

A STUDY OF TOPICAL READING INTERESTS AND
THEIR RELATION TO THE LITERATURE TEXTS OF
SELECTED GRADE NINE STUDENTS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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A STUDY OF TOPICAL READING INTERESTS AND
THEIR RELATION TO THE LITERATURE TEXTS
OF SELECTED GRADE NINE STUDENTS



by

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the Faculty of Education
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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to investigate the extent to which the reading interests of the grade nine students of the Roman Catholic School Board of the Burin Peninsula in Newfoundland were satisfied in the curriculum of their literature course, primarily the anthology and assigned novels.

This study was part of an intensive, co-operative effort of three graduate students to analyze the status of reading in the curriculum of the students and teachers under the board concerned and to make the findings available to the local school authority, together with some suggestions and recommendations for future development of a high school reading program.

For this study, two questionnaires were formulated: one examined general reading interests, while the other investigated specific reading interests as they related to selections in the anthology and assigned novels. Both questionnaires were tested for student comprehension and ease of administration in a pilot study in a junior high school. The population of the present study consisted of 209 grade nine students under the jurisdiction of the board concerned. Information regarding intelligence quotient and reading ability of the students was obtained from the

research data of another Master's thesis which was conducted concurrently with this one. The resulting data of the General Topical Interest Questionnaire and the Specific Literature Interest Questionnaire were analyzed by computer programs.

An analysis of the data revealed that the students displayed interest in a wide variety of topics and character types. The type of literature they liked best was short stories, followed by novels and plays. Poetry and essays fell far behind.

Five of the six interest ratings that were assigned the major sections of the literature curriculum ranged from 0.61 to 0.89. This percentage can be interpreted as the average percentage of students to whom the unit has the potential of appealing.

The factor of sex exerted a significant influence upon the ratings given to the units of short stories, poetry, non-fiction, plays and novels. The factor of age exerted a significant influence upon students' ratings of the selections in the short story, poetry, drama and novel units. The factor of intelligence exerted a significant influence upon student ratings on the units of poetry and non-fiction. The factor of reading ability exerted a significant influence upon student ratings of the selections in the short story, poetry and drama sections.

Reading ability exerted a significant influence upon the ratings which students assigned to the level of

difficulty of the poetry section of the text.

Several recommendations were made by the researcher after consideration of the findings of the study. Among these were:

1. The text should be supplemented by materials in which the students have expressed interest.
2. The units of poetry and mythology need to be revised and supplemented.
3. Two groups of students need special consideration in the selection of curriculum materials: those above the average age for grade nine and those of above average intelligence.
4. Alternative choices of literature materials should be available for boys and girls.

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Chapter 1

THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In recent years, secondary teachers of language and literature have become increasingly aware of the many problems that students encounter in reading. They are generally concerned with promoting an interest in reading yet innumerable studies have revealed that, to a large extent, their efforts have not been successful. On the whole, students are not reading as much as their teachers would like. This study is designed to investigate one of the possible reasons for this, specifically, this thesis is based on the assumption that students do not acquire an interest in reading because their interests are not met or stimulated in the reading experiences they encounter in school, principally, in their experiences with the novels and the anthologies of the literature curriculum.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A permanent reading habit based on a love of reading for all normal children is the most important purpose of the school's instructional effort.¹

¹George Norvell, The Reading Interests of Young People (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1950), p. 8.

It is possible to argue that students should be given high quality literature instead of simply giving them materials they like to read. However, many writers, notably Harris,⁸ Rudman,⁹ and Lazar¹⁰ agree that adults are not always aware of what is "best" in literature for children. Moreover, investigators agree that in order to develop interests, teachers must begin with materials that satisfies the immediate interests of the students. Such a conclusion was drawn by Betts,¹¹ Grogan,¹² Abbot,¹³ and Burton¹⁴ among others.

⁸A.J. Harris, Effective Teaching of Reading (New York: David McKay Co., 1962), p. 292.

⁹H.C. Rudman, "The Informational Needs and Reading Interests of Children in Grades IV Through VII," Elementary School Journal, Vol. 55 (1955), p. 505.

¹⁰M. Lazar, "Reading Interests, Activities and Opportunities of Bright, Average and Dull Children," Contributions to Education, No. 707 (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1937); cited by McKay, op. cit., p. 225.

¹¹E.A. Betts, "Parents and Teachers Want to Know More About Reading," Education, Vol. 78 (1958), p. 295.

¹²A.C. Grogan, "Appraising Reading Interests and Attitudes in Grades Seven Through Nine," Evaluation of Reading, ed. H.M. Robinson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 90-92.

¹³A. Abbot, "Reading Tastes of High School Pupils," School Review, Vol. 10 (1902), p. 586; cited by J.W. McKay, op. cit., p. 229.

¹⁴D.L. Burton, "There's Always a Book for You," English Journal, Vol. 38 (1942), p. 372.

This statement by a noted authority on children's reading interest was made over 25 years ago. Yet the extent to which schools have failed to meet this objective has become painfully evident. Several studies and surveys, among them, Witty,² Brown,³ and Olson and Rosen,⁴ have shown that both children and adults read below the standards that should be expected for their age and intelligence.

Several authorities, such as Brown,⁵ Evans,⁶ and Rice,⁷ feel that one of the major causes of this lack of reading activity is that there is an enormous span between what children really like to read and what educators give them to read in curriculum materials. As a result, since children do not experience satisfaction in their first encounters with books, there is no motivation to further reading.

²Paul Witty and David Kopel, Reading and the Educative Process (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1939), p. 28.

³Carl A. Brown, "Meeting Reality in the Classroom," Improving Reading in Secondary Schools, ed. Lawrence E. Hafner (New York: Macmillan Co., 1967), p. 411.

⁴Arthur Olson and Carl Rosen, "A Comparison of Reading Interests of Two Populations of Ninth Grade Students," Teaching Reading Skills in Secondary Schools, eds. Arthur Olson and Wilson Ames (Pennsylvania: International Textbook Co., 1970), p. 568.

⁵Brown, loc. cit.

⁶K.M. Evans, Attitudes and Interests in Education (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 102.

⁷Richard Rice and James Sellers, "What Do Teenagers Read?," Improving Reading in Secondary Schools, ed. Lawrence E. Hafner (New York: Macmillan Co., 1967), p. 410.

This study is concerned, then, with ascertaining the extent to which children's reading interests are satisfied in the literature curriculum. Since, as Brett points out, "the teacher of literature is the person most directly concerned with the reading interests of the students,"¹⁵ it was decided that this investigation would attempt to assess the principal instructional tool of the literature teacher in Newfoundland--the literature textbook and assigned novels.

Stephenson¹⁶ and Witty¹⁷ have both stated that reports of studies of children's reading interests reveal that the peak of children's reading interests occurs during the junior high school years. In addition, Brett¹⁸ has stated that the Newfoundland school dropout rate reaches its maximum at the grade nine level and that the Newfoundland Department of Education has suggested a relationship between school dropouts and weakness in reading. For these reasons, it was decided that this investigation would be carried out at the grade nine level.

¹⁵Betty M. Brett, "A Survey of the Leisure Reading of Grade Nine Students in Central High Schools of Newfoundland" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1964), p. 37.

¹⁶Margaret Stephenson, "An Investigation of the Agreement Between Reading Interests as Expressed by Students and as Predicted by their Teachers" (thesis proposal, University of Alberta, 1968), p. 1.

¹⁷Paul Witty, "Current Role and Effectiveness of Reading Among Youth" (NSSE, Forty-seventh Yearbook, 1948), p. 20.

¹⁸Brett, op. cit., p. 36.

III. SIGNIFICANCE AND PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

This investigation into the relationship between students' reading and the kinds of books included in the course of study in literature is part of a team exploration into some of the factors which must be considered in developing curriculum in reading instruction for high school students. Intelligence, reading ability and the reading interests of the students, as well as the attitudes of the teachers towards reading, comprise the total area under investigation in this team approach, inspired partly by a request from an interested school principal in the district selected for study, that is, the Roman Catholic School District of the Burin Peninsula, Newfoundland. The other two members of the team were Davis¹⁹ and Shortall,²⁰ who concerned themselves with reading ability and teachers' attitudes.

It is the hope of those concerned with the total study that the resulting data will constitute a sound basis for the development of a systematic program in reading for the secondary schools in the district.

¹⁹Horace Davis, "A Study of Secondary School Reading Achievement in a Selected Area of Newfoundland" (unpublished Master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1973).

²⁰Brian Shortall, "A Study of the Attitudes and Teaching Practices of Selected Newfoundland Teachers Pertaining to Reading Instruction in Secondary Schools" (unpublished Master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1973).

This study will concern itself with the following:

1. An investigation of the reading interests of grade nine students under jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic School Board of the Burin Peninsula as they are manifested in voluntary reading choices.
2. An investigation of the extent to which actual interests in grade nine students are satisfied in the grade nine literature curriculum.
3. An investigation of the effects of the factors of sex, age, intelligence and reading ability upon the ratings given by these students to specific selections in the text under investigation.

The investigation will, it is hoped, suggest answers to the following questions which are of crucial importance to those responsible for developing and implementing curriculum:

1. What are the general reading interests of the grade nine students under study?
2. Does the current literature curriculum satisfy the reading interests of the group?
3. What are the effects of the factors of age, sex, intelligence and reading ability upon the interest of this group in the text under investigation?

4. Is there any relationship between a student's reading ability and the difficulty he says he experiences in reading the selections in the text?

IV. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The reader should bear in mind several points concerning the scope and limitations of the present research.

1. This study will be concerned only with the reading interests of grade nine students on the Burin Peninsula, therefore its generalizability is limited.
2. Since data collection will be undertaken in the school, the school setting may have a detrimental effect upon the sincerity with which students answer questions.
3. This study will be limited by the indirect method of the questionnaire.
4. The textbook had just been introduced to the school system in conjunction with an older edition which has been discontinued by the publisher. Therefore, students will not be as familiar with the selections in the text as they may have been had this text been the only one on the course of study.
5. The books under study contain more than enough material for a year's work and as a consequence not all of the selections will have been read by the students.

V. SUMMARY

This study, then, is designed to investigate the extent to which the reading interests of the grade nine students of the Roman Catholic School Board of the Burin Peninsula are satisfied by their literature course, primarily by the novels and the new anthology which had just been introduced to the schools and which has since become the core of the grade nine literature program. As this study is a part of a united effort of three graduate students, it is intended that the results of this study, in conjunction with the results of the other two theses, be made available to the local school authority together with some suggestions and recommendations for future development of their high school reading program. The primary purpose and true significance of this study must be assessed by considering the context to which it has practical application--the development of a realistic program in reading and literature.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

I. ESTABLISHMENT OF PERMANENT READING HABITS AS AN AIM OF A LITERATURE PROGRAM

As early as 1925, a national committee on reading declared one of the aims of a good literature program to be "To promote and refine reading interests and tastes which will direct and inspire the present and future life of the reader and provide for the wholesome use of leisure time."¹

Twenty-five years later, one of the most noted researchers in reading interests made almost the same statement when he declared in the opening words of his now famous study:

A permanent reading habit based on a love of reading for all normal children is the most important purpose of the school's instructional effort.²

These opinions have continued to receive corroboration from most recent writers. Barbe declared that

¹National Association for the Study of Education, Twenty-Fourth Yearbook, Report of the National Committee on Reading (Bloomington, Illinois: Public School Publishing Co., 1925), p. 64.

²Norvell, op. cit., p. 8.

instruction in reading can only be successful if long-term interests are developed in students.³ Witty stated that a permanent interest in reading should be one of the primary aims of all citizens.⁴ Jacobs expressed the opinion that persons who have developed wide and deep reading interests have opened for themselves ever newer and wider ranges of interests.⁵

McKay, in a summary of his review of research on reading interests, synthesized the opinions of the writers whom he had reviewed when he stated that:

It is generally agreed that the most important outcome of reading instruction is intensity and extent of reading interests.⁶

A love of and for reading [is] a goal toward which most education should be directed.⁷

And

Literary taste and appreciation [is] another of the ultimate goals of instruction in reading.⁸

³W.B. Barbe, "Interests and the Teaching of Reading," Education, Vol. 83 (1963), p. 486.

⁴P.A. Witty, "Some Interests of High School Boys and Girls," Improvement of Reading Through Classroom Practice, ed. J.A. Figurel, IRA Conference Proceedings (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1964), p. 186.

⁵L.B. Jacobs, "Goals in Promoting Permanent Reading Interests," Developing Permanent Interest in Reading, ed. H.M. Robinson, Supplementary Educational Monographs, Number 84 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 20.

⁶James McKay, "A Summary of Scientific Research and Professional Literature on Reading Interests of Secondary School Students, Grades 7-12, 1889-1965" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1968), p.144.

⁷Ibid., p. 258.

