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Fifth Graders' Interpretations when Reading Literary Works from Two Different Asian Cultures

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FIFTH GRADERS' INTERPRETATIONS
WHEN READING LITERARY WORKS
FROM TWO DIFFERENT ASIAN CULTURES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by

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M. A., Northern Arizona University, 1998

May 2005

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ABSTRACT

Although each Asian culture is unique, many Americans tend to generalize and see “Asian” as one vaguely defined culture. This study explored the use of multicultural literature in assisting elementary school students to become aware of and then develop true understanding of what makes two Asian groups different. This case study assessed whether fifth graders in a public elementary school in the Southeast raised their awareness of similarities and differences between two Asian cultures after reading *Journey to Topaz* (1971), written by Yoshiko Uchida, and *Dragon’s Gate* (1993), written by Laurence Yep. The use of multicultural literature has become common in literacy instruction and is considered useful for developing children’s multicultural awareness. The exchange of opinions with their peers helps students nurture their own interpretations of the stories.

Nineteen participants took part in this study. They read two multicultural stories from different Asian cultures with their reading teachers. Multiple data were collected in the form of open-ended questionnaires, response journals and observation field notes. A pretest questionnaire was used to measure the participants’ current knowledge about the cultures in the stories, and a posttest questionnaire was used to measure the changes in participants’ attitudes and understanding. Response journals allowed the participants to share their feelings while reading the stories. I conducted individual interviews with selected participants after the students had read and discussed both books.

In this study, data have been analyzed based on four research questions:

- 1) What were fifth graders’ interpretations of Japanese- and Chinese-American cultures before reading the stories?

- 2) What were the interpretations of fifth graders when they engaged in writing and discussing their thoughts while reading literary works from these two different Asian cultures?
- 3) How did their interpretations change after they read each story?
- 4) What were the similarities and differences in participants' interpretations and understanding of these two stories?

In order to report the findings in depth, five cases from the selected interviewees were also within-analyzed and then cross-analyzed in the study.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

According to the U. S. Census Bureau data released in 2005, the total number of foreign-born residents in the U. S. was 34,240,000 as of March 2004, an increase of 4.3 million since 2000, and a number which is expected to grow in the future. As a result, American schools are in the unique position of transmitting American traditions and values to an increasingly diverse population of students. Teaching American traditions should be valued in American education; however, teaching from a single perspective will no longer be effective in order to educate students in the U. S. As classrooms become more culturally and racially diverse than ever before, educators are being forced to address this demographic change in order to help students recognize the advantages of diversity and respect individual differences.

Although I was not brought to the U. S. from Japan during my childhood, the ethnocentricity that many Americans unconsciously embrace often confused me as an adult while doing my doctoral work in New Orleans, Louisiana. Although many different racial and cultural groups are represented in the U. S., and especially in New Orleans, there often seems to be little mixing of the groups in much of America. Many Americans tend to generalize different groups in stereotypical fashion rather than having a true understanding of what makes each group different. As a result, I often felt that my cultural values and racial identity as a Japanese person were ignored or even despised by some Americans. My experiences as one of the racial minorities in this country and as an international doctoral student from Japan prompted me to explore in the process of my dissertation research Americans' attitudes toward other minority cultures.

Yamate (1997) asserts that many Americans cannot distinguish between Asians who are foreign nationals and Asian Americans. According to Yamate (1997), "the issue of generalization toward Asians relates to historical anti-Asian sentiment in the U. S." (p. 97). Fear of the so-called "Yellow Peril" allowed the U. S. Congress

to pass such laws as the Chinese Exclusion Act, alien land laws, and the National Origins Act of 1924, according to Yamate, (1997, p. 97). During World War II, Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps because the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. "Prior to 1952, Asian immigrants were ineligible for U. S. citizenship," Yamate has written (1997, p. 97).

Although many pan-Asian and Pacific Islander organizations have attempted to establish Asian Americans' recognition as U. S. citizens since those times, progress has been slow because Asians in the U. S. tend to be treated as foreigners in their own country. This slowness of the racial recognition of Asian Americans has also influenced the diffusion surrounding Asian American children's literature (Morgan, 1998; Yamate, 1997; Zitlow & Stover, 1998). Although about 4,500 children's stories are published each year in the United States, through the middle 1990s, only 66 children's books that depicted Asian Americans had been written (Yamate, 1997). According to statistical data reported by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education, (2005, <http://www.soemadison.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/pstats.htm>), out of 5,000 children's books published in 2003, only 106 books depicted Asian/Pacific Americans. These statistics highlight another reason that few studies pertaining to Asian or Asian/Pacific American literature have been conducted to date.

Understanding of racial and cultural diversity in classrooms is expressed as important in education by multicultural advocates in this country; however, in reality, that need is often treated as secondary. One of the problems with education in the U. S. is that teachers attempt to teach in the same manner as they have been taught (Howard, 1999). Thus, students are expected to learn in the way that their teachers did (Howard, 1999). If students are not able to adapt quickly to their teachers' ways of teaching, they are considered problematic. Students from different racial and cultural backgrounds are often in danger of this assumption because they are likely to have different values and perspectives than their teachers.

Maxine Greene (1994) insists that today's teachers need to recognize and then cope with the cultural and racial plurality that exists in their instructional settings in a positive manner. She acknowledges that the concept of the "Euro-centric canon" is intentionally implanted and is still pervasive in today's education in the U. S. Acquiring Standard American English and learning about "Euro-centric" American culture, tradition, and history are considered indispensable skills for literate Americans. However, an overemphasis on this concept permits many American-born students to develop ethnocentric attitudes toward other cultures and eventually may cause them to ignore or even ostracize racial and cultural minority students. Eventually, this ethnocentric attitude may develop into stereotypes, biases, and prejudices.

E. D. Hirsch (1987) explores "ethnocentricity" in his book *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. Hirsch defines "cultural literacy" as knowledge indispensable to becoming responsible Americans. His concept of "cultural literacy" stems from the traditional Western European perspective. He asserts that it is important for every American child to learn how to speak Standard American English and to be well-versed in American culture, politics and history. Despite what Hirsch might like, however, Standard American English cannot be assumed to be the native language of every child in this country. For instance, many children grow up speaking non-standard English at home even though they are U. S. citizens. Children of Mexican or other Hispanic origins, for example, may have a strong desire to maintain their native Spanish language in order to preserve their racial and cultural identities. Thus, these children are often considered reluctant English learners and are seen as intentionally refusing to integrate into American society by their teachers.

As another example, many immigrants have arrived from Asian countries in recent years. They are often considered more motivated to learn Standard American English and to adapt to American culture than any other immigrant children; however, the linguistic and cultural differences that they possess often make their acquisition of English language and culture difficult and complex. Thus, according

to Hirsch's discussion of "cultural literacy," children from any different racial or cultural background are unconditionally disadvantaged.

From my own perspective and experience, learning how to speak Standard American English and integrating into the American culture is important for those who choose to live in the U. S., but maintaining one's own language and culture should also be valued for linguistic and racial minority students. Basic knowledge and critical thinking are constructed and further developed through literacy activities in one's own native language. Thus, I believe that all students in the U. S. should be expected to develop cultural understanding of other cultures existing in this country as well as of their own culture in order to understand the diversity brought to their classrooms by students from racial or cultural minorities.

Hirsch (1987) maintains that being aware of multicultural features and cultural diversity in educational settings in the U. S. is important; however, he contends that such educational policies should not become the main focus of education. From his perspective, being aware of and nurturing critical eyes toward multicultural phenomena in the U. S. are important; however, Hirsch also believes that they should never be considered the most important part of education. According to Hirsch, the real responsibility of schools is to educate all of the children about American culture; nurturing the traditional Euro-centered American perspective should be considered the priority in education for both American-born and immigrant children. From Hirsch's perspective, true literacy can only be acquired by exploring American language and culture. In this sense, he implies that American culture is superior to any other culture.

Dinesh D'Souza (1996) also criticizes the nature of multicultural education practices in the U. S. However, his perspective on multicultural education is different from Hirsch's. According to D'Souza, no culture is superior to others, so all cultures are equal. Through this premise known as "cultural relativism" (p. 18), he asserts that cultures are simply different. Thus, he insists that cultural differences should not differentiate the quality of human beings. D'Souza encourages learning about cultural differences as a good educational practice. On the other hand, he also

maintains, “Multiculturalism is a political movement based on a denial of Western cultural superiority” (p. 18). Multiculturalists emphasize respect for minority cultures only because racial identities of minorities cannot prevail over the Euro-centric American culture, according to D’Souza.

It is true that the multicultural movement may have grown out of political pressures arising during the Civil Rights Movement. However, D’Souza’s perspective on multiculturalism seems somewhat cynical. The concept of multicultural education does not have to exclude any cultural canon. Multiculturalists may attempt to include more culturally underrepresented features in Euro-centered academic curricula without ignoring or excluding the significance of learning about the mainstream culture.

Geneva Gay (2000) offers sound pedagogical suggestions in her book *Culturally Responsive Teaching*. She asserts that ignoring academically underachieving students and culturally, racially underrepresented students and imposing on these children from various backgrounds the identical academic curricula, and then expecting the same levels of achievement, are not desirable educational practices. Gay insists that teachers first need to understand their own attitudes and assumptions toward existing cultural diversity in their classes. She criticizes many teachers for remaining ignorant of other cultures and for being unmotivated to learn about cultural differences that exist in their classrooms. These attitudes, says Gay, keep teachers from creating the ideal learning environment. Developing the techniques to incorporate different cultural elements into their existing academic curricula will help teachers to create cultural harmony in their classrooms.

As Gay asserts, ignoring cultural diversity in the classroom offers no solution to the problem. Nor does a superficial presentation of cultural information.

While ethnic content has the potential to stimulate intellectual curiosity and make meaningful contact with ethnically diverse students, it should be combined with instructional strategies that emphasize inquiry, critique, and

analysis, rather than the traditional preferences for rote memory and regurgitation of factual information. (Gay, 2000, p. 28)

Although it is not part of her pedagogical suggestions, Gay (2000) briefly discusses the effectiveness of using narratives in learning settings. Since stories composed by individuals are personalized, developing human connections only through reading stories is often considered more difficult than having direct contact and interaction with human beings. However, as Gay insists,

Stories are means for individuals to project and present themselves, declare what is important and valuable, give structure to perceptions, make general facts more meaningful to specific personal lives, connect the self with others, proclaim the self as a cultural being, develop a healthy sense of self, and forge new meanings and relationships, or build community. (p. 3)

Thus, the use of narratives can be a powerful tool to develop reciprocal empathy with others. Providing students with the opportunities and environment needed to develop mutual empathy should be a priority in order to promote multicultural awareness in learning settings. Reading and writing narratives can encourage students to develop their own meanings and interpretations.

Rationale for the Study

Gary Howard (1999) states in his book *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know*, "Diversity is not a choice, but our responses to it certainly are" (p. 2). As the U. S. student population becomes more diverse, developing positive awareness toward other cultures will become more important for both teachers and students. During the years of my graduate studies in the U. S., I often perceived that many Americans tended to generalize and see "Asian" as one vaguely defined culture, although each Asian culture is different and unique. Because elementary school is often where these stereotypes begin to form, it is crucial to begin to promote cultural and racial understanding about underrepresented ethnic groups in that setting.

According to data released by the U. S. Census Bureau in 2005, 8,300,000 out of 34,240,000 individuals, or about one-fourth of the U. S. foreign-born population in 2004, was from Asia. Despite the large number of Asians in the U.S., the ability of Americans to discriminate among different Asian groups is still lacking.

Stephan (1999) insists that the “basis of stereotyping is categorization” (p. 2). “Thus, when we categorize people by using a group label, we are highlighting the similarity of people within the category and the ways in which these people differ from other groups” (Stephan, 1999, p. 2). According to Stephan, developing stereotypical concepts is not always negative. Accumulating positive stereotypical experiences allows people to develop insight into a particular culture, which provides a starting point for exploring the subtleties of the cultures in order to develop true cultural sensitivity. If the cultural input is frequently negative, however, many tend to develop negative stereotypical concepts that eventually surface as prejudice. This should be avoided because once stereotypical concepts are firmly internalized, people tend to see the similarities within racial groups and de-emphasize the differences among individuals within the groups, according to Stephan (1999). This highlights the importance of providing students with positive experiences with other cultures and of challenging their stereotypes with a typical example from each culture.

Many multicultural advocates have explored the process of racial and cultural minority students’ assimilation into American culture and American-born students’ learning about minority cultures. For example, James Banks (2004) and Geneva Gay (2000) have explored African-American students’ adaptability and flexibility in their approach to mainstream American culture, while Sonia Nieto (2004) has studied acculturation issues regarding Latino students such as Puerto Ricans.

However, few researchers have focused on American-born students’ cultural understandings about Asians. As the Asian-born population increases in school settings, many American-born students remain uninformed about Asian cultures. It

is important to address this problem in order for us to develop harmony in our culturally and racially diverse learning settings.

In this study, fifth graders' interpretations when reading literary works from two different Asian cultures were examined. Two children's literary works were used for this study. *Journey to Topaz*, written by Yoshiko Uchida (1971), is about Japanese Americans' experience in an internment camp during World War II. *Dragon's Gate*, written by Laurence Yep (1993), is about Chinese immigrants' experience when they came to the U.S. to help construct the Transcontinental Railroad. "By learning to look through multiple perspectives, young people may be helped to build bridges among themselves, [and] they may be provoked to heal and transform," writes Maxine Greene (1993, p. 17). Because many American-born children tend to generalize "Asian" as one vaguely defined culture, I wanted to see what would happen if I provided the fifth grade participants in this study with these two stories about different Asian cultures in the U. S. and then had them read and compare the contents of the stories. I hoped that it might be possible for some of the participants to dispel their stereotypical beliefs about Asians in the U. S. Although many reading teachers currently use multicultural literature, students' voices and meaningful interactions with stories have been largely overlooked. As Spiro (1979) has maintained, personal experiences that individuals develop greatly influence how they perceive and interpret written forms of texts. According to several researchers, (Dooling & Christiansen, 1977; Neisser, 1976; Spiro, 1977), humans' background knowledge, or schema, is daily changed and expanded based on their life experiences. Using multicultural literature allows students to have multiple interpretations, to appreciate the significance of meaning-making through stories, and to develop metacognitive awareness (Freppon, 1991; Gambrell & Palmer, 1992; Morrow & Gambrell, 2000). Thus, I thought that understanding how fifth graders in this study perceived the experiences of Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans in the books could make a significant contribution to research in reading and literacy studies and to multicultural education.

