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### Comparing the Effects of Storybook Reading and Storytelling on Preschoolers' and Kindergartners' Ability to Answer Comprehension Questions

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COMPARING THE EFFECTS OF STORYBOOK READING AND  
STORYTELLING ON PRESCHOOLERS' AND KINDERGARTNERS'  
ABILITY TO ANSWER COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the  
Department of Education and Human Development  
State University of New York  
at Brockport  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science in Education

By

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May 1998

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DEDICATION

To my husband, James Brewer,  
who is always there for me with his love,  
support and encouragement.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare preschoolers' and kindergartners' ability to comprehend a story as a result of either having read to them from a book or having orally told them a story. A second purpose of this study was to examine each age group individually to see if age played a factor in their comprehension of the stories with relation to the two methods of presenting the stories.

The books were introduced before they were presented. Two methods of presentation were used: reading a story from the book, or telling a story orally, without the book. In a one-on-one setting, both books were presented by the researcher to each child. The order of the books and the method of presentation of each book were carefully chosen by the researcher in order to prevent any bias as a result of one book always being presented before the other, or one book being presented using one method more than the other. The researcher presented some questions and comments during the stories and each child was asked three comprehension questions at the end of each story. The same researcher conducted both the read aloud and storytelling sessions.

The comprehension scores were compared by using a two-way analysis of variance. The results showed no significant differences in their comprehension scores.

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## CHAPTER I

### Statement of the Problem

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compare preschoolers' and kindergartners' ability to comprehend a story as a result of either having read to them from a book or having orally told them a story. A second purpose of this study was to examine each age group individually to see if age played a factor in their comprehension of the stories with relation to the two methods of presenting the stories.

#### Need For the Study

"For most of human history, storytelling has been the major means by which people have been educated" (Roney, 1988, p. 14). Roney went on to say that it is these oral stories, passed down from generation to generation, that have kept a group's history alive and have taught lessons for the listeners. There are some countries today where storytelling is still a vital part of the culture, but in our country it has become a rare art form. Advanced technology and popular education have turned our country away from storytelling. The



plentiful supply of books, movies and television programs have taken over the job of the storyteller (Wilcox, 1990).

"A story read with enjoyment is not a reading exercise. Rather it is an auditory experience, as is storytelling, and listeners learn to associate reading with pleasure" (Baker & Greene, 1977, p. 72). Morrow's (1979 & 1985) research has shown that when children enjoy their experiences with literature they are more anxious to learn to read. She has also found that both reading and storytelling help children to develop their oral language skills and comprehension skills, and enhance their vocabulary.

Henry (1993) conducted a study which compared kindergartners' ability to sequentially retell a story using pictures when a story was told either in a storytelling session or in a storybook session. She found that the children were more attentive during the storytelling, however, the children were all able to retell the stories whether they were read from a storybook or told orally. In her discussion of implications for future research she proposed this question: "Is their comprehension better when stories are read aloud or when stories are told orally without a book?" (p.20).

## Definitions

**Storybook Reading:** For the purpose of this study storybook reading will be the reading of a book that has both words and pictures. Storybook reading will be referred to as reading aloud. The read aloud sessions will be an adult reading to a child in a setting which permits the child to view the pictures.

**Storytelling:** For the purpose of this study, storytelling will be a story told orally without a book. The story being told may be from a book, but the book will not be used during the telling. There will not be any props used during the telling of the story. The storytelling sessions will be an adult telling a story to a child.

**Comprehension:** For the purpose of this study, comprehension is the ability of a child to understand a story read aloud or told orally. To determine a child's comprehension score, two literal-level questions and one inferential-level question were asked.

### Research Questions

1. Which method of sharing a piece of literature, reading a story aloud or telling a story orally, yields the best comprehension results for preschoolers and kindergartners?
2. Does age play a factor in which method of sharing a piece of literature, reading a story aloud or telling a story orally, yields the best comprehension results?

### Limitations of the Study

The researcher conducted all the read aloud sessions and the storytelling sessions. A limited number of sessions were conducted each day with a separate set of questions and comments for each of the two books. The possibility existed that the researcher would inadvertently affect the telling and reading of the books.

### Summary

The study compared preschoolers' and kindergartners' ability to comprehend a story as a result of either having read to them from a book or having orally told them a story. The study also

determined if age affected which method yielded better comprehension results.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of the Literature

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compare preschoolers' and kindergartners' ability to comprehend a story as a result of either having read to them from a book or having orally told them a story. A second purpose of this study was to examine each age group individually to see if age played a factor in their comprehension of the stories with relation to the two methods of presenting the stories.

#### Reading Aloud

Before one can begin to look at reading aloud and its values, one must be able to understand the definition of reading. There are many students who believe reading is just a matter of recognizing words (Holdaway, 1979).

I was recently asked to work with Robert, a third-grader, who would read the words in a grade-level book but could not say what he read beyond giving some unrelated details. When I asked him 'Why do we read?' he replied, 'to know the words.' Because he viewed reading only as reading the words, he did not stop when something didn't make sense, and he

never went back to reread or refocus. (Routman, 1991, p. 397)

Anderson, Heibert, Scott, and Wilkinson define reading as "the process of constructing meaning from written texts. It is a complex skill requiring the coordination of a number of interrelated sources of information" (p. 7). They consider reading to be a "holistic act" where the many subskills of reading need to be used in coordination with each other. Just to read the letters on a page is not reading, but reading the letters to form words, seeing the words together as forming sentences and then using one's schema as well as other strategies to help apply some meaning to those sentences in the text is reading.

