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The Social Construction of Literary Understanding in a 3rd Grade Classroom During Interactive
Read-Alouds

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Introduction

Read-alouds are a commonly used tool in elementary classrooms. Teachers read aloud for a variety of purposes, including helping students to better understand a topic, promoting students' enjoyment of reading, examining an author's craft, and developing students' literary understanding. There are two main types of read-alouds that are used in classrooms: traditional read-alouds and interactive read-alouds. Traditional read-alouds include a text being read by the teacher to the class with little student participation during the reading, but an in-depth, or grand conversation about the book at the end of the reading instead (Eeds & Wells, 1989). The second type of read-aloud, interactive read-alouds, are different in that the students and teacher converse during the read-aloud, and the students are encouraged to make comments and discuss the text during the reading (Barrentine, 1996). An interactive read-aloud includes the teacher encouraging "the children to interact verbally with the text, peers, and the teacher during book reading" as well as the teacher asking "questions throughout the reading that enhance meaning construction" (Barrentine, 1996). Interactive read-alouds are useful because they help students vocalize and discuss their questions and thoughts while the book is being read-aloud, instead of having to wait and add their comments at the end of the reading (Barrentine, 1994; Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey, 2004). These interactions during read-alouds have been shown to help develop students' literary understanding and meaning making or comprehension (Sipe 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2008). Read-alouds can be conducted simply to increase a love of reading, but they are also sometimes used during writing instruction in order to provide students with an example of a mentor text. Students can then create their own work using methods and ideas from the mentor text that has been read aloud.

According to Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey, (2004) there are several characteristics of effective read-alouds. First, the chosen book must be developmentally, socially, and emotionally

appropriate. Secondly, the teacher should practice reading the book so that the story can be read emphatically and fluently. A purpose for the read-aloud must be established, and the teacher may stop occasionally to ask the students questions regarding the storyline and their thoughts or feelings about it. Finally, during the reading, connections must be made between the text and other reading and writing activities (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey, 2004). Teachers conducting interactive read-alouds should carefully find a balance between the amount of reading and discussing, and should be careful to keep students' conversations related to the story or topic.

Literary scholars have been in favor of interactive conversation during read-alouds for many years. In her book *Literature as Exploration*, Rosenblatt (1938) discusses the way in which readers approach stories differently and introduces reader response theory. Previously, it had been assumed that every text had one correct interpretation, but Rosenblatt made it clear that books can often be interpreted differently because everyone approaches stories from their own lives and experiences. She explains that "the same text will have a very different meaning and value to use at different times or under different circumstances" and there is not one correct interpretation (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 34). This connects to the transactions that occur while someone is reading. Every person approaches each text differently, but as they read their interpretations vary as well. According to Rosenblatt, every person approaches a text "with certain expectations" about what is to come, but as the story unfolds their interpretations and hypotheses will vary (1938, p. 26). This explains "why meaning is not 'in' the text or 'in' the reader" but instead that both are "essential to the transactional process of meaning making" (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 27). In addition to reader response theory and transactions, she also discusses two types of reading: efferent and aesthetic. Efferent reading refers to an individual reading for a practical purpose or to gain information "that will remain when the reading is over"

(Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 32). Conversely, aesthetic reading is done for pleasure and so that the reader can “‘live through’ what is being created during the reading.” Aesthetic reading is done for the experience and often elicits emotions in the reader (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 33).

Focusing on children’s responses to literature, Sipe (2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2008) conducted naturalistic, qualitative studies on the oral responses of first and second-graders to picturebook read-alouds in order to develop a grounded theory of children’s literary understanding. He conducted these studies by observing and recording read-alouds in a class of first and second-graders and analyzing the students’ and teacher’s oral responses. The interactive read-alouds were analyzed by the conversational turn, which Sinclair and Coulthard define as “everything said by one speaker before another began to speak” (Sipe, 2000, p. 263). Sipe used the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to develop categories from the data. He then examined the data further to see how frequently oral responses fell into each category. In doing this, he showed that the students, although very young, were making thoughtful responses and constructing an advanced literary understanding during interactive read-alouds.