⁸Ibid.

The failure of schools to develop permanent interest in reading was pointed out by Betzner and Lyman as early as 1937. Their study revealed that "fifty-six per cent of college students do no optional reading of books; sixteen per cent occasionally read newspapers and magazines."⁹ The findings agreed with those of Lehman who discovered in 1926 that the amount of reading carried out by students decreased as the students grew older.¹⁰ Similarly, Witty stated in 1939 that,

Perhaps the strongest and most frequent criticism of reading in high schools and college is associated with their seeming failure to cultivate permanent interests in and preferences for good reading. This criticism is supported to some extent by studies which reveal a relatively low level in reading interests and a small amount of leisure time reading on the part of youth.¹¹

Thorndike's findings indicate a relationship between low reading interests and little time devoted to reading.¹²

⁹ Jean Betzner and R.L. Lyman, "The Development of Reading Interests and Tastes" (NSSE, Thirty-sixth Yearbook, 1937), p. 189.

¹⁰ H.C. Lehman, "Reading Books Just for Fun," School Review, Vol. 34 (1926), pp. 357-364; cited by J.W. McKay, op. cit., p. 190.

¹¹ Paul Witty, "Current Role and Effectiveness of Reading among Youth" (NSSE, Forty-seventh Yearbook, 1948), pp. 19-20.

¹² R.W. Thorndike, Children's Reading Interests (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941), cited by J.W. McKay, op. cit., p. 143.

Such discouraging findings are by no means limited to the students of 30 or 40 years ago. Norvell in his study of reading interests revealed similar poor results in the amount of reading carried out by students.¹³ Even in 1970, Ashley was forced to admit that,

Only five per cent of North Americans can be thought of as habitual readers, or to put it rather more urgently, ninety-five per cent of all those who attend school will probably never take to reading as a matter of habit.¹⁴

In 1967, Brown stated that,

For every adult who continues to read the type of literature to which he is introduced in high school, there are probably several hundred who, in their adult life, read nothing but popular paperbacks and magazines.¹⁵

The findings of Brett and Crocker in their investigations of the reading interests of Newfoundland students reveal similar poor reading habits. Brett found that while students do read more than their teachers realize, the literary merit of much of what they read may be questionable.¹⁶ Crocker found it necessary to state that "the percentage of students who were readers in the true sense of

¹³ Norvell, op. cit.

¹⁴ L.F. Ashley, "Children's Reading Interests and Individualized Reading," Elementary English, Vol. 47 (December, 1970), p. 1088.

¹⁵ Carl A. Brown, "Meeting Reality in the Classroom," Improving Reading in Secondary Schools, ed. Lawrence E. Hafner (New York: MacMillan Company, 1967), p. 411.

¹⁶ Brett, op. cit., pp. 55-57.

the word was small,"¹⁷ and that "the reading of high school students in Newfoundland is extremely limited."¹⁸ He found that Newfoundland students confine their reading to reference materials on school work and hobbies and the infrequent reading of novels. He also found that exceedingly few students were likely to select a play or a book of poetry for leisure reading and declared that "a substantial proportion of students are virtual non-readers of books."¹⁹

II. IMPORTANCE OF ADULTS' KNOWLEDGE OF STUDENT READING INTERESTS

Innumerable educational researchers over the years have stressed the importance of adults knowing exactly where students' reading interests lie. Over and over again they have emphasized the vital link between learning and interest, and they have emphasized the necessity of motivating students to learn by appealing to their interests.

Such an opinion was expressed by Betts who said that interest was the motivating factor for any learning activity, especially reading.²⁰ Grogan, too, stressed the importance

¹⁷Oswald K. Crocker, The Leisure Reading of High School Students in Newfoundland, Library Facilities in the Schools and Home Background as Related to Reading (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Indiana, 1967), p. 107.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 136.

²⁰Betts, op. cit., p. 295.

of beginning any learning activity with the interests students already possess.²¹

One of the oldest reading studies ever carried out was done by Abbot in 1902. MacKay cited his observation that,

The pupil can understand nothing, like nothing, unless he has already something in his mind that reaches out, as it were, a hand to the new idea and claims kinship with it. All new interests are built on earlier ones. A boy cannot be driven from detective stories to philosophical essays, he must be led step by step.²²

It is this careful guidance of students by teachers that has been stressed in most research. Bamman, Hogan and Greene stressed the importance of the teacher's selecting new material based on the reading interests of the class.²³

Bley, some years earlier, stated that students cannot properly read some types of literature unless they can understand the nature of the material contained in it.²⁴ He said that they must be able to identify with the characters in some way in order to be interested in the story. Bley implied that literature which is presented to students, should, therefore, of necessity have some common basis with students' reading interests. Similar conclusions have been

²¹Grogan, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-92.

²²Abbot, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

²³Henry A. Bamman, Ursula Hogan and Charles E. Greene, Reading Instruction in the Secondary Schools (New York: David McKay Co. Inc., 1961), pp. 170-172.

²⁴E. Bley, "Identification, A Key to Literature," English Journal, Vol. 34 (1945), p. 28.

formulated by Burton and Witty. Burton encouraged teachers to explore students' real interests before beginning instruction in new material.²⁵ McKay, after examining Witty's studies, concluded that if students enjoyed reading and understood the material read, then their amount of reading increased.²⁶

Paffard reiterated these opinions and indicated some possible effects of lack of adult knowledge of student reading interest when he stated:

Whitehead's investigation of the attitudes of grammar school pupils to ten novels read in school [shows that] four of the ten novels provoked such uniformly and strongly hostile attitudes that it is impossible to escape the conclusion that they should no longer feature in the syllabus. . . . He also found that among the influences determining attitudes, those relating to the children themselves . . . were relatively unimportant when compared with those influences which are inherent in the books themselves. This finding contradicts the often expressed view that it doesn't matter much what books are chosen because a good teacher can get the children to do almost anything.²⁷

III. DIVERGENCE BETWEEN ADULT DESIRES FOR STUDENT INTERESTS AND ACTUAL STUDENT INTERESTS

One of the principal explanations for high school students' lack of reading outside a required school curriculum has been that the gap between what students really

²⁵ Burton, op. cit., p. 372.

²⁶ McKay, op. cit., p. 147.

²⁷ M.K. Paffard, "The Teaching of English Literature in Secondary Schools - I," Educational Research, Vol. 4 (1961-62), pp. 222-223.

"apparently their reading choices were influenced very little either by teachers' suggestions or class discussions."³² Leafe and Johnson felt that some teacher methods of encouraging students to read such as "rigid requirements of book lists and ways of reporting" are actually "liable to exert a negative influence on reading."³³

Peterson stated that because student reading interests are not met in the literature curriculum, students seek satisfaction in other materials during their leisure hours.³⁴ Such student dissatisfaction with their in-school reading is one of the main reasons for the wide divergence between the kinds of material assigned in the literature course and the kinds of material that compose students' leisure reading. McKay reinforced this viewpoint when he stated:

. . . students, unable to find answers to their questions and solutions to their problems in the selections assigned them in reading and literature courses, not surprisingly, resort to other types of material, much of it rather inferior by even loose literary standards.³⁵

The famous authority on children's reading interests, Norvell, has deplored the effect of poor selection

³²Brett, op. cit., p. 72.

³³Bamman, Hogan and Greene, op. cit., p. 60.

³⁴A. Peterson, "Leisure Reading of High School Pupils," Education, Vol. 54 (1934), pp. 296-300.

³⁵McKay, op. cit., p. 227.

want to read and what they are being required to read is enormous. This theory has been supported by innumerable authorities who have stated that adults who choose students' reading materials are not really aware of the kinds of literature that teenagers like to read.

Brown, for example, noted that the kinds of literature that students read when they were finished high school were not the kinds of literature that they had been subjected to in literature classes.²⁸ Harris holds that there is a great difference between what children like to read and what adults think they should read.²⁹ Such opinions support the results of a study that was carried out much earlier by Johnson. He found that only 25 per cent of the students he investigated in grades five through eleven read books because they were suggested by friends and teachers.³⁰ Both Leafe and Johnson, in their research, as cited by Bamman, Hogan and Greene, found that students' reading choices were not influenced by the suggestions of parents, teachers or librarians.³¹ Brett's findings for grade nine students in Newfoundland were similar. She concluded that

²⁸Brown, op. cit., p. 411.

²⁹Harris, op. cit., p. 292.

³⁰B.L. Johnson, "Children's Reading Interests as Related to Sex and Grade in School," School Review, Vol. 40 (1932), p. 269.

³¹H.A. Bamman, U. Hogan, and C.E. Greene, Reading Instruction in the Secondary Schools (New York: David McKay Co., 1961), p. 59.

by adults of literary materials for children.³⁶ Students, he stated, should be permitted to do their own selection of reading materials. His studies have shown that students do not like the traditional kinds of materials selected for them by teachers, or the traditional intensive methods of study that usually accompanies them.³⁷ Rudman found in his investigations of teenage and adult reading that the interests of the two groups were not similar. He concluded that among the three groups of adults investigated, adults agreed more among themselves in their perceptions of children's reading interests than they did with children's interests as stated by the children.³⁸ Soares, also, in a review of the findings of other investigators, stated that generally there seems to exist a rather large inconsistency between reading materials chosen for children by experts and by the children themselves.³⁹ Lazar came to a similar conclusion in his

³⁶ G.W. Norvell, "Some Results of a Twelve-year Study of Children's Reading Interests," English Journal, Vol. 35 (1946), p. 535.

³⁷ G.W. Norvell, "Wide Individual Reading Compared with the Traditional Plan of Studying Literature," School Review, Vol. 44 (1941), pp. 603-613; reprinted in G.W. Norvell, The Reading Interests of Young People (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1973, Revised edition), p. 502.

³⁸ Rudman, op. cit., p. 505.

³⁹ A.J. Soares, "Salient Elements of Recreational Reading of Junior High School Students," Elementary English, Vol. 40 (1963), p. 843.

investigation of the types of books recommended for children by experts. He could find no valid explanation for the experts' statements that these books were 'best' for young children.⁴⁰

Brown's statement in 1967 indicated that the existence of this discrepancy between curriculum materials and student interests was becoming painfully obvious to high school English teachers. He said:

Many English teachers have come to realize that there is very little relation between the literature they teach and the material that many students will read after graduation. Sometimes this gap is so large that it is never bridged and the student's school experiences have no relation to his real life.⁴¹

Brown went on to state that only a fraction of those students who graduate from high school read the types of literature to which they are introduced in school; the literary diets of the vast majority are composed of popular paperbacks and magazines.⁴²

This opinion, that too much material is too far removed from the real world of teenagers, is corroborated by Rice and Sellers who were interested in the impact of religious literature upon teens. They stated that,

We suspect that curriculum builders turn away from concrete, sensible experiences of teenagers, so eager are they to thrust before young people

⁴⁰Lazer, op. cit., p. 225.

⁴¹Brown, op. cit., p. 411.

⁴²Ibid.

easily recognizable ideals of the church. Thus, many materials may be planned from a middle-class adult point of view.⁴³

They concluded that "there is not enough similarity between the curriculum materials we produce and the reading teenagers do on their own initiative."⁴⁴ This viewpoint is reiterated by Evans who stated that, "It may be that the kinds of interest we encourage at school are too far from those of the out-of-school world of the children to have much chance of survival."⁴⁵ The conclusion of these writers, therefore, would seem to suggest that designers of curriculum should become more attuned to the types of material that students really enjoy reading. These kinds of materials could be valuable sources of initial motivation for the reluctant reader.

Strang and Bracken feel that much of the problem in motivating students to read can be attributed to teacher misunderstandings of the nature that motivation must take. They wrote, "teachers are more concerned with interests that require reading than with reading interests."⁴⁶ Furness revealed that the Newbery Medal award

⁴³R.H. Rice, and J.E. Sellers, "What Do Teenagers Read?" Improving Reading in Secondary Schools: Selected Readings, ed. Lawrence E. Hafner (New York: MacMillan, 1967), pp. 406-410.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 410.

⁴⁵K.M. Evans, Attitudes and Interests in Education (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 102.

⁴⁶R. Strang, and D.K. Bracken, Making Better Readers (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1957), p. 64.

winning books selected, evaluated, and praised by adults were not always popular with children.⁴⁷ Harris, too, made this observation.⁴⁸ Paffard restated the conclusions of other researchers this way:

It seems clear that if teachers are to extend their influence over children's leisure reading--perhaps the most important aim of literature teaching--they will have to find ways of narrowing the gulf that separates the books studied in school from the material voluntarily read by pupils.⁴⁹

IV. SUMMARY

The studies that have been carried out over the years by researchers concerned with the reading interests of students indicate that the establishment of permanent reading habits is an extremely important aim of a literature program. Mature reading habits can be developed, however, most researchers agree, only when the material which students are given to read appeals to their reading interests. It has been found by many educators that there is a great divergence between the kinds of materials students are given to read and the students' voluntary reading choices. It was found that the peak of reading

⁴⁷E.L. Furness, "Researches in Reading Interests," Education, Vol. 84 (1963-4), p. 3.

