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## A Study of the Relationship between Reading Ability and Reading Interests Among Seventh Grade Students

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## **A Study of the Relationship between Reading Ability and Reading Interests Among Seventh Grade Students**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between a seventh grade child's reading level and his reading interests.

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN READING  
ABILITY AND READING INTERESTS AMONG  
SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS

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A Research Paper  
Presented to the  
Faculty of the Library Science Department  
University of Northern Iowa

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
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July 1974

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~~\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Jo Anne Rauch~~

Date August 1, 1974

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

To improve his reading skills a student must read. However, a student will not read unless the reading material available to him helps to satisfy his needs and is of interest to him. The material that a student is required to read for his English class is usually chosen by his teacher or a committee of teachers, or in some cases the student is allowed to pick his own reading material from the school library. The school library books available to a student for his required reading or his free reading are selected by the school librarian. To get students to read librarians and English teachers must provide students with materials that are of interest to adolescents and that meet their needs.

Modern educators realize that students differ in many ways including their reading interests. There have been many studies of the reading interests of children and adolescents. According to Robert Carlsen the reading interests of young adolescents, ages about twelve to fourteen years, fall into ten general categories: adventure, mystery, animal, home and family life, stories with historical settings, the supernatural, sports, growing up around the world, slapstick, and science fiction.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert G. Carlsen, "The Right Size," Top of the News, 23, 55-62 (November, 1966).

Since students are individuals, student's reading interests differ greatly. According to Norvell the three major factors that influence a student's reading interests are his sex, age, and intelligence.<sup>2</sup> To be able to provide each child with the type of reading material that meets his needs and interests him, the English teacher and the librarian must know how a child's reading interests are influenced by his sex, age, and intelligence. According to Leng reading ability is closely related to measured intelligence.<sup>3</sup> Leng also believes that there is a relationship between a child's home background and his reading interests.<sup>4</sup>

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between a seventh grade child's reading level and his reading interests.

#### HYPOTHESIS

The reading interests of a child are influenced by the child's reading ability.

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<sup>2</sup>George W. Norvell, The Reading Interests of Young People (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1930), p.25.

<sup>3</sup>I. J. Leng, Children in the Library (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1968), p.135.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 146-157.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

One of the major aims of the American school system is to teach children to read since the ability to learn most other school subjects depends on the child's reading skills. Reading skills are also needed if a person is to meet the normal responsibilities of adult life. Reading, like every other skill, is improved only by practice. Since most children will not read material that is not of interest to them it is important that librarians and English teachers give students materials that are of interest to them. The results of the research described in this paper should help librarians and English teachers give each child a book that will interest him.

The studies previously conducted in this area have always examined the relationship between intelligence (a certain range of IQ scores) and reading interests. As most teachers know, some students perform better than their IQ scores would indicate and some perform more poorly than their scores indicate. As a result, this study will compare a child's reading level (his performance score) with his reading interests.

Another reason for conducting this research is the variety of results of previous researchers. Terman may have found gifted children to have reading interests so different from his control group because his gifted children were such a select group (IQ's of 135 or higher). On the other hand Huber's bright group had IQ's of 109 to 139 with a mean of 114.6. There was very little overlapping between the IQ's



of the children in Huber's and Terman's groups. Leng's study probably contained children whose IQ's overlapped Huber's and Terman's groups since the mean IQ of the children in Leng's bright group was 125. Unfortunately Leng's bright and slow groups each only contained five children, which is too small a sample to use for generalization. The large size of Norvell's sample should have made it possible for him to have studied bright and dull groups of sufficient size to reach valid conclusions. Unfortunately Norvell's bright group had IQ's of 111 or above and his slow group had IQ's of 89 or below. Lazar's study was based on identical IQ groups. These IQ groups were probably too near the mean IQ of 100 to show any significant difference between the interests of the children in the three groups.

Norvell's and Huber's research studies were based on children's reactions to about three dozen short selections which were picked by the researcher. If the students had been allowed to rate a wider variety of materials which they had picked themselves, the results may have given a different picture of student's reading interests. Huber's research was also based on selections which were read aloud to the pupils. If the children had read the material themselves, the effects of their intelligence and reading ability might have been more apparent. Leng's and Terman's studies of reading interests were based on library books that the students had chosen for themselves. Lazar's research was based on a questionnaire completed by the children.

The differences in the ages of the children in these studies may have partially caused the varying results. Terman studied children of all ages but the other researchers limited themselves to children of one or a few selected grade levels.

### ASSUMPTIONS

1. It is assumed that the paragraph meaning section of the Stanford Achievement Test yields valid results.
2. It is assumed that the verbal ability section of the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test yields valid results.
3. It is assumed that the interest questionnaire yields valid results.
4. It is assumed that the student reading records and the questionnaires will be accurately and honestly completed.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to examination of the relationship between the reading ability and the reading interests of 310 seventh grade students in a mid-western town with a population of about 23,000 people. The results of this study may not apply to a city in a different part of the country, a much larger city, or a rural community. These results also may not apply to students who are much older or much younger than the students in the sample. Of the many factors that influence reading interest, only the relationship between

reading ability and reading interest will be examined.

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS

IQ: The score obtained on the verbal portion of the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test, Form 1, Level D.

Reading level: The score obtained on the paragraph meaning section of the Stanford Achievement Test, Advanced Battery. The score will be expressed in terms of a numeral representing a school year, a decimal point, and another numeral which represents a month of the school year. For example a child who receives the score "7.1" reads as well as the average child in the first month of seventh grade.

