Visions of Iowa

Shirley J. Daman

University of Northern Iowa

Copyright ©1999 Shirley J. Daman

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/1950

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.
Visions of Iowa

Find Additional Related Research in UNI ScholarWorks
To find related research in UNI ScholarWorks, go to the collection of School Library Studies Graduate Research Papers written by students in the Division of School Library Studies, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, at the University of Northern Iowa.

Abstract
It was the purpose of this research project to explore the significance of poetry and photography in the classroom. The research included locating and reviewing studies of poetry for children and the use of photography for illustration. It also included reading and analyzing poetry written for and by children, especially those using photography. Journal articles were reviewed for the many ways teachers can use poetry and photography across the curriculum. Students in grades 4, 5, and 6 were interviewed for their feelings and knowledge of poetry, and for their visions of Iowa. A book was produced containing poems and photographs depicting written and visual imagery to create a sensory experience and to enhance visions or memories of Iowa.
Visions of Iowa

A graduate Research Project
Submitted to the
Division of Library Science
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
University of Northern Iowa

by

*Shirley J. Daman*

April, 1999
This Research Paper by: Shirley J. Daman
Titled: Visions of Iowa

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts.

June 8, 1999
Date Approved

Barbara Safford
Graduate Faculty Read

June 8, 1999
Date Approved

Marjorie L. Pappas
Graduate Faculty Read

June 8, 1999
Date Approved

Rick C. Traw
Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Abstract

It was the purpose of this research project to explore the significance of poetry and photography in the classroom. The research included locating and reviewing studies of poetry for children and the use of photography for illustration. It also included reading and analyzing poetry written for and by children, especially those using photography. Journal articles were reviewed for the many ways teachers can use poetry and photography across the curriculum. Students in grades 4, 5, and 6 were interviewed for their feelings and knowledge of poetry, and for their visions of Iowa. A book was produced containing poems and photographs depicting written and visual imagery to create a sensory experience and to enhance visions or memories of Iowa.
Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction ............................................... 1
Statement of Purpose ............................................... 4
Assumptions .............................................................. 7
Significance of Study ............................................... 8
Limitations ............................................................... 9
Definitions ............................................................. 10

Chapter 2 Literature Review ...................................... 11
Procedure ............................................................. 17

Chapter 3 Project Summary ...................................... 19
(See accompanying book)

Chapter 4 Conclusions and Recommendations .......... 20
Bibliography .......................................................... 24
Appendix A: Interviews with students ................. 27
Chapter 1

Introduction

Children grow in a world within a world. While they are part of the big world, they are growing and learning within their own little world through sensory awareness. “All that we know about our world, whatever our age, has been learned through our five senses...and the sixth sense—our reaction to what the other five have told us.” (Wyndham, 1980, p.75)

The world is a very large place to relate to in the eyes of children. Lupo (1956) contends poetry can give a sense of being a part of a world much bigger than yourself. Where is home within the world? Home is a house, a neighborhood, a city, a state, a country. Iowa is home to those who live there. “...human beings ask and reask during their lives: Who am I? Where do I belong? (Stot, 1994, p. 248). Giving children a strong sense of their heritage can help answer these questions. Helping to create a vision of the state will strengthen that heritage.

Memories are also a part of who a person is. Memories are like building blocks in a life. They grow with us. “Childhood memories are the most living and sparkling and true...” (Ueland, 1987, p.90). Memories gather from incidental happenings or are purposely created. People will carry memories of their childhood and of their home state throughout their life, wherever they go.

Since children are very receptive to sensory experiences and are
gathering memories, poetry is the perfect avenue to Visions of Iowa. Stott (1984) points out that poetry creates imagery that evokes sensory perceptions, while Bugeja (1998) states memory is a critical component of poetry.

Huck (1997) says poetry offers a way of feeling or sensing the world around us. It appeals to both thought and feeling, and elicits a deep response. It invites participation, calls upon prior experiences, and creates sensory images. Poems contain rhyme, sound, images, figurative language, shape, and emotional force to create an impact. Poetry increases awareness and sensitivity to an idea or a mood. Children delight in the sound, rhythm, and language of poetry. Their preferences are influenced by form, elements, and content, with humor and familiar experiences being particularly popular.

