, in the experience of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom, so I chose the method that I believed would help me in my search. If I had wanted to know how many books I must read to children to improve their

vocabulary on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test I would have chosen the scientific method. I would have dealt in variables and numbers. Instead, I wanted to understand the *experience* of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom so I chose words. A research methodology rich with words is hermeneutic phenomenology.

There is life and there are words about life. Hermeneutic phenomenology is words about life. The hermeneutic phenomenologist closely observes a particular experience, reflects upon it and then writes and rewrites about those reflections. The result is a narrative description of the experience that attempts to capture both its meaning and its essence. It is different than the empirical method of the natural sciences but it is also the same because both comprise that human pre-occupation with wanting to understand.

The scientific method, the way of numbers, as a way of understanding the world, has achieved almost godlike status. Hermeneutic phenomenology may have arisen partially in opposition to this inflated status. The idea of phenomenology began with the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl, who introduced the term in his book, *Ideas: A General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1913 / 1931). Husserl believed that "...we must return to the immediacy of reality as it presents itself to our experience...In other words, we must deal with the basic *phenomena* of our experience" through what he called "phenomenological reduction", which reduces the experience to "the immediacy of reality...without recourse to other theories, deductions or assumptions" (Strathern, 1998, p. 32).

Martin Heidegger was a student of Husserl. He wrote in *Being and Time* (1927 / 1962) that "...phenomenon means that which shows itself ... to bring to the light of day, to

put in the light” (p. 51). Heidegger believed that this ability to put phenomena “in the light” was what made humans different than all other life forms and that phenomenology would reveal those things that are hidden in an ordinary experience. He differed with Husserl in his belief in the possibility of phenomenological reduction. He questioned the possibility of foregoing other theories, deductions or assumptions.

The ideas and writings of Husserl and Heidegger spread throughout Europe and were an important part of the early development of the philosophy of existentialism introduced by the Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard. Existentialism, like phenomenology, stresses the importance of experience in the search for knowledge. The French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, wrote about both existentialism and phenomenology along with a fellow countryman and philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty wrote *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/1962), a study of the way in which human beings perceive reality. He believed that primary reality was a perceived life world, that through perception of that world (which exists before we begin to attach meaning to it) we begin to become aware of being present in the world and use our language system to make meaning out of that initial awareness of reality. He felt that phenomenology was the best way to learn about life because it was a description of the world as “directly experienced ... a reawakening of the basic experience of the world” (p. viii). He wrote that science was a “second order experience,” (p. vii) merely a “rationale or explanation” of the world (p. vii).

From the works of these and other philosophers, a methodology for hermeneutic phenomenology came into being. It became a method of attempting to describe the essence of the life experience. Researchers have used the phenomenological method to

inquire into life experiences in disciplines such as biology, psychology, medicine and education.

The application of hermeneutic phenomenology to an understanding of education started in Germany and Holland (van Manen, 1990). Langeveld, Beets and Bollnow are among the prominent Dutch and German pedagogic phenomenologists who participated in interpretive phenomenological research in education. The pedagogic phenomenologist, Max van Manen (1990), describes their work as “sensitively reflective studies of the pedagogic lifeworld that parents and teachers share with their children and students” (p. ix).

Langeveld wrote the classic phenomenological and pedagogical text “The Secret Place in the Life of a Child” (Langeveld, 1967/1983). Like other phenomenologists, he attempted to understand human experience by “bracketing out” or ignoring abstract theory. He believed that it was the study of the “pre-theoretic relevancies of the lifeworld” (van Manen, 1990, p. 41) that would make it possible to “act as an educator.” Langeveld wrote that the study of the life experience could reveal a particular way in which an educator should act, a correct pedagogic relationship. He viewed the pedagogic relationship as one filled with responsibility and that the responsibility of the pedagogue was to deal with children appropriately (van Manen, 1996).

Another of the pedagogic phenomenologists was Beets, a medical doctor, whose interest in the phenomenological study of pedagogy arose from his pediatric practice. He saw that the medical approach to children’s problems was one of finding the problem and fixing it so that the child would be “normal” again. He believed that if one wanted to help and understand children one needed more understanding than a medical diagnosis

provided. He felt that pedagogic thinking looked at each child in his or her uniqueness and kept possibilities for understanding always open. Beets did not completely discount therapy based on scientific deduction; rather, he believed that phenomenological pedagogy and medical therapy were mutually beneficial (van Manen, 1996).

Bollnow, a German pedagogic phenomenologist, wrote “The Pedagogical Atmosphere” (1962 / 1970 / 1989). Like Langeveld, Bollnow saw the normative importance of phenomenological study. He was concerned with “...examining and describing those affective conditions and qualities which are necessary for the raising or educating of children to be possible or successful” (p. 5). Like Beets, he believed that empirical research and phenomenology could work together. He wrote that education existed long before anyone began to make theories about it and that the “pre-theoretic praxis” of pedagogy was the “intrinsic object for pedagogical research...” (Bollnow, 1987, p. 132).

Bollnow’s hope was that the continued use of phenomenology would provide a “scrupulous analysis of educational reality” (p. 146).

The art developed within the school of Edmund Husserl under the name of phenomenology, an art of describing and distinguishing, which makes possible a penetration into the essence of a thing, has still had much too little influence in pedagogy. (Bollnow, 1987, p. 146)

Phenomenology did not have as large a following in North America as it did in Europe. This was particularly true in its use as a method for the study of pedagogy. There are a few names associated with phenomenological research in education in North America. One is Donald Vandenberg who wrote *Being and Education* (1971). He

believed that it was the duty of the philosophy of education to “raise the question of being” (p. 10) particularly in the face of the “technologizing of the world” (p. 10). He wrote that it was necessary to examine the ontological question, “What is the significance of being?” so that the “limitations of scientific and technological thinking are seen for what they are.” Vandenberg believed that determinate answers to “educational problematics” actually prevented pupils from “finding out for themselves who they can become” (p. 11).

Another North American phenomenologist and pedagogue was Maxine Greene who used the term *landscapes* to refer to our perception of the world, to the way in which one “orders the materials of his own lifeworld” (1997, p. 142). She believed that the goal of the pedagogue was to “stimulate an awareness of the questionable...to beckon beyond the everyday” (p. 148) so that ordering and re-ordering of landscapes could take place. Greene also pointed out the limitations of scientific thinking in the study of education.

The sciences, in addition to becoming increasingly mathematicized, have become positivistic. This means that the scientists ... are likely to lose perspective on what they, as human beings, are doing when they apply their empirical and analytical methods in a domain of inquiry. Devoid of a perspective on their own grounding in experience, in particular location in the world, they are likely to treat their own investigations as in some sense godlike. (Greene, 1978, p. 17)

All of these philosophers, these believers in phenomenology as a way of knowing and as a way of knowing about education, guided me in my study of the experience of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom. I learned from them to look for the limitations in the science of the “quantifiers” in helping me to understand what I want to know. I learned

that it may be necessary to “bracket out” abstract theory and to begin to live and reflect upon the “immediacy of reality” in order to come to a more significant awareness of the essence of the experience of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom. What all of the phenomenologists had in common was the belief that knowledge was not something “out there” like a new species, waiting to be discovered, classified, labeled and filed. Rather, knowledge consisted of the way in which humans, perceiving the life world, made sense of it. Through phenomenological writing, these perspectives on reality would be blended, would confirm each other and meaning would emerge (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

This is the methodology, based on this particular tradition of philosophy and pedagogic thought that I chose as a guide as I reflected upon the experience of the Read Aloud in the primary classroom. It was new to me and I was grateful that there were others who had “gone before” and whose work could be used as a guide. I chose, as my guide, the work of Max van Manen, particularly his text, *Researching Lived Experience* (1990).

Chapter 2: The Research Activities

To *do* hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal. (van Manen, 1990, p. 18)

The book *Researching Lived Experience* was a guide in my attempt “to construct a full interpretive description” of the Read-Aloud. In the book, van Manen suggests six research activities as possibilities in a phenomenological research project, however, he points out that the activities “are not meant to prescribe a mechanistic set of procedures....” (p. 30). I attempted to use the six activities in my search for the meaning of the experience of the Read-Aloud. I made use of them in varying degrees throughout my study along with “a tradition, a body of knowledge and insights, a history of lives and thinkers and authors, which, taken as an example, constitutes both a source and a methodological ground for present human science research practices” (van Manen, 1990, p. 30).

Asking the Question

The first of the six research activities suggested by van Manen (1990) is “turning to the nature of the lived experience” (p. 31). He describes this activity as “a deep questioning of something” by someone. Someone, in their own “particular individual, social, and historical life circumstances, sets out to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence” (p. 31). So what I am able to make sense of the Read-Aloud experience becomes my own particular interpretation and is only as rich or as significant as my particular thoughtfulness can make it.

So I start with me. I am a white, middle-class western Canadian woman who was born post World War II along with millions of other “baby boomers” including my three sisters. My grandparents (both sets) were immigrants from the British Isles and my parents were dairy farmers with a grade-ten education received in small rural schools in Alberta. My parents valued books as well as science and used the admonitions of scientists like Dr. Spock to raise me in a modern way. We attended a Protestant church where I learned the importance of honesty and hard work. I rode the school bus to a small town to attend a school with a classroom for each grade. I learned to read with basal readers and workbooks for practicing skills. In my adolescence, I was encouraged to question the established order by the hippie subculture and young teachers with radical ideas such as having us sit in circles instead of rows. The experience of university and books such as Betty Friedan’s, *The Feminine Mystique*, taught me to continue to question the norm.