Brief Description of the Study

This study examined fifth graders' interpretations when reading literary works from two different Asian cultures. "Understanding, unlike explaining, is not preemptive: one way of construing the fall of Rome narratively does not preclude other ways of interpretation," according to Bruner (1996, p. 90). The use of stories allows the participants to be active readers, to construct their own interpretations and develop critical insights through reading stories. In this study, how the participants dispelled or retained their stereotypical concepts about two different cultures in the stories was examined.

In order to explore the fifth graders' interpretations, the books *Journey to Topaz* (Uchida, 1971) and *Dragon's Gate* (Yep, 1993) were used. These two stories have been categorized as historical fiction, and the authors are members of the cultures represented in the stories. In order to minimize the variables in this study, two books from the same genre were selected.

A public elementary school in the New Orleans metropolitan area was used as the research site. There were two fifth grade classes in the school. Nineteen fifth graders (6 males and 13 females) participated in the study. Sixteen were Caucasians, and three were African-American girls. The age range of the participants was from 10 to 12 years.

Informal school observation began on December 2, 2003. Data collection started on March 3, 2004 and ended on May 25, 2004. As an extracurricular activity, the participants met in the school library from 1:30 to 2:15 every afternoon to read and discuss the two stories.

The school has a more culturally diverse population than others in the area because many international medical interns at a nearby private hospital have enrolled their children in the school, although none of the parents of the participants of this study were medical practitioners. This site was chosen because it was assumed that students in heterogeneous environments would tend to be more tolerant of the culturally unfamiliar contexts in the stories than students from more racially and culturally homogeneous learning environments. My choice allowed me

to focus on the perceptual growth of the participants and helped me to obtain more in-depth and trustworthy data from them.

In this study, multiple data in the form of questionnaires, response journals, field notes, and interview responses were collected in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the acquired data. I attended each class session in which the stories were discussed as a participant observer and took field notes. After the data collection was over, nine participants who demonstrated interesting responses in their journals were invited to individual interviews, which were conducted for the purpose of data saturation. Finally, five of them were chosen for the in-depth report.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because many Americans still lack the ability to distinguish among different Asian groups although the number of Asian residents from many Asian countries has increased. Providing more positive experiences with Asian cultures by using typical examples from different Asian cultures may help dismantle stereotypes in the process of learning.

This study demonstrates that reading multicultural literature is a useful learning tool to promote the multicultural awareness of American-born students. As Morrow and Gambrell (2000) maintain, using trade books in reading instruction encourages readers to explore the contents of stories and helps them improve attitudes toward reading. However, the suggestion of using literary works in reading instruction brings with it a problematic issue, which is the preparation of reading teachers. Many teachers and pre-service teachers are not familiar with teaching and reading stories about different cultures with their students because the cultural contents of the stories feel foreign to them. Although the use of multicultural literary works in reading instruction is no longer considered a new type of literacy approach, many teachers tend to teach only the stories and books with which they are most familiar or that parallel their own cultures (Dressel, 2003). Students also tend to be resistant to reading books with foreign words or concepts (Dressel, 2003) because they do not feel that it is necessary for them to understand other cultures. As a result, when teachers ask students to read works about other

cultures, they often tend to emphasize having students collect literal meanings and information from stories.

As McGee (1992), Rosenblatt (1978, 1991) and Morrow and Gambrell (2000) posit, readers' interpretations are often influenced by their prior experiences and backgrounds. However, readers' interpretations of stories have been at times overlooked or even ignored in reading instruction. Additionally, few studies have been conducted to examine differences in interpretations between readers who are cultural members of the stories being read and readers who are non-members of those cultures.

The lack of research regarding readers' interpretive responses is even more conspicuous for Asian stories in the U. S., since Asian cultures are still not widely recognized by American educators, even though Asian immigration has been increasing. From her own experiences as a Japanese American and an Asian-American literature expert, Yamate (1997) maintains that Americans' racial generalization about Asians stems from historical sentiments, making the generalization persistent. It would be important for educators to change this trend in the future. This study will be a significant piece if reading multicultural stories from two different Asian cultures helps American-born fifth graders in this study be aware of culturally and racially sensitive issues.

Statement of Delimitations

Scope

This study is a qualitative examination of fifth graders' interpretations of two stories depicting different Asian cultures. The students' reading comprehension was not measured using quantifiable reading examinations because interpretations are in general not quantifiable. Qualitative reading comprehension indicators such as the participants' interpretations of the stories, *Journey to Topaz* and *Dragon's Gate*, were examined and then reported. No cultural elements in these stories are meant to generalize about Japanese-American or Chinese-American cultures. The events in the two stories are situation-specific.

Limitations

The findings of this report are situation-specific. This study was conducted in an elementary school in a metropolitan city in the Southeast. The participants were fifth graders whose ages range from 10 to 12 years. The student population was racially more heterogeneous than those in other schools in the metropolitan area. Only two Asian stories were used. Thus, this study, as qualitative research, was not intended to generalize the results to different populations and research contexts.

Assumptions

It was assumed that some participants would show indifference toward Asian cultures in the stories, but some would also feel a certain degree of interest in Asian cultures. I assumed that their individual motivations would greatly influence their performance in the assignments and activities.

I further assumed that some participants would have preconceived stereotypes of Asian cultures or immigrants in general, while others might be neutral. I believed that the existence or lack of a preexisting stereotype would affect the students' interpretations of the stories.

Summary

The ethnocentric focus of American education still exists, and cultural generalization of Asians is a continuing problem. As Bishop (1994) states, however, learning about a different culture does not mean excluding other cultural and racial groups. It is an effective means of understanding the underrepresented voices screened by the traditional Western canon. As Cai (1998) also insists, the ultimate goal of education in this pluralistic and democratic society is that everybody respects uniqueness and differences in order to achieve equality and justice. Thus, examining fifth graders' interpretations through reading two literary works from different Asian cultures is useful research providing evidence that students can develop empathy for other cultures through the use of multicultural literature. This experience was the initial step for many of the student participants in the process of examining their own attitudes toward different cultures.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

In this study, I examined fifth graders' interpretations when reading multicultural literary works from two different Asian cultures. In order to demonstrate the reasons that reading and writing about multicultural stories are important, in this chapter I will discuss the four theories that form the theoretical basis of this work, and the literature reported by current researchers and advocates in the field of multicultural literature. Next, I will describe how literature-based instruction became popular as a current method of reading instruction, and how multicultural literature and response journals are used in current school settings in the U. S. Finally, I will also present some controversies surrounding the use of multicultural literature.

Theoretical Framework for this Study

Four theorists have provided the important theoretical frames for the study. As Jerome Bruner (1990) wrote, "Story, in a word, is vicarious experience, and the treasury of narratives into which we can enter includes, ambiguously, either 'reports of real experience' or offerings of culturally shaped imagination" (p. 54). Bruner (1996) further elaborated on his thoughts about narratives by explaining how students read and interpret stories in this society and then process information based on each student's different life experiences. Bruner's insights about the process of meaning-making and the use of narratives are especially important for the study, since I examined the participants' interpretations of two different Asian stories. Interpretations are normally not quantifiable; it is difficult to demonstrate the similarities and differences among interpretations with objective measurements. Thus, Bruner's theory of narratives and the process of meaning-making became sound criteria in order for me to evaluate and then report the participants' interpretations in the study more accurately.

A second theory I chose for the study stems from Walter Stephan (1999). As a psychologist, Stephan discussed how human beings develop stereotypical beliefs and prejudicial attitudes toward the existing differences in others. His discussion provided critical insight in determining whether the participants' thoughts and ideas arise from culturally embedded beliefs or from empathy about the characters in stories. Stephan offers pedagogical suggestions in order for students to develop multicultural awareness in school settings. Although these pedagogical suggestions are not examined in this study, his theory about stereotypes and prejudice provided the criteria for me to evaluate whether the responses from the participants are stereotypical.

The third theory is based on the transactional theory that Louise Rosenblatt (1938) posited, discussing two types of reading stances, efferent and aesthetic reading. Rosenblatt describes how readers transact with books. According to Rosenblatt, efferent reading occurs when readers attempt to clarify the literary meanings of words or sentences and the contents of stories. In contrast, aesthetic reading occurs when readers explore the unwritten messages in stories. Aesthetic responses relate to readers' feelings. Being able to articulate the differences between efferent and aesthetic reading stances was helpful as I examined the participants' oral and written comments during the process of data analysis.

Finally, James Banks' *Four Approaches to Multicultural Curriculum Reform* (2004) was added to the theoretical frames of my study. Since the purpose of this study was not to reform a traditional core reading curriculum, most of the approaches that Banks posits do not relate to the study. However, his concepts of decision-making and social action became important since the participants in the study developed individual values while reading the books.

Nature of Mind and Culture and Theory of Education

In *The Culture of Education*, Bruner (1996) argued that no school is culture-free, and any learning environment possesses differences and uniqueness. Understanding the underlying differences and uniqueness embedded in each school is important for both teachers and students. In order to stimulate this cultural

learning at school, Bruner posits nine tenets that explain how students develop multiple interpretations and why teachers need to respect their students' multiple interpretations as they learn.

The first tenet that Bruner listed is the *perspectival tenet*, which relates to *perspective*. Bruner posits that a right answer from one perspective can be wrong from another perspective. Teachers need to be aware that alternative meanings invariably exist in their students' responses to stories. The development of this tenet is environmental, according to Bruner. The students' environments include their parents, brothers and sisters, friends, and even teachers, and their perspectives are transient and may be imbalanced. However, as Bruner maintains, "A perspectival view of meaning-making does not preclude common sense and 'logic'" (p. 14). This tenet is constructed through human interactions, which involve both individual perspectives and cultural canons. Thus, consistency, cohesiveness, and persuasion become focal points in using this tenet to determine the appropriateness of meanings that are created, according to Bruner.

The second tenet is the *constraints tenet*. The process of human meaning-making is constrained in two ways: human mental functioning and human universal, according to Bruner. Thoughts, emotions, and perceptions unconsciously restrict the mental functions of humans. Additionally, he asserts that the objective interpretations of realities may inhibit "human capacity for meaning making" (p. 17). The combination of these two constraints also can lead to the formation of stereotypical concepts, which is why this tenet can inhibit the formation of "self." Closely related to the *perspectival tenet*, this tenet restricts the capabilities of human perspectives. However, understanding the *constraints tenet* will be crucial when educators pay attention to negative effects as "self" and then stereotypical concepts are developed.

The third tenet is the *constructivism tenet*. The basic concept of this tenet is already imbedded in the previous two tenets. "Reality construction is the product of meaning-making shaped by traditions and by a culture's toolkit of ways of thought,"

according to Bruner (1996, p. 19). Bruner emphasized that meaning is not found but made; knowledge is internally constructed through practical communicative means.

Pertaining to knowledge construction, Bruner provided another tenet, which is called the *interactive tenet*. Knowledge is constructed through interaction with humans (Bruner, 1996). Interactions with teachers and peers further motivate students and reinforce understanding as they learn how to treat their peers with respect and then begin to develop empathy with others through interactions, according to Bruner. He calls this empathy *intersubjectivity*, which is important because it teaches students how to nurture their empathy through reading narratives. Creating an empathetic learning environment often motivates and facilitates the process of learning.

The fifth tenet, the *externalization tenet*, “produces a record of our mental efforts, one that is ‘outside us’ rather than vaguely in memory” (p.23). Bruner writes that demonstrating improvement is crucial because it will encourage students to achieve academic goals as they learn and to further surpass their teachers’ original expectations for them. The primary emphasis of the *externalization tenet* is to make the outcomes from learning more visible and solid, according to Bruner. The concept of the *externalization tenet* is important. Once students learn unfamiliar issues, they become confident, and are able to apply their learned strategies and knowledge when they encounter something either new or unknown.

The sixth tenet is the *instrumental tenet*, which somewhat overlaps with the fifth tenet. According to Bruner, consequences from previous learning influence learners’ subsequent lives. If so, the learning strategies and knowledge that students develop are considered as instrumental. The instrumental tenet also includes the awareness of cultural subtlety, according to Bruner. Thus, the *instrumental tenet* is always a good indicator in assessing the degree of cultural sensitivity that students develop through the process of learning.

The seventh tenet is called the *institutional tenet*. Bruner has pointed out that educational systems in the U.S. are highly institutionalized. Thus, educators who teach in such environments tend to have their own fixed perspectives, which is

why having a supportive environment to educate teachers will become even more crucial in the future. Bruner discusses this tenet from the perspective of educators.

The eighth tenet, the *tenet of identity and self-esteem*, indicates the significance of self-awareness in the process of learning. For information-processing, whether or not students possess a sufficient level of self-awareness becomes a focal point, according to Bruner. Their self-awareness will help them evaluate their own thoughts and ideas with less developing subjective perspectives. Developing an adequate level of self-awareness eventually provides students with confidence in the learning process. In other words, increased self-esteem encourages students to accomplish more challenging tasks. The development of this tenet as they learn will allow students to become both critical thinkers and independent learners. Thus, this tenet is crucial, according to Bruner.