⁴⁸Harris, op. cit., p. 292.

⁴⁹M.K. Paffard, "The Teaching of English Literature in Secondary Schools - Part I," Educational Research op. cit., p. 222.

activity occurs in junior high school, with a decrease in the amount of reading beginning early in high school.

Investigations made by Newfoundland researchers have found that similar conclusions can be applied to the students of this island.

Chapter 3

THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This chapter will discuss the preliminary approach to the school board concerned, the pilot study, the collection of data, the tests and questionnaires employed in the study, and the treatment and analysis of data.

I. PRELIMINARY APPROACH TO SCHOOL BOARD

As has previously been stated, this study is only one section of a collective approach to the solving of a curriculum problem. The head of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction of Memorial University of Newfoundland was initially approached by a principal of one of the schools under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic School Board for the Burin Peninsula in Newfoundland, inviting graduate students to conduct research in his school. His suggestion was welcomed, and subsequently, letters requesting permission to conduct research which required the responses of students and teachers were sent to the superintendent of the school board and permission was granted. Copies of these letters may be found in Appendix A of this study.

use of the total intelligence score and the percentile rank of the total reading score for each student in grade nine.

General Topical Interest Questionnaire

In order to design this questionnaire it was necessary to categorize various types of literature. To make this listing as complete as possible, several sources used for literary classifications were employed. Among them were interest questionnaires and the summaries of the results of such questionnaires, prepared by researchers such as Witty,² Thorndike and Henry,³ Soares and Simpson,⁴ and Shores.⁵ Also used were classifications of types of literature prepared for librarians, such as those prepared by Field,⁶ Haviland,⁷ and the Library Committee

²Paul Witty, "Study of Pupils' Interests, Grades 9, 10, 11, 12," Education (October, 1961), pp. 100-110.

³Robert L. Thorndike and Florence Henry, "Differences in Reading Interests Related to Differences in Sex and I.Q. Level," Elementary School Journal, Vol. 40 (June 1940), pp. 751-763.

⁴Anthony T. Soares and R.H. Simpson, "Interest in Recreational Reading of Junior High School Students," Teaching Reading Skills in Secondary Schools: Readings, eds. Arthur Olson and Wilbur Ames (Pennsylvania: International Textbook Company, 1970), pp. 357-364.

⁵J. Harlan Shores, "Reading Interests and Informational Needs of High School Students," Reading Teacher, Vol. 17 (April, 1964), pp. 536-544.

⁶Carolyn W. Field (ed.), Subject Collections in Children's Literature (New York and London: R.R. Bowker Company, 1969).

⁷Virginia Haviland, Children's Literature: A Guide to Reference Sources (Washington: Library of Congress, 1966).

II. INSTRUMENTS

Construction of Questionnaires

Because this study was to investigate whether the literature texts of the grade nine curriculum satisfied the reading interests of the students who must read them, two factors had to be ascertained:

1. the actual reading interests of the students;
2. an evaluation of their interest in the selections presented in the anthology on the course of study.

Since the factors of intelligence and reading ability were to be considered in the analysis of data, tests had to be administered to the students to ascertain these two factors. This information was obtained from the research data of the Master's thesis of Horace Davis,¹ who administered standardized tests on the complete high school population under the jurisdiction of the board concerned at the same time as data were being gathered for this study. The standardized tests that he employed were the Lorge Thorndike Intelligence Test and the Co-operative English Test: Reading Comprehension. All information regarding their administration, validity, reliability, scoring and analysis may be found in his thesis. From the data provided by Davis, this investigator made

¹Davis, op. cit.

of the National Association of Independent Schools.⁸

As complete a selection of these categories as was possible was included in the questionnaire. All were divided into three main classifications: fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Under fiction were included the following categories:

mystery	animal
adventure	foreign lands
romance	westerns
sports	sea
science fiction	travel
horror	mythology
supernatural	historical fiction
humour	home life
war	sentiment
growing up	folk stories

Under non-fiction were included the following categories:

biography	occupation and careers
autobiography	outdoors
sports	personal and social development
foreign lands	social problems
hobbies and handicrafts	science
history	arts
self-improvement	religion or philosophy
nature	origin of man

⁸Library Committee of the National Association of Independent Schools, Books for Secondary School Libraries (4th ed., New York and London: R.R. Bowker Company, 1971).

Under poetry were included the following categories:

nature poems	story poems
nonsense or	descriptive poems
funny poems	

In the event that a one-word description of a particular class of literature interest might not be clear to the students, it was decided to include in the questionnaire a short explanation of that term; for example, the first item on the questionnaire reads:

Fiction:

Mystery (stories about fictional persons who are trying to solve crimes of unexplained events).

An appropriate description was included for each item on the questionnaire.

Students were asked: "Do you like to read or would you like to read, selections dealing with the following topics?" They were required to rate each category by simply checking "Yes," "No" or "Don't Know" in the appropriate column.

In order to investigate ratings of interest not only for the content but also for the characters in a selection, students were asked to respond to the following question:

When you read a story, play, novel or poem about people, do you like those people to be:

men?	_____
women?	_____
teenage boys?	_____
teenage girls?	_____
young children?	_____
babies?	_____

In order to provide for the inclusion in the curriculum of literature genuinely interesting to the students they were asked:

Which type of literature do you like to read best?
(Check only ONE):

short stories? _____
 novels? _____
 plays? _____
 poetry? _____
 essays? _____

The students were required to give a total of 47 judgements.

Provision was made also for the following information: name, sex, age, grade, name of school, name of teacher and homeroom number. To facilitate analysis, space was designated for the inclusion of the intelligence quotient and reading ability score for each student. This designated space was completed after the questionnaires had been collected.

A copy of this questionnaire may be found in Appendix B of this study.

Specific Literature Interest Questionnaire

This questionnaire was constructed by simply listing, in order, the titles of the selections in the grade nine literature textbook entitled Understanding Literature.⁹ This text was a new one which had just been introduced to the schools the preceding September and which has since been

⁹ Elizabeth White, Joan Wofford and Edward J. Gordon, eds., Understanding Literature (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1970).

adopted as the core of the grade nine literature program in Newfoundland. In addition to these selections the titles of the novels which were prescribed for the grade nine literature curriculum in the Newfoundland Department of Education Program of Studies 1971-72¹⁰ were also listed. There was a total of 83 selections.

While the directions for the students were a little lengthy, it was felt that it was necessary to assure the students that they were to rate the selections according to their own feelings and not as they thought their teachers might like them to rate the selections. They were told that the purpose of the study was "to help your teachers know what kinds of literature you are really interested in so that they can give you more of those sorts of things to read." They were asked, in addition, to rate not only those selections which they had read but also those which they had attempted to read. It was thought important to know the rating a student gave a selection which he had been thwarted from reading, either because he found it too dull or too difficult.

There were two main columns on the questionnaire under which the students rated the selections. One column rated the amount of interest a student had in the content of a selection, while the other rated the level of difficulty a student may have experienced in reading a

¹⁰ Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education. Program of Studies, 1971-72, Grades I-XI.

selection.

In rating the first column, titled "Level of Interest," students were asked to state how much they liked the content, form, or ideas in a story, poem, novel, play or essay. They were given three choices: "Interesting," "Neutral," and "Not Interesting." If they had not read that particular title, they were asked to check the "Not Read" column.

The second column on the questionnaire dealt with the level of reading difficulty of a selection and was titled "Level of Difficulty." The students were asked to rate the amount of difficulty they had experienced in reading a selection. Again they were given three choices: "Difficult," "Neutral" and "Not Difficult."

For every selection the students had read or attempted to read there were two checkmarks, one for "Level of Interest" and one for "Level of Difficulty." For those selections they had not read, they were required to place a checkmark in the "Not Read" column.

A copy of this questionnaire may be found in Appendix C.

III. PILOT STUDY

A pilot study on these questionnaires was carried out in a grade nine class in a junior high school in St. John's. The purposes of this study were:

1. To ascertain some of the difficulties students might encounter in rating selections and to make the appropriate adjustments.
2. To investigate some of the statistical procedures involved in the analysis of the data.
3. To develop a vehicle through which the test-retest method of determining the reliability of the questionnaires could be employed.

As a result of the pilot study, modifications were made to the physical appearance of the questionnaires so that students would know exactly where to place their checkmarks. Introductory remarks were also expanded and clarified.

IV. RELIABILITY

The reliability of the questionnaires was examined through the test-retest method. Three weeks after the initial administration of the questionnaires to the group used in the pilot study, the same group was asked to complete the same questionnaires for the second time.

General Topical Interest Questionnaire

The agreement of response between the first completion of the questionnaire and the second completion is represented in Table 3.1. The headings of the columns in this table represent the type of response the students made on the questionnaire. "Yes," "No" and "Don't Know" were

the responses students made to the question: "Do you like to read, or would you like to read, selections dealing with the following topics?"

TABLE 3.1

AGREEMENT OF RESPONSE ON THE GENERAL TOPICAL INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE: TEST-RETEST METHOD

Test 2	Test 1		
	Yes	No	Don't Know
Yes	272	41	34
No	33	96	14
Don't Know	39	41	59

A total of 629 pairs of answers was considered in this reliability study. Of these, 68 per cent were in total agreement, 20 per cent were in partial disagreement (i.e., varying between a "Don't Know" and a "Yes" or "No" response) and 12 per cent of the responses were in total disagreement.

Specific Literature Interest Questionnaire

The reliability of this questionnaire was considered in two sections: the responses given to the "Level of Interest" column and the responses given to the "Level of Difficulty" column were considered separately. Table 3.2 represents the agreement of responses for the "Level of Interest" column over two completions of the questionnaire. The headings of the columns in this table represent the type of response the students made on the questionnaire. "Interesting," "Neutral," "Not Interesting"

and "Not Read" were the ratings students assigned to the selections on the literature curriculum.

TABLE 3.2

AGREEMENT OF "LEVEL OF INTEREST" RESPONSES ON THE
SPECIFIC LITERATURE INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE:
TEST-RETEST METHOD

<u>Test 2</u>	<u>Test 1</u>			
	<u>Inter- esting</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Not Interesting</u>	<u>Not Read</u>
Interesting	268	51	9	41
Neutral	39	59	13	34
Not Interesting	20	18	17	15
Not Read	22	14	7	690

A total of 1,317 pairs of answers were considered in this section of the reliability study. Of these, 78.5 per cent were in total agreement, (i.e., the same response was given each time); 7.8 per cent were in partial agreement (i.e., varying between a "Neutral" and an "Interesting" or "Not Interesting" response); 6.8 per cent were in total disagreement (i.e., the response changed from "Interesting" to "Not Interesting" or vice versa, or it varied from giving a rating on Test 1 to saying the same selection was "not Read" in Test 2); and 6.8 per cent were in disagreement that could possibly be justified by the students having read a number of selections in the three weeks intervening between the test and the retest.

The agreement of response for the "Level of Difficulty" column over the two completions of the questionnaire is represented in Table 3.3. The headings of the columns in this table represent the type of response the students made on the questionnaire. "Difficult," "Neutral," and "Not Difficult" were the ratings students assigned to the level of difficulty of the selections in the text. If a selection had not been read, students were asked to check the "Not Read" column.

TABLE 3.3

AGREEMENT OF "LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY" RESPONSES ON THE
SPECIFIC LITERATURE INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE:
 TEST-RETEST METHOD

Test 2	Test 1			
	Difficult	Neutral	Not Difficult	Not Read
Difficult	24	19	12	3
Neutral	22	81	56	45
Not Difficult	11	58	204	39
Not Read	8	22	13	690

A total of 1,307 pairs of answers were considered in this section of the reliability study. Of these, 76.4 per cent were in total agreement (i.e., the same response was given each time); 12.0 per cent were in partial agreement (i.e., varying between a "Neutral" and a "Difficult" or "Not Difficult" response); 5.0 per cent were in total disagreement (i.e., varying between "Difficult" and "Not Difficult" or vice versa or varying between expressing a

rating on Test 1 to saying the same selection was "Not Read" in Test 2); and 6.6 per cent were in disagreement that could possibly be justified by students having read a number of selections in the three weeks intervening between the test and the retest.

V. POPULATION

Justification of Grade Nine as the Population of the Study

Innumerable studies have shown that the peak of reading activity occurs in the junior high school. Wickens¹¹ has conducted investigations which reveal that junior high school students read 19 per cent more than senior high school students. Similarly, Anderson¹² has stated that the peak in reading activity occurs around age 13 and 14, the age at which students generally attend grade eight or nine.