Sipe (2000a) laid the foundation for a grounded theory of literary understanding, which states that student’s responses during interactive read-alouds fall into one of five conceptual categories. These categories for student responses are: analytical responses, intertextual responses, personal responses, transparent responses, and performative responses. Throughout the read-aloud, these responses interact with each other and at times, the lines can blur between the categories. Within Sipe’s (2000a, 2008) study, over 70% of student responses fell into the Analytical category. The Analytical category consists of all oral responses in which the students treat the text as an item to be analyzed and interpreted. This category also included responses in which the students made narrative meaning. The second category consists of intertextual

responses and these made up 10% of his data. These are responses that connect the text that is being read to a text that the students have previously read or experienced, as well as connections that students made to television programs, videos, movies, or similar media. The third category, personal responses, also consisted of 10% of the data and includes conversational turns that connect the text to students' own lives or their life experiences to better understand the text. Sipe found that these responses occurred either from text-to-life or from life-to-text and show that the students are using the text to better understand their own lives. According to Sipe, transparent responses, the fourth category, are rare since they often only scratch the surface of what is going on inside of a student's head. Transparent responses only made up 2% of the conversational turns within Sipe's study. These responses show that the student has temporarily entered the world of the story and is reacting to it as though they are taking part in the story. The final category, performative responses, which were also not very common, only made up 5% of the data. Performative responses show that the student has taken the text they are listening to and using it for their own purposes, such as to entertain their classmates (Sipe, 2000a, 2001, 2008).

According to Sipe (2008), these five student response categories can then be separated into three impulses. These impulses are the Hermeneutic Impulse, the Personalizing Impulse and the Aesthetic Impulse. The Hermeneutic Impulse includes the students' analytical and intertextual responses because these responses show that the students are trying to understand the text being read to them. The Personalizing Impulse includes students' personal responses. Wanting to personalize a story and use it to help understand one's own life is a basic impulse, so all the personal responses, which attempt to do this, are included in this Personalizing Impulse. The final impulse includes the transparent and performative responses. This is the Aesthetic

Impulse, and it includes conversational turns that were expressive and included attempts to leave the student's own lives and enter the world of the text (Sipe, 2000b, 2008).

Sipe conducted other studies that further attempted to understand interactive read-alouds and how the lines between the categories for student's conversational turns can be blurred. He also dealt more in depth with intertextual responses and analytical responses to see how they differed and compared (2001). Sipe further analyzed intertextual responses made in a first and second-grade classroom and examined the way that students build understandings based on similar stories, such as variations of the same fairytales (2000b). In both of these studies, he calls for further research. Understanding the connection between students' reading and writing as well as studies in other grades are both areas in which Sipe hoped other studies would be conducted (Sipe, 2000b, 2008).

In addition to exploring students' responses during interactive read-alouds, Sipe (2008) also examined the teacher's responses. Teachers leading read-alouds can have a great deal of influence over the way the read-aloud is conducted and how successful it is. Sipe's research led to the creation of five categories for teacher talk. The categories for teacher talk are Reader, Manager and Encourager, Clarifier or Prober, Fellow Wonderer or Speculator, and Extender or Refiner. The Reader category includes any responses when the teacher is reading the text or commenting directly about the book or its parts. Within Sipe's study, over 25% of the teacher conversation fell into the Reader category. The second category, Manager and Encourager, consists of classroom management, calling on children or comments that encourage the children to continue speaking. This category made up over 33% of the teacher's responses in Sipe's study. The third category is Clarifier or Prober, and it includes times when the teacher asks the students for more information or asks questions they already know the answers to regarding the

text. This category made up 25% of the responses in Sipe's study. The fourth category of teacher talk, Fellow Wonderer or Speculator, happens rarely. These responses occur when the teacher questions things in the text or wonders along with the children as to what may happen. This category only made up 3% of the responses in Sipe's study. The final category of teacher talk is Extender or Refiner. This category includes teachable moments, times when new concepts can be introduced, and times when the teacher helps to continue or clarify a student's thoughts. These responses were also fairly uncommon and only made up 5% of the results in Sipe's study. Teachers' comments during interactive read-alouds can also blur between categories at times. For example, a teacher may both manage the classroom and clarify a student's thoughts within one conversational turn.

There have been many studies on interactive read-alouds, including how teachers can implement them, the characteristics of effective read-alouds (Barrentine, 1994; Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey, 2004), and how a teacher and students construct literary understanding during read-alouds (Sipe, 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2008). My study focused on further researching the teacher's and students' oral responses that occur during interactive read-alouds directly before writing workshop. Sipe's studies have inspired much of the project I conducted. While there has been a variety of research on interactive read-alouds, no previous studies have been conducted that focus specifically on interactive read-alouds that take place directly before writing workshop. In addition, Sipe's grounded theory focuses on students in first and second-grade classrooms; however, my study was conducted with students in a third-grade classroom. Since the read-alouds in my study were conducted prior to writing workshop, the teacher may have made comments and steered conversations in a way that differed from read-alouds that were conducted independently. By using Sipe's theory of literary understanding to analyze the