Lupo (1956) believes poetry not only brings forth old memories, but also creates new ones.

There is not only memory, but a forward look also, as poetry stimulates imagination. It can stir a child to ideas he never thought of before, can open eyes to new beauty in things about him, and can inspire him to reach up toward ideals not yet attained. (p. 426)

There is no limit to what can be experienced through poetry.

Pictures will enhance the experience as they “...set an appropriate
mood, and provide an enjoyable art experience." (Gates, 1986, p. 55) As viewers of pictures in books, children increase their experience with the written word and will become better readers. “...visual accompaniments to words helped young readers to understand more fully the materials they were reading.” (Stott, 1984, p. 220) Pictures have a value in and of themselves. Shulevitz (1985) points out that pictures help clarify words, provide details, decorate the text, enhance the beauty of the book, and provide a rest from reading the words.

Visual literacy or imagery is an important skill and should be developed. It can help children think of literature in terms of visual images rather than just words. It also permits nonverbal communication.

While poetry does create images in our minds, illustrations can extend those images. Harms and Lettow (1994) suggest that by integrating the verbal and the visual, the literature experience is enhanced. They also suggest that illustrations invite children to enjoy and ponder the images in poetry.

Photography as a form of illustration is not as widespread as other art forms. Photographs can capture a moment in time, just as a memory does. Other art forms can only interpret those same moments. Perry (1992) says photography is an art and more, and when put into the hands of children it makes them active observers of life. So to combine poetry and photography is to create “phoetry”. “Photography can make poetry
accessible to children. Think of it! Poetry without pain. Poetry with photography. Phoetry!" (Schillinger, 1977, p.49)

Statement of Purpose

It is the purpose of this research project to write a poetry book depicting visions of the state of Iowa as might be seen in the memories of those who live or have lived in Iowa. The target audience will be children in grades 4, 5, and 6. Though there is an abundance of poetry books for children, in a search of the Unistar online catalog using key words poem/s/ or poetry and Iowa the writer found no match in the Rod Library youth collection. Four books were found of poetry about other states. This suggests a lack of poems through which children can relate to their home state.

Wyndham (1980) advises that a successful book appeals to human emotions and that a writer must be able to express emotions in words. Moods effect thinking, feeling, and response. Children also react to sensory impressions, so writers should use as much sensory detail as possible. This advice lends itself to writing poetry.

Brenda Ueland (1987), writer, editor, and teacher of writing believes that everyone has talent, everyone is original, and everyone has imagination. All people can be writers if they trust in themselves and believe in their imagination. Unfortunately, this creativeness is often
diminished by critics, by lack of a listener, or lack of use because of fear of not being good enough. So if one wants to write, ignore the critics, find someone to listen who thinks you are interesting, and work freely with love. (Ueland 1987)

Ueland equates creative power to life, the spirit, all that is important, and encourages us to use it. Writing is a blessing, should come before duty, and be experienced every day.

...no writing is a waste of time,—no creative work where the feelings, the imagination, the intelligence must work. With every sentence you write, you have learned something. It has done you good. It has stretched your understanding. (p. 15-16)

Ueland dares the potential writer to be idle, to wait for ideas. She says the imagination is always creative. A dreamy idleness, a quiet looking and thinking, will let in ideas. She counsels to resist being pressed and not to force writing. Good ideas come slowly. Record little ideas as they come.

Some people act (i.e., express what they have thought of in their idle times) by becoming better people, better doctors, better business men, better mothers. (p. 40)

She believes in letting things flow freely rather than in “must” or in planning. A relaxed imagination will enable little bursts of revelation. People have been taught too much about construction and have become
inhibited. We should think of writing as talking on paper.