¹¹A.R. Wickens, "A Survey of Current Reading Interests in Grade 7-9," Developing a Permanent Interest in Reading, ed. H.M. Robinson, Supplementary Educational Monographs, No. 84 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 60.

¹²E.M. Anderson, "A Study of Leisure Time Reading of Pupils in Junior High School," Elementary School Journal, Vol. 48 (1948), p. 259.

Master's theses by Leafe¹³ and Johnson¹⁴ and quoted by Bamman, Hogan and Greene, revealed that:

Apparently a peak in the amount of reading done is reached during the junior high school years. A steady decline in the number of books read is reported through the upper grades of the high school.¹⁵

In summaries of studies of children's reading interests, Stephenson,¹⁶ Witty and Kopel,¹⁷ and Lehman¹⁸ have stated that the peak of reading activity occurs in the junior high school years followed by a sharp decline. McKay, in a review of studies on age and children's interests, stated that:

Most studies of interest which treat the subject of age agree that a child's reading peak is generally reached during his junior high school years. Very few students do no reading at all in grades seven, eight and nine. Individual reading

¹³Ben Leafe, "A Summary of Reading Interests and Habits of High School Students in the Sacramento Area" (unpublished Master's thesis, Sacramento State College, 1958); cited by Bamman, Hogan and Greene, Reading Instruction in the Secondary Schools, op. cit., p. 57.

¹⁴D. Tobias Johnson, "A Study of the Reading Interests of Seventh and Eighth Grade Pupils in the Arden-Carmichael Union School District of Sacramento County, California" (unpublished Master's thesis, Sacramento State College, 1958); cited by Bamman, Hogan and Greene, Reading Instruction in the Secondary Schools, op. cit., p. 57.

¹⁵Bamman, Hogan and Greene, Reading Instruction in the Secondary Schools, op. cit., p. 58.

¹⁶Stephenson, op. cit., p. 1.

¹⁷Witty and Kopel, op. cit., p. 28.

¹⁸Lehman, op. cit., pp. 357-364.

increases during the middle and upper grades then begins to decrease in ninth grade.¹⁹

Even as early as 1907, it was noted by Smith²⁰ that there was a marked decrease in the amount of reading done by students after completion of junior high grades. Terman and Lima²¹ placed the peak of reading activity as occurring at ages 12 and 13. McKay, again in a review of over 300 studies of children's reading interests, stated rather emphatically that "no study showing continuous high interest in book reading during high school could be unearthed."²² He summarized three reasons for this decline in reading activity, attributing the development of these reasons to Park:²³

- 1) social pressures which force students into other activities;
- 2) no prestige or recognition for reading books;
- 3) through maturation, many students outgrow their interest in a particular type of story and being unable to find a replacement, lose interest in reading.

¹⁹McKay, op. cit., p. 190.

²⁰F.O. Smith, "Pupil's Voluntary Reading," Pedagogical Seminary, Vol. 14 (1907), pp. 208-222; cited by McKay, op. cit., p. 226.

²¹L. Terman, and M. Lima, Children's Reading (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1925), cited by McKay, op. cit., p. 227.

²²McKay, op. cit., p. 227.

²³W.J. Park, "Achieving Personal Maturity Through Reading by Developing an Interest in Reading"; cited by J.A. Figurel (ed.) New Frontiers in Reading, IRA Conference Proceedings (New York: Scholastic Magazines, 1960), pp. 87-91.

In Newfoundland, a thesis by Kennedy has revealed that the Newfoundland school dropout rate reaches its maximum at the grade nine level;²⁴ and Brett, in a Master's thesis on the reading interests of grade nine students in central Newfoundland, stated that the Newfoundland Department of Education has suggested a relationship between school dropouts and weakness in reading.²⁵ An analysis of the impact of the literature program in grade nine might prove helpful in a study of this problem.

Nature of the Population

The population of the main study consisted of the grade nine students under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic School Board for the Burin Peninsula. Students who had incomplete questionnaires or who had not completed both questionnaires or for whom IQ and reading ability scores were not available were eliminated from the study. The resultant population consisted of 209 students.

VI. COLLECTION OF DATA

Both questionnaires were administered to the population by the investigator in the students' classrooms with

²⁴Sister Mary Perpetua Kennedy, A Critical Analysis of the Dropout Problem in the Province of Newfoundland over the Ten Year Period 1954-1964 (unpublished Master's thesis Catholic University of America, 1966), p. 64.

²⁵Brett, op. cit., p. 37.

the assistance of the classroom teachers. Testing the complete population was carried out over a span of three and one-half days. Administration time was generally between 20 and 30 minutes. Students completed the General Topical Interest Questionnaire first and then the Specific Literature Interest Questionnaire. In completing the latter, students were permitted to open their textbooks in order to refresh their memories about any selection they might have forgotten.

VII. QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was designed to answer four main questions:

Question 1: What are the general reading interests of the grade nine students under investigation?

To ascertain the types of literature that the students like to read, they were administered the General Topical Interest Questionnaire. The categories on this questionnaire were divided into five major divisions. Items 1-20 were classed fiction; items 21-36 as non-fiction; items 37-40 as poetry; items 41-46 as types of characters; and item 47 as types of literary forms. Students were required to respond "Yes," or "No," or "Don't Know" to each individual category. In the analysis of the responses provision was also made for students who had not responded to individual categories.

The program designed to analyze this data expressed the number of "Yes," "No" and "Don't Know" responses to each category as a percentage of 209--the number in the total population. The responses to the categories were ranked by the investigator within each of the five major divisions according to the number of "Yes" responses. This information was presented in table form.

Question 2: How do the interests expressed by students' responses on the General Topical Interest Questionnaire relate to the types of selections that are included in the text?

In order to ascertain if there was any comparison between the interests as expressed by the students and the types of selections presented in the text, the selections in the text had to be classified according to the categorizations listed in the General Topical Interest Questionnaire. A group of eight teachers carried out this classification. All of the teachers in this group were using or had recently used the text under investigation in their classrooms. Each member of the group of eight held at least one Bachelor's degree, five held two degrees, and three held Master's degrees. Their number of years of teaching experience varied from five years to 16 years, the mean being 9.75 years. The number of years in which the group had been involved directly with the teaching of grade nine literature ranged from one to seven, the mean being 2.75 years.

The teachers were given a list of the titles of the selections in the text Understanding Literature²⁶ and were asked to place each selection in one or two of the categories on the General Topical Interest Questionnaire. If they were not familiar with a selection they were asked to state "No Opinion" after its title.

Each selection was assigned the category or categories attributed to it by the teachers. If all or all but one of the teachers had expressed no opinion about a selection because they were not familiar with it, the selection was categorized by the investigator, an experienced grade nine teacher, assisted by information given in the teacher's manual which accompanies the text.

The individual classifications of the selections in the text may be found in Appendix D.

Because some selections were assigned a multiple of categories, some assigned by more teachers than others, and because teachers often varied in their opinions as to which category was most appropriate for an individual selection, a system of weighting teachers' choices was developed.

Each of the categories on the General Topical Interest Questionnaire was assigned a fraction which represented the ratio of student "Yes" responses to that category over the total possible number of "Yes" responses--209. This fraction is r_j for each of j categories. In turn, these

²⁶White et al., op. cit.

values were weighted in accordance with teachers' judgements of selection category. The weighting process is represented in the formula:

$$\text{Individual Selection Interest Rating} = \frac{\sum_j n_{ij} r_j}{\sum_j n_j}$$

where n_{ij} equals the number of times a teacher rated selection i as belonging to category j , and r_j is the "popularity" of category j .

For example, the "Cask of Amontillado," the first selection in the book, was rated as a horror story by five teachers and also as a mystery story by six teachers. The r_j 's were $\frac{142}{209}$ for "horror" and $\frac{163}{209}$ for "mystery." Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Individual Selection Interest Rating} &= \frac{\Sigma [(5 \cdot \frac{142}{209}) + (6 \cdot \frac{163}{209})]}{11} \\ &= \frac{153.45}{209} \\ &= 0.73 \end{aligned}$$

The interest rating for each section in the text was found by calculating the average individual interest rating for the selections in that section.

Question 3: How is interest in the major sections of the text (short stories, poetry, essays, plays, mythology) and assigned novels affected by the sex, age, reading ability and intelligence of the students?

To determine the effect of these factors on students' interests, the students were asked to complete the

Specific Literature Interest Questionnaire. They were asked to rate each selection in terms of its level of interest. They were asked to check one of "Interesting," "Neutral," or "Not Interesting" for each selection they had read. They were asked to respond "Not Read" if they had not read a particular selection.

The responses given on this questionnaire, together with the students' age, sex, intelligence and reading ability scores, were transferred to computer cards. There were five cards for each student, four to tabulate the responses on the Specific Literature Interest Questionnaire and one to represent the responses given on the General Topical Interest Questionnaire. There was a total of 1,045 data cards.

In the analysis of the data the responses to the selections were considered within the six major literary types represented in the curriculum. These types were: short stories, poetry, essays, plays, novels, and mythology. (The selections in the mythology section of the text were closely bound by theme and therefore treated collectively as one item on the questionnaire).

The responses to each of the groups of selections was considered first of all in terms of the number of students who had or had not actually read a number of selections in that group. This information was tallied by the computer and summarized and reported in table form by

the investigator.

The effect of the factors of age, sex, intelligence and reading ability was examined only for selections which had actually been read. It was felt that eliminating the "Not Read" responses from further analysis was the fairest way to assess the text because it was not known if the students or their English teachers had made the decision not to read certain selections.

The program designed to analyze the data treated each of the six major types of literature separately. The responses to each type were expressed by the computer as a function of the subgroups of age, sex, IQ and the reading ability of the students making the judgements. The investigator summarized the information given by computer and presented each literary type individually in a table which expressed the kinds of responses that students gave in terms of the subgroup of their age, sex, IQ and reading ability. Chi-square analysis was used to test the significance of the distribution of data on each of the tables.

Question 4: How is the level of difficulty of selections in the text, as perceived by the students, affected by their ability to read?

The purpose of this portion of the research was to determine if there was any relationship between a student's reading ability and the difficulty the student said he experienced in reading a selection.

Under the "Level of Difficulty" column on the Specific Literature Interest Questionnaire, the student was asked to rate the selections he had read as "Difficult," "Neutral" or "Not Difficult."

Students had previously been administered the Co-operative English Test: Reading Comprehension. Students' scores on this test had been converted into percentile ranks by Davis²⁷ and, in turn, these ranks were subdivided into three major groups for purposes of this study. The high reading ability group was composed of those students who scored at the sixty-sixth percentile or over. The middle group was formed of those who scored lower than the sixty-sixth but higher than the thirty-third percentile. The low group was composed of those students who scored lower than the thirty-third percentile. There were 36 students in the high group, 93 in the middle group, and 80 in the low group.

The selections on the questionnaire were considered within the major subdivisions of short stories, poetry, essays, plays, novels, and mythology.

The responses the students gave in the "Level of Difficulty" column for selections in the text were tallied and reported by the computer in terms of the reading ability of the students making the choices. The computer-given information was summarized by the investigator and expressed in table form. Chi-square analysis was conducted on individual sections of the table as a test of significance.

²⁷Davis, op. cit.

VIII. SUMMARY

After permission had been granted by the school board concerned to conduct research on the students and teachers under their jurisdiction, two questionnaires were formulated; one examined general reading interests and the other investigated the specific reading interests as they related to the selections in the literature program. Both questionnaires were tested for student comprehension, ease of administration and reliability in a pilot study in a junior high school. The population of the main study consisted of 209 grade nine students under the jurisdiction of the board concerned. Information regarding their intelligence quotient and reading ability was obtained from the research data of another Master's thesis which was conducted concurrently with this one. The resulting data of the General Topical Interest Questionnaire and the Specific Literature Interest Questionnaire were analyzed by computer and summarized in table form by the investigator.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This chapter discusses the findings of the analysis of the data. Each of the four major questions presented in Chapter 3 are discussed in turn.

I. QUESTION 1

What are the general reading interests of the grade nine students under investigation?

The responses to each item on the General Topical Interest Questionnaire are expressed in percentages of the number of students who responded to that item--209. Each of the five major sections of the questionnaire (fiction, non-fiction, poetry, types of characters and types of literary forms) are discussed separately.

The categories are rank ordered according to the number of positive responses received by that item.

The rank order of the number of positive responses received by items in the fiction and non-fiction sections of the questionnaire appears in Table 4.1 which follows.

