A SHORT HISTORY OF UNITED STATES' READING RESEARCH AND INSTRUCTION: 1900 to 2006

1900 to 1919

In the following chapter, the reader is asked to do four things: first, accompany the writer's ancestors and relatives on hypothetical journeys through their reading instruction. Grounding reading instruction within the context of real individuals adds to the narrative by creating a sense of the familiar. The second part of each decade asks the reader to examine any research continued from previous decades. In some cases, this subsection is omitted or de-emphasized when it does not apply. In subsection three of each decade, the reader is asked to focus on new research and instructional practices that characterize each decade. In the final subsection of each decade, the reader is asked to note what the research of the decade meant specifically for the reading teacher of the day. This may include the public's perceptions.

One Student's Journey

The year was 1906. Anyone walking past the school house with the open door would have had no trouble hearing Alice recite. A first-generation American fifth grader, she was reading aloud from her 1879 McGuffey reader. Her book was not one of the new "competing sets of readers all firmly based on the phonics approach" (Flesch, 1955, p. 49). In rural Pennsylvania, perhaps no funds could be found for new school books. The Beacon Readers and their "leading system [based on] systematic phonics" would not arrive until 1910 but would remain popular until 1920 (Flesch, p. 50). From 1900 to 1925, the Beacon Readers had competition from other sets of phonics-based texts (p. 49).

No one knew if Alice was a "deficient reader": It would be four years before Augusta Bronner would signal the beginning of attention to such a new label (Smith, 2002, p. 179). Bronner would in 1926 become President of the Society of Clinical Psychology ("Division 12," n.d.). Alice may have spoken the words, but did she understand the meaning of the words she spoke? It would be another two years before educators might expect her to comprehend, rather than simply recite. From 1880 to 1910, Smith noted, "educators considered the supreme function of reading instruction to be . . . developing appreciation for a permanent interest in literature" (p. 185). From 1900 to 1919, those who taught only reading were nonexistent as reading instruction occurred only through the concept of English instruction. Literature appreciation and the term *reading* would continue to be synonymous until 1910—two years after Edmund Burk Huey's book *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading* announced that oral reading—"a bad exercise in speaking"—had been crowding out "the act of thought getting and thought manipulating" (p. 151). Huey, who, like Alice, was also from rural Pennsylvania, was one of the first to change the definition of *reading*. How many words did Alice know? Smith noted that E. A. Kirkpatrick concluded in 1907 that "the number of words that are known by any one person depends upon two factors, the variety in his word environment, auditory, and visual, and his own readiness to respond to the various elements of the environment" (p. 183). In only a few short years, the educational solos of Bronner, Huey, and Kirkpatrick soon had much accompaniment since 1900 to 1919 was the "initial period of emphasis on scientific investigation in reading" (p. 149).

New Research and Instruction

Smith (2002) reported that 1910 to 1924 was the period of reading research fervor (p. 176). E. B. Huey's 1908 text "showed that as readers mature[,] they shift to even longer units of perception (Singer, 1983, p. 334). Flesch (1955) noted that the same text became the inspiration for the whole-word method: "For him [Huey], the word method was the dawn of a new world" (p. 52). Before 1915, Smith noted, medical men believed that "congenital word blindness was the cause of [reading] difficulties" (p. 179). Throughout the 1910 to 1924 period, popular research topics included "reading time allotments, methods of primary reading, phonics" and most especially "standardization of reading tests and what to do with them" (p. 176).

Despite the overabundance of reading research conducted before 1915, the period of 1914 to 1919 was the most ground breaking. In 1914, educational psychologist Charles Hubbard Judd ("Charles Hubbard Judd," 2006, March 19, para. 1) announced that the "distinction between oral and silent reading is not one which has been clearly recognized in school work. What we want primarily in the reading class is ability to understand the passages. . ." (. Judd, 1914, p. 40). The following year, Judd asserted that silent reading was better than oral (Smith, 2002, p. 151). In 1915, the first standardized test appeared (p. 151), and Leta Hollingworth was the first to study reading disability (p. 179). A student of Edward Thorndike, ("Leta Hollingworth," n.d. para. 11), Hollingworth, "the first woman to scientifically research and challenge the dogma which alleged the inferiority of women" (para. 8) was best known for her work with gifted children (para. 13). In 1916, the term *remedial reading* entered the educational forefront (Smith, p. 180).

Just as World War I had a significant impact on American society, certain individuals had a significant impact on the field of reading between 1917 and 1919. These individuals—Charles Judd, Francis Parker, William S. Gray, Edward Thorndike, and Ernest Horn—received much public support since the act of reading was the new focus of nationwide attention. The war led to the discovery "that thousands of U. S. soldiers could not read well enough to follow printed instructions"; thus, reading became a household concern (Smith, 2002, p. 149). In 1917, William S. Gray who would in thirty-eight years become the first president of the International Reading Association declared that "silent reading is more practical, more efficient, and more effective than the regular regime of oral reading" (Shannon, 1989, p. 22). Charles Judd and Francis Parker, whom John Dewey considered "the 'father of progressive education'" ("Who Is," n.d., para. 1) agreed that deriving meaning was more important than reciting (Smith, pp. 150-151). Parker believed that "expression helps thought[,] thought is necessary for expression, [and] ordinary reading [silent reading] was not a form of expression but a matter of attention" (p. 150). In 1919, reading pioneer Ernest Horn suggested "reduc[ing the] forty principles of spelling instruction to five rules—pretest all words to be taught, teach only those words that students spell incorrectly, provide vigorous review, show students progress continuously, and keep up the interest" (Shannon, 1989, p. 24).

While new definitions of *reading* were plentiful, perhaps no one contributed more to the field than Columbia University's Edward Thorndike. Russell (1961) notes that "Thorndike clearly showed the difference between mouthing words and understanding meaning. [He] demonstrated the need for instruction in getting meaning from the printed

page. He also raised the issue of causes of misunderstanding and attributed it in part to the over-potency of certain words" (p. 3).

Thorndike (1917) explained:

> It appears likely that a pupil may read fluently and feel that the series of words are arousing appropriate thoughts without really understanding the paragraph. (p. 331) Reading is a very elaborate procedure, involving a weighing of each of many elements in a sentence, their organization in the proper relations one to another, the selection of certain of their connotations and the rejection of others, and the cooperation of many forces to determine final responses. (p. 323) Understanding a paragraph is like solving a problem in mathematics. It consists in selecting the right element of the situation and putting them together in the right relations, and also with the right amount of weight or influence or force for each. The mind is assailed . . . by every word in the paragraph. It must select, repress, soften, emphasize, correlate and organize, all under the influence of the right mental set or purpose or demand. (p. 329)

For his declaration that reading is thinking, even today, Thorndike is one of the most cited experts of the scientific period.

Impact on the Reading Teacher

With changes in the definition of reading come changes in the definition of *reading teacher*. The first two decades of the twentieth century established "the rationale for and the format of basal reading materials" (Shannon, 1989, p. 27). Tierney (2000) reported that "for the first time, . . . reading assessments required students to indicate their comprehension by answering unpractical questions about passages never before

encountered" (p. 52). Resnick and Resnick (1977) noted that "fundamental change in the standards applied to reading instruction came early in the twentieth century with the advent of child-centered theories of pedagogy, which stressed the importance of interest and meaningfulness in learning. . . " (p. 381).

Between 1914 and 1919, teachers would receive more instruction from the experts of the day. In 1914, Martha Fulton (1914) urged teachers to use a variety of methods to make spelling more meaningful to students (p. 126). Edward Thorndike (1914) in "The Measurement of Ability in Reading" called for the necessary measurement of "school achievement in reading" (p. 1). William S. Gray and Thorndike created the "first rough scale for measuring simple oral reading of matter-of-fact passages" (p. 2). Gray urged teachers to "be regular readers of scholarly journals in the hope to stay informed concerning effective means to provide reading instruction" (Shannon, 1989, p. 22). In 1919, Gray reported that students need to be "trained to study effectively as they read" (p. 155). His tests concerning college freshmen revealed that students of all abilities were not receiving adequate instruction in that area (p. 158).