Reading interest: The subject about which a book is written that will cause the child to read the book completely and with enjoyment.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The relationship between a child's measured intelligence and his reading interests have been studied by Coy, Huber, Lazar, Leng, Norvell, and Terman. Terman obtained his information from a two-month reading record kept by 511 members of his Main Experiment Group of gifted children plus a control group containing 808 unselected children.<sup>5</sup> Terman's gifted children had IQ's of 135 or higher.<sup>6</sup> Each child's reading record was kept in a thirty-two page booklet, which was three inches by five inches. One book was recorded on each page and was rated by the child on a five-point scale indicating how well he liked the book.<sup>7</sup>

Terman found that gifted children read a much wider variety of books than the children in his control group. The gifted children also read more books in the areas of science, history, biography, travel, folk tales, informational fiction, poetry, and drama. A smaller percentage of the books read by the gifted children than by the control children were mysteries or adventure stories. Emotional fiction was read by a still smaller percentage of the gifted children.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Lewis M. Terman and Melita H. Oden, The Gifted Child Grows Up. Volume IV, Genetic Studies of Genius. (Stanford, California: Stanford University, 1947), p. 39.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-12.    <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 39.    <sup>8</sup>Ibid.

Leng also found that a child's reading interests depended to some extent on his level of intelligence.<sup>9</sup> In his research Leng compared the five children with the highest IQ (Mean 125) with the five children with the lowest IQ (Mean 78).<sup>10</sup> All of the children were eleven years old. Leng found that bright children usually read books below their level of maturity. He also found that both the brightest and the dullest children had their own types of attitudes toward reading which were different from the attitudes of average children.<sup>11</sup> Few works of non-fiction were checked out by the brightest children but many were checked out by the dullest children. The brightest children could be distinguished by their love of "human" fiction. About ninety percent of the books checked out by the brightest girls and about eighty-six percent of the books checked out by the brightest boys dealt with human beings and human experiences.<sup>12</sup> Leng found that the difference in reading tastes between the brightest and dullest boys was greater than the difference between the brightest and the dullest of the girls.<sup>13</sup>

Leng found that the brightest girls read less fantasy but more mystery than other girls of their age. According to Leng the interest in juvenile mysteries shown by the brightest girls indicated that they were still more interested in the problems of childhood than those of the teen years.

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<sup>9</sup>Leng, Children in the Library, p. 144. <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 145. <sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 139. <sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

Leng also believed that this interest in easy books about children indicated that the brightest girls read strictly for pleasure and relaxation from their difficult school work.<sup>14</sup>

Leng found that about half the books read by the dullest girls were stories about toys, fairies, or animals. When the dullest girls did read books with human characters, the main character was often a solitary person who was an average of 9.3 years old. The average and the bright girls usually read about characters of their age or slightly older and the main characters were usually loyal to and accepted by their peers. Leng suggested that this showed that the dullest girls were trying to find a refuge from their daily lives.<sup>15</sup>

The brightest boys read more stories with unfamiliar settings than average or dull boys. The dullest boys seemed to prefer books with familiar settings and read fewer books of high adventure, war, capture and escape, violent crime, and death. The fictional heroes of the dullest boys were children of their own age and not men or youths of courage, aggressiveness and power which were the heroes of the average and bright boys. In contrast to the duller girls' interest in fantasy, the duller boys read more gang and family stories ("human" fiction) than other boys of their age. Leng believed that the dullest boys read so many school and gang stories to comprehend their present situation whereas brighter boys read to comprehend the future.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.    <sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 141-142.    <sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 139-141.

Leng also compared the average age of the heroes and heroines in the books borrowed by the brightest and dullest children. The difference between the choices of the brightest and the dullest boys was found to be statistically significant at the .1% level. According to Leng the difference between the ages of the main characters in the books chosen by the girls was not statistically significant only because the dullest girls rarely read books with human characters.<sup>17</sup>

Norvell also studied the influence of a child's intelligence on his reading interests. He studied the reactions of over 12,000 students in grades seven through twelve to thirty-six selections which ranged in difficulty from very difficult to very easy. Twelve of the selections were read to the students and twenty-four were studied in class. For his research Norvell divided the students into three groups: superior (IQ above 110), average (IQ 90-110), weak (IQ below 90). The percentage of students with IQ's below 90 was low--only 16.9%. Norvell used a random sample.<sup>18</sup> Students were asked to rate each selection on a three point scale.<sup>19</sup>

Norvell found limited evidence that superior pupils liked humorous selections better than weak pupils. Among the thirty-six selections Norvell found that superior, average, and weak pupils have similar reading interests. He also found

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 141-142.

<sup>18</sup>Norvell, The Reading Interests of Young People, p. 25.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p.10.

that the students judged a book by content and not by reading difficulty. Norvell stated that his research findings agreed with those of Coy and Huber.<sup>20</sup> Norvell's findings disagreed in some areas with those of Terman and Leng discussed above.

Norvell also compared the ages of the students in the three ability groups within each grade. He found that the weak pupils in junior high averaged 1.62 years older than the superior pupils. Norvell added that this age difference appeared to contribute to the similarities between the interests of the three age groups at each grade level.<sup>21</sup>

Another study of the relationship between intelligence and reading interests was conducted by Miriam Huber. She studied 430 children from fifteen classes in five schools in Yonkers, New York. The children were from average American middle class families although the percentage of foreigners was higher than would have been found in many parts of the country. Most of the classes had a few Negro children.<sup>22</sup>

Each of the children was given a Stanford-Binet Intelligence test by a certified tester. On the basis of the results of this test the children were divided into three groups: Group I (called the Dull Group) had IQ's from 40 to 89; Group II (called the Average Group) had IQ's from 90 to 108; Group III (called the Bright Group) had IQ's from 109 to 139. The

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-28.    <sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 28-29.