Fiction

The item which received the highest percentage of positive responses was humour. It was liked by 90 per cent

TABLE 4.1

RANK ORDER OF POSITIVE RESPONSES ON FICTION AND NON-FICTION SECTIONS OF
GENERAL TOPICAL INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE. NUMBER OF STUDENTS: 209

Category	Percentage of Positive Responses	Rank	Category	Percentage of Positive Responses	Rank
Fiction			Non-Fiction		
Humour	90	1	Origin of Man	79.9	1
Adventure	83.3	2	Occup. & Careers	77.5	2
Mystery	78	3	Autobiography	76.1	3
Growing-up	76.1	4	Biography	73.7	4
Westerns	71.3	5	Outdoors	66.5	5
Horror	67.9	6	Personal & Social Adjustment	66	6
Romance	64	7	Social Problems	64.6	7
Supernatural	63.6	8	Hobbies & Handicrafts	64.1	8
Home Life	63.2	9	Self-Imp.	61.7	9
Foreign Lands	56.5	10	History	55	10
Science Fiction	53.6	11	Sports	50.2	11
Folk Stories	53.1	12	Science	49.3	12
Sentiment	51.7	13	Nature	46.4	13
Sea	51.2	14	Foreign Lands	42.6	14
Travel	51.2	15	Relig, or Philos.	35.4	15
Sports	48.8	16	Arts	23.9	16
Historical Fiction	47.4	17			
War	46.4	18			
Animals	34.9	19			
Mythology	33	20			

of the students completing the questionnaire. Humour was followed by adventure with 83.3 per cent positive responses, mystery with 78 per cent, growing-up with 76.1 per cent and westerns with 71.3 per cent. Selections which were liked by less than 70 per cent but more than 60 per cent of the students were those dealing with horror, romance, supernatural and home life. Slightly more than half said they enjoyed selections having to do with foreign lands, science fiction, folk stories, sentiment, the sea and travel. Less than half the students said they enjoyed literature about animals and mythology.

Non-Fiction

The item which received the highest percentage of positive responses on this section of the questionnaire was the origin of man, receiving 79.9 per cent positive responses. Other items which received at least 70 per cent "Yes" responses were the three topics of occupations and careers, autobiography, and biography. The category of the outdoors received 66.5 per cent "Yes" responses and the category of personal and social adjustment followed close behind with 66 per cent "Yes" responses. The two categories of social problems, and hobbies and handicrafts were topics enjoyed by approximately 64 per cent, while slightly more than half the students surveyed enjoyed reading about the categories of history and sports. Less than half the students said they enjoyed reading about the three topics of science,

nature, and foreign lands. Thirty-five decimal four per cent of the students said they liked reading about the topic of religion or philosophy and 23.9 per cent said they enjoyed reading about the arts.

Poetry

The most popular type of poetry was the nonsense or funny poem which 83.3 per cent of the students said they enjoyed. Sixty-two decimal seven per cent of the students responded that they liked to read story poems and 60.8 per cent gave a positive response to nature poems. Descriptive poetry received a "Yes" response from 57.4 per cent of the students.

Types of Characters

The type of character that boys liked to read about most was teenaged boys; this category received 86 per cent "Yes" responses. Eighty-three per cent of the boys said they liked to read about men. Seventy-eight per cent said they liked to read about teenaged girls and 70 per cent said they liked to read about women. Stories about children and babies were not popular with the boys; these categories drew 23 per cent and 15 per cent positive responses, respectively.

In contrast to the boys, girls preferred to read about teenaged girls. Ninety-eight per cent of the girls gave this category a positive response. Ninety-five per cent of the girls liked to read about teenaged boys.

Seventy-nine per cent liked women as a character type and 60 per cent liked men as a character type. Girls also liked to read about young children and babies, to which they responded, respectively, 58 and 56 per cent positively.

Types of Literary Forms

In this item on the questionnaire, students were asked to name the types of literature they liked best. Short stories received the highest ranking with 39.7 per cent of the students checking this category. Novels were preferred by 32.1 per cent, while 21.5 per cent liked plays best. Only 2.4 per cent of the students surveyed said they preferred poetry, and, similarly, only 2.4 per cent said they preferred essays. One decimal nine per cent of the students did not respond to this item.

II. QUESTION 2

How do the interests expressed by students on the General Topical Interest Questionnaire relate to the types of selections that are included in the text?

Each of the individual selections in the text was ascribed an individual interest rating as described in Chapter 3. An individual listing of these ratings may be found in Appendix D. The calculation of this number considered the students' expressed reading interests as well as teacher opinions about the nature of the content of the selections. This number represents the extent to which a

Poetry

The individual interest ratings in this section of the text ranged from a low of 0.57 for the poems "The Poet Speaks," "Sale Today," "This Morning," "In a Station in the Metro," and "Design," to a high of 0.90 for "Gamboling on the Gumbo." The high rating of the last poem is accounted for by its nonsense content. The average interest rating of the 46 poems in this unit was calculated to be 0.61.

While all four classifications of poetry (nonsense, story, nature and descriptive) were contained in various selections in the unit, humour, the type of poetry that students said they liked most, was contained in only four of the 46 selections in the unit.

Non-Fiction

The individual interest ratings in this section of the text ranged from 0.35 for "The Ethics of Biography" to 0.76 for "The Night the Ghost Got In." The average interest rating for the 13 selections in this unit was calculated to be 0.63.

According to the panel of teachers, the following categories were represented in the non-fiction selections: origin of man, philosophy, personal and social adjustment, self-improvement, social problems, autobiography, biography, foreign lands, and history.

There were several non-fictional categories listed on the General Topical Interest Questionnaire which were

selection contains material the students deemed interesting.

Short Stories

The individual interest ratings in this section of the text ranged from a low of 0.47 for "The Homecoming" to a high of 0.83 for both "The Open Window" and "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." The high rating of the latter two stories resulted from their humour, the interest category which received the highest rating on the General Topical Interest Questionnaire. The short story "Flight" received an interest rating of 0.80. This rating resulted because it deals with the topics of adventure and growing-up. The average interest rating of the 14 stories in this unit was calculated to be 0.68.

The teachers classified the various stories in this unit as containing elements of mystery, adventure, horror, supernatural, humour, war, foreign lands, historical fiction, home life, sentiment, and growing-up. The exact teacher allocation of the stories to the categories is found in Appendix D.

There were several fictional categories listed on the General Topical Interest Questionnaire which were not represented in the short stories of the text, according to the classifications assigned by the panel of teachers. These were, in rank order of their popularity: westerns, romance, science fiction, folk stories, sea, travel, sports, animals, and mythology.

not presented in the non-fiction section of the text, according to the classifications assigned by the panel of teachers. These were, in rank order of their popularity: occupations and careers, outdoors, hobbies and handicrafts, sports, science, nature, and the arts.

Drama

There were three plays contained in this section of the text. The individual interest rating for The Diary of Anne Frank was calculated to be 0.64; for The Miracle Worker, 0.67; and for The Life of Henry Fifth, 0.55.

According to the panel of teachers, these plays contained both fictional and non-fictional elements. The categories they assigned to these selections included: romance, war, growing-up, philosophy, personal and social adjustment, biography, and history.

The average individual interest rating for the three selections in this unit was calculated to be 0.62.

Novels

The individual interest ratings of the selections in this section of the curriculum ranged from 0.52 for The Snow Goose to 0.83 for both Prester John and Flight Into Danger. The high rating of the latter two selections results from their high adventure content. The Pearl received an interest rating of 0.72. The average interest rating of the six novels on the curriculum was calculated to be 0.69.

The panel of teachers classified the various novels as containing elements of the following categories: adventure, war, home life, sentiment, growing-up and folk stories.

Mythology

Because the selections in this unit were so closely bound by theme, the selections were not analyzed individually but considered as a whole unit. The interest rating ascribed to this unit was 0.33. This rating resulted from the low number of positive student responses to the category of mythology on the General Topical Interest Questionnaire.

III. QUESTION 3

How is interest in the major sections of the curriculum (short stories, poetry, non-fiction, plays, novels, and mythology) affected by the sex, age, reading ability and intelligence of the students?

When the students answered the questionnaire, they indicated whether or not they had read each selection in the text. Only the responses which indicated that the students had actually read a specific selection were analyzed in this study. It was not thought necessary to analyze the number of selections that were not read for two reasons:

1. The book was a new one at the time of data collection. It was being used in some schools in the study in

conjunction with an older edition and the time limitations of the school year might have made it impossible for teachers and/or students to have read all the material.

2. It was not known for what other specific reason the selection had not been read. The decision could have been either teacher or student motivated.

The test of significance applied to each section of the table was that of chi-square. The associated probability of the chi-square was, in some cases, approximate. The level of significance which was deemed acceptable for the purpose of this study was 0.05.

Short Stories

The ratings given in the "Level of Interest" column to the 14 stories in the short story section of the text are presented in subgroups in Table 4.2.

Effect of sex. Boys and girls differed considerably in the ratings they gave the short stories. While 79.2 per cent of the girls' responses indicated that they found the stories they had read to be "Interesting," only 61.6 per cent of the boys' responses were "Interesting." There was a difference of 11.6 percentage points between the numbers of "Neutral" responses given by boys and girls, while almost twice as great a percentage of male responses as female responses were listed as "Not Interesting." Chi-square analysis conducted on this data shows these differences to be significant at the 0.01 level.

TABLE 4.2

RESPONSES TO THE LEVEL OF INTEREST OF FOURTEEN SHORT STORY SELECTIONS SUBGROUPED
ACCORDING TO AGE, SEX, IQ AND READING ABILITY

Subgroups	N	No. of Responses*	Interesting** (%)	Neutral (%)	Not Interesting (%)	χ^2	p
Sex							
Male	98	988	61.6	25.0	13.4	79.03	<0.01
Female	111	1,122	79.2	13.4	7.4		
Total		2,110					
Age							
Over 16	28	299	65.2	20.7	14.1	26.78	<0.01
16	46	453	64.2	23.0	12.8		
15	83	852	74.8	16.3	8.9		
14 yrs. & under	52	506	74.1	18.2	7.7		
Total		2,110					
IQ							
Over 115	14	127	63.0	23.6	13.4	7.21	<0.40
101-115	61	597	70.9	19.9	9.2		
86-100	98	1,007	70.5	18.6	10.9		
85 & less	36	379	75.2	16.1	8.7		
Total		2,110					
Reading Ability							
High	36	360	75.8	15.8	8.4	13.44	<0.01
Middle	93	952	68.4	19.1	12.5		
Low	80	798	71.9	19.8	8.3		
Total		2,110					

*Number of ratings given to selections which had actually been read.

**Percentage cumulate horizontally to 100.

Effect of age. While the students in the two groups 16 years of age and over made approximately the same percentage of "Interesting" responses, there was a difference of approximately 10 percentage points between these two groups and the two groups whose ages were 15 and 14 years and under. In the "Neutral" category, the responses ranged from 16.3 per cent for the 15 year age group to 23 per cent for the 16 year age group. The percentage of "Not Interesting" responses made by the "14 years and under" group was almost doubled by the "over 16" group. In fact, in all categories of responses, there appears to be a considerable difference in the responses of the students in the two older groups from the responses of the students in the two younger groups. Chi-square analysis shows that the distribution of data on this table is significant at the 0.01 level.

Effect of intelligence. The percentage of students within each IQ group who rated the short stories as "Interesting" ranged from 63.0 to 75.2. The groups in the average range of 86-115 differed little in their responses. There was a larger difference between these ratings and the ones given by students at the upper and lower ends of the intelligence scale. This difference in percentages is noticeable again in the "Neutral" column but is not as evident in the "Not Interesting" column. Chi-square analysis on this data shows that these differences are not significant at the 0.05 level.

Effect of reading ability. This table shows that the selections in the short story section held least interest for the middle reading group, who gave the highest percentage of "Not Interesting" responses and the lowest percentage of "Interesting" responses. The high reading group found 75.8 per cent of what they had read interesting and the low reading group marked 71.9 per cent of their responses in the same way. Both the high and the low group had similar percentages in the "Not Interesting" column. Chi-square analysis conducted on this section of the table showed the results to be significant at the 0.01 level.

Summary. The factors of sex, age and reading ability exerted a significant influence on the ratings given by students to selections in the short story section. The factor of IQ did not exert a significant effect upon these ratings.

Poetry

The ratings given the 46 poems in the poetry section of the text were analyzed in subgroups and the resulting data appear in Table 4.3.