A seemingly simple yet important question to ask is, "What are the values of reading aloud?" According to Baker and Greene, (1977) reading aloud plays a very important role in shaping children's views and preferences in reading. Children are introduced to many types of literature when they are read to and this then helps them to develop their own system to judge whether a book is "good." Routman (1991), throughout her experiences in the field of education, has found that reading aloud improves children's listening skills, expands vocabulary, helps reading comprehension, and has also had a positive effect on students' point of view on

reading.

Bower (1976) found that as children are exposed to many simple types of stories they begin to pick up on the structure of the stories, which helps them to comprehend future stories. Chomsky (1972) found that the more a child is read to and the more books a child is exposed to, the child's understanding and use of the English language improves.

"The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" (Anderson, Heibert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 23). It was also stated, in Becoming a Nation of Readers, that the greatest gains are made when there are interactions taking place between the reader and the child during story readings. These interactions can occur in a variety of ways. There can be questions asked and then answered, words and letters can be observed, the definitions of words can be acquired, and what is being read can be elaborated on. Research conducted by Morrow (1988) specified a number of different styles of interacting during read aloud sessions that play a role in the quality of the sessions. Some of these interactions are questioning, scaffolding dialogue and responses, offering praise or positive feedback, giving or

extending information, clarifying information, restating information, directing discussion, sharing personal reactions, and relating concepts to life experiences. She also found that in order for these interactions to be beneficial the child and the reader have to work together.

According to Heath (1980), interactive language behaviors during story reading change as children get older. Initially parents expect very young children to interrupt stories, and they accept dialogue and questioning during the story. By the age of three, according to Heath's observations, the child is expected by the parents to listen to the story and learn information from it as in traditional school settings. The adult begins to question the child after a reading to determine the child's content understanding and recall. (Morrow, 1988, p. 93)

In a study that examined the interactions taking place during storybook readings with a child and his mother or father, Phillips and McNaughton (1990) found that a majority of the interactions related to an understanding of the story. These interactions or comments, made by both the adult and the child, were questions and statements used to either restate what had just happened in the story or to predict what might happen next. The researchers concluded that, "At this stage in their storybook reading, neither children nor adults appear to focus on concepts about print" (Phillips & McNaughton, 1990, p. 211).



A similar study by Yaden, Smolkin and Conlon (1989) investigated preschool children's spontaneous questions to determine on what children focused during storybook readings at home. The questions, that were asked by either the adults or the children in the study, tended to concentrate on the illustrations. For preschoolers, the illustrations in storybooks aid in their comprehension of the story. The researchers surmised that when parents share storybooks with their children, the reading of the story is helping to form each child's "comprehension process" rather than "print awareness."

Morrow (1988) and Kertoy (1994) also conducted studies of the types of responses or interactions made during storybook readings as an indicator of the area of reading upon which the heaviest concentration was placed during story book readings. However, Morrow and Kertoy conducted their studies in the school setting. Both researchers found that when the child and the reader interact with the story through the use of questions and comments that the emphasis of these interactions is on story meaning. Through further analysis Kertoy came to the conclusion that it is best to integrate the use of questions and comments throughout the story reading. This will maximize the child's level of comprehension.

Morrow (1989) then conducted another study a year

later that looked at the responses taking place during read aloud sessions. However, this time she used small groups of students rather than individual students to gather her data. She found that with the small groups the children did not hesitate to make comments or to answer the adult's questions. The responses grew in complexity and she felt this to be because the students would comment and expand upon the other children's comments. The comments and questions that were stated in this study tended to relate to the meaning of the story similar to the results of her previous study of one-to-one story readings.

Ninio and Bruner (1978) set up what they call "the book-reading dialogue" where the parent is given a certain method to use to help their child interact with the story. Their dialogue consists of four steps to be followed:

1. The parent will get the child's attention.
2. The parent will then point at a picture and ask the child to identify the picture.
3. The child will then give a response.
4. If the child is correct the parent will simply affirm the child for correctly identifying or labeling the picture. If the child incorrectly identifies or labels the picture then the parent

will assist the child in giving the correct label to the picture while still affirming the child. Ninio and Bruner used this dialogue technique in a study to determine whether interactions between the parent and the toddler helped them to be able to correctly label pictures in picture books. They found that "the book-reading dialogue" was very successful in helping the toddlers learn labels for objects.

A similar study was conducted by Hale and Windecker (1992). They studied the growth of a preschoolers' vocabulary in relation to the interactions between parent and child during storybook readings. They found that vocabulary knowledge was enhanced as the number and quality of the interactions increased.

Another method of interacting with storybooks or picture books is the art of retelling. Morrow (1985) found that young children did better on tests of comprehension when they were able to first retell the story. Routman (1991) has found that a child's retelling of a story can be used to test the child's comprehension of a story that the child recently heard or read. She feels this is not as stressful for the child as is answering teacher comprehension questions. In retelling, the student is in charge of the situation and therefore can feel free to tell whatever details or

events are remembered from the story. She also found that using retellings helps improve the oral language skills and comprehension of a child, who is a less proficient reader.