<sup>22</sup>Miriam B. Huber, The Influence of Intelligence upon Children's Reading Interests (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1928), p. 17.



mean IQ of Group I was 74.4, Group II was 98.5, and Group III was 114.6. There were 107 children in Group I, 170 in Group II, and 131 in Group III. The children ranged in age from five years and ten months to fourteen years and eleven months. The bright and the average children were in grades one through five and the dull children were in ungraded classes.<sup>23</sup>

To conduct her experiment Huber used thirty selections of childrens literature which were short enough to allow any two to be read aloud in a single twenty-five minute period. There were five selections from each of the following six categories: A) Familiar Experiences; B) Unusual Experiences (realistic not supernatural); C) Humor; D) Fancy; E) Information; F) Heroism and Service. Each selection was judged for literary quality by seven teachers who were taking a graduate class in children's literature. The women who read the selections aloud were asked to rank the selections in order of difficulty.<sup>24</sup> Three different programs of paired selections were used by the readers. Each of the programs was used with five groups of children. Huber said that the selections were read aloud to remove the mechanical problems of reading for the children. Huber justified this by saying that the purpose of her study was to compare the interests of children of different levels of intelligence.<sup>25</sup> Three thirty minute periods each day for a week were used

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-20.      <sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-13.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 21-22.

to read the selections to the children.<sup>26</sup>

Huber found that dull children showed two distinct differences in interests from the other two groups. Dull children showed a significantly greater liking for Type A selections than the other two groups. Dull children also showed a less significant dislike for Type C selections. Type C literature was best liked by the brightest children.<sup>27</sup> On comparing Types B and C literature, Huber found that the dull children preferred Type B, the average liked Types B and C equally, and the bright preferred Type C.<sup>28</sup> In her study Huber found no real differences in the preferences of the average and the bright children for the six types of selections. Even though dull children liked Type A selections much better than the other two groups of children, they liked these selections the least of the six types of selections.<sup>29</sup>

Considering only the selections used in Huber's study, the bright children seemed to like the selections judged by the experts to be of a higher literary quality better than the average or dull children liked such selections. The dull children showed a tendency to prefer the selections judged to be easy. The average children showed less of a tendency to prefer the easy selections, and the bright children showed no tendency to pick the simpler material.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 37.    <sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-29.    <sup>28</sup>Ibid., p.35.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 28-29.    <sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

In 1919 and 1920 Genevieve Coy compared the reading interests of a class of gifted children with a control group of children. The IQ's of the gifted children varied from 100 to 156 with a mean of 128. The children in the control group had IQ's of 72 to 116 with a mean of 96. Coy stated: "The Special boys are markedly higher in instructive books and somewhat higher in literary books and books in series; the Control boys are slightly higher in adventure and children's books. The Special girls show greater liking for adventure and sentimental tales than the Control girls, while the latter list more books in series and more books about children. In literary value of the books preferred the two groups are practically equal."<sup>31</sup>

May Lazar studied the reading interests of 1,038 boys and 989 girls from thirteen public schools in various parts of New York City in 1931-1932. The children were in grades 2A to 8B but most were between 4B and 6A. (There were sixteen grades in these elementary schools and the letters "A" and "B" were used in the designations of the grades). Ninety-seven percent of the pupils were between the ages of ten and twelve. Each child's IQ was determined by the use of the Stanford-Binet Scale. The children were then divided into three groups on the basis of their IQ's. The bright group contained 637 children with IQ's above 110. The average group contained 765 children with IQ's between 90 and 110. There were 625

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-6.

children with IQ's below 90 in the dull group.<sup>32</sup>

According to Lazar there seemed to be a definite relationship between intelligence and the type of books selected by children. She also found that the relationship was increased when the children selected their favorite type of book. Dull children seemed to like fairy tales, detective stories, nature and animal stories, and poetry better than average or bright children. The duller children also seemed to choose the simpler and more fanciful types of books. Novels, science, and adventure were liked by the bright children better than the average or the dull.<sup>33</sup> Bright children also tended to select the "better" quality books.<sup>34</sup>

In summary Huber and Norvell found that humor was best liked by the brightest children. Terman found that mystery stories appealed less to the brightest children than to other children. Lazar found that dull children seemed to like mystery stories better than average or bright children. However, Leng found that the brightest girls read more mystery stories than other girls. Lazar found that adventure stories were better liked by bright children than by average or dull children. Terman's study, however, showed that bright children read fewer adventure stories than average or dull children. Coy found that bright girls and average and dull boys liked

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<sup>32</sup>May Lazar, Reading Interests, Activities, and Opportunities of Bright, Average, and Dull Children (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1937), pp. 4-8.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 58.      <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

adventure stories better than the other three groups. Leng found that non-fiction books were checked out much more frequently by the dullest children. The studies of Coy, Terman, and Lazar showed, however, that the brightest children liked non-fiction books better than average or dull children. Lazar and Leng found that animal stories were more popular with dull children.

## DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The sample for this study included all of the students in the seventh grade of West Junior High in Muscatine, Iowa for whom there was an October 1973 Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test score and a September 1973 score on the paragraph meaning section of the Stanford Achievement Test. This sample included 310 students.