Finally, the ninth tenet that Bruner has suggested is the *narrative tenet*. Supporting the significance of the use of narratives in *Acts of Meaning* (1990), Bruner has written, “Stories, then, are especially viable instruments for social negotiation” (Bruner, 1990, p. 55). According to Bruner, reading narratives allows readers to become reflective. Developing reflective thoughts is especially important in order to understand how others think. The reflective process further allows readers to explore the differences between reality and the imaginary world. Reading narratives allows readers to have vicarious experiences through stories and makes readers socially and culturally more sensitive.

In *The Culture of Education*, Bruner (1996) further expanded his thoughts about the use of narratives, emphasizing how crucial it is for students to create their own stories as they learn. Not only do reading and recounting narratives allow students to reflect upon and further refine their thoughts critically but also to sum up their ideas through their experiences. Critically reflecting upon their own experiences and lives can further encourage students to understand others. In the *narrative tenet*, Bruner does not specify the type of narratives to be used. In other words, if some students are more verbal than others, he encourages them to share their ideas orally. If some students are quieter than others, he suggests that

teachers should encourage those students to write reflections at home. The means of creating narratives should be flexible. As well as the use of narratives in reading instruction, expression of ideas and thoughts as narratives can be a useful learning tool because it stimulates and reinforces learners' meaning-making process.

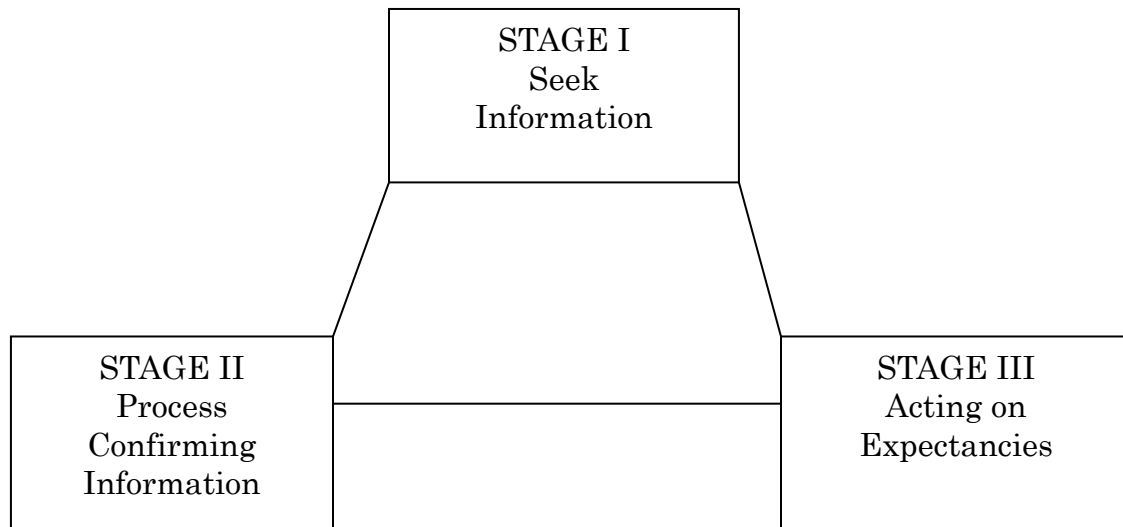
Stereotypes and Prejudice: Expectancy-Confirming Sequence

Walter Stephan (1999) discussed the process of stereotypes and prejudice of different racial groups. He insisted that stereotypes are beliefs, and prejudices are negative attitudes toward a particular social group or those with differences. Once they are internally developed, "prejudicial attitudes are usually rigid, irrational, and unjust" (Stephan, 1999, p. 24). Eliminating such attitudes becomes even more difficult; thus, he proposes that teachers make an effort to increase the opportunities for their students to have more positive experiences with other ethnic groups in their school settings.

The expectancy-confirming sequence that Stephan (1999) described is especially important because once stereotypes are internally established and then activated, humans start to seek stereotype-related traits in those from different ethnic backgrounds, according to Stephan. People with negative stereotypical concepts toward a particular racial group consistently expect individuals in that racial group to behave as they believe, according to Stephan. A repeated confirmation of their biased thoughts further reinforces their biased beliefs (Stephan, 1999). For example, there are those who believe that many Asians are quiet and passive. In general, anyone with those beliefs will not expect aggressive attitudes from Asians. In reality, however, some Asians may be more aggressive and some less aggressive than others. As long as these believers meet less assertive Asians in their living environments, their expectancies about Asians may be fulfilled because they do not have to disconfirm their biased beliefs. After the stereotypical concepts are internally established and then activated, however, these biased believers become reluctant to disconfirm their beliefs, according to Stephan.

Stephan (1999) proposed three stages of the expectancy-confirmation sequence (see Figure 1). He suggests that any of these three stages can appear nonsequentially. However, keeping in mind that these stages exist helps us to become more aware of our subjectivity and biased thoughts.

Figure 1: **Three Stage Model of Stereotype Processing** (Stephan, 1999)



Stage I, the information-seeking stage, indicates whether or not people can seek information without developing any biased thoughts. If they can, the information-seeking process can provide a fair judgment, according to Stephan. However, if they cannot or attempt to confirm their expectancies based on their subjective beliefs, a twisted judgment can occur.

Stage II, process-confirming information, indicates that the information-seeking process is more internally automated. If stereotypes are negatively activated, people stop doubting their beliefs. They automatically try to confirm their expectancies even though some ambiguities are found in the behaviors of others. At this stage, their stereotypical concepts become fossilized, and they refuse to disconfirm their beliefs, according to Stephan.

Stage III, acting on expectancies, indicates that people start to act according to their established beliefs. Their expectancies control and determine their actions and behaviors. When people in a different ethnic group behave as the observers expect, this allows them to further exaggerate and overestimate their observations, according to Stephan.

In my study, it was especially important to pay attention to the expectancy-confirmation sequence because participants were invited to create individual responses through reading multicultural books from different Asian cultures. I did not expect any of the participants in the study to possess excessive levels of racial prejudice against Asian cultures because such prejudicial attitudes might inhibit their information-seeking process while reading the stories. Excessive prejudicial attitudes could confound the study's results. However, I anticipated that some of the participants had already developed a certain degree of stereotypical concepts about Asian cultures. I wanted to examine whether or not their stereotypical concepts were positive. Some would certainly be motivated to learn more about the Asian cultures in the stories if their stereotypical concepts were positive. On the contrary, if their stereotypical concepts were negative, they would hesitate to disconfirm their subjective beliefs and would instead repeatedly try to confirm their expectancies based on their superficial observations.

Transactional Theory

It was also important to consider how participants interact with stories in this study. Rosenblatt (1938) proposed two types of reading stances: efferent and aesthetic.

The term *aesthetic* is derived from the Greek word meaning “to sense” or “to perceive” (Morrow and Gambrell, 2000, p. 565). “In aesthetic reading, the reader’s primary concern is what happens during the actual reading event,” Rosenblatt wrote (1978, p. 24). This reading stance allows readers to develop their own relationships with the characters in stories. In the case of efferent reading, readers are encouraged to seek literary understandings from stories. While personal and qualitative elements are discouraged in efferent reading, in aesthetic reading, “the reader must be a critic” (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 137) and must develop their own voice during the process of reading. “The more sophisticated the reader, the better equipped he is to accept or reject such habitual patterns, to see [the] limitations or interdependence” (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 136). Aesthetic interactions with stories

allow readers to enrich their thoughts and imaginations through the process of reading.

The term “efferent” is derived from the Latin “efferre,” and its definition is to “carry away,” according to Rosenblatt (1938). The term “efferent,” means to “carry away,” but it does not directly contrast with the term “aesthetic,” according to Rosenblatt (1938). The term “instrumental” forms a counterpart to aesthetic, according to her description. She explained that “instrumental implies a tool-like usefulness that does not fit some kinds of nonaesthetic reading” (1978, p. 24). Thus, she selected a more neutral term such as “efferent” in lieu of “instrumental.” The primary purpose of efferent reading is to seek public meanings from story contexts and to abstract the contents based on memory after reading stories, according to Dressel (2003). Readers are expected to map their pre-existing knowledge with what is to be retained in their memories after reading. Although efferent reading is frequently emphasized in traditional reading instruction, as Rosenblatt, (1938), Applebee (1978), Britton (1970), Langer (1994), and Dressel (2003) contended, this reading stance is not sufficient for readers to deepen their understanding about literary works. Readers need to have direct interactions with stories so as to deepen their empathy and thoughts through the process of reading. Rosenblatt (1938/1978) calls this reading style an aesthetic reading stance.

In traditional reading instruction, the efferent reading style tends to be overemphasized (Rosenblatt, 1938/1978). Thus, many students are not familiar with expressing their thoughts and opinions freely. In this study, the participants’ reflections and impressions about the stories were both expected and respected; the aesthetic reading stance allowed participants to become reflective upon their personal experiences, which further motivated them.

Four Approaches to Multicultural Curriculum Reform

A main focus of my study was fifth graders’ interpretations when reading books from two different Asian cultures. In the study, I did not examine their teachers’ perceptions and decisions when teaching these books. The study did not intend to modify any existing core reading curriculum. Thus, Banks’s curriculum

reform paradigm (see Figure 2) does not directly relate to my study. However, in the study, some participants definitely demonstrated their own individual values while reading the books, which told me that some of the participants also made decisions and attempted to undertake social actions while and after reading the books. Thus, it became important to consider Level 4 of his approach in order to examine the participants' awareness and consciousness regarding social justice and injustice issues.

(Figure 2) *Approaches to Multicultural Curriculum Reform* (Banks, 2004)

<p style="text-align: center;">Level 4 The Social Action Approach</p> <p>Students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Level 3 The Transformational Approach</p> <p>The structure of curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Level 2 The Additive Approach</p> <p>Content, concepts, themes, and perspectives are added to the curriculum without changing its structure.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Level 1 The Contributions Approach</p> <p>Focuses on heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements.</p>

Banks (2004) called Level 1 the *contributions approach*. In the *contributions approach*, teachers include basic cultural elements such as holidays and celebrations in their existing curriculum. At this level, students simply learn about

cultural differences. Thus, the existing curriculum is not modified, according to Banks.

The second approach is called the *additive approach*. In this approach, cultural contents, concepts, and themes are actively inserted into an existing curriculum; the basic framework such as the paradigm and the structure of the curriculum, stay unmodified, according to Banks. Banks presents some examples of the additive approach such as the use of a story, thematic unit, and newly developed course. The use of the multicultural literature in my study may be considered as additive in nature. However, this study was conducted as a special reading program and was not implemented in the existing reading curriculum of the school. According to Banks, simply adding new concepts and contents does not mean an additive approach. This is the reason that the paradigm and the structure of the curriculum stay unmodified at this level, according to Banks.

The third level is called the *transformation approach*. Banks (2004) posits that the *transformation approach* is different from the previous two approaches because the frameworks will be drastically shifted into multicultural mode. This approach intends to change the existing schemata in students concerning cultural diversities. The cultural canon, paradigms, and structures of an ongoing curriculum are shifted in order for students to learn and then to comprehend the abstract features from different perspectives. Thus, the *transformation approach* encourages students to observe and to understand the events and issues not only from their own perspectives but also from diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives.

Finally, the fourth level that Banks (2004) emphasized is the *social action approach*. He also calls this approach the process of “decision-making.” After learners are successfully transformed into the multicultural mode, they begin to take social actions based on their shifted cultural perspectives, according to Banks. For example, if students become curious about Asian-American books, they might voluntarily start to examine more unique features about Asian Americans by themselves. As Bruner (1996) has insisted, each culture has different emphases. At this level, students are fully aware of cultural differences. Students who

successfully reach this level are ready to behave according to their newly-developed values. This level also indicates that students have acquired the strategies necessary to learn about cultural differences. The strategies that they develop can be applicable to more authentic social settings when they learn about different cultures in the future.

In my study, I especially focused on this level because I thought that monitoring how the participants became culturally sensitive and then developed their individual values would explain both the process and degree of their multicultural awareness in the study.

Diffusion of Literature-based Instruction:

In order to implement the study, it was important to review the popularity of literature-based instruction based on historical perspectives. Morrow and Gambrell (2000) reported that the popularity of literature-based instruction in elementary reading instructional settings has dramatically increased since the 1980s. Allington (1991); Darling-Hammond (1995); Fitzgerald (1995); and Au (2000) reported that rote instruction and the emphasis on discrete reading skills in the traditional basal reading instruction do not help readers to improve their authentic reading skills. One reason may be that the skills developed by basal reading instruction tend to be impractical.

Gambrell (1992) found evidence of the diffusion of literature-based instruction in an instructional survey given to 93 kindergarten through sixth grade teachers in three Eastern states in 1980. According to her research data, only 5 percent of these teachers at that time used supplemental reading materials or approaches, in addition to basal reading instruction. That means that 95 percent of these respondents may have thoroughly depended on basal reading instruction as their primary reading instructional means. Gambrell was surprised that so few teachers in the early 1980s had considered the inclusion of supplemental reading materials such as children's literature.

This tendency has changed, however, as Gambrell (1992) reported. She replicated her own survey with 84 teachers in seven Eastern states and Washington, D. C. By then, she found that 80 percent of the teachers surveyed still used basal reading programs for their reading instruction; however, more than 50 percent of them had incorporated children's literature into their reading instruction, a dramatic shift in reading instruction. To her surprise, 20 percent used children's literature as the core reading instruction.

In another study, Strickland, Walmsley, Bronk, and Weiss (1994) also reported that 80 percent of reading teachers in eight states who were interviewed responded that they used both basal reading materials and children's literature in their reading instruction. However, 18 percent of these teachers chose to use only children's literature as their core reading instruction materials. The study also indicates that the use of literature-based instruction became more prevalent in the 1990s than it had been in the 1980s.