Brown (1975) went one step further and conducted a study which examined kindergartners' ability to retell stories with the events of the story in the correct order. Brown found that kindergartners had difficulty verbally stating the correct order of events. However, when given picture card of the events in the story they were able to put the pictures in the correct order.

"Yes! Research evidence indicates that reading aloud to children significantly improves their vocabulary knowledge and their reading comprehension. It also demonstrates that hearing literature read can affect reading interests and the quality of a child's language development" (McCormick, 1977, p. 139). Cohen (1968) also found that when children were read to everyday their vocabulary and their comprehension significantly improved. The children in her study were second graders that were in special service schools because of their academic deficiencies. Many of these students were from a low socioeconomic population and there was a high percentage of ethnic and racial minorities. There were no known cases of mental

retardation. She came up with her conclusion by comparing two groups of students: one group was read to everyday from preselected books and the other group was only read to as a special treat.

Reading aloud has many benefits, but is it pleasurable and can it be incorporated into today's classrooms at any level? It is believed that reading aloud can be a pleasurable and enjoyable experience, especially when readers let their love for a good story show and let their reading have a flair for the dramatic (Baker & Greene, 1977).

It is the easiest component to incorporate into any language program at any grade level. Reading aloud is cost effective, requires little preparation, and results in few discipline problems. Nonetheless, it is sometimes neglected just because it is so easy and pleasurable. I can remember for years feeling uncomfortable about spending daily time reading aloud—the children and I were enjoying it so much. It took me a long time to accept that one doesn't have to suffer, do hard work, or require written responses for an activity to be worthwhile. (Routman, 1991, p. 32)

It is important to know how to conduct a read-aloud session so that a read-aloud session really will be worthwhile, pleasurable, and easy to incorporate into any language program. Baker and Greene (1977) have come up with this set of criteria to follow when a story is being read aloud:

- The mood should be one of relaxed listening.

- Do not invade the privacy of a child's thoughts by forcing comments.
- Do not read in a condescending manner.
- Do have a sense of humor.
- Know your material so well that you do not struggle over words and ideas, and so you can look frequently at your listeners in order to involve them in the story.
- Strengthen your technical equipment—pleasant flexible voice, clear enunciation, skillful pacing that captures the rhythms and conveys the mood. The timing and the pauses are as important in reading aloud as in storytelling.
- The length of the material [storybooks] should be suitable to the maturity of the group. (p. 74)

Another point to consider is the emotional appeal of the story. Are the children going to be able to relate with the characters' emotions and the experiences the characters go through? Also, is the book written for the young child to follow easily? Cohen (1968) found that when books were chosen by their emotional appeal and their readability, this helped "facility in listening, attention span, narrative sense, recall of stretches of verbalization, and the recognition of newly

learned words as they appear in other contexts" (p. 217).

### Storytelling

"Storytelling is almost the oldest art in the world-the first conscious form of literary communication" (Shedlock, 1951, p. XVII). Shedlock advocated for the use of storytelling with children. She believes that storytelling gives them a "dramatic joy," helps children to cultivate a sense of humor, allows for lessons to be learned from the characters in the story, and improves their imagination. Hearing stories introduces the children to new vocabulary words, helps to develop and improve their oral language, and strengthens their listening skills (Morrow, 1979). "When you tell a story to children you are free to watch their faces and respond to what you see there. A television program or even a book cannot respond" (Wilcox, 1990, p. 10).

Amato, Emans, and Ziegler (1973) conducted a two-year study which compared storytelling and creative dramatics in a library setting. The study took place in nine libraries over two 28-week periods during the two years. Two hundred ninety eight fourth and fifth grade students from public and parochial schools took part in this study. The subjects in this study were each

assigned to a specific library branch and then were assigned to either a creative dramatics group, a storytelling group, or a library usage group. The library usage group served as the control group. During the creative dramatics sessions the students were actively involved in designing and acting out a script that told the story or poem of the day. During the storytelling sessions, two folktales and four or five poems were read with a dialogue following the readings. Librarians who specialized in each of the three areas led the sessions. The librarians noted that the children from the storytelling group signed out more books than the children in the other two groups. The children in the storytelling group also were more interested in finding books that correlated with the theme of the story hour. Pretests and posttests were given by qualified elementary teachers. The researchers found that storytelling enhances the self-image, empathy, and creativity of students.

It is important to learn some techniques before beginning to tell stories to ensure a successful storytelling session. Baker and Greene (1977) and Morrow (1979) have set up the following techniques for storytelling:

- Before beginning, call up the essential



emotions of the story as you first felt them.

- Look directly at your listeners.
- As you tell, let your gaze move from one to another so that each child feels involved in the telling of the story.
- Break direct eye contact only to look at an imaginary scene or object you want the listeners to see, or when you engage in dialogue between two or more characters during the telling.
- Speak in a pleasant, low-pitched voice with enough volume to be heard easily by listeners in the last row.
- Speak clearly, distinctly, smoothly, and at a pace suitable for the story.
- Gestures, if used at all, should be natural to the teller and to the action of the story.  
(Baker and Greene, 1977, p. 58)
- Do not memorize stories when telling them, but be sure to know them well.
- Use any of the catch phrases or quotes that are important to the piece of literature.
- Use expression in your presentation but do not become too dramatic and overshadow the story itself.