For the verbal battery of level D of the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test the alternate forms reliability correlation coefficient was .912. The split-half reliability correlation coefficient was .927 for the verbal battery. The standard error of measurement for level D varied from 3.1 to 4.3 points of the verbal IQ score.<sup>35</sup> The predictive validity of the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test when correlated with many different achievement tests usually yielded a correlation coefficient in the .60's, .70's, or .80's. The concurrent validity when correlated with the verbal batteries of three other well-known group IQ tests yielded correlation coefficients of .79, .77, and .84.<sup>36</sup>

At the seventh grade level the paragraph meaning section of the Stanford Achievement Test had a split-half reliability

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<sup>35</sup>Irving Lorge and others, Technical Manual, the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Tests, Multi-Level Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), pp. 9-12.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-26.

coefficient of .93. The Kuder-Richardson reliability coefficient was also .93. The standard error of measurement for the paragraph meaning section was 5.0 in terms of grade scores. The grade score was obtained by removing the decimal point from the reading level score. The test was said to have content or curricular validity if it tested what was taught in the particular school system.<sup>37</sup>

This sample was divided into three groups on the basis of each student's score on the paragraph meaning section of the Stanford Achievement Test. Group I was made up of the 14% of the students who received the highest test scores. Group III was made up of the 14% of the students who received the lowest test scores. Group II was made up of the remaining 72% of the students. Group II, which contained 222 students, was then divided into five subgroups on the basis of reading level. Of the subgroups Group IIA had the highest reading level and Group IIE had the lowest. The subgroups varied in size from 37 to 49 students because all students at the same reading level were placed in the same subgroup. The students were not informed of these groups.

A record of all books checked out of the school library during the months of October and November or February and March was kept for each child. Each book was listed on a three-by-five inch card with the students name on the card.

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<sup>37</sup>Kelley, Truman L. and others, Stanford Achievement Test, Directions for Administering, Advanced Battery (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964), p. 24.

The students were asked to record on the card whether or not the book was finished. If the book wasn't finished, the child was asked to choose one or more of five possible reasons for not finishing the book. If the book was finished the child was asked to rate the book on a five point scale with the rating of five meaning very good and one meaning very poor.<sup>38</sup> In order to get the students to honestly say whether or not they had read the whole book, the students were told that the teachers would not be able to see the cards. In no case was a card shown to a teacher.

The books read by each child were assigned to one of the following interest categories: science fiction, sports, stories with historical settings, adventure, mystery, animal stories, home and family life, the supernatural, growing up around the world, and humor. Any story written about the past, through 1945, was placed in the category stories with historical settings. If a book could be placed in two categories, this category was used instead of any other possible category. The category growing up around the world was used in preference to every category except the category stories with historical settings. Because many of the books that would normally be placed in the category adventure were placed in the categories stories with historical settings, growing up around the world, science fiction, or mystery stories, the category adventure contained comparatively few books. The category home and

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<sup>38</sup>Appendix II, p. 45



family life contained all family stories, school stories, romances, stories about the problems of growing up, and stories about orphans unless the book was historical or had a foreign setting. Stories dealing with automobiles were placed under the category sports.

The students were then asked to fill out a questionnaire dealing with reading interests.<sup>39</sup> Students were asked to sign the questionnaires, but the methods used to keep the information written on the questionnaires confidential was explained to the students. After the students have completed the questionnaires each students IQ and reading level were entered on his questionnaire.

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<sup>39</sup>Appendix I, p. 44.

## ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The individual cards of the students' reading interest records were divided into the seven reading level groups. These seven groups included Group I, Group III, and the five subdivisions of Group II. All data was tabulated for the seven groups by using a Monroe Epic 3000 Calculator. Data from the five subdivisions of Group II was combined to yield Group II data.

The cards within each of the seven groups were subdivided into the ten interest categories of fiction books and a non-fiction group. The books themselves plus many reference sources on children's and young people's books were used so that each card was assigned to the best category. The cards in each of the ten interest areas and the non-fiction area of each of the reading level groups were further subdivided into the books that the students claimed to have read and the books that they hadn't completely read.

The percentage of non-fiction checked out by each of the seven reading level groups was determined. The percentage of books checked out in each of the ten interest areas of fiction was also figured for each of the reading level groups. The percentages for the ten interest areas were based on the total number of fiction books checked out of the library by the particular reading level group.

The percentages of books read and not read in each of the

ten interest areas of fiction plus the non-fiction area were figured for each of the seven reading level groups. In each of the seven reading level groups, the data for the ten interest areas of fiction was combined to yield data on all fiction books checked out by the group. The data on all fiction books was combined with the data on non-fiction books for each of the seven reading level groups. Then the average number of books checked out of the library, read, and not read per student was figured for each of the reading level groups. The percentages of the total number of books read and not read were also figured for each of the seven reading level groups.

The reading interest questionnaires were also divided into the seven reading level groups with the data for Group II being obtained by combining the data from the five middle groups. The percentage of the total number of students in each of the seven groups, who responded to any question or part of a question, was then figured for all questions except questions number four and five. The age of each student was varified from school records. All ages were figured from December 1973. The month and year, but not the exact day of each child's birth, were considered in figuring the child's age. Because the exact day of birth was not used, all children born from September 1960 through September 1961 were considered to be of the average age for seventh grade because of the school district's age requirement for kindergarten entrance. The average IQ, reading level, and age in months was figured for each of the seven reading level groups.

## RESULTS

The average reading level and the average IQ increased steadily from the lowest group, Group III, to the highest group, Group I. This was true whether Group II was divided into its five subgroups or left as one large group. The average age in months decreased steadily from Group III to Group I when only the three major groups were considered. When the five subgroups were included, the decrease was steady except for Group IIA which had an average age of 153 months compared to the average age of 154 months for Groups I and IIB. This was because a larger number of the students in Group IIA had birthdays in the fall and winter months than in Groups I and IIB. Group I had one overage student and one underage student whereas Group IIA had three overage students and no underage students.