My post-secondary education included an Arts degree followed by an Education degree but I did not start teaching full time until my daughter started school. I learned to teach using educational theory, which included child psychology and behavioural objectives. At the time, the Whole Language method was beginning to be the most popular way to teach children how to read. I believed that the experts knew how children learned and that if I could only do what they told me to do, my students and I would be successful.

My first teaching job was in a small community in northern Alberta where I taught about twenty children in grades one through three. My main interest was always children’s literacy. I believed that if all children read well, vistas of knowledge and

opportunity would open up for them. If, as van Manen (1990) suggests, the essence of pedagogy is hope (p. 109), then I was indeed a pedagogue. I taught in a number of different schools in northern Alberta and then moved to north eastern British Columbia where I have taught since, first as a primary teacher and about five years ago as a learning-assistance teacher. I live with my second husband and our fourteen-year-old son in a young community surrounded by alpine forests, mountains and hiking trails. When I arrived, the community was a thriving company town where everyone had work. Two years ago, the main employer, a mining company, closed its doors and, as people lost their jobs, the population of the town began to dwindle. There remain a small number of people struggling to keep the community alive. I teach their children, two hundred at the elementary school and two hundred at the high school. My job this year, 2002-03, is learning-assistance teacher at both of these schools.

In my lifetime, I have taken three trips to Europe, including living for a month with a French family in Paris and attending a school of languages when I was twenty-six.

This brief autobiographical sketch is not really about who I am but it is a small sampling of the times and places and people who have contributed to my beliefs and value system. As I walk into the classroom each day I take these with me and they become part of the experience of the Read-Aloud.

I bring myself to this phenomenological study of the Read-Aloud in the primary classroom. I am a teacher who has been content to teach children how to read. I go to school every day to play the role of teacher. I have read to children in a classroom setting for over twenty years primarily because the experts told me that it was good for the children. I did it to fill in moments when students completed projects early or there were

a few minutes left in the day. “To truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the center of our being” (van Manen, 1990, p. 43). Children and reading are my life’s work; this work drew me to my question. I start with me.

My hermeneutic phenomenological study will be my own interpretation, dependent upon the values and understandings that I bring to it and determined in many ways by the place in time and space that I occupy. The moment that I begin to act, in this case, to observe and to write, I begin to change. The process has already begun. van Manen warns that the same thing will happen with the life experience that I am studying. Lived experience changes as one reflects upon it. The experience is always in the past because, as I read to the children, I live the experience of reading aloud to children. If I think about what it means to read to children, I live the experience of reflecting upon reading and not the experience of reading. I cannot understand the experience of the Read-Aloud in its immediacy because I am always reflecting on a past experience. I cannot understand it in its entirety either because each experience is intertwined with all life experience and as we separate one strand of fabric from the tapestry, we may come to know that strand better but we lose the rest of the picture.

Through phenomenological research, I may be able to take the lived experience of the Read-Aloud, although not immediately or wholly, and through my writing, render it down to some of its essential elements or essence and possibly learn something of significance. I want to know what is significant about my place on the chair in the classroom in front of those children holding the work of art, which is the picture book, and speaking its words. This action is part of my life, has been for many years and

perhaps will continue to be so for many more. I want to understand how it is different than the experience of eating breakfast with my husband. I believe that examining my actions will make them more meaningful and that by understanding the essence of the experience, I will change it. I want these things because I believe that “the unexamined life is not worth living,” as Socrates said, so long ago. I will examine this particular experience so that the whole of the experience of my living is better, richer and more significant. That is why I must be what van Manen (1990) calls “steadfastly oriented to the lived experience” (p. 42). I recognize that my interpretation of that experience may not be identical to another’s interpretation and I am aware that my interpretation cannot be separated from the interpreter, from who I am and the values that I hold.

So phenomenology does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can explain and / or control the world, but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world. (van Manen, 1990, p. 9)

Part of the act of “turn[ing] to the nature of the lived experience” involves “bracketing out” all of the understanding I have of the Read-Aloud that has come from other sources besides direct lived experience. I am aware that others have studied the Read-Aloud. The research literature deals with an abundance of information on how the experience changes or does not change children’s lives. I am a teacher and I am a reading teacher. It is my business to know a lot about reading to children. For example, I know that in 1985, the U.S. funded *Commission on Reading*, after studying more than 10,000 research projects, issued a report which stated that “the single most important activity for

building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is *reading aloud* to children” (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 23).

It is also my business to know about children. Educators study the science of child psychology in order to know about children. These scientists explain *normal* and *abnormal* behaviour in children in the physical, cognitive, social and emotional domains, among others. They tell us that the actions of adults determine the normal or abnormal development of children. Child psychologists have developed tests and other methods of observation that help them to categorize and label children for the purpose of changing their behavior or controlling them. There continue to be debates about the effects of environment versus the effects of genetics on children’s behaviour. The Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, showed us, through his studies, how children’s perception and cognition of the world are different than those of adults and he created categories in which he related behavioural change to chronological age.

The book *The Meaning Makers* (Wells, 1986) is a longitudinal study of the acquisition of both spoken and written language in children. The researchers found a strong correlation between stages of development and the pedagogic relationship. It is generally accepted by child psychologists that children become adults by imitating the adult world, or through the pedagogic relationship, and that through this relationship, they are socialized into patterns of acceptable behaviour or, in other words, made into acceptable adults.

I know these things about reading and about children because of science. I know that reading aloud to children is important in their development and that their development follows certain steps and is dependent, in part, upon the pedagogic

relationship. This knowledge has led me to interpret the Read-Aloud in the past and has justified my action of reading aloud to children. In “turning to the nature of the lived experience,” van Manen tells me that I must attempt to set this knowledge aside or to “bracket it out” along with assumptions I have drawn from my daily practice and conversations with other educators. van Manen (1990) writes that the best way to do this is by making “understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories” (p. 47) explicit.

There are a lot of “understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories” about reading. “As the most important discipline in education, reading generates more than 1200 research projects annually” (Trelease, 2001, p. 12). It would be easy to determine from this that “the problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 46). “...Scientific knowledge as well as everyday knowledge believes that it already had much to say about a phenomenon...” (p. 47).

Scientific knowledge tells us that the number of primary teachers who read aloud to their students has increased (Chasen & Gambrell, 1992). The researchers report significant benefits in the acquisition of literacy such as the improvement of vocabulary (Elley, 1989); the knowledge of how to handle books and, how to identify the front of a book, the print to be read and the appropriate direction (Baghban, 1984) and an improvement on measures of decoding ability (Senechall, Thomas & Monker, 1995). Reading aloud to children develops interest in reading, promotes language development and provides opportunities for social interaction (Galda & Cullinan, 1991) and children enjoy having adults read to them (Mendoza, 1985). Studies find that most of these

reported benefits are dependent on a number of factors such as the genre and style of books read (Rosenhouse, Feitelson, Kita, & Goldstein, 1997), the frequency of reading aloud and the number of times a particular book is read (Rasinski, 1990), group size (Morrow & Smith, 1990) and the teacher's reading style (Martinez & Teale, 1993). Eeds and Wells (1990) studied the interactions that take place before, during and after the reading and how these impact the development of skills and comprehension. I have not read a research report which suggested any negative effects resulting from reading aloud to children; however, after analyzing 31 studies of storybook reading, Bus, van Ijzendoorn, and Pelligrini (1995) differed with many other research reports and concluded that there was no clear link between shared book experiences and literacy development.

These studies are a mere sampling of the quantitative and qualitative research done on the Read-Aloud. They, among others, have added to my understanding of the act of reading to children. I have explicated them in order that I might bracket them out, that is, put them aside for now, and pay attention to the existential moment and immediacy of experience.

Asking the question involved being aware of my relation to the question and attempting to "bracket out" any previous knowledge and assumptions I held about the question. Now it is time to look for the answer.

Wandering Around

The second research activity suggested by van Manen (1990) is "investigating experience as we live it" (p. 30). This involves "stand[ing] in the fullness of life" (p. 31). In my case, it was an awakening of my awareness of what is happening when I read to

children as well as “actively explor[ing] the category [of the read aloud] in all its modalities and aspects” (p. 32). This is the “gathering data” part of the research. I did this by exploring the etymological origins of words where “the terms still had living ties to the lived experiences from which they originally sprang” (p. 59). I considered the idiomatic expressions about reading such as “lost in a book” and “in another world.” I also gathered and collected data through conversational interviewing and close observation. I lived the experience of reading to groups of children, as part of my job and as part of this study, using close observation. “Close observation involves an attitude of assuming a relation that is as close as possible while retaining a hermeneutic alertness to situations that allow us to constantly step back and reflect on the meaning of those situations” (p. 69). I audio taped over twenty Read-Aloud sessions and transcribed them, always looking for the essential meaning of each encounter with the children. I kept a journal in which I recorded my reflections upon the Read-Aloud sessions. I wrote and reflected upon my personal experience of listening to stories read by my parents and in a classroom. I received written and audio-taped adult memories of Read-Aloud experiences and I looked in literature and art for expressions of the Read-Aloud experience. I sought out phenomenological writing about children and reading such as Hunsberger’s (1985) article “The Experience of Re-Reading” and Bollnow’s (1989) “The Pedagogical Atmosphere.” I wanted to know what being read to by a teacher was like for each person to whom I listened so that I might come to an understanding of this particular aspect of being human. I was interested in the essence of the experience of the Read Aloud so I continually asked, “How is this being read to? Is this what it means to listen to a story? Is

this what listening to an adult read is like?” As I went about the activity of gathering data about the lived experience of the Read-Aloud, I reflected upon that data.