For when you begin to plan such a huge edifice of words, your heart fails you. It is too hard, it will never get done, it is too complex and frightful. No, write what comes to you now. More will come later. The river will begin to flow through you. (p. 167)

Write first, plan later. Allow words to be born from freedom of what you think and want to share. Let your imagination run free without worry of what critics will say. If you have a block, take a walk. Relax and it will flow. The writer feels this viewpoint on writing is excellent information to consider in writing for children, and also for teaching children to write. (Ueland 1987)

*Visions of Iowa* will serve several purposes. Through pictures and poetry, it will promote an awareness of Iowa heritage. It will help to enhance or instill memories of places, things, and events in Iowa. It will feed children’s imagination and stimulate their sensory awareness. It will expose children to various styles of poetry. The writer hopes it will encourage children to share their photographs of Iowa and their experiences. The writer further hopes teachers will engage children in writing poetry of their visions of Iowa. It is also hoped teachers provide opportunities for this book to be read aloud to students.

Stott (1984) advises poetry is for savoring rather than gulping. It
should be read aloud and slowly. Children will enjoy the music and rhythm of poetry even though they may not understand the words. In support of reading aloud, Hickman and Cullinan (1989) claim it broadens children’s understanding of their world and influences literary development. It extends and enhances language development, adding to personal growth. Through listening children make connections and build a background of literary knowledge. They develop a sense of how things work and begin to have expectations; learn reading behaviors; learn to visualize, to appreciate, and to make critical choices.

Assumptions

It can be assumed that children who live in Iowa have an interest in places, things, and events that are part of Iowa. It can be further assumed that many children experience only their corner of Iowa, but could share a broader experience through a book.

Children who are exposed to poetry at an early age gain a better appreciation of it. It is assumed teachers in upper elementary do not read aloud to children as readily as lower elementary teachers do. Poetry may provide the exception. If children learn to enjoy listening to and reading poetry, they will advance to writing it.
Significance of Study

The book will be a sensory experience. The pictures in the book will encourage children to observe their surroundings and wonder what is over the hill or on the other side of the fence. The poetry will stimulate children to think creatively and form pictures in their mind.

A writer should also be cognizant of how his or her work might be used in the classroom. “Poems provide the doorways to understanding of all manner of subjects, ideas, and feelings.” (Hickman, Cullinan, and Helper, 1994, p.35.) Subjects within poems include nature, environment, people, families, holidays, social behavior, earth, space, eating, food, and much more. Poems also explore language. Poems can pique curiosity, ask and answer questions, and present different points of view. In light of the versatility of poetry, it can be used across the curriculum.

Both the poetry and the photography in *Visions of Iowa* can be used in science in the study of the senses, to foster and heighten awareness of the environment, to understand, compare and contrast of images, to identify with nature. They can be used in social studies in the study of Iowa and comparing the likeness of Iowa to other states. Poems and/or photography can evoke situations that may be used in mathematical problem solving. Art projects could arise from the images of the poetry or from the colors, shapes, or lighting in the photography. These poems can be used to build and enrich vocabulary in both English and non-English
speaking children. They can be used in language arts in many ways - to introduce poetry forms, to tap the senses, to talk about feelings and images, to encourage writing, to motivate reading. Poetry in itself can be used to promote emotional health, self esteem, and confidence, especially if children go beyond reading to writing poetry.

It is hoped that this book would inspire teachers across the curriculum to use both poetry writing and children's photography in the classroom. Photography can create opportunities for collaboration, cooperation, enthusiasm, language development, building self esteem and self control, independent thinking, and creative experiences.

Limitations

Pictures must be limited to those taken in Iowa. Pictures that will be taken are limited by time and travel. Pictures should be limited to places, things, and events that are common, rather than infrequent or rare. Pictures should hold interest for children.

The book is intended for children nine to twelve years old, and the language and vocabulary should have some limitations. Because the poems can be read aloud to children, limitations should not be stringent and should allow for and encourage growth in vocabulary.

The writer's inexperience as a writer and photographer poses
limitations. Further limitations will arise in the mechanics of putting the research and the project together.

Definitions

Sensory experience - experiencing through the senses
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Research reviewed investigates children's poetry preferences, teacher modeling and poetry instruction, effect of classroom environment on understanding poetry, and poetry to improve communication skills. Also investigated were photography as art, visual literacy through photography, and photography as reality reflection.