As shown in Table I, the average IQ of Group I was 118 with a range of 92 to 144. For Group II the average IQ was 98 with a range of 65 to 128. Group III had an average IQ of 85 with a range of 62 to 108. IQ scores for two special education students, whose reading levels (R.L. 2.1 and 2.5) were included in the averaging of the reading levels for Group III, were not available. If these IQ scores had been available, the average IQ for Group III would probably have been lower. Despite these missing scores, the difference between the average IQ score of Groups II and III was 13 points and

Table 1  
Comparison by Reading Level Groups  
of Reading Level, I.Q., and  
Age in Months

	Reading level groups							
	I	IIA	IIB	IIC	IID	IIE	II (A-E)	III
Average R.L. <sup>a</sup>	10.6	8.1	7.1	6.5	5.7	4.9	6.4	3.8
Average IQ <sup>b</sup>	118	107	103	98	94	91	98	85
Average age in months	154	153	154	155	157	158	156	160
Range of R.L.	9.2 to 12.3	7.6 to 8.9	6.8 to 7.4	6.2 to 6.6	5.4 to 6.0	4.6 to 5.2	4.6 to 8.9	2.0 to 4.4
Range of IQ <sup>b</sup>	92 to 144	89 to 128	78 to 121	65 to 114	69 to 111	73 to 109	65 to 128	62 to 108
Range of age in months	146 to 166	147 to 167	148 to 167	144 to 169	148 to 175	147 to 179	144 to 179	144 to 179
No. of students	44	44	37	47	45	49	222	44

<sup>a</sup>R.L. means reading level.

<sup>b</sup>One to three scores were missing in each small group.

the difference between Groups I and II was 20 points. The range of IQ scores in each group or subgroup was much greater than the range of reading levels because the students were grouped by reading level.

The results obtained from the last three questions on the reading interest questionnaires were shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4. Table 2 showed that when the students were asked to state their preference for fiction or non-fiction, the lowest ability group stated a much larger preference for non-fiction than the highest ability group. Considering only Groups I, II, and III there was a steady decline in the popularity of fiction and a steady increase in the popularity of non-fiction when one went from the highest to the lowest ability group. The subgroups of Group II showed an erratic pattern when the

Table 2

Comparison by Reading Level Groups  
of the Interest in Fiction Versus  
Non-fiction as Expressed on  
the Questionnaires

	Reading level groups							
	I	IIA	IIB	IIC	IID	IIE	II (A-E)	III
Fiction	.77	.73	.57	.70	.42	.59	.60	.43
Non-fiction	.23	.27	.43	.30	.58	.41	.40	.57

popularity of fiction and non-fiction were compared although the results from Group IIA, the second highest group, were very much like the results of Group I.

Table 3 showed the results obtained when the students were asked to check as many of the ten fiction subject areas as appealed to them. When considering only Groups I, II, and III, it can be seen that there was a steady decrease in the popularity of science fiction, the supernatural, stories with historical settings, and mystery stories when looking from the highest to the lowest group. There was a steady increase in the popularity of stories about growing up around the world and animal stories when considering the same groups in the same manner. Sports was the least popular with Group II by one percentage point. These patterns weren't maintained over the subdivisions of Group II although Group IIA was usually very much like Group I and Group IIE, the second lowest group, was usually very much like Group III.

When just Groups I and III were considered, the two groups appeared to differ greatly in their interest in adventure stories, mystery stories, animal stories, the supernatural, science fiction, and sports with Group III leading in showing a preference for sports and animals and Group I leading in the other four areas. When Groups I and IIA were considered together, the students in these two high ability groups showed more interest in science fiction, the supernatural, stories with historical settings, home and family life, and mystery stories than the students in the two lowest ability groups, Groups IIE and

Table 3  
Comparison by Reading Level Groups  
of Interest in Fiction  
Subject Areas

	Reading Level Groups							
	I	IIA	IIB	IIC	IID	IIE	II (A-E)	III
Adventure	.59	.59	.65	.60	.56	.69	.62	.48
Mystery	.73	.75	.59	.68	.51	.69	.65	.59
Home and family life	.28	.30	.24	.28	.33	.27	.28	.23
Animals	.25	.48	.46	.38	.33	.55	.44	.52
Stories with hist. settings	.30	.27	.27	.21	.20	.29	.25	.23
Super- natural	.73	.57	.65	.57	.47	.49	.54	.52
Growing up around the world	.07	.05	.14	.09	.16	.12	.11	.16
Humor	.55	.55	.76	.64	.73	.67	.67	.57
Science fiction	.36	.30	.41	.30	.24	.27	.30	.23
Sports	.41	.39	.38	.32	.38	.53	.40	.61

<sup>a</sup>Data based on the reading interest questionnaires.



III. When Groups IIE and III were considered together, the students in these groups seemed to be interested in sports, humor, stories about growing up around the world, and animal stories more often than the students in Groups I and IIA.

In Table 4 the results were shown from the question in which the students were asked to check only their favorite type of fiction book. When considering only Groups I, II, and III, there was a steady decrease in the popularity of mystery and adventure stories if the highest ability group is considered first. There is a steady increase in the popularity of sports and animal stories if the same groups are considered in the same manner. Humorous stories were equally popular with Groups I and II and slightly less popular with Group III. Science fiction was much more popular with Group I than with Group III, but it was even less popular with Group II. In this case the supernatural was equally popular with all three groups. The differences between Groups I and III appeared to be the greatest in the areas of adventure stories, mystery stories, animal stories, science fiction, and sports stories.