Thinking About It

The third research activity suggested by my guidebook is “reflecting on essential themes” (van Manen, 1990, p. 32). After turning to the experience and collecting data, I reflected on the data for the purpose of discovering essential themes that answered the question, “Is this what being read to by an adult is like?” Each theme was then further explored for the purpose of arriving at what Van Manen (1990) calls “a determination and explication” (p. 78) of the Read-Aloud. As I transcribed the audio tapes of the Read-Aloud sessions, I watched for similarities in responses from one session to another. I then examined the memories I had collected from adults and compared these and sources from literature, always looking for the elements that each experience had in common. I wrote about those discoveries in my journal, read, reflected and wrote again until I felt that I had found and had some understanding of the essential themes.

Writing It Down

The fourth research activity is “the art of writing and rewriting” (van Manen, 1990, p. 32). Hermeneutic phenomenology is words about life and the words are an essential part of the research. “Human science meaning can only be communicated textually-by way of organized narrative or prose. And that is why the human science researcher is engaged in the reflective activity of textual labor” (van Manen, 1990, p. 78). “Textual labor” makes use of narrative and poetic language and, like poetry, it discloses truth that cannot be brought out in any other way (p. 15). Through the search for and textual development of themes, the author brings the lived experience into focus and fills

it with meaning. "...Phenomenology attempts to systematically develop a certain narrative that explicates themes while remaining true to the ... essence of a certain type of experience" (p. 97). All of this reading, talking, living, thinking and writing can occasionally lead the researcher astray, away from essential experience.

Keeping the Purpose in Mind

The fifth research activity is "maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon" (p. 31). If I have done the job well I may actually have discovered "*aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is*" (Van Manen, 1990. p. 107). And if I am very lucky, I may not have lost the teacher or, more importantly, the child in all of these activities.

I started with me but, because I am doing a study of pedagogy, I must not forget the children. I read what the experts had to say about the development of children and their language. I read aloud to 22 children, between the ages of seven and nine, all different. Each could have an individual biographical sketch outlining his or her physical and motor development from infancy, cultural background, type of parenting and the experiences of his or her early years. Who are these children who come to the classroom to listen to me read them stories? They are the progeny of the men and women who have made their homes in this little town in the mountains of northeastern British Columbia. Parenting, geography, and life experiences have limited and enlarged these children. What does it mean to be a child? Adult memories of childhood give us pieces of a puzzle that must be re-assembled with many missing parts. If I am going to be a pedagogue, I must first be acutely aware of what it means to be a child. To forget the child is to forget

everything. The phenomenologists attempt to look at children in the existential moment. They also see stages through which children pass and ways in which children are different than adults.

Langeveld (1967/1983) found that children, unhampered by the conventionalities of the adult world, have different ways of relating to time, space and their own bodies. He wrote about children's need to maintain a connection with the "normal world of shared relations" (p. 183) accompanied by a need to have a secret place, "a place where one is with oneself." Langeveld found stages through which a child passes and that the use of the secret place gradually changes as the child ages (p. 186) until in adulthood, the "appreciation of ... a space which assumes personal meaning, never disappears because this need is inseparably connected with the essential personality of humanness" (p. 190). Langeveld arrived at this understanding by "maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relationship to the phenomenon" (Van Manen, 1990. p. 31). In the article "Human Science as a Dialogue with Children," Loren Barritt and Ton Beekman (1983) suggest ways in which it might be possible to begin to experience a child's world. They suggest participation in the child's "lifeworld" by being part of it, participating, interacting, changing and being changed.

Because I want to understand the essence of the Read-Aloud experience in a primary classroom, I must remember that it is the children who make up that classroom. I tried to enter their "lifeworld" by sitting with the children and listening to other teachers read stories. When I read stories, we talked. I tried to listen in a participatory way, seeking to understand without judgment. I wanted to examine the Read-Aloud in the existential moment so I tried not to think about what the children would become

tomorrow but to remember that they are someone today. There is no *becoming* human, there is only *being* human in all of its varied lived aspects: youth, age, ability, disability, morality, immorality, sense, nonsense and passion.

The Forest and the Trees

The sixth and final research activity is “balancing the research context by considering parts and wholes” (van Manen, 1990, p. 33). I attempted to keep my question “What is the meaning of the experience of the Read Aloud in a primary classroom?” uppermost in my mind. I did this because it was possible that the topic could gain monstrous proportions. Each sub-topic within the topic held the potential of becoming a study on its own. I wanted to explore in depth reading aloud by parents, adult reading for pleasure or other purposes, the transactional theory of reading, the nature of childhood, the nature of teaching and the purposes of schooling. I considered all of these briefly, moving from part to whole and back, and while each contributed to an understanding of my question, none were my question. I wanted to focus on the essential parts.

One of those essential parts was the culture and values I brought to the experience. Another was the children with their own unique way of viewing the world and their own particular adaptations to the time and place in which we lived. Another essential part was the books. When I began to read to the children I wanted to let them choose the books that I would read. Yet, I understood that giving the children a choice is not always what happens in a Read-Aloud in a primary classroom so I interspersed their choices with mine. I wanted to be able to ask them why they had chosen a particular book. I used a shelf on wheels that was built so that the book covers faced outward and I selected about fifty titles from the school library and my personal collection of children’s

literature. I told the children that when it was their turn to choose they could bring a favourite book from home but this did not happen in the course of my study. The children made their selection from the initial fifty titles on my cart except for one occasion when a child chose a book from the classroom library. I audio taped 25 read-aloud sessions with a group of 22 children, reading one book per session, so we covered about half of the books on the shelf. There was only one occasion when a child chose a book for a repeat reading. The children did not select the few available non-fiction titles. The books were primarily *picture* books, some published as early as the 1960s and others “hot off the press.” There were a few *chapter* books with more print and fewer illustrations.

In her book, *American Reading Instruction* (1986), Nila Barton Smith wrote about the changes in the books used to teach children how to read in the last 300 years. She stated that the first books emphasized religious instruction, followed by books that prepared children for responsible citizenship. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, stories like “The Three Bears” became available for young children. In the early 1900s, scientists began to tell us how children learn to read. As a result, books for reading instruction changed. Basal readers had controlled vocabulary and children’s literature became supplemental material in the classroom. The main source of reading material in most primary classrooms today is children’s literature. These are books, occasionally written to encourage moral development and good citizenship, but more often written for the spontaneous pleasure of children by authors who work at writing stories that children enjoy. These are the books usually used in a Read-Aloud in a primary classroom and they were the books that I used in my study. The increasing abundance of children’s literature

is one of the influences available to children's lives in the literate countries of the world that is not and was not available to children in other countries or other times.

Each of the research activities brought me closer to an understanding of the experience of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom. I questioned the experience, gathered data about the experience, searched for themes essential to the experience, engaged in textual labour describing and explicating my findings about the experience, maintained a pedagogical relationship to the experience and considered parts and wholes of the experience. So the experience became clearer and more meaningful and gradually changed the way I see myself as a teacher reading aloud to children in a primary classroom.

Chapter Three: The Experience

As I searched the data for those themes associated with the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom, I chose four themes that I believed were essential to the experience. I could say, with some confidence, that pleasure, enhanced vocabulary, the act of moving beyond the here and now and an increased understanding of the real world were, to some degree, what being read to by a teacher was like. The essence of being read to, of listening to a story, of listening to an adult read was captured in the themes of pleasure, words, imagination and reality.

Pleasure

The experience of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom is the experience of pleasure. "... Most theories of literary understanding fail to mention the profound pleasure young children feel when reading (or listening to) stories" (Sipe, 2002, p. 479). The theme of pleasure emerged early in my reflections on the Read-Aloud. The children's exuberant involvement with the text and their eagerness to live in the world of the book was evidence of their pleasure. It is interesting to speculate as to when the act of decoding printed symbols first became pleasurable for human beings. Did our ancestors first use symbols for functional purposes or artistic endeavors? Adults who decode print for young children, who have not yet acquired the skill to do it themselves, certainly give this gift to children primarily to please them. I received the following story from an adult who shared her experiences of the pleasure of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom:

I remember the excitement of receiving our first readers. They were the *Spot*, *Dick and Jane* series in Kindergarten. I remember wanting to open the book and

look at the pages, but our teacher said to wait until she was ready. I still remember Sally, Dick and Jane with fondness. Reading classes were the thing I remember most in school. I remember a box, I think it was a shoebox from which our Grade One teacher would pull out our new words. I can still remember the words *something* and *surprise* coming out of the box. I also remember specific stories from *Surprises, Toy Box, Treats and Treasures* like the one where the kids got the spots. I also remember “Mrs. Impossible,” a poem about a lady with lots of hats and eventually she took off on one with a rocket attached. I also remember with fondness going to the library and being read to. After the story, we got to take out a library book. There was a poem in a blue reader, Ginn 360 which I read in school about a little old lady. Over twenty years later, I came across that poem and like an old friend, I used it for choral speech with my class. I still can picture some of the earlier books like the Harry series, *Celia Gand, The Nine Monkeys, Curious George, Madeline*, etc... The thing that stands out for me is the comfort I still feel when I see and read those books. (Char, 2002)

Being human means to be a seeker after pleasure. The pursuit of happiness may not be our primary need but there is an enormous amount of evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, suggesting that feeling good which exists along a continuum from comfort to ecstasy, is a major goal for most human beings. Children let us know what they like and dislike before they have words. Most parents attempt to give their children the things that they like, the things that make them happy. Books may or may not have been important to the parent but often the parent decides that it is important to give them to the child. The first books are made of cloth or heavy cardboard or plastic. Children can

chew on them and take them into the bath. We give books to children for the purpose of play and pleasure and they often end up in a box with the rest of the child's toys.