transcripts of the read-alouds in my study, I was able to compare the frequency of the conceptual categories within his theory for student and teacher conversational turns. In addition, I was able to determine how Sipe's theory generalizes to different grades. The texts read aloud to the class in my study were shared as mentor texts. The students took part in the read-aloud knowing that they would soon be crafting a piece of writing during writing workshop that may be modeled in some way after the text currently being read aloud. My study investigated the teacher's and students' oral responses during interactive read-alouds specifically read aloud prior to writing workshop and examined how the frequencies of the oral response categories compared to Sipe's study.

Method

This six-month descriptive, naturalistic study examining third-grade students' social construction of literary understanding was conducted in a third-grade classroom. This classroom was in a public charter school (kindergarten-eighth grade) in an urban school district in a large northeastern city in the United States. The school's curriculum integrated reading and writing, and children's literature shaped their literacy curriculum. The classroom teacher in this study conducted interactive read-alouds at least three times a day. The school also had very high behavioral expectations, which limited behavioral disruptions in the classroom. This classroom was made up of 14 students. There were 10 African American students, 3 Hispanic students, and 1 Asian student. All of the interactive read-alouds examined in this study took place immediately before writing workshop.

The data analyzed in this study consisted of digital recordings of six interactive read-alouds and their transcriptions. I analyzed each of the conversation turns, which Sinclair and Coulthard define as "everything said by one speaker before another began to speak" (Sipe,

2000a, p. 263) using Strauss and Corbin's open coding, axial coding and selective coding, and Glaser and Strauss's constant comparative method (1990). Open coding consisted of breaking down, examining, labeling, comparing, and categorizing the conversational turns according to the five basic conceptual categories for student responses in Sipe's grounded theory of literary understanding. Axial coding helped me to reduce the number of codes, interconnect the codes into broader concepts, and develop subcategories within the initial five conceptual categories of student responses. Using selective coding, I related the subcategories back to the original conceptual categories and analyzed the frequency of the different categories that were found in my study as compared to the frequency in Sipe's study. In addition to my analyzing and coding of the students' oral responses, my mentor also coded the students' responses in order to ensure our inter-rater reliability. Teacher responses were also analyzed using this coding technique and Strauss's constant comparative method (1990).

Findings

Student Responses

Within the context of interactive read-alouds prior to writing workshop, I found that some of the frequencies for the conceptual categories of student responses in my study were similar to Sipe's while some were different (Figure 1). In this study, nearly 80% of the students' responses fell into the Analytical category and 14% of the responses were in the Transparent category. The remaining categories, Intertextual, Personal, and Performative each made up less than 10% of the students' oral responses.

Student Responses					
	Analytical	Intertextual	Personal	Transparent	Performative
Sipe's study	73%	10%	10%	2%	5%
My study	76%	6%	1%	14%	2%

Figure 1. Comparison of students' oral responses during interactive read-alouds in Sipe's study and my study.

Analytical Responses.

Sipe defines analytical responses as those which involve the students making narrative meaning from words and pictures and focusing on interpreting the text (Sipe, 2008). Sipe's analysis of his read-aloud transcripts demonstrated 73% analytical responses while my data resulted in a slightly higher frequency of analytical responses. In my study, 76% of the student responses were analytical. Within the subcategories of the analytical responses, many responses dealt with the students attempting to make narrative meaning, understanding the language of the text, and viewing the picturebook as an object. In a read-aloud of the book *Scarecrow* by Cynthia Rylant (2001), a student commented that he liked how the author was using the word borrowed:

Teacher: Yes, Osahru. We are going to be focused on what Osahru is about to share with us.

Osahru: I like how she kept using *borrowed* so that we remember that it doesn't really matter that the stuff is borrowed that he is happy the way he is.

Teacher: Yeah, it's very interesting. We can certainly learn something from this book of scarecrows that the scarecrow does not mind that he's made up of all borrowed things and that he can't really close his eyes, and all these animals are making their home on him. He's alright with that. He's happy with who he is anyhow.

Very interesting.

This student responded in a way that analyzed the text and attempted to better understand the story. Many other analytical responses also commented on why the author wrote the book in a certain way. In the following example during a read-aloud of *Henry the Dog with No Tail* (Feiffer, 2007), a student commented on the author's decision to use certain punctuation points:

Teacher: Yes, I love the word SCOFFED. What a great verb. It is kind of like...she must have said, (imitating the tone of the character in the book) "I told you that wasn't a REAL tail," she scoffed. See Mark, I just called on Jeremiah and now you're talking which isn't polite to Jeremiah. Go ahead.