- Stories selected should have simple well rounded plots.
- There should be a limited number of well delineated characters that are carried throughout and with whom the children can identify.
- Take into consideration the children's attention span when choosing and preparing the story. (Morrow, 1979, p. 237)

#### Reading Aloud and Storytelling

A commonly asked question is, "Why not just read stories to children since it seems much easier than learning to tell stories?" In Roney's (1988) research in the area of storytelling and reading aloud, he found that storytelling is more personal, direct, and creative. One kindergarten teacher he spoke with had this to say, "I've always read aloud to them but I've noticed that they pay much closer attention when I tell stories. I get more satisfaction out of story telling than reading aloud" (p. 16). Morrow (1979) believes that one of the advantages storytelling has over reading aloud is the fact that a storyteller can shorten a piece of literature so that the younger listener can still hear the whole story. She also believes that the art of

storytelling can be mastered by anyone. Baker and Greene (1977) believe that reading aloud to children is a wonderful skill to master first but that storytelling should also be incorporated into story times.

Storytelling allows the storyteller and the audience to reach a deeper level of communication since there is no book present which can sometimes put a barrier between the reader and the audience.

How often is storytelling and reading aloud used in the classrooms? Morrow (1982) conducted a study to find an answer to this question. Teachers were observed over a four week period and it was found that they only read 58% of the time, discussed stories only 32% of the time, and told stories even less often. On the average the teachers read 12 stories during the four week period and told stories only 3 times during that period.

### Summary

Exposing children to different types of literature helps children judge for themselves if a book is "good." This exposure also helps to shape children's views and preferences in reading. A child's exposure to literature can be through reading aloud or storytelling.

These experiences have been found to be pleasurable for children and they produce many benefits such as improved comprehension, expanded vocabulary, strengthened listening skills, and enhanced oral language.

CHAPTER III  
The Research Design

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compare preschoolers' and kindergartners' ability to comprehend a story as a result of either having read to them from a book or having orally told them a story. A second purpose of this study was to examine each age group individually to see if age played a factor in their comprehension of the stories with relation to the two methods of presenting the stories.

Research Questions

1. Which method of sharing a piece of literature, reading a story aloud or telling a story orally, yields the best comprehension results for preschoolers and kindergartners?
2. Does age play a factor in which method of sharing a piece of literature, reading a story aloud or telling a story orally, yields the best comprehension results?

## Methodology

### Subjects

The subjects in this study were nine three-year-olds, ten four-year-olds, and five kindergartners from two schools. One was a cooperative nursery school in a suburb of Rochester, New York, and the other a day care center in the east side of the city.

### Materials/Instruments

The materials used in this study were the trade books, Monkey and the Moon, by John Randall, and Orson, by Rascal. The classroom teachers from each school were consulted to ensure that the books chosen were not familiar to the students. The stories also needed to be appropriate for three-year-olds, four-year-olds, and kindergartners. They needed to be similar in length, number of characters, and flow of the language.

### Procedures

The parents of each child were given a letter explaining the purpose of the study and were asked to

sign a permission slip stating that they allowed their child to participate in this study. Only those children with whom the researcher had received a permission slip participated in the study. See Appendix A for a copy of the permission letter.

A pilot for this study was conducted two weeks before the start of the study. This was completed with some children who were not participating in the actual study in order for the researcher to evaluate the number and complexity of the comprehension questions. The researcher performed the procedure, to be defined shortly, on two children who were compatible with the test subjects.

One week before the study was to begin the researcher visited each of the classrooms. This allowed the children to become familiar with the researcher and it allowed the researcher to let the children know that she would be coming in to read and tell stories with each of them. The following procedures for reading books aloud and telling books orally were not new to the children in the study. The teachers of each of the classes both read and tell stories, regularly, using the following procedures.

The books were introduced before they were presented. Two methods of presentation were used:

reading a story from the book, or telling a story orally, without the book. In a one-on-one setting, both books were presented by the researcher to each child. The order of the books and the method of presentation of each book were carefully chosen by the researcher in order to prevent any bias as a result of one book always being presented before the other, or one book being presented using one method more than the other.

During both the read-aloud sessions and the storytelling sessions the researcher presented some questions and comments. The researcher avoided making radically different comments to any of the children in either group. See Appendix B for further details on the types of questions and comments.

Three comprehension questions were asked by the researcher at the end of each story, two of which were literal-level questions and one of which was an inferential-level question. For the comprehension questions, see Appendix C.

The same researcher conducted both the read aloud sessions and the storytelling sessions. The sessions were recorded on audio cassette. The following, Figure 1, is a chart that explains how the research study was conducted.