To a child of seven or eight, the classroom is a big room, bigger than the child's bedroom but not as big as the skating rink in the community center. By April it is a familiar place because the child has been coming there for five days a week since September and knows what to expect. The pictures on the walls change and sometimes the furniture is in different places but usually everything is as it is expected to be. A familiar world and safe, like home, most of the time. Home and the classroom are shared with people who have also become familiar. There are more of them in the classroom, more to like or dislike, more to be kind or unkind, to be noisy or quiet. In this place it is very unusual to be alone. There are many children and usually just one teacher. Sometimes the teacher reads a story to the children. She chooses the book or asks a child to choose it. When the children take turns picking the book it takes a long time before everyone has had a turn so it is not a particular child's choice very often. Sometimes the children sit on the floor or put their chairs into a group and sometimes they sit in their desks and the teacher stands up. There are a lot of "sometimes" that are usually decided by other people, most often by the teacher. There are a lot of books but not as many as in the library. Some of the books are ones that the child has seen before, someone else read them to the child, and some books are new. They have pictures on the covers and pictures inside and one can guess from the pictures what the books are about. The teacher starts to read and her voice and the words in the book and how the child feels on a particular day determine what is going to happen. Each book holds its own possibilities, an opportunity to laugh, to complete sentences, to act out situations, to complain or to get lost in the

story. Pulling children away from something pleasant like recess or lunch or gym is part of the familiar pattern of school. Some children like story time even when it pulls them away from something else they like. It is pleasant because it is easy to listen, or to choose not to listen, to a story and because you never know what is going to happen. Sometimes the stories make the child laugh or are reminders of things that have happened in their lives or frighten them. Sometimes they make children think of monsters or losing friends or bullies or death. Children sometimes enjoy scary books because they know that the bad things in them are like dreams. They are in the story, not in the classroom with them.

Pleasure is an enormously complex concept. What we like, what pleases us, why one thing gives us pleasure and another does not are enigmatic questions. One might be content, like Eliza Doolittle, with a large chair, a warm fire and a box of chocolates while another prefers skiing at break-neck speeds down the side of a mountain. I read to the children and invited them to talk about the books and the first words I heard were “I like ...” and “I don’t like ...” They knew what pleased them or not and they expressed this pleasure, sometimes directly and sometimes through their laughter, chiming in and dramatization of the story. The types of responses to literature which I, and other teachers of young children have seen: the calling out, dramatizing and attempting to control the story are “... sophisticated expressive acts of literary pleasure, in which the children treat the literary text as a playground” (Sipe, 2002, p. 479).

One of the ways in which children experience the world is through play. Children take delight in stories and often approach them in a playful manner. They ask for one more and they ask for them to be repeated again and again.

There has always been a tendency to link the experience of art with the concept of play. Kant characterized the disinterested, non-purposive, and non-conceptual quality of delight in the beautiful as an affective state of mind in which our faculties of understanding and imagination cooperate with one another in a kind of free play. (Gadamer, 1986, p. 127)

One finds pleasure in beauty. The author and illustrator of children's books often create something beautiful. Picture books are a relatively new art form that has grown steadily during the twentieth century. They "are unified artistic wholes in which text and pictures, covers and end pages, and the details of design, work together to provide an aesthetically satisfying experience for children" (Sipe, 2001, p. 23). It often appears that the purpose of the author is to create a work of art that gives pleasure to young children just as the novel pleases older children, adolescents and adults. The pleasure can range from enjoyment of the familiar to that visceral moment of joy when a new piece of prose or fine poetry takes you to a place of wider, deeper, finer, richer understanding or feeling, when words allow for an experience for which there are no words. Sipe (2001) believes that children are able to experience this type of pleasure.

I saw expressions of it in my Read-Aloud experiences with children. During the reading of humorous books such as *I Know an Old Laddie* (Little, 1999), there was a lot of laughter and the children chimed in on rhymes. After reading a Berenstain Bears book (Berenstain & Berenstain, 1982), I wanted to know if the moral was obvious to the children so I asked them if they knew why the author had written the book. One told me, "They write the books to make children happy." When a book was chosen that a lot of children had heard before, one child told the others "sometimes it's good to read a book

you haven't read in a long time because it brings back good memories." I told the children that one of the adults who had written to me about reading said that books were like friends and I asked them if they agreed. One girl wasn't sure how paper and words could be friends but others commented that "Maybe you like it so much it feels like a friend" and "It might have funny stuff in it and it makes you laugh" and "Books take a long time, in the book club we have to read a hundred and they can take a long time and friends last a long time if they don't move away." I was aware of the children's obvious pleasure when they cheered when I agreed to read all of the chapters in *Frog and Toad* (Lobel, 1971) and when they asked that I stop while they got a drink so they wouldn't miss anything. They talked about the illustrations as well as the story line. The painting of the ice in *The Moccasin Goalie* (Brownridge, 1995) intrigued them. "Turn the pages back, the marks don't look like ice," one child pointed out, so we examined it for a while until another commented, "It makes sense, 'cause kinda like sunshine on the ice, it kinda reflects."

When I saw that the children were pleased with my offering of the oral reading of someone else's beautiful book like *The Moccasin Goalie* and later *Huge Harold* (Peet, 1961), I was also pleased. During the reading of *Huge Harold*, the children discovered "This is a rhyming book!" then listened and repeated words like, "A tree full of owls with eyes fierce and greedy," (p. 8) and "A raindrop surprisingly plopped on his nose" (p. 17). I wanted to share more books, better books, that, as a group of readers, we might visit this pleasant country more often. Dennis Sumara (1996), in his study of the lived experience of adults sharing text, made a similar discovery.

I have come to believe that those of us who have experienced what it is like to be relationally bound to works of fiction have found these experiences pleasurable-desirable, we might say. And because we desire it ourselves, and because pleasure is meant to be shared, we wish to participate in similar experiences. (Sumara, 1996, p. 43)

A colleague shared the following memory of the Read-Aloud in her childhood and the pleasure she remembers feeling while being read to in school and how her desire to share that pleasure effects her teaching today.

The most memorable reading experiences in elementary school were those when teachers would take us for novel readings. I remember in grade two these afternoons would start. I remember one of the first books that they read to us was Judy Blume's book *Superfudge*. We would read a chapter a day and then discuss and complete activities around the events. Peter, Fudge, their parents and turtle all became part of a love of reading. One of my best friends, Lesa, and our moms quickly bought the other books and Judy Blume became something we all shared for many years to come. In grade three, my family moved and I started attending a new elementary school. It was a brand-new school because there had been a fire in the old school two years before. Some of the teachers who had taught there came back. The two teachers that made reading fun were Mrs. Kubos and Miss Carter. Weekly readings sessions occurred when Miss Carter would do prep for Mrs. K. (I thought she did it for fun, now I know it was part of prep time). The book I remember most vividly is *The Hobbit*. Miss Carter had this amazing voice and could make you believe Bilbo Baggins was really there. We would spend

hours outside under trees in the field reading. The whole class was mesmerized by the grade two teacher and her amazing abilities to make characters come alive. Just recently when I saw *Lord of the Rings* I remembered the descriptions from *The Hobbit* (it looked just as imagined). I have used that book as a teaching unit to my grade eights and the voice I hear when I read it to this day belongs to the teachers I had then! I have always loved to read, and believe the teachers, my parents and classmates are all responsible for making me still ache to steal a few hours to read a novel! (Louise, 2002)

There is pleasure in books, the mesmerizing, mystical pleasure of getting lost in a book and the pleasure of sharing literature with others. Both of these experiences are part of the experience of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom. The pleasure comes from the words.

Words

The experience of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom is the experience of words.

Communications experts tell us that we need to take a language course to build up our vocabulary so that we can really say what we want to say. And such efforts may indeed be helpful. People with a gift for words do have a certain aura, a certain engaging mystery. It is as if they are able to say that which we all know and want to say but cannot ... People with a gift for words grant an abode for the being of mortals. (Smith, 1986, p. 30)

The transactional theory of reading as described by Louise Rosenblatt (1994) in her book, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* is about the dance between the words, the one

who assembles the words into something meaningful and the one who interprets that meaning. Before the children can join in this dance, the pedagogue carries them along through the act of the Read-Aloud. Life is full of newness, new people to take again and again on this journey, the journey to words, spoken and written and all of the meaning that they hold. So the pedagogue invites the child to share this space that another has designed and to travel hand-in-hand into a strange world another has created.