Jeremiah: I liked it when she put the exclamation point because it tells you like you saying something really loud.

Teacher: Yeah. It's a FAKE! With lots of excitement, right? Yes.

In both of these examples, as with many analytical responses, the students were responding while analyzing the text and attempting to better understand the story. It is possible that the students' responses often fell into the analytical subcategories of understanding the language of the text and viewing the text as an object because these read-alouds took place before writing workshop. The students were viewing the text as an object to learn from or as a text to mentor their writing, not simply as a reading for enjoyment. This is also shown by the students having no responses that fell into Sipe's Analytical subcategory which focuses on analyzing the illustrations of the text.

Intertextual Responses.

Intertextual responses are responses that show the students are making links to other texts, movies, plays, or other cultural products (Sipe, 2008). Sipe's second category of student responses, Intertextual, consisted of 10% of his total data. This was similar to my study which

found that 6% of the students' responses were intertextual. Within my study, nearly all of the intertextual responses were connections to other stories or books:

Keith: I have a text-to-text. I've got two things. In *Henry...the Dog with No Tail* and *Scarecrow* are both fiction and at the end they both said that they didn't care what they had.

Jeremiah: I agree.

Teacher: They didn't care what they had or didn't have, I agree with you there. I see eye to eye with you. Yes, Nakota.

In this response, the student connects *Henry the Dog with No Tail* (Feiffer, 2007) to another book that had previously been read in class. At other times, they connected the story they were reading to books they had read on their own or to stories that had been read in class during previous grades. For example, in the following excerpt, a student connects the book they were reading, *Spiders* (Gibbons, 2005), to a book they had read previously:

Student: When you were talking about changing its colors, you made me think about adapting.

Teacher: People are thinking about ADAPTING. It has adapted to catch its prey just like we read in *How Animals Adapt*. I'm glad you made that connection.

In this intertextual connection, the student refers back to a text that had a similar theme to the book they were currently reading and made a connection through the word *adapting*. This is indicative of the intertextual connections in our study, as they most often connected the text currently being read to other works of literature.

Personal Responses.

The third conceptual category includes personal responses. According to Sipe's definition, personal responses occur when students are making connections between the text and their own lives (Sipe, 2008). In Sipe's study, this category made up 10% of the students' responses, but in my study these only made up 1% of the data. One example of a personal response in my study came while the story *Animal Dads* (Collard, 1998) was being read. One student made sure to ask if his teacher and classmates knew about one of his special areas of knowledge:

Teacher: What is the opposite of shallow, Samone?

Samone: Deep.

Teacher: Yeah, deep. So deep means to go really far down and shallow is not so deep.

Yes, Jeremiah.

Jeremiah: Do you know I am an expert on turtles?

Teacher: Yes, you are an expert on turtles.

Michael: I'm an expert on wolves.

In this example, the students were at the point in the text where readers learned that turtle babies never see their parents after they hatch. The student took this opportunity to share information about himself that was connected to the story. In another example, a student connects *Henry the Dog with No Tail* (Feiffer, 2007), the book that is about to be read, to their lives by informing their classmates that they have already read the story.

Teacher: We are going to read Kate Feiffer's book,

Student: Oooh, I've already read that.

Teacher: Great, so you get to enjoy it again.

In this example, the student connects the book to their own life simply because they have already read this book. Personal responses in my study were rare and often included brief comments such as these. Only once in my study did a student tell a personal story about something she had done that connected to the text, although they did this frequently in Sipe's study. It is possible that personal responses were so infrequent in this study because the interactive read-alouds took place immediately before writing workshop. Students' personal responses may have often occurred in written form instead, as they were writing their own stories during writing workshop.

Transparent Responses.

The fourth conceptual category, transparent responses, occur rarely. Sipe suggests that transparent responses are rare because they often occur when the student's world and the world of the text are the same momentarily. He also adds that these responses are automatic and not intended for an audience (Sipe, 2008). The frequency of the fourth category in my study was also different than in Sipe's study. In Sipe's study, transparent responses only made up 2% of his data, but in my study they made up 14% of the data. Within my study, transparent responses were often quiet, and consisted of "oohs" or gasps. These responses often interrupted the teacher as she continued reading, such as in this example from the read-aloud of the book *Spiders* (Gibbons, 2005):

Teacher: Remember the nursery rhyme, "Little Miss Muffet"?