Student #	First story	Second story
1	Monkey and the Moon read aloud	Orson told orally
2	Orson told orally	Monkey and the Moon read aloud
3	Monkey and the Moon read aloud	Orson told Orally
4	Orson told orally	Monkey and the Moon read aloud
5	Monkey and the Moon read aloud	Orson told orally
6	Orson told orally	Monkey and the Moon read aloud
7	Monkey and the Moon read aloud	Orson told orally
8	Orson told orally	Monkey and the Moon read aloud
9	Monkey and the Moon read aloud	Orson told orally
10	Orson told orally	Monkey and the Moon read aloud
11	Monkey and the Moon told orally	Orson read aloud
12	Orson read aloud	Monkey and the Moon told orally
13	Monkey and the Moon told orally	Orson read aloud
14	Orson read aloud	Monkey and the Moon told orally
15	Monkey and the Moon told orally	Orson read aloud
16	Orson read aloud	Monkey and the Moon told orally
17	Monkey and the Moon told orally	Orson read aloud
18	Orson read aloud	Monkey and the Moon told orally
19	Monkey and the Moon told orally	Orson read aloud
20	Orson read aloud	Monkey and the Moon told orally

Figure 1. Schedule describing the order in which the stories were presented to each student and the method of each presentation.

### Analysis of Data

The data were analyzed using a two-way analysis of variance.

CHAPTER IV  
ANALYSIS OF DATA

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compare preschoolers' and kindergartners' ability to comprehend a story as a result of either having read to them from a book or having orally told them a story. A second purpose of this study was to examine each age group individually to see if age played a factor in their comprehension of the stories with relation to the two methods of presenting the stories.

Findings and Interpretations

Research Questions:

There is no statistically significant difference in the comprehension results for preschoolers or kindergarteners in regards to the method of sharing a piece of literature, reading a story aloud or telling a story orally.

Age is not a statistically significant factor in which method of sharing a piece of literature, reading a story aloud or telling a story orally, yields the best comprehension results.

To determine if age or the method of presentation had a significant effect on a child's ability to comprehend a story, the comprehension scores were analyzed using a two-way analysis of variance. The maximum comprehension score a child could attain was a three and the lowest was a zero. The results of the analysis are shown in the following tables and graphs.

Table 1  
 Summary of Data for a 2X3 ANOVA

		Factor A: method of presentation						
		Level A1: Read Aloud			Level A2: Told Orally			
Factor B: age	Level B1: Preschool 3 yrs. old	3	1	1	0	0	2	$\bar{X}_3 = 1.94$ $\sum X_3 = 35$ $n = 18$
		3	2	3	2	1	3	
		2	2	3	2	2	3	
		$\bar{X} = 2.22$			$\bar{X} = 1.67$			
		$\sum X = 20$		$\sum X = 15$				
		$\sum X^2 = 50$		$\sum X^2 = 35$				
		$n = 9$		$n = 9$				
	Level B2: Preschool 4 yrs. old	2	2	3	1	2	2	$\bar{X}_4 = 1.90$ $\sum X_4 = 38$ $n = 20$
		2	1	2	3	2	0	
		3	0	2	0	2	3	
				3			3	
		$\bar{X} = 2.00$			$\bar{X} = 1.80$			
		$\sum X = 20$		$\sum X = 18$				
		$\sum X^2 = 48$		$\sum X^2 = 44$				
		$n = 10$		$n = 10$				
	Level B3: Kindergarte 5 yrs. old	2		2	3		2	$\bar{X}_5 = 2.60$ $\sum X_5 = 26$ $n = 10$
		3		3	2		3	
				3			3	
		$\bar{X} = 2.60$			$\bar{X} = 2.60$			
		$\sum X = 13$		$\sum X = 13$				
		$\sum X^2 = 35$		$\sum X^2 = 35$				
		$n = 5$		$n = 5$				
		$\bar{X}_{RA} = 2.21$		$\bar{X}_{TO} = 1.92$			$\sum X_{Total} = 99$	
		$\sum X_{RA} = 53$		$\sum X_{TO} = 46$			$\sum X^2_{Total} = 247$	
		$n = 24$		$n = 24$			$n = 48$	

Table 2  
Summary Table of Two-Way ANOVA

Source	Sum of squares	/	df	=	Mean Square	F
Between Factor A (method of Presentation)	1.02		1		1.02	1.24
Factor B (age)	3.67		2		1.84	2.24
Interaction (AXB)	.56		2		.28	.34
Within	37.56		46		.82	
Total	42.81		47		.91	

Table 3  
Obtained and Critical Values of F

	F <sub>obt.</sub>	F <sub>crit</sub>
Main effect of method of presentation (A)	1.24	4.05
Main effect of age (B)	2.24	3.2
Interaction (A X B)	.34	3.2

Firstly, since the obtained  $F_A$  was not larger than the  $F_{crit}$  there was no statistically significant difference between the means for factor A. That is, the method of presentation did not have a significant effect on the child's ability to comprehend a story.

Secondly, since the obtained  $F_B$  was not larger than the  $F_{crit}$  there was no statistically significant difference between the means for factor B. That is, the age of the child was not a significant factor on the child's ability to comprehend a story.

Lastly, since the obtained  $F_{A \times B}$  was not larger than the  $F_{crit}$  there was no statistically significant difference between the differing levels of each factor. That is, when the method of presentation was changed, the comprehension score was not significantly dependent on the age of the child.

Even though there were no statistically significant differences found using the  $F$  test, graphs of the means show some interesting trends which may warrant further research.

