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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Catherine Cash Buck entitled "Young Readers Respond to International Children's Literature." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Teacher Education.

Colleen P. Gilrane, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Clara Lee Brown, Charles H. Hargis, Jinx Stapleton Watson

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Young Readers Respond
to International Children's Literature

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Education Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Catherine Cash Buck
May 2008

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DEDICATION

In memory of Leonard W. Cash and honor of Elizabeth Cash
My parents who set my feet on this path
with their dream of a college education for their children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have supported and encouraged me as I worked toward this degree. My committee members, Dr. Colleen Gilrane Dr. Jinx Watson, Dr. Clara Lee Brown, and Dr. Charles Hargis guided me throughout my work. Our meetings felt like friends sitting down to discuss books and ideas but they always moved me toward being a better researcher and writer. I am especially grateful for Colleen's friendship and counsel when I wrestled with difficult decisions in this project.

I am especially grateful to my husband, Ron, who believed all along I could accomplish this. He listened to me rehearse my many ideas, offered constructive criticism, and celebrated my milestones as I wrote. As my writing deadline approached, he took over the household cooking and cleaning to give me more time to devote to writing. His love and support are true blessings in my life.

Ron, we are finally a "paradox" because in Mallory's words: I am very done.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine readers' responses to international children's literature through the lens of reader response theory to examine how they created meaning. Seven ten-year old readers participated in this study. Data derived from transcripts of videotapes of the twelve book club sessions and individual interviews, post-it notes participants made in their books, and journal entries chronicled their interaction with story events outside the realm of their cultural experience.

The transcript data indicated the readers used their experiences, their world knowledge world, and a variety of other texts to create meaning. They constructed synthetic scenarios to interpret of story motives and events or to solve conflicts in the story. The readers wondered about the narrative setting, evaluated characters' motives and actions, showed empathy for characters, and expressed their motivation to engage in further reading about the characters or culture. The readers acknowledged ways they wrestled with narrative styles, language, and unfamiliar cultural practices or events.

This study shows the potential of international children's literature for engaging students in reading good literature and developing their awareness of other cultures. Some implications for teachers are: select appropriate global texts by considering the reading level, the narrative style and the cultural load; encourage wide reading and writing experiences to strengthen readers' interpretive base; promote literate behaviors through authentic reading experiences and safe havens for reading where students can respond in multiple ways to a text. The study points to the need for teachers to develop responsive, classrooms where different views are tolerated, the importance of valuing the inquiry process, and social construction of knowledge.

Data showed that even with limited knowledge about the cultural background, the readers were able to derive a meaningful interpretation for the texts. More studies need to examine how young readers read and interpret these texts to use them effectively.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Stories tend to present characters as living and breathing individuals, not as faceless masses of people. When students engage in reading multicultural literature, it not enough to know about others from the perspective of the students' own culture because the literature of a country is the literature of men and women within its borders. The text becomes an aesthetic object and a cultural document, recording the legacy of an individual and the person's group. (Jordan & Purves, 1990, in Louie, 2005)

The students in our classrooms today are citizens of a global society even if they live in the most remote area of America. Our world is shrinking because of global communications, technology and increased mobility. Satellite signals relay real time images of events occurring on the other side of the world into our homes, schools, and places of business. It is vital for children, tomorrow's decision makers, to develop understanding, acceptance, and empathy for people of other cultures. As future decision makers, they need to understand the interdependency of all countries and how events in one country affect others far beyond its geographical borders.

The challenge is to help children to understand someone from a diverse culture living on the other side of the world. A few may actually be able to travel to distant lands and experience the wonders they possess but they will still only come away with a tourist's view, a surface understanding of the culture. Tourists often visit only sites that are promoted by the tourist industry, which may present stereotypical roles and ideas of cultures. For example, foreign visitors to the United States may believe that Americans live in apartments in large, bustling cities if their visit is to New York. This is a skewed view since a significant number of Americans reside and work in suburban or rural areas.

Understanding a foreign culture requires more than knowledge about its topography and traditional cultures. To understand a culture in a significant way you have to identify with its people, see the world through their eyes and understand the intricacies of social order that dictate their relationships with each other and the world. One possible approach for promoting cultural understanding is through reading stories that provide an authentic view of a culture, its people, and their perspective through the lens of a native author. Susan Stan (1999) contends a book “creates a personal relationship with a place not possible through a text book or television encounter.” She cites Hazard, who describes a book as “a messenger that goes beyond mountains and rivers, beyond the seas, to the very ends of the world in search of new friendships” (p. 169). In convincingly written narratives we become friends with characters whose way of life we would never be able to experience for ourselves.

International children’s literature is one vehicle for vicariously encountering other cultures. According to Stan (2002) in *The World Through Children’s Books*, international children’s literature is a category of books for children that are written and published in countries other than the United States or books that may be published in the United States but are set in another country. This category includes books such as *Bare Hands* (1998), by Bart Moyeyaert that was translated into English from Dutch, as well as *Le Petit Prince* (1971) by Antoine de Saint Exupery, which was published in the United States in its original French. It also encompasses books, such as the *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling, written in English by British or Australian authors and first published in the country of their origin. Still other books, for example *Shiva’s Fire* (2000) by Suzanne

Fisher Staples and *Red Scarf Girl* by Ji-Li Jiang (1997), were initially published in America yet accurately depict foreign cultures and events.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Reading is a process by which readers make meaning from texts. During the act of reading many complex procedures occur in the mind of the reader, but in isolation none of these procedures would result in an understanding of the ideas contained in the written passage. For much of the 20th century an ongoing debate within the field of literary criticism wrestled with the question: How is meaning derived from a narrative? A variety of answers were offered. They ranged from theories that based meaning solely upon authorial intention in the text (Hirsch, 1976) to the theory of Stanley Fish (1980) where meaning resided wholly in the mind of the reader. The theory of Louise Rosenblatt (1978) describes reading as a transaction between the reader and the text where the reader carries on an internal dialog with the written word that includes the reader's prior experiences, her knowledge related to the text, cultural lens, and language facility. Through this internal dialog or thought process the reader comes to negotiate a personal meaning for the text. The same text may be assigned a different meaning when read by another reader who brings a different set of experiences, knowledge and language ability to the text. In this model of reading, the creation of meaning is subjective because the resulting interpretation is dependent upon what the reader brings to the text.

This description of the reading process becomes potentially problematic when applied to the reading of international children's literature. Since the literature was originally intended for readers of the author's native culture, the author's anticipated reader brings similar cultural understandings and prior knowledge to the text, which

would make the creation of meaning an easier task for that reader. When the text is translated and published in another country, the reader who encounters the text there views it through the lens of his/her own culture, experiences, and knowledge or lack of knowledge about the culture of origin. This difference in background knowledge does not nullify the meaning created by a reader from another culture. The reader from another culture employs different cultural understandings, values, and experiences to create a meaning for the text that is unique for her. That reader's transaction with the text and derivation of meaning is still very real but some of the inherent nuances of feeling and ideas available to the reader from the culture of the text's origin may not come through due to her lack of knowledge about how the native culture dictates the actions of characters.

One example is the book *Samir and Yonatan* (2000) by Daniella Carmi, translated from the Hebrew by Yael Lotan. Samir, the story's narrator, is a Palestinian boy who must go to an Israeli hospital for an operation. During the story, the reader learns how the Israelis killed Samir's younger brother, what life was like for his family before the fighting began, and the effects of the conflict on his family members. The story of Samir's interaction with Israeli children in the hospital ward is fascinating since it is told through a child's voice. There is a possibility that a reader encountering this text without an understanding of the history between the Palestinians and the Israelis might miss the undercurrent of tension in the story. Their responses would still reflect their personal understanding of the characters and events in the text but their understanding would be based upon their own culture. Students faced with international children's literature texts will encounter different religious views, gender roles, and traditions. All of these cultural

differences influence how characters make decisions and react to events in a story. This study explored the understandings students created when reading international children's literature.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine student responses to international children's literature in order to view the processes students use as they create meaning from texts originally intended for readers of other cultures. It looked at the way students interpreted texts written about foreign cultures and also observed their perceptions of other cultures as depicted in international children's literature.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The stated purpose of this study led to the formulation of the following research question as the focus of this investigation:

How do fourth grade students respond to international children's literature in a Book Club setting?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The overall significance of this study is to inform teachers' literacy practice in the use of international children's literature. In recent years several professional publications have promoted this category of literature to teachers and librarians. The International Reading Association (IRA) sponsors the Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group that annually publishes *Notable Books for a Global Society: A PreK-12 List*. This booklist is accompanied by teaching ideas, websites, and related books. All of the books on the list are not translated works and did not originate in other countries, but the list does include many that fit the criteria of international children's literature. The list

is published in the Fall issue of *The Dragon Lode*, a journal of the IRA Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group. The books are grouped into "text sets" and presented in *The Reading Teacher*. These text sets are groups of books that explore various themes. "The Resilient Spirit: Keeping Hope Alive" and "Bordering Cultures and Languages" were themes for the January 2004 issue. A few of the books highlighted in the 2004 text sets which would be considered international children's literature were *The Whispering Cloth: A Refugee Story* (Shea, 1996), *Gleam and Glow* (Bunting, 2001), and *The Caged Birds of Phnom Penh* (Lipp, 2001). Shea's book, *The Whispering Cloth: A Refugee Story* (1996) acquaints the reader with Mai, a young Hmong girl living in a Thai refugee camp, who embroiders the story of her parents' murder by soldiers. The embroidered cloth also depicts the girl's hope of a better life. Watercolor pictures and color photos of embroidered scenes illustrate the events of the story. Eight-year old Viktor has to leave his goldfish, *Gleam and Glow*, behind when he flees his Bosnian village with his mother and younger sister. They return home from a refugee camp and discover the goldfish pond filled with the descendants of *Gleam and Glow* in Bunting's book *Gleam and Glow* (Bunting 2001). *The Whispering Cloth: A Refugee Story* (Shea, 1996) is a picture book about eight year old Ary's life in Phnom Penh and her wish to live in the fresh, green countryside away from the pollution and poverty she experiences in the city. While these stories deal with children facing serious issues out of their control, they still manage to convey a sense of hope for the future.

In 2006, the Children's Book Council and the United States Board on Books for Young People (USSBY) published the first Outstanding International Booklist. Forty-two books were selected that "represented the best of children's literature from other

countries” (Issacs, 2006). See Appendix A. Other Outstanding International Booklists were published in the *School Library Journal* in 2007 (Issacs, 2007) and in 2008 (Angus, 2008). See Appendix B and Appendix C. This attention to books written for other cultures (not all were translated because many came from English-speaking countries) indicates an awareness of the importance of providing experiences that introduce children of all ages to worldviews other than their own.

Informing teachers and librarians about international children’s literature is an important first step to engaging students in reading these texts, but there is currently little research on how students understand or respond to them. The available literature about these texts seems to focus on its history, bibliographies, rationale for use, selection factors, and issues pertaining to its origins and availability (Roxburgh, 2004, Soter, 1997, Stan, 1999). Some articles deal with the problems in translation and authenticity (Joels, 1999, O’Sullivan, 2005). Only a few articles are available that explore the actual use in teaching translated literature and those deal with students in middle school, high school or college (Louie, 2005, Mathis, 2001, Pritchard, 2005). With this study, I endeavor to remedy the paucity of literature about the utilization of these texts with elementary age students.

This study demonstrated how one group of fourth grade students constructed meaning of texts originating in other cultures and examined their responses for the methods they incorporated to understand events and situations outside their realm of cultural experience. Learning how students understood and responded to these texts may provide insight into ways teachers and librarians can use the texts more effectively with students.

Unless teachers understand how to use translated texts effectively students may not reap the full benefits these texts have to offer. In *Guiding Principles for Teaching Multicultural Literature*, Louie (2006) conveys the warning from Beach & Finders that, “simply exposing children to multicultural literature may lead to indifference, lack of understanding, and even resistance” (p. 438). While there are distinct differences between multicultural literature and international children’s literature, both deal with cultural diversity issues, thus, this assessment would be just as applicable to literature that not only deals with other cultures, but also may originate in the culture it describes. If students are able to gain insight about foreign cultures from a narrative text, knowledge about how they interpret such texts would be instrumental in the development of strategies and activities for the optimum use of international children’s literature.

To utilize international children’s literature effectively in the curriculum, teachers may well need to “go beyond a ‘quick read,’ followed by comprehension questions and answers, or construction of pre-designed multicultural crafts” (Mathis, 2001, p. 159). Research by Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) indicates that the instructional pattern of teacher interrogation and student response, followed by teacher evaluation of the student’s response is not a viable means of promoting understanding of a text. The present study informs the conversation about what might be effective ways for teachers to engage their students in reading these books.

According to transactional reader response theory proposed by Rosenblatt (1978), students comprehend literature by making personal connections to the text. Comprehension takes place when a reader can see a story in some relationship to his or her own life. The responses of students in this study encountering global literature may

inform educators in the development of strategies to scaffold students' understanding as they read international texts.

Another outcome for this study was creating among teachers an awareness of the benefits of using international children's literature in the classroom. Compelling reasons exist for using translated literature with children. According to Freeman (2001), "international children's literature can spark the imagination, nurture curiosity, and delight the heart and mind" (p. 12). Stories from other lands provide an opportunity for children to experience vicariously other cultures, find the similarities that exist with our world, and appreciate the beauty of diversity. Some experiences (love, family, friendship, death, illness, loneliness, etc) are universal. Gebel (2006) points out books for children in every country have common themes: "development, growing up, coming of age, experiencing the world and finding a place in it" (p. 18).

An additional benefit of international children's literature is that it has the potential to promote critical thinking skills as readers read books from different cultures on similar themes, compare and contrast lifestyles, or discover characters' points of view. Many books from other countries deal with moral dilemmas and can be used as a way to discuss issues surrounding values. One example is *The Other Side of Truth* (Naidoo, 1990) that lends itself to a discussion of truth and fairness with older elementary and young adult readers as Sade, the main character, feels compelled to act dishonestly in order to protect her father and younger brother. *A Thousand Hills I Walk With You* (Jansen, 2006) is a memoir of a young Tutsi survivor of the Rwandan genocide in 1994. While its content is graphic at times, the book might prove to be a springboard for discussions about justice, prejudice, and acts of violence. In *Something Invisible*

(Parkinson, 2006), readers vicariously experience Jake's insecurity about his place in the family when his stepsister is born and his guilt about the part he plays in an unfortunate accident. The story has a definite Irish flavor and presents issues pertinent to upper elementary age readers.

My final justification for this study is more personal in nature. This study conveys to the reader what I have learned about international children's literature and the ways students responded to these texts so others can benefit from my interaction with the students in my study. The case study is a record of the transactions between a group of students and myself as we collaborated to develop understandings around a shared textual experience. Because I believe students learn best through collaborative, constructive activities, I share this experience to enrich the teaching knowledge of other professionals and hopefully influence their teaching practice.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Aesthetic Response: How a reader reacts emotionally or intuitively to a text. (Rosenblatt, 1995)

Efferent Response: How a reader attends to the information or data contained in a text. (Rosenblatt, 1995)

Implied Author: The author identified through clues found in a text. (Iser, 1974)

Instrumental Case Study: An examination of an identified, selected group engaged in a particular activity for a definite time with the purpose of gaining understanding about an issue. (Stake, 2000)

Intended Reader: The audience an author anticipates during the creation of a text. This imaginary audience is a textual construct and can only be identified through clues when reading a text. (Iser, 1974)

International Children's Literature: Children's books written and published in countries other than the United States or books that may be published in the United States but are set in another country. (Stan, 2002)

Multicultural Literature: Literature written about the many cultures living in the United States. (Freeman & Lehman, 2001)

Real Reader: The living, breathing reader of a text. (Iser, 1974)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was conducted within a social constructivist paradigm based on my belief that knowledge about the world and others is socially constructed through an interactive process. Students in this study interacted in a book club setting to share their responses as they created meanings for two texts written about cultures other than their own. According to Schwandt (2000): "We do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a back drop of shared understanding, practices, language, and so forth." The meaning created by the group represents their thinking during the specific period of time in which the study was conducted. If they revisit the text at a later date or welcome a new member into the book club, the meaning would vary from the original. Schwandt (2000) expresses this concept when he says, "We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience" (p. 197). Louise Rosenblatt (1995) recognized discussion around a common text as one way the reader engages in efferent

response. The reader has an aesthetic response to the initial reading then upon returning to the text for discussion takes a deeper look into the text. When the reader encounters ideas from other readers of the same text that differ from her own she is motivated to return to the text to confirm or refute her interpretation of the text.

This study exhibits critical leanings within my social constructivist paradigm. According to Schwandt (2000), this is not an atypical stance because he contends: “A general assumption of social constructionism is that knowledge is not disinterested, apolitical, and exclusive of affective and embodied aspects of human experience, but is in some sense ideological, political, and permeated with values” (p. 199). I am committed by my personal spiritual beliefs to live in a way that promotes justice and kindness. These beliefs spill over into my goals as an educator in that I view books as potential peacemakers in our world. Books provide experiences with people, places, events, and other cultures through which students could change the way they view others and become more understanding of people who are different from them. Jella Lepman, a German Jew who escaped Nazi Germany and is credited with beginning the international children’s literature movement through her active endorsement of the use of children’s literature to create intercultural understanding, was convinced that books “would build bridges of understanding between the children who read them” (Stan, 2002, p. 9). Understanding is a deterrent to fear which breeds distrust and hatred.

The international children’s literature selections I chose to use in my study, *Samir and Yonatan* (Carmi, 2000) and *The Breadwinner* (Ellis, 2000) are realistic fictional texts that deal with the contemporary world issues of war, poverty, women’s roles, and the plight of refugees. Encountering these issues in a fictional setting may help to remove the

angst that might be associated with those topics and afford the students an opportunity to view other cultures. The study was designed to provide meaningful experiences and discussions around books with the goal to promote acceptance of people who look, speak, and dress differently but who have the same basic needs and share our world.

This study deals with the responses of children as they interact with a particular type of narrative so my theoretical framework rests upon theories of narrative criticism and the work of Rosenblatt (1978, 1995) describing reading as a transaction between the reader and the text. Pertinent characteristics of literary narrative criticism must be briefly explained due to the significant part the international children's narratives play in this study.

In the field of literary criticism, a narrative text consists of parts, some of which are real and may or may not be known, and others are textual constructs, found only in the text itself. Every text has a "real" author who attempts to communicate a narrative through the words and ideas she situates on the page (Iser, 1978). That author exists outside of the text and as long as that author is living, any reader of the narrative potentially has access to the author's point of view about the text. Examples of real authors would be J. K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series and Deborah Ellis, author of *The Breadwinner* (2000), *Parvana's Journey* (2002), and *Mud City* (2003). The real author writes for an intended reader, whom Iser (1978) describes as "a sort of fictional inhabitant of the text" (p. 33). The intended reader may be someone who shares similar background experiences and knowledge with the real author, or the author may anticipate the readers' lack of background experiences and knowledge. Through textual clues a *real* reader may gain insight into the audience targeted by the real author.