When just Groups IIA through IIE were considered, no definite pattern emerged. If Groups I and IIA were considered together, mystery stories, home and family life, the supernatural, and science fiction appeared to be much more popular with these higher ability students than with the students in Groups IIE and III. When Groups IIE and III are considered together, adventure stories, animal stories, and sports appeared to be more popular with lower ability students. These two

Table 4  
Comparison by Reading Level Groups  
of Student's Favorite Fiction  
Subject Areas<sup>a</sup>

	Reading level groups							
	I	IIA	IIB	IIC	IID	IIE	II (A-E)	III
Adventure	.09	.05	.11	.06	.04	.12	.08	.05
Mystery	.27	.20	.19	.26	.24	.18	.22	.14
Home and family life	.05	.16	.08	.15	.16	.10	.13	.05
Animals	.09	.16	.11	.13	.07	.12	.12	.18
Stories with hist. settings	.05	.02	.03	.00	.04	.02	.02	.05
Super- natural	.11	.16	.05	.17	.04	.12	.11	.11
Growing up around the world	.00	.00	.05	.00	.02	.00	.01	.00
Humor	.09	.11	.08	.11	.07	.06	.09	.07
Science fiction	.11	.05	.05	.00	.02	.04	.03	.05
Sports	.14	.09	.24	.13	.29	.22	.19	.32

<sup>a</sup>Data based on the reading interest questionnaires.

methods of comparing the groups yielded conflicting information on the popularity of adventure stories. This may have been because of the comparatively small size of the individual groups.

Tables 5 through 9 presented the results of the two-month reading records kept for each child. Table 5 showed that Group I children checked out more fiction books and Group III children checked out more non-fiction books as was expected from the information found on the students questionnaires. Under normal conditions the students in Groups I and IIA would probably have checked out fewer non-fiction books because while the study was being conducted in the spring every student in the top reading classes was required to read two

Table 5  
Comparison by Reading Level Groups  
of the Percentage of Fiction and  
Non-fiction Books Checked out  
of the Library<sup>a</sup>

	Reading level groups							
	I	IIA	IIB	IIC	IID	IIE	II (A-E)	III
Total fiction	.63	.67	.58	.74	.56	.60	.64	.47
Non-fiction	.37	.33	.42	.26	.44	.40	.36	.53

<sup>a</sup>Data based on the two-month reading records.

biographies and to make a booklet of poetry. These assignments probably greatly increased the percentage of non-fiction books checked out of the library by the better readers. If these assignments hadn't been given, the percentages in Table 5 might have been even more like those found in Table 2. The pattern formed by the percentages for Groups IIA through IIE in Table 5 had similar high and low points to those found in Table 2. In both Tables 2 and 5, Groups I and IIA showed very similar reading interests.

Table 6 compared the types of fiction books checked out by the students of the different reading level groups. Considering only Groups I, II, and III, it can be seen that there was a slight decrease in the percentage of science fiction and stories about growing up around the world checked out when one goes from the highest to the lowest ability students. When the same groups were considered in the same order, a steady increase in the popularity of animal and sports stories was noticed. There was also a slight increase in the popularity of humorous stories. This table showed the interests of Groups I and III to be quite different in the areas of home and family life, animal stories, stories with historical settings, and sports. Animal stories and sports stories were more popular with Group III, and the other two types of stories were more popular with Group I.

When Groups I and IIA were considered together, these high ability students showed a much greater interest in stories with historical settings than the students in Groups IIE and

Table 6

Comparison by Reading Level Groups  
of Interest in Fiction Subject  
Areas as Expressed by the  
Types of Books Checked  
out of the Library<sup>a</sup>

	Reading level groups							
	I	IIA	IIB	IIC	IID	IIE	II (A-E)	III <sup>b</sup>
Adventure	.06	.07	.07	.04	.09	.06	.06	.06
Mystery	.08	.15	.09	.16	.13	.11	.13	.11
Home and family life	.30	.28	.29	.39	.25	.35	.32	.21
Animals	.12	.18	.21	.13	.11	.15	.16	.18
Stories with hist. settings	.22	.17	.08	.12	.17	.08	.13	.16
Super- natural	.04	.05	.03	.03	.02	.02	.03	.05
Growing up around the world	.05	.03	.04	.04	.08	.04	.05	.04
Humor	.03	.02	.05	.03	.03	.06	.04	.04
Science fiction	.05	.02	.08	.03	.00	.05	.04	.04
Sports	.04	.02	.08	.01	.11	.08	.05	.12

<sup>a</sup>Data based on the two-month reading records.

<sup>b</sup>Group III checked out a total of only 82 fiction books in the two month period.

III. Groups IIE and III showed a greater interest in animal stories, humorous stories, and sports stories than the students in Groups I and IIA. This table doesn't appear to differentiate between the three major groups as much as some of the earlier tables. This may be because the students in Group III only checked out 82 fiction books which may have been too small a sample of books to yield accurate data. When only Groups IIA through IIE were considered no pattern of reading interests emerged except in the case of the supernatural. With these five ability groups, stories dealing with the supernatural became less popular as the ability of the group decreased. This pattern didn't appear in Tables 3,4, and 8 so it may have been just coincidence.

The three remaining tables dealt with the percentage of or the average number of book that the students claimed to have read completely. A student could easily lie about whether or not he had read a book, but as explained earlier honest responses were encouraged by attempting to remove the causes of lying.