Chiodo and Lobaugh (1995) investigated whether teacher modeling improves students' attitudes toward poetry. Two fifth grade classes were used in this study and it was concluded that students exposed to modeling developed a greater appreciation and enthusiasm for poetry. It is suggested that modeling is a simple and natural way to engage children. It is further suggested that poetry must be nurtured and students should be given time to savor poetry as part of the total literary experience.

Teacher Modeling and Poetry Instruction

Some feel that children who appreciate and become writers of poetry will also become more appreciative of literature in general and will improve their ability to write prose. Shapiro and Shapiro (1971) conducted a study to determine if poetry instruction does in fact effect attitude toward literature and the ability to write prose. The study included 82 children (42 boys, 40 girls) in four fourth grade classes. The poetry lessons consisted of fifteen half-hour lessons given over a period of
six weeks and provided six occasions for the children to write original poems. It was concluded that the instruction of poetry does benefit children's ability to write prose and creates a more positive attitude toward literature in general. Two factors were seen to be important: the qualities of freedom in poetry and the provision it provides for linguistic expression; and poetry as an alternative mode of self-expression through language.

**Effect of Classroom Environment on Poetry**

McClure (1986) conducted a study to learn the effect of a nurturing, supportive environment on children's understanding of poetry. She suggests response is individual in nature and reflects one's view of the world. Children's interests and preferences have been defined as response.

It is noted that many studies focusing on children's poetry preferences have been conducted revealing striking similarities.

Generally, children tend to prefer poetry which includes humor, nonsense, familiar experiences, imaginative story lines, animals, holidays and people. They dislike poems perceived as didactic, meditative, serious, or "difficult to understand." Narrative and limerick forms are enjoyed while more abstract forms such as haiku and free verse are generally disliked. Favorite poetic elements include
rhyme, rhythm, sound and repetition. Figurative language is not particularly enjoyed. (p.2-3)

While these former studies provided valuable insights, there were limitations of time and responses. "...it may well be that only the lower limit of children's responses have previously been measured."

The hypothesis for McClure's study was that conducting research in an environment offering continuous opportunities for response to poetry would provide further insights and demonstrate that children may be capable of more complex understandings of poetry. It was intended that this study would extend previous research of children's responses. It also was designed to give insight into teaching practices that support more complex responses.

The study was observational, included 42 fifth and sixth graders, two teachers, and was conducted over a school year.

The conclusion provided considerable contrast to previous research. It was found that children were able to develop more complex, abstract responses to poetry. They were also able to create poetry with deeper, more complex metaphor and imagery when allowed long enough time to discuss and experiment with it. As a result of this study, recommendations are: children should be immersed in reading and writing poetry as opposed to studying it in short units; children should not be pushed to technical perfection, but rather allowed to use their own
experiences to search for meaning; children’s efforts should be encouraged and nurtured even if initial efforts are disorganized or inarticulate.

**Poetry to Improve Communication Skills**

Rogers (1988) developed a practicum project designed to use poetry to improve student participation and to decrease speech anxiety. The program took place over a ten week period in two classes of 57 eighth-grade English students. Two pre/post tests and two pre/post surveys and poetry-related activities were used. The target group of this study was the “quiet” students.

The conclusion was that the quiet students did improve their participation, both in groups and individually and the overall anxiety in speaking situations was reduced. There was also in increased appreciation of poetry, the largest gain being in the discussion of poetry.

**Poetry Preferences**

A national survey conducted by Ann Terry (1974) looked at the responses of 422 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students who listened to 113 poems which were on cassette tape over a period of ten days. It was found that children’s preferences remained stable and were consistent with studies of previous years. Preferences included narrative form, humorous content, familiar experience, and animals. Contemporary poems with modern content were preferred over traditional poems. Poems difficult to understand were disliked. While the survey indicated a dislike
for haiku, teachers disagreed. In explanation, it appears students like to write haiku, but not listen to professionally written haiku.