An implied author, a narrator or narrators, characters, and plot-line are a few of the other “textual perspectives” described by Iser (1978). The implied author is a narrative construct discernable only through clues in the text. Since the implied author is a textual construct, she may or may not resemble the *real* author and based on understanding of a text, she may be different for individual readers. Other more familiar textual perspectives, narrator, characters, and plot are devices for revealing the narrative to the reader. All of these components work their literary magic upon the “real readers” like the ones in this study, who exist outside the text. “Real readers” are the flesh and blood readers who experience a text and who, through their action upon the text, create meaning from the symbols and literary constructs.

I hold strongly to the belief that reading is a process by which readers make meaning from text. During the act of decoding words many complex mental tasks take place, yet by themselves none of these tasks result in an interpretation of a text (Scarborough, H., 2001). It is important to note that in Rosenblatt’s model the transaction occurs between the reader and the text not the reader and the author. For at least half a century, the role of the author in assigning meaning to a text has been called into question by literary critics. The work of Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954) in “The Intentional Fallacy” marked an important turning point when they stated: “the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable...” (p. 3). While some critics, including E.D. Hirsch, Jr., (1976) continued to assign some authority over interpretation to the original author an increasing number of voices in the field agreed with Robert Crossman, “Yes, readers make meaning.” (1980, p. 164).

Rosenblatt (1978) describes reading as a reciprocal process between the reader and the text and contends that during the act of reading, the reader and the text act upon each other. The reader evokes prior knowledge, experiences, and cultural identity when encountering a text but during the process the text becomes part of the reader's experiences. In Rosenblatt's theory, the text and the reader are not independent of each other. The reader creates a personal meaning from a text that is exclusive to that reader based on the uniqueness of each reader that comes to the same text. Another reader with different experiences and knowledge of the world would assign a different meaning to the text. Each reader's interpretation is personally located creating a subjective interpretation of a text.

According to Wolfgang Iser (1974, 1978), in the discussion of how a reader interprets a text, it is important to consider the information omitted from a text, as well as what is written on the page. Iser labels these text omissions as "gaps" and contends that each reader fills in the "gaps" much the way people view stars in the night sky, drawing lines between the stars to create figures. In the creation of a text, "gaps" exist for a variety of reasons. Some omission of information is inherent in the act of writing because if every nuance and idea were explained the writing would be so lengthy and unwieldy it would be impossible to read. Other "gaps" are unintentional when the writer takes for granted information the reader possesses, while still other "gaps" may be stylistically intentional when the author purposely leaves out information so that the reader will make connections and inferences in the text. Every reader coming to the text would not be privy to the omitted information based upon the experiences and prior knowledge brought by the individual reader to the text. Iser's (1974) constellation metaphor allows for

multiple interpretations of the same text because star gazers “may be looking at the same collection of stars, but one will see the image of a plough, and the other will make out a dipper...” (p. 282). The text, like the stars in the night sky, remains static, but the connections within the text are dependent upon the reader and her perspective.

Iser’s description of how the reader creates meaning from a text by filling in the “gaps” with knowledge from the reader is compatible with the application of schema theory to reading comprehension. Schema theory was first described in the field of cognitive psychology as an explanation of how the memory configures information and actions in stories so it can remember them at a later date (Nassaji, 2002). Educational research used the theory to explain the role of *schemata*, experience and prior knowledge, in the creation of meaning during the process of reading (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Schema theory reinforces the constructive nature of the reading process and the interaction between the reader and the text when a reader utilizes schemata, or prior knowledge and experiences already filed in her memory, to understand new, unfamiliar material she encounters when reading a text. For Iser, the reader fills in the “gaps” to create a meaningful text and for Rosenblatt, the reader engages in a transaction with the text by bringing her knowledge and experiences to the text to create a personal meaning which then becomes part of the reader’s knowledge and experience pool.

Rosenblatt’s transactional view of reading, in which meaning is a negotiation between the reader and the text, is quite different from the belief that there is a single, objective meaning for a text intended by the author. This is in direct opposition to Hirsch’s (1976) belief that meaning resides in the text and interpretation involves determining the author’s one intended meaning for a text. Rosenblatt (1978) describes a

text as an author's "creative activity" and the necessary activity of a reader "to again bring a poem into being" (p. 15). In *Let the Reader Understand*, Robert Fowler (1991) expresses the significant part a reader plays in determining a meaning for a text:

...once the author finishes the text and gives it to the world, she no longer has control over it; thereafter the text has a life of its own. Once out of the author's hands, the text is totally dependent on its readers. Such life as it continues to enjoy flows from them. Unless the text is read and comes to life in the reading experience, it is simply a lifeless assemblage of paper, binding, and dried ink. The text has no life or meaning unless life and meaning are conferred upon it by a reader. (p. 26)

In transaction theory, the author's activity with the text does not dictate meaning.

Meaning is dependent upon a reader's activity with the text.

The assertion that meaning resides in the relationship between the reader and the text does not exclude the role of the author in the creation of meaning of a text. An author creates a text by selecting words, characters, and events based on his/her worldview, knowledge, experiences, and imagination for an anticipated audience (Iser, 1978). Some texts may be written for audiences who share a similar cultural background and knowledge with the author. Readers outside of the writer's anticipated audience might need explanations for anything in the text that is not within their realm of experience or knowledge. An author writing for an anticipated audience from a different background, possibly lacking the author's knowledge might provide information or explanations to scaffold the reader's understanding of the text. Karolides (1997) says "readers process [the text] without the immediate presence of the author" (p. 19) so their interpretation of

the text is based upon their own knowledge and experiences. Unless the reader shares the same knowledge base, culture, and background experiences as the author, he/she may not create the same meaning as an author's anticipated reader. This view of reading was central to my study as it examined the responses students made to literature originally published in another country for readers of that culture.

ORGANIZATION

My study is presented in five chapters. This chapter contains the introduction, along with my rationale, proposed research question, and theoretical framework. Chapter Two presents a review of literature concerning the history of International Children's Literature, issues of availability, translation, authenticity and rationale for its use. Chapter Three describes the methodology used in conducting this study, as well as how the data were collected and analyzed. Results from the study are presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five discusses the implications of the study and further questions the study raised.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The existing literature concerning international children's literature is more often than not descriptive in nature. Most of the journal articles contain historical background information, bibliographies of books, criteria for selection and justification for inclusion in classrooms and libraries. Some articles deal with specialty areas such as translations or authenticity of texts. There were only a few studies done involving international children's literature (Louie, B., 2005. Pritchard, Carr, Buchanan, Powell-Brown, & Cotton, 2005). One longitudinal study investigated the origins of books that were selected for publication by American publishers (White & Cox, 2004). . Only two studies actually involved students reading and responding to international texts. One of those explored responses of high school students in a senior level course on contemporary world issues. Participants in the second study were pre-service teachers and in-service teachers enrolled in a university children's literature course and fourth and fifth grade students at an elementary school. This chapter will present the literature dealing with these texts.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the end of World War II, there has been an increased awareness of the need for international children's literature (Tomlinson, 1998). Jella Lepman, a German Jew who escaped Nazi Germany, is credited with beginning the international children's literature movement as she actively endorsed the use of children's literature to create intercultural understanding. Her ultimate goal was to prevent the reoccurrence of events like the Holocaust and to promote world peace (Lepman, 2002). Lepman's conviction was that the books "would build bridges of understanding between the children who read

them” (Tomlinson, in Stan, 2002, p. 9). Lepman solicited children’s books from publishers in Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America. These books became part of an exhibition of children’s books that was displayed all over Europe (Lepman, 2002). In 1949 the books from the exhibition were used to create the International Youth Library, (*Internationale Jugendbibliothek* in German), which continues to collect children’s books from all over the world. The International Youth Library houses more than 500,000 books in their original languages and publishes the *IJB Bulletin* quarterly, the *IJB Report* annually, and *The White Ravens* which recommends the titles of international children’s book for translation each year. Today this collection of international books is located in a castle in Munich, Germany (Stan, 2002).

Lepman later founded the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) in 1953 (Stan, 2002). This organization promotes world peace and intercultural understanding through the use of children’s literature. Countries around the world can join IBBY and support its goals through dues collected by the national affiliates. Since 1956, IBBY has bestowed the Hans Christian Andersen Medal every two years to the living author and illustrator whose works were judged to have made important contributions to children’s literature. IBBY also publishes a catalog of books recommended for translation and publication in other countries and *Bookbird: The Journal of International Children’s Literature*, which contains articles and reviews of new pertinent literature. International Children’s Book Day is sponsored by a national section of IBBY each year to promote children’s books.

The United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY), the United States’ affiliate of IBBY, has sponsored three volumes of books featuring international

children's literature. *Children's Books from Other Countries* (Tomlinson, 1998), introduced international children's literature and presented book titles with annotations categorized by the countries of their origin that were published between the years of 1950 and 1996. The second volume, *The World Through Children's Books* (Stan, 2002), began with Tomlinson's introduction to international children's literature but included books published in the United States that were set in another country. Doris Gebel (2006) edited the most recent volume, *Crossing Boundaries with Children's Books*. It lists books published from 2000 to 2004 and continues to include books that are set in other countries but originate in the United States.

Mildred L. Batchelder was another advocate for promoting intercultural understanding through children's books (Tomlinson, 1999, Stan, 2002). Batchelder led the School and Children's Library Division of the American Library Association and was executive secretary of the Children's Services Division and the young Adult Services Division (now the Association for Library Service to Children and Young Adult Services Association). She believed strongly in the power of stories, writing:

To know the classic stories of a country creates a climate, an attitude for understanding the people for whom that literature is a heritage. When children know they are reading in translation the same stories that children in another country are reading, a sense of nearness grows and expands. Interchange of children's books between countries, through translation influences communication between the peoples of these countries, and if the books chosen for traveling from language to language are worthy books, the resulting communication may be deeper, richer, more sympathetic,

more enduring. (Wheeler, 1967, p. 180, cited in Stan, 2002, p. 15)

Beginning in 1968, the American Library Association has awarded the Batchelder Award to the American publisher who published the most outstanding translated children's book previously published in a foreign country. Since 1990, other translated books of merit are named as honor books each year in addition to the Batchelder Award. (See Appendix D.) The award gives the American publisher well-deserved recognition for producing a translated book and also provides an excellent resource for librarians and teachers looking for the best international children's literature available in the United States.

AVAILABILITY

In America, we export far more children's literature than we import (Bond, 2006, Stan, 1999). The publication of international children's literature is driven by a profit motive (Taxel, 2002). According to Stephen Roxburgh (2004), "very few publishers are commissioning translations because they tend to be expensive, time-consuming, and unsuccessful in the market place" (p. 48). Joels (1999) suggests that the same exotic, foreign nature of a text that entices American publishers to consider them for publication may be unappealing to American readers. The paucity of international titles available to American readers insulates our students from being exposed to diverse lifestyles and appreciating other cultures. Students are aware of the wars and catastrophic events happening around the world through news reports but do not have any way to connect with the daily lives of people living in other countries. Their worldview of other cultures is likely to be skewed by this type of information, creating fear and distrust of foreign cultures.

According to Tomlinson (1998), Australia, Canada, Great Britain and a few other European countries, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States have “well-developed” bodies of children literature (p. 7). He goes on to describe some common factors that support the publishing industry in these countries including a monolingual culture so a book written in one (the country’s native language) is appropriate for all the readers of that country. These countries have high average per capita incomes enabling consumers to purchase children’s books and the leisure time to enjoy them. The economic health of these countries also promotes the work of artists and authors who write literature for children. Well-developed educational systems in these countries purchase children’s literature in addition to textbooks and promote high literacy rates in the population. Countries with a great number of children’s titles also have institutions in place, including school libraries, public libraries, and private libraries (i.e., bunkos in Japan), which make the books accessible to readers.

Stan (1999) points to population as the most critical indicator of the number of children’s books published by a country. The United States publishes about 5,000 new titles for children each year compared to Norway, which publishes about 500 in any given year (Stan, 1999). Of the 5,000 titles published in the United States only a small number are translations of children’s literature from other countries. Stan (2002) reported the number to be less than 1%.

A longitudinal study of the translated children’s books published in the United States from 1990 to 2000 (White & Cox, 2004) was conducted to identify current trends and common features of books that were recommended for children. White and Cox focused on the languages, genres, and subjects of books published in the United States

over that ten-year period. Books that were considered in the study were recipients of an award such as the Batchelder Award or the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award; listed on the Children's Notable Book List, Booklist's Editors' Choice, or Fanfare: The Horn Book Honor List; or reviewed in Booklist, Bulletin for the Center of Children's Books, Horn Book, or School Library Journal. Basing the selection of books for the study solely upon these criteria means some translated books may not have been included in this study.

Findings in this study showed that Germany, France, Sweden, and Japan had the greatest number of books translated and published in the United States. Holland, Spain, Italy, Denmark, and Russia also contributed books but in much smaller numbers. The authors of the study attributed the success of the translations to the healthy economic and foreign diplomatic relationships existing between these countries and the United States.

Picture books comprised 60% of the translated books that were published in the United States (White, 2004). The book topics were varied but similar to those of books generally published for children in the United States. The texts included fictional narratives about animals, fairy tales, family relationships, and friendship, as well as expository texts about people, places, and animals. France had more books dealing with art possibly due to their country's reputation for renowned artists. Books about World War II and the Holocaust were contributed by Israel, Germany, and Holland. Authors of the study speculated this was due to the continued impact of those historical events on their countries. Some of the translated books dealt with sensitive and serious topics (sex, death, personal problems) that Americans find objectionable for children and could possibly limit the sales of these books (Tomlinson, 1998).

AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is one critical issue in translated children's literature and centers around who can write international children's literature. There is an ongoing "insider-outsider" argument that questions the ability of someone who is not a native member of a culture to authentically portray the experiences and viewpoints of that culture (Freeman, 2002). Tomlinson (1998) excluded books with foreign settings that were published in the United States but Stan (2002) included certain "domestic" children's books (e.g., *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind* (1989) by Suzanne Staples, *Red Scarf Girl* (1997) by Ji-Li Jiang,) that contained foreign characters or were set in foreign countries. Exceptions to the literature included under the category of international children's literature were made in consideration of how well an author knew a foreign culture. Some authors do extensive research or spend an extended time in a culture so that they can create characters and text that authentically depict the people and their lifestyle. Suzanne Staples was a journalist and spent time in Pakistan, the setting of *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind* (1989). Staples spent time with Pakistani nomads like the people of her character Shabanu, researched their way of life and ultimately "was able to identify with them to the point of laughing at the same things very spontaneously as they did (Cai, 2002, p. 179). Staples represents the culture without bias and combines imagination with research to give insight into a remote relatively unknown tribe of people.

Other authors writing about foreign countries were recent immigrants and wrote of their experiences in their native countries. This was the case of Jiang, who wrote of her experiences growing up during the Cultural Revolution in China under Mao. The prevailing argument seems to be that some countries, due to economic and language

barriers, do not have a body of children's literature that can be imported and translated so their stories will be lost unless an "outsider" is allowed to write them (Freeman, 2002).

When selecting a text to use with children, it is very important to be aware of the relationship of the author to the culture depicted in the text. A text written by an "outsider" may possibly promote stereotypes and misconceptions about cultures and their beliefs. This puts the teacher and librarian in difficult positions because we lack the linguistic skills and intimate knowledge of different cultures to evaluate their literature for cultural authenticity. That makes it critical to be familiar with books chosen for the Mildred L. Batchelder Award and the Hans Christian Andersen Award and to read reviews of recommended translated children's literature so books can be selected for use with children that accurately represent other cultures (Freeman, 2002).

TRANSLATION

Translation is another critical issue in the realm of international children's literature. The act of converting a text from one language to another is more than exchanging a word in one language to a word that means the same in a target language. Translation has more to do with creating a text with the same meaning. Yamazaki (2002) stated:

...translation is never a purely linguistic matter. The attitude toward and practice of translation reflects intercultural power balances. Translated texts not only reveal what kind of relationship the target culture has with the source culture but also affect that relationship by presenting a certain image of the source culture. (p. 54)

Yamazaki goes on to describe how many translators make changes such as giving different names to the characters to make translated stories sound more familiar to the reader. Some translators feel that foreign names for common items and even characters keep readers from appreciating a text. Translators at times change not only the characters' name but also change the setting of a story to one more familiar to the targeted reader. Translators know this type of modification as "cultural context adaptation" or "localization" (Yamazaki, 2002, p. 56). Yamazaki argues that the very act of translating a text is a type of "cultural context adaptation" due to the linguistic changes that take place to make the target reader able to access the text. Some cultural idioms and humor do not have the same meaning in other languages and that necessitates changes. Despite the changes, it is important for the book to retain the defining traits inherent in a culture so that it still provides insight into other cultures.

Occasionally translators make the decisions to change elements of a story because they feel children can't understand or accept things that are too different. If children are never exposed to anything foreign based on the premise that they can't comprehend foreign details, then everything will remain "foreign for good and children never learn to accept another culture"(Yamazaki, p. 58). *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling, 1998) originally published in Great Britain in 1997 as *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 1997) is a high profile example of this type of change in a text. Yamazaki further argues that the problem lies more with adults who are making decisions about what children can understand and accept and have little understanding about the value of translated literature for children.

In translations, sometimes the rhythm and cadence of the original language is removed from the text. This could be due to the translator's art or perhaps it was just poorly written in the original language. Lo and Cantrell (2002) recommend not using books in which the language seems stilted or unnatural. They assert "poorly written books, whether the fault of the author or the translator, are inappropriate for classroom read-alouds" (p. 24).

TRENDS FOR USING INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

According to Clark, White, and Bluemel (2004), the use of translated literature is not a strong focus in the curriculum of young children even though early childhood is an optimum time for children to learn about the world. Young readers do not yet possess the values, life experiences or literary preferences that prevent them from approaching a text with openness. Their natural curiosity is an open door for new ideas and knowledge about other cultures to enter and makes early childhood the optimum time to introduce children to international children's literature. "Aesthetic restriction" described by Soter (1997) is more likely to be highly developed in older readers and may cause them to dismiss a translated work due to the diverse attitudes and roles of people depicted in a foreign culture. The rejected text then has no opportunity to "work on the reader" and can neither impart new information about a culture nor change preconceived ideas about the people of that culture (Soter, 1997, p. 218). This knowledge about readers strengthens the argument for the use of international children's literature with young children.

Several articles suggest that the activities that accompany reading global children's literature should enhance the understanding of cultural mores and norms and how these dictate the actions of the characters living in that culture. "Students, usually

limited in their background knowledge ... tend to interpret these text on the basis of their self-centered worldviews and experiences” (Louie, 2005, p. 567). Louie (2006) believes that teachers need to guide students beyond projecting their own values onto story characters and contends that students must be lead to interpret characters’ actions based on the beliefs and norms of the characters’ culture. The literature also suggests that many of the methods teachers use to promote comprehension of traditional texts are appropriate for helping students understand translated texts. A discussion method developed by Enciso requires students to “talk back” to literature and question the characters concerning how they are represented in the text or in the media (Louie, 2006). This causes students to identify with the story, the character, and the culture in order to express how the character would feel. The development of this type of empathy is the key to opening the doors of trust and friendship between cultures.