1920 to 1929

One Student's Journey

The year was 1925, and citizens walking past the school house door could hear Alice's daughter Erma and her elementary classmates reading aloud. Times had changed. If rural Pennsylvania kept up with the times, Erma, unlike her mother, would have attended reading class as opposed to former reading instruction within the familiar confines of English class (Smith , 2002, p. 159). In the 1920s, reading materials were plentiful, most people could read, communication had become "very rapid," and "written

language [was] the chief means of communication" (p. 155). Like her mother, Erma and her classmates would have been using basals (p. 161) although those books had become more colorful (p. 201) since Alice was in school. From 1900 to 1925, "competing sets of readers, all firmly based on the phonics approach" were the norm (Flesch, 1955, p. 49). Since reading readiness became an established concept between 1925 and 1935 (Smith, p. 186), Erma was probably tested to determine her ability to succeed with those basals written for the most part by "women holding public school positions" (p. 203). If the school kept up to date, Erma would have seen books that were of a diminished size (p. 197), workpads for use in silent reading (p. 199), and "chart card holders used as receptacles for sentences, phrases, and words that the teacher place in the holder for reading exercises" (p. 199). The older that Erma became, the less likely she would have been to receive phonics instruction at school: Flesch noted that reading pioneer Arthur Gates was responsible for "'intrinsic'" or "'incidental'" phonics (pp. 53-54)—a concept based on his 1927 article from the *Journal of Educational Psychology* (p. 55) that recommended saving phonics instruction for second grade (pp. 55-56). While still in elementary school, Erma may have been asked for the first time to let the teacher know her interests since Judd and Buswell's study indicated that children's interests may be significant (Smith, p. 190).

Continued Research and Instruction

The period between 1924 and 1935 "was remarkable in productivity of reading research both in quantity and scope" (Smith, 2002, p. 238). Some of what was happening was a carry-over from the first two decades of the century. Although 1915 marked the beginning of attention to reading disability, between 1920 and 1924, "the public schools

really became concerned about reading disability, and (p. 179) many of them initiated some form of reading improvement for “retarded readers” (p. 180). Monroe (1937) noted that most of what was known about reading disability at the time came from the 1922 to 1937 period (p. 43).

Remedial reading that became a “hot topic” between 1917 and 1918 continued to be a concern. In 1924, William S. Gray called for teachers to be more careful in their diagnoses and attention to remedial students (Smith, 2002, p. 184). Ahead of his time in yet another way, Gray’s (1922) definition of a “’remedial case’” (p. 206) would lay a foundation for remedial reading instruction that took hold in the United States in 1925 (Flesch, 1955, p. 2). Gray defined a “’remedial case’” as follows:

> low IQ [;] inadequate language habits [;] lack of general experience [;] little or no interest in reading [;] careless, indifferent attitude [;] inadequate attention to the content [;] difficulties in the mechanics of reading [;] ineffective rates of reading [;] an inadequate meaning vocabulary [;] failure to think independently about the content [;] inability to picture unfamiliar situations [;] poor home environment [;] distracting social influences [;] inadequate parental supervision [;] inadequate or inappropriate reading materials and poor instruction. (p. 206)

Before remedial reading instruction began in 1925 to be offered in the schools, the first clinic for remedial instruction. . . [was probably] in 1921 at the University of California, Los Angeles (Smith, p. 181). Gray continued to call attention to the need for “special reading clinics” that would start to appear approximately thirty years later (p. 182). Some say that Courtis and Heller’s 1921 report “’Experiments Developed at Detroit for Making

Reading Function'" gets the credit for the realization that comprehension was missing from the reading process (p. 170). In fact, E. B. Huey had said as much in 1908 (p. 151).

New Research and Instruction

Some reading research conducted during the decade was not a continuation of past thinking. A 1927 study by Read showed "that one in every six children failed at the end of the first semester in first grade, and that one in eight failed at the end of the second semester in first grade" (Smith, 2002, p. 243). Reading readiness therefore became a "hot topic" (p. 244). Resnick and Resnick (1977) noted that the Army Alpha and Beta tests from World War I caused group testing to become popular:

> The ability to understand an unfamiliar test, rather than simply declaim a familiar one, became the accepted goal of reading instruction and the new standard of literacy. This newer standard, previously applied only to the programs of elite institutions, required the ability to gain information from reading and use that information in new contexts. The 1920s marked the first time in history that such a rigorous standard had been applied in the [U.S.]. This emphasis on deriving meaning from text bolstered the cause of those educators advocating change in reading instruction. (p. 382)

Other 1920s research was quite varied. By the end of the decade, new phonics readers were no longer published as a result of studies done by James McKeen Cattell, 1895 President of the American Psychological Association ("APA Past," n.d.). Raymond Dodge, 1916 President of APA, and Dodge's German colleague Erdmann, claimed that they "proved that [people] do not ordinarily read by letters but by whole-word units" (Flesch, 1955, p. 50). This study conducted with adult subjects "began the early stages of

the take-off of the whole-word method" (p. 51). Arthur Gates who was still a research "'giant'" (Smith, 2002, p. 209) created diagnostic tests that "led to the establishment of reading clinics, the forerunners of [the 1980s] reading labs and centers" (Singer, 1983, p. 335). In the last half of the decade, reading branched out beyond the reading-class confines and began to be connected with other happenings in the school day (Smith, p. 215). Reading in different curricular areas became a "hot topic" (p. 239). Goodkuntz et al. (1925) argued that "just as spelling and language habits must be emphasized in every subject, so essential reading habits must be cultivated in the study of literature, arithmetic, history, geography, and other content areas" (p. 160). A 1920 Buswell and Judd study "suggested that reading skills differ with different purposes and materials" (Russell, 1961, p. 3). Smith noted that intelligence was no longer the deciding factor for placing students into certain reading groups, and "reading ability or disability,. . . special reading interests, social background, physical condition, and emotional maturity" became issues (p. 225).

Impact on the Reading Teacher

For teachers in the 1920s, some things remained the same, but the abundance of research had an impact on practice. Right after 1925, attention was still being paid to silent reading and reading speed as well as reading disability and new materials (Smith, 2002, p. 185). The focus on silent reading methods was a direct result of the publication of the 1921 Twentieth Yearbook [of the National Society for the Study of Education] that "declared that [educators] need[ed] to stop paying so much attention to oral reading and study silent reading" (p. 153). Efficiency being the order of the day, teachers would want to equip their students with strategies "to meet the practical needs of life" (p. 154). Basals

were still being written, and teachers were still using them. For a 20-year period beginning in the 1920's, "journal articles provided unquestioned advocacy of basal use over other methods" (Shannon, 1989, p. 33). The experts of the 1920s—Horn, Gray, and Gates—were the ones writing the new basals (p. 29).

Research had a significant impact on teacher practice. W. S. Gray's Summary of Investigations Relating to Reading showed teachers the "ways in which pupils use reading in preparing assignments in content subjects" (Smith, 2002, p. 188). Attention to individual needs became popular between 1925 and 1935 (p. 224). The new Activity Movement caused teachers to teach reading "largely as it entered into or flowed out of children's interest, problems, and activities" (p. 227). A variety of new materials would be needed, said Judd and Buswell's 1922 study, to account for the fact that "readers vary their silent reading processes according to their purposes and the kind and difficulty of the material" (Singer, 1983, p. 335). Smith reported that methods used in beginning reading "had never been more varied" (p. 216).