Avegno (1956) investigated the preferences of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade children for old poems (written prior to 1900) and for new poems (written since 1932). It was noted that children's interests are a significant factor in learning poetry. Twelve hundred children from forty-eight classes participated over a ten week period. A teacher read five poems every day, totaling 250 poems. After each set of 25 poems read, the poems were left in the classroom for two weeks for the children to read and reread. The results were similar to other studies. What was different was the assumption some poems may have been presented too early for some children due to lack of appeal because of inadequate background for understanding. Others were presented too late and were considered too babyish or boring. It was concluded poetry has real value and curriculum should include time for poetry.

In an abstract of a dissertation by Bridge (1966) findings of a study of 1000 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders found preferences similar to other studies. The conclusion differed in that it determined the poetry selections of the study would not be graded. It was recommended that an enriching literary experience should encompass the whole range of man's poetic effort.
Photography as Art

It would appear that the use of photography as art in children’s books has been slower to be accepted that other art forms. Bates (1975) related some of the history of photography in books and notes that as photo illustration began to appear, the best examples appear in books of poetry. She suggests it is time to give attention to photography for young reader’s appreciation and recognition.

Visual Literacy through Photography

Young and Wright (1973) conducted research investigating to what extent children’s visual awareness and visual literacy were developed through photography. In this study children were give the opportunity to use a camera and take photographs of their choice and were presented with professional photographs to serve as stimuli. It was concluded that experience with photography promoted visual awareness.

Photography as Reality Reflection

In a study by Seidman and Beilin (1984) it is noted that the uses of photography and drawing differ across development. Younger children see photography as reality reflection, while older children see it as a medium for allowing expression of specific concepts or ideas. In photos as opposed to drawing all ages are better able to realize their intentions.
Procedure

The project will be a 32 page book of poems based on the writer's visions of Iowa. The visions will be images familiar to most Iowans. There will a variety of poetry styles accompanied by photographs which will enhance the poems.

The writer's goal is to create a book of poems based on personal visions of Iowa with accompanying photographs. The book can be enjoyed by all Iowans, but is intended for grades 4 through 6. It is the intent of the writer to promote appreciation of poetry and to stimulate imagination. It is hoped the poems will encourage pride in "home" and bring forth the reader's own visions.

The writer will begin by locating and reviewing research by experts in the field of poetry for children and in the use of photography as a means of illustration. This process should reveal standards of quality to be followed in producing a book that will be appealing and lasting.

The next step will be to browse the poetry books in the youth collection of the University of Northern Iowa, as well as books in local libraries. The writer will read and analyze an abundance of poetry written for and by children, especially books using photography for illustration. The writer will also interview librarians for input on their observations of children's interest in poetry.
Beyond reading to become acquainted with poetry and presentation, the writer will become familiar with the intended audience. Children in grades 4 through 6 will be approached to learn their interest in, knowledge of, and use of poetry. They will also be asked to convey their visions of Iowa.

Visions being considered as poetry subjects are as follows: Ragbrai, hot air balloons - National Balloon Classic in Indianola, barns, farms, silos, fields/land/crops/corn, farm animals/livestock, water towers and main streets, “Field of Dreams”, parades, county fairs, bodies of water, caves, industry, nature trails, prairie/bluffs/rolling hills, seasons, trees/grass/green, sky/stargazing, country roads. As stated earlier, visions will be based on the writer’s visions, but consideration will be given to input by other Iowans, including children.

Upon determining visions to be represented, poetry styles and photographs will be selected to present the visions.
Chapter 3

Project Summary

People carry memories with them wherever they go. Some go away to college or to military service, some move to another state, and some leave the country. All take visions of home with them.

*Visions of Iowa* is a picture book containing poems and photographs depicting visions Iowans might see in their mind’s eye.

Poetry is used to create a sensory experience. The reader will be exposed to various forms and styles of poetry. Photos used capture a moment in time, adding visual imagery to the images in the poetry.
Chapter 4

Conclusions and Recommendations

Research studies often have limitations or biases that affect their outcome. Conclusions reached are a product of these limitations and biases. One should look carefully at the method and length of a study, as well as looking for possible biases, before accepting the researcher’s conclusions.

Several studies concerning children and poetry have been conducted. In examining the methods used and length of time they covered, it appears the best conclusions came from studies that allowed a longer time span for the study and utilized student participation and interaction in various ways.