When only Groups I, II, and III were considered, Table 7 showed that the percentage of fiction books and total books (fiction plus non-fiction) read was greatest for Group I and decreased steadily as the group's average ability decreased. In the non-fiction row Group II appeared to have read a slightly higher percentage of books than Group I. This may have been because the students in the top reading classes had to check out books of poetry for their poetry notebooks. Since these

students only needed a few poems from each book, it was very unlikely that they would read the complete book of poetry. Many of the students in the top reading classes, who had to read and report on two biographies, checked out more than two books in the hope of getting two that would appeal. These students also seemed to dislike reading biographies. These unread biographies would also decrease the percentage of non-fiction read by Groups I and IIA. Because of these assignments, it's difficult to say whether the figures in Table 7 for Group I and IIA were a true indication of the percentage of such

Table 7  
Comparison by Reading Level Groups  
of the Percentage of Fiction and  
Non-fiction Books Read<sup>a</sup>

	Reading level groups							
	I	IIA	IIB	IIC	IID	IIE	II (A-E)	III
Total fiction read	.69	.62	.63	.62	.60	.53	.60	.54
Non- fiction read	.59	.58	.67	.52	.72	.56	.62	.47
Total books read	.66	.60	.65	.59	.65	.55	.61	.50

<sup>a</sup>Data based on the two-month reading records.

books usually read by these groups.

Considering only Groups IIA through IIE, the percentage of fiction read seemed to decrease slightly but steadily from Group IIB through Group IIE. Group IIA read a slightly lower percentage of fiction books than Group IIB. Groups IIA through IIE formed an erratic pattern in the percentage of non-fiction and total books read. When Groups I and IIA were considered together, these two high ability groups read a higher percentage of fiction, non-fiction, and total books than the students in Groups IIE and III. In each of the three types of books Group I read a larger percentage of books than Group III.

In Table 8 the percentage of each of the ten types of fiction books read by the students of the different ability groups was shown. When only Groups I, II, and III were considered, there was a steady decrease in the percentage of adventure stories, stories of home and family life, stories with historical settings, stories about growing up around the world, and science fiction read as the average ability of the group decreased. There was a steady increase in the percentage of sports books read as the ability of the group decreased. The percentage of books read by Groups IIA through IIE in the ten areas of fiction form no definite pattern.

Group I read a much greater percentage of books in the areas of adventure, home and family life, animals, stories with historical settings, stories about growing up around the world, and science fiction than Group III. Group III read a much



Table 8  
Comparison by Reading Level Groups  
of the Percentage of Books Read  
in Each of the Fiction  
Subject Areas<sup>a</sup>

	Reading level groups							
	I	IIA	IIB	IIC	IID	IIE	II (A-E)	III
Adventure	.73	.62	.56	.57	1.00	.38	.65	.40
Mystery	.70	.52	.33	.55	.69	.50	.53	.67
Home and family life	.69	.64	.74	.73	.45	.55	.64	.53
Animals	.71	.79	.71	.83	.54	.81	.76	.47
Stories with hist. settings	.67	.54	.45	.32	.52	.42	.47	.38
Super- natural	.70	.30	.25	.33	1.00	.00	.35	.75
Growing up around the world	.67	.57	.40	.62	.50	.17	.47	.33
Humor	.86	1.00	.50	.67	.75	.33	.59	1.00
Science fiction	.77	.40	.80	.17	---	.86	.61	.33
Sports	.50	.80	.80	.00	.64	.55	.66	.70

<sup>a</sup>Data based on the two-month reading records.

larger percentage of the books in sports, and a somewhat higher percentage of the books in the areas of humor and the supernatural. As mentioned before Group III only checked out 82 fiction books, so the data on the percentage of fiction books read by Group III may be somewhat questionable. When Groups I and IIA were considered together, the students in the two highest ability groups read a larger percentage of the books in every fiction area except science fiction than Groups IIE and III. The two highest and the two lowest ability groups seemed to have read about the same percentage of science fiction books.

Table 9 showed the average number of books checked out, read, and not read by the students in the different ability groups. As the table showed, the average number of books checked out of the library by the students in one ability group was equal to the average number of books read plus the average number of books not read by the same ability group. The average number of books checked out, read, and not read declined steadily as the ability of the group decreased when only Groups I, II, and III were studied. There was an almost steady decline as ability decreased in the average number of books checked out and read when only Groups IIA through IIE were considered. For Groups IIA through IIE there was a steady decline as ability decreased in the average number of books not read except for Group IIE.

The students in Group I checked out, read, and did not read a higher average number of books than the students in

Group III. When Groups I and IIA were considered together, the students in these two highest ability groups checked out, read, and did not read a much higher average number of books than the students in Groups IIE and III.

Table 9  
Comparison by Reading Level Groups  
of the Average Number of Books  
Checked out, Read, and Not  
Read per Student<sup>a</sup>

	Reading level groups							
	I	IIA	IIB	IIC	IID	IIE	II (A-E)	III
Checked out	8.57	7.36	6.16	5.17	4.87	4.90	5.65	3.98
Read	5.61	4.45	4.00	3.06	3.18	2.67	3.43	2.00
Not read	2.95	2.91	2.16	2.11	1.69	2.22	2.22	1.98

<sup>a</sup>Data based on the two-month reading records.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study support the hypothesis that the reading interests of a child are influenced by his reading ability when the abilities of the high and low groups are very different from the large middle group. High ability students prefer fiction books, and low ability students prefer non-fiction books. The highest ability students show a definite preference for science fiction, while the lowest ability students prefer animal stories and sports. There is some indication that the highest ability students also prefer adventure stories, mystery stories, stories with historical settings, and stories of home and family life. The lowest ability students show some indication of a preference for humorous stories. This research also shows that the average highest ability student checks out over twice as many books and reads nearly three times as many books as the average lowest ability student.