Students: Yeah.

Teacher: Little Miss Muffett was a real little girl. Her father was a spider expert

/Students: What! Blough!/
/

Teacher: who used to make her eat mashed spiders when she was sick. About 200 years ago, this was a common cold remedy.

In this example, as with many, the students interrupted the teacher as if they could not contain their excitement and comments. This helped to categorize these comments as transparent, because it was clear that the students' worlds and the world of the text had been combined. In other examples, it was as though the students did not realize they were speaking out loud. During the read-aloud of *Henry the Dog with No Tail* (Feiffer, 2007), one student let out a few responses that were very quiet and seemed to have no intention of stopping the read aloud:

Teacher: (Reading aloud.) "Look," he said, "I've got a new tail."

Michael: Oh, my.

Teacher: (Reading aloud.) "Wow! Neat! Cool!" said Grady. "Does it do any tricks?" asked Pip. Remember we're listening for cool, interesting sentences. Henry ran around in a circle and jumped over his tail. The first time he did a high jump, then he did a long jump, then he ran backward and jumped. He did a spin jump, a low jump, and a leap jump.

Transparent responses were more common in my study than in Sipe's, but they were still somewhat infrequent. It would be difficult to know if I was able to capture all of the students' transparent responses, as many occur within their minds. However, the transparent responses that are audible usually show that the students are engrossed in the story and are not speaking to their class intentionally.

Performative Responses.

Sipe describes the final category, the Performative, as student comments that use the text as a platform for their own purposes, such as to express creativity or to entertain their classmates (2008). These responses were often accompanied by movements or dramatic motions. The frequency of this category was also slightly different in my study. In Sipe's study, these

performative responses made up 5% of his data, but in my study it was only 2% of the data.

During the reading of *Henry the Dog with No Tail* (Feiffer, 2007), a student gave this series of performative responses during a dramatic scene in the story:

Teacher: Something is about to happen and aren't you wondering what?

Students: (chorally) YES!

Teacher: I love how this author chose...She chose to end her page here. But she didn't just want you to flip and feel nothing. She wanted you to wonder what was going to happen. Are you ready?

Students – (chorally) Yes!

Jeremiah: Close your eyes. (Covers eyes with hands.)

Teacher: Then...

Jeremiah: (Whispers.) Close your eyes.

Mark: No.

Teacher: Shhh, Jeremiah. We're waiting.

This student was trying to entertain his classmates and make the reading more exciting for them by putting on a bit of a performance. The percentage for performative responses found in my study may have been slightly lower than in Sipe's study because of the age of the students and the culture of the classroom. The school that my study took place in had very high behavioral expectations, and because of that it may have resulted in fewer performative responses because the students understood that these would not be acceptable.

Teacher Responses

Teachers' comments during read-alouds can significantly influence the success of the read-aloud. Focusing on teacher's responses within the context of interactive read-alouds prior to

writing workshop, I found that many of the frequencies for the five conceptual categories of teacher responses in my study were similar to Sipe's study (Figure 2). The categories for teacher's responses that had similar frequencies to those found in Sipe's study were Reader, Manager and Encourager, and Fellow Wonderer or Speculator. However, two categories for teacher's responses had vastly different frequencies in my study than in Sipe's study. The Extender or Refiner category made up 34% of the teacher talk in my study, and only 15% fell into the Clarifier or Prober category, which differed greatly from the results of Sipe's study.

Teacher Responses					
	Reader	Manager & Encourager	Clarifier or Prober	Fellow Wonderer or Speculator	Extender or Refiner
Sipe's study	25%	33%	25%	3%	5%
My study	20%	29%	15%	2%	34%

Figure 2. Comparison of teacher's oral responses during interactive read-alouds in Sipe's study and my study.

Reader Responses.

Responses that fell into the Reader category were those when the teacher read the text or commented directly about the text or its illustrations (Sipe, 2008). Sipe's analysis of his read-alouds demonstrated that 25% of the teacher's responses fell into this category, but within my study, it was slightly less common. My data demonstrated that 20% of the teacher's comments fell into the Reader category. The teacher did all of the reading during my study, and it is possible that the percentage is lower than in Sipe's study due to the teacher's tendency to read entire pages or paragraphs at a time. For example, she read this entire sequence of the story *Animal Dads* (Collard, 1998) without interruption:

Teacher: “Dads have their ups. To spawn or reproduce, salmon return to the same river or stream where they were born. The trip can be difficult. Salmon dads and moms have to leap clear out of the water to get past logs or rocks. Sometimes, a salmon dad EVEN wiggles over shallow stretches of gravel to reach the place where he will spawn.”