Studies in the use of photography as illustrations in children’s books have shown bias. Many seem to feel photography is not an art form, while others believe that it definitely is. Whether it is called art or not is irrelevant. The question should be whether or not it can enhance a story or poem for a child.

*Visions of Iowa* was written to appeal to the reader’s emotions through poetry. This book of poetry is intended to create or enhance an awareness of Iowa as part of a person’s heritage. It will introduce children to a variety of poetry forms and styles and hopefully stimulate an interest in writing poetry. The poetry forms and styles used include
acrostic, quintet, couplet, diamante', sijo, cinquain, tanka, haiku, pensee', and metaphor.

Sixty-four students were interviewed and their visions of Iowa were merged with the writer's visions to create the poems. For each poem careful consideration was given to the most effective poetic form or style to create the desired image. Photographs were chosen to enhance visual imagery and to compliment the text of the poems. Due to a time constriction, photographs were limited to those attainable within that time period.

Page layout and placement of poems and photographs were major challenges in preparation of the manuscript. Standard 8 ½ by 11 inch paper was used with landscape layout. A photograph was placed and lightened for the background of each poem. Each poem was then transposed over a relating photograph, and positioned on either the left or right side of the page. Two or more related photographs were resized and cropped and placed on the page opposite each poem. The use of various computer software programs and setups (moving to three different computers), digital photographs and photographs to be scanned added greatly to the total number of hours required to complete this project and to its complexity. Problems were encountered when attempting to have the information on the disk copied in color at a copy center. Apparently
the software used in producing the disk was not compatible with that of
the copy center.

It is recommended that photographs to be scanned be used rather
than digital photographs. The digital photographs are expensive and to
get print copies nearly doubles the cost. The lack of print copies makes
the manipulation of photographs more difficult.

Time did not allow for interviewing librarians or teachers about
their use of poetry with children. In interviewing students regarding
interest in or knowledge of poetry the response elicited was meager. Some
of the children liked poetry and some did not like it. The knowledge
demonstrated indicated their exposure to poetry was limited.

Recommendations would be that poetry be introduced to children in
kindergarten and continued through high school. Poetry should not be
taught as a unit in isolation, but used throughout the curriculum and
across the disciplines. Students should be encouraged to write, write,
write! Feelings and emotions can be expressed and shared through
poetry. Communication can occur through poetry. Skills can be taught
through poetry.

Poetry should not be dissected. It should be related to in terms of
how it makes one feel or what image it creates. Poetry should be read
aloud for the listener to savor.

Students can combine poetry with art to create a treasure to keep.
Poetry can be written first, followed by art to add visual imagery, or the art can be created first and a poem written to put the image into words.

Photography can also be used to express emotions, to communicate, and to learn skills. It is an art form that even those with little artistic ability can learn.

To create a project such as *Visions of Iowa* in the classroom with students allotment of ample time is recommended. It is also advisable to be aware of what technology resources are needed from beginning to end and to ensure they are available before beginning the project. It would also be wise to perform a practice run using all tools necessary for completion before beginning a lengthy project.

One must ask oneself at the end of a journey if it was worthwhile. This journey has been fraught with difficulty and frustration, but has been a learning experience to be remembered and has produced a book to be proud of. The journey was worthwhile!
Bibliography


Appendix A

Interviews with Students

Sixty-four students in grades four, five, six were interviewed regarding their visions of Iowa. They were asked what pictures of Iowa they would carry in their mind if they were to leave Iowa. The answers given most often were:

- cows/pigs/sheep: 24
- barns: 18
- farms: 40
- beans: 23
- towns: 19
- rivers/streams/ponds/lakes: 23
- snow/rain/storms/weather: 45
- animals/livestock: 17
- silos: 9
- crops/fields: 38
- corn: 58
- home/house: 18

Other things mentioned with less consistency are horses, tractors, friends, trees, birds, boating/fishing, cattails/ditches, colored leaves, roads, pastures, pheasants, rolling hills, countryside, fences, prairie, and sports.

The students were also asked about their feelings toward poetry and what they know about writing poetry. Only a few responded. The lack of response and the few that did respond gave the impression that these students have little knowledge of poetry.