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN’S LITERATURE STUDIES

There are a limited number of studies that focus on the use of international children’s literature with students. One study involved middle and high school age students. Another was conducted with elementary aged students and it used international picture books in their original language.

Only one study was found that focused on the responses of students to characters and events in a novel situated in a foreign culture. Louie (2005), in an observational case study, identified and described the types of emotional responses high school students had to a Chinese novella. Her research focused on how students developed empathy for characters from another culture and the varying degrees of empathy students felt for the characters. While her study was titled “Development of Empathetic Responses with

Multicultural Literature,” the novel used in the study, *Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom* (Feng, 1995), was an international text translated from its original Chinese. The novel dealt with government persecution of an artist during the Cultural Revolution in China.

Students participating in the study had little previous exposure to literature or courses that allowed them to delve into issues concerning diversity. The students’ historical and cultural background knowledge of China was very limited therefore Louie thought a great deal of contextual information was necessary before students could fully understand the character’s motives. The study design addressed this deficiency by including simulation activities, critique of propaganda posters found on internet sites, films set in that era, and interactive lectures. When students began to read the novel, they had some understanding about the historical events that were the context for the story.

Student responses from journals, class discussions, projects, and interviews were analyzed for emotional responses to characters and events. Louie was able to distinguish five different types of empathy through students’ responses as they read the novel. The responses ranged from “cognitive empathy” in which the students were able to talk about the character’s point of view toward the events that happened to “cross cultural empathy” where the students interpreted the actions of characters based on the value system of the characters. Other types of responses included: historical empathy, parallel emotional empathy, and reactive emotional empathy.

The study provided insight into possible methods for scaffolding students to interpret and understand actions of other cultures as well as types of student responses. Before approaching a text with a diverse cultural origin, students were engaged in activities to introduce them to the historical, social, and political background necessary to

understand the characters' actions in the novel. Louie states "empathy development is a process of approximation during which students shorten the distances between the characters and themselves" (p. 575), but there are no shortcuts to this process.

Information is a critical factor in the process to nurture understanding between cultures.

Pritchard, Carr, Buchanan, Powell-Brown, and Cotton (2005) conducted the second study in 2002 at two different sites. Pre-service and in-service teachers, enrolled in children's literature classes were participants at Site 1 and 175 fourth and fifth graders, twenty-two pre-service teachers in a children's literature class, ten advanced field experience students, and six elementary teachers took part in the study at Site 2. At Site 1, the pre-service and in-service teachers were asked to select a book from text sets created from a group of books from the European Picture Book Collection (EPBC). They spent a little time with their chosen book and then completed a survey about their reasons for selection, their prior knowledge of the author, illustrator, or country of origin, and an indication of their comfort level with the book if it was from a foreign country.

The "power of the visual text in creating interest or comfort" was identified as a trend in the pre-service and in-service teachers (Pritchard et al., 2005, p. 82). Examples were given describing how the teachers rejected a book because the characters in the illustrations were so "different". Even the illustrations of animals (sheep) were described as "evil" or "scary." The researchers indicated the need for more experiences with EPBC books for their students in children's literature courses.

At Site 2 during the first session the fourth and fifth grade students were presented an introductory lesson on *Une Nuit, Un Chat*, a French picture book. After a discussion on France, which was used as an assessment of the students' background knowledge

about the country, students looked through the book for visual and linguistic characteristics. They made predictions about the story based on the illustrations. The story was told in English and students wrote responses to the book. At the second session a French university student read the book aloud in French so the students could hear the rhythm and flow of the language in the story. He also told the students about his country and answered their questions about France.

The study continued into Spring 2003 with a focus on Spain using the book, *El Guardian Del Oivido*. It was also repeated in Fall 2003, but books from different countries were assigned to the fifth grade classes. The languages represented were German, French, and Swedish. In this session, the pre-service teachers introduced one of the EPBC books after the procedure had been modeled for them.

Pritchard, et al. (2005) identified some implications for teacher education programs and for the use of global literature with young students based on the findings of their study. Using the EPBC with elementary school students seemed to be a way to stimulate interest in other cultures and languages. One observation was that students used words such as “fancy” and “weird” when describing the objects in illustrations from *Une Nuit, Un Chat*, but after hearing the French student explain about his country, the number of factual statements in students’ written responses doubled. Pritchard, et al. (2005) felt that exposure to diverse cultures in literature with appropriate teacher scaffolding holds great potential to create positive attitudes in children and that teacher preparation must include experiences with global literature for pre-service teachers as well as training in appropriate methods for using it in their future classrooms. They cited the need for further studies to support their findings.

SUMMARY

The review of literature concerning international children's literature presented here covers a wide spectrum of topics ranging from a basic definition and history to translation issues. Studies of how children interpret and understand this category of literature are so limited in number that implications for using the literature are inconclusive at this point. The following chapters detail my study of how upper intermediate elementary children respond to two pieces of international children's literature.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

RATIONALE FOR METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

The intent of this study was to describe the processes students used to interpret characters and events as they read literature set in other cultures. The proposed question and method of interpretation were best suited to a qualitative research design that, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), attempts “to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). Through this study I hoped to gain insight into ways young readers create meaning from international children’s texts.

I chose a case study approach for the purpose of observing the ways students create meaning from and respond to global texts. According to Robert Stake (2000), “case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied” (p. 435). My *bounded case* consisted of a group of seven students who met for twelve book club sessions to discuss two specific international children’s literature texts. This study was an instrumental case study. According to Stake (2000), in an instrumental case study “the case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else.” (p. 437) The desired outcome of this study was insight into the processes young readers use to comprehend international children’s texts and how they understand other cultures based on the responses they make during book club sessions.

Stake (2000) also contends a case study is “both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of the inquiry” (p. 436). An attempt of this study was to describe the responses students made to international children’s literature but a significant part of the

study was to observe how they interacted within the group setting to create a meaning for the text that was specific to that group of children at that time.

As a social constructivist, I believe that knowledge is socially situated and influenced by the discourse of the learning community. Schwandt (2000) asserts that qualitative methodology allows for the construction of meaning at a given time in a particular context and states that “truth is a matter of the best-informed and most sophisticated construction on which there is consensus at a given time”(p. 128). That characteristic of qualitative research was conducive to my goal of an in-depth description of how students comprehend this specific type of literature and also the social interaction that occurred during the process. The constructed meanings and responses to the texts in this study were unique to our group because they were based on the experiences and interactions of this specific group of individuals. The study assumes that the meanings of other groups of students reading the same texts would probably vary due to the uniqueness of the participating students and how their worldviews filter information and events. Sturman wrote:

‘Case study’ is a generic term for the investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon. While the techniques used in the investigation may be varied... the distinguishing feature of case study is the belief that human systems develop a characteristic wholeness or integrity and are not simply a loose collection of traits. As a consequence of this belief, case study researchers hold that to understand a case, to explain why things happen as they do, and to generalize or predict from a single example requires an in-depth investigation of the interdependencies of parts and of the patterns that emerge. (Sturman, 1994, in Bassey, 1999)

METHODS

Participants and Site

The participants for this study were chosen from a local elementary school in a small town in Kentucky. The principal of the school agreed to identify students from her school's population who fit the criteria for my study and distribute letters of introduction to the parents of those students. Based on the length and level of the texts, I believed the participants for the study needed to be average or above average in their reading ability so that reading difficulty would not influence the outcome of the study. The students also needed to enjoy reading and discussing books. Potential participants for the study had finished fourth grade and would be entering fifth grade in the fall. By selecting students from upper intermediate elementary grades, I expected the students to be able to read the texts and engage in discussions about the topics they encountered in them.

When designing this study, I determined that six to eight participants would be an optimum number so that all of the members in the book club would have opportunities to voice their ideas and opinions during discussions. I believed that number of participants would yield a manageable amount of data through book club sessions, interviews and individual notes or journals. That number, also, kept down the cost of the study as I bought novels, journals, post-it notes for the participants and video supplies to record the sessions.

After receiving IRB approval from the university, I gave eight copies of my letter of introduction for the parents of prospective participants to the elementary school principal (Appendix E). The letter gave information about my background and my educational interests. It explained how the study would be conducted and the

expectations I had for the participating students. The principal contacted parents until eight parents showed interest in having their child take part in the study during the summer break. Those parents along with their children were invited to an informal, introductory meeting where I could answer any questions about the study, and distribute the novels, the reading schedule for the sessions, and other materials for our book club. Parent consent forms (Appendix F) and student assent forms (Appendix G) were distributed at that meeting. Eight students and their parents attended the meeting but only seven of the students were able to participate due to a conflict with a previously planned, extracurricular, summer activity.

Since the elementary school used for selecting participants was a small neighborhood school, all the children participating in the book club were familiar with each other. All but two of the seven participants had attended the elementary school since Kindergarten. Six females and one male made up the group. Five of the participants were Caucasian and two were African-American. The town where the study took place is near a military installation, so one of the participants had a parent in full-time, military service and had lived in Germany for several years. Another participant's parent was recently retired from military service. The children chose pseudonyms to use for the book club so participants in the study were: Hannah, Isaiah, Chloe, Katie, Paige, Caroline, and Keisha. They called me Catherine since I was a member of the book club and learning along with them.

I assumed the role of a facilitator and co-participant in the book club sessions. Objectivity or observer neutrality, in my opinion, is not possible due to all the filters individuals use to process information and events. I agree with Schwandt's (2000) belief

that our knowledge about the world and its past is “from the view of the historically and culturally situated individual” (p. 200). This study is presented through my voice and interpretive lens. As a facilitator and co-participant in the book club setting, it was impossible for me to have an emic role in the study. The participants of the study and I worked together to construct a set of meanings for the selected global children’s literature texts.

Four of the participants attended every book club sessions. Two participants missed one session each due to illness and doctor’s appointments. A third book club member, Keisha, had to accompany her family on a trip and missed the last three sessions. Keisha’s unexpected trip also prevented her from being interviewed.

The book club sessions took place in the youth room of a local church. Permission was been granted by the congregation’s board of directors for the use of the space for the duration of the study. The church facilities are used for many local events and activities such a tutoring programs, exercise sessions, and civic groups. The youth room provided an adequately sized space and was comfortably furnished with chairs and couches so the book club sessions had an informal feel. We used the worktable in the room for a place to have snacks after our book club sessions. The room was conducive to videotaping the sessions with good natural lighting and several electrical outlets for the audiovisual equipment.

Book Selection

I chose two realistic fiction novels that fit the description of international children’s literature for this study. The novel format was desirable for the study because the longer length text allowed for more in-depth character and plot development. I hoped

the extended engagement with characters and events from other cultures would be conducive to promoting a deeper understanding of the way traditions and societal mores contribute to how characters act and react to events in a story. The selection of a novel length text was also based upon my belief that the use of realistic fiction would allow the students to experience vicariously the lifestyle and experiences of characters from other cultures.

The first book participants read for the study was *The Breadwinner* (2000) by Deborah Ellis. In this novel, the experiences of Parvana, a young Afghanistan girl masquerading as a boy to earn a living for her family, are told through a third person narrator in a chronologically sequenced story line. *The Breadwinner* (2000) is a 4.2 grade level text based on the Flesch-Kincaid readability scale. Deborah Ellis, a Canadian author, was inspired to write this story when she visited refugee camps in Afghanistan and heard girls telling how they resorted to living as boys to help their families survive (Jenkinson, 2003). Events in the book are primarily based on interviews Ellis conducted with women and children in the refugee camps. *The Breadwinner* is the first book in a trilogy about Parvana, her family, and friends. The other two books also portray life in Afghanistan under the Taliban and its effect on women and children.

The second text read by participants in the study, *Samir and Yonatan* (Carmi, 2002), is translated from its original Hebrew and was the recipient of the Batchelder Award. Stan (1999) states “these longer, translated works are sometimes the books with the most discernible cultural content...that promise to widen readers’ global horizons” (p. 175). The readability of *Samir and Yonatan* is a 3.7 grade level text on the Flesch-Kincaid scale but it proved to be more challenging to read for the participants possibly

due to the way the text is constructed. The narrator in the story is a Palestinian boy who informs the reader about his life on the West Bank through flashbacks during his stay in an Israeli hospital ward where he is the only Palestinian. He tells the story of his interaction with the Israeli children on the ward and an unexpected friendship.

Data Collection Methods

Data for my study were collected through book club sessions, individual interviews with the participants, and information gleaned from participant journals and post-it notes they used to mark passages while reading the books. Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) advocate the collection of information from multiple sources to allow for the triangulation of data. I designed the study to incorporate four sources of data.

There were twelve book club sessions where the participants met to discuss the selected novels. I designed a reading schedule of approximately thirty pages to be read before each session to insure that the participants would be able to discuss the text. One participant was a voracious reader and read each of the novels on the first day they were handed out. She agreed not to tell the endings of the books and spoil the reading experience for other group members.

When deciding the best time frame for the study, I considered the amount of time it would take to read a novel length text and the optimum amount of text participants at this age might be able to process at one time. To get the best possible quality data, I felt it was important for the readers to engage in discussion soon after reading each text portion. I was afraid that some of the responses might become less intense if large amounts of time passed between the reading of the text and the discussion sessions. For that reason I scheduled the book club sessions on consecutive days (excluding weekends) for three

weeks during the summer. We read and discussed *The Breadwinner* in five sessions but *Samir and Yonatan* was a slightly longer text and took six days to complete. The book club met on Monday through Thursday from 10:00 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. each day. Our discussion lasted for about an hour, after which we had a snack and usually played on the playground until the parents arrived to pick up their child. Our final meeting was a wrap-up and celebration session where we talked about our feelings toward both books. A pizza and ice cream sundae party followed that meeting where I presented each participant with a gift certificate to a local bookstore.

The book club members were given journals and post-it notes to use to respond to self-selected events and characters and record their ongoing thoughts as they read. The use of the journals and post-it notes was left to the discretion of the individual readers. It was important for the book club sessions to have an overall atmosphere of friends getting together to talk about what they were reading. I especially did not want the book club participants to associate this with *school* or see me in a teacher role therefore I did not insist on written responses by the readers. I did demonstrate a form for creating two-column notes in my journal where a portion of interesting text is noted in one column and a personal response to that text is written in the second column. I also showed how to write a personal response on a post-it note and attach it to a page as a reference for discussion. I stressed that these were completely optional.

It turned out that only two of the book club members consistently used the journals every day to record their thoughts as they read while another made four journal entries. Three of the participants used post-it notes to mark passages and made notes

about their responses to the text each time they read. One of the participants relied upon her memory of the events in the text and chose not to write any responses.

To give the students time to come to some conclusions about the texts they were reading, I did not begin the individual interviews until after we had finished the first book. The interviews were scheduled before and after our book club sessions. They lasted approximately thirty minutes each. I had a list of open-ended questions to begin each interview but there were times when a response prompted me to ask other questions delving a little deeper into their understanding or asking for clarification of their ideas. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2006), in a qualitative study, other sources of data may be added as the design of the study emerges. Six of the participants were interviewed during the course of the study. One participant, Keisha, had to accompany her family on a trip and missed the last three book club sessions.

Since I participated as both a member and facilitator of the book club, the discussion sessions and individual interviews were videotaped to preserve all the interactions within the group. The video camera was placed on a tripod so that all the members were visible.

Data Analysis

Some analysis of data occurred during the course of the study as I responded to daily discussions and student reactions to the narratives. Data analysis in a naturalistic study is a continuous, interactive process where the examination of data during the collection process informs the study and helps to fine-tune the collection of data throughout the study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). The researcher “responds to the first available data and immediately forms very tentative working

hypotheses that cause adjustments in interview questions, observational strategies, and other data collection procedures” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 114). This continual refinement of data collection yields a more focused view of the phenomenon being studied. During the course of the study I recognized a change in the readers’ discussion and interaction with the text. Initially the discussions were student driven with the students bringing up story events and topics for discussion. When the group began the second novel, *Samir and Yonatan*, there was an immediate change in the quality of the discussion. I encouraged them to find a passage that they thought was significant or difficult for the group to discuss. Eventually, I read short passages for them to discuss.

Data analysis continued as I transcribed all the videotapes of the book club sessions and interviews. It was impossible to view the tapes and record the interactions between the participants without noticing some of their observations about the texts as I typed. While I did not record my thoughts at this point, I began to ponder the significance of some of their comments.

I based the analysis of data upon the constant comparative method of Glaser and Strauss (1967). Frederick Erickson (2004) states that “data in qualitative research must be found—they do not simply *appear* to the researcher” (p. 486) so after completing the transcription, I read through the entire data set just to get an overall feel for the study. After the first reading, I reread each session marking significant occurrences that potentially could develop into themes. At this time I blocked noteworthy discussion events and made comments in the margins as I read. The discussion events were phrases spoken by one book club participant or entire conversations between several book club participants so they varied in length.

My next step was to read over the transcripts and margin notations for each book club session again while adding more specific descriptions of the marked discussion events. I noted the different types of comments students made in a separate notebook. The different types of comments about the narratives were categorized in the different kinds of reading behaviors applied to the narratives. The readers engaged in good reading behaviors that lead them to personal interpretations of the text by predicting, making connections, questioning, visualizing, synthesizing, applying background knowledge and identifying with characters. The texts also evoked evaluative comments about the way of life dictated by culture and empathetic comments toward the characters. Another important facet of the data was group interaction to interpret unfamiliar cultural customs and ideas.

Trustworthiness

The purpose of this study was to explore the way students create meaning from literature set in cultures other than their native culture. For this study to have meaning to its readers, it must meet criteria that make it credible. Erlandson et al. (1993) asserts:

If intellectual inquiry is to have an impact on human knowledge, either by adding to an overall body of knowledge or by solving a particular problem, it must guarantee some measure of credibility about what it has inquired, must communicate in a manner that will enable application by its intended audience, and must enable its audience to check on its findings and the inquiry process by which the findings were obtained.

(p. 28)

A naturalistic study does not attempt to create a single, objective reality so its credibility is determined on the relationship between the participants (including the inquirer) of the study and the outcome of the inquiry. In other words, the product of the study should represent the experience and beliefs of all the participants at the time the study was being done. Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the term “trustworthiness” to describe the soundness of a study. I incorporated the following techniques Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend establish trustworthiness in a naturalistic study into this research: prolonged engagement in the field, persistent triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, and the creation of a thick description.

Erlandson et al. (1993) describe prolonged engagement as the “amount [of time] that enables the researcher to understand daily events in the way the persons who are part of that culture interpret them” (p. 30). Twelve book club sessions where the readers in this study discussed the two international children’s literature texts provided insight into the ways these readers created meaning and their understanding about the cultural settings of the stories. In addition to the twelve book club sessions, I spent time with an individual reader during an interview. Prolonged engagement was achieved through the time spent in book club sessions and interviews.

Triangulation, another criterion for “trustworthiness,” was incorporated into the study through the use of multiple data sources. Data for the study were collected from four sources: videotape transcripts of the book club sessions, individual interviews with the readers, and notes the students made in journals and on post-it notes in their books. These data sources were analyzed to discover and confirm themes in the readers’

responses to the two international children's texts and determine the relationships existing between the themes.