Life comes first, along with pleasure and pain, and the sounds of words follow shortly afterward. The infants hear them, sounds in the ears that slowly gather meaning and become useful or soothing or frustrating. And then the infants make sounds, bumbles and gurgles like the ones they have heard. The meaning of the sounds comes into being, both sounds heard and spoken. It is all part of being human, of making sense of life and words help us do that. If our ears or tongues do not work we make words with our fingers. Writing is the words made into symbols and reading is the symbols made into stories. But reading is not only the decoding of the symbols, reading is the sense of the words, the emotion of the words. Emotion existed before words but words express and control emotion. The words are powerful; the pen that writes them is “mightier than the sword.” They make sense of the world, they fill us with wonder and dread, with comfort, sorrow and anger. They move us to be still and to start up in righteous indignation. They tell us how to operate a blender and they take us to the heart of darkness. Like pedagogy, they have existed long before anyone made a theory about them. Children want to know words. Another adult shared the poignant story of her discovery of the need to learn words:

I have a memory of my mother reading to me, from forever, like, before I was four and five, and when I was four she read the *Chip and Dale* books about the chipmunks, I never forgot those and then when I was four going on five she started reading *Black Beauty* to me but she worked nights and so I didn't get a lot of time with her and I wasn't able to go to school then because my birthday was in January so I had to stay home the extra year. And when Mom went to work the lady downstairs in the building that we lived in kind of kept an eye on me but I was pretty much on my own. Mom had started reading *Black Beauty* to me and I loved horses and I wanted to get to the end of it but she would only read a little bit each day because she didn't have very much time so I used to, we were in Southern California, and I used to sit in my little chair out by the sidewalk with the book in my lap and of course I was only four and a half going on five and I had this big *Black Beauty* book in my lap and so people would stop and ask me if I was reading the book and I'd say "Well, yes, I'm reading the book but I just don't know what this word is", and so I'd point to a word on the page and they'd help me out, they'd tell me what the word was and then I'd sit there and memorize it and then the next person that came along, I'd ask them another word and so by the time I went to school I had read *Black Beauty* because I learned the words. I learned to read before I went to school just because I wanted my mom to read it to me so badly and I wanted to find out what happened in the story and I had to get other people to help me with the words so it really influenced my life so by the time I was in grade three I... Well, grade one with Dick and Jane and

Spot and Puff was boring out of my mind and I loved the library because I could go and read what I wanted...(Linda, 2002)

As I read aloud to the children in the study, they wanted to learn more about the words because it was part of their involvement with the story. They were constantly naming the world. One asked, "What is a channel?" and another asked, "What is an eel?" and another answered, "I know what it is, it gives you a shock." One asked, "What is crippled?" and another answered, "It means not perfect, like our budgie." "What are cow plops?" ("Eew!" and laughter over this one) and the answers made their world of words larger and brighter; the children were changed by the words. The children who told me that they only like books about sports repeated the words "hockey heaven" with reverent voices. When you are an adult and you take a trip to another country, it is exciting because so many things are fresh and new, you ask, "What is that?" and "What does that mean?" When you are young, your backyard is fresh and new, and a blade of grass is an important discovery. An adult might make a whistle from the blade of grass and that is new, too. Each book we read is the same for adults and children, the words add to us, change us. Sometimes we just read the books and make our own discoveries and sometimes we share them and someone else makes a whistle. We have enlarged the repertoire that we use to enter another world. That entry into a strange land, the ability to see and to go beyond the here and now was the third theme that emerged in the study of the experience of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom.

Travel

Moving beyond the here and now is the experience of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom.

Each person's life is a story. We read stories about others to know who we are and how others feel and think, and to discover what we might become. We read stories to experience more lives than the one we are allotted (Huck, 1999, p. 113)

I had been reading picture books to 22 children for ten sessions when I decided to try something new. I believe that children enjoy picture books because pictures are the representations of their world that are easy for them to understand. Emergent readers are only beginning to understand the representations made by print. There is a gradual decrease in the amount of picture and a gradual increase in the amount of print as this new way of representing meaning becomes more meaningful to them. I wanted to know what would happen if I read the book without showing the pictures. They didn't like the idea and they told me so: "Why can't we see the pictures?" I told them that I wanted them to make the pictures in their heads. Cody was so upset he turned his back on me. This intrigued me since not looking at the book is what I had in mind. Sellenne told me that they have to learn how to read without the pictures so they can get ready for chapter books. I didn't think of that. I know that for me reading is building pictures in my head and I want to know if children of seven and eight can do it. I started to read, the book was *A Salmon for Simon* (Waterton, 1978) and it is full of images, sounds and smells. The frustration of fishing and fishing and catching nothing, children digging clams, seagulls screaming, an eagle and the flap of its great wings, the beautiful silver salmon dying in the clam pool, the boy's struggle to save it, the sea and the sunset and the glow of home windows and the smell of supper. The children were very quiet, they were all listening, one of them tried once again to get me to show the pictures, I heard their voices repeating

words like “flap” and “silver.” I was enjoying the book and they were there with me and I could tell that it was in their heads, too, that for that moment the author and my voice had made Simon and his feelings for the great fish part of their world. For a moment, there in that classroom, those children from the northeast of British Columbia had gone to the West Coast, had gone to the sea. When I finished, I asked them to tell me about their pictures and they did. They had “seen” the story: the fish falling from the sky, the fish swimming down the channel (Cody asked me what a *channel* is), the noise of the seagulls, and the smell of clams cooking. Some of the children whose parents are from Newfoundland, remembered that the children in the story were digging clams. They assumed that it was clams that were cooking for supper and that was the delicious smell that came to their noses. Then I showed them the pictures and they began to tell me that they were right, that the picture in their head was the right one. I told them what I believe, that the illustrator’s pictures are not the *right* ones, just hers, and their pictures are just as *right*. I wanted to tell them about Rosenblatt and how books are created between the writer and the reader but I kept that to myself. We shared a book, they travelled, and so did I.

Some of the children were not as keen to listen to stories as the others. They asked me what time gym was and they told me that the books are boring, that they only liked books about sports or hockey. I watched these children carefully and almost without exception, I saw them succumb to the power of the story. They were drawn in, if somewhat reluctantly, they arrived at a new place, a new experience. Some even grudgingly admitted later, “Yeah, that was a good book.”

I remember my grade four teacher, Mrs. Reid (my favorite teacher) reading Anne of Green Gables and then at recess or noon my friends and I would go outside and act it out and Daisy and I got to take turns being Anne because of our red hair.

(Darlene, 2002)

Sometimes we can do the things that the characters in books do and other times we can only dream of doing them. After reading the book, *Purple, Green and Yellow* (Munsch, 1992) there was a lot of discussion about the longed for ability to become invisible. “If I turned invisible I’d never go to school and I’d never be scared;” “If I turned invisible I’d scare my little sister;” “I’d make Brandon go into a trap;” “I could jump into a puddle and splash and they would say, ‘Who done it?’;” “I don’t want to be invisible ‘cause the people who work for me don’t know who I am;” “I’d like to be invisible ‘cause when I get in trouble my mom couldn’t see me;” “I want to be invisible and be able to fly;” “If you push your belly button you’d be invisible and if you push it twice you’re not invisible”.

On a pleasant mid-June day with the classroom windows open, green grass, warm breezes and the sound of skipping rope rhymes at recess, we read *Hansel and Gretel* (Marshall, 1990). Following the reading, the children attempted to solve a problem they felt existed in the story. Some of the children were certain that the mother and the witch were the same person while others disagreed. The arguments included: “They was fat like each other;” “They both died;” “They almost cackled the same;” (this delighted me since I was the one doing the cackling) “Maybe the mom’s plan didn’t work on the woods and she wanted a plan to eat them;” “I’m not so sure it was the mom because the mom and the witch had different hair colours;” “Witches can turn themselves into someone;” “I

think the mom was the witch because she could have been wearing a wig and she was mean and nasty and she wanted to get rid of the children,” “ I don’t think they were the same because the witch gave them candy,” “I think the mom and the witch swapped places,” “The mom cannot be the witch because if the mom was the witch the wood chopper would say, ‘Where is she, where is she?’.” The children became deeply involved in the story. Sometimes they imagined that they were part of it. Sometimes they questioned the author. They asked a lot of “What ifs?” Hansel could not fool the witch “if she felt his arm.” During the reading of *Amos’ Sweater* (Lunn, 1988) a discussion of what they would do if they lived on the farm ensued. One child pointed out that “you can’t go there because it’s just a story” but this utterance only brought a brief lull in the conversation. The plans and dreams and joy of becoming a part of the story continued: “If I went there and they knit me a sweater the sheep would chase me;” and “I’d go there and ride on the sheep.”

Children’s books create a child’s world and children use them to enter that creation, to reflect back a world that is just for them, that they create out of their growing awareness that in books all things are possible.

May in Tumbler Ridge last year didn’t look much like spring. The snow melted a little and then returned. There were a few mud puddles on the playground and a child chose the book *Mud Puddle* (Munsch, 1982) for one of our Read-Aloud sessions. The children seem to understand that anything can happen in books. Animals walk on two legs, they talk and live in houses and mud puddles jump on children. Still, it seemed important to make sense of the world. We did this together. When “the grass jumped over the fence” they were quick to point out “that doesn’t make any sense.” Sense and

nonsense, good and bad, right and wrong were all things that the children wanted to clarify and re-clarify. As I read to the children, they used the stories to help them make sense of the world.

Reality

The attempt by children to use literature to make sense of their own lives and the world around them is the fourth theme of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom.

“Our first hand experience is necessarily limited by the accidents of birth, upbringing, geography and history, yet one of our characteristics as human beings is the ability to ... learn from real or imagined experience mediated through images or words” (Marriott, 1995, p. 15). The children had a sense that the purpose of some books is to teach them a lesson; however, the exact point of the lesson was more difficult to figure out. Following the reading of *The Berenstain Bears and the Green-Eyed Monster* (Berenstain & Berenstain, 1982), I asked the children what they had learned from the story. The answers included: “On your birthday you get special stuff and just because other kids get stuff you shouldn’t be jealous;” “You shouldn’t be afraid to sleep over;” “When it’s summer don’t just sit around;” “Learn how to ride bikes” and “Don’t be jealous of what other kids get.”