Effect of sex. In rating the selections in the poetry unit of the text, the girls gave 15 per cent more of their responses as "Interesting" than the boys did. While 24.6 per cent of the boys' responses were "Not Interesting," only 14.1 per cent of the girls' responses fell in this column. Chi-square analysis conducted on this section of the table showed the results to be

TABLE 4.3

RESPONSES TO THE LEVEL OF INTEREST OF FORTY-SIX POETRY SELECTIONS: SUBGROUPED
ACCORDING TO AGE, SEX, IQ AND READING ABILITY

Subgroup	N	No. of Responses*	Interesting** (%)	Neutral (%)	Not Interesting (%)	χ^2	p
Sex							
Male	98	1,165	40.3	35.1	24.6	73.0	<0.01
Female	111	1,474	55.4	30.5	14.1		
Total	209	2,639					
Age							
Over 16	28	371	44.2	31.3	24.5	50.69	<0.01
16	46	516	44.6	39.7	15.7		
15	83	1,032	47.7	30.1	22.2		
14 yrs. & under	52	720	55.7	31.5	12.8		
Total	209	2,639					
Intelligence							
Over 115	14	180	37.2	46.7	16.1	40.28	<0.01
101-115	61	741	48.7	32.9	18.4		
86-100	98	1,221	47.9	34.2	17.9		
85 & less	36	497	55.1	22.8	22.1		
Total	209	2,639					
Reading Ability							
High	36	545	53.2	29.5	17.3	27.43	<0.01
Middle	93	1,166	44.0	33.7	22.3		
Low	80	928	53.2	32.8	15.0		
Total	209	2,639					

*Number of ratings given to selections which had actually been read.

**Percentages cumulate horizontally to 100.

significant at the 0.01 level. This unit of poetry appears to be more appealing to the girls than to the boys, although it is not overly popular with either. The results on this section of the table were significant at the 0.01 level.

Effect of age. The poetry selections in the text appeared to become less popular as the age of the student increased. The percentage of "Interesting" responses varies from 44.2 for students over 16 to 55.7 for those students who are 14 years of age and under. The youngest age group also gave the lowest percentage of "Not Interesting" responses while the oldest group gave the highest. There appeared to be no definite upward or downward pattern in the percentages reported in the "Neutral" column. Chi-square analysis on this section of the table showed that the results were significant at the 0.01 level. The poetry unit appears to be more appealing to the younger student than to the older one.

Effect of intelligence. An examination of this section of the table shows that the responses of students in the two IQ groups, 86-100 and 101-115, varied little in the proportion of checkmarks assigned to each of the three columns: Interesting, Neutral and Not Interesting. There is a more notable difference, however, between the responses of these two groups and the groups at the upper and lower limits of the intelligence scale. The responses of the students whose IQ was over 115 varied at least 10 per cent

from the responses of the two IQ groups immediately below it on the table for the categories of "Interesting" and "Neutral." The difference is only approximately 2 per cent for the "Not Interesting" column. The students with the lowest intelligence scores were the ones who found the poetry most interesting. However, this group also gave the highest percentage of "Not Interesting" responses. The other three groups rated a far greater proportion of selections as being "Neutral." Chi-square analysis was calculated on this section of the table and revealed that the results were significant at the 0.01 level.

Effect of reading ability. The students in the high and low reading groups gave fairly similar types of responses in the three categories of the questionnaire. The selections in this section of the text appealed the least to the middle group. The number of their "Interesting" responses fell 8.8 percentage points behind the other two groups and their percentage of "Not Interesting" responses were 5.0 and 7.3 points higher than the high and low groups respectively. Chi-square analysis on this section of the data showed that the results were significant at the 0.01 level.

Summary. All four of the factors of sex, age, IQ and reading ability had a significant effect upon the ratings students made of the selections in the poetry section of the text.

Non-Fiction

The ratings given the 13 selections in the non-fiction section was also subgrouped and analyzed. The data appears in Table 4.4.

Effect of sex. The ratings given to selections in this section were affected by the sex of the student doing the ratings. There was a significant difference in the types of ratings given by boys and girls. The non-fiction appeared to be more interesting to the girls than to the boys, for the girls gave 75.4 per cent of their responses as "Interesting" while 63.8 per cent of the boys checked this column. Both boys and girls were very similar in the percentage of selections found to be "Not Interesting." The boys gave more "Neutral" responses than the girls, for 28 per cent of their responses were in this column while only 16.9 per cent of the girls' responses were in this category. Chi-square analysis revealed the results were significant at the 0.01 level.

Effect of age. Students in the four different age groups expressed similar proportions of opinion about the selections in the non-fiction section. In each of the "Interesting" and "Neutral" columns the range of percentages was less than 5 per cent. The proportion of responses given in each of these two columns by students in all four age groups was very similar. In the "Not Interesting" column the range was only 2.6 per cent between the highest and

TABLE 4.4

RESPONSES TO THE LEVEL OF INTEREST OF THIRTEEN NON-FICTION SELECTIONS:
SUBGROUPED ACCORDING TO AGE, SEX, IQ AND READING ABILITY

Subgroup	N	No. of Responses*	Interesting** (%)	Neutral (%)	Non-Interesting (%)	χ^2	p
Sex							
Male	98	378	63.8	28	8.2	14.39	<0.01
Female	111	390	75.4	16.9	7.7		
Total	209	768					
Age							
Over 16	28	126	69.9	23.8	6.3	3.34	<0.75
16	46	173	66.5	24.8	8.7		
15	83	301	72.8	19.6	7.6		
14 yrs. & under	52	168	67.3	23.8	8.9		
Total	209	768					
Intelligence							
Over 115	14	17	23.5	58.8	17.7	21.16	<0.01
101-115	61	205	70.2	22	7.8		
86-100	98	389	68.6	23.4	8.0		
85 & less	36	157	76.4	16.6	7.0		
Total	209	768					
Reading Ability							
High	36	158	77.9	17.7	4.4	9.97	<0.04
Middle	93	360	68.9	21.4	9.7		
Low	80	250	65.6	26.8	7.6		
Total	209	768					

*Number of responses given to selections which had actually been read.

**Percentages cumulate horizontally to 100.

lowest percentage of responses. Age appeared to have no significant effect upon the ratings expressed in this table. Chi-square analysis showed that the results were not significant at the 0.05 level.

Effect of intelligence. The ratings given by the students whose IQ was over 115 differed very noticeably from the ratings given by those in the other three groups. The students in the highest IQ group gave only 23.5 per cent of their responses as "Interesting," while those in the other three groups gave at least 68 per cent of their responses as "Interesting." The students in the highest IQ group gave 58.8 per cent of their responses as "Neutral," while the percentage of responses in this column of the other three groups varied from 16.6 per cent to 23.4 per cent. The highest IQ group also gave the highest percentage of "Not Interesting" responses. The responses of the two middle IQ groups, 86-100 and 101-115, varied from each other in each of the columns only in the range of 0.2 to 1.6 percentage points. The lowest IQ group gave the highest percentage of "Interesting" ratings, 76.4 per cent. Chi-square analysis revealed that these results were significant at the 0.01 level.

Effect of reading ability. The proportion of responses in the "Interesting" column revealed that the group of selections in the non-fiction section was more interesting to the students in the high reading ability

group who placed 77.9 per cent of their responses in this column. The middle and low reading ability groups, respectively, placed 68.9 per cent and 65.6 per cent of their responses in this column. The low reading ability group had the highest proportion of "Neutral" responses while the middle reading group gave the highest proportion of "Not Interesting" responses. Chi-square analysis conducted on this section of the table revealed that the results were significant at the 0.04 level.

Summary. The factors of sex, intelligence and reading ability had a significant influence upon the ratings given by students to the non-fiction section of the book. No effect was exerted by the factor of age.

Plays

The ratings given the three plays were broken down into subgroups. The data appears in Table 4.5.

Effect of sex. This unit appeared to have more appeal to the girls than to the boys. The girls gave nearly 90 per cent of their responses as "Interesting" while the boys gave only 73.5 per cent of their responses in this way. The percentage of girls' "Not Interesting" responses in the play category was approximately half of the percentage of boys' responses in this category. Chi-square analysis revealed that these results were significant at the 0.01 level.

TABLE 4.5

RESPONSES TO THE LEVEL OF INTEREST TO THREE PLAYS: SUBGROUPED ACCORDING TO AGE, SEX, IQ AND READING ABILITY

Subgroup	N	No. of Responses*	Interesting** (%)	Neutral (%)	Not Interesting (%)	χ^2	p
Sex							
Male	98	166	73.5	16.3	10.2	17.50	<0.01
Female	111	196	89.8	4.6	5.6		
Total	209	362					
Age							
Over 16	28	52	73.1	21.1	5.8	17.56	<0.01
16	46	79	77.2	13.9	8.9		
15	83	142	82.4	7.0	10.6		
14 yrs. & under	52	89	92.1	4.5	3.4		
Total	209	362					
Intelligence							
Over 115	14	15	80	6.7	13.3	4.06	<0.60
101-115	61	112	87.5	7.1	15.4		
86-100	98	173	79.2	12.1	8.7		
85 & less	36	62	82.3	9.7	8		
Total	209	362					
Reading Ability							
High	36	69	88.4	7.3	4.3	14.43	<0.01
Middle	93	167	77.8	9.0	13.2		
Low	80	126	84.9	12.7	2.4		
Total	209	362					

*Number of ratings given to selections which had actually been read.

**Percentages cumulate horizontally to 100.

Effect of age. It can be seen in this table that the percentage of responses in the "Interesting" column increased as the ages of the students decreased. It appears that the plays were most appealing to the students who were 14 years of age and younger. Although the 15 year old students gave 82.4 per cent of their responses as "Interesting," they were also the group who had the highest percentage of "Not Interesting" responses. The students 16 years and older were not as positive in their responses, and appeared to have less strong feelings about the plays, for they gave more of their responses as "Neutral" than the younger students did. Chi-square analysis computed on this table showed that the results were significant at the 0.01 level.

Effect of intelligence. There were no clear patterns of responses on this section of the table. There was, however, an unusually large difference in the percentage of responses for those students in the two IQ groups 86-100 and 101-115. The proportion of responses for these two groups on Tables 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 were similar; however, for the drama section of the text, there was a large discrepancy between the two groups. In the "Interesting" column the proportion of responses varied by 8.3 percentage points and in the "Not Interesting" column, they varied by 6.7 points. Chi-square analysis revealed that the results on this section of the table were not significant at the 0.05 level.

Effect of reading ability. This drama unit appears to appeal more to the high and low reading groups than it does to the middle group. The middle group also responded with the highest number of "Not Interesting" ratings. A test of significance applied to this data revealed that the results were significant at the 0.01 level.

Summary. The interest ratings given to the three plays in the drama section of the text were significantly affected by the factors of sex, age and reading ability. They were not significantly affected by the factor of intelligence.

Novels

The breakdown of responses given to the six novels presented on the questionnaire appears in Table 4.6.

Effect of sex. In rating the selections in the novel section of the questionnaire, the females gave 90.7 per cent "Interesting" responses while 79.6 per cent of the males' responses were in this category. The percentage of male responses in the "Neutral" and "Not Interesting" columns was twice that of the female responses. Chi-square analysis conducted on this section of the table showed the results to be significant at the 0.01 level.

Effect of age. This group of novels held the most appeal for students who were 15 years of age and younger. Its interest diminished as the students' ages increased.

TABLE 4.6

RESPONSES TO THE LEVEL OF INTEREST OF SIX NOVELS: SUBGROUPED ACCORDING
TO AGE, SEX, IQ AND READING ABILITY

Subgroup	N	No. of Responses*	Interesting** (%)	Neutral (%)	Not Interesting (%)	χ^2	p
Sex							
Male	98	196	79.6	10.2	10.2	18.4	<0.01
Female	111	194	90.7	5.2	4.1		
Total	209	390					
Age							
Over 16	28	71	67.6	15.5	16.9	28.22	<0.01
16	46	81	80.2	9.9	9.9		
15	83	141	92.2	4.3	3.5		
14 yrs. & under	52	97	91.8	5.2	3.0		
Total	209	390					
Intelligence							
Over 115	14	30	83.3	16.7	0	8.46	<0.25
101-115	61	113	87.6	7.1	5.3		
86-100	98	180	83.3	6.7	10.0		
85 & less	36	67	86.6	7.5	5.9		
Total	209	390					
Reading Ability							
High	36	77	89.6	9.1	1.3	7.29	<0.30
Middle	93	173	83.2	6.4	10.4		
Low	80	140	85.0	8.6	6.4		
Total	209	390					

*Number of responses given to selections which had actually been read.

**Percentages cumulate horizontally to 100.

TABLE 4.7

RESPONSES TO THE LEVEL OF INTEREST OF THE UNIT ON MYTHOLOGY: SUBGROUPED
ACCORDING TO AGE, SEX, IQ AND READING ABILITY

Subgroup	N	No. of Responses*	Interesting** (%)	Neutral (%)	Not Interesting (%)	χ^2	p
Sex							
Male	98	65	52.3	18.5	29.2	0.5	0.78
Female	111	64	46.9	18.8	34.3		
Total	209	129					
Age							
Over 16	28	19	36.8	26.3	36.8	3.9	0.71
16	46	28	50.0	17.9	32.1		
15	83	57	47.4	17.5	35.1		
14 yrs. & under	52	25	64.0	16.0	20.0		
Total	209	129					
Intelligence							
101-115 & over	75	41	58.5	22.0	19.5	8.58	0.08
86-100	98	71	43.6	14.1	42.3		
85 & less	36	17	52.9	29.4	17.7		
Total	209	129					
Reading Ability							
High	36	20	55.0	10.0	35.0	1.43	0.84
Middle	93	65	50.8	18.5	30.7		
Low	80	44	45.5	22.7	31.8		
Total	209	129					

* Number of responses given to selections which had actually been read.