As I read the transcripts, it was apparent that at times my teacher persona emerged and replaced my researcher stance. I participated as a member of the book club but when I saw the readers struggle with difficult parts of the text where they had no background knowledge or experiences to fill in the gaps, my teacher persona wanted them to "get it." When they struggled understanding "a crazy dude in pajamas" and the meaning of a funny story Samir told a nurse in *Samir and Yonatan*, I made a conscious decision to tell them the "crazy dude" was a rabbi and the joke in the story hinged on how the Israelis had taken the Palestinian's land. These disclosures led to insightful metacognitive discussions by the readers.

I sent my transcripts of the book club sessions and reader interviews along with the themes I felt were present in the data to a peer debriefer, a professor at the University of Tennessee who does naturalistic qualitative research and specializes in literacy. She read several of my transcripts along with both of the international children's novels from the study. I was concerned about places in the transcripts where I took a leading tone in the discussion. My peer debriefer confirmed my observation about the sections of transcripts and I did not include those data in my results. My themes derived from the readers' responses isolated the comprehension strategies the readers used to interpret the text. My peer debriefer also confirmed that those strategies were present in the data but through our discussion of the actions of my readers on the text, I was able to refine my themes to show the unique ways the students interacted with texts from unfamiliar cultures.

I coded the following verbal units in the data transcripts: readers' use of their personal experiences, world knowledge, other texts, construction of synthetic scenarios; readers' statements expressing wonderings, evaluations, empathy, and motivation to read more about the characters and places in the two novels; and readers' comments explaining how they wrestled with narrative style, language, and unfamiliar cultural practices and events. All of the above categories of statements made by the readers were indicators of how the readers comprehended the two texts.

SUMMARY

This study was designed as a naturalistic, instrumental qualitative case study of the responses of seven ten-year old readers to two international children's novels. The twelve book club sessions where the readers met and discussed the novels were video taped and transcribed, yielding data for the study. Additional data was gathered from interviews conducted with the individual readers and notes the readers made in journals or on post-its in their books. The transcripts of book club sessions, reader interviews, and readers' notes were carefully studied and emerging themes were coded and categorized. The findings of the study are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine student responses to two international children's literature novels in order to view the processes students used as they created meaning from texts originally intended for readers of other cultures. Data derived from transcripts of videotapes of the twelve book club sessions and individual interviews, post-it notes participants made in their books, and journal entries chronicled their interaction with the text and each other as they interpreted these narratives dealing with story events outside the realm of their cultural experience. The ten-year old readers participating in this study encountered two narrative texts set in the Middle Eastern countries of Afghanistan, Israel, and Palestine.

The readers in this book club were average to above average readers and in the transcripts, I observed these readers successfully incorporating reading comprehension strategies that led them to both personal and corporate interpretations of the text. They visualized, predicted, summarized, questioned, made connections, used background knowledge, and synthesized text. Occasionally they openly commented about their own thinking process and how they came to their point of view, or about deterrents to understanding a particular part of the story. Overall comprehension of the plot and story events was apparent when reading the transcripts, but some of the cultural practices remained a topic of discussion throughout the book club sessions.

Those portions of transcripts and notes that reveal readers' processes to make meaning of the unfamiliar cultural practices are the focus of this study. Some of their statements indicated how the readers acted upon the text to create meaning through their own experiences, other texts, or synthesizing scenes based upon the texts or their own

lives. Other statements indicated the text acted upon the readers as it evoked expressions of “approval, disapproval, pleasure, shock; acceptance or rejection of the world that is being imaged” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 69), as well as, justification for events in the text. In some portions of the transcripts, the readers’ comments indicated their awareness of their transactions with the text, how they acted on the text or its effect on them. During this chapter, I will discuss the processes these readers used to create meaning for the two international narrative texts.

In the sections that follow I will present the different processes the readers used to create meaning while reading the two international children’s novels.

READERS CREATE MEANING

The readers employed different strategies to interpret the international children’s novels. Comments the readers made to express understanding of the story, characters, or cultural phenomena revealed their action on the text. As already stated, the readers effectively used strategies common to good readers but when they applied these strategies to the international texts these strategies were tailored in a way to fit the interpretive demands of the text. In the sections that follow, I present each process these readers demonstrated, and the supporting evidence for each process from the book club and interview transcripts.

Readers Evoke Personal Experiences

The Middle Eastern culture of the two novels was vastly different from the culture of the readers in this study but they still evoked personal experiences to help understand the motives of unfamiliar characters and events. Hannah, in an attempt to explain the

motives of the Taliban, did not use a first person voice to convey this connection but it is evident that she personally understood the behavior.

Hannah: Back to the Taliban. It is kind of complicated but the Taliban, they were upset and sometimes when you get upset you do mean things to people. They might be upset over something like maybe if they used to be good and they had a leader who died and now they are sad about that. And sometimes when you are sad, you do bad things. Like get mad and hit people and stuff like that.

Katie voiced a similar idea of retaliation as a motive for the Taliban's behavior toward Afghanistan: *I think that the Taliban are just trying to get like... That one day their houses or family members were bombed and they are just doing it back to other people.*

Samir, a Palestinian character, struggled with the death of his brother in *Samir and Yonatan* and doubted his father loved him as much as his brother, Fadi. Katie tried to help the group understand how Samir might feel his father loved his brother more through her personal connection.

Katie: I have a connection to where Samir thinks his dad loves Fadi more. Sometimes I think my mom and my dad love my brother more because they say yes to him and no to me for the same thing. And sometimes I feel like that, but then after a couple of hours I know they don't. Of course they are always going to love me but I sometimes feel like that because they are saying no to me and yes to my brother.

Because of her dad's past deployment to Iraq, Katie, also, connected in a personal way to the discussion of landmines as they were described in *The Breadwinner*.

Katie: My dad was in Iraq and he said that a couple of soldiers he knew had

stepped on things and been blew up. And I was getting really, really, worried about my dad. I did not want him blowing up and stuff. And finally I was praying for him and stuff.

Some of the readers felt they shared hospital experiences similar to Samir's. For Hannah a hospital stay *was so cool because I got to watch TV for hours at a time* and later she said *it's like room service*. Isaiah agreed because *you don't really have to work. When I was in the hospital I didn't have to do anything.*

Tzahi, one of the children on the Israeli hospital ward in *Samir and Yonatan*, behaved erratically and outwardly did not show any signs of illness. The group tried to explain his hyperactivity and many thought it could be the result of medication he might take. Paige did not agree with their idea that pain medication might make him hyperactive and shared this personal connection: *My mom and my brother take pain pills. When they take it, they get sleepy.* The group did not ever find a satisfying answer for Tzahi's behavior even after the text revealed his physical problem.

Readers Exert Their Knowledge of the World

The readers made a few connections to current events during the book club sessions. They had some general ideas about the countries in the books but tended to inject ideas about American and foreign history, Iraq, and the Iraq war in some of their connections to Afghanistan and Israel. This seemed to indicate their awareness of issues in this area of the world but lack of knowledge about the distinct countries in the texts. In one discussion about why the Taliban arrested Parvana's father Hannah connects to multiple events in history saying: *Like Hitler. He did a lot of bad things for no reason. And a lot of kings did things for no reason. Like chop off people's heads. One king had*

nine wives and chopped off all their heads. That is just bad. Caroline connects the Taliban to Saddam Hussein and Bloody Mary.

Caroline: The Taliban were like Saddam Hussein. Like Bloody Mary.

Hannah: Actually Bloody Mary was a queen who killed people.

Caroline: Who did not believe her beliefs like Saddam Hussein did. He killed people and cut off their heads practically who did not believe his beliefs. That is what the Taliban are doing. They are killing people who do not believe their beliefs.

In another discussion about the nature of the Taliban, Keisha says: *the Taliban is like Saddam Hussein. Instead of helping people, he beats them...*

The living conditions for the story characters were drastically different from those of the readers in this study. Parvana struggled to carry water buckets up stairs damaged by bombings because she was the only one in her family who could go outside due to Taliban regulations for women appearing in public. This prompted speculations about the availability of electricity in Afghanistan and Hannah's comment connecting the effects of war to a devastating event closer to home. She remarked: *It is kind of like Hurricane Katrina. They were without power for months.*

The day-to-day danger faced by the story characters was also out of the realm of these readers' experience. Samir's neighbor is shot while playing soccer by an unseen shooter and Isaiah connects to the incident with an act violence in the news: *That is kind of like that sniper in Virginia, who shot people but nobody ever saw him.*

Readers Connect to Other Texts

The group frequently posed text-to-text connections to help interpret these stories. The readers called upon a variety of text genres to illustrate the meaning of the stories and nature of characters as well as non print texts such as television and video games. Table 1 shows all the texts used by the readers to interpret narrative style. Table 2 displays the texts used to understand story events or cultural objects and Table 3 lists textual referents for characters or motives. Narnia was a common connection for both books. Chloe used this connection for *The Breadwinner* saying: *When she (Parvana) talked about the bombing, it made me think of the movie, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe because at the beginning there were bombs and stuff and they had to go hide.*

Harry Potter was another common connection to help readers interpret the stories. Hannah described the unfamiliar garments Afghanistan women were required to wear in public: *They really look like a dementor (an evil being in the Harry Potter books) except without the hood.* She used a dementor connection to illustrate her understanding of Samir's inner thoughts:

Hannah: Samir is always stuck in a world of nightmares. You know about his family and friends-really bad experiences. Kind of like a dementor. They suck out all your good thoughts, so there's no good things left inside. Really, he doesn't dwell on happiness. He is more of the depressing type. I think he has depression. He needs to get medicine.

When Isaiah did not understand what a "cupboard" was in *Samir and Yonatan*, Hannah told him it was: *like the vanishing cupboard in Harry Potter.*

Table 1

Comparisons to Interpret Textual Style			
Reader	Comparison	Type	Used to Describe
Hannah	Goosebumps	Fantasy	Book style
Hannah	Nancy Drew	Mystery Fiction	Book
Isaiah	Books with multiple endings	Open Ended Texts	Book
Hannah	Voldemort	Fantasy	Book
Katie	Willow	Movie	Story/Taliban
Hannah	Narnia books	Fantasy series	Order of sequels
Hannah	Star Wars	Movies	Order of sequels
Hannah	Willie Wonka	Fantasy book	Flashbacks in S& Y
Hannah		Glossary	Narghile
Hannah	Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince	Book	Ending of book
Isaiah	Johnny ????	Movie	To explain sequel nature (end written first)
Hannah	Happily Never After	Movie	Ending
Hannah	The Secret Garden	Fiction Book	Sequels
Hannah	Nancy Drew/Hardy Boys	Books	Narrative style
Hannah	Nancy Drew	Mystery	Narrative style

Table 2

Comparisons Used to Interpret Story Events or Cultural Objects			
Reader	Comparison	Type	Used to Describe
Chloe	Grim Reaper	Fantasy Figure	Burqa
Hannah	Ski mask	Object	Burqa
Chloe	Lion, Witch, Wardrobe	Fantasy Story	Bombing
Hannah	Amazing Grace	TV show	Landmines
Hannah	Home Alone	Movie	Taliban/punishment scene
Hannah	Bible School Oil Lamps	Realia	Lighting Sources In Afghanistan
Hannah	Dementor	Fantasy	Burqa
Chloe	Grim reaper	Fantasy	Burqa
Isaiah	Unnamed movie		Boys dress as girls to escape

Table 2, Continued

Isaiah	One Grain of Rice	ICL Book	Character tricks leader
Hannah	Unnamed book where Girl in India fakes her identity earn food for family	Realistic Fiction	Parvana disguising herself as a boy
Hannah	Sandman	Character in Spiderman movie	Accident in hospital where vase is broken
Paige	Unnamed Movie	Lifetime movie	Razia's abuse by her father
Hannah	Raccoon in Over the Hedge	Movie	Samir/Adnan looking through garbage
Hannah	Highlights for Children	Magazine	Tzahi's brother playing a comb covered with paper
Hannah	Nightmare room in Goosebumps	Fantasy book	Samir's life
Hannah		Map	Areas of Israel and Palestine
Hannah		Glossary	Narghile
Hannah	Taliban in The Breadwinner	ICL Book	Israelis taking land from the Palestinians
Isaiah	Virginia Sniper	Current event	Shooting in Palestine
Hannah	Tycoon	Video Game	Building virtual world
Chloe	Bridge to Terabithia	Book Realistic Fiction	Getting away from problems through imagination
Isaiah/Caroline/Hannah	Narnia	Fantasy	Getting away from problems to a fantasy world
Hannah	Pandora's Box	Myth	Samir and Yonatan created world with hope

Table 3

Comparisons Used to Understand People or Motives			
Reader	Comparison	Type	Used to Understand
Keisha	Cinderella	Fairy tale	Parvana
Caroline	Robber		Taliban
Hannah	Snape	Fantasy	Nooria
Hannah	Hitler	Historical Figure	Taliban
Hannah	King with 9 wives	Figure in History	Taliban
Caroline	BloodyMary	History	Taliban
Caroline	Saddam Hussein	History	Taliban
Hannah	Dr. Jeckell/Mr. Hyde	Fantasy	Nooria
Hannah	TV Show about guys getting sucked up in to a computer game	Fantasy	Taliban
Isaiah	3-D	Cartoon character	Taliban
Katie	Willow	Movie	Story/Taliban
Hannah	Mummy in Abbot and Costello movie	Movie	Taliban
Hannah	Voldemort	Fantasy character	Razia's father
Hannah	Big Fat Liar	Movie	Tzahi's brother
Hannah	Nightmare room in Goosebumps	Fantasy book	Samir's life

Hannah used text connections to help explain how the story in *Samir and Yonatan* was revealed to the readers. This text was very different from the first novel the group read because it was not written with a sequential plot. Katie expressed difficulty understanding the story until her mother told her that Samir was having a “flashback.” Hannah offered Katie this text connection to clarify the narrative style: *Like Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. He kept having dreams, flashbacks.* Hannah compared the narrative construction of *The Breadwinner* to *Goosebumps* and *Nancy Drew* because the chapters ended in cliffhangers that were not resolved until the next chapter. She also used *Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde* to describe Parvana’s sister, Nooria saying: *One minute she is mean to her and the next day she is really, really nice to her.*

Chloe applied the scene from *Bridge to Terabithia* (Paterson, 1977), where Jess and Leslie enter their make-believe kingdom, in her connection to explain the virtual world Samir and Yonatan created on Mars. Her connection prompted a more detailed, descriptive connection of Narnia to the virtual world in the following transcript unit:

Chloe: When you said about getting away from his troubles, it made me think about Bridge to Terabithia because when he swung across on the rope he was a conqueror and stuff.

Caroline: Like Chloe was saying Bridge to Terabithia is a good example

Isaiah: Or Narnia

Caroline: Narnia?

Isaiah: It is not really created by them but it is a world...

Hannah: It is like Aslan. Aslan created it from his own mind. He made the animals talk.

Isaiah: They go through the wardrobe. And they were in that land.

Hannah: If they walked far enough across Narnia they would be in the Wintry Forest.

Catherine: What is the connection between the worlds?

Hannah: They went to get away from the war and the fighting. To get away from everything bad.

Hannah offered a text-to-text connection for *Samir and Yonatan*. Her connection begins as an expression of her overall impression of the book but changes at the end to include the safe and peaceful environment Samir and Yonatan create in their virtual world.

Hannah: I have something to say. This book kind of reminds me about this other book. There is this box that holds every bad thing in the world. She got so curious that she opened the box.

Catherine: Pandora's Box?

Hannah: Yeah, and everything flew out and only one thing was left in the box. It was hope. So it was hope.

Katie: That is not bad.

Hannah: Yeah, but it kind of reminded me of the story because everything bad was going on and he (Samir) could kind of escape from the world like there was hope out there. There was hope in the world there.

This connection was a stark contrast to an earlier text connection Hannah made when Isaiah describes his concept of Samir's daydream world. Isaiah contends: *It is more like a*

nightmare world. Because his brother dies. Hannah replies: Like the nightmare room in Goosebumps. It is a room where nightmares come true and stuff.

Readers Create Synthetic Constructions

The readers' personal life experiences often were not appropriate fits for the gaps they perceived the text but they tried to relate to the story characters and events by creatively molding their experiences and prior knowledge to understand these stories. Through out the discussion of both novels, the readers offered solutions to the problems the characters faced and the conflicts of the countries where they lived. These *solutions* were a form of synthesis because the students endeavored to create scenarios where the characters were safe and happy. The endings of both of the texts left the readers wanting the story to continue. Based on their understanding of the characters and their acquired knowledge of the situations the characters faced, the readers formulated their own sequels to the stories. I categorized these statements as synthesis due to their innovative quality.

Synthetic Solutions for Story Problems.

In *The Breadwinner*, the readers in the book club responded to the idea that most of the Afghan people were unable to read, including the soldiers. They offered some ideas to remedy illiteracy:

Caroline: There is one reason the men couldn't learn how to read. They were fighting. The women could be taught how to read. They could be home schooled.

Then when the men came home they could teach them to read.

Katie: I think it should be okay for the parents to go to school and learn how to read. They could teach their children and the children could teach other children.

Hannah offered a solution for the Middle East conflict: *I think they should just split the land fifty-fifty. Like the Jews would get fifty percent and the Palestinians would get fifty percent.* This discussion was continued during Session 9 as the group compared the motives of the Taliban to the fighting between the Israelis and Palestinians. Hannah held on to her solution despite some other ideas the group members presented.

Hannah: Like the Taliban people who blow up a house when they feel like it. They are like the Taliban people.

Catherine: How?

Hannah: They blow things up, arrest people for no reason. They want to take over a country...literally. They want to take over all the land.

Chloe: What are they going to do with all the land?

Hannah: Make their country bigger. They should just split it in half.

Caroline: They could do that. Just split it fifty-fifty, like Hannah was saying.

Isaiah: Or they could just sell...

Caroline: Are they fighting to the death?

Chloe: Like whoever dies first, loses?

Hannah: Where is that map? (Looks for the map.)

Isaiah: They should just send the Palestinians to Arabia.

Hannah: I want to see. (She points to the map.) All these stripes are where they pushed the Palestinians to. Literally, you have to walk through Israel to get to parts of Palestine.

Isaiah: They could go to Syria or Jordan.

Catherine: Do you think those countries would take those people?

Isaiah: They might.

Hannah: I really doubt it. I think if they split the land kind of like this (moves finger across the map), it would be solved.

Hannah was convinced her solution for the Middle East conflict would work based on her understanding of the mathematical process. *I think you can split everything in half. You can split the number one in half to one-half. You can split three to one and one-half.* In her interview, she took a judgmental stance when she restated her resolution for the two countries:

They were sworn enemies. That is really bad. I think it is crazy that they did not split the land...I would split the land. That way the Jewish people and the Palestinian people would each have the same. No more, no less.

Chloe utilized an event in *The Breadwinner* as a basis for her fanciful scheme to get rid of the Taliban. Parvana's mother and Mrs. Weera were going to start a magazine, but it would have to be sent to Pakistan for publishing and then smuggled back across the Afghanistan border for distribution. The group thought that it was a terrible risk if they were caught but Chloe constructed a scenario that she thought would take care of the situation.