After reading *Just Me and My Cousin* (Mayer & Mayer, 1992), the children talked a lot about meanness and how it could be dealt with. They had a lot of solutions to the problem: “If my cousin was mean to me, I would be mean back;” “I wouldn’t play with him;” “I’d just go away;” “I’d beat him up.” The meanness was related to things that had happened in their own lives such as, “sometimes my sister locks me in the bedroom.” This venture into crime became a search for punishments like “red ants in a jar and put

them in his bed.” During the book *Huge Harold* (Peet, 1961), there were more ideas for avenging wrongs: “I’d just turn around and kick ‘em” and “I wish he could learn Tai Kwan Do and kick the weasels and owls and foxes.”

The children related the characters’ experiences to what they understood about goodness and badness and what could and should be done about it. Together they were using the Read-Aloud to work out their understanding of their complex, post-modern world and the injustice and ethical dilemmas it poses. They were able to look again at what they had learned about appropriate behaviour and their feelings about it.

The reader’s attention to the text activates certain elements in his past experience...the selection and organization of responses to some degree hinge on the assumptions, the expectations, or sense of possible structures, that he brings out of the stream of his life. (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 11)

These children, at the headwaters of “the stream of [their] li[ves]” were “activate[d] by past experience” and were responding to the text. The text itself, as it challenged their assumptions, changed their way of looking at the world. The books that adults read to children may support or challenge what children already think they know about what it means to be human. During the reading of *The Moccasin Goalie* some children were reminded by others “Girls can play hockey.” In *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* (Trivizas, 1993), the joke was discovered in the firm knowledge that “Pigs don’t eat wolves.” Generalizations about humanity were eagerly expressed: “All kids like blowing up stuff because it’s awesome;” “All boys like army men;” “Some girls like action, too” and “Not me.” During *I Know an Old Laddie* (Little, 1999), there was a general agreement that while impossible things could happen in books, they were

still impossible: “Nobody could open their mouth that wide;” “A bear would be too hard to swallow;” “Eating those things would make you die;” “You can’t eat a squid;” and “The guy would die if he ate a piranha - it would come right out of him.” During the reading of *Earthlets* (Willis, 1988), a book about what it means to be a human child, they were more interested in the possibility of the non-humans: “Aliens don’t exist, they’ve never been on Discovery either;” “Do they have space suits under their disguises because they would die” and “Me and David have this dictionary and these aliens were on it - it says some people were abducted by aliens and they lost skin and hair - it’s called *The Knowledge Factory*.” The children searched for meaning as we read and as we talked and we all learned and re-learned about our world.

As much as parents might try to make life as pleasant as possible for their children, there is no holding back the inevitable discovery that being human is sometimes uncomfortable, hurtful, frightening and confusing. In the pedagogue’s invitation to humanity, through the Read-Aloud, it is possible to talk about these feelings and to make sense out of them through the power of words. To learn what it means to be human is to confront the scary, painful and hard stuff. Readers can deal with the difficult topics raised by books because the stories and characters usually remove the difficulty from our daily lives and invite the reader to think and to talk about topics otherwise too difficult to discuss.

A large mining company built our town in a beautiful valley in the mountains. It was designed and built with shiny new houses, paved streets and a large community center with a pool, skating rink, gym, curling rink, racquet ball courts and a library; all this to attract potential employees who would take the coal out of the earth and make the

company prosper. When the economy failed, Japan was selling fewer cars and didn't need coal to melt steel, and the company no longer prospered, the people in our pretty little town began to move away. For the children, this meant anxious homes and lost friends. The children expressed these feelings through the experience of the Read-Aloud. During the reading of *Franklin's Bad Day* (Bourgeois & Clark, 1996), the children talked about all of the people they missed, friends who had moved, those people who had moved and had come back to visit and those who seemed to be gone forever. After dismissal the children gathered around to continue the conversation. While the agony of lost friends may have been particularly keen in our valley, the experience of loss is universal.

One of the realities of childhood is dependence upon the care of others. When the characters in books got lost or lost someone to death, the children were eager to talk about their concerns with these experiences. During the reading of *Sheila Rae, the Brave* (Henkes, 1987) almost everyone had a story about getting lost. They had gotten lost in the forest, in West Edmonton Mall and camping. They were anxious to share the memories and feelings and to point out that they, too, were brave like Sheila Rae: "I wasn't scared but at Jasper I got lost and I just had to go up the chairlift;" "I got lost at the hockey game and they put it on the announcements;" "I got lost in West Edmonton Mall in the big park place and I walked around until I found my parents;" "I got lost at the rodeo and I said, 'Who cares?';" "I got lost once when I was three and I was riding my bike and I went to the park and I forgot where my house was;" "I got lost and a guy said 'Who are you? I'm mean;' " and "I got lost at Fantasy Land so I got to go on all the rides I wanted to."

Just as I cannot pinpoint the complex way in which my life is connected to the intertwined complexity of culture, experience, and language, neither can I trace the beginnings and endings of the effects that reading literary fictions has had on my life. (Sumara, 1996, p. 5)

On a hot day in June when my study was almost completed I realized that by reading books to children and listening to them talk about the books, I had learned a lot about their fears. Like the rest of us, children live in a vulnerable world. They are powerless over many things. I do not know if the experience of the Read-Aloud helps them because they see that disappointment and fear are universally experienced. I do know that the stories opened up their desire to talk about similar experiences and feelings in their own lives.

There is life and there is death. There are words about death. Children know about death, too. The reading of *Love You Forever* (Munsch, 1986) reminded the children that to be human means to die. Death was a powerful catalyst for conversation: “Yesterday I read my mom and dad this book and my dad almost cried and my mom was crying;” “I think it makes grown ups cry when she’s really old and she sings like that;” “Grown ups cry because they think about their children getting old;” “My dad’s mother died;” “My dad’s dad died from cancer when I was only two years old;” “My mom’s mother died;” “My mommy and daddy cry because their parents have passed away and they see their children grow up so fast;” “My daddy is in his fifties already;” “My best gran died when it was Christmas;” “My poppy was in the war and he didn’t die” and “If you die on the battlefield and you have a poppy on and it blows away and someone finds it, it brings back good memories.”

Powerful and genuine responses to stories are often, appropriately and necessarily, private. Many children occasionally, and some children frequently, do not wish to talk about the experience of a story ... there are certainly times when the most significant responses are silent and tacit rather than explicit and articulated ... children's responses are like an iceberg, nine-tenths of which is submerged beneath the surface. (Marriott, 1995, p. 91)

As we talked, I glanced over at a boy who had little to say and I remembered that he was in grief counseling because he had watched his father die of a brain tumor at home only a year earlier. Books have the power to remind us of our humanity and these sharp reminders reinforce the responsibility of the pedagogue to choose them carefully. If a book is too painful for me to read today, I can put it down until tomorrow. The children at my feet are virtually captives to the words that I read. This, too, is the experience of the Read-Aloud in a classroom.

An essential component of the Read-Aloud in the primary classroom *is* the primary classroom. On a day in late April when there was still only a very vague promise of new leaves and green grass, I noticed that children had been complaining about sitting on the floor to listen to stories. I had been talking with them about the difference between stories at home and stories at school. The main difference seemed to be comfort. They talked about lying in bed for home stories or sitting on the couch or a big chair. And for school stories they talked about the discomfort of the floor, one said that Read-Alouds gave him a "numb bum" which made everyone laugh. So I have decided to take them down the hall to the counselling room where there are two sofas. There will only be room

for half of them on the sofas so we will have to do this again to make it fair. As we walked I wondered if the experience of comfort and discomfort is related to the existentialist concept of *spatiality*. van Manen (1990, p. 101) writes about four “fundamental existential themes, which probably pervade the lifeworlds of all human beings.” One of these existentials is *lived space* or *spatiality*. The act of reading may require a certain type of space. Home feels like a safer place than school and listening to stories may be much more a part of that space than the more regimented and less comfortable world of the classroom. When I read I want a comfortable space so I understand that if I want the children to enjoy a book I need to find a comfortable space for them. I also know that if the book is good enough, the space will adapt itself to comfort. We read *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* (Steig, 1969). It is a magical book and the children are unusually still throughout the reading. One of the children does not know what a pebble is and as soon as the understanding comes from the context, he cannot help but shout out “It’s a magic rock.” Some of them make the sound effects for the rainstorm but mostly they are very quiet. As Sylvester’s dilemma begins to be apparent, they offer solutions such as, “He could try to roll” and they express excitement when Sylvester is back with his family “Yes!” The conversation that follows the story is intense. I have already learned that having a conversation with 22 people is not really a conversation, there is far too much waiting between listening and talking. In this attempt at conversation, everyone had something to say and it is all about wishes. If I had a magic pebble I would wish “for lots of money;” “...that the snow would melt;” “for my mother and father and brothers to turn into rocks;” (I wondered if I should leave this child in the counselling room) “I had a birthday everyday;” “the puddle around the trees would go

away;” “I had a gazillion dinkies;” “my whole room was hockey and I was a grown up so I could go in the N.H.L.” and “there was monsters, that would be cool.” I asked if they had any ideas about why the book won an award but they didn’t care, they kept telling me about their wishes. “ I wish the world would turn to ice except for us and the hockey sticks.” The Read-Aloud in the classroom is not as comfortable as the Read-Aloud at home and the conversation is much more difficult. Nevertheless, there is room in the classroom for pleasure, the wonder of words, the creation of a world where all things are possible, and an improved awareness of our own feelings and wishes.