The popularity of literature-based instruction relates to its strengths. The merits of literature-based instruction are the use of "real" stories (Giddings and Medgar, 1992; Tunnell and Jacobs, 1989) and the inclusion of student-centered practices and activities (Giddings and Medgar, 1992; Zarrillo, 1989). Au (1998) explained that literature-based instruction demands that readers nurture "high level of thinking about text" and encourages them to make connections between texts and their own lives (2000). She maintained that readers' knowledge is created through meaningful reading activities, and she further discussed the merit of literature-based instruction from the constructivist perspective. "First, constructivist approaches are not only effective in improving students' higher level thinking but also in fostering their motivation and interest in literacy," she wrote (p. 846). It is important to motivate readers to read the stories at first, then to teach them how to enjoy reading stories, and finally, to let them be responsive in the reading activities, according to Au (1998). She further suggested that teachers remember the importance of developing discrete literacy skills in reading instruction. She also contended that isolated skills are fostered when readers

engage in meaningful and responsive reading activities. Holistic reading instruction can offer students balanced literacy skills.

In terms of the merits of literature-based reading instruction, Gipe, Richards, and Barnitz (1993/1994) also reported some positive findings. They conducted a three-year literacy project that included both college students who took reading instruction courses and public elementary and middle school students. In this study, the authors reported that the use of children's literature facilitated the development of children's reading and writing skills. Approximately 350 children in urban elementary and middle schools in a southeastern region of the U. S. were tracked over a three-year period. The researchers collected data including the California Achievement Test (CAT), Literacy Attitude Survey, oral story retelling, silent reading comprehension, decoding and word recognition, spelling development, reading vocabulary, reading records, and dialogue journals. College participants read literary works with the grade-school participants and exchanged dialogue journals with them. The authors reported that the children demonstrated positive attitudes toward reading, although they were hesitant to write and exchange their journals because they were afraid of making grammatical and spelling errors. Children's literature can be an important tool for literacy development.

Small group discussions, a staple of literature-based instruction, are certainly useful in getting children to share their opinions with their peers in order to broaden their cultural perspectives. But not all children are comfortable sharing their ideas verbally, which means it is important for both researchers and teachers to prepare alternative methods of response. Response journals become a crucial method for participants to express their thoughts and opinions as they read literary works. Written methods such as those used in Gipe, Richards, and Barnitz's (1993/1994) study have the added advantage of allowing researchers to assess easily a large number of participants.

Galda, Cullinan and Strickland (1993) also discussed the positive characteristics of literature-based instruction. According to their description, literature-based instruction allows teachers to become knowledgeable and

enthusiastic guides for reading instruction. In order to read a particular story, teachers require a tremendous amount of teacher preparation time. Although this aspect may not be positive for teachers, it is true that meticulous research and prior preparation may make teachers more knowledgeable and enthusiastic. According to Galda, Cullinan and Strickland (1993), literature-based instruction encourages readers to have social interaction about books, which means that reading stories will allow readers to become more sensitive to socio-cultural and political issues through meaning interactions with their peers. “Literature contributes to students’ understanding of how they view and value them,” according to Taylor (2000). Social interaction further prompts readers to learn about themselves through reading books. Thus, literature-based instruction is considered effective.

Galda, Cullinan and Strickland (1993) pointed out that this type of instruction allows readers to choose what to do with stories. Literature-based instruction encourages readers to make decisions while reading books. This type of instruction allows readers flexibility of choice, making it reader-centered. It also provides readers with flexibility of time and quality of reading materials, according to Galda, Cullinan and Strickland (1993).

Goodman (1970, 1973) argued that reading is a natural process of language activities. Thus, readers should learn how to enjoy reading at first, and then they should be further encouraged to learn how to connect their personal experiences with their prior knowledge and with the story contexts. However, some teachers often overemphasize the content acquisitions before students become familiar with reading, and then expect them to become independent readers. According to Hickman (1977), fluent readers have a reason for reading and know what information is important for them. That means that reading should be purposeful, according to Hickman. A reader-centered approach such as literature-based instruction can fulfill these requirements for reading and allow readers to connect their personal experiences as they read, helping them understand a story through meaningful interactions with texts (Langer, 1982; Giddings, 1992).

It is important for readers to develop a personal connection with a story character and a story *per se*. Au (2000) has maintained that students from diverse cultural backgrounds often have difficulty relating to stories from the Western canon. Since such students often have difficulty communicating in English, their teachers also misjudge their students' problems while reading books, according to Au. The same problem occurs with many American-born children, who have difficulty relating to stories written from different cultural and racial perspectives. Although the differences do not always affect readers negatively, existing differences can bring up different interpretations when readers read texts (Goodman, 1970; Smith, 1971). In sum, "The more experience students have with such texts, the more easily they will acquire the particular linguistic devices and cultural orientation that they contain" (Farr, 1991, p. 369). Thus, literature-based instruction can surely help readers develop their awareness of cultural contexts in stories.

The Classroom Use of Multicultural Literary Works

The classroom use of multicultural literary works is no longer considered unusual. As Nieto (2004) contended, the population of school children in the U. S. has become racially, culturally, economically, and linguistically more diverse than ever before. Therefore, the use of multicultural literary works for literacy development has become an indispensable means to expand understanding of cultural differences in the classroom. Multicultural literary works are often considered only for students from different cultural backgrounds. Many advocates of multicultural literature such as Au (1993) and Harris (1999) have objected to this bias. It may be true that students from different cultural backgrounds have difficulty relating to a story character if the story is written from a different cultural perspective than their own, because they are not familiar with other cultural contexts. However, the same thing is true for American-born children who have no idea about other cultures. This is the reason that many advocates such as Au (1993) and Yamate (1997) asserted that multicultural literature is for everybody. Thus, the use of multicultural literary works can be an effective instructional tool for reading.

Since multicultural literature is for everybody, providing students with books with which they may be able to connect is important. The use of historical fiction may be one effective way when teachers decide to read multicultural stories with students.

Jolley (2002), for instance, reported on the use of nonfiction slave narratives in her English classes. One of the reasons that Jolley found nonfiction slave narratives effective was that such narratives, a true voice from former slaves, might have great impact on children in a modern classroom. She used *Beloved*, written by Toni Morrison (1987) and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, written by Mildred Taylor (1976) in her class. The characteristics of these two books are very different. Strictly speaking, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* is not about slavery, while slavery is a central theme in *Beloved*. The researcher taught *Beloved* to high school seniors, most of who were African-American female students. Jolley taught *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* to ninth graders. The gender and number of students were not described in the case of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Jolley described how her students responded as they developed their cultural awareness regarding slavery.

Beloved is about a female fugitive slave who kills her child rather than have it taken by a slave catcher. Reading the book made Jolley's students emotional and empathetic. A student who was originally from Pakistan identified the history of in her country with the events in *Beloved*, according to Jolley.

Although the concept of the story was easier than *Beloved*, Jolley reported that teaching *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* was much more difficult than teaching *Beloved* because of the controversial issues in the book. Her students were old enough to be familiar with racial segregation issues, but she said that reading the story with the students required more caution than *Beloved*. In order to read *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Jolley also needed to explain the historical context underlying the story.

Jolley also shared some quotes from her students when she read the books with them. One student stated, "Life lived as a slave is not life at all." (Jolley, 2002, p. 37). Another student wrote, "There must have been a feeling of total helplessness

in slave mothers, who were denied the right to tend their own children....” (Jolley, 2002, p. 37). Reading a few slave narratives is not enough for students to develop a complete understanding of the experience of slavery, but Jolley was sure that many of her students developed awareness and sensitivity toward differences and social injustice issues.

Johannessen (2002) also reported on his use of nonfiction Vietnam War stories in his high school literacy classes. As a high school and college instructor, he often found it difficult to choose appropriate and effective reading materials for his students. When he discovered that many students tended to be interested in war stories, he used some nonfiction Vietnam War books.

In his report, Johannessen presented his findings about two books that he used for his students including *Nam: The Vietnam War in the Words of the Men and Women Who Fought There*, which is Mark Baker’s (1981) oral history, and *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam* written by Bernard Edelman (1985). He reported that giving his students a chance to read nonfiction Vietnam War stories was effective since the students developed strong connections to the events that the authors of the books experienced.

His idea of using nonfiction Vietnam War stories was quite successful, and many of his students liked his choice of the war stories, according to Johannessen. They liked them for their flexibility and their thrilling nature, which spurred them into exchanging their opinions with their peers more freely. One of his students responded when he read *Nam*,

I had read a lot about history of the war because I wanted to understand my Dad who is a Vietnam veteran. But, I really didn’t learn very much from the history books I read that was helpful. It wasn’t until I read this book that I really began to understand what Vietnam must have been like for him.

(Johannessen, 2002, p. 40)

“Through multicultural children’s literature, [both] students and teachers have the potential to gain a greater awareness and appreciation of their own and others’ cultural distinctions and universal commonalties,” according to Taylor (2000,

p. 29). Additionally, in his study, Johannessen reported that the stories provided his students with an opportunity for maturity because the stories exposed them to terrors that they had never experienced. Although the stories were often written by American authors, reading them seemed to have taught students to reflect upon their family and themselves and to have influenced their ways of thinking and their value judgments.

Both Jolley and Johannessen reported that the use of historical fiction provided their students with positive effects in their studies. In my study, I used two Asian books: *Journey to Topaz*, written by Yoshiko Uchida (1971) and *Dragon's Gate* (1993). *Journey to Topaz* is about Japanese Americans, and *Dragon's Gate* is about Chinese Americans. These books are also categorized as historical fiction. One of the reasons that I chose historical fiction for my study is that historical fiction would be able to offer readers the connections with the events and characters while they read, as Jolley and Johannessen reported. Thus, I thought that the use of historical fiction was effective for my study.

Another way to use literature to develop cultural awareness is through book clubs. Goatley, Brock, and Raphael (1995) have reported that providing children with a small discussion group in which to share their thoughts and opinions about novels helped them to improve their reading and writing skills in multicultural instructional settings. A group interaction of five third to fifth graders (Mei, Stak, Jean, Jason, and Andy) from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Asian, Caucasian, African American, Hispanic) was assessed. Participants read and discussed three books written by Katherine Paterson: *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977), *Park's Quest* (1988), and *The Great Gilly Hopkins* (1979). Multiple qualitative data sources in the form of interviews, written questionnaires, researchers' field notes, audiotaped discussions, videotapes of the book clubs, and students' written works were collected and then holistically analyzed. The significance of this study was that the participants developed cultural awareness and empathy through their book club discussions. In the course of these discussions, the students also developed understanding and awareness of themselves as members of a multicultural society.

In the study, the students' roles were not defined but naturally emerged through the process of peer interactions.

In the Goatley, Brock, and Raphael's study (1995), the authors explained that the students' roles in the discussions were not defined but naturally emerged through the process of the peer interactions. These discussions were intense due to the diverse backgrounds of the participants. As the students continued to interact with their peers, their understanding of themselves as individuals within a multicultural group expanded to an understanding of themselves as individuals within a multicultural society. As Vygotsky (1978) has explained, they developed an understanding of the novels by incorporating their experiences and their existing schemata. Since the students' life experiences were diverse, their interpretations were diverse as well. In that study, interestingly, analysis showed how discussion groups could facilitate interpretations of books. Therefore, three multicultural stories were used as texts rather than stories, and the participants' feelings and perceptions about the books were not targeted in the study.

Discussion is one of the powerful tools teachers have to stimulate readers' cultural senses. Broso, Valerio, and Salazar (1996) emphasized the significance of group discussions and cooperative learning for literature learning. They examined how 23 eighth graders (19 Mexican American, 1 Filipino American, 1 African American, and 1 Caucasian student) learned about Hispanic culture and developed more insightful cultural awareness in the learning process. The students read several Hispanic novels written by Hispanic authors such as Sandra Cisneros and Gary Soto and exchanged ideas with their peers during literature discussions. The participants were divided into groups, and the teacher assigned one chapter of the novel to each group. Additionally, the participants voluntarily chose their roles within each group as discussion leader, literary luminary, and vocabulary enricher, and the roles rotated for each discussion. One unique feature of this study was its emphasis on cooperative learning. The participants in each group needed to read the same book and help one other if someone in the group needed it. The authors

reported that this cooperative learning further stimulated students' motivation for learning about the Hispanic novels and enhanced their understanding of the stories.

Discussion circles are not only used for reading instruction in K-12 settings but also in college settings. Multicultural literature should be read by college students who want to become teachers, because they need to understand their students' cultures and develop sensitivity to other cultures. Literature from other cultures affords teachers the ability to reconceptualize the cultural information from stories and apply it to the real world (Fang, Fu, & Lamme, 1999). Teachers are also expected to develop their multicultural awareness by reading books that they plan to read with students. Chevalier and Houser (1997) reported that the use of adolescent fiction helped predominantly Caucasian-American female college students to develop their multicultural awareness. Twenty-nine Caucasian female students and one African-American female student were involved in their study. They read six multicultural stories such as *Scorpions* by Walter Dean Myers (1988), *Journey Home* by Yoshiko Uchida, *Lupita Manana* by Patricia Beatty (1999), and *I Wear the Morning Star* by Jamake Highwater (1987). The purpose of this study was to explore how the participants could develop their cultural awareness and empathy through the vicarious experience of reading multicultural stories. According to Chevalier and Houser (1997), many participants struggled to understand the meanings of the stories at first because their previous beliefs were challenged.

Ketter and Lewis (2001) have contended that many teacher trainees expect to obtain practical advice in order to use multicultural stories in their future instructional settings. Thus, they feel frustrated when they are not able to understand a particular content or when something contradicts their beliefs. Such emotional struggles cause a certain degree of resistance in accepting the stories. For example, the authors reported that a group of Jewish students insisted when they read *The Summer of my German Soldier*,

we wouldn't use it alone to teach a multicultural lesson on the prejudices that existed during World War II. Instead, we would use the book as a follow up so that students will have the background knowledge when they need because no prior knowledge was included....