** Percentages cumulate horizontally to 100.

affected by the factors of sex and age. They were not significantly affected by the factors of intelligence and reading ability.

Mythology

Because the unit on mythology in the text was so closely bound by theme, the students were asked to rate this unit as a whole. One hundred and twenty-nine students responded to this item on the questionnaire and the breakdown of their ratings appears in Table 4.7.

Effect of sex. Neither boys nor girls found this unit to be particularly interesting. The boys gave the percentage of "Interesting" ratings 52.3 per cent. However, boys and girls varied very little in their responses in the three columns. Chi-square analysis revealed that the results were not significant at the 0.05 level.

Effect of age. This unit appeared to have been similarly appealing to the students who were 15 and 16 years of age. The youngest group gave the highest percentage of "Interesting" responses and the lowest percentage of "Not Interesting" ratings. Students in the oldest group found the unit least interesting and most uninteresting but they also gave the highest percentage of "Neutral" ratings. Chi-square analysis, however, indicated that the results as expressed on the table were not significant at the 0.05 level.

This trend was also apparent in the decreasing percentage of responses given in the "Not Interesting" column. The results in this section of the table were significant at the 0.01 level.

Effect of intelligence. All four intelligence groups placed at least 83.3 per cent of their responses for the novel section of the curriculum in the "Interesting" column. None of the students whose IQ was over 115 found any of the novels they had read to be uninteresting. This group gave the highest proportion of "Neutral" responses--16.7 per cent. The highest percentage of "Not Interesting" ratings--10.0 per cent--was given by students whose IQ ranged from 86-100. In most other respects, the group responded similarly. Chi-square analysis conducted on this section of the table showed that the results were not significant at the 0.05 level.

Effect of reading ability. This unit of novels appears to be slightly less interesting to the middle reading ability group than to the other two groups. The high reading ability students appeared to be most interested in the novels; however, the differences between the ratings given by all three groups were not found to be significant at the 0.05 level, using chi-square analysis.

Summary. The ratings given by the students to the six novels listed on the questionnaire were significantly

Effect of intelligence. Because the number of responses for the high IQ group was too low to be validly analyzed, the number of responses for the two highest IQ groups was combined.

The highest and lowest IQ groups gave similar proportions of responses to this unit. Over half of the students in each of these groups found the unit to be interesting; on the average, 18 per cent of the responses of these two groups were "Not Interesting" and the remainder were "Neutral." The low average intelligence group were evenly divided in their opinions on the level of interest of this unit. Using chi-square analysis, the data in this section of the table was not shown to be significant at the 0.05 level.

Effect of reading ability. This unit appeared to appeal more to the high reading level group than to the low group. The high group placed 55 per cent of their responses in the "Interesting" column while 45.5 per cent of the responses of the low reading group were "Interesting." The middle reading group had the lowest proportion of "Not Interesting" responses--30.7 per cent. Chi-square analysis conducted on this section of the table showed that the results were not significant at the 0.05 level.

Summary. The ratings given by the students to the unit on mythology were not significantly affected by the factors of age, sex, intelligence or reading ability,

although of these four, the factor which had most effect on the responses given on this item was that of intelligence.

IV. QUESTION 4

How is the level of difficulty of selections in the text, as perceived by the students, affected by their ability to read?

The responses the students gave in the "Level of Difficulty" column about the selections in the text were analyzed according to the reading ability of the students doing the ratings. Each of the major divisions of the questionnaire (short stories, poetry, non-fiction, plays, novels, and mythology) were considered separately. This data is presented in Table 4.8.

In the short story section of the table, the proportion of responses for each of the three reading groups was similar, with at least 58 per cent of the responses listed as "Not Difficult." When chi-square analysis was conducted on this section of the table, the results were found to be significant at the 0.05 level.

In the poetry section of the table, there is a fairly large range of proportions of responses in both the "Neutral" and "Not Difficult" columns. In the "Neutral" column the percentages vary from 35.6 for the high reading group to 45.6 for the middle group. In the "Not Difficult" column the percentages vary from 39.3 for the low reading group to 51.2 for the high reading ability group.

TABLE 4.8

RESPONSES TO THE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY OF THE SIX SECTIONS OF THE CURRICULUM:
SUBGROUPED ACCORDING TO READING ABILITY

Section	Reading Ability*	N	No. of Responses**	Difficult*** (%)	Neutral (%)	Not Difficult (%)	χ^2	p
Short Stories	H	36	360	6	28.1	65.9	7.73	<0.10
	M	93	952	8	29.8	62.2		
	L	80	798	7.8	34.1	58.1		
Poetry	H	36	545	13.2	35.6	51.2	28.00	<0.01
	M	93	1,166	13	45.6	41.4		
	L	80	928	17.3	43.4	39.3		
Non-Fiction	H	36	158	3.8	28.5	67.7	7.79	<0.10
	M	93	360	8.1	28.9	63		
	L	80	250	8.4	35.2	56.4		
Plays	H	36	69	13	18.9	68.1	1.59	0.85
	M	93	167	13.8	19.1	67.1		
	L	80	126	11.9	24.6	63.5		
Novels	H	36	77	6.5	23.4	70.1	3.31	0.50
	M	93	173	9.2	23.7	67.1		
	L	80	140	12.1	27.9	60.0		
Mythology	H	36	20	50	30	20	1.87	0.75
	M	93	65	58.5	26.2	15.3		
	L	80	44	59.1	31.8	9.1		

*H = high; M = middle; L = low.

**Number of ratings given to selections which had actually been read.

***Percentages cumulate horizontally to 100.

Chi-square analysis conducted on this section of the table showed that the results were significant at the 0.01 level.

In the unit on non-fiction, it appeared that as the students' reading ability became higher, the less difficulty the student said he experienced in reading the selections in that unit. While 3.8 per cent of the responses of the high reading ability group were given in the "Difficult" column, 8.4 per cent of responses of the low reading ability group were given as "Difficult." While 67.7 per cent of the responses of the high reading ability group were given as "Not Difficult," 56.4 per cent of the responses of the low reading group were given as "Not Difficult." Chi-square analysis conducted on this section of the table showed that the results were not significant at the 0.05 level.

In rating the play section of the text, the responses of the high and middle reading ability groups were very similar. The low reading ability group had the lowest proportion of "Difficult" and "Not Difficult" responses but the highest proportion of "Neutral" responses. Chi-square analysis conducted on this section of the table did not show the results to be significant at the 0.05 level.

An average of 65 per cent of the students' responses to the novels were "Not Difficult." It appeared that the novels became easier to read as the reading ability of the students increased; however, chi-square analysis on the data distribution of this table showed that the results were not significant at the 0.05 level.

On the mythology section of the table, it was noted that the greater proportion of responses for all three reading ability groups fell in the "Difficult" column. The highest proportion of "Not Difficult" responses was given by the high reading ability group. Chi-square analysis conducted on this section of the table did not reveal that the results were significant at the 0.05 level.

Summary. Reading ability had a significant effect upon the ratings which students gave poetry. It had a lesser effect upon the ratings given to short stories and non-fiction and had no effect upon the ratings given to drama, novels, or mythology.

V. SUMMARY

A breakdown of the responses on the General Topical Interest Questionnaire revealed that the most liked types of fiction of the students surveyed were humour, adventure, and mystery. The types least liked were those having to do with war, animals, and mythology. The most favoured types of non-fiction were those dealing with the origin of man, occupations and careers, and autobiography. The types of non-fiction least liked were religion or philosophy, and the arts. In poetry, students liked nonsense or funny poems best, followed by story poems, nature poems, and descriptive poems. The types of characters preferred were teenaged boys and teenaged girls. The type of literature they liked best

was short stories, followed by novels and plays. Poetry and essays fell far behind.

An interest rating based on the average popularity of the individual selections on the curriculum was calculated for each of the major sections of the text. The interest rating for short stories was 0.68; poetry, 0.61; non-fiction, 0.63; drama, 0.62; novels, 0.69; and mythology, 0.33. These interest ratings represent the extent to which these units contain elements which students have deemed interesting.

A breakdown of the responses given on the Specific Literature Interest Questionnaire revealed that student interest in the selections in the short story, poetry, non-fiction, drama, and novel sections of the curriculum was significantly affected by the factor of sex. Sex was not a significant factor on the ratings given to the mythology unit of the text. Short stories, poetry, plays, and novels were affected significantly in their ratings by the factor of age. The poetry and non-fiction sections were significantly affected by the factor of intelligence. Reading ability was a significant factor in the ratings given to short stories, poetry, non-fiction, and plays.

The reading ability of the students had a significant effect (at the 0.05 level) only upon the ratings they gave the level of difficulty of the poetry section of the book. Reading ability had no significant effect upon the level of difficulty ratings given in the short stories,

non-fiction, drama, novels, and mythology sections of the curriculum.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter will discuss the conclusions and implications of the findings of the study. It will also make some recommendations.

I. QUESTION 1

What are the general reading interests of the grade nine students under investigation?

This study revealed that the grade nine students who were surveyed in the General Topical Interest Questionnaire held a wide variety of expressed reading interests. Those types of fiction which they said they liked to read were, in descending order: humour, adventure, mystery, growing-up, westerns, horror, romance, supernatural, home life, foreign lands, science fiction, folk stories, sentiment, sea, travel, sports, history, war, animals, and mythology.

In the non-fiction types of literature, their preferences were, in descending rank order: origin of man, occupations and careers, autobiography, outdoors, personal and social adjustment, social problems, hobbies and handicrafts, history, sports, science, nature, foreign lands,

religion or philosophy, and the arts.

In poetry, the students surveyed liked nonsense or funny poems best of all. This choice was followed by story poems, nature poems and descriptive poems, in that order.

When reading about types of people, the students' responses varied according to their sex. Boys preferred reading about teenaged boys, men, teenaged girls and women, in that order. Almost all girls liked reading about teenaged girls and teenaged boys. They also liked women as literary types, followed by men, young children and babies.

When asked to state the types of literature they liked to read best, the students' responses revealed that the short story was the most popular type of literature, followed by the novels and plays. As preferred types, poetry and the essay lagged far behind.

II. QUESTION 2

How do the interests expressed by students on the General Topical Interest Questionnaire relate to the types of selections that are included in the text?

Each of the selections in the text was assigned an individual interest rating. The calculation of this number considered the students' expressed reading interests as well as teacher opinions about the nature of the content of the selections. This number represents the extent to which a selection contains material the students deemed interesting. An interest rating for a unit of selections was found by

calculating the average of the interest ratings for individual selections in that unit.

The interest ratings of the individual sections of the text and assigned novels were found to be: short stories, 0.68; poetry, 0.61; non-fiction, 0.63; drama, 0.62; novels, 0.69; mythology, 0.33. These percentages can be interpreted as the extent to which a unit contains elements which students have deemed interesting.

It must be noted here, however, that this text contains more than enough material for a year's work. Those selections, therefore, that have not received a high interest rating may be bypassed for those selections that have.

III. QUESTION 3

How is interest in the major sections of the literature curriculum (short stories, poetry, non-fiction, plays, novels, and mythology) affected by the sex, age, intelligence, and reading ability of the students?

The factor of sex exerted a significant influence upon the ratings assigned by students to all of the major sections except mythology. In each of the other five sections, the selections offered were more appealing to the girls than to the boys.

The factor of age exerted a significant influence upon student ratings of the selections in the short story, poetry, drama, and novel units. In these units, there was a noticeable difference between the ratings given by the

older and the younger students. In these instances, it appeared that the older the student was, the less interest he had in the selections in the unit.

The factor of intelligence exerted a significant influence upon student ratings of the selections in the units of poetry and non-fiction. The students who had an IQ of over 115 were not as interested in these units as the students of lesser intelligence.

The factor of reading ability exerted a significant influence upon student ratings of the selections in the short story, poetry, non-fiction, and drama sections. In each of these sections, it was to the middle reading ability group that the selections held the least interest.

IV. QUESTION 4

How is the level of difficulty of selections in the text, as perceived by the students, affected by their ability to read?

Reading ability had a significant effect upon the ratings which students assigned to the level of difficulty of the poetry section of the text. It had a lesser effect upon the ratings given to short stories and non-fiction and it had no significant effect upon ratings given to the units on drama, novels or mythology.

For the units on poetry, short stories, and non-fiction, the higher the students' reading ability, the less difficulty the student experienced in reading the selections

in that unit.

V. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study seem to suggest that the text under investigation, Understanding Literature, needs to be supplemented by other materials that draw upon those areas which students expressed interest in, but which were not readily available to them in their program. While the text, in some of its units (short stories, non-fiction, drama), and the assigned novels, was fairly effective in meeting students' interests, two of the sections, notably poetry and mythology, did not receive a high percentage of positive ratings by the students surveyed. The poetry unit was judged interesting by approximately half of the students and only half judged it to be not difficult to read. The mythology unit was judged to be interesting by approximately half of the students surveyed and over half of the students who had read it found it difficult to read. These units need to be supplemented by material that students would find more appealing and less difficult to read. The Newfoundland Department of Education has recommended supplementary material and alternate texts, and it appears that teachers should take advantage of these materials in order to develop a well-rounded literature curriculum.

Of all the factors related to reading interests investigated, it appears that sex exerted the most influence upon student reading interests. Teachers and developers of

curriculum, therefore, ought to consider the possibilities of alternate choices of literary material for boys and girls in grade nine.

These educators should consider also that pupils who are older than average for grade nine do not appear to have the same literary interests as their younger classmates, and their interests need to be met by additional types of material.

Students of above average mental ability also need additional literary stimulation for the reading interests of these students are not satisfied by the material on the curriculum. This is particularly true of the poetry and non-fiction sections of the text. It was this group that gave these sections the lowest proportion of "Interesting" responses.

Further investigation is required to ascertain the reasons why the material in some sections of the text (short stories, poetry, drama, novels) is less appealing to the students in the middle ability reading group than it is to the high and low groups whose responses were fairly similar.

VII. SUMMARY

In summary, the most meaningful conclusions and suggestions this study can make are:

1. It is impossible for any text to contain all the types of material which students profess to like to read. However, there were many topics on the General Topical

Interest Questionnaire which received very high popularity ratings and which were scantily represented in the text. Literary material dealing with these topics could be chosen to supplement the present course material.

2. While in four of the major divisions of the curriculum--short stories, non-fiction, drama, and the novels--student interest runs fairly high, the units of poetry and mythology need consideration. It is recommended that a program of study for poetry begin with nonsense or funny poems, move to story poems and from there proceed to descriptive and nature poems. Since so many of the students found the mythology unit difficult to read, it is suggested that myths be studied, in the beginning, in simpler forms.

3. In selecting materials to awaken literary interest, educators are urged to make special concessions and choices for two groups of students: those who are above the average age level for grade nine and those of above average intelligence. Additional research on the specific interest of these two groups is needed.

4. Since the sex of the student is the greatest influence upon reading interest at the grade nine level, alternative choices of materials should be available for boys and girls.

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MARYSTOWN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

96

Marystown, Placentia Bay

Newfoundland

January 18, 1971

Dr. G. Murphy, Head
Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction
Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, Newfoundland

Dear Dr. Murphy:

We, at this school, are very interested in having testing programs conducted with our students. As these testing programs are not available to us or we do not have the personnel to administer them, we have a number of proposals to make to you and to your graduate students.

(1) If your department or your graduate students are conducting any testing program that requires qualified people to administer and to mark, we would be delighted to accommodate them at their convenience.

(2) If your department or your graduate students are conducting a testing program that we can administer, we will gladly co-operate in administering them and in returning the papers for marking, etc.

(3) We will also gladly co-operate with you in any other type of research work you or your students are conducting.

(4) In return for our co-operation, we would want a copy of score, percentiles, etc., for our own school records, so that we can better understand our pupils' problems and maybe do a better job of guiding them in the right direction.

We also ask you to pass this proposal on to the other graduate departments as we would do the same for them.

Yours truly,

(Sgd.) Wm. Patrick Walsh

WM. PATRICK WALSH
Principal.

APPENDIX A
CORRESPONDENCE

E. UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

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January 24, 1972.

Mr. Albert Dober, Superintendent,
Roman Catholic School Board
for Burin Peninsula,
P.O. Box 278,
Burin, Newfoundland.

Dear Sir:

We are three teachers who are working towards a Master of Education degree at Memorial University. Our field of specialization is English Language and Literature, Curriculum and Instruction at the secondary level. In our teaching experience we have considered the problem of reading at this level to be one of great concern. Consequently, we are attempting to write our theses on certain aspects of this problem.

We wonder if it would be possible for us to do some research on this area in your school district. Our research would consist of standardized tests administered to the students and questionnaires administered to the teachers, at no cost to your school board. Our data and conclusions will be made available to you and your staff as well as our recommendations which will be the products of discussion among you, your professional staff, our faculty advisors and ourselves.

If you are agreeable to our request, our findings will be of particular interest and use to your board because our population and sample will be drawn entirely from your school district.

Please inform us whether or not our proposal meets with your approval so that we may furnish you with more details relevant to the scope and depth of our research.

Thanking you for your consideration and trusting that your reply will be a favourable one, we remain,

Yours truly,

Horace Davice
Mauréen McDonald
Brian Shortall

ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD

for the

Burin Peninsula

Burin, Newfoundland

January 31, 1972

Mr. Horace Davis
Department of Curriculum & Instruction
Memorial University
St. John's
Nfld.

Dear Sir:

In reply to your letter dated January 20, 1972, this Office will gladly co-operate in the survey you, Maureen McDonald and Brian Shortall plan to do.

When details of your research project are known, I will make arrangements with the particular Schools for you.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd.) A.J. Dober

A.J. DOBER,
DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT.

APPENDIX B
GENERAL TOPICAL INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE

GENERAL TOPICAL INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: _____ MALE: _____ FEMALE: _____

AGE: _____ DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE

SCHOOL: _____

HOMEROOM TEACHER: _____ 1. (I.Q.) _____

HOMEROOM NUMBER: _____ 2. (R.A.) _____

Please answer the following questions as carefully as you can. Put your check mark under one of the headings on the right column.

DO YOU LIKE TO READ, OR WOULD YOU LIKE TO READ, SELECTIONS DEALING WITH THE FOLLOWING TOPICS?

(When the word 'story' is used below, it is meant to include any content which forms the basis for a prose selection: plays, novels, short stories, essays.)

FICTION:

Mystery: (stories about fictional persons who are trying to solve crimes or unexplainable events)

Adventure: (stories about fictional persons who perform daring deeds)

Romance: (stories about romantic love between fictional people)

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW

FICTION: (Continued)

Mythology: (stories dealing with the supernatural, almost religious beliefs of ancient peoples, Romans, Greeks, North American Indians)

Historical Fiction: (stories about persons or happenings of many years ago; for example, a make-believe story about a man or woman who lived in England three hundred years ago)

Home Life: (stories about problems and happenings which occur in fictional families)

Sentiment: (stories about emotional relationships between fictional characters (not romantic love); for example, a story about an attachment which grows between an old man and a small boy)

Growing Up: (stories about fictional persons who are trying to discover their values, to put direction in their lives; for example, a teenager trying to become an adult)

Folk Stories: (stories about fictional heroes or fairy tales which were usually made up by ordinary people and passed down from generation to generation mostly by word of mouth)

NON-FICTION:

Biography: (life stories of real men and women, written by other people)

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Mythology: (stories dealing with the supernatural, almost religious beliefs of ancient peoples, Romans, Greeks, North American Indians)			
Historical Fiction: (stories about persons or happenings of many years ago; for example, a make-believe story about a man or woman who lived in England three hundred years ago)			
Home Life: (stories about problems and happenings which occur in fictional families)			
Sentiment: (stories about emotional relationships between fictional characters (not romantic love); for example, a story about an attachment which grows between an old man and a small boy)			
Growing Up: (stories about fictional persons who are trying to discover their values, to put direction in their lives; for example, a teenager trying to become an adult)			
Folk Stories: (stories about fictional heroes or fairy tales which were usually made up by ordinary people and passed down from generation to generation mostly by word of mouth)			
Biography: (life stories of real men and women, written by other people)			

NON-FICTION: (Continued)

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Social Problems: (selections dealing with deprived, underprivileged; for example, the Negroes in the United States)			
Science: (selections dealing with invention and discovery in area like biology, medicine, machinery, space travel, mathematics)			
Arts: (selections dealing with description or criticism of art or music)			
Religion or Philosophy: (selections dealing with the process of developing value systems, finding out what acts are good and bad)			
Origin of Man: (selections dealing with descriptions of how man lived thousands of years ago; for example, the cave man and how he changed gradually into modern man)			
WHEN YOU READ POETRY, DO YOU LIKE TO READ: (Please rate <u>each</u> type of poetry)			
Nature poems?			
Story poems?			
Nonsense or funny poems?			
Descriptive poems? (for example, the way an author views a person, event, emotion or opinion)			
WHEN YOU READ A STORY, PLAY, NOVEL OR POEM ABOUT PEOPLE, DO YOU LIKE THOSE PEOPLE TO BE:			
Men?			
Women?			

APPENDIX C
SPECIFIC LITERATURE INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE
FOR GRADE NINE

SPECIFIC LITERATURE INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GRADE NINE

NAME: _____ MALE: _____ FEMALE: _____
 AGE: _____
 SCHOOL: _____ DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE
 HOMEROOM TEACHER: _____ 1. (I.Q.) _____
 HOMEROOM NUMBER: _____ 2. (R.A.) _____

TO BE STATED ORALLY BY THE INVESTIGATOR:

This questionnaire is designed to discover what portions of your literature books you like and what parts you don't like. Please rate the selections below as honestly as you can. Do not be afraid to say you found a story or play or poem, or novel uninteresting even though you know, perhaps, that your teacher likes that selection very much. The purpose of this study is to help your teachers know what kinds of literature you are really interested in so that they can give you more of those sorts of things to read.

There are two columns under which you must rate the selections. One measures the interest you had in a story, while the other measures the difficulty you may have experienced in reading a selection. When answering the questionnaire, RATE ALL THOSE SELECTIONS WHICH YOU HAVE READ OR ATTEMPTED TO READ. In checking the first column, titled "Level of Interest," you are asked to state how much you like the content, form or ideas in a story, poem, novel or

play. In other words, if you thought that the plot or characters in a particular story were good or if you enjoyed the rhythm, rhyme or ideas of a particular poem, check the column underneath the heading 'Interesting'. If you have no special feelings about a selection and think that it was neither good nor bad, check the 'Neutral' column. If you didn't like a selection and thought it dull and boring, check the 'Uninteresting' column. If you haven't read that particular story or poem or novel or play, check the 'Not Read' column.

On the questionnaire, there is also a column dealing with the level of reading difficulty of a selection. This column is titled "Level of Difficulty." If you found a story or poem or play difficult to read or understand, check the 'Difficult' column; if it was neither too easy nor too hard, check the 'Neutral' column, and if you thought it was easy to read and understand, check the 'Not Difficult' column.

For every selection you have read or attempted to read, therefore, you will have two checks--one for "Level of Interest," the other for "Level of Difficulty." For those selections which you have not read, there will be only one check--under the 'Not Read' column.

You may use your textbooks to refresh your memory about any selections you cannot recall.

	LEVEL OF INTEREST				LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY		
	Inter- esting	Neutral	Not Inter- esting	Not Read	Diffi- cult	Neutral	Not Diffi- cult
43. Biography							
44. V is for Victory, as you can plainly see							
45. Finis							
46. An Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog							
47. The Gray Squirrel							
48. "next to of course god america I							
49. The Umpire							
50. Eleven							
51. Their Lonely Betters							
52. Time, You Old Gypsy Man							
53. Limited							
54. En Route							
55. Polo Grounds							
56. Design							
57. Dark Girl							
58. Bells for John Whitesides Daughter							
59. "Out, Out-"							
60. David							
61. The Miracle of Language							

APPENDIX D
TEACHER CLASSIFICATION AND INDIVIDUAL INTEREST RATINGS
OF SELECTION ON THE GRADE IX LITERATURE CURRICULUM

LITERATURE CLASSIFICATION

	Fiction										Poetry				Non-Fiction							Individual Interest Rating							
	Mystery	Adventure	Romance	Horror	Supernatural	Humour	War	Foreign Lands	Mythology	Historical Fiction	Home Life	Sentiment	Growing-Up	Folk Stories	Nonsense	Story	Nature	Descriptive	Origin of Man	Philosophy	Personal & Social Adjustment		Self-Improvement	Social Problems	Autobiography	Biography	Foreign Lands	History	
72. Escape from Slavery	1																1					1	1						0.70
73. Frederick Douglass																	1												0.57
74. Diary of Anne Frank			1				3																						0.64
75. The Miracle Worker																													0.67
76. Life of Henry Fifth																													0.55
77. The Pearl		5					1					1	1	1									1						0.72
78. Prester John		2																											0.83
79. Captains Courageous		2																											0.69
80. Where Nests the Water Hen											1	1																	0.57
81. Snow Goose												1																	0.52
82. Flight into Danger		6																											0.83
83. Trojan War								3																					0.33

*The numbers in the columns represent the number of teachers who assigned that category to the selection in question.