Chloe: And then y'all were talking about the magazine being a big risk. They could put like by the Taliban. Like for the author they could put by The Taliban.

Catherine: So you are saying...

Chloe: They would be looking at each other and they might kill each other and then they would be gone!

Synthetic Sequels to Continue the Stories.

The second international children's text, *Samir and Yonatan*, did not have a sequel. This prompted the readers to create their own scenarios for a sequel. Hannah, Isaiah, and Chloe offered ideas for the next story that are as unique as the readers proposing them.

Hannah: I think Samir becomes a soldier and Yonatan becomes a soldier for the other side and they fight up against each other like Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader. It is kind of like they are two friends but they are still fighting over land when they grow up or something. Samir and Yonatan become soldiers and Yonatan is for the other side and they battle one to one.

Isaiah: I think pretty much the same thing happens but it is just they come up with a treaty like thingy and they come up with more rights.

Catherine: You think that Samir and Yonatan would form a treaty and form some kind of alliance. That would be your sequel?

Hannah: Or it would be Tzahi.

Chloe: It might be that Razia runs into Samir and Razia runs into Yonatan and they meet in Paris and they go home and have a party and invite Ludmilla.

Hannah: If I could live anywhere it would be in Egypt or Greece so I could go to the Parthenon.

Isaiah: After the treaty there would be people that don't think that the treaty should have been done and they have another war.

Hannah: What is good about this book is that it does just leave you there and you can imagine what is going to happen after the end. The way you want it.

Isaiah and Hannah's innovative comments about the events that might occur in the future of these characters suggest they may not see the possibility of a peaceful settlement but by continuing the story with their imaginations, they are in control of how the book ends.

Yonatan reads all the time in the story and tells Samir that his problem is that "you always live in this world." Hannah observation that Samir doesn't read leads to a discussion of books Samir might read. Hannah begins the following transcript unit about books Samir might write if he did not have access to books:

Hannah: Or he could write his own books and read them. That is what some people do.

Catherine: What do you think he would write about?

Hannah: His brother dying. He is obsessed with that subject. I tell you obsessed!

Paige: He might write about his life. The way it is now.

Hannah: Or what it might be like if his brother hadn't died. Or if his dad talked to him. What it would be like if he wasn't in the hospital. Or make believe, knights and castles. Throwing pies in people's faces!

Synthetic Scenarios to Interpret Story Motives and Events.

When the readers did not have a personal experience or textual connection that seemed to adequately explain phenomena in the text, they concocted imaginary scenarios. The imaginary scenarios were based on events in their own lives, personal knowledge, or even incidents in the text. The readers often placed themselves in unusual hypothetical situations to illustrate motives or events in the stories.

At the beginning of *The Breadwinner*, the Taliban enter Parvana's home and take her father away to prison. Katie reacted to the imprisonment of Parvana's father with this scenario:

I would probably try ... if one of my family members was in jail...to do something bad so they would put me in jail with them. And like try to figure a way to get out or something, If they had not really done anything bad.

Katie's remark prompted a similar reaction by Chloe who went into more detail about her actions: *Just like Katie, I think I would do something bad to get in jail to be with my family. I would take a bomb and throw it at the Taliban's homes or something.*

Parvana and her friend, Shauzia, made money by digging for bones in a graveyard and selling them to a bone broker. This was outside the realm of experience for the readers in the book club. The readers constructed an imaginary scenario in the next transcript unit that illustrated their thinking about the event in the text.

Katie: I have a question: What if a person's husband died and he got buried in the bone yard and the little kids were digging him up and the wife bought the bones back.

Hannah: But she would not know if they were his.

Katie: What if he had a particular spot or something.

Caroline: He could have had a particular bone in his body.

Hannah: like he might have had 6 fingers. Cause in the Guinness Book of World Records some people literally have another finger between here and here.

Caroline: Or a particular cheek bone.

Keisha: or the way that he died. His skull.....Like when they dug up some of the skulls they found where some had a place on them....

Hannah: Actually all skulls grin because the way your teeth formation. It is just creepy.

Chloe: If you got shot in the head you would have a hole in your skull. You could tell by that.

Hannah: And then what if he got his head chopped off!

Chloe also put herself in the graveyard and expressed how she would feel if her bones were dug up. *If I was in the ground...like a body....I wouldn't want to get dugged up...It would disturb my "Rest in Peace!"*

Chloe and Isaiah constructed similar scenarios to clarify their understanding of landmines and how they worked. Chloe phrases her construction as a question: *So are you talking about if there was a landmine there and I stepped on it I would blow up. Would it still be there for another person? Would there still be a bomb there ready for the next person?* Isaiah continues the same scenario with his observation about the destructive potential of landmines when he said: *If that was a landmine and Chloe stepped on it, we would all blow up because we are so close to it.*

The readers imposed the story into their lives by pretending to be in Afghanistan in two sessions. The first pretend scenario happened after a loud clap of thunder rattled the windows in our meeting room. They reacted to the thunder in the following way:

Hannah: Is that thunder? Yeah, I won't have swim practice this afternoon.

Chloe: What is that?

Catherine: Thunder

Chloe: No, we are in Afghanistan and that is bombs outside!

They all proceeded to squeal with exaggerated, pretend fear after Chloe's remark. Again during Session 12, our last meeting to wrap up both books, when Isaiah made a disparaging remark about the Taliban, Chloe looked at him and warned: *The Taliban will hunt you down.*

Katie invented two scenes based on her experience the previous evening to explain two different remarks in *Samir and Yonatan* about a rabbit. Samir thinks about how his friends called him "Rabbit" indicating he was not brave, but Samir thinks a rabbit uses its speed to run away because it does not have any other way of protecting itself. Katie offered this scene to the group to explain her interpretation of Samir's remarks:

I went to this house last night with my mom. She was helping Mrs. R and I played with her little girl. She said they had rabbits in their yard and they need a cat or a dog that hunts rabbits to get rid of them because her mom hates animals. And maybe he had like rabbit friends outside of his home and so he liked to go outside and feed the rabbits and play with them and stuff and maybe he wanted to name himself Rabbit because maybe they got themselves killed by like hunters or something or dogs.

When Fadi's pet rabbit was killed by tear gas, Samir and his brother, Fadi, thought their neighbor's goat may have survived due to the milk in its body. This caused them to climb up on their neighbor's roof to steal some milk from the goat. Katie constructed this scenario to explain that story event:

But also maybe his neighbor, maybe it does not matter to them if he gets their milk or not. Maybe they just let him when they are not looking. Because maybe they know they don't have any milk and they need some milk and they can't buy it because it is too much and they are being really good neighbors. And they know that if the soldiers see him that he will be arrested. And maybe their neighbor only has one person living in her house. That is her or him and maybe he has too much milk.

Hannah and Caroline attempt to explain the Taliban's motives for bombing and killing. Caroline created an incredible scenario in her response to Hannah.

Hannah: I think that at one time they were religious scholars but over the years they started believing stuff out of other religions that was bad like violence was good, thinking you should do what ever you want even if it involves killing somebody. So they don't really care.

Catherine: Are you saying they feel have a right to kill someone?

Hannah: They feel like they have a right to do anything. They feel like they have a right to rule the country or the world.

Caroline: Like Hannah was saying they feel like they have a right for anything but just feeling that you have a right could lead to some really bad things. Say I accidentally ran over a dog on accident and then I did it again and said it was on accident. I feel like I have the right to run over a dog on accident.

Catherine: When you meant to do it?

Caroline: The Taliban may be doing everything on purpose but saying they meant to do it on accident.

In Session 5, Hannah continued this effort of describing the Taliban with another constructed scene but this one offered some comic relief to the serious subject.

No they are trying to make everything look like them like...schools are going to be named ...like ...if a Taliban's name is John Smith then the school would be named "John Smith's School on How to Become a Taliban—a Bad Guy." Also, I would name the school "How to Become a Super Bad Guy Whose Head Is As Big As Mars."

The readers offered many different explanations for Tzahi's behavior in Samir and Yonatan. Caroline constructed two different scenarios that featured herself but both hovered on the realm of fantasy.

Caroline: Say this: I slept for 5 days and I woke up all hyper.

Hannah: You can't sleep for 5 days.

Caroline: I am just using this as an example. Let's say I slept for another 5 days. I am awake for 1 whole day then I am calm. That could be happen to him.

Caroline continues to speculate on Tzahi's behavior in another constructed scenario and again uses herself taking an excessive amount of medication as an example.

Some people do act naughty or bad if they take drugs. But some make you act better. Let's say I have to take 5 pills a day. And one makes me act bad for a day.

Readers Wonder About Narrative World

The readers in this study generated many questions during our book club discussions. Most of the questions were prompted by their curiosity about the country, customs, or culture in the texts. Some of these questions could be answered because they were factual in nature. Those questions did not affect the readers' interpretation of the

stories and were more indicative of their desire to truly understand everything they could about the setting. *What are their churches like in Afghanistan? Do they have pets in Afghanistan? Do they have electricity in Afghanistan?* The questions about Afghan churches and electricity were answered through the knowledge of the group and further reading in the stories. The readers speculated that there probably weren't many pets due to the landmines or goats and camels might be pets.

A few of the answerable questions did impact the readers' level of understanding about the stories. Some of the most significant questions dealt with nationalities and the religious identities of people in the story. *What are Jews and where are they? About the soldier that arrested people and stuff...were they Israelis? Who are the Arabs?* The identity of Jews and Muslims and knowledge of the discord between the Israelis and Palestinians was an important factor for the conflict in *Samir and Yonatan*. This information was never explicitly stated to the readers. The omission of this information created textual "gaps" for these readers. They were unequipped to fill the gaps due to their limited knowledge about the conflict between these Middle East countries. These questions indicated the readers perceived the significance of these relationships and recognized their lack of background knowledge as they constructed an interpretation for the text. The questions were a significant part of their interpretation process.

Other questions were not so easy to answer. The group struggled with understanding customs and laws. Kate posed the question: *If the Taliban made a law that women had to bring a note outside and no one in the Taliban could read, why did they make it a rule?* Chloe did not understand the marriage arrangements. She asked: *How can they get married if they are not allowed to go out and meet? Is your dad going to get out*

and walk you around? The group discussed how the Taliban burned books and Isaiah queried: *How can they not like books when they can't read?* The readers were horrified to read a description of the Taliban cutting off the hands to punish thieves. This generated Hannah's question: *Would the Taliban want that to happen to them? 'Cause the Taliban stole too!* Chloe wanted to know: *What will they do with the arms?* While the readers never arrived at answers for these questions, their exploration of these ideas expanded the collective knowledge base of the group. Katie's question about the Taliban law requiring a note for women to be in public without a male escort prompted a discussion about gender roles. Chloe's question about meeting potential mates prompted Hannah and Isaiah to share their knowledge about marriage customs in other countries. Due to the open ended nature of these inquiries the readers were not able to make definitive conclusions but their discussion around the inquiries yielded few ideas for the group to consider and possibly take to other experiences with texts.

Readers Evaluate

According to Rosenblatt (1995), readers may “ponder on questions of right or wrong, or admirable or antisocial qualities, of justifiable or unjustifiable actions (p. 16) and pass judgment on characters. This was evident in this study as the readers made judgmental statements about characters, actions they perceived as unfair or denigrating to others, and the narratives' structures. They also voiced evaluative statements about the stories. At times the judgments were pronounced as an expression of injustice but at other times the readers' judgmental expressions were toward something they identified as different or odd in the cultural setting.

The Breadwinner presented a picture of a bleak existence for women and children living in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. The readers critiqued the Taliban and their rules harshly in all of the discussions. Caroline spoke out against girls being forced to quit school while boys still attended saying: *It just was unfair. The girls should get to go to school.* The group analyzed the Taliban's intentions and concluded:

Isaiah: They're not really good like they say they were. They say they are bringing a better life to everybody but they don't. They just abuse their power.

Keisha: All the Taliban is doing is making them do things that are not necessary. Like making them grow beards. That is not necessary. The only necessary thing there is making the women stay inside because of the bombing.

Chloe: The reason her father went to jail was because he went to school in England. The Taliban doesn't like that because they are against England and America. And now they are trying to take over everything.

All the readers agreed that the Taliban did not have the best interest of the people in mind but Keisha interpreted their reason for restricting women as a safety precaution.

The book club members judged other Taliban mandates as "crazy," "strange," "bad," "absurd," or "weird." The readers criticized the Taliban's regulations dealing with personal appearance in public. Hannah declared, *All the rules are bad... women were ordered to obscure every part of their body.* Caroline's response when she read the Taliban ordered all men to grow a beard was: *That is crazy that every man had to grow a beard. If you are just sixteen you would have to grow a beard.* Keisha thought men might not want to grow a beard "because they itch." To Hannah the law was "absurd...bad because some men look weird with beards."

Keisha perceived the Taliban's injustice toward women and children but offered this argument to justify her position:

I didn't like the Taliban's rules cause the women couldn't do anything. Like Parvana's mother was really out of shape and her sister. They couldn't go outside. Ever since Parvana turned into a boy, they could do that. If the Taliban didn't make that rule then everyone would be in shape. Afghanistan would look better because there would be people working on buildings.

She did not approve of the Taliban confining women and girls to their homes. Keisha interpreted the restrictions placed on women as detrimental to their health rather than discrimination against women.

The readers responded to the reported illiteracy of most of Afghanistan during the book club. Hannah commented, *Most of the soldiers couldn't read. That was just wrong!* Isaiah based his evaluation upon the inconsistency he saw in requiring women to have a note from a man if they were in public without a male escort. *It was pretty weird that they would ask for a note from a man for a woman to be outside and they can't even read it.*

They were incredulous that the Taliban burned books. Hannah voiced her opinion about this:

I think it is really bad. You shouldn't burn books because some people may like those books. It is really bad cause if the Taliban didn't like them they should think of other people. Also, it was because they were books from a foreign country. Like England and stuff. They were from schools. Private schools and they didn't like that.

The readers voiced their overall opinions of Afghanistan after reading *The Breadwinner*. Based on the fighting in Afghanistan, Isaiah determined, *It must not be a good place to live*. Hannah brought up the religious nature of the Taliban but arrived at the same conclusion as Isaiah:

The Taliban were just there to take over the country. I don't even think they were real religious scholars... Good religion is about teaching people to make the world a better place and be better. But they make Afghanistan a bad place.

Later in the same discussion Isaiah restated his position: *It could have been the old Taliban that was really good but then they could have been taken over... So now it is just a bad place to live in Afghanistan*. Keisha shared Isaiah's feelings when she said, *I think the Taliban are messing up Afghanistan even more*. The group's negative attitude toward the Taliban escalated when they perceived threats toward children. Hannah talked about the way the Taliban had bombed Afghanistan and added this comment: *Also I think the Taliban are bad because they wanted to kill children with landmines. They disguised them like toys*. Isaiah agreed, *It is wrong to do that*.

One of the more graphic scenes in *The Breadwinner* depicted the Taliban punishing thieves by cutting off their hands. Caroline declared it to be "cruel" but commented *you know they might still do that in Afghanistan*. Chloe wrote a note in her book about the incident: *I can't believe they are cutting people's arms off just because they are theifs (sic). They are killers. What should we do to them?* Hannah's commentary was: *Disgusting. Would the Taliban want that to happen to them? 'Cause the Taliban stole, too*. Isaiah was a little more matter of fact and his comment expressed his idea that

different countries do things in different ways. *'Cause if one of the Taliban got caught that is what they would do to him. That's their culture and how they do it.*

The readers encountered the cultural custom of arranged marriage in the text. Their comments indicated that they accepted it as a part of the culture and did not judge it in a negative way. They seemed to view it simply as different. Parvana arrives home one afternoon and is told her sister is getting married to a cousin in another town. This prompts the following discussion:

Paige: I think it is weird that they are getting married.

Katie: I think it is weird, like if they have only met once in their life, why would they want to get married?

Hannah: Cause the father and the mother kind of choose.

When the discussion continued a little later in the session, the readers presented reasons for the marriage from the Afghan character's perspective.

Isaiah: She probably had to.

Katie: One, she is getting too old and she can't go outside without a male escorting her.

Keisha: I think she probably did not want to disappoint her parents because they had already booked the marriage for her.

Hannah: Cause he lived in Mazur and she thought the Taliban had not attacked there, but they did.

Their explanations for the marriage indicated a level of understanding about the lack of women's control over their own lives in that culture but the comments were not from a judgmental stance.

Only one scene in *The Breadwinner* prompted the group to see the Taliban from a different perspective. In this incident, Parvana was hired to read a letter for a Taliban soldier, whose wife had died. The soldier cried prompting the readers in the group to say that the Taliban must have feelings too. Katie wrote a note that said: *I now see the Taliban has a sad side not just a bad side. I felt very bad. First I did not like them but now I feel sorry.*

Samir and Yonatan did not elicit many evaluative statements toward culture, countries or people. Hannah offered an evaluation summarizing the relationship between Samir and Tzahi at the end of the book.

Hannah: He wants to remember that a Jewish boy isn't being mean to him. He standing there with the enemy peeing into a sandbox. That is weird. They are not all bad.

Catherine: Tell me more

Hannah: Kind of like everything has a dark side and everything has a good side.

Isaiah voiced a similar judgment during his interview when he said: *Just because it is different doesn't mean it is bad. The culture could be good or bad.*

Readers Empathize

Empathy is the ability to understand or identify with someone. The readers in this study showed feelings toward the characters that could be categorized into two different types of empathy. The first type of empathy was a simple expression of the feelings evoked by the characters or their situation. The readers engaged in the second type of empathy when they identified with a character to the point of understanding that

character's experience. Identification with a character meant the reader was placing herself in the character's situation and experiencing similar emotions.

Empathy as Simple Expressions of Feeling

The readers often expressed their feelings for the characters in the stories. (See Table 4.) The characters had no control over the world in which they lived and their existence at times was precarious. *I feel sorry* was the most common emotion evoked by the events in the stories. Some readers also expressed a sense of fear for the characters when they faced unknown dangers. This type of empathy extended beyond the stories for Hannah and Paige who expressed feelings during their interviews for the people living in Afghanistan and Israel today.

Empathy as Character Identification

When the readers put themselves in the place of the character and conveyed how they would feel or what they would do when faced with the character's dilemma, they engaged in a deeper level of empathy (Louie, 2005). Katie and Chloe showed this kind of empathy for Parvana when her father was put in prison. They both developed scenarios for what they would do to be with their father. Isaiah expressed his personal discomfort if he had to wear a burqa when he stated: *I think it would be hard to breathe. How did they breathe with something over their face?* Paige put herself in Shauzia's place and thought about how she would feel if she were separated from her family: *If I were Shauzia, I would be sad to leave my family even if they were fighting all the time and stuff. I would sad.* (A complete list of these responses is in Table 5.)