New materials and opportunities flourished in the age of American prosperity. Smith (2002) noted that "perception cards to increase eye span [,] flashcards containing silent reading exercises[,] remedial materials[,] and diagnostic and achievement tests" were prevalent (p. 162). Thorndike (1927) whose career would last another twenty-eight years, published his 1921 *Teacher's Word Book*, a guide meant to "help the teachers to decide quickly which treatment is appropriate by telling her just how important any word is" (p. iv). A second service of the "alphabetical list of the 10,000 words . . . found to occur most widely in a count of about 625,000 words from literature for children" and additional words from a variety of sources (p. iii) was "to provide the less experienced

teacher with that knowledge both of the importance of words and of their difficulty. . . “ (p. iv). Between the new teacher manuals focusing on silent reading procedures and Thorndike’s Word Book, teachers found efficient sources of scientific guidance—if not control. Other sources of professional development could be found in the newly formed—1928—National Education Association (Smith, pp. 245-246). Finally, between 1925 and 1935, “special supervisors of reading” were being hired (p. 186).

1930 to 1939

One Student’s Journey

The year was 1930, and Erma was entering high school. Her younger sister Vernie would still have been using the basals written by Horn, Gates, and Gray (Shannon, 1989, p. 29). In the decade best known for its poverty, Alice, her children, and the rest of the country listened to the radio: There were even those who began to wonder if radio would reduce the public’s interest in and time spent on reading (Smith, 2002, p. 252).

Continued Research and Instruction

Reading research certainly did not stop. As in the previous decade, some of what was happening was a carry over from the preceding decade. The attention given to “children’s interests in reading” and the “different habits . . . employed when reading for different purposes” persisted until 1935 (Smith, 2002, p. 190). Basals and the Activity Method co-existed in the classroom (p. 230). Pearson (2002) noted that the look-say approach that began at the turn of the century continued throughout the 1930s (p. 419). *Look*-say is synonymous with “whole language” and “’sight reading’” (“Whole language, “ n.d., para. 1) For another decade, journals would continue advocating the use of basals

(Shannon, 1989, p. 33). The Gates' list of sight words was in its second decade of popularity (Dolch, 1936, p. 185).

New Research and Instruction

Other research and instruction was not a carry over but a new set of developments. Some of those developments concerned the reading disabled. Monroe (1937) noted that 1937 was the year that reading disabilities could be attributed to more than one cause. Getting to know the child would be a necessary step toward understanding his or her disability (p. 42). Monroe, then, agreed with Emmett Betts (1934) who in 1934 declared "that no one theory can be expected to account for all types of reading disabilities" (p. 211).

Beyond reading disability, research covered a wide range of topics. Almack and Staffelbach (1933) reported that in 1933, some believed that individuals "who spell well do so" because they pay attention to words and "have had adequate practice in using these words" (p. 126); others believed that" children learn to spell 'incidentally'. . . without specific instruction. . . " (p. 126). Betts who won IRA's 1971 Citation of Merit award (Jerrolds, 1977, p. 269) and acted as committee chair when IRA first began in 1956 (p. 251), observed that a large segment of the educational community believed that children under the age of nine "should not be required to read" (Betts, 1934, p. 209). Marion Monroe who was head psychologist of the Child Guidance Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from 1932 to 1936 and author of several Dick and Jane readers (TagNwag Books, 2000 – 2006, para. 1-2) arrived at the conclusion that "general reading ability consists of a multiplicity of factors: [S]uccess or failure in reading depends on whether a student's strengths in these factors outweigh his or her weaknesses" (Singer, 1983, p.

335). Ruth Strang (1938) who would in eighteen years become IRA's first past-president (Jerrolds, p. 251) and who would in 1962 win IRA's Citation of Merit award (p. 269) advocated reading instruction throughout high school (Singer, p. 335). In 1938, Eva Bond showed that a student's comprehension may vary from school subject to school subject (p. 335). In 1935, W. S. Gray and Bernice Leary "were the first to find that word frequency and sentence length were determinants of text difficulty" (p. 337). Dolch and Bloomster's 1937 study involving first graders-- who had never been told anything about letters and sounds but were expected to tell words apart-- ironically convinced the educational community that first graders could not do phonics (Flesh, 1955, p. 73).

Impact on the Reading Teacher

Unlike Erma's teachers, Vernie's teacher may have gone to college where she may have taken "special courses. . . in the teaching of reading" (Smith, 2002, p. 246). In the classroom, she probably used the Scott Foresman Reading Program workbooks (p. 211). She probably balanced basals with the Activity Method (p. 230). Gates' 1927 article may have convinced her to join her peers in saving phonics for the third grade instead of the previously recommended second grade (Flesh, 1955, p. 56). As a teacher in the 1930s, she would have taught silent reading, and she may have reported to a special supervisor of reading (Smith, p. 246).

1940 to 1949

One Student's Journey

In the early 1940s, Erma's son Floyd was in elementary school. If she were in keeping with the times, Floyd's teacher would have wanted him to read in order to become a productive citizen (Smith, 2002, p. 250). He probably did not receive

individual instruction (W. S. Gray as cited in Robinson, 2005, November, p. 3). Along with the rest of the class, he probably waited his turn to read aloud. He and his classmates probably endured an abundance of skill drill, and when they were asked to read silently, the focus was still on skill development. Whether or not they "develop[ed] a taste for good reading" was not a priority (p. 4). Reading was "probably not . . . as well taught in many schools as it could have been" (p. 11). No longer were these students expected to "read and accept": Instead, if the teacher were in keeping with the times, students were expected to see different perspectives as democratic citizens (p. 12). Basal use continued throughout the 1940s (Shannon, 1989, p. 33), and Floyd and his classmates probably used texts by the experts of the day—Betts, Russell, and McKee (p. 9). As Flesch (1955) reported, students were experiencing a loss of vocabulary acquisition since phonics had ceased to be as valued (pp. 57-58).

Continued Research and Instruction

Compared to other decades, the 1940s was not, Smith (2002) reported, rich in reading research (p. 279) although after World War II, it did increase somewhat (p. 248). Some of yesterday's topics were still in vogue. Once again, America discovered that its soldiers "could not read well enough to follow the simple printed instructions for camp life" (p. 251). Reading education for adults was still a topic of study.

New Research and Instruction

Although Smith (2002) reported that new research may not have been as abundant as in decades past, it was, in fact, still rich and varied. Five topics emerged-- the notion of reading as related to a well-rounded life; developmental reading in high school and college; new attention to remedial reading; renewed focus on comprehension; and

miscellaneous terms, concepts, and programs. In the 1940s, social uses and values of reading became "hot topics" (Smith, 2002, p. 250). In 1946 or 1947, W. S. Gray announced that "reading does affect accuracy of information as well as morale, beliefs, judgments, and actions" (as cited in Smith, p. 250).

Between 1948 and 1950, the reading community-- revisiting the notion of "reading at higher levels"-- (Smith, 2002, p. 274) formed a new plan: The time had come to teach "developmental reading in high schools" (p. 275). The earliest definition of the term *developmental reading* was "reading instruction, except remedial, for all students beyond the elementary school level" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 58). W. S. Gray explained: "I think . . . we must teach reading in every grade. Growth in reading is a continuous process. . . (as cited in Robinson, 2005, November, p. 7). "Teaching pupils to read," he continued, "is not something that is completed by the end of a given grade" (p. 9). Remedial programs are worthwhile, Gray noted, but they are not the end-all (Smith, p. 275). Ruth Strang's 1946 *Problems in the Improvement of Reading in High Schools and College* "pointed to the need for developmental reading instruction in secondary schools and colleges" (Russell, 1961, p. 4).