(Chevalier & Houser, 1997, p. 432)

They had trouble accepting the information about German soldiers in the story and were highly judgmental about the use of the book. Chevalier and Houser maintained that most students did not recognize the author's intention because the author challenged whether readers perceive the stereotypical views that they in general may embrace regarding German soldiers. Exploring the contents of the novels during literature circles helped further develop the students' multicultural awareness, according to Chevalier and Houser.

The Significance of Response Journals

Reading multicultural stories is important, but it is not sufficient for readers to expand their knowledge. As Bruner (1996) stated, the practice of having students compose their own narratives in response to literature should be valued.

Wollman-Bonilla and Werchadlo (1995) discussed the use of dialogue journals in literature-based reading instruction, writing that students' response journals served as a useful communicative means for interaction (Wollman-Bonilla & Werchadlo, 1995). In this study, 11 first-graders read *James and the Giant Peach* by Ronald Dahl (1961) and responded to the story in dialogue journals. They attempted to elaborate on their ideas and the meanings of the stories orally after they finished writing. Writing in the journals helped the students to organize their thought processes in order to express themselves. Another feature in this study was the use of discussion guides, which helped the students deepen their understanding of the meanings and then elaborate on their comments during discussion.

In a research study on facilitating the interpretation of novels, Tomlinson (1997) used a coding system for note making on response journal writing. She reported that "the effective reader's cognitive pursuits are frequently developed and then articulated within the parameters of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of reading

comprehension by four objectives: literal recognition or recall, inference, evaluation, and appreciation” (Tomlinson, 1997, p. 469). She used a six- step coding system for note making with literature:

1) Assign code letter to each theme, 2) Create a directory of code categories on the inside front cover of the book, 3) List the code letters in the back cover of the book (or in notebook), leaving space between each, 4) While reading, place the code letter on line where relevant information is found, 5) When a concept is coded on the page, turn to the back cover and list the page number next to code letter, and 6) Keep a note page for each major theme or character and write a brief note of significant details and place the page number in the margin. (Tomlinson, 1997, p. 472)

Tomlinson studied college students in her own first-year reading classes. She posited that learning how to reorganize texts meaningfully during the reading process would help her students improve their reading comprehension and prepare them for good response journal writing. Two literary works, *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Viktor E. Frankl (1962) and *After the First Death* by Robert Cormier (1979), were read by the students. Tomlinson found that the use of coding exercises helped the students to understand the stories and facilitated “critical, analytical, and creative [thought] processes” (Tomlinson, 1997, p. 474). For example, by comparing and contrasting the themes and the patterns in the novels, the students learned how to categorize the underlying concepts in the stories. Such practice in classifying the themes and the patterns was especially useful for future reference in their reading practices. The author reported that the coding exercises also improved the students’ oral presentation skills.

Writing about thinking is a sophisticated skill that requires practice. Horn (1997) reported that writing about thought processes assisted her middle school students in understanding novels. The author felt that many students tended to show their frustration during the process of writing about thinking because they had difficulty accurately expressing their thoughts. She encouraged her students to focus on the characters in novels. For instance, after reading the novel *Canyon* by

Gary Paulsen (1990), a student compared his personal experiences with confusion to the confusion experienced by the main character in the story. This type of comparison gave students a chance to reconsider the meanings of the novel more critically and profoundly in writing, according to Horn (1997). It is important in the process of learning to write about thinking that teachers assist their children in constructing and then in expressing their impressions, and that they further assist their children in refining their thoughts and impressions without developing stereotypical preconceptions. Tomlinson reported that writing helped her participants develop an appropriate level of literary interpretation skills.

In another study, Bean and Rigoni (2001) reported how the exchange of dialogue journals helped to nurture the relationship between college students and high school students. Three Hispanic high school students, one African-American high school student, one Caucasian-American high school student and five Caucasian college students, read *Buried Onions* by Gary Soto (1997), a novel set in Hispanic culture. In this study, dialogue journals were exchanged between the college students and the high school students, and they had some individual meetings for the follow-up.

The main purpose of Bean and Rigoni's research project was to explore the intergenerational gaps between college participants and high school participants. By reading the same multicultural literary work and having these intergenerational interactions, both college students and high school students facilitated their learning while learning about the cultural issues in the novel. The authors reported that the college participants had difficulty understanding the novel at first because the cultural differences were so great. For instance, one female college participant reacted negatively to the contents of the novel because she could not comprehend the situation in which the character in the novel was placed. However, her negative reaction gradually faded through dialogue exchanges and oral interactions with her high school partner. This dialogue with her high school partner allowed her to develop cultural sensitivity and empathy. The authors also reported that the

intergenerational relationship with college students served to boost the self-esteem of the teenagers in the study.

Teaching multicultural literature is often considered challenging because teachers are required to deal with socially and culturally sensitive issues such as racism, discrimination, and social injustice. For example, Desai (1997) described her students' reactions when she read *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. She did not include the specific descriptions about the research context of her study, which was conducted in the 1994-1995 school year. The students came extensively from the Appalachian regions such as Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky. Many African-American students in this region were bused in order to attend a school. A large number of ESL students from 22 different countries attended the school.

According to Desai, more than 85 culturally diverse stories were read in this class. She shared her findings about the participants' reading and examining Mildred Taylor's works. Although Dasai described how Mildred Taylor often used the word *nigger* in her stories because white people in the South at that time used the term, everyone became quiet and looked uncomfortable when the term was read. The teacher asked them, "What would be your reaction if someone called you a *nigger*?" Although the reactions were different, many of the participants expressed their anger and frustration to be called *nigger*, regardless of their racial background and gender, according to Dasai. One African-American girl said,

I really don't like the word *nigger* because when the Simms be calling the Logan family niggers and stuff it makes me feel awful and it makes me feel like I'm a nigger when the white people be calling the black people niggers. (Dasai, 1997, p.174)

One white girl responded, "It probably feels as they're calling them a bad word or a wimp. When black people get called a nigger they probably feel that they don't have no pride" (Dasai, 1997, p. 174). One white boy reacted by saying, "If someone called me a nigger I would not show them that they hurt my feelings then they would keep calling me that. Instead, I would just walk away so they would not

get any satisfaction out of it” (Dasai, 1997, p. 174). One African-American boy responded,

I feel like I’m being talked about. I feel like they’re putting down my color and it really hurts my feelings. And when someone calls me a black [nigger is written and erased] I would say and I’m proud to be a black. And I am very proud that I am a black man. (Dasai, 1997, p. 174)

One Asian-American girl also responded, “It hurts my feelings, it will hurt your feelings, too, if someone called you that. If I was a black African American and they called me names I would just call them back just like Hammer did” (Dasai, 1997, p. 174).

Dasai stated that she and the teacher in the study were concerned about how to share the book with the participants because they felt, “a moral imperative” (Dasai, 1997, p. 174) to provide the participants with an accurate understanding of the intentions of the author of the book. Through the discussion of the study, Dasai maintained that it was important for teachers to develop the sensitivity to evaluate their students’ multiple reactions and interpretations in their responses. Dasai further emphasized that teachers are often concerned with what the readers can deal with and understand through the process of reading a story, but the most important thing is to encourage them to have their own voices based on having an accurate understanding of reality.

Important as it is for teachers to encourage students to have their own voices when students read multicultural stories, in many studies, researchers have focused on how American-born children respond to stories outside their culture. Thus, responses to stories from cultural insiders are often overlooked. Ruan (2005) examined the perceptions and understanding of three first-grade Chinese children in a Midwestern university city when they read Chinese literary works. According to Ruan, American schools need to learn and introduce the Asian literary works to their students since the Asian population in the U. S. has increased so dramatically in the recent years. However, in reality, Americans’ understanding of Asian cultures is still lacking. Thus, Ruan thought that this study would be invaluable. According

to Ruan, two of the participants in the study came to the U. S. with their parents, and one of them was born in the U. S. Although their English proficiency varied, in general, they had a good command of English and were smoothly acculturated.

The participants read three Chinese-American children's books: *Lon Po Po* by Ed Young, *My First American Friend* by Sarunna Jin, and *At the Beach* by Huy Voun Lee. In the study, she examined how "children with a similar cultural background who are the same age respond[ed] to the same piece of Chinese [American] literature" (Ruan, 2005, p. 245) and "some of the response patterns that these children display[ed]" (Ruan, 2005, p. 245). The researcher conducted individual interviews with each participant before and after reading, distributed a survey after reading each book, and conducted parent interviews. The researcher did not say that she collected response journals from the participants. In the study, oral responses from the participants were collected.

Ruan reported that the participants showed no strong preference or dislike in the study while reading the books, but they tended to provide different perspectives and responses, although they were originally Chinese. As the results of data analysis, Ruan maintained that the participants' responses were influenced by their previous experiences and background knowledge rather than their cultural identities. She concluded that reading the stories about Chinese Americans helped the participants motivate themselves and develop positive attitudes about those stories and Chinese-American culture in her study.

Controversies of Multicultural Literature

Two main controversies in terms of the characteristics of multicultural literature will be discussed here. The first issue is the ambiguity of the term *multicultural* because the term is often misunderstood by readers. Although the term itself holds the view of multiple cultures, it does not mean that the sum of multiple cultures is discussed in a story. It is true that multicultural literary works in the U. S. discuss cultural elements of minority groups such as nationalities, genders, races, religions, customs, traditions, ages, or sexual orientations as a conceptual topic, and that the various characteristics exist in the stories.

Additionally, many stories tend to discuss the conflicts and dilemmas that were caused by cultural differences between countries.

Yokota (1993) has defined multicultural literature as stories represented by any distinctive racial group. According to her definition of multicultural literature, any type of literature would be called multicultural literature, including some stories written from the traditional Western European perspective. Although the purpose of multicultural practice is to be culturally and racially inclusive, many advocates of multicultural literature might object to Yokota's definition of multicultural literature.

Harris (1992) has said that we should "concentrate on those who are most excluded and marginalized, people of color" (p. xvi) when it comes to multicultural literature. In her definitions of multicultural literature, Harris included not only cultural and racial differences but also differences in local or regional cultures, religions, ages, and handicaps and disabilities. Additionally, Au (1993) added gender to Harris's definition of multicultural literature. However, Bishop (1994) has contended that focusing on people of color does not exclude others. Multicultural literature allows authors to discuss any racial and cultural groups as long as they are racially and culturally knowledgeable about a particular culture. Multicultural literature should be used as an important literary tool to "call attention to the voices that have been traditionally omitted from the canon" (Bishop, 1994, p. 7). Thus, it is wrong to consider that multicultural literature is simply the sum of stories about multiple cultures or the special stories written for the racial or cultural groups that authors discuss in the stories.

Cai (1998) provided an even stronger perspective about the issue of what multicultural covers. He explained that multiculturalism concerns issues of power structures and struggle. "If the issues of inequality, discrimination, oppression, and exploitation are excluded from consideration when we try to define multicultural literature, there is a danger of diluting, or even deconstructing, the social, political concept that underlies the term," Cai, has written (1998, p. 313). That is, the primary purpose of the use of multicultural literature is "to decentralize the power

of the mainstream culture” (Cai, 1998, p. 313). In fact, Cai’s comments have often been criticized by readers in the mainstream culture because those who experienced hardships are not only the immigrants discussed in a story but also anyone who chose to come to the U. S. in the past. The ancestors of those in the mainstream culture have also likely shared similar experiences. The emphasis on minorities’ rights should not exclude those in the mainstream. It seems that Cai ignored the above fact in his discussion. Cai’s statements may eventually give multicultural literature an image as a racially and culturally isolated literary tool.

The second controversy regarding multicultural literature revolves around the cultural authenticity of literary works. Fang, Fu, and Lamme (1999) have addressed the fact that many multicultural literary works are predominantly written by authors in the mainstream culture. Many minority groups in the past did not have the political and economic power to insist on having some place within the dominant culture (Marx, 1889). Thus, they needed to be represented by people in the mainstream culture in order to disseminate their voices.

Fang, Fu, and Lamme examined 90 children’s stories about Chinese and Chinese Americans that Cai (1994) listed in his article and reported that over two-thirds of these stories were composed by non-Chinese authors. Although they acknowledged that people in minority groups might need the assistance of those people in the mainstream culture in order to elucidate their social positions, they maintained that this ratio is more than they expected. Fang, Fu, and Lamme (1999) explained that outside authors are defined by not only cultural backgrounds and languages but also their gender. If a male author who is not from the culture depicted in a story tries to write about a female character in his story, that male author is not only an outsider of the culture but also of the gender. In this way, outsiders are likely to encounter more handicaps than insiders. Additionally, outsiders may imbue their own cultural ideologies and values into their stories. Such subjective concepts that outsiders develop in their stories may increase stereotypical elements and eventually devalue the cultural authenticity in the story. As Yokota (1993) has maintained, if authors have no immediate experience of the

target culture in the stories that they are depicting, more meticulous prior investigations are necessary in order to enhance the cultural authenticity in their stories. Thus, the authors' research capabilities invariably influence the cultural authenticity of the stories.

Banks (1979) has proposed a typology for cross-cultural competency. Four levels of competency are explicated:

- (1) the individual experiences superficial and brief cross-cultural interaction;
- (2) the individual begins to assimilate some of the symbols and characteristics of the 'outside' ethnic group;
- (3) the individual is thoroughly bicultural;
- (4) the individual is completely assimilated into the new ethnic culture. (p. 251)

This typology can be a valuable indicator for checking the cross-cultural competency for students in instructional settings. This concept of cross-cultural competency is certainly applicable to outside authors who attempt to write about minority issues in their stories. However, the next issue is how these authors evaluate their own cross-cultural competency. Additionally, no clear criteria exist for general readers to determine the author's cultural authenticity until they read the stories.

Although bilingual individuals have two languages, they normally have a dominant language. People possess a dominant culture, as well as a dominant language. While each person can be an insider of his/her primary culture, no one can truly be an insider of multiple cultures. It may not be practical to criticize "outsider" authors since such criticism will aimlessly narrow the scope of multicultural literature. Establishing guidelines for these "outsider" authors in order to enable them to become informed outsiders will be a future concern in the field of multicultural literature. The guidelines will help empower the capabilities of multicultural literature.