These empathetic statements illustrated the depth of connection the book club readers developed with the characters from vastly different countries. Their interpretation

Table 4

Empathy Shown As Expressions of Feeling		
Reader	Character	Empathetic Statement
Hannah	Parvana	I felt sorry for her because she had to live in a smaller and smaller house.
Hannah	Parvana	I felt sorry because she did not have any friends.
Keisha	Parvana	It must have hurt when they went all the way down to the jail and back.
Hannah	Taliban Solider	He never really knew what the letter said and then Parvana read it to him. Anyway it was sad.
Katie	Taliban Solider	I now see the Taliban has a sad side not just a bad side. Ifelt very bad. First I did not like them but now I feel sorry.
Chloe	Homa	I think it was pretty sad when she told about her parents and her brother. (They were killed by the Taliban.)
Katie	Homa	I thought when she heard the lady crying in the dark, without a burqa on her, I felt really sorry for her because I felt something bad had happened to her. I was thinking like a Taliban hurt her or something and then chased her and she tried to hide.
Katie	Samir	I feel sorry for him. (When his mother can't come to the hospital to see him.)
Katie	Samir	I felt really sorry for him because he wasn't trying to do anything wrong. All he was trying to do was to help his friend.
Hannah	Characters in both books	It makes me feel bad that there are kids that are trapped with enemies. It makes you feel bad for those people cause their country was attacked by the Taliban.
Paige	Characters in both books	Sad because I was thinking about the kids in Afghanistan and Israel, and the kids in the Jews hospital and things like that.

Table 5

Empathy Shown As Character Identification		
Reader	Character	Empathetic Statement
Katie	Parvana	I would probably try if one of my family members was in jail to do something bad so they would put me in jail with them.
Chloe	Parvana	Just like Katie, I think I would do something bad to get in jail to be with my family.
Isaiah	Afghanistan Women	I think it would be hard to breath. It doesn't seem like it would be very comfortable.
Paige	Homa	I was scared for Homa to walk out without her burqa in the middle of the night because I thought the soldiers were going to be watching around and like she doesn't have a burqa on and stuff. So I was afraid for all that part.
Paige	Shauzia	If I were Shauzia, I would be sad to leave my family even if they were fighting all the time and stuff. I would be sad.
Caroline	Samir	If my brother got killed I would still love him. Even if he was dead.

of the story took them beyond understanding at times to the point where they showed true concern or shared emotions with the characters.

Readers Express Motivation to Read

From the beginning of the book club sessions, the readers expressed a desire to read more. As the study progressed the readers conveyed their desire to continue meeting to read and discuss books. The book club members developed strong ties to the characters in both books. At the conclusion of each novel the readers speculated on what would happen to the characters in the future. I informed them that Deborah Ellis had written a sequel to *The Breadwinner* and at the beginning of Session 5, Katie asked: *Do you think that, like we gave you some money you could order the other books?* The group continued to wonder about characters in *The Breadwinner* prompting this conversation:

Hannah: Does it reveal her true identity in the next book? Do you find out in the next book...the next book?

Catherine: That remains a mystery. As far as I know there isn't a fourth book. The reason she wrote the second and third books about Parvana was that her readers wrote and asked her about Parvana.

Hannah: We will write her a letter a day for a year until she writes another book.

Katie: We will write her a letter, a strongly worded letter.

Hannah: WRITE MORE BOOKS!

Readers Acknowledge Wrestling With Text Demands

During the book sessions and individual interviews, the readers referred to their process of understanding the stories and commented on deterrents to understanding

specific parts of the two texts. Their metacognitive statements addressed the readers' ability to understand the narrative style of the texts, language, and events tied to cultural differences. In these statements the readers acknowledge their transaction with the text and their awareness of the way they acted on the text to create meaning. The statements also illustrate how the text acted on them by eliciting confusion or misunderstandings.

Readers Wrestle With Narrative Style

In the first text, *The Breadwinner*, a third person narrator unfolded the story events in a linear plot. This straightforward method of storytelling was more easily understood as noted in Katie's comparison to the narrative style of *Samir and Yonatan* that conveyed much of the story through Samir's first person flashbacks. *I like The Breadwinner more because it makes more sense. It comes right out saying, "I said; he said; they said." This one, I was so confused about who was talking. Was it a boy or a girl?*

In the same book club session, Hannah expressed her basic understanding of a first-person narrative style but did not seem to grasp an unreliable narrator.

Paige: Who was saying this?

Hannah: That was Samir. In this book it is kind of like in his body. Point of view.

Catherine: Point of view?

Hannah: Yeah, it is his perspective. He is telling the story, not like in The Breadwinner. Parvana is not telling the story. It is the author. But in this story Samir is telling the story.

Catherine: Does that mean we can believe everything he says?

Hannah: We should unless it would be like he was lying to himself.

Paige explained Samir's limited knowledge of hospital procedures, like using an IV to administer fluids to patients unable to eat, saying: *That made me know he had never been in the hospital. Maybe he is just a little kid that doesn't know about that kind of tubes.*

The readers were cognizant about the extra demands the nonlinear text placed on their comprehension. They questioned the purpose for telling a story in a nonlinear style and then supplied their own conclusions.

Hannah: But about his brother. How come it doesn't tell how he died right at the beginning? That would be easier.

Catherine: That is just the author's... (interrupted by Hannah)

Hannah: That is just the author being mean to us.

Catherine: You think?

Katie: He is just making us think.

Hannah: Making us want to read the book a bit more.

In that discussion, the readers intuited an author's presence in the text in the way they connect the author's decision to present the story in flashbacks to behaviors they speculate the author wanted to elicit from the readers of the text.

The narrative style factored into Hannah's preference *Samir and Yonatan* over *The Breadwinner*. Hannah stated: *I like Samir and Yonatan better. It did not rush right into the story. Like a mystery book. You had to put together clues... In The Breadwinner, they just told you.* Hannah acknowledged the two texts required different thought processes for interpretation based on the way each narrative was written.

Readers Wrestle With Language

The readers identified unfamiliar words and names as a source of confusion in reading the international children's texts. This complaint was more pronounced at the beginning of each book when the readers were introduced to the characters. Katie shared her frustration at the end of the first session saying: *All the weird names and words confused me about the story. Like the ones I couldn't pronounce very well. Like I didn't know who they were and stuff.* This initial confusion cleared as we read but Katie voiced the same criticism in her interview.

Katie: I thought all the different words in both of the books confused me.

Sometimes when it said Ludmilla, I thought it was Razia. It did not make sense at all. Now since we have read for a couple of days, I am beginning to understand it. I think that the reason I didn't understand it was because they were in a different language and they were from a different country.

Isaiah found parts difficult to understand but did not attribute that to the "weird" words. He blamed the writing or *the way it is described* as a source of difficulty. The specific section he cited was a description of divine punishment as *falling into a snake pit* so it was not a language issue. Isaiah understood the vocabulary in the description but did not have a concept of the image behind the description.

Readers Wrestle With Unfamiliar Cultural Practices and Events

At a few points in the text, the book club expressed difficulty understanding characters or events that required specific cultural knowledge. There was a vague understanding how Samir might feel frightened by Tzahi but the underlying cause for the fear eluded them.

Paige: It is like Samir is scared of Tzahi.

Catherine: Why do you think he would be scared of Tzahi?

Paige: 'Cause...I don't know.

Catherine: What did you read or do you know that makes you think Samir is scared of Tzahi?

Paige: 'Cause his brother is a soldier.

Catherine: You understand they are on opposite sides because Tzahi is an Israeli and Samir is a Palestinian.

Katie: Maybe his brother taught him how to be mean.

Samir was obviously frightened of Tzahi in the text that prompted this discussion. The fear registered with the readers but they were unable to discern the underlying cause for the fear even after I supplied pertinent information about the characters.

When the readers' specifically recognized an event in the story that depended upon cultural knowledge they did not possess, they brought it up for discussion in our sessions. The following transcript unit depicts one of these instances where the group works together to create a meaning. Their collaborative attempt is unsuccessful because, Samir, an unreliable child narrator, added an extra layer of difficulty to the interpretation task. I finally supplied the cultural information to help them fill in the gap in the story. The small piece of information I supplied allowed them to identify Samir's lack of knowledge as the partial source of their interpretation difficulty.

Paige: On page 30, I was wondering. It says that sometimes I see a man with a yar...

Catherine: Yarmulke.

Paige: yarmulke going down the corridor. He wears white pajamas and has a biggish belly and sings to himself...

Catherine: Yiboneh bais hamikdosh...bimheira beyomaimu...

Paige: Yeah, like that. I thought that that dude must have just woke up because he had his pajamas on. I am wondering what's wrong with him cause he just got up out of his hospital room. I don't know what is wrong with him...something.

Katie: Maybe he is deaf and he can't hear so he doesn't know when people say no to him.

Hannah: But they have sign language.

Katie: But what if he doesn't know sign language. Maybe they don't teach sign language.

Catherine: What do you think?

Hannah: About the guy. About the yarmulke. That is a thing that Jewish guys put on their heads....Anyway yarmulkes are what they have to wear in a synagogue and they are usually black.

Catherine: They can be all different colors. A man in our church got one in Israel. It is embroidered. When we went to a worship service at a temple in Nashville, he wore his yarmulke. Back to this man. This is a Jewish hospital, remember.

Hannah: Does it tell who he is later on?

Catherine: I am going to tell you who he is because I don't want you to misunderstand this part. He is singing a blessing, a prayer. He is a rabbi.

Paige: What is a rabbi?

Catherine: A rabbi would be like a minister in a Jewish temple.

Hannah: Like a preacher.

Catherine: He is going through the rooms...

Hannah: That's why he stops by every bed.

Catherine: Stops by every bed. I am sure that is why he is wearing what looks like white pajamas.

Hannah: It might be white robes, right?

Catherine: Remember Samir is telling this, right?

Hannah: And he doesn't know what that stuff is!

Paige: Yeah, he is a kid and he doesn't know what word to use!

Another transcript unit shows the readers' discussion about why they did not understand a verbal exchange Samir shared with his recovery room nurse who is also a Palestinian. Samir tells her about the house overlooking the sea where his grandfather grew up. The readers recognized the inconsistency between what Samir told the nurse and what they felt they knew about his current life but questioned why both Samir and the nurse laughed.

Catherine: And now they turned the house into a café. The Israelis own the house now. They did not buy it from his family.

Paige: OH! NOW I GET IT!!!

Catherine: Samir wanted everyone to know what they had taken from him. The nurse did not catch on until later.

Isaiah: And we didn't either

Catherine: Wonder why we didn't get that?

Hannah: Because he wanted us not to. He wanted us to be the victims like the nurse.

Isaiah: You can't just get it off the top of your head.

Catherine: That is not something that you could get off the top of your head?

Why?

Paige: We are kids

Catherine: What else?

Katie: Some adults might not get that.

Catherine: Why do you think that?

Isaiah: It might be adult humor.

Paige: Cause they don't know...

Hannah: (interrupts) Cause adult humor doesn't always make sense.

Catherine: You think that was adult humor?

Hannah: Yes, I think it was adult humor and I did not get anything out of it. I bet you laughed your head off cause you are an adult.

Catherine: No, it gave me a sad feeling. It was not funny to me.

Paige: It was not a joke. I think some people did not understand it. They did not understand it because they did not know what was happening in Israel. I think. In Jaffa. They don't know what happened so they did not get the joke.

Catherine: So you think you have to understand what happened in Jaffa. In Palestine and Israel. You have to know about that before you can understand it?

Paige: Yeah, you have to know about it.

An important comment during the preceding unit is when Hannah attributes her inability to make sense of this particular incident to *adult humor*. She was aware that she did not have the background knowledge to understand the “joke” and relegates this to her stance as a child reader. Her comment *I bet you laughed your head off cause you are an adult* indicated she believed the knowledge was dependent upon some type of adult construction and young readers were not capable of discerning it.

SUMMARY

This dissertation study examined the responses of six ten year old readers to two international children’s literature texts set in the Middle Eastern cultures of Afghanistan, Israel, and Palestine. By design, the readers engaged in an individual reading of the text to allow a personal, aesthetic response to the international narratives, then the readers shared their personal responses in a book club discussion format. The individual book club members were interviewed during the course of the study. Transcriptions of the videotapes of the book club sessions and the interviews along with readers’ post-it notations and journals provided data that were coded and developed into themes.

The readers in this study acted on the two international children’s texts set in Middle Eastern culture by using their personal experiences, their knowledge of the world, and many diverse textual referents. When the gaps in the texts could not be filled with their own experience or knowledge, they resorted to creating synthetic scenarios to help them understand the characters, motives, and events. The readers’ responses also indicated that the texts worked on them by kindling their wonderings, prompting judgments, evoking empathy, and stimulating the readers to want to read more about these characters and places. This reciprocal interaction between text and reader is the

essence of Rosenblatt's theory where meaning is "an active process lived through during the relationship between a reader and a text (1978, p. 20). At times, the readers commented on narrative style, language, unfamiliar cultural practices or events, and other deterrents to their understanding of the text indicating their active participation in interpreting the texts. Despite the readers' unfamiliarity with the background cultures for both of the international children's texts, their transactions with texts led them to interpretations that were meaningful for members of the group.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrated how one group of fourth grade students constructed meaning of texts originating in other cultures and examined their responses for the methods they incorporated to understand events and situations outside their realm of cultural experience. Learning how students understood and responded to these texts may provide insight into ways teachers and librarians can use the texts more effectively with students.

The data indicated the following transactions between the readers and text during the reading of the two international children's novels:

- ❖ The readers responded to the text using their experiences, their knowledge of the world, and a variety of other texts. They also constructed synthetic scenarios to aid their interpretation of story motives and events or to solve conflicts in the story.
- ❖ The readers responded to the text with questions, judgmental statements, empathetic statements, and an increased motivation to engage in further reading about the characters or culture.
- ❖ The readers were conscious of their transactions with the texts and acknowledged their own thought processes as they interacted with the narratives. They specifically referred to their transactions with the narrative styles, with language, and with unfamiliar cultural practices or events, in addition to explanations about their thinking and justifications about their ideas toward the culture.

This chapter offers my conclusions and recommendations for further research and for teaching based on the findings of this study.

CONCLUSIONS

While much has been theorized and suggested, research has had little to offer, to date, about the experiences of real elementary readers and their needs when encountering international children's literature. The present study suggests that, at least for the seven readers who participated, meaningful interpretations were possible despite lack of prior knowledge, and the social interaction around the texts was crucial to meaning making.

Meaningful Interpretations Are Possible From Differing Cultural Perspectives

A valid interpretation of a text is not the derivation of an absolute meaning but an experience where "the reader crystallizes his sense of the work" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 70). The readers in the study acted on the text with multiple comprehension strategies, their knowledge, and experiences. Valid interpretations for the text were possible without complete background knowledge of the cultural settings. The readers developed their own insights about the consequences of war, discrimination against groups of people in society, and the effects of intolerance of others views. There were some unresolved questions for the readers but they were still able to negotiate a meaning for the texts. This finding is in contrast to Louie's (2005) belief that context needs to be developed before readers encounter global literature from diverse cultures.

Social Interaction Is Key

The book club format and the way group the readers scaffolded each other played an important part in each members' construction of meaning. Readers were given options about using journals or post-it notes for recording their personal reactions to their reading. Very few readers chose to use these materials. At least for this study, the readers

found the social interaction of the book club meetings powerful enough to point to this as crucial to their ability to construct meaning.

The discussions shared in Chapter 4 illustrate the ways the readers shared their individual experiences and background knowledge to help the other group members understand the texts. When they did not have experiences or background knowledge to fill the gaps, they shared synthetic constructions they thought would help the group to fill gaps in the text. Katie highlighted the effect of the group discussion on her understanding during her interview:

Katie: If I couldn't think of any notes....like in the chapters we read for today. I couldn't think of any notes because it just wasn't a good notey chapter. Now with all the insights and things people have said I have a lot of notes I want to write down. I didn't think there was anything to write down, nothing interesting, or weird, now everybody has been saying things that were in the chapter. I want to write them down now. Like they [the group members] are helping me.

For this group of readers the social interaction around the texts was an important if not crucial part of creating meaning. The readers in this group probably would not have developed the rich descriptions of characters and events if they had read these texts in isolation. Social interaction around the texts was essential to these readers experience with the text.

AREAS NEEDING FURTHER RESEARCH

A limited number of studies exploring the use of international children's literature have been published. One of the studies described the use of the European Picture Book Collection (EPBC) in their original languages with upper intermediate grade students.

The same study investigated the attitudes of in-service and pre-service teachers toward the international texts. A few other studies were conducted using global literature with high school students. No other studies were found using international children's literature with young readers. Education and library professionals are being made aware of international children's literature through the United States Board of Books for Young Children (USBBY) Outstanding International Booklists published in 2006, 2007, and 2008, as well as the themed issue of *Journal of Children's Literature* published in Fall, 2006, devoted to international children's literature. More studies need to examine how young readers interpret and respond to these texts in order to use them effectively with children.

Researching Text Differences

Texts Depicting Other Cultures

This study has provided me with a picture of how one group of ten year old readers responded to two international children's literature texts but at the same time it generated other questions that could be the focus of future studies. This group of readers responded to two texts set in Middle Eastern countries. I wonder how they would interpret texts originating in other cultures. Would the ways they act on the texts to construct meaning change? The readers in this study cited many different types of texts when they tried to create meaning from the two international novels. Would the genre of their text-to-text connections change if they read books set in cultures more similar to their own culture?

Picture Books Versus Novels

The readers in this study did attend to the cover illustrations but were not able to derive much information there. What kind of responses would picture books of international children's literature generate from the readers? Picture books add a visual dimension to the interpretation process. The brevity of picture books does not allow readers to develop the complex knowledge of characters that reveals insight into their motives and actions. How would that visual layer affect their responses? Would the readers have the same deep feelings toward the characters and events? What might be the trade-offs between visual input and character development in meaning making?

Researching Response Format Differences

Critical Literary Technique

The readers participating in this book club did not receive any prior instruction about how to respond to the stories other than how to use post-it notes or a journal to record their ideas as they read. How would the responses be different if a think-aloud to model critical literary critique were added to the book club format? If I modeled my thinking about the voices that were silent in the story or the way another character would view an event in the story, the readers could develop other ways to respond to the texts? Critical interpretations of texts might impact their empathetic or judgmental statements. Equipping young people with strategies to analyze narratives for injustice, inequality, and oppression has the potential to affect the world in a very positive way. This is an area ripe for further study.

Building Prior Knowledge

The readers in this study did not participate in any activities to build background knowledge about the culture or history of the narrative settings. They were still created meaningful interpretations for both international texts. If the readers were provided more factual information about the countries before their initial reading of the texts, would their interpretations be enhanced? In Louie's (2005) study, historical background information, as well as cultural and political knowledge was developed before reading the multicultural novel. The ability of the readers in this study to derive meaning from the two international texts contradicts Louie's (2005) study design with its extensive preparation for reading international texts. In most cases the readers in this study were able to utilize a variety of comprehension skills to understand events in the texts. Other studies might examine the effect of building prior knowledge on readers' interpretation and interest of these texts.

Researching Responses of Other Types of Readers

Readers of Different Ability Levels

Deficits in decoding abilities would prevent children who are reading below grade level from accessing these texts but if the narratives were read aloud they would still be able to engage in discussions around the narratives. I wonder what might happen if the study were conducted with less able readers and the novels were read aloud to them? When reading difficulty is primarily decoding, the below level readers could still wield their comprehension strategies on the text to negotiate personal meanings. Further studies might investigate their responses to these texts to determine if they engage the text differently than above average readers.