Table 4  
Summary of Means for Comprehension Study

		Factor A: Method of presentation		
		A1: Read Aloud	A2: Told Orally	
Factor B: Age	B1: preschool 3 yrs. old	$\bar{X}=2.22$	$\bar{X}=1.67$	$\bar{X} =1.94$
	B2: preschool 4 yrs. old	$\bar{X}=2.00$	$\bar{X}=1.80$	$\bar{X}= 1.90$
	B3: kindergarten 5 yrs. old	$\bar{X}=2.60$	$\bar{X}=2.60$	$\bar{X} =2.60$
		$\bar{X} =2.21$	$\bar{X} =1.92$	

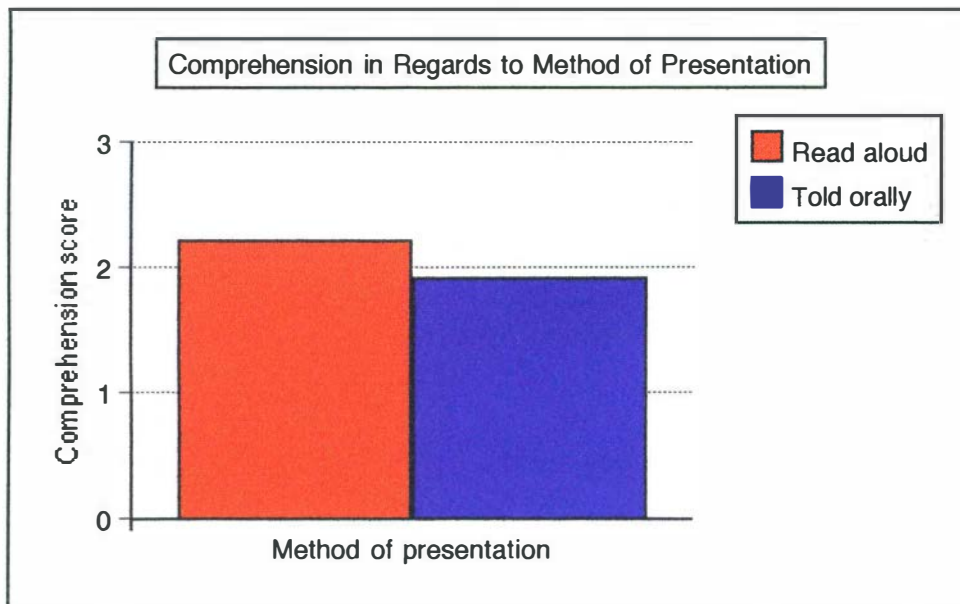


Figure 2. The average comprehension score for each of the methods.

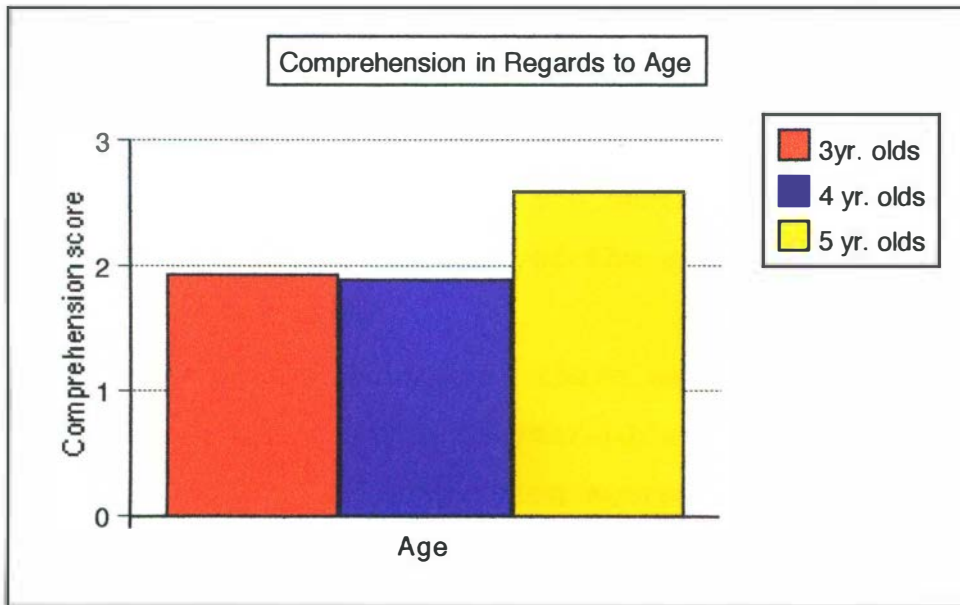


Figure 3. The average comprehension score for each age group.