Summary

Four theories in this chapter provided the basic frameworks for this study. Bruner's theoretical emphases are the use of narratives and awareness of meaning-making. In order to reinforce these effects, Bruner contends that teachers should respect students' multiple interpretations. The construction of multiple interpretations requires practice and interaction, techniques that will be further enhanced when students devote themselves to composing their own stories, according to Bruner (1996).

Students' responses are often influenced by their environments and prior experiences; they tend to be more subjective than objective. Thus, as Stephan (1999) has discussed, understanding the development of stereotypical concepts helps evaluate students' responses in a more efficient manner. Students learn differences through stereotypical images and thoughts. The difficulty is that they quit disconfirming their stereotypical concepts once they have been internally established. Thus, developing more positive stereotypical concepts helps them learn differences and further allows them to enjoy learning differences.

Rosenblatt's transactional theory (1938) provided another useful criterion for the evaluation of students' responses. Since this study focused on students' interpretations through reading stories, readers' efferent stance of reading becomes less important. Rather, interpretations can be properly evaluated through examining their personal feelings, ideas, and attitudes. According to Rosenblatt, this aesthetic stance of reading motivates readers and nurtures critical insights. It will help them have positive interactive experiences with stories.

Reading stories motivates readers and develops their positive attitudes (Ruan, 2005). This action further encourages readers to develop their own individual values through the process of reading. Banks (2004) has explained the significance of decision-making and the social action approach in his *Four Approaches for Multicultural Curriculum Reform*. When readers are exposed to stories and begin to have vicarious experiences, they become more sensitive about the social justice and injustice issues raised in the stories and begin to build their own individual values.

Developing this internal drive of flexibility further allows readers to seek multiple meaning in stories and become more culturally sensitive and tolerant.

Literature-based instruction is no longer considered a new literacy approach, and many positive research results of its use have been reported. The strengths of literature-based instruction are the utility of real stories and flexibility for reading. In traditional reading instruction focusing on building discrete literacy skills, retelling, rote memorization, and vocabulary exercises have been overemphasized. However, encouraging multiple meanings and perspectives in the process of reading allows readers flexibility and freedom of interpretations.

For teaching content area reading, the use of multicultural literature and the effect of response journals have been especially helpful in recent years. Research has shown that the use of multicultural literature, along with response journals, can be a useful literacy instructional tool to help readers develop their cultural awareness of and sensitivity to other cultures because its use encourages reflective interactions with peers. However, in reality, many readers have difficulty understanding the cultural context in stories. Research shows that older readers of multicultural literature such as college students often express their frustration in their response journals, because understanding different cultural elements is often challenging for them. This confusion often stems from their ignorance about a particular culture in a story or from the quality, accuracy, or cultural authenticity of a story.

In my own study, I utilized two multicultural stories from different Asian cultures in order to examine fifth graders' interpretations. Both books were written by insider authors. The study's purpose was to determine how and when the participants' interpretations began to change while they were engaged in reading the stories. I meticulously focused on when and in what way they felt frustrated and how they related to the stories as they read them. Regarding reading styles, most of the participants were familiar with acquiring literary meanings of the words and sentences and objective information through the facts as they read. Thus, as in the research studies previously mentioned, I further attempted to examine how and

when they began to be reflective, to develop empathy, and to build their own individual values, eventually dispelling their stereotypical concepts of the cultures in the stories. Some of the participants found differences and similarities between themselves and the characters or the events in the stories.

In this chapter, four theories and research studies from current periodicals regarding literature-based instruction, the use of multicultural literature, the significance of response journals, and controversies of multicultural literature were reviewed and delineated. Each discussion of this chapter helped me to reinforce the trustworthiness of the interpretations of my findings in this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

In this study, I have examined how fifth graders in one elementary school in the Southeast perceived Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans. Having chosen multicultural literary works from two different Asian cultures, Japanese American and Chinese American, I then examined and reported the students' interpretations while and after they read those stories.

Research Questions

My research questions were as follows:

- (1) What were the fifth graders' interpretations of Japanese- and Chinese-American cultures before reading the stories?
- (2) What were the interpretations of fifth graders when they engaged in writing and discussing their thoughts while reading literary works from two different Asian cultures?
- (3) How did their interpretations change after they read each story?
- (4) What were the similarities and differences in the students' interpretations between the two stories from different Asian cultures?

Research Site

I chose Filmore Elementary School, a public elementary school in the Southeast, as my research site. Because a private hospital is located near the school, many medical interns from other countries enroll their children in the school, making the school racially and culturally more heterogeneous than many others in the metropolitan area in which the school was located, although to my knowledge, none of the participants' parents involved in the study were medical practitioners at the hospital. For this study, I did not necessarily intend to choose a school where participants were familiar with Asian cultures, although I considered it a benefit for the students involved to have had some exposure to cultures other than American.

I wanted to be careful to choose a racially and culturally heterogeneous school because many public schools in the metropolitan area have become resegregated. I thought that students more familiar with racially and culturally diverse learning settings would be able to interact with the stories in a more active and naturalistic manner. Acquiring such a research site also allowed me to focus on the participants' interpretations rather than trying to control for any negative attitudes, biases, and preconceptions toward the cultures presented in the stories. I felt that students in a more heterogeneous setting would be more tolerant and receptive to a multicultural experience. Finally, I thought that as a Japanese researcher, I would be more accepted in a racially and culturally heterogeneous school than in a homogenous school.

Another reason for the site selection was that some of the faculty members and doctoral students from the University of New Orleans (UNO) had already conducted other research studies there, and I had heard positive reports about this school from them. Although I did not anticipate that the students would be overly familiar with being examined as research participants, I thought that a certain degree of familiarity might facilitate the study.

Making arrangements for the research site began in July 2003. In order to have my dissertation research approved by the Institutional Review Board, I needed permission from the school principal of the elementary school as well as the local board of education.

A colleague in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at UNO introduced me to a friend at the elementary school, Miss Frank, who readily agreed to play the role of gatekeeper for this study. She discussed the possibility of my doing research there with the principal before the school's summer vacation started, and at the start of the school year, I contacted the principal and scheduled an interview with her at the school. After a brief discussion, the principal agreed to have me use the fifth graders in her school as the participants for this study. She also told me that I needed to obtain permission from the local board of education,

and she requested the necessary forms from the school board for me. Eventually, I received permission from the local board of education.

Participants

The total number of students in Filmore Elementary School is 481. There are 60 fifth graders there, and they are divided into two classes. I attempted to involve as many students as possible when I initially planned this study. However, I needed to restrict the number of participants in order to keep the data collection and analysis manageable. Focusing on 30 students during each reading session would have been very difficult. In the beginning of March 2004, I brought parent consent forms to the school and explained the study's purpose and procedures. I distributed a consent form to each student and asked the two homeroom teachers in the fifth grade to collect the forms prior to the data collection. Nineteen out of 60 students ultimately returned their consent forms. The principal suggested that she could accommodate a special reading program for the 19 students who returned the consent forms, and it would be possible to assign one of the school's teachers as a reading teacher for this study. She advised me that the children always like something special and that it would be an interesting reading project for them.

A total of 19 students, 6 males and 13 females, participated in the study. The age range of the participants was 10 to 12 years. All of the six male students were Caucasian. The three African-American participants were female, and no African-American males participated in this study. The remaining ten students were Caucasian females. The participants met in the school library from 1:30 to 2:15 every afternoon from Monday to Friday and read the two books with a teacher who was specially assigned for this study.

This study intended to examine the fifth grade participants' interpretations when reading multicultural literary works from two different Asian cultures. It was not designed to examine their reading proficiency or comprehension with quantifiable data through reading exams. Thus, I needed students who had already developed an adequate level of reading proficiency to understand the stories without depending on story illustrations. As a result, I needed to exclude lower grade levels

such as first to third grades in which significant numbers of children may not have become independent readers. Thus, selecting the participants from an upper grade level became important. Fourth graders were immediately excluded because they needed to spend much of their school year preparing for the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century (LEAP 21), and therefore would not be allowed to deviate from the set curriculum. Middle school levels were also excluded because of the restrictions of their own reading curriculum. Ultimately, fifth grade was chosen as the appropriate grade level for this study.

Teachers

Two teachers were involved in this study, Miss Berry and Miss Martin. Miss Berry, the school librarian, began reading the first novel with the participants. In the process of reading *Journey to Topaz*, her duties as the school librarian became overwhelming. In order to continue the data collection, I needed to substitute someone else, so the school principal asked Miss Martin, one of the third grade teachers, to take over this responsibility. She read the rest of *Journey to Topaz* and then all of the chapters of *Dragon's Gate* with the participants in her classroom.

Miss Berry

A New Orleans native, Miss Berry calls herself “a product of the New Orleans’ public school system.” She received her undergraduate degree in liberal arts from UNO. After working for a company, she returned to school to be certified as a teacher. She completed her teaching certification program and taught at a middle school for a few years before transferring to her present elementary school. Although she is currently a school librarian, she was a classroom teacher first and has taught many of the students at the school. She has worked for the school system for 29 years and at this particular school for 26 years.

Miss Berry mentioned that while the historical events of World War II had once been taught at the elementary school levels, the current elementary school curriculum in Louisiana no longer requires elementary teachers to teach the issues and incidents of World War II. Thus, she said that this study would be quite interesting and educational for the participants. She downloaded many photographs

of Japanese Americans in the internment camps from the Internet and showed them when she read *Journey to Topaz* with the participants. She also included many types of role-playing activities while the participants read *Journey to Topaz*. Including the role-playing activities made the participants more involved while reading and discussing the story. Unfortunately, she could not continue to read the stories with the participants because of her workload. Still, she planned well for each reading session and shared her ideas and thoughts for this study with me. Her insightful comments and suggestions were helpful during the entire period of the data collection for the study.

Miss Martin

Miss Martin was involved in the study and read the latter part of the first book and the entire second book with the participants. A new third-grade teacher at the school, she holds an undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of Mississippi. After working for a private company for a while, she decided to go back to school to receive a teaching license. While in the Alternative Certification Program at UNO, she had a chance to come to this school for her student teaching. After completing the Alternative Certification Program, she worked for a real estate company. When she learned that this school was looking for a third-grade teacher, she applied. She stated that she did not have many opportunities to be exposed to multicultural learning settings. She remembered that many things that she had read and learned at school during her education had been described from the Western perspective. She said that participating in this study was a great experience because it introduced her to different cultural contexts. Since Miss Martin was a young teacher, the participants often approached her as though she were a friend. Although she often had difficulty calming down the participants, she led them through the discussions smoothly. Regarding her preparation for the books, I depended on her creativity, flexibility, and discretion as a teacher. She often created some handouts in order to help the participants write their responses smoothly.

Initial Observation

The informal school observation began on December 2, 2003. Its purpose was to enable me to be familiar with the research context. Two classes for the fifth graders existed in this school. Miss Wilson, one of the homeroom teachers, taught mathematics and science. Miss Costa, the other homeroom teacher, taught reading, English language arts, and social studies. In this school, the teachers moved to each classroom rather than having students change classes. The two classes were in rooms that faced each other.

As soon as I arrived at the classrooms, I realized some similarities and differences from the classrooms in Japan. One conspicuous difference was that I found the “Pledge of Allegiance” on the wall in each classroom. One of the similarities was that all of the students’ desks faced the teacher’s in the classrooms. Desks were arranged for lectures rather than discussions. I was a bit amazed about the desk arrangement because I had thought that schools in the U. S. tended to emphasize collaborative activities and cooperative learning. Thus, I expected that the desk arrangement would be more group-oriented than individual-oriented. Another similarity concerned the number of students in each classroom. In general, the number of students in American schools is considered to be small in order to enhance more personal attention from teachers. However, each class contained approximately 30 students, about the class size in schools when I was a student in Japan.

I also found a few desk computers and some lockers in each classroom. The lockers were not designed for the students. One locker behind a teacher’s desk was for the teacher’s use. The teachers’ desks were located in the back of each classroom in order for them to observe their students’ activities and behaviors while they were working independently. However, many students, especially males, tended to spread their notebooks and texts on the floors. Every now and then, a student stood up, went to a teacher’s desk, and sharpened a pencil.

Both Miss Wilson and Miss Costa were enthusiastic while teaching, encouraging their students to participate in discussions, tasks and activities. Miss Wilson actively used scaffolding when she had her students solve some math problems. While a teacher was interacting with a student, students often tended to talk with whoever was sitting close by. In general, the classes were messier than classes with which I was familiar in my life. When I was a student in grade school in Japan, manners and self-discipline were emphasized as a part of moral education. Keeping classrooms clean was a part of students' responsibility.

Reading Proficiency

In order to learn about the fifth graders' reading proficiency, I asked Miss Costa to describe their ability. She picked up one of the books that she was reading with her students at that time, entitled *Matilda* (Dahl, 1989). Miss Costa told me that she could finish reading this type of trade book with her students within two months. According to Miss Costa, some of the students could read trade books independently faster than that, although the reading proficiency of each student varied.

Because understanding the overall reading proficiency of the fifth graders was important, I also asked the school principal the same questions before data collection began. The principal showed me the 2002-2003 school year's reading scores of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. According to the test data, the overall reading proficiency for the fifth graders in the school was at the 50th percentile, indicating that these children were average readers as compared to fifth graders nationally.

After speaking to Miss Costa and the principal, I felt comfortable that the fifth graders' reading proficiency would be sufficient for reading the multicultural stories that I had chosen for this study.

Novels

I selected two Asian-American literary works for this study. One was *Journey to Topaz* (1985), written by Yoshiko Uchida. The other was *Dragon's Gate* (1993), written by Laurence Yep.