Younger Readers

Children in lower elementary grades would come to international texts with fewer experiences with other texts, less background knowledge, and comprehension strategies that are still developing. If content appropriate international novels were read aloud to lower elementary aged readers, what processes would they use to create meaning? The visual layer in picture books would give these readers added support for interpretation. If picture books were read aloud to younger children, how would they respond to the stories?

Researching Effect of Prolonged Group Involvement

The readers in this study asked if our group could continue to meet to discuss other books and plans have been made to read and discuss the sequel to *The Breadwinner*. What effect would this book club have on the ways the participants respond to individuals whose beliefs differ from their own if the book club continued to meet and discuss international texts? There is a possibility these readers will keep on meeting in the future. How would prolonged engagement with international literature texts affect their view of other cultures? Would they develop an awareness of other cultures that would lead to understanding and acceptance of diversity?

These are all possible areas for more in-depth study around using international children's literature with young readers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

International children's texts open the doors to new and exciting places for students to explore and for that reason they are a powerful resource for teachers. Because the texts originate in different cultures with different political structures, religions, mores

and customs, the texts will most certainly expose children to lifestyles very different from their own. This leads to some special issues and concerns for teachers or anyone working with children as they read these texts.

Issues for Teachers Raised by This Research

This study shows the potential of international children's literature as a vehicle for engaging students in reading good literature and developing their awareness of other cultures. The readers encountered these texts with limited knowledge about the cultural background of the stories, yet they were able to derive a valid meaning for the texts even if they lacked factual information about the cultures. A valid interpretation of a text is not the derivation of an absolute meaning but an experience where "the reader crystallizes his sense of the work" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 70). The readers in the study acted on the text with multiple comprehension strategies, their knowledge, and experiences. Valid interpretations for the text were possible without complete background knowledge of the cultural settings. The readers developed their own insights about the consequences of war, discrimination against groups of people in society, and the effects of intolerance of others views. There were some unresolved questions for the readers but they were still able to negotiate a meaning for the texts. This finding is in contrast to Louie's (2005) belief that context needs to be developed before readers encounter global literature from diverse cultures. The results of this study present some points for teachers to consider in the selection and use of international children's literature.

Selecting Appropriate Texts

The readers in this study found *The Breadwinner* with its third person linear plot easier to read than *Samir and Yonatan*, which revealed the story through the flashbacks of

an unreliable first-person narrator. According to Iser (1974), all stories contain gaps that must be connected in the process of creating meaning by the reader. A real reader is able to fill in the gaps based on their background knowledge and experience but in an international children's text there is the potential for other gaps to exist in the text due to the readers' lack of cultural knowledge. In *Samir and Yonatan*, the cultural gap coincided with a stylistic gap of an unreliable narrator adding an extra layer of difficulty to the readers' comprehension task. This does not prohibit using more sophisticated texts like *Samir and Yonatan* with young readers. It points out the importance of being familiar with the texts in order to support children as they read. *Samir and Yonatan* is an excellent example of an unreliable narrator. It could be a valuable touchstone for writing instruction because it provides readers with insight into how an author writes a non-linear story line through flashbacks. Educators must take into consideration the reading level of the text, the cultural load of the text, as well as the text structure when choosing a text for young readers.

Teacher might question whether the content of these texts is appropriate for upper elementary school aged children. Both of the texts used in this study dealt with children affected by war. The readers in this study asked several times if the books were "real." They became very involved with the characters, a vital part of a satisfying reading experience. They made empathetic statements about the characters' circumstances and were concerned about solving the problems the characters faced. Based on my readers' involvement with the texts and their responses toward the content, I believe realistic fiction is an excellent vehicle for exposing young readers to difficult but real parts of life. Our natural inclination might be to shelter children from this part of life but these texts

mirror what is currently happening in our world and is shown on television news everyday. Teachers should always use professional judgment and knowledge about their students when selecting texts to use with children. These particular books probably would not be appropriate for students younger than ten years old. Genres of international novels and picture books range from expository texts to fantasy series. International texts can be found to fit the level of maturity and individual reading preferences.

Wide Reading and Writing Experiences

Children need to be widely read in an abundance of different genres of literature. The readers in this study referred to many different texts, from nonfiction to fantasy, to construct meaning when reading the international children's novels. This strengthens support for exposing young people to a wide variety of good literature with diverse narrative styles.

Children also need experiences writing and creating stories of their own. The most important and difficult part of writing is the process that takes place in the mind before the first mark on paper or keystroke occurs. When the readers in this study commented on authors' word choices and narrative styles they were engaging in what Frank Smith (1983) calls reading like writers: noticing—as authors themselves—the decisions the novels' authors were making. These readers were engaging in authoring behavior when they created synthetic constructions to fill in the gaps in meaning. They demonstrated authoring behavior again when they created sequels for the texts. Young people should be encouraged to write their own stories because the act of authoring strengthens meaning-making in reading. Young people should be encouraged to view pieces of good literature as mentors for their own writing and encouraged to write their

own stories. Combining reading and writing experiences encourages the readers to think creatively and further appreciate the beauty and power of words and stories.

Authentic Reading Experiences

This study demonstrates the value of authentic reading experiences for promoting literate behaviors in young readers. The readers in this study successfully applied multiple reading strategies in their interaction with the texts and were cognizant of their thinking when confronted with problems understanding the text. They participated in discussions around these texts with thoughtful comments and were deliberate in their use of critical thinking as they analyzed, evaluated, and synthesized information in the text. This level of engagement with the text was not in response to worksheets, workbooks, computer-generated tests, or required written reports. Their responses were generated by the text or their interaction with other members of the book club.

Comprehension Strategies

The results of this study point to the importance of helping readers understand and utilize a variety of comprehension strategies. These readers knew how to use texts to create meaning because they explained the connection between their cited texts and the way it helped them better understand the story. They also engaged their experiences and knowledge when they constructed meaning for the stories. These findings support classroom practices where comprehension strategies are modeled and students are scaffolded in learning to apply the strategies to their own reading.

Safe Havens for Authentic Reading

The results of this study indicate the importance for students to engage in authentic discussions around texts that enable them to explore new ideas in safe

environments where a single, right answer is not expected as an indication of comprehension. The readers' rich empathetic responses, judgmental statements, and creative scenarios resulted from the social interaction within the group. The social interaction of the book club supported their construction of meaning. The personal interpretations of individual readers were challenged or expanded when the readers shared their ideas about the stories during the book club meetings. Their shared interpretations created a communal pool of knowledge that enriched all the readers' understanding. Occasionally, one reader was able to supply a missing connection or bit of pertinent knowledge that filled in a gap in the text for another reader. The end result was the construction of a valid meaning for the texts.

Tolerance for Different Views

In this study the texts prompted the readers to make judgmental statements about war and the Taliban's laws. Some of them called the Taliban's requirement for making women wear burqas and men to grow beards "stupid." One of the readers thought the "rule" about women needing a note to be in public without a male escort was "unnecessary." The readers commented about the "weird" names of some of the characters. Teachers need to be prepared to deal with young children's judgmental and evaluative statements about other people and their cultures. There is a substantial difference between making a judgment about a practice that is harmful or unfair to other people and denigrating people or cultural practice just because it is different from us and our cultural practice. Allowing judgmental statements of the denigrating type would defeat the purpose of exposing children to international children's texts.

The concern about judging people and cultures spills over into personal values and beliefs. Exposure to different lifestyles and ideas through international children's texts provides a wonderful platform for valuing other people and their practices. In our diverse classrooms of today, it is possible that children have been exposed to beliefs and religions that are not part of the American mainstream. In some areas, children's exposure to diversity may be limited. Teachers need to consider how to handle discussions of sensitive topics concerning lifestyles, religions, and cultures before they are encountered in a classroom.

The readers in this study held opposing opinions about some of the issues in the books. One reader described laws imposed by the Taliban as "stupid" while another said "That is their culture. That is how they do it." Opposing opinions exist for every issue and teachers need to decide how they will handle them in their classroom. They need to wrestle with how they will deal with students who may disagree. Most importantly teachers need to know how to build a classroom community where opposing opinions can be voiced without fear of ridicule. Everyone in a classroom does not have to espouse the same values but everyone should be tolerant and respectful of the values of others. Teachers also need to consider how they will react when students' opinions about lifestyles, religion, political structures, or cultures differ from their point of view. I personally believe that international children's literature would not be a good choice for teachers who see everything as "black or white" and "right or wrong."

Valuing the Inquiry Process

Teachers need to be aware that discussions around international texts may not always end in a recognizable solution. This is clearly demonstrated by the readers in my

study. These readers struggled to understand the Taliban and its motives for violence and injustice toward the people of Afghanistan. The readers used their own experiences, their knowledge of the world, and many different types of texts when they attempted to explain the Taliban. Their strategies did not bring them an absolute answer but their efforts to understand the Taliban yielded a rich description that supported their comprehension of the narrative. The value was not in the “answer” but in the process of inquiry and investigation.

Issues for Teacher Educators Raised by This Research

All of the above issues for teachers pertain to teacher educators as well, because they are important topics to consider when preparing teachers to teach in today’s society. These issues do not apply solely to international children’s literature. Sound, responsive pedagogy rests on these issues therefore they should be addressed in teacher education courses. In addition, the issues below relate specifically to teacher educators.

Familiarity With International Children’s Literature

International children’s literature courses are offered as electives. It is probably not possible to add a required international children’s literature course to the already full slate of required course for preservice teachers. Teacher educators need to devise ways to embed international children’s literature into the required children’s literature courses for preservice and inservice teachers. Because of the many different genres of international children’s literature, it could easily be incorporated into other methods courses. The most logical places would be reading and language arts courses. It could just as easily fit into social studies, science, or math classes because of the diversity within the international children’s literature category of books.

Methods for Providing Meaningful Reading Experiences

Being familiar with specific international texts and their content is essential to providing meaningful experiences for readers. Preservice and inservice teachers need to understand the special demands the texts place on young readers. Teacher education courses should incorporate a variety of methods for facilitating discussions in order to support readers with comprehension tasks and content related issues.

The book club format for this study enabled the readers to support each other in their quests for meaning in the text. The group interaction was a dynamic part of this study. Preservice and inservice teachers need preparation for managing book clubs in their classrooms. One way this might be achieved is by having preservice and inservice teachers participate in a book club to discuss international children's literature texts. This would familiarize them with international texts and at the same time allow them to experience the book club setting. Discourse around the texts would also be a forum for teachers to wrestle with their own biases about the people, countries and cultures encountered in the literature.

BOOKS: BRIDGES TO CHANGE

I feel it is important for educators to see the power of international children's literature to engage students in exploring cultures beyond their own doorsteps. In a time when standards and test scores shape classroom instruction, educators need to remember the power of good literature to excite and transform readers. The transcripts of our book club sessions illustrate the enthusiastic way that the readers interacted with the text and each other. The value of these books may lie in their ability to activate readers' curiosity about other cultures and their ability to motivate further reading and learning. The readers

in this study wanted to read sequels to both the stories. They consulted maps to find out more about the countries in the texts. They searched the glossary to understand foreign names for unfamiliar objects. The readers were motivated to inquire and learn.

International children's literature as an agent for changing attitudes about people from other cultures and ultimately creating peace in the world may seem a very distant possibility but providing experiences with these texts for young readers increases the chances of a more tolerant, peaceful world in the future. In the words of James Baldwin:

Literature is indispensable to the world...The world changes according to the way people see it and if you alter, even by a millimeter, the way a person looks at reality, then you change it. (Watkins, 1979, p. 37)

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: 2006 USBBY Outstanding International Booklist

USBBY Outstanding International Children's Booklist 2006

Author	Title	Publisher	Country of Origin	Age Appropriate
Adlington, L.J.	<i>The Diary of Pelly D.</i>	HarperCollins/ Greenwillow	Great Britain	Grade 6 - 8
Browne, Anthony	<i>My Mom</i>	Farrar	Great Britain	K – Grade 2
Clarke, Judith	<i>Kalpana's Dream</i>	Front Street	Australia	Grade 6 – 8
Daly, Niki	<i>Ruby Sings the Blues</i>	Bloomsbury	Great Britain	K – Grade 2
De Deu Prats, Joan	<i>Sebastian's Roller Skates</i>	Kane/Miller	Spain	K – Grade 2
Delaney, Joseph	<i>Revenge of the Witch</i>	HarperCollins/ Greenwillow	Great Britain	Grade 6 – 8
Dyer, Heather	<i>The Girl with the Broken Wing</i>	Scholastic/The Chicken House	United Kingdom	Grade 3 - 5
Gallego Garcia, Laura	<i>The Legend of the Wander King</i>	Scholastic/A. Levine Bks.	Spain	Grade 6 – 8
Gardner, Sally	<i>I, Coriander</i>	Dial	Great Britain	Grade 6 – 8
Grant, K. M.	<i>Blood Red Horse</i>	Walker	United Kingdom	Grade 6 – 8
Grey, Mini	<i>Traction Man Is Here!</i>	Knopf	Great Britain	K – Grade 2
Gribbin, Mary & John Gribbin	<i>The Science of Philips Pullman's His Dark Materials</i>	Knopf	England	Grade 9 – up
Haworth-Attard, Barbara	<i>Theories of Relativity</i>	Holt	Canada	Grade 9 – up
Hearn, Julie	<i>The Minister's Daughter</i>	S & S/ Atheneum	Great Britain	Grade 9 – up
Heydlauff, Lisa	<i>Going to School in India</i>	Charlesbridge	India	Grade 3 – 5
Holub, Josef	<i>An Innocent Soldier</i>	Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Bks.	Germany	Grade 6 – 8
Hussey, Charmian	<i>The Valley of Secrets</i>	S & S	Great Britain	Grade 6 – 8
Laguna, Sofie	<i>Surviving Aunt Marsha</i>	Scholastic	Australia	Grade 3 – 5
Lanagan, Margo	<i>Black Juice</i>	HarperCollins/Eos	Australia	Grade 9 – up

Author	Title	Publisher	Country of Origin	Age Appropriate
Ma, Yan	<i>The Diary of Ma Yan: The Struggles and Hopes of a Chinese Schoolgirl</i>	HarperCollins	France	Grade 6 – 8
McCaughrean, Geraldine	<i>Not the End of the World</i>	Harper/Tempest	United Kingdom	Grade 9 – up
McKay, Hilary	<i>Permanent Rose</i>	McElderry Bks	Great Britain	Grade 6 – 8
McNaughton, Colin	<i>Once Upon an Ordinary School Day</i>	Farrar	England	K – Grade 2
Michael, Livi	<i>The Whispering Road</i>	Putnam	United Kingdom	Grade 6 – 8
Morgenstern, Susie	<i>It Happened at School: Two Tales</i>	Viking	France	Grade 3 – 5
Naslund, Gorel Kristina	<i>Our Apple Tree</i>	Roaring Brook	Sweden	K – Grade 2
Nilsson, Per	<i>You & You & You</i>	Front Street	Sweden	Grade 9 – up
Ormerod, Jan	<i>Lizzie Nonsense: A Story of Pioneer Days</i>	Clarion	Australia	K – Grade 2
Paver, Michelle	<i>Wolf Brother</i>	HarperCollins	Great Britain	Grade 6 – 8
Philip, Neil	<i>The Pirate Princess: And Other Fairy Tales</i>	Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Bks.		
Pullman, Philip	<i>The Scarecrow and His Servant</i>	Knopf	England	Grade 3 – 5
Rose, Malcolm	<i>Framed!</i>	Kingfisher	United Kingdom	Grade 6 – 8
Rosen, Michael	<i>Michael Rosen's Sad Book</i>	Candlewick	England	Grade 3 – 5
Spillebeen, Beert	<i>Kipling's Choice</i>	Houghton	Belgium	Grade 9 – up
Steinhofel, Andreas	<i>The Center of the World</i>	Delacorte	Germany	Grade 9 – up
Udale, Eleanor	<i>Montmorency on the Rocks: Doctor, Aristocrat, Murderer?</i>	Scholastic/Orchard	Great Britain	Grade 6 – 8
Valckx, Catharina	<i>Lizette's Green Sock</i>	Clarion	France	K – Grade 2

Author	Title	Publisher	Country of Origin	Age Appropriate
Wilson, Jacqueline	<i>The Illustrated Mum</i>	Delacorte	England	Grade 6 – 8
Wooding, Chris	<i>Poison</i>	Scholastic/Orchard	Great Britain	Grade 6 – 8
Wynne-Jones, Tim	<i>A Thief in the House of Memory</i>	Farrar/Melanie Kroupa Bks	Canada	Grade 9 – up
Zenatti, Valerie	<i>When I Was a soldier</i>	Bloomsbury	France	Grade 9 – up
Zusak, Markus	<i>I Am the Messenger</i>	Knopf	Australia	Grade 9 - up

Source: Isaacs, K. (2006)

Appendix B: 2007 USBBY Outstanding International Booklist

USBBY Outstanding International Children's Booklist 2007

Author	Title	Publisher	Country of Origin	Age Appropriate
Almond, David	<i>Clay</i>	Delacorte	United Kingdom	Grade 9 and up
Barth-Bruzinger, Inge	<i>Something Remains</i>	Hyperion	Germany	Grade 6 – 8
Bondoux, Anne-Laure	<i>The Killer's Tears</i>	Delacorte	France	Grade 9 and up
Browne, Anthony	<i>Silly Billy</i>	Candlewick	United Kingdom	K – Grade 2
Butterworth, Chris	<i>Sea Horse: The Shyest Fish</i>	Candlewick	United Kingdom	K – Grade 2
Daly, Niki	<i>Happy Birthday, Jamela!</i>	Farrar	United Kingdom Capetown, Africa	K – Grade 2
D'Harcourt, Claire	<i>Masterpieces Up Close: Western Painting from the 14th to 20th Centuries</i>	Chronicle	France	Grade 6 – 8
Faller, Regis	<i>The Adventures of Polo</i>	Roaring Brook/A. Neal Porter Bks.	France	K – Grade 2
Foreman, Michael	<i>Mia's Story: A Sketchbook of Hopes and Dreams</i>	Candlewick	United Kingdom	Grade 3 – 5
Gravett, Emily	<i>Wolves</i>	S & S	United Kingdom	K – Grade 2
Greif, Jean-Jacques	<i>The Fighter</i>	Bloomsbury	France	Grade 9 and up
Ha, Song	<i>Indebted as Lord Chom/No Nhu Chua Chom: The Legend of the Forbidden Street</i>	East West Discovery	Vietnam	Grade 3 – 5