Throughout the 1940s, remedial reading received attention. The term *remedial reading* refers to "specialized reading instruction adjusted to the needs of a student who does not perform satisfactorily with regular reading instruction" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 218). Smith (2002) noted that in 1940, W. S. Gray defined *remedial reading* (p. 283) although the first clinic for remedial instruction was formed in 1921 (p. 181). Helen Robinson's 1946 *Why Pupils Fail in Reading* concluded that those labeled "'unreachable'" may indeed be reached (pp. 281-282). Robinson was IRA's 1969 winner

of the Citation of Merit award (Jerrolds, 1977, p. 269), 1951 to 1952 President of the National Association of Remedial Teachers (p. 249), and one of IRA's first committee chairs (p. 251).

In the 1940s, the study of comprehension was not new, but Paul McKee (1941) made a significant statement about it:

> Eye movements, increasing speed, or using exercises are not going to help anyone with comprehension. (p. 99) The reading ability of our pupils and students is much lower than deficiencies in the mere mechanics of reading indicate. It is much lower than the scores on standardized tests or photographs of eye movement show it to be. Eighty percent of our students are not getting much from their textbooks. Pupils are not particularly disturbed at the lack of understanding in reading their textbooks. They are not at all the demanders of meaning which they should be in order to read effectively. The best readers we have are in the first grade; the poorest, in the secondary schools and colleges. Those students have learned that there is such a thing as reading without understanding and that we, as teachers, are willing to accept a student's manipulation and reproduction of the language symbols of a meaning as evidence of his possession of that meaning. (p. 97)

All this being said, reading clinics, McKee believed, should be of more service to both teachers' and students' understanding of the "thinking side of reading" (p. 99).

Research in the 1940s also illustrated that *reading* is a multifaceted topic. *Readability* became a "hot topic" (Smith, 2002, p. 270), and the terms *visual* and *auditory discrimination* first appeared (p. 270). In addition, Smith noted, Albert J. Harris' 1940

How to Increase Reading Ability, Emmett Betts' 1946 *Foundations in Reading Instruction* (p. 254), and Ruth Strang's 1946 *Problems in the Improvement in Reading* (p. 255) served as examples. Harris was IRA's 1968 winner of the Citation of Merit award (Jerrolds, 1977, p. 269) as well as IRA's 1957 to 1958 President (p. 252). Betts was IRA's 1971 Citation of Merit winner (p. 269) and one of IRA's first committee chairs in 1956, the year that IRA formed. Strang was IRA's first past president and a very early committee chair (p. 251).

Not only were books on specific aspects of reading appearing, but new reading programs developed. The *Reading for Interest* series by Paul Witty et al. appeared (Smith, 2002, p. 261). Witty was the 1969 to 1971 chair of IRA's Reading for the Gifted and Creative Committee (Jerrolds, pp. 262-263), the 1953-1954 President of the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction (ICIRI) (p. 246), and a 1952 to 1955 Board member of the National Association of Remedial Teachers (NART) (pp. 249-250). In the 1950s, ICIRI and NART merged to form IRA. Nila Banton Smith's 1940 to 1945 *Learning to Read* program "was the first to provide social studies and science content designed to accompany curricular topics" (Smith, p. 263). In addition to writing one the most respected history-of-reading texts, Smith was IRA's 1963 to 1964 President (Jerrolds, p. 256).

Impact on the Reading Teacher

As in previous decades, new research brought new concerns for teachers. In the 1940s, the educational community realized that teachers needed additional training (Smith, 2002, p. 285). The Forty-Seventh Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education declared that colleges and universities needed to offer summer courses,

“extension and home study courses, workshops, reading conferences, and consultant services” (p. 286). Other advice and guidance for teachers came from Edward Thorndike, Irving Lorge, Paul McKee, and William S. Gray. Thorndike and Lorge’s 1944 *The Teachers Word Book 30,000 Words* appeared. The authors described it as follows:

> It enables a teacher to know not only the general importance of each word so far as frequency of occurrence measures that, but also its importance in current popular reading for adults . . . and its importance in such juvenile reading. (preface)

McKee (1941) instructed teachers to “deliberately teach pupils how to do what they must do in order to dig out and correct understanding of what they read” (p. 99). W. S. Gray summarized: “Every child should have a chance to grow in both oral and silent reading in proportion to his potentialities. If they are limited, train him to read as effectively as his capabilities permit” (as cited in Robinson, 2005, November, p. 12).

1950 to 1959

One Student’s Journey

The year was 1950, and Floyd’s younger brother Roger entered elementary school. Like his brother before him, he probably used basals written by Betts, Russell, and McKee (Shannon, 1989, p. 29). His chances of learning phonics decreased after Gates’ 1953 pamphlet *Teaching Reading* appeared: Flesch (1955) believed that it “completely denounced phonics” (p. 56). If one believes Flesch, Roger and his classmates would have shared their teachers’ “cluelessness” about phonics (p. 57). Flesch pointed to Betts’ 1954 article calling phonics “’a gimmick . . . that . . . will not make much of a dent in the reading problem” (p. 59). By 1955, Roger’s first- or second-grade

neighbors would not have been able to read by themselves any books on the market (p. 79). At the time, Flesch continued, eighty percent of "'nonreaders'" were boys because "girls are usually a little less revolted by the stupidity of the word method" (p. 114) and because reading seemed a boring, "heartbreaking, hopeless," and never ending routine that caused children to give up (p. 122) and caused most students in 1955 to "guess instead of read" (p. 18). All of the guesswork could lead most elementary students to be labeled as remedial.

Continued Research and Instruction

Except for a renewed interest in reading disability (Smith, 2002, p. 378), reading research of the 1950s was not a carry-over from previous decades.

New Research and Instruction

In the 1950s, paying more attention to people's potential appeared to be a theme. Traxler (1958) voiced concern that standardized tests misrepresented students' abilities. Testing reading speed, he noted, is difficult when a person's speed varies depending what he or she is reading. Standardized tests also gave the impression that there was such a thing as a "general reading vocabulary" which, of course, did not exist in the 1950s (p. 46) any more than it exists in 2006. Finally, testers gave the impression that they were evaluating comprehension when, in fact, intelligence may have been the only thing the tests measured (Traxler, p. 46). In addition to the re-evaluation of standardized tests, Traxler also recommended that gifted students be identified far earlier than the junior or senior year of high school as had been the 1950s practice (p. 47). Sharing in the belief that more needed to be done to help people reach their potential, reading clinics began to assist adults with job preparation (Smith, 2002, p. 346).

In the research community, some activity concerned the demise of some methodology, the beginning of a new practice, and most importantly, the development of a new theory. In 1950, the Activity Method came to a halt: Smith (2002) noted that "there was a sharp decrease and finally an omission of articles having to do with reading taught only in connection with projects, units of work, and the activity (p. 251) program" (p. 252). Cloze, a technique that Harris and Hodges (1995) defined as "any of several ways of measuring a person's ability to restore omitted portions of an oral or written message by reading its remaining context" (p. 33) became a "hot topic" (Shanahan & Neuman, 1997, p. 25). Most significantly, in 1953, Singer (1983) noted, researcher Jack Holmes developed a theory about reading instruction:

> Holmes formulated his substrata factor theory that stated [the following]: underlying each of reading's two components, speed and power, are a multiplicity of skills and processes; the reader organizes them into momentary working systems according to his or her purposes and the demands of the task. This view . . . explains why different methods of reading instruction work. (p. 336)

Although the 1957 launching of Soviet satellite Sputnik caused America to re-examine its educational offerings, America's period of "expanding knowledge and technological revolution" began in 1950 and continued through 1965 (Smith, 2002, p. 287). To keep up with all that was happening in the world, Americans realized that they had to add to their bodies of knowledge and be able to read well (p. 288). Sputnik caused a metaphorical explosion of fear and a flurry of research activity in the United States: "Investigators, authors, and publishers," Smith noted," worked feverishly in seeking new (p. 290) methods and in preparing new materials that they hoped would produce faster

and better results in learning to read" (p. 291). Professional books concerning the teaching of reading (p. 299) and new books for college-level and adult reading flooded the market between 1950 and 1965 (p. 301). Throughout the decade, "programmed learning" appeared: "Psychologists, manufacturers, and teachers participated in the movement by preparing programmed materials, inventing teaching machines, and reporting results of experimentation" (p. 369). Later in the decade, some in the reading field realized that publishers and their profits were exerting an inappropriate amount of influence in the reading field (Shannon, 1989, p. 33).