There were several reasons that I chose these two stories for the study. Both stories describe hardships that groups of Asian immigrants had experienced in the U. S. *Journey to Topaz* describes how one Japanese-American family was treated when sent to an internment camp during World War II. *Dragon's Gate* describes how Chinese workers were treated when they constructed the Transcontinental Railway. Having a connection with America was important, because I thought that the connection would allow the participants to relate more easily to the stories. Although I did not set out to choose the combination of Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans, more stories about Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans were available than stories about any other Asian Americans. In addition, I felt that this choice would be appropriate for my study since Americans seem most familiar with Japanese and Chinese, of all the Asian cultures.

In terms of the types of multicultural literature, Mingshui Cai and Rudine Sims Bishop (1994) posit three categories: (1) world literature, (2) cross-cultural literature, and (3) parallel cultural literature. World literature includes folktales, fiction, and stories from non-Western countries, and describes people and cultures from the Southern and Eastern Hemispheres. In terms of cross-cultural literature, many stories depict the cross-cultural differences between two countries. Although stories and illustrations are often appealing to readers, many cross-cultural stories are not always empathetic and emotional but rather informative about cultural differences. Finally, parallel cultural literature is written by authors from parallel cultural groups. That is, this literature explicates personal experiences and struggles between two cultures or countries. As Cai and Sims Bishop (1994) maintained, "In this sense, parallel cultural literature is the literature of a cultural group" (p. 66). This feature of parallel cultural literature differentiates from that of cross-cultural literature. I hoped that using parallel cultural stories would allow the participants to become more empathetic during the process of reading, which is why two parallel cultural stories were chosen for the study.

The study did not intend to evaluate the cultural qualities of the two stories that I chose for it. However, whether a story was written by either a cultural insider or outsider of the culture becomes critical in the field of multicultural literature, since cultural authenticity often influences the quality of stories. Yoshiko Uchida is Japanese American, and Laurence Yep is Chinese American, making them both cultural insiders in this respect. Since Yoshiko Uchida experienced the internment camp when she was in college, and Yuki, the protagonist in *Journey to Topaz* was 11 years old, the story does not reflect Uchida's actual experience in the internment camp. However, the story was written based on historical fact and her personal observation in the internment camp.

Laurence Yep, a Chinese-American author, had not been born when the Transcontinental Railroad was constructed. However, *Dragon's Gate* was written based on his meticulous and exhaustive historical research about Chinese Americans. I thought that stories written by insider authors would provide the participants in this study with more emotional impact.

In order to finalize the selection of the two stories in this study, a measurement of the reading levels was required. *Dragon's Gate*, which is 333 pages in length, is a story written for readers who are ten years old or older, according to its publisher. The appropriate reading age for *Journey to Topaz*, which is 149 pages long, was not specified on the book, but according to the online bookstore information from Amazon.com (www.amazon.com) and Barnes & Nobles (www.barnesandnobles.com), the story is appropriate for readers about 12 years old.

When I started the informal classroom observation, I had a chance to discuss the reading levels of the books with the classroom teachers. Miss Costa, one of the fifth-grade homeroom teachers, confidently told me that her fifth-graders would have no trouble reading both stories. When I asked Miss Berry, the school librarian, she checked the Renaissance Learning website (www.renlearn.com), which runs the Accelerated Reader programs. According to Miss Berry, the school often makes use of the Accelerated Reader programs, and many teachers rely on the reading levels indicated on the website. According to the reading levels given by Renaissance

Learning, *Journey to Topaz* is at the 6.0 grade level, and *Dragon's Gate* is at the 5.3 grade level.

I also attempted to check the readability of the stories, but I could not get good results with the readability formulas that I tried to use. Readability is generally used to assign grade levels to reading materials. However, as Gray and Leary, (1935) maintained “Compared with school texts, trade books vary a great deal in terms of subject matter, style, presentation, vocabulary, and sentence structure” (cited in Davison, 1988, p. 37). As a result, the irregularities and limitations of trade books make it harder to predict grade levels merely by using readability formulas. Therefore, asking reading specialists to examine the content of stories analytically becomes crucial, as Alice Davison (1988) further suggested. As Davison (1988) also maintained, seeking reliable comments and opinions from experts becomes crucial. Many types of readability standards exist in the world. If the right formulas are found, readability could become a good indicator in order to determine appropriate grade level for a story. If not, it could easily mislead readers, parents, teachers, and researchers. Especially for trade books, thus, considering and then accommodating an alternative means for evaluating a reading level of a story or more flexible observations and analysis become crucial.

Davison (1988) presents supplementary characteristics in order to analyze the reading levels of trade books. She suggests that reviewers consider factors including “writing style, the use of unusual words or complex sentence structures, the overall organization of the book, and the kind of exposition used” (p. 38). The overall organization of the two books is clear. For example, *Journey to Topaz* is divided into three main incidents: before going to the internment camp (Chapters 1-4); after arriving at the internment camp (Chapters 5-10); and after leaving the internment camp (Chapters 11-17). *Dragons' Gate* is divided into four incidents: life in China (Chapters 1-6); journey to the Golden Mountain (Chapters 7-11); hardship on the Mountain (Chapters 12-22); and Uncle Foxfire's death (Chapters 23-30). The time sequence and the story organization flow from simple to more complex. From

my perspective, the overall organization of the two books was appropriate for the fifth-grade participants.

I decided to have the students read *Journey to Topaz* first because it is shorter than *Dragon's Gate*. I did not want to discourage the poorer readers among the participants. I did not employ any particular measure to confirm the effect of this choice, but as it turned out, not all of the participants in this study were proficient readers, especially when reading was perceived as extra work. Starting with a shorter story seemed to work well.

Regarding the protagonists' ages, in *Journey to Topaz* Yuki is 11 years old, and in *Dragon's Gate*, Otter is 14 years old. According to Davison (1988), "The characters in a story also influence children's response, since children tend to identify with protagonists of their own age or slightly older" (p. 38). Thus, I considered that the age range of the protagonists in the two stories was appropriate for the participants since their age range was 10 to 12 years.

The language used in the books was also an important factor in determining the reading levels because "poor readers find difficult words a great obstacle to reading, while average to good readers do not have difficulty in understanding texts because of such words," according to Davison (1988, p.38). I found many challenging words in the two stories. However, in the process of reading, I thought that the participants could understand the definitions with the help of the reading teacher.

Dragon's Gate was written as a part of the *Golden Mountain Chronicles* (nine books including *Dragon's Gate*). Although each book discusses different time periods, it might have been helpful for the participants to understand this book's connection with the previous stories. Additionally, many metaphoric phrases were used in this story, adding to its conceptual difficulty. Miss Martin was also aware of these two problems and attempted to ease the difficulties on the first day by having the students point out some figurative expressions from the story and by discussing the historical connections between China and the U.S. These two problems did not explicitly surface in the reading level of the story, but they made me aware that *Dragon's Gate* was more challenging than *Journey to Topaz*.

Autobiographic Disclosure

As soon as I arrived at Filmore, I immediately became aware of the differences between my own experiences as a student and a teacher in Japan and the educational environment of this American school, and I noted these differences in my researcher journal. All of the school buildings at Filmore were two stories, and the classrooms for the fifth graders were located on the second floor. I did not find a spacious playground and sturdy multiple-story and reinforced-concrete buildings that I used to be familiar with as a student and a teacher in Japan. As soon as I arrived on the second floor, I saw many students sitting on the floor and talking with each other in the hallway. Some teachers were trying to have students make a line in the hallway. When some students in the line attempted to talk to me, one of the teachers suddenly said to them, "Be quiet." Then, the students seemed to be embarrassed. I also felt embarrassed because I felt like I was being accused by the teacher of acting inappropriately.

I was unfamiliar with an elementary school environment because I had been a high school teacher in Japan for six years prior to my Ph.D. study at UNO. Thus, I was more familiar with older students than the younger students at Filmore. I felt that they were friendly, and many of them occasionally smiled and said "Hello" to me. I tried to greet them also, but at the same time, I felt a bit awkward because I was not familiar with elementary school contexts. Thus, I was simply scared and felt some emotional distance between the students and myself.

This conflict continued for a while, but the emotional distance that I felt in the beginning gradually disappeared as my informal observations progressed. During my observations, I switched from one classroom to the other after each period. I found some space in the classroom, brought an empty chair, and kept taking the notes. Each time I changed classrooms, I realized that students treated me as a guest. Some students always tried to communicate with me. For instance, some of the students asked me the spelling of words for their writing. Although I am a non-native speaker of English, I could confidently respond to their questions. I was interested to find that students at Filmore were not afraid to ask me questions.

When I taught at high schools in Japan, I realized that my students often avoided asking me questions, but I think this was due to their ages rather than them being intimidated by me. Elementary school students in Japan might be as open as students at Filmore, but I simply did not have experience dealing with elementary school students in Japan, so I cannot make a comparison.

In general, I felt that I received positive attention from the students. I was not uncomfortable to receive such attention from them. As already mentioned, however, I felt odd because I did not have sufficient experience with elementary students. More specifically, I had never received such attention from small children in my life. Although the anxiety that I at first felt toward students at Filmore gradually disappeared, my lack of experience dealing with elementary students persisted through the entire process of data collection.

Data Collection

Table 1

Steps of Data Collection	Dates of Data Collection
1. Permission from Jefferson Parish Public School System	September 9, 2003
2. Permission from Principal	September 11, 2003
3. Observation of context	December 2, 2003
4. Pretest Questionnaire on Japanese-American culture	March 12, 2004
5. Reading of <i>Journey to Topaz</i>	March 23, 2004
6. Posttest Questionnaire on <i>Journey to Topaz</i>	April 7, 2004
7. Pretest Questionnaire on Chinese-American culture	April 7, 2004
8. Reading of <i>Dragon's Gate</i>	April 15, 2004
9. Posttest Questionnaire on <i>Dragon's Gate</i>	May 13, 2004
10. Interviews with selected participants	May 17, 18, 19, 20, 2004

Table 1 describes the steps in the data collection process and the timeline that I followed. The participants read and discussed the stories for 40 minutes every day from March 23, 2004 to May 12, 2004. In order to stimulate the participants' motivation and curiosity, the two teachers started with an open discussion before reading each chapter of the stories. After they confirmed the participants' understanding, they read the stories. Both Miss Berry and Miss Martin tended to read aloud to the participants at first. After they read some pages, they assigned some participants to continue to read paragraphs. Miss Berry often included some role-playing activities. In order to provide some visual images of internment camps,

she also downloaded pictures from the Internet and showed them to the participants during the sessions. Miss Martin often prepared handouts so that the participants could independently and freely write their opinions and ideas based on the prompts that she provided them. For example, the following is the one of the prompts that Miss Martin provided to the participants:

We have talked about Otter's living conditions at the camp. Write a paragraph or two about how you would feel living with so many people in such a small space. Remember, too, that the cabins lacked electricity and plumbing!

I depended on the teachers' flexibility and discretion in order to minimize confounding effects. If I expected too much of the teachers, they would become self-conscious about their teaching. As a result of this, the participants would also become self-conscious and attempt to provide me with flattering comments in their responses.

During the initial observations, I periodically took field notes; however, I waited to collect data from the students until I received approval from the members of the university's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A) and my dissertation committee.

Once the data collection began, I participated in each reading session as a participant observer. During my observations, I especially focused on the participants' verbal comments and ideas, and their reactions to some of the incidents in the stories. I kept notes of the interactions between the teachers and the participants. Through informal conversations with the participants and students at Filmore, I also attempted to record the verbal and nonverbal interactions between the participants both inside and outside of the classrooms as much as possible.

For some of the participants, participating in this study was simply an extra reading assignment. A few days after the data collection began, one of the African-American participants complained about this study. Once she asked me, "Tada, how long is this project gonna last?" A Caucasian girl sitting next to her immediately stopped her comment by saying, "It's rude!" Then, the

African-American girl continued by saying, “But my mom said always to be honest. It’s boring.”

I was shocked by her complaint, but Miss Berry advised me that I did not have to worry about her statement because some students say such things without hesitation.

I noticed that the participants were affected by my presence. When I was taking notes, some of the participants became curious. One of the male participants often approached me and attempted to peek at my notes. Although I did not want to be negative, after that, I started to feel more aware of the participants’ negative reactions, responses, behaviors, and contradictory statements more often. Frequently, some of the participants attempted to communicate with me while they were writing in their response journals and after each reading session. It was a great chance for me to hear their authentic responses. I attempted to concentrate on their responses without taking notes, then, right after they left the classroom, I briefly jotted down their statements and my reactions.

In this study, how much information readers could report correctly about particular questions during and after reading the stories was not the focus. I wanted to examine how the participants felt about the stories. In her theory of reader response, Rosenblatt (1978) asserted that there are two types of transactional reading stances, *effereent* and *aesthetic*. In *effereent* reading, “the reader’s attention is focused primarily on what will remain as the residue after the reading - the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 23). However, “in *aesthetic* reading, the reader’s attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 25). Although both transactional stances are equally important in developing good reading skills, I attempted to focus on the participants’ *aesthetic* reading stances in this study. As Dressel (2003) posited in her study, reading multicultural literature in an *aesthetic* manner had a significant emotional impact on the participants in her study. *Aesthetic* reading can encourage readers to find connections with the characters

through the process of reading (Rosenblatt, 1985). If so, focusing on the participants' aesthetic reading stances would help me to observe the process of how they develop empathy with the characters in the stories.

In this study, I utilized two similar open-ended *questionnaires*. The questionnaires were distributed before and after the participants read each story. The first questionnaire was used to measure the participants' knowledge about each Asian culture before reading the stories. The second questionnaire measured how the participants' interpretation of the events in each story had changed. The ultimate purpose of these two open-ended questionnaires was to compare their perceptual differences before and after reading the stories. All four questionnaires have been listed in the appendices of this dissertation. A pretest questionnaire on Japanese-American culture (see Appendix B) was administered before the participants began to read *Journey to Topaz*. After reading *Journey to Topaz*, I provided them with a posttest questionnaire on *Journey to Topaz* (see Appendix C). Before reading *Dragon's Gate*, I also administered a pretest questionnaire on Chinese-American culture (see Appendix D). After reading *Dragon's Gate*, I offered them a posttest questionnaire on *Dragon's Gate* (see Appendix E).