Author	Title	Publisher	Country of Origin	Age Appropriate
Hagerup, Klaus	<i>Markus and Diana</i>	Front St.	Norway	Grade 6 – 8
Hartnett, Sonya	<i>Surrender</i>	Candlewick	Australia	Grade 9 and up
Henderson, Kathy	<i>Lugalbanda: The Boy Who Got Caught Up in a War</i>	Candlewick	United Kingdom	Grade 3 – 5
Herrick, Steven	<i>By the River</i>	Front St.	Australia	Grade 9 and Up
Hinton, Nigel	<i>Time Bomb</i>	Tricycle	United Kingdom	Grade 6 – 8
Ichikawa, Satomi	<i>My Father's Shop</i>	Kane/Miller	France	K – Grade 2
Jansen, Hanna	<i>Over a Thousand Hills I walk with You</i>	Carolrhoda	Germany	Grade 9 and Up
Kelleher, Victor	<i>Dogboy</i>	Front St.	Australia	Grade 9 and Up
Kuijjer, Guus	<i>The Book of Everything</i>	Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Bks.	The Netherlands	Grade 6 – 8
Laird, Elizabeth & Sonia Nimr	<i>A Little Piece of Ground</i>	Haymarket	United Kingdom	Grade 9 and Up
Lanagan, Margo	<i>White Time</i>	HarperCollins/Eos	Australia	Grade 9 and Up
Lat	<i>Kampung Boy</i>	Roaring Brook/First Second	Malaysia	Grade 6 – 8
Mahy, Margaret	<i>Down the Back of the Chair</i>	Clarion	United Kingdom	K – Grade 2
Naidoo, Beverly	<i>Web of Lies</i>	HarperCollins/Amistad	United Kingdom	Grade 6 – 8
Parkinson, Siobhan	<i>Something Invisible</i>	Roaring Brook	Ireland	Grade 6 – 8
Pausewang, Gudrun	<i>Traitor</i>	Carolrhoda	Germany	Grade 9 and Up
Pienkowski, Jan	<i>The Fairy Tales</i>	Viking	United Kingdom *translated from French and German	Grade 3 – 5

Author	Title	Publisher	Country of Origin	Age Appropriate
Pin, Isabel	<i>When I Grow Up, I Will Win the Nobel Peace Prize</i>	Farrar	Germany	Grade 3 – 5
Pratchett, Terry	<i>Wintersmith</i>	HarperTempest	United Kingdom	Grade 6 – 8
Rao, Sandhya	<i>My Mother's Sari</i>	North-South	India	K – Grade 2
Rasmussen, Halfdan	<i>The Ladder</i>	Candlewick	Denmark	K – Grade 2
Reeve, Phillip	<i>Larklight: A Rousing Tale of Dauntless Pluck in the Farthest Reaches of Space</i>	Bloomsbury	United Kingdom	Grade 3 – 5
Sedgwick, Marcus	<i>The Foreshadowing</i>	Random/Wendy Lamb Bks.	United Kingdom	Grade 9 and Up
Singh, Vandana	<i>Younguncle Comes to Town</i>	Viking	India	Grade 3 - 5
Vejjajiva, Jane	<i>The Happiness of Kati</i>	S & S/Atheneum	Thailand	Grade 6 – 8
Winterson, Jeanette	<i>Tanglewreck</i>	Bloomsbury	United Kingdom	Grade 6 – 8
Zusak, Markus	<i>The Book Thief</i>	Knopf	Australia	Grade 9 and Up

Source: Isaacs, K. (2007)

Appendix C: 2008 USBBY Outstanding International Booklist

USBBY Outstanding International Children's Booklist 2008

Author	Title	Country of Origin	Age Appropriate
Amado, Elisa	<i>Tricycle</i>	Canada	K – Grade 2
Bae, Hyun-Joo	<i>New Clothes for New Year's Day</i>	Korea	K – Grade – 2
Bateson, Catherine	<i>Being Bee</i>	Australia	Grade 3 – 5
Beake, Lesley	<i>Home Now</i>	United Kingdom	K – Grade 2
Brooks, Martha	<i>Mistik Lake</i>	Canada	Grade 9 – up
Cali, Davide	<i>Piano, Piano</i>	France	K – Grade 2
Clarke, Judith	<i>One Whole and Perfect Day</i>	Australia	Grade 9 – up
Daly, Niki	<i>Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood Story from Africa</i>	United Kingdom	K – Grade 2
Debon, Nicolas	<i>The Strongest Man in the World: Louis Cyr</i>	Canada	Grade 3 – 5
Diakit, Baba Waguz	<i>Mee-An and the Magic Serpent: A Folktale from Mali</i>	Canada	Grade 3 – 5
Dickinson, Peter	<i>Angel Isle</i>	United Kingdom	Grade 9 – up
Ellis, Deborah	<i>Sacred Leaf</i>	Canada	Grade 6 – 8
Erlings, Fridrik	<i>Benjamin Dove</i>	Iceland	Grade 6 – 8
Funke, Cornelia	<i>Igraine, the Brave</i>	Germany	Grade 3 – 5
Gravett, Emily	<i>Meerdad Mail</i>	United Kingdom	K – Grade 2
Hayes, Rosemary	<i>Mixing It</i>	United Kingdom	Grade 6 – 8
Herrick, Steven	<i>The Wolf</i>	Australia	Grade 9 – up
Hoffman, Mary	<i>The Falconer's Knot: A Story of Friars, Flirtation and Foul Play</i>	United Kingdom	Grade 9 – up
Kwon, Yoon-duck	<i>My Cat Copies Me</i>	Korea	K – Grade 2
Lacombe, Benjamin	<i>Cherry and Olive</i>	France	K – Grade 2
Lofthouse, Liz	<i>Ziba Came on a Boat</i>	Australia	Grade 3 – 5
Malley, Gemma	<i>The Declaration</i>	United Kingdom	Grade 9 – up
Marillier, Juliet	<i>Wildwood Dancing</i>	Australia	Grade 9 – up
Marsden, John	<i>While I Live</i>	Australia	Grade 9 – up
Peet, Mal	<i>Tamar</i>	United Kingdom	Grade 9 – up
Pressler, Mirjam	<i>Let Sleeping Dogs Lie</i>	Germany	Grade 9 – up

Author	Title	Country of Origin	Age Appropriate
Reeve, Philip	<i>A Darkling Plain</i>	United Kingdom	Grade 6 – 8
Rivera, Raquel	<i>Arctic Adventures: Tales from the Lives of Inuit Artists</i>	Canada	Grade 3 – 5
Rowling, J. K.	<i>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows</i>	United Kingdom	Grade 6 – 8
Sellier, Marie	<i>Legend of the Chinese Dragon</i>	France	Grade 3 – 5
Steffensmeier, Alexander	<i>Millie Waits for the Mail</i>	Germany	K – Grade 2
Stewart, Paul & Chris Riddell	<i>Hugo Pepper</i>	United Kingdom	Grade 3 – 5
Tan, Shaun	<i>The Arrival</i>	Australia	Grade 6 – 8
Thompson, Kate	<i>The New Policeman</i>	United Kingdom	Grade 6 – 8
Toksvig, Sandi	<i>Hitler's Canary</i>	United Kingdom	Grade 6 – 8
Turnbull, Ann	<i>Forged in the Fire</i>	United Kingdom	Grade 9 – up
Van der Heide, Iris	<i>A Strange Day</i>	The Netherlands	K – Grade 2
Wahl, Mats	<i>The Invisible</i>	Sweden	Grade 9 – up
Wilson, Jacqueline	<i>Candyfloss</i>	United Kingdom	Grade 5 – 8
Wynne-Jones, Tim	<i>Rex Zero and the End of the World</i>	Canada	Grade 6 - 8

Source: Angus, C. (2008)

Appendix D: Mildred Batchelder Recipients

Mildred Batchelder Awards by Year

Year	Book Title	Original Language	Author	Publisher
1968	<i>The Little Man</i>	German	Erich Kastner	Knopf
1969	<i>Don't Take Teddy</i>	Norwegian	Babbis Friis-Baastad	Scribner
1970	<i>Wildcat Under Glass</i>	Greek	Aliki Zei	Holt
1971	<i>In the Land of UR: The Discovery of Ancient Mesopotamia</i>	German	Hans Baumann	Pantheon
1972	<i>Friedrich</i>	German	Hans Peter Richter	Holt
1973	<i>Pulga</i>	Dutch	Siny Rose Van Itersen	Morrow
1974	<i>Petro's War</i>	Greek	Aliki Zei	Dutton
1975	<i>An Old Tale Carved Out of Stone</i>	Russian	Aleksander M. Linevski	Crown
1976	<i>The Cat and Mouse Who Shared a House</i>	German	Ruth Hurliman	Walck
1977	<i>The Leopard</i>	Danish	Cecil Bodecker	Atheneum
1978	<i>No Award</i>			
1979*	<i>Konrad</i>	German	Christine Nostlinger	Watts
1979*	<i>Rabbit Island</i>	German	Jorg Steiner	Harcourt
1980	<i>The Sound of Dragon's Feet</i>	Greek	Aliki Zei	Dutton
1981	<i>The Winter Time Was Frozen</i>	Dutch	Els Pelgrom	Morrow
1982	<i>The Battle Horse</i>	Swedish	Harry Kullman	Bradbury
1983	<i>Hiroshima No Pika</i>	Japanese	Toshi Maruki	Lothrop
1984	<i>Ronia, the Robber's Daughter</i>	Swedish	Astrid Lindgren	Viking
1985	<i>The Island on Bird Street</i>	Hebrew	Uri Orlev	Houghton
1986	<i>Rose Blanche</i>	French	Christophe Gallaz & Roberto Innocenti	Creative Education
1987	<i>No Hero for the Kaiser</i>	German	Rudolf Frank	Lothrop

Year	Book Title	Original Language	Author	Publisher
1988	<i>If You Didn't Have Me</i>	Swedish	Ulf Nilsson	McElderry
1989	<i>Crutches</i>	German	Peter Hartling	Lothrop
1990	<i>Buster's World</i>	Danish	Bjarne Reuter	Dutton
1991	<i>A Hand Full of Stars</i>	German	Rafik Schami	Dutton
1992	<i>The Man from the Other Side</i>	Hebrew	Uri Orlev	Houghton
1993	<i>No Award</i>			
1994	<i>The Apprentice</i>	Spanish	Pilar Molina	Farrar
1995	<i>The Boys from St. Petrie</i>	Danish	Bjarne Reuter	Dutton
1996	<i>The Lady with the Hat</i>	Hebrew	Uri Orlev	Houghton
1997	<i>The Friends</i>	Japanese	Kazumi Yumoto	Farrar
1998	<i>The Robber and Me</i>	German	Josef Holub	Holt
1999	<i>Thanks to My Mother</i>	German	Schoschana Rabinovici	Dial
2000	<i>The Baboon King</i>	Dutch	Anton Quintana	Walker
2001	<i>Samir and Yonatan</i>	Hebrew	Daniella Carmi	Arthur A. Levine/Scholastic
2002	<i>How I Became an American</i>	German	Karin Gundisch	Cricket Books/Carus Publishing
2003	<i>The Thief Lord</i>	German	Cornelia Funke	The Chicken House/Scholastic
2004	<i>Run, Boy, Run</i>	Hebrew	Uri Orlev	Walter Lorraine/Houghton Mifflin
2005	<i>The Shadows of Ghadames</i>	French	Joelle Stolz	Delacorte/Random House
2006	<i>An Innocent Soldier</i>	German	Josef Holub	Arthur A. Levine Books
2007	<i>The Pull of the Ocean</i>	French	Jean-Claude Mourlevat	Delacorte Press
2008	<i>Brave Story</i>	Japanese	Miyuki Miyabe	VIZ Media

Source: Association for Library Service to Children, (n. d.). *ALSC Mildred Batchelder award winners*: Retrieved March 9, 2008, from <http://www.ala.org>

Appendix E: Parent Introduction Letter

Catherine Buck

[Address]

PARENT INTRODUCTION LETTER

International Children's Literature Book Club Research Project

June 10, 2007

Dear Parent,

I am a doctoral student at The University of Tennessee preparing to conduct the research for my dissertation. The topic of my dissertation is International Children's Literature, a group of books about other cultures. My study will be done this summer through a Book Club where students meet to discuss two realistic fictions novels that are set in other cultures. I am interested in how students respond to these books and the way they comprehend them.

Your child has been identified by his/her school as someone with good reading skills, who enjoys reading and discussing books. I think he/she might enjoy being a part of my summer Book Club for my dissertation study. The Book Club will meet at 10:00 until 11:30 on Monday to Friday from June 18 to July 3. We will be meeting in the library at [location] on [address].

If you and your child agree, your child's participation in this study will involve the following: reading two international children's literature novels, meeting for 12 book club sessions to discuss our International Children's Literature novels, and an individual interview with your child to talk about the novels. I will provide all materials and snacks for each session. The book club sessions and interviews will be videotaped so you and your child will be asked to sign consent forms giving me permission to use the information in my dissertation study.

If you and your child are interested participating in my study, we will be meeting at [location] on Thursday evening at 5:30. I will give you further information about the book club and answer any questions you might have.

You are welcome to contact me if you have any questions about this study. I would be happy to meet with you if you would like to talk in person about this project.

Catherine Buck

[Address]

[Phone]

[Email]

Appendix F: Parent Consent Form

Catherine Buck
[Address]

PARENT CONSENT LETTER
International Children's Literature Book Club Research Project

June 10, 2007

Dear Parent,

I am a doctoral student at The University of Tennessee preparing to conduct the research for my dissertation. The topic of my dissertation is International Children's Literature, a group of books about other cultures. My study will be done this summer through a Book Club where students meet to discuss two realistic fictions novels that are set in other cultures. I am interested in how students respond to these books and the way they comprehend them.

Your child has been identified by his/her school as someone with good reading skills, who enjoys reading and discussing books. I think he/she might enjoy being a part of my summer Book Club for my dissertation study. The Book Club will meet at 10:00 until 11:30 on Monday to Friday from June 18 to July 3. We will be meeting in the library at [location] on [address].

If you and your child agree, your child's participation in this study will involve the following:

GROUP SESSIONS

Our "Book Club" will meet for 12 sessions to discuss our International Children's Literature novels. The sessions will be videotaped and transcribed.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

I plan to meet with each child individually once during the course of the Book Club. During our 30-45 minute meeting I will ask your child to tell me what he/she thinks about the novels we are reading and discussing. These sessions will be videotaped and transcribed also. I will contact you to find out when it is most convenient to schedule the interview with your child (for example, before or after Book Club).

READING

Your child will read two International Children's novels during our summer Book Club. The books will be supplied to your child free of charge, for use during the study. I will also provide your child with a reading journal and post-it notes to use to record responses to the books as he/she reads. I will encourage your child to respond honestly to the feelings he/she has about the characters and events in the books. I will assure them that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers.

This study will be conducted under the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board of the University of Tennessee. The risk to your child in this study is minimal. Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your child may discontinue his/her participation in the study at anytime by notifying me. There will be no questions asked or consequences for withdrawing from the study.

At the conclusion of the study, I will write the results as part of my dissertation. It is possible that the study could be published in another form or presented at a professional conference. I would like to use the videotapes in presentations and /or for further research projects. The possibility exists that your child could be identified on the video but his/her real name will not be used. Pseudonyms will be substituted for the names of all the children participating. No information will be used that could lead to identifying or locating your child.

Your child may not derive any direct benefit from participating in this study. I do hope your child will enjoy reading these books and discussing them in our Book Club.

This study is in no way connected to your child's school. His/her performance in this Book Club has no influence on school grades or requirements.

You are welcome to contact me if you have any questions about this study. I would be happy to meet with you if you would like to talk in person about this project.

Catherine Buck
[Address]
[Phone]
[Email]

If you have any questions about your child's rights as a participant in this project you may contact Brenda Lawson at the UT Office of Research (865 974 3466, blawson@utk.edu).

If you want your child to participate in this study, please sign this parental consent form. Go over the student assent form with your child and have him/her sign the participant assent letter. I will provide extra copies of both forms for your personal records.

Thank you very much for considering your child's participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Catherine C. Buck

I have read the information and consent form and I give permission for my child to participate in this project.

Student's Name _____

Parent's Name _____

Parent's Signature _____ Date: _____

I understand that video recordings will be made of my child's participation in the International Children's Literature Book Club. I understand the recordings may be used in presentations of this research to professional organizations. I understand that my child's real name will not be used and no identifying information about my child will be given. These tapes may be used in future research about International Children's Literature. Videotapes and transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet and only the researcher, her faculty advisors, and a transcriber will have access to them.

I hereby give my permission for these videos to be used by the researcher in the manner described.

Student's Name _____

Parent's Name _____

Parent's Signature _____

Please indicate here whether or not you wish to meet with me in person, to discuss the study.

_____ I request to meet with Catherine in person.

_____ I decline the opportunity to meet with Catherine in person.

Novels that will be read in the Book Club.

Samir and Yonatan by Deborah Carmi (2000)

The Breadwinner by Deborah Ellis (2000)

Appendix G: Student Assent Letter

Catherine C. Buck
[Address]

PARTICIPANT ASSENT FORM
International Children's Literature Book Club Research Project

June 10, 2007

Dear Young Person,

My name is Catherine Buck. I want to have a Book Club to read some really interesting books this summer. The books are set in other countries so the characters and events are new and exciting to read about.

I want to meet on weekdays from 10:00 until 11:30 from June 18 to July 3. During this time we will read two books. At our meetings we will talk about the books we are reading. I also want to talk with you by yourself to talk about the books. I will lend you the books and provide you with journals and sticky note pads to use for writing down ideas as you read.

I hope you will tell me what you really think about the books we read. This Book Club is not part of your schoolwork so there will be no grades. During our Book Club, there will be no "right" or "wrong" answers. You can tell the group how you honestly feel about these books. It is all right if you do not like the books.

Our Book Club meetings and the interviews I do with you (by yourself) will be videotaped.

I hope you will want to be a part of my Book Club to read books about characters in other countries. I think it will be interesting and fun. Talk it over with your parents, if you want to be in the Book Club. If they think it is a good idea, too, print and sign your name on the lines on the back.

Thanks, I am looking forward to reading these books with you,

Catherine Buck

Yes, I want to be in Catherine Buck's Book Club. I will read the books, write in a journal, come to the Book Club meetings, and have an interview with the researcher (Catherine).

Print your name here

Sign your name here

Write the date here _____

The researcher (Catherine) will store the videotapes in a locked cabinet. She might want to use them to show other teachers what she has learned about these books. She might even do more research on these types of books. She will never use my real name. I agree to being in the videotapes by signing again below.

It is okay for me to be videotaped for this study.

Print your name here

Sign your name here _____

Write the date here _____

VITA

Catherine Cash Buck was born in Stuttgart, Arkansas, on March 6, 1956. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Education at Henderson State University at Arkadelphia, Arkansas in 1978 and taught Kindergarten and third Grade in Eastern Arkansas for seven years. In 1992, Catherine earned a Master of Science in Education at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, Arkansas. After moving to Tennessee, she taught first grade in Lauderdale County in West Tennessee and Roane County in East Tennessee for twelve years. While employed in Roane County she was asked to serve on the Roane County Literacy Team, a group of teachers selected to study existing county literacy practices with the goal of selecting uniform assessment tools, benchmarks, and instructional methods for the county. As a result of her involvement with the Roane County Literacy Team, Catherine became a Literacy Leader in Roane County. In 2003, she began work toward her EdD at University of Tennessee at Knoxville, completing the degree in 2008. She is currently an Academic Coach in the Clarksville Montgomery School System.