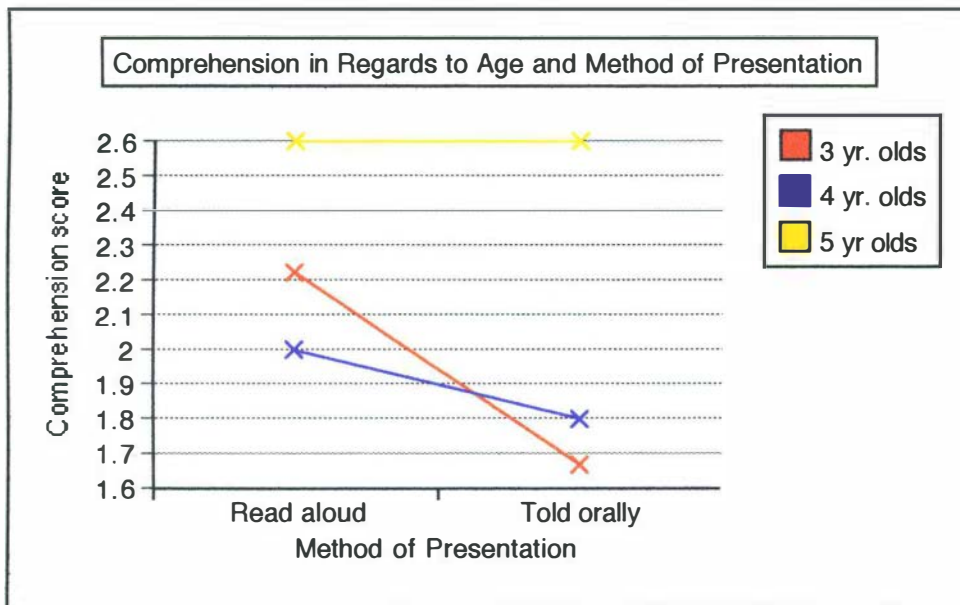


Figure 4. The average comprehension score for each age group and each method of presentation.



Figure 2, which compares the average comprehension scores between the two methods of presentation, shows that there is not a significant difference between the two methods of presentation. The number of questions correctly answered under each of the conditions were approximately the same.

Then Figure 3 shows that there was relatively no difference between the three-year-olds' and the four-year-olds' average comprehension scores. However, there did seem to be some change in comprehension between the preschool children and the five-year-olds that are in kindergarten. This change may not have been found to be significant because of the small sample population of kindergartners who were allowed to participate in this study. Further study would need to be done with a larger sample population to determine if there really is a significant difference between the preschoolers' and kindergartners' comprehension or if the results of this study are representative of the larger population.

Lastly, Figure 4 examines the comprehension scores for each age group and each method of presentation. This graph shows that both the three-year-olds' and the four-year-olds' comprehension scores were lower for the stories told orally than the stories read aloud. However the five-year-olds' comprehension scores

remained the same for both methods of presentation. Even though these average scores were not found to be significant, would further study find that five-year-olds are at a higher cognitive level and therefore are not affected by the method of presentation?

CHAPTER V  
Conclusions and Implications

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compare preschoolers' and kindergartners' ability to comprehend a story as a result of either having read to them from a book or having orally told them a story. A second purpose of this study was to examine each age group individually to see if age played a factor in their comprehension of the stories with relation to the two methods of presenting the stories.

Conclusions

Story time is an enjoyable experience for both the child and the reader. It is an excellent opportunity to build relationships and to enhance a child's learning. Stories, whether they are read aloud or told orally, are engaging and pleasurable.

The three-year-old has just begun his journey through school and wants to know all that there is to know about the world around us. In this study the researcher found that each of the three-year-olds seemed to fall into one of three categories.

The first type of three-year-olds was very distracted during the stories; they made many extraneous comments, and the researcher had to regain their attention and focus them back in quite often. For example, one child wanted to talk about going to McDonalds for lunch, talk about the playdough from earlier that morning, ask where mom was, and get out of her chair to find something to play.

The second type was only distracted a few times and made only a few extraneous comments. For example, one child wanted to read his favorite fire truck books instead and mentioned them a couple of times. However, after the researcher said that his books could be read afterwards, he seemed satisfied and was able to focus on the present story completely.

The third type was quite focused, made related comments, and asked why questions. For example, one child pointed out the birds and insects that he recognized on one of the pages and pointed out where the moon was during each part of the story.

While there did seem to be three classifications of the three-year-olds, these classifications did not always indicate how well they did on their comprehension score in all cases. There was one child who seemed quite fidgety and distracted during the stories, but he

obtained a perfect comprehension score for both of the stories.

As far as attention span was concerned, there was only one child who could not sit through both stories. After the first story the child left the reading corner. Both the researcher and the child's teacher tried to talk the child in to listening to the second story, but the child was not interested anymore. However, on the first story, the child answered two out of the three comprehension questions correctly. The child was able to comprehend a story, but his attention would only last for one story.

The researcher showed the children the characters on the covers of the books to help introduce each of the stories before presenting them and therefore the children would see both of the books and would know that the story being told orally came from a book. When presenting the story that was to be told orally without using the book, the researcher had one student ask: "Why aren't you just using the book?"

The researcher noticed that the four-year-old children were less likely to make extraneous comments during the stories. The four-year-olds would make comments in between the stories about something they did in school that day or something they were going to be

doing, or something that was new to them.

Overall, the four-year-olds seemed very attentive and showed much expression during the presentation of the stories. A few of the children pointed out objects that they recognized in the pictures during the stories that were read aloud. During the oral telling of the stories, a majority of the students were focused on the researcher while the other students looked at their shoes almost the whole time.

As for attention spans for this group, there was only one child who expressed that he did not want to listen to the second story. He did listen, enjoyment could be seen on his face, and he was able to answer two out of the three comprehension questions.

In the four-year-old group there was one child who did not want to answer any of the comprehension questions. She just stared blankly at the researcher. For the second story, the researcher held out the book to see if the child would point at the answer and she was able to point to the answers to the two literal-level questions for that story. In this case, the second story was told orally and the first story had been read aloud. The researcher surmised that the lower overall comprehension score was probably not due to a problem with comprehension but rather due to her

shyness.