Parents give the first nursery rhymes and labeled pictures like they give the first feedings, close up, tucked in an arm to the sounds of a familiar voice. When I brought my son home for the first time I apologized for the small space in which we lived. I wanted to give him worlds, not a trailer park. He was embarking on the experience of being human. His experience would be like mine and vastly different than mine, filled with possibility. How could I share with him the possibilities of life beyond this little space we occupied? People and books held the answer. We send our children off to the experience of schools and hope that there might be moments of joy and what Sumara (1996) calls the illumination of “a new vista of perception and understanding” (p. 248) to counteract the routine. People and books hold the answer.

Chapter 4: Truth and Beauty

“Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world ... Men are not built in silence ... no one can say a true word alone—nor can he say it for another”(Friere, 1997, p. 150).

This interpretation of the experience of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom is mine. It is lived by me. What will I do with it? What will it do with me? When I was a child, I lived on a small farm in central Alberta. It was the 1950s, a prosperous time for even the lower-middle classes. As I grew, my parents gradually accumulated technology. We got an indoor bathroom, an electric stove and a television set. When I was very small we had a coal furnace in the basement and a woodstove in the kitchen. My mother gardened and preserved fruit and made bread while my sisters and I made playhouses in empty granaries and climbed mountains of hay bales. In the evening, we sat around the wood stove and took turns brushing our mother’s hair while she read to us. She read books like *The Bobbsey Twins*, *The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew*, *Little Women* and a series of colourfully illustrated Bible stories. She did it because it was something her mother had done, it was part of parenting and it was pleasant. I do not think that she did it to improve our vocabulary or enhance our understanding of the human condition. She could read, she loved reading, she loved us and so she read to us. In millions of homes parents read to children for the same reasons. I do not remember a teacher reading to me during my primary years in school. If the teachers read to us I am sure we did not gather in a group on the floor because of classrooms packed to overflowing with the lived consequences of the baby boom. I do remember clearly other things about the primary grades. I remember my fear on the first day of school, my pride

at being able to recite the alphabet, getting rid of a wart on my wrist by falling down the stairs, lying to a teacher about having the hiccups so I could get a drink of water, the love I had for my grade three teacher and the pain of not winning any ribbons in the track meet. These things, fraught with drama and emotion, I remember. Books at school must not have been fraught with drama and emotion for me, or at least not enough to remain in my memory for long.

Reading brings pleasure and it changes us but not for everyone and not every time and not every book. A reading experience for children and adults probably differs mostly in the amount of sophistication (previous experience) one reader brings to the task as compared with another. As I worked on this paper, I read books. Some I loved like *The History of Reading* (Manguel, 1996), some touched me deeply like *Map of the World* (Hamilton, 1994), some were like visiting old friends like *East of Eden* (Steinbeck, 1952) and others were difficult like *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre, 1956).

I am glad that my parents read to me and I am glad that more parents and teachers read to young children. I am not certain that a love of books and learning is something that necessarily makes a “good” life for everyone. I was fascinated by the story of Akinnaso’s (1991) journey to literature in a culture which some would call illiterate. The people of his village saw literacy as practical for a few things and his people helped him to become literate so that he could be useful. He came to view his own literacy as a way of life. He moved into the realm of a reader. It would be presumptuous of me to claim that reading is pre-requisite to a good life or that the literate will improve the world by

making everyone literate like they are. There are probably some well-read tyrants and perhaps even more illiterate people who live rich lives. Human beings can read, the ability is within their being and reading has many dimensions. To read aloud to children is to invite them into that multi-dimensional experience. What I am convinced of is what I learned from my mother. If we, as pedagogues, can read, if we love to read and if we love children, then it would be the most flagrant omission of all not to introduce them to the world of books through the experience of the Read-Aloud. Where that world takes them, is for the most part, a game of chance, a game of life. It is children and their possibilities and our hope for them that cause us to open the books and say, "Look here, there are wonders for the taking."

It is children who gather us together as teachers in schools, as educators in universities, at conferences or as authors in journals. Why else would we be there? But it is also a mark of our time that in the midst of an inordinate spoken interest concerning children, it is not really children in which we are interested. That is, as is the case with almost everything we 'touch' in an empirical, objectivist, positivistic tradition such as ours, the deeds of our lives, including our language, have been reified to such a degree that we have lost the heart of hearing the deep messages and calls uttered in the very midst of our doing. (Smith, 1983, p. 34)

What does it mean to improve primary education? Who decides what constitutes improvement? Like all qualitative research, phenomenological enquiries are value laden. I cannot escape my belief that human life is valuable, that children are valuable and that

reading to them has a very good chance of enriching their lives. So I improve my pedagogic practice (and my life) by reading aloud to my students. Another adult shared this memory:

My favourite aunt was my grade one teacher. There had been some controversy about me going to school. We lived FAR out of town and walked back and forth to school. My parents did not send me to school for the kindergarten equivalent year since I was four until December and would have had to walk alone. At least that seems like their logic now... I was behind the others in my class and I knew it instinctively (I really was in the Buzzard group, I think.) I always felt like I was not on the same 'page' as the others. I remember taking the reader home at night to read to my parents. I remember reading in a round robin format and sweating while I waited for my turn...I guess the magic is that I enjoy reading now. In fact I am passionate about it. Someone, somewhere did some pretty good work to get me to that place. I wish I could remember that part. (Marlene, 2002)

I wanted to understand the experience of the Read-Aloud in a primary classroom because I wanted a deeper understanding of my practice. I wanted a deeper understanding of my practice because I wanted to improve it. I cannot escape it. Phenomenological research is normative. My research has validity if it changes what I do or causes me to continue my current practices in a more reflective manner. I see the power in the Read-Aloud in terms of enriching lives, particularly in terms of creating readers who want to read because the joys of reading are available much more in a read-aloud situation than in other instructional activities. I am determined to read aloud more often. I am also

determined to continue to reflect upon my practice with the use of books like *Grand Conversations* (Peterson & Eeds, 1990) that suggest ways in which the interaction between teacher and students, through the sharing of personal responses to books, can make reading more momentous and meaningful. I am aware of the need to use more “thought provoking literature in order to nurture deep thinking” (Martinez & McGee, 2000). Although the empiricists have found that more teachers are reading aloud more often, there is a trend in education at this time and place to depend on scientific studies to demonstrate the value of pedagogic practice. The word in common usage is *accountability* and it involves starting with base-line data and proving that a particular practice can raise the scores quoted in the data. The practice of reading aloud to children raised the scores on vocabulary tests. How does one measure the love of reading, the pleasure of discovery, the value of a touched heart, the practice that continues through a lifetime? In reflecting upon professional practice, it is crucial to keep these things in mind, the experience of books and childhood, and not to be overburdened with “the unexamined theoretical baggage that has accumulated around almost everything we do in school” (Anderson, Herr & Nihlin, 1994, p. 5).

Making stories our own may be a powerful way—or perhaps the only way—for stories to affect our lives and to transform us. If we believe in the power of literature to change our lives and the lives of children, or ... to serve as ... a catalyst for thinking about the problems and opportunities of life in new, creative ways, we encourage these responses as ways of forging strong links between stories and children’s lives. (Sipe, 2002, p. 482)

As a pedagogue, I continue to reflect upon the moments that make up the life of a child and how it may be possible or not that shared text may become one of those moments. Part of my practice involves working with children who are unable to get the meaning from the words because they struggle with the ability to decode the symbols. These children may receive huge benefits from listening to others read. They associate reading with failure, pain and frustration. The joy of books is lost to them but there is a chance that they will find it through the Read-Aloud and taped books. I know that one of my favourite activities is to listen to authors read aloud from their works. The Read-Aloud is a valid activity for all ages.

Another adult, who participated in my study, shared the following memory that poignantly illustrates the way in which teachers and schools can occasionally and inadvertently turn reading into something less than the life enhancing experience it can become:

I remember very clearly being punished in grade three for reading ahead in my reader. This classroom had three grades and the teacher divided her attention among several groups. There must not have been other reading material, because when I finished my work, the only thing I had to do was read ... my reader. Miss Taylor caught me reading ahead in the new stories and punished me. 'If you read ahead you will know what happens in the stories.' This objection seems absurd really but I understood what she meant- all the questions and worksheets depend on initial ignorance in order to show the teacher how much the student has

learned, I suppose. After that, I remember hiding my reader behind my math book down on my lap so that she wouldn't notice. (Jane, 2002)

Sumara (1996) writes that reading is recursive. "Although a literary fiction can offer an opportunity for a particular experience, it cannot cause the experience to happen in the reader" (p. 199). I read to 22 children; in doing so I offered the opportunity for a particular experience but I could not make it happen. I do not know which children in my class were particularly touched by which books or even if any of them had a moment that would stay in their memory beyond dinner time. I made some guesses based on their conversation but I have a feeling that much of the experience of books is very private. In spite of the ability of some teachers to make reading a "dull and leaden experience" (Sipe, 2002, p. 482) full of "overemphasis on competencies and drills" some children continue to hide their readers behind their math books. They have obviously found value in the written word. Can we reach the others by recognizing that reading is a joyful experience, seen in the exuberance with which many young children approach the experience of the Read-Aloud?