Within my study, nearly all of the teacher’s responses that fell into the Reader category were examples in which the teacher was reading directly from the text. Within Sipe’s study, responses that commented on publishing information or other aspects of the book were also included in the Reader category, so it is possible that this also led to my study showing a smaller percentage of reader responses.

Manager and Encourager Responses.

The Manager and Encourager category of teacher’s responses includes instances when the teacher calls on students, deals with classroom management issues or comments in a way that continues the children’s responses (Sipe, 2008). Sipe’s study resulted in 33% of the responses falling into the Manager and Encourager category while this study was slightly lower, resulting in 29% of the responses falling into this category. Within my study, these responses usually included the teacher calling on students or quieting them down. In this example, from the read-aloud of *Henry the Dog with No Tail* (Feiffer, 2007), the teacher encourages a student to continue her explanation while also managing the classroom environment by reminding students of the necessity of raising their hands:

Teacher: Why do you like that sentence?

Renesha: Because the word moped is a good describing word.

Teacher: Yeah, that's a great describing word. (Rereading sentence.) He moped and he moped.

/Frenia: Ms. Daniels what does.../

Teacher: We raise our hands, Frenia, and wait to get called on. Anything else anyone wants to say about this sentence, He moped and moped? Yes, Denise.

As the students began to interrupt and lose focus, the teacher refocused the students and encouraged the first student to continue her explanation. In other examples, the teacher's responses as she called on students also fell into the Manager and Encourager category.

Teacher: I'm keep hearing from some of the same people. I'd like to hear other people's thoughts. Michael, what are you thinking?

Michael: I'm thinking that when she said about the crows, birds and other things that can fly she just said

The teacher used this opportunity to remind the students to be engaged and to call on a student who was waiting patiently. Any responses regarding classroom management, such as these, were examples of the Manager and Encourager category of teacher responses. As previously stated, the school in which my study took place had very high expectations for student behavior, so the students were less likely to need redirection during the read-aloud. This could have led to the slightly lower number of Manager and Encourager responses found in my study.

Clarifier or Prober Responses.

Sipe's third category of teacher responses is defined as remarks that connect to previous statements during the read-aloud or times when the teacher asks questions to which they probably already know the answer (Sipe, 2008). In Sipe's study, he found that 25% of the teacher talk fell into this category, but my study found that only 15% of the teacher's responses

fell into this category. In my study, most of the Clarifier or Prober responses occurred through the teacher asking questions. For example, while reading *Scarecrow* (Rylant, 2001), the teacher probes the students to see what they have noticed in the book.

Teacher: (Reading aloud.) “The wind is brushing his borrowed head and the sun is warming his borrowed hands and the clouds are floating across his button-borrowed eyes.”

Students: Ooooh.

Teacher: That was ALL one sentence. Did anyone notice any repetition there? What did you hear Nakota?

Nakota: That she repeated the word *borrowed*.

In this example, the teacher is probing the students to determine what they have noticed in the story. Comments that fell into the Clarifier or Prober category were most often framed with questions such as this. This question came at the beginning of the conversation and served as a jumping off point for the students. At other times, questions that fell into this category came after a student’s comment, as the teacher attempted to better understand what the student was saying. In the following excerpt from *Animal Dads* (Collard, 1998), the teacher asks the student questions so that he can better articulate his thought.

Keith: I like how it said when it protects the females and the cubs.

Teacher: What did you like about that?

Keith: I like when they said the female and cubs part.

The teacher asked a question to help the student narrow down or clarify his thought in a way that would make sense to the rest of the class. There are examples from this study in which the teacher’s responses fell into the Clarifier or Prober category through connections to previous

student's statements, but most often, responses that fell into this category were in the form of questions.

Fellow Wonderer or Speculator.

The fourth category of teacher talk, Fellow Wonderer or Speculator, is made up of responses in which the teacher wondered and asked questions along with the students. In this category, the teacher did not know the answers to the questions that she asked or did not have the answers to questions that the students asked (Sipe, 2008). Responses that fell into the fourth category of teacher talk were very rare. In Sipe's study, these occurred only 3% of the time, and in my study they were even less frequent, making up only 2% of the total teacher responses. For example, during a read-aloud of *Scarecrow* by Cynthia Rylant (2001) the teacher posed a question to the students but it was not a question they were expected to answer. After reading, she paused and asked:

Teacher: I wonder if it is important to the way this scarecrow might feel because it doesn't sound like this scarecrow has anything that just belongs to him so far. Just wondering.