Impact on the Reading Teacher

The 1950s was not only a turning point in the century: It was a turning point in the way that the public viewed teachers of reading. Smith (2002) noted that "for the first time in history, reading instruction in the U. S. schools underwent harsh and severe criticism by laymen and by some instructors in subject fields other than reading" (p. 291). Rudolf Flesh's 1955 *Why Johnny Can't Read and What You Can Do About It* was largely responsible. In that text, he purported that the currently used word method made no sense: "The teaching of reading—all over the United States in all the schools, in all the textbooks—is totally wrong and flies in the face of all logic and common sense" (p. 2). Johnny can't read, Flesch accused, because "nobody ever showed him how" (p. 2). If only teachers would help students with letters instead of whole words, he noted, they could read (p. 3). Instead, though, "we have decided to forget that we write with letters and learn to read English as if it were Chinese. One word after another after another" (p. 5). Students books, he lamented, were "horrible, stupid, emasculated, pointless, tasteless

little readers" (p. 6). The blame, Flesch indicated, could be placed on the teacher-education courses wherein this sort of nonsense was instilled (p. 12).

Flesch (1955) would have the public believe that reading teachers were no longer worthy to be called *teachers*. Instead, they were substitutes for student thought since "learning to read (p. 15) is guessing or waiting until you are told what the word means" (p. 16). Teachers, he purported, were simply adults who encouraged children to memorize (p. 79). Children were at best their own teachers (p. 20), or at worst, subjects in an "animal training" experiment (p. 126).

1960 to 1969

One Student's Journey

In the 1960s, Floyd's daughter Lou Ann was in elementary school. Basal use was diminishing (Shanahan & Neuman, 1997, p. 27), but I may have still used readers by Guy Bond, Albert. J. Harris, or Russell Stauffer (Shannon, 1989, p. 29). I do recall using the Dick and Jane readers. I may have been asked to choose some of my own reading material (Shanahan & Neuman, p. 27). Elementary writing instruction had become a "hot topic," (p. 28) and I do remember being asked to write more in the fourth and fifth grades than any other. I would not have seen much media and technology use as it was "still limited in most schools" (Shanahan & Neuman, p. 28). If my teachers were in keeping with the times, they were "better educated with regard to reading, literature, and writing," and they had more exposure to teacher research than in the past (Shanahan & Neuman, p. 28). Since the "standardization of reading was virtually complete by 1960" (Shannon, p. 42), I would have been among the first students to witness "the process, act or result of

establishing criteria for the evaluation of something; specifically, in educational testing" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 242).

Continued Research and Instruction

Some of the research of the period was a mixed bag of topics carried over from previous decades. Smith (2002) noted that in the early years, "it suddenly became mandatory to teach millions of adults and youths out of school to read better so that they might hold jobs and lead productive lives" (p. 292). From 1960 to 1965, developmental reading programs progressed quickly (p. 339). Reading disability was still a topic of interest (p. 378). In 1967, Jeanne Chall announced that "publishers often unduly influenced how children were taught to read by convincing school administrators which basal program to purchase. . . and by providing 'propaganda' . . . during in-service programs" (Shannon, 1989, p. 39). Chall was an IRA 1961 to 1963 Board member (Jerrolds, 1977, pp. 254-255) and a 1959 to 1961 IRA committee chair (pp. 253-254). The cloze procedure continued to be a "hot topic" (Shanahan & Neuman, 1997, p. 25) as did comprehension (p. 27). In 1969, Kenneth Goodman who was IRA president from 1980 to 1981, IRA Board member from 1976 to 1979, and a member of the Reading Hall of Fame since 1991 ("Kenneth Goodman," n.d.) re-iterated the importance of silent reading (Artley, 1977, p. 75). Leo Fay (1964) who was a 1962 to 1963 IRA committee chair (Jerrolds, p. 225), a 1964 to 1969 IRA Board member (pp. 256-259) as well as the 1968 to 1969 President (p. 260) asked educators to teach reading in the content areas to any child beyond the second grade: the further along the children are in school, he noted, the more they need that assistance (Fay, p. 163). In a prefatory remark preceding an Arthur Gates' (1967) article, editor Richard Robinson indicated that 1967 was a turning

point for technology in reading instruction: Although technology existed prior to the 1960s, after 1967, a "technological revolution" ensued (Gates, 1967, p. 226).

New Research and Instruction

Reading research was twice as prevalent in the 1960s as in the 1950s (Smith, 2002, p. 373). In many ways, reading became something new, methodology changed, and more of the population was given a chance to meet with success. Shannon (1989) called the decade "the re-awakening of the new education in reading instruction in the United States"—a description that would last at least through the 1980s. He attributed some of the rebirth to the work of Ken Goodman, Donald Graves (mentioned later in this chapter), and Frank Smith (p. 124). Shanahan and Neuman (1997) reported that "different kinds of literacy [became] recognized" (p. 28). Also new were criterion-referenced tests (Pearson, 2002, p. 423): Harris and Hodges (1995) defined *criterion-referenced measurement* as "the assessment of performance on a test in terms of the kind of behavior expected of a person with a given score" (p. 48).

Reading instruction began to take new shape. Shanahan and Neuman (1997) noted that "readiness activities" disappeared (p. 27). Teachers were using "informal assessment" (p. 28). Instructional strategies such as SQ3R, advance organizers, and Directed Reading Activity became popular (Singer, 1983, p. 338). Harris and Hodges (1995) defined *SQ3R* as "a series of steps to be used in reading a textbook for study purposes" (p. 241); the term *advance organizer*, as "an instructional tool in which brief written text is presented prior to other text for the purpose of enhancing the comprehension of that text" (p. 5); and the term *Directed Reading Activity*, as "a step-by-step process for presenting a reading lesson; developmental reading lesson, especially in

the content fields" (p. 61). Bond and Dykstra's 1967 First Grade Studies "found that no instructional method was superior to others for students at either high or low levels of readiness" (Shanahan & Neuman, p. 32). Shannon (1989) noted that these studies "had a significant impact on instructional policy at the time and [were] still used [in the 1980s] to dismiss alternative nonbasal methods of teaching reading in the United States" (p. 35).

Giving more individuals a chance at being successful readers became a theme in the 1960s. Shanahan and Neuman (1997) indicated that "literacy [was] taught" both earlier and later than in the past (p. 27), so adults and younger children had increased access to reading assistance. Ken Goodman's 1965 study of oral and reading miscues later morphed into the whole language movement: Goodman "found that children could recognize words in context that they could not in isolation" (p. 34). *Miscue* refers to "a deviation from text during oral reading or a shift in comprehension of a passage" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 155). For this discovery, Goodman's work earned the distinction of one of the four most significant 1960s studies along with the First Grade Studies, Dolores Durkin's 1966 study on early reading, and the Children's Television Workshop 1969 debut of *Sesame Street* (Shanahan & Neuman, p. 30). William S. Gray who died several years before the *Sesame Street* debut, would have been delighted that the Children's Television Workshop had echoed his own philosophy from 1961: "'The goal is increased capacity on the part of children to engage independently at a reflective, creative level in pursuit of knowledge and in the solution of difficult problems'" (as cited in Smith, 2002, p. 295).