The results of this study indicate that librarians and reading teachers should try to supply their lowest ability students with a much larger percentage of non-fiction books at an acceptable reading level. There is also need for much more fiction material at a low reading level dealing with sports (including automobiles) and animals. More humorous stories are also needed, but very little such material seems to be available at a low reading level and a high interest level. Most schools will probably find it necessary to provide their

best readers with more science fiction and more adult and young adult mysteries. These students provide a special challenge to school librarians because they can read all of the material in their interest areas so quickly.

The results of this study lead to many questions. One question could concern whether or not the sample size of this study was large enough. If the sample size could have been even doubled or tripled, it is possible that a larger number of definite conclusions might have been reached about the interests of the highest and lowest ability students and possibly also about the middle group or groups. It might be possible to conduct this study with the seventh grade classes that enter the school for several years in order to increase sample size. It would be best to conduct the study when teachers aren't giving a particular ability group an assignment which requires the students to read a particular type of library book. An assignment in which all students are required to read a particular type of fiction book, for example a mystery or a science fiction book, could also effect the results of such a study.

The problems which result from the small sample size of the highest and lowest groups might be solved if each of these groups includes about 20% of the students instead of 14% of the students. In such a study, the large middle group would include 60% instead of 72% of the students.

It might be useful to divide the students within each ability group by sex. Such a division might show that a par-

ticular reading interest is caused by the sex and not the reading ability of the children in the group.

It might be possible to extend this study by forming the groups on the basis of verbal IQ and possibly also on non-verbal IQ. It would be interesting to see whether these two additional studies based on the same data as this study, but with the ability groups formed on a different basis, would yield the same or different results. Correlation studies between reading level, verbal IQ, and non-verbal IQ would probably give some indication of whether these two suggested studies would yield the same or different results than the study reported in this paper.

The large amount of interest that is shown in stories of home and family life would be more meaningful if the subjects grouped under this category were separated. Questions number twelve and thirteen of the questionnaire would have to be revised to include the fiction interest areas of romance, school stories, and teen-age problems. In such a case the category of home and family life would be used only for stories about families who work and play together. Stories about orphans would be placed in the category school stories. This type of change in the fiction subject areas would help to differentiate between the students who are still reading stories which are written for children and those who are reading stories written for teen-agers. Most of the stories written for teen-agers would appear in the categories of romance and teen-age problems with only a few appearing in the other

two categories. A comparison of the interests in these four categories, shown by the students in the different ability groups, would be interesting.

It might also be worthwhile to divide the non-fiction into ten to 15 interest areas and compare the interests of the ability groups in the different areas of non-fiction. Such a comparison might reveal as many differences between the ability groups as the comparison of the fiction interest areas revealed.

Only Tables 1,7, and 9 appear to show any regular differences between the students in the five subgroups of Group II. This seems to indicate that the large amount of time that is needed to divide the large middle group according to ability and then tabulate the data on each subgroup does not yield sufficient results. As a result it may be wiser in any future study to treat the large middle group of children as a unit instead of subdividing them.

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## READING INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Sex (check one): \_\_\_\_\_ Boy; \_\_\_\_\_ Girl
3. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years, \_\_\_\_\_ months
4. Father's occupation: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Mother's occupation: \_\_\_\_\_
6. What do you do in your free time? (check as many as apply to you): \_\_\_\_\_ active sports (baseball, football, basketball, track, etc); \_\_\_\_\_ Scouts; \_\_\_\_\_ quiet games (cards, board games); \_\_\_\_\_ reading; \_\_\_\_\_ watch TV; \_\_\_\_\_ quiet activities (build models, crafts, etc); \_\_\_\_\_ dating.
7. Do you have a TV at home? \_\_\_\_\_ yes; \_\_\_\_\_ no.
8. Does your family get a daily newspaper? \_\_\_\_\_ yes; \_\_\_\_\_ no.
9. Does your family receive magazines regularly? \_\_\_\_\_ yes; \_\_\_\_\_ no.
10. If you answered yes to question number 9, check the number of different magazines that your family receives regularly: \_\_\_\_\_ 1-3; \_\_\_\_\_ 4-6; \_\_\_\_\_ 7 or over.
11. Which type of book do you like best? (check one):  
\_\_\_\_\_ fiction (a story; something that is made up);  
\_\_\_\_\_ non-fiction (true, facts).
12. If you were picking out a fiction (story) book, which of the following subjects would you like to read about? (check as many as interest you): \_\_\_\_\_ adventure;  
\_\_\_\_\_ mystery; \_\_\_\_\_ animals; \_\_\_\_\_ home and family life;  
\_\_\_\_\_ stories with historical settings (pioneer stories);  
\_\_\_\_\_ the supernatural (ghosts, etc); \_\_\_\_\_ growing up around the world; \_\_\_\_\_ humor (funny stories); \_\_\_\_\_ science fiction; \_\_\_\_\_ sports.
13. Put a second check in front of the subject in question number 12 which interests you the most.

## TWO-MONTH READING RECORD QUESTIONS

The following questions were read to and/or shown to the students taking part in the two-month reading record. Two of the following three questions had to be answered by each child for every book that he checked out of the school library during the two-month period.

1. Did you read the complete book? Answer yes or no.

2. If you answered yes, rate the book using the following scale: Answer with a number.

1	2	3	4	5
Very poor	Poor	Avg.	Good	Very good

3. If you answered no, why didn't you finish the book?

Answer with a letter.

- a. The book was too hard.
- b. I never planned to finish the book.
- c. The book was childish.
- d. The book's subject wasn't interesting.
- e. The book was boring.