In this example, the teacher shared her own question about the read-aloud, and although it was stated as a question, she does not expect the students to answer her. She is simply wondering something about the story, and says it out loud, giving herself the same role in the read-aloud as the students. Of course, the teacher could not do this all of the time, or the read-aloud would lose direction. However, the occasional ponderings of the teacher made their way into Sipe's study and mine, leading to these rare responses.

Extender or Refiner Responses.

The fifth and final category of teacher responses was made up of responses in which the teacher continues a child's thought, introduces a new concept or takes advantage of a teachable moment (Sipe, 2008). This category showed the greatest difference in frequency between these two studies. Sipe's study demonstrated that only 5% of the teacher's responses fell into the Extender or Refiner category, but within my study, 34% of the teacher's responses fell into this category. My study featured many comments that involved the teacher continuing students' thoughts. One such example occurred during the reading of *Animal Dads* (Collard, 1998):

Keith: Um, I like how the author said that female and male take care of the downy youngster...

Teacher: That is an interesting description, their downy youngster. Very interesting.

Student: What is downy?

Teacher: Downy is the feathers that they have. Yes.

Student: I like the way they say they put their babies under their ...

Teacher: Their special feathery lined pouch?

Student: (nods head in agreement)

As the student trailed off and seemed to have forgotten the particular phrasing that he liked, the teacher helped by finishing the sentence. At other times, teacher responses within this category would introduce new ideas to the conversation. In the following excerpt from the read-aloud of *Henry the Dog with No Tail* (Feiffer, 2007), the teacher takes the opportunity to make it clear how important word choice can be to a story.

Teacher: He does. I just think he was saying that to try to make himself feel better. I have a question for you. Did anyone notice how Kate Feiffer repeated the same word?

All Students – (chorally) Yes!

Teacher: I thought that was really interesting because now I really can see that he must have moped and moped...it just kind of kept going. He didn't just mope for a minute, he kept moping. Yes, Nakota.

The teacher explains that the way Kate Feiffer reuses the word *moped* makes it clear that Henry continued to mope. This type of comment, in which the teacher explains what a word means or the importance of how a word is used, fell into the Extender or Refiner category.

Frenia: Me and Keith we were talking about how Gail Gibbons, how she put a lot of things to make it more...

/Keith: she put a lot of information/

Frenia: Yeah

Teacher: She put a lot of effort into putting a lot of information. So, if you want to make a book like Gail Gibbons, which you can, you need to put in a lot of effort and find a lot of information and really become an expert. Yes.

Student: I like how Gail Gibbons talked about the spider's life....

The teacher's comments expanded upon students' understanding of vocabulary, helped them to better understand the author's craft, and make sense of unusual grammar or punctuation. In this example, the students explain something that they thought was an example of great writing done by the author, and the teacher refined this remark by restating the students' comments in an even more explicit and clear way. This may have helped other students understand what their classmates really enjoyed about the story, but it also served the purpose of redirecting the focus of the read-aloud. The teacher reminded the students of the importance of their mentor text and

the way that they could model their own writing after it when they were writing during writing workshop.

The increased frequency of this category is most likely due to these read-alouds occurring immediately before writing workshop. In Sipe's studies, the books were read for the experience, while in my study the books were read as mentor texts. The read-alouds would occur with a clear purpose, and the students would be expected to notice various aspects of the writer's craft and then go on to use that in their own writing. This means that the teacher had ample opportunities to introduce new concepts and help the students during teachable moments, possibly more opportunities than if the read-alouds had been occurring simply for the experience.

Conclusions

These results indicate that it is important for students to interact with their teacher, peers, and the text during interactive read-alouds prior to writing workshop. During interactive read-alouds, students' and teacher's responses help readers develop an understanding of the text including how texts work, how they are purposefully crafted, and why they may be crafted in a particular way. In a traditional read-aloud, the students are able to express their thoughts about the story during a grand conversation (Eeds & Wells, 1989) after the story has been read; however, many of the students' responses found in this study would likely not have occurred during a traditional read-aloud. For example, if the students were not able to discuss the story during the reading, their transparent responses may have been less common. Often, the students' analytical responses were paired with the teacher's extending or refining comments. As both of these categories had a higher percentage in my study, it is possible that they could be correlated. The students knew that the texts being read aloud were mentors for their writing, and they must truly understand how the author crafted the text for this reader's understanding and enjoyment.