Many teachers, however, are in a special 'bind' because their daily dealings are formally charged with the language of objectives, ends, and goals. But such language has very little to do with the realities of living with children ... The saddest teachers of all are those who never learn the difference between formal curricular goals and the only goal of any importance: namely, learning to live together in the house of being, which is language itself, the abode where mortals may dwell. (Smith, 1983, p. 31)

We are teaching children how to do things and, almost incidentally, we are teaching them to love and desire things. Perhaps it is the incidental teaching that will make the most difference. The exuberance of the children and the deeply felt memories of the adults call out the importance of “learning to live together ... in language ... the abode where mortals may dwell.” They call out the love of books and the ways in which they have enriched their lives.

So what is the experience of the read-aloud in the primary classroom? I am a little embarrassed to admit that what I have learned is that the experience of the Read Aloud is “all we know of life and all we need to know.” It is the experience of truth and beauty. While I worked on this paper, I read the novel, *Map of the World*. Jane Hamilton’s poignant prose was beautiful and truer than truth. I felt the pain and at the same time, I felt the pleasure of the power of Hamilton to put the pain into words and I thought a lot about this combination of pain and pleasure and decided that the pleasure and pain came from truth. Truth is what good writers give to the rest of us. Truth is what Landsburg and van Manen hope will come from phenomenological writing. The amount of truth that the reader comes to understand has to do with what the reader brings to the book. Rosenblatt (1994) tells us “the experience between reader and text is not linear. It is a situation, an event at a particular time and place in which each element conditions the other” (p. 16). Steinbeck (1952) puts it another way.

Samuel rode lightly on top of a book and he balanced lightly among ideas the way a man rides white rapids in a canoe. But Tom got into a book, crawled and groveled between the covers, tunneled like a mole among the thoughts, and came up with the book all over his face and hands. (p. 325)

The story, the author, the place and the time are all conditioning elements in the experience between reader and text. Another element is the reader. The human, each child in the classroom, is like each story we read. They have infinite variations. This is truth. This is beauty.

We are all human, we are all part of this particular experience of being human and what we do with, and to, our children is our invitation to them to enter the world, such as it is, in all of its misery and terror and uncertainty and joy and hope. This invitation to the part of humanity that is the glory of the written word is what I have found is the over-all theme of the act of pedagogues reading aloud to children.

References

- Akinnaso, F. N. (1991). Literacy and individual consciousness. In E.M. Jennings & A.C. Purves, (Eds.) . *Literate systems and individual lives* (pp. 73-94). NY: State University of New York Press.
- Anderson, G. L., & Herr, K., & Nihlen A. S. (1994). *Studying your own school*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Anderson, R. C., Hiebert, E. H., Scott, J. A., & Wilkinson, I. A. G. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the commission on reading*. IL: Center for the Study of Reading.
- Baghban, M. J. M. (1984). *Our daughter learns to read and write: A case study from birth to three*. Newark: DE: International Reading Association.
- Barritt, L., & Beekman, T. (1983). Human science as a dialogue with children. *Phenomenology + Pedagogy*, 1 (1), 26-34.
- Berenstain, J., & Berenstain, S. (1982). *The Berenstain bears go to camp*. NY: Random House.
- Berenstain, J., & Berenstain, S. (1982). *The green-eyed monster*. NY: Random House.
- Brownridge, W. R. (1995). *The moccasin goalie*. Victoria, BC.: Orca Publishing.
- Bollnow, O. F. (1962/ 1970/1989). The pedagogical atmosphere. *Phenomenology + Pedagogy* , 7, 5-11.
- Bollnow, O. F. (1987). *Crisis and new beginnings*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Bourgeois, P., & Clark, B. (1996). *Franklin's bad day*. Toronto, Ontario: Kids Can Press.

- Bus, A. J., van Ijzendoorn, M. H., & Pellegrini, A. D. (1995). Joint book reading makes for success in learning to read: A meta-analysis on intergenerational transmission of literacy. *Review of Educational Research, 65*, 1-21.
- Chasen, S. P., & Gambrell, L. B. (1992). A comparison of teacher read aloud practices and attitudes: 1980-1990. *Literacy: Issues and Practices, 9*, 29-32.
- Eeds, M., & Wells, D. (1989). Grand conversations: An exploration of meaning construction in literature study groups. *Research in the Teaching of English, 23* (10), 4-29.
- Elley, W. B. (1989). Vocabulary acquisition from listening to stories. *Reading Research Quarterly, 24*, 174-187.
- Friere, P. Pedagogy of the oppressed In D. J. Flinders, & S. J. Thornton, (Eds.) (1997). *The curriculum studies reader*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gadamer, H.-G., (1986). *The relevance of the beautiful and other essays*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Galda, L., & Cullinan, B. E. (1991). Literature for literacy: What research says about the benefits of using trade books in the classroom. In J. Flood, J. M. Jensen, D. Lapp, & J. R. Squires, (Eds.) *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts* (pp. 529-535) NY: MacMillan.
- Greene, M. (1978). *Landscapes of learning*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Greene, M. (1997). Curriculum and consciousness. In D. J. Flinders, & S. J. Thornton, (Eds.). *The curriculum studies reader* (pp. 137-149) N.Y.: Routledge.
- Hamilton, J. (1994). *A map of the world*. N.Y.: Anchor Books / Doubleday.
- Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

- Henkes, K. (1987). *Sheila Rae, The brave*. New York: Scholastics
- Huck, C. S. (1999). The gift of story. In J.S. Gaffney, & B.J. Askew, *Stirring the waters*.
Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Hunsberger, M. (1985). The experience of re-reading. *Phenomenology + Pedagogy*, 3,
161-166.
- Husserl, E. (1913 / 1931). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology*. New
York: Humanities Press.
- Langeveld, M. J. (1967/1983) The secret place in the life of the child. *Phenomenology +
Pedagogy*, 1, (2), 181-191.
- Little, J. (1999). *I know an old laddie*. Toronto, Ontario: Viking.
- Lobel, A. (1971). *Frog and toad together*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Lunn, J. (1988). *Amos's sweater*. Toronto, Ontario: Groundwood / Douglas & McIntyre.
- Manguel, A. (1996). *A history of reading*. NY: Penguin Books.
- Marriott, S. (1995). *Read on: Using fiction in the primary school*. London: Paul Chapman
Publishing.
- Marshall, J. (1990). *Hansel and Gretel*. New York: Scholastic
- Martinez, M. G., & Teale, W. H. (1993). Teacher storybook reading style: A comparison
of six teachers. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 27, 175-199.
- Mayer, G. & Mayer, M. (1992). *Just me and my cousin*. NY: Western Publishing
Company.
- Mendoza, A. (1985). Reading to children: Their preferences. *Reading Teacher*, 38, 522-
527.

- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Morrow, L. M. & Smith, J. K. (1990). The effects of group size on interactive storybook reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 25, 213-231.
- Munsch, R. N. (1982). *Mud puddle*. Toronto, Canada: Annick Press.
- Munsch, R. (1986). *Love you forever*. Willowdale, Ontario: Firefly.
- Munsch, R. (1992). *Purple, green and yellow*. Toronto, Ontario: Annick Press.
- Peet, H. (1961). *Huge Harold*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Peterson, R. & Eeds, M. (1990). *Grand conversations*. Ontario, Canada: Scholastics.
- Rasinski, T. V. (1990). Effects of repeated reading and reading-while-listening on reading fluency. *Journal of Educational Research*, 83, 147-150.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1994). *The reader the text the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Rosenhouse, J., Feitelson, D., Kita, B., & Glodstein, Z. (1997). Interactive reading aloud to Israeli first graders: It's contribution to literacy development. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 32, 168-183.
- Sartre, J. P. (1943/1956) *Being and nothingness*. NY: Washington Square Press.
- Senechall, M., Thomas, E., & Monker, J. (1995). Individual differences in four- year-olds acquisition of vocabulary during storybook reading. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 87, 218-229.
- Sipe, L. R. (2001). Picturebooks as Aesthetic Objects. *Literacy teaching and learning*, 6 (1), 23-42.

- Sipe, L. R. (2002). Talking back and taking over: Young children's expressive engagement during storybook read-alouds. *The Reading Teacher*, 55 (5), 476-483.
- Smith, D. G. (1983). Learning to live in the home of language: Hearing the pedagogic voice as poetic. *Phenomenology+Pedagogy*, 1 (1), 29-35.
- Smith, N. B. (1986). *American Reading Instruction*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Steig, W. (1969). *Sylvester and the magic pebble*. New York: Prentice Hall Books for Young Readers.
- Strathern, P. (1998). *Sartre in 90 Minutes*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee
- Sumara, D. J. (1996). *Private readings in public*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Trelease, J. (2001). *The read-aloud handbook*. N.Y.: Penguin Books.
- Trivizas, E. (1993). *The three little pigs and the big bad wolf*. New York: Scholastic.
- van Manen, M. (1984). Practicing phenomenological writing. *Phenomenology + Pedagogy*, 2 (1), 36-69.
- van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience*. NY: State University of New York Press.
- van Manen, M. (1996). Phenomenological, pedagogy and the question of meaning. In D. Vandenberg, (Ed.) *Phenomenology and Educational Discourse* (pp, 39-64). Durban: Heinemann Higher and Further Education.
- Vandenberg, D. (1971). *Being and education*. N. J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Waterton, B. (1978). *A salmon for Simon*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.

Wells, G. (1986) *The meaning makers*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books.

Willis, J. (1988). *Earthlets*. New York: Puffin Unicorn Books.