Other avenues created new opportunities to reach more people for the cause of reading. In 1965, United States President Lyndon Johnson created Title I of the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of his Great Society initiative (Pearson, 2002, p. 423). Harris and Hodges (1995) defined *Title I* as "the federally funded compensatory education program in the United States, intended to serve children of lower socioeconomic backgrounds who may be at risk of school failure, particularly in the elementary grades" (p. 257). At the end of the decade, the Right to Read Program was established "as a way of guaranteeing that right to each child in the United States" (Pearson, 2002, p. 423).

Impact on the Reading Teacher

During this decade, experts in the field of reading were both criticized and welcomed. Shannon (1989) noted that a 1964 study by Barton and Wilder "characterized reading experts as 'marginal researchers' who relied on the research and opinions of a very few people in order to form their positions on reading instruction" (p. 39). On the other hand, in 1960, seven states had certification of reading specialists. Later in the decade, Smith (2002) recalled, there was a "heavy demand for qualified reading specialists that was considerably greater than the supply" (p. 387). Harris and Hodges (1995) defined *reading specialist* as "educational personnel with advance training in reading education" who may act as a reading teacher, consultant, supervisor, or coordinator (p. 213).

1970 to 1979

One Student's Journey

In the 1970s, Floyd's daughter Dixie was in elementary school. Basals had changed, Pearson (2002) noted:

> Phonics . . . was back. . . Dick and Jane . . . were retired and replaced by a wider

array of stories and characters: by the early 1970s, more of the selections were adaptations of children's literature rather than stories written to conform to a vocabulary restriction or a readability formula. (p. 425)

Dixie's books would have been more difficult than in decades past and rich in skill orientation. As her relatives before her, Dixie would have "continued to play the role of passive recipient of the knowledge and skills mediated by the teacher" (p. 428). In 1979, Ken Goodman reported that the basals of the 1970s "prevent[ed] students from becoming literate" (as cited in Shannon, 1989, p. 38). Dixie and her classmates may well have experienced what Shannon called " a dull tedium of reading groups, skill, work, and tests" (p. 40). Translating letters into sounds, translating letters into sounds, and translating letters into more sounds (Pearson, 2002, p. 428) probably fostered little enthusiasm.

Continued Research and Instruction

The research of the 1970s was not a carry over from the past.

New Research and Instruction

The research of the 1970s was a smorgasbord of new topics. For the first time since the early 1900s, psychologists became interested in reading (Pearson, 2002, p. 437; Pearson, 1985, p. 101). Shanahan and Neuman (1997) called the following studies the most influential of the decade: Freire (1970); Read (1971); Sticht, Caylor, Kern, and Fox (1972); Pichert and Anderson (1977); Stein and Glenn (1977); Durkin (1978 to 1979); and Clay (1979) (p. 30). Freire's book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* "speak[s] to the role that schools play in reducing social inequality" (AERA, n.d., para. 2). Read showed that "we no longer assume that children enter school with little knowledge of . . . language"

(Shanahan & Neuman, 1997, p. 31). Sticht, Caylor, Kern, and Fox studied “literacy in work training and job performance” (Sledd, 2001, March 26, personal communication). Pichert and Anderson concerned themselves with prior knowledge as “linked to individuals’ perspective on what they read or heard” (IRA, *A Historical Perspective*, 1996 – 2006, para. 2). Durkin’s “study of classroom reading instruction found that teachers taught comprehension less than one percent of the time and that this instruction was more a matter of ‘mentioning’ than actual explanation or demonstration” (*Comprehension Instruction*, 2006, para. 1). Clay’s work involved Reading Recovery (*History of Reading Recovery*, 2002, para. 1, 3). Other important studies included Branford and Franks (1974) who concluded “that readers perceive verbal relationships across sentences referred to as ‘chunking’” (Singer, 1983, p. 334), David Rumelhart’s 1976 work regarding the “interaction concept of reading”, and David Hayes’ 1979 work with “analogies embedded in text” (p. 336).

Pearson (2002) noted that Ken Goodman’s whole language movement that officially began in 1972 would come to be known as “the most significant movement in reading curricula in the last thirty years” (p. 448): “In whole language, teachers were facilitators, not tellers. Teachers observed what children did, decided what they needed, and arranged conditions to allow students to discover those very insights about reading, writing, and learning for themselves” (p. 452). Harris and Hodges (1995) devoted three pages to Dorothy Strickland’s definition of *whole language*: A past president of IRA, she called the movement “a set of applied beliefs governing learning and teaching, language development, curriculum, and the social community” (p. 279).

Much of the research of the decade was devoted to comprehension. In fact, Shanahan and Neuman (1997) reported that ‘little work on reading comprehension was done until the 1970s” (p. 32). Artley (1977) summarized that the important researchers of the early 1970s believed that ”reading is . . . a complicated processing of grammatical information which transcends individual words” (p. 75). Pearson (1985) noted that before 1970, the educational community believed that “the comprehension process was driven by . . . fixation upon the text as an object of study. Comprehension was viewed as some degree of ‘approximation’ to the text read” (p. 101). Laberge and Samuels’ 1976 study “theorized that a speed of reading during which readers can identify words automatically enabled them to comprehend better because they can give almost all their attention to comprehension” (Singer, 1983, p. 335). Jay Samuels’ 1979 study advocated “’repeated reading’” as a comprehension strategy for remedial readers (p. 335). Teun Van Dijk and Walter Kintsch’s 1977 study revealed that readers can process and comprehend text more easily if it is “organized into macro and microstructures” such as topic sentences and details that follow (p. 337). Koretz (2002, March 21) noted that 1972 marked the beginning of the “minimum competency movement” that was a forerunner of the 1990s high-stakes testing. The movement consisted of “a wave of state-level policies imposing generally low-level tests as exit exams—tests [one] has to pass to get out of high school and get a diploma” (para. 4).

Impact on the Reading Teacher

Unfortunately, Shannon (1989) reported, in 1977, ninety-four percent of “teachers [still taught] reading according to the directions in the teachers’ guide books” which subjected students to unnecessary “tedium” (p. 40). Teaching was a “profession without

professional activity" (p. 40). Reading teachers in this decade were, Pearson (1985) noted, "manager[s], [people] who arranged materials, tests, and the classroom environment so learning could occur" (p. 111). As a result, students needed to teach themselves if they were to learn anything (p. 111).

1980 to 1989

One Student's Journey

In the 1980s, Roger's daughter Heather was in elementary school. Until the latter part of the decade, she probably used basals of the 1970s (Pearson, 2002, p. 425). After the 1988 California Reading Framework became a "hot topic," (p. 445), the basals she used probably had "authentic literature and authentic activities" instead of excerpts and emphasis on skills (p. 446). Her classroom experience would have been relatively the same as her father's since reading instruction had been relatively the same for the past sixty years: "'lessons . . revolv[ed] around textbooks and workbook[s]" (Shannon, 1989, p. xiv). Like her classmates, Heather probably "learn[ed] that reading is the attempt to memorize text which someone else selects so that [one] can reproduce factual information when questioned" (p. 96). Chances are that she did not acquire critical literacy skills (p. 134).