The five-year-olds or kindergartners wanted to point out all that they knew that related to anything in the stories. This was seen during both methods of presentation. For example, during an oral telling of The Monkey and The Moon, one child was sure to tell me that the moon in the pool was just a reflection. Then during a reading of the story, Orson, one child pointed out how Orson was too big for the boat he was sitting in on the lake.

In many instances the kindergartners gave more detail than was needed for their answers. They would retell portions of the story that happened before or after the answer. In some cases they even proceeded to tell the researcher why they gave the answer they did.

The children in this group seemed to really enjoy the stories. They would laugh at the funny parts and were quite serious looking during the more serious parts of the stories. In some cases, it was as if the children were feeling what the characters were feeling.

In conclusion, the children in this study varied from child to child in their comprehension scores and their scores were not significantly affected by their age or the method of presentation. Both methods of presentation were enjoyable to the children.

### Implications for Research

1. Studies comparing the comprehension of young three-year-olds, middle three-year-olds, and older three-year-olds. Do the children fall into the three groups found in this study and do those groups represent young, middle, and older three-year-olds respectively?

2. Studies that again compare the effects of storybook reading and storytelling on preschoolers' and kindergartners' ability to answer comprehension questions. Does using a larger sample back up or contradict the results of this study?

3. Studies that examine children's cognitive ability and their comprehension scores in regards to the two different methods of presentation from this study. Does this play more of a role than their age in predicting comprehension scores of a population?

4. Studies to determine if there is a difference in comprehension abilities of students between two or more schools.

5. How often are young children read to at home and what type of books are being read at home?

6. Studies comparing the effects of storybook reading and storytelling using props on preschoolers' and kindergartners' ability to answer comprehension questions.



7. Studies examining a preschoolers' ability to sequentially retell a story using pictures.

### Classroom Implications

Reading aloud allows a teacher to teach concepts in a fun, non-threatening environment. Young children enjoy hearing stories read aloud and their comprehension of the stories has been shown to be fairly good. This will then help them to learn new concepts as the stories are being read aloud. In the story Monkey and the Moon, for example, the children could learn or reinforce their knowledge of the fact that the when the moon can be seen in a body of water, it is just a reflection and not the moon itself.

The same can be true for telling stories orally. Although, in this case the storyteller has an added advantage. He can modify and tailor the story as he goes so that the story fits the needs of the listeners. If the child is becoming distracted the storyteller is able to condense the story into a shorter version or add in a detail or event that would interest the reader without disturbing the story's plot.

Tailoring or modifying a story that is being read from a book can be a bit more difficult. There are some listeners who will let you know that you have skipped

some words while reading. The listeners also can tell and will often point out when the reader has skipped a page. Young readers don't like to miss a thing. They are very curious and their excitement and curiosity can be seen in their faces as they are listening to a story.

Reading stories aloud and telling stories orally will help a young child develop good listening skills and help to build up their attention span. Asking questions or making comments during the presentation of the stories will help a young child to begin to think about the things that they hear or are told. All of these areas are important for their later years in school.

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Appendix A

February 12, 1998

Dear Parents,

My name is Erin Brewer and I taught preschool at Asbury Day Care Center for two years. I am currently teaching at Gates-Chili Cooperative Nursery School and I am completing my masters degree at SUNY Brockport in the Reading Teacher Program by writing a thesis. My thesis will be comparing the effects of storybook reading and storytelling on preschoolers' and kindergartners' ability to answer comprehension questions.

I have chosen two books which are age-appropriate, and hopefully will be new to the children participating in my research. For each child, I will read aloud one of the books and orally tell the story of the other book, in a one-on-one setting. During the stories, I will be presenting some questions and comments. Then at the end of the stories, I will be asking each child three comprehension questions. The sessions will be recorded on audio cassette so that the children's responses can be recorded accurately. No names will be used in the write-up of my study.

If you would allow your child to participate in my study please sign the permission slip below and place it in the box in the office by February \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Erin Brewer

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I give my child, \_\_\_\_\_,  
permission to participate in Erin Brewer's research  
project.

Parent signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Questions and comments during Monkey and the Moon:

- The story was introduced and this prediction question was asked: "Do you think that the monkey will be able to get the moon?"
- "Where did the moon go when she disappeared?"
- "Do you think the moon will come down to monkey?"

### Questions and coments during Orson:

- The story was introduced and this prediction question was asked: "Where do you think Orson will find Little Bear?"
- "Was Orson being nice to Little Bear?"
- "What did Orson wish that Little Bear could do?"

## Appendix C

### Comprehension questions for Monkey and the Moon:

1. What did the monkey want to touch and learn from?  
>the moon
2. What did the monkey fall into?  
>the water or the pool
3. At the end of the story was monkey still trying to touch the moon?  
>no

### Comprehension questions for Orson:

1. What was Little Bear?  
>a stuffed bear, a stuffed toy, a stuffed animal or teddy bear
2. What did Orson make for Little Bear?  
>a crib or a bed
3. At the end of the story who called out to Orson?  
>Little Bear or the stuffed bear

note: The first two questions for each story are literal-level questions and the third question of each story is an inferential-level question. The acceptable answers are given below each of the questions and are marked by this symbol, ">".