This may have led to a higher number of analytical responses. Additionally, it is possible that students did not feel the need to tell as many personal stories because they knew they would soon have an opportunity to share their personal experiences in their own writing during writing workshop. In a traditional read-aloud, the students would have had to wait until the end of the story and would have possibly forgotten some of these valuable comments that together led to the development of an understanding of how authors intentionally craft their texts for their readers. Also, many of the students' analytical comments that took place during the read-alouds involved the students asking for a definition of a word or commenting on something that they noticed in the texts. Given that the books read in my study were read immediately before writing workshop and with a very clear purpose in mind, this may have increased the number of analytical responses given by the students. A read-aloud which required the students to be quiet would have meant losing out on so many of the great comments and thoughts of the students. The conversations that the students had amongst themselves and with the teacher throughout the read-alouds in this study were rich and, in most cases, created by the students. Additionally, the students could let their emotions out through transparent responses or contribute performative responses meant solely for entertainment. The comments and questions that occurred during the read-alouds worked together to help the students form the basis of their literary understanding.

Allowing the students to converse with each other, their teacher, and the text during the read-aloud resulted in more responses that demonstrated a more advanced literary understanding and a better understanding of how the text was crafted for the reader. This corresponds with Rosenblatt's reader response theory because allowing the students to discuss the story while it is being read allowed them to comment based on their own experiences and understanding of the story, instead of requiring them to wait until the end of the story and listen to a grand

conversation regarding the text. Encouraging the students to interact with the text as it was being read meant that they would be more prepared when their own opportunity came about to write a story modeled in a specific way after the mentor text.

The portion of this study examining teacher talk has shown that the teacher's contribution to and facilitation of the read-aloud is incredibly important. The teacher in this study was thoughtful in the way that she presented the text and was constantly finding ways to guide the conversation without making it seem like there was only one proper interpretation of the text. She continually guided the students toward answers or helped to refine their thoughts without giving only her interpretation. The thoughtful engagement of the teacher resulted in the thoughtful engagement of the students in the read-aloud. As they worked together to discuss and analyze the texts being read, they discovered new and interesting interpretations which may not have otherwise been reached. The higher number of teacher responses that fell into the Extender or Refiner category was likely because the teacher was often finding a way to direct the conversation back to the overall purpose of the read-aloud, for the text to be a mentor for students' writing. While the teacher and students were reading with a specific purpose in mind, all students' comments were encouraged and expanded upon by the teacher. Her comments on the read-aloud focused on helping the students develop an understanding of the text, but not necessarily correcting or minimizing their comments. As with Rosenblatt's reader response theory, the teacher in this study supported multiple interpretations of the texts read, and this was clearly reflected in her supportive comments.

There were some significant differences between Sipe's study and my study. Overall, his study featured small group and whole-class read-alouds, and his study took place in the first and second grades. My study only featured whole-class read-alouds and took place in a third-grade

classroom. The types of teachers featured in our studies also may have affected the frequency of the different categories of responses, based on what the teachers would accept or not accept as proper classroom actions. The types of books read in our studies differed, as well. Sipe's study featured all fictional stories, often based on fairytales. My study featured fiction as well as expository texts, which may have resulted in different types of responses. However, the most significant difference between the two studies is the difference that perhaps had the greatest impact on the results. The read-alouds in Sipe's study were read for enjoyment and for the overall experience. The texts read in my study were read immediately prior to writing workshop, and while they were read for the experience, they were also read with a specific purpose in mind to mentor the students' writing. Using the books as mentor texts, the teacher in my study would guide the conversation toward a certain aspect of the author's writing in order to teach this topic to the students. As the story was being read aloud, the students would work towards an understanding of not only the story being read, but the way it was written as well. By discussing the reasons why a text was written in a certain way, the students could better understand the way authors craft their writing. Then, immediately following the read-aloud, as they began writing in writing workshop, they would incorporate the author's craft that they had just learned about during their read-aloud.

The findings in this study lead to many more questions regarding students' and teacher's oral responses during interactive read-alouds. Research that could better show the connection between students' responses during interactive read-alouds and their writing would help to demonstrate the effectiveness of conducting interactive read-alouds prior to writing workshop. Additionally, it would be helpful to see if interactive read-alouds prior to writing workshop often resulted in a higher number of analytical responses than in Sipe's study, or perhaps how the

classroom environment leads to differences in students' and teachers' oral responses. The performative responses in my study were rare, but often added a great deal of energy and direction to the conversation. Research investigating the writing of students who often offered performative responses could possibly be a great demonstration of the link between interactive read-alouds and voice in students' writing.

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