Continued Research and Instruction

In the 1980s, criticism of basals continued, and the reading field still had little awareness of certain practices. Since 1964, teachers had been relying on "commercial reading materials" (Shannon, 1989, p.xvi), but by the end of the decade, "some reading experts [were beginning] to feel uneasy about the marriage of the science of reading instruction with the commercial publishing of basal materials" (p. 42). Shannon cursed

them for the “fragment[ation of] reading into isolated skills” while the assessment of reading was left behind (p. 99). Although awareness of the faults of basals was increasing, certain other areas remained elusive. How to teach vocabulary effectively was still a mystery. Nagy and Herman (1985) indicated that it was not safe to say “that learning from written context is an effective means of vocabulary acquisition” (p. 190). Empirical research had so dominated the field that not much looking back at the history of reading occurred (Shannon, p. xxi). Riley and Shapiro (1989) indicated that “the process of diagnosis and remediation [of reading problems] remain[ed] elusive” (p. 212). While practitioners were still using comprehension strategies, a 1980s “hot topic” (Pearson, 2002, p. 444), they still did not have an adequate grasp of the concept of comprehension—something that psychologists who had once again become interested in the field of reading may help them to solve (Pearson, 1985, pp. 100-101). In the 1980s, high-stakes testing not only continued but became a part of an educational reform movement advocating “more statewide testing and stiffer course-taking requirements for graduation from high school” (Koretz, 2002, March 21, para. 8). All of this was the result of concern that the United States’ educational system was weak when compared to other nations and “the perception that performance was deteriorating” (para. 7). This, of course, applied not only to reading but also to other content areas.

New Research and Instruction

In the 1980s, other fields became interested in reading, and some significant studies appeared. Pearson (2002) commented on the other fields that began to get interested in reading: linguistics (p. 430), cognitive psychology (pp. 436-439), sociolinguistics (pp. 440-442), and reader response (p. 442). Harris and Hodges (1995)

defined *linguistics* as "the study of the nature and structure of language and languages" (p. 139); *sociolinguistics,* as "the study of the relationships between linguistic behavior and other aspects of social behavior" (p. 236); and *reader response*, as the transaction between reader and text (p. 209).

Shanahan and Neuman (1997) noted that the most significant studies of the decade were done by Marie Clay in 1985, Donald Graves in 1981, and Nancy Atwell in 1987 (p. 30). Clay, a past president of IRA and a New Zealand native, created Reading Recovery, a program that "offers daily half-hour one-one-one tutorial sessions for students who are having trouble learning to read after one year of formal instruction" (Sensenbaugh, n.d., para. 4). Since the integration of reading and writing became a standard practice in the 1980s, (Pearson, 2002, p. 448), Graves' work on the process of writing received acclaim in the reading field (Ing & Wild, n.d., para. 4). Atwell's work declared that "children will read what they are interested in" (Fuhler, 2005, para. 7). Also significant, although not appearing on Shanahan and Neuman's list, are studies by Pearson and Nagy and Herman. Pearson (1985) urged that

> a teacher can no longer regard the text as the ultimate criterion for defining what good comprehension is; s/he must view the text, along with students' prior knowledge, students' strategies, the task, and the classroom situation, as one facet in the complex array we call comprehension. (p. 102)

Nagy and Herman (1985) suggested that making vocabulary effective involves "multiple exposure to the word, exposure to the word in meaningful contexts, rich or varied information about each word, ties between instructed words and students' own

experiences and prior knowledge, and an active role in the word-learning process" (p. 193).

Within the school confines, radical change was occurring. Giroux and Freire (1989) showed that the United States' federal government initiated "an educational reform movement that define[d] reading as a technology rather than a historical and social practice" (p. ix). Reading instruction quickly became "part of a wider political and pedagogical attack on the capacity of teachers and students to engage in critical thought" (p. ix). Shannon (1989) reported that "statewide textbook adoptions" occurred (p. 42). Along came mastery learning, "a method of reaching the attractive, but elusive goal of teaching everyone to read at school" (p. 62). School administrators experiencing a sudden loss of power surrendered and "let the publishers choose the goals, methods, and assessment for reading instruction, focusing their efforts on managing teachers' use of the chosen materials in order to render it more effective and efficient in raising students' test scores" (p. 87).

The 1980s was also the decade of the literature "explosion" (Pearson, 2002, p. 444). Major emphasis was placed on the integration of reading and writing (p. 448). Teachers were "active participants in the classroom without ignoring the child as constructor of his or her own meaning"—a direct result of the influence of Lev Vygotsky (Sipe, 2001, p. 136). As active participants, teachers and students participated in book clubs and literature circles (Pearson, 2002, p. 446) and used graphic organizers (Singer, 1983, p. 338). Harris and Hodges (1995) defined *book club* as "an information organization in a school, class, or library established to encourage reading by its members" (p. 21). *Literature circles* involve "students meet[ing] to discuss books they

are reading independently" (p. 145). *Graphic organizers*, pictures that students construct in an attempt to map out main ideas and details of written and spoken materials or their own ideas, were developed by Judie Thelen in 1982 (Singer, p. 338). Thelen is a past president of IRA.

Impact on the Reading Teacher

More than any other part of the twentieth century thus far, reading teachers of the 1980s suffered a changing identity. In this time that Shannon (1989) called "bleak" (p. xxi), reading teachers lost control of their surroundings and became trapped: Keeping their jobs meant doing what the administration told them to do (p. 51), and as previously noted, administrators had also become trapped. Decisions regarding "what reading means and how to teach [it]" now out of their hands (p. 43), teachers became truly dependent on governmental authority. Shannon continued that "the roles of teacher and textbook seem[ed] to be reversed . . . wherein teachers bec[a]me a support system for the textbook rather than the other way around" (p. xiv). Shannon called this a new form of invisibility (pp. 56-57). At the time, teachers were reduced to worker bees whose productivity needed to be "maximized" (p. 56). To make matters worse, Shannon noted, teachers became "spectators" in their own profession and began to believe "that basal materials can teach reading and that the materials are based on scientific fact" (p. 51). The state of dependence began to stir the public to revisit its skeptical view of reading teachers (p. 46). Teachers tended to agree with the public that in their quest to be "accountable to the state" (p. 85), they had been propelled out of control (p. 70), "deskilled" (p. 79, and less able than ever to reach students (pp. 111-112).

1990 to 1999

One Student's Journey

In the 1990s, Floyd's granddaughter Jamie was in elementary school. Since whole language had become "a curricular force" (Pearson, 2002, p. 450) and skills development had moved to an after thought, Jamie and her classmates may have missed some of the skills they needed to acquire (p. 451). They probably had exposure to phonemic awareness (p. 461) that Harris and Hodges (1995) defined as "the awareness of the sounds that make up spoken words" (p. 185). These classmates would have undergone high-stakes testing (Tierney, 2000, p. 49). As she progressed to junior high school, she probably did not experience reading assistance in the content areas because many subject-area teachers still were not accepting that reading is not a compartmentalized subject and they-- as teachers of science, math, or history-- were partly responsible for the students' reading comprehension. In those junior-high years and beyond, she would not have spent much time on reading for fun (IRA, *Adolescent Literacy: A Position Statement,* 1999, p. 4).

Continued Research and Instruction

In the 1990s, whole language in its third decade of existence had become a "curricular force" (Pearson, 2002, p. 450). Teachers and students continued to co-construct meaning thanks to the philosophy of Vygotsky (Sipe, 2001, p. 136). On a more substantial level, however, one-size-fits-all thinking was still very much in full swing. Teachers had no choice but to conform to the one right way, Pearson (2002) noted, which meant continuing to adhere to standards-based assessments brought on by "concerns about U. S. economic competitiveness and public and political perceptions of the public

school ethos" (Tierney, 2000, p. 52). Koretz (2002, March 21) added that "the big push became two things: further ratcheting up of stakes . . . [and] systems that actually gave cash awards based on test scores" (para. 13). Tierney reported that 1990s high-stakes testing "seem[ed] intent on holding students' and teachers' feet to the fire" (p. 49). This type of testing leaves children behind (p. 50).

New Research and Instruction

At a time when qualitative research was making a comeback (Pearson, 2002, p. 459) and phonemic awareness captured attention (p. 461), IRA was making a statement about the need for increased attention to adolescent literacy. In its 1999 position statement *Adolescent Literacy*, the organization stated the following:

> No one is giving adolescent literacy much press. It is certainly not a hot topic in educational policy or a priority in schools. In the United States most Title I budgets are allocated for early intervention. Little is left over for the struggling adolescent reader. . . . Many people don't recognize reading development as a continuum. (p. 1)

IRA also lamented the lack of reading specialists in the schools, the lack of reading education courses for teachers (p. 3), and the lack of content-area teacher commitment to helping students with comprehension (p. 4). Surely "adolescents deserve more than a centralized one-size-fits-all approach to literacy" (p. 8).

After a long vacation, phonics was once again a "hot topic." Harris and Hodges (1995) defined *phonics* as "a way of teaching reading and spelling that stresses symbol-sound relationships, used especially in beginning instruction" (p. 186). IRA's 1997 position statement explained:

> The role of phonics in reading and writing has become as much a political issue as it has an educational one. Teachers and schools have become the focus of unprecedented public scrutiny as the controversy over phonics is played out in the media, state legislatures, school districts, and the home. (p. 1)

IRA believes that phonics is a necessary component of teaching reading (p. 2) and classroom teachers had not forgotten about it (p. 3), but phonics "must be embedded in the context of a total reading/language arts program" (p. 3).

Diversity, too, was a "hot topic" in the 1990s (Shanahan & Neuman, 1997, p. 27). Orfield (2001, July 17) related that "statistics from the 1998-1999 school year show[ed] that racial and ethnic segregation continued to intensify throughout the 1990s. . . despite the nation's growing diversity" (para. 1). Public schools were, in fact, "resegregating at accelerating rates" (para. 1). This state of affairs, no doubt, led in part to the creation of IRA's 2000 position statement *Making a Difference Means Making It Different: Honoring Children's Rights to Excellent Reading Instruction"* which asserted among other things "that all children have a right to early reading instruction that meets individual needs" and "a right to instruction that makes meaningful use of first-language skills" (para. 1-2). Pirofski (1995-2006) pointed to several 1990s research studies regarding multiculturalism:

> Reimer (1992) found that most books for children tend to [be] about non-minority groups. Her research involving trade books and basal reading programs designed for third grade school children found that none of the main characters in these books were from Asian, African-American, Hispanic, or Native American [heritage]. (para. 18) Reimer (1992) documented that a recommended children's

> reading list generated by Jim Treslease and former U. S. Secretary of Education William Bennett did not contain any Asian, Hispanic, or African-American characters. The books that did feature minorities relied heavily on stereotypes of African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asians. (para. 19) During the last two decades, only 4 best sellers out of 253 featured African-Americans. (para. 22)

Impact on the Reading Teacher

Even more so than their 1980s counterparts, 1990s teachers had something to fear and some heavy food for thought. Tierney (2000) captured the sentiment: "Some educators have suggested that teachers may need to go underground, so that they give the illusion of compliance, but in their classrooms. . . they will find ways to partition the approaches" (p. 50). In order to live with themselves and maintain some semblance of control, they needed to hide in plain sight. Citing Sheehy (1999), Tierney noted that "teachers should recognize that the spaces within which they work are rented rather than owned and that they should pursue their desired engagements in the cracks or spaces within the system" (p. 50).

2000 – 2006

One Student's Journey

Since 2000, Floyd's grandson John has been in elementary school. He may get A's in spelling, but as Beckham-Hungler and Williams (2003) indicated, that does not mean that he is really learning those words (p. 144). The same thing may be happening in his other subjects, Jacobs (2002, p. 171) reported, since content teachers have not all come to terms with incorporating reading and writing as strategies for learning (p. 170). He probably is not being asked to use writing "to engage . . . in learning" (p. 172). In the

classroom, he has probably been getting training in phonemic awareness and phonics (Valencia as cited in Tierney, 2000, p. 54). The libraries in his school and classroom "have deteriorated" (IRA, 2000, *Making a Difference Means Making It Different*, p. 6), which explains the school's Adopt-a-Classroom program whereby community members and organizations such as Rotary donate funds for new books.

Continued Research and Instruction

Some dilemmas from the past have crept into the current decade. Teachers still do not know how to teach vocabulary. In an environment of high-stakes testing, vocabulary is a "hot topic" (Nilsen & Nilsen, 2003, p. 196). Teachers of history, science, and other content areas have not yet lent their unanimous support to use of literacy strategies to increase understanding (Jacobs, 2002, p. 170). Throughout the previous century, reading educators have not been able to form a consensus about the part phonics plays in the reading process: In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the debate continues (Robinson, 2005a, p. 61). The concept of comprehension is still loosely defined in teachers' and students' experience (Robinson, 2005b, p. 86). Robinson reported that educators still have not decided whether *comprehending* means being able to retell text (p. 86) or if it has more to do with the reader's previous knowledge that he or she brings to the topic (p. 87). If no one knows what comprehension is, how does anyone teach it (p. 87)?

New Research and Instruction

In the current decade, researchers continue to suggest new practices. For example, Jacobs (2002) encouraged educators to use writing-to-learn (p. 172). Beckham-Hungler and Williams (2003) suggested that teachers take a look at whether successful grades in

spelling means that students are actually learning those words (p. 144). Sipe (2001) suggested that the time has come for teachers and students to begin to "'co-construct meaning'" (p. 136). Unfortunately, as a result of the 2001 legislation No Child Left Behind, teachers have less of an opportunity than ever to hear those research voices and implement those practices. Since the law was passed, teachers must use their time, energy, and motivation to meet the accountability standards and try to escape the threat of sanctions for inadequate progress. Sanctions include labeling of a school as "needing improvement," after which it must formulate and carry out a two-year correction plan (United States Department of Education, n.d., para. 1). If the school cannot correct its problem by the third year, the label changes to "school-improvement status" (para. 2). In year four, teachers can be fired, and the label changes to "corrective action" (para. 3). If change is still needed in the following year, most if not all of a school's teachers can be replaced, and the school can be "turn[ed] over. . . to the state or to a private company with a demonstrated record of effectiveness" (para. 4). When told what to do and threatened, teachers often have the same negative reactions as anyone else would have. NCLB, then, has nearly replaced and devalued research: Ironically, this leaves teachers and their students behind.

Consequently, No Child Left Behind has received abundant criticism. Twenty-seven organizations including the International Reading Association have voiced their concerns in a *Joint Organizational Statement on the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act* (IRA, et al., 2004, October, 21). While the organizations concurred that "strong academic achievement for all children" and "accountability" are important, they agree that sixteen changes in the law are needed. Some of the concerns include the following:

overemphasizing standardized testing, narrowing curriculum and instruction to focus on test preparation rather than richer academic learning, over-identifying schools in need of improvement, using sanctions that do not help improve schools, inappropriately excluding low-scoring children in order to boost test results, and inadequate funding. (para. 2)

Impact on the Reading Teacher

In the first half of the decade, reading teachers find themselves playing a game of tug of war: Teachers hold for dear life to their end while government continues to exert more force on the other. Through no fault of the teachers, students do not appear to be active participants in the game. Reading teachers are expected to teach phonics without being asked their opinions of the effectiveness of that practice (Villaume & Brabham, 2003, p. 78). With all of the concentration on NCLB requirements, "resources for professional development will have to compete with resources needed for high-stakes test implementation" (Valencia as cited in Tierney, 2000, p. 55). Teachers watch as phonics instruction "crowds out literature- and language-rich instruction" (Villaume & Brabham, p. 78). Teachers are forced to watch as "a one-size-fits-all mentality"(p. 79) eclipses their students.

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