Response journals were utilized in order for the participants to express their thoughts and impressions about the stories in each reading session in a more flexible manner. After the first questionnaire was distributed, the participants began to read *Journey to Topaz*. While reading the story, they were also required to keep response journals.

Initially, I planned to have the participants write their responses at three different times for *Journey to Topaz* and at four different times for *Dragon's Gate*. *Journey to Topaz* was mainly divided into three major incidents: before going to the internment camp (Chapters 1-4); after arriving at the internment camp (Chapters 5-10); and after leaving the internment camp (Chapters 11-17). I planned to collect the response journals for *Dragon's Gate* four times. The story contexts were mainly divided into four incidents: life in China (Chapters 1-6); journey to the Golden Mountain (Chapters 7-11); hardship on the Mountain (Chapters 12-22); and Uncle

Foxfire's death (Chapters 23-30). However, I reconsidered how often I would have the participants write their response journals, as a result of a suggestion from Miss Frank, gatekeeper of this study. She said that some students would have difficulty retaining information and feelings about the stories over several days. She suggested that I should have the participants write a short response after each reading session so that I could get more immediate feelings about each story from the participants. I thought that it would be wise for me to follow her advice, so the participants were required to write their responses after each reading session, and then their responses were collected once a week for the data analysis.

Before the data collection began, Miss Berry asked me what topics I would want the participants to discuss in their response journals. Because I wanted to depend on her discretion, I only mentioned that I wanted to know how the participants felt about the incidents in the stories and what they would do if such incidents occurred in their lives. After Miss Martin succeeded Miss Berry, she asked me the same question. Again, I described what I wanted. One difference in the two teachers was that Miss Martin used literature guides for teaching *Journey to Topaz* and *Dragon's Gate* and selected some journal topics from them. Because this study was a qualitative study, I wanted to put a priority on emergent features, attempting not to control the reading teachers' styles of teaching.

Based on the results of multiple data such as field notes, open-ended questionnaires, and response journals, nine interviewees were chosen. In order to obtain in-depth data from the participants, I considered how many participants I should invite to a final individual *interview*. I wanted to invite as many participants as possible, but reporting the results from all of the participants would be difficult. I knew that there was no stipulated number of interviewees for this study. I wanted to report at least two individuals from each of the three racial groups, since three types of racial backgrounds such as Caucasian males and females and African-American females were in this study. I also wanted to reserve another individual from each racial group. Thus, I conducted separate interviews with nine participants. After all of the nine participants were interviewed, I selected five

interviews and reported them in the final results. I did not include the data from two African-American female students since I did not obtain information that I initially expected. They had difficulty answering my interview questions.

The primary purpose of interviewing was to delve in-depth into readers' interpretations about the experiences of Japanese and Chinese in the U. S. in the stories. Collecting multiple data helped me enhance the trustworthiness of the data interpretations, since each participant had different styles of expressing ideas and opinions. The use of multiple data helped minimize my subjectivity as a researcher. As a result of my daily observations, I determined that a 15 to 20 minute individual interview was long enough for the interviewees.

The following questions were considered:

- 1) What story did you like most? Tell me why?
- 2) What did you learn about Japanese Americans?
 - When did you learn that? During or after reading?
 - How did you learn that?
- 2) What did you learn about Chinese Americans?
 - When did you learn that? During or after reading?
 - How did you learn that?
- 3) How were Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans alike in the stories?
- 4) How were Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans different in the stories?
- 5) How are you like the people in the story?
- 6) How are you different from the people in the story?
- 7) Which story was harder for you?
 - How did you figure it out?
- 8) Did reading about people from different cultures change you in any way?
 - If so, how did it change you?

The interview questions were composed based on the multiple data. I chose Question 1 because some of the participants expressed their preference between the stories after reading *Dragon's Gate*. I thought that it would be interesting to explore the reasons for their preferences. I asked Questions 2, 3, and 4 because it was

critical to determine whether the interviewees could express the differences between the Japanese Americans and the Chinese Americans in the stories. Question 2 asked for the general perspectives of Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans. Questions 3 and 4 asked for the similarities and differences between Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans. Questions 5 and 6 were asked to examine how the interviewees could relate to the story characters. Question 7 was asked to examine how many interviewees perceived the differences and difficulties between the two stories. Question 8 was asked to explore whether it was possible for the interviewees to develop empathy through reading the stories.

Researcher's Subjectivity

Lincoln and Guba (1985), Merriam (1988), and Peshkin (1988) all maintained that researcher biases exist in qualitative studies; thus, all researchers are required to develop strategies in order to monitor and control their own subjectivity in the process of data analysis. During data collection, I took field notes and audio-recorded each session in order to preserve my questions and findings. However, my taking field notes during each session often made some participants self-conscious. As an alternative means, I kept a journal in order to record my findings and thoughts. If I needed clarifications for my questions, I informally asked the participants those questions after the reading sessions.

Data Analysis

The data were collected and then analyzed in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the interpretations. After I received permission from the participants' parents, I began to read their response journals. In order to analyze their response journals, I used the "constant comparison method" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 101) that allowed me to focus on the response journals both in a particularistic and holistic manner. A series of deductive and inductive analyses were crucial for this study. Inductive data analysis allowed me to focus on the overall contents of the journals, and deductive analysis allowed a focus on the discrete meanings and implications of the words and sentences (Newell, 1996). My reflections and comments were added to the other side of the participants' response

journals. This helped me constantly compare between the raw data from the participants and my subjective thoughts during the process of data analysis. Then, I also compared comments from the open-ended questionnaires to the journals.

In order to elucidate and then spell out any similarities and differences, I independently analyzed the open-ended questionnaires first, and then I reciprocally compared them with the response journals and the notes from my observations. After examining both the response journals and the open-ended questionnaires, I began to examine the interview data.

The interview data were within-analyzed first and then coded based on the emergent themes. Then, I further cross-analyzed with the other interview transcripts based on the emergent themes. I summed up with all of the qualitative data and examined consistencies and inconsistencies in the data. After I had meticulously analyzed the data, I reported them based on my research questions as the final findings.

Data Coding and Emergent Themes

In this study, multiple data in the form of two types of open-ended questionnaires, response journals, and interview data from the selected participants were collected and analyzed. Each of the data was independently read and reread by me. I highlighted important parts with different colored markers or sticky notes in order to determine major concepts in the participants' responses. Although each of the data sources was independently analyzed initially, I realized that the participants did not thoroughly elaborate on their thoughts in individual data sources. Therefore, I also incorporated the field notes from my observations and my reflections about the various data sources in order to reinforce the trustworthiness of the interpretations of the data.

The first data source for the study consisted of pretest questionnaires on Japanese-American culture and Chinese-American culture administered separately and then independently examined. I highlighted the important points with different colored markers, but I found that I often had difficulty reviewing the highlighted portions later since the highlighted portions of the text became darker, and I was

not familiar with the participants' handwriting. I then began to use small sticky notes instead of highlighting. After numerous rereadings in order to independently analyze the two pretest questionnaires, I compared them in order to determine the concepts that appeared in responses to both questionnaires. I decided to analyze two questions: 1) What good things do you know about Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans? 2) What bad things do you know about Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans? I chose to examine these questions in the two questionnaires because I thought that I would be able to examine the participants' beliefs about Japanese-American and Chinese-American cultures. As Stephan (1999) maintains, developing positive stereotypical concepts is a good practice of cultural learning. Through analyzing the two questionnaires, I could observe two types of stereotypical concepts: *positive beliefs* and *negative beliefs*. Those became the important concepts I looked for when I examined data related to research question 1.

When I examined the posttest questionnaires on *Journey to Topaz* and *Dragon's Gate*, the questions of good things and bad things that they learned through reading the books were also examined. After several rereadings, I eventually compared the results with the results from the two pretest questionnaires in order to explore the degree of participants' stereotypical concepts before and after reading and the differences between the results of the pretest questionnaires and the posttest questionnaires. Since the posttest questionnaires were administered after reading each story, I also analyzed the participants' comments related to the stories in these questionnaires.

For example, while I was analyzing the posttest questionnaire on *Journey to Topaz*, I realized that many participants pointed out rudimentary issues such as foods, fashion, and toys before reading. However, I also realized that the participants started to express how their beliefs were often disconfirmed after reading the story. Some participants pointed out that we cannot judge people only from our physical differences and traits. Some participants also began to point out that we all share many similarities and are all equal regardless of our cultural

backgrounds. While analyzing the comments from their posttest questionnaires, I realized that students' discussions included the issues of *unfairness and injustice* and also *sameness and equality*. These concepts became the major codes that I identified from reading the posttest questionnaires on *Journey to Topaz*.

I collected students' response journals each Friday and read them over the weekend. I read and reread the journals every week. I highlighted and put different colored sticky notes on important concepts that emerged from the readings. I made some small notes on the sides of the journals. I examined the participants' responses in their journals in order to identify concepts similar to those I found while analyzing the two open-ended questionnaires.

I also identified different concepts while analyzing students' response journals. Many participants were sensitive about *unfairness and injustice* in the two stories, as I had already identified while examining their questionnaires. Through reviewing responses of particular students, I also observed another concept: *gap between their own lives and the story events*. Responses in a number of students' journals related to the concept of *gap between their own lives and the story events*. This concept related to another concept, *decision-making and values*, which I consider an important concept since I realized that the participants developed their individual values while reading. When I read their responses, I realized that some participants projected themselves into the situations or the characters and some did not. Their responses also elucidated their own individual values.

Finally, I examined the interview transcripts from the five selected or volunteered individuals. I read and reread the interview transcripts and highlighted important parts with a marker or with sticky notes. In the interview transcripts, I examined the similarities and differences in the participants' interpretations and understanding between the two stories. I realized that all of the interviewees developed empathy while reading the two stories and became more sensitive about issues of social justice and injustice. I realized that no interviewees compared the differences between Japanese-American and Chinese-American cultures. However,

they compared the differences between the two stories. They pointed out that having problems adjusting to a new culture was one of the similarities between the two stories, but the types of problems that the story characters encountered were different. Some of the interviewees also compared their own lives to the lives of the story characters. Through analyzing the interview transcripts, I realized that the interviewees' experiences helped them relate to the story events and characters.

While analyzing the multiple data, the following five concepts emerged as important and recurring concepts across data sources: 1) *the participants' positive or negative beliefs*, 2) *unfairness and injustice*, 3) *sameness and equality*, 4) *decision-making and values*, and 5) *gap between reality and the stories*. I connected these findings to the four research questions and report them in the following chapter. Based on these emergent themes, the data from the five interviewees were within-analyzed and then cross-analyzed, and both analyses are presented in the next chapter.

Ethical Issues

As Glazer (1982) posited, successful research can be accomplished only through a researcher's establishing a good reciprocal relationship with the participants. It was my obligation to protect the human rights, values and privacy of the participants in my study. Glesne (1999) further articulates the guidelines for research ethics as follows:

1. Research subjects must have sufficient information to make informed decisions about participating in a study.
2. Research subjects must be able to withdraw, without penalty, from a study at any point.
3. All unnecessary risks to a research subject must be eliminated.
4. Benefits to the subject or society, preferably both, must outweigh all potential risks.
5. Experiments should be conducted only by qualified investigators.

(pp. 114 - 115)

Because the potential participants were fifth grade students, I needed to obtain consent from their parents. I provided the students' parents with consent forms (see Appendix F) containing a brief description of my study so that they could be sure that their children were safe during the study. I initially distributed about 70 consent forms, which 19 students ultimately returned. I placed my telephone number and e-mail address on the consent forms so that their parents could contact me whenever they had questions regarding my study, thinking that it would also help me to receive some feedback about this study from their parents.

Creswell (1998) maintains that it is the researcher's priority to protect the privacy of the informants regardless of any type of research inquiry. Because I needed to identify who provided a particular comment during the process of data analysis, in the discussion of the final results, I used a pseudonym to protect the privacy of the participants. I showed the raw data from the participants to my dissertation committee members only after I disguised the participants' identities. The personal information provided in the consent forms will never be disclosed to any individuals or private agencies regardless of any conditions. The data obtained through this study were securely and confidentially kept in the drawer of my desk.

I often talked about the progress of the study to the participants, sometimes during my informal interactions with the participants before and after each reading session. Needless to say, I did not disclose the interim data to the participants.

Eliminating any unnecessary risks to the participants is also a priority for researchers (Glesne, 1999). The questionnaires were distributed as a part of the reading session. The response journals were written right after each reading session was over. Completing them took about 10 to 15 minutes. Writing response journals should not have posed any physical or emotional risks to the participants. The individual interviews were also administered as efficiently as possible. Because the participants were constantly observed, their response journals were read, and some of them were interviewed, they certainly knew that they were being examined, but I made an effort to minimize their discomfort as much as possible. Finally, the

participants could withdraw from the study any time that they wanted. I articulated the conditions of withdrawal in the consent forms.

Trustworthiness

Credibility/Authenticity

Creswell (1998) asserts that triangulation of qualitative data increases the credibility and authenticity of the interpretations. Four types of data triangulation are recommended: multiple and different sources; methods; investigators; and theories.

Triangulation of Research Methods

Berg (1995) states that the purpose of methods triangulation is not “the simple combination of different kinds of data, but the attempt to relate them so as to counteract the threats to validity identified in each” (p. 5). The triangulation of multiple data helped me control my own subjectivity as a researcher and minimized confounding effects in the process of data analysis. The following three data collection techniques were also used in this study:

- 1) “Qualitative interview technique,” a term coined by Weiss (1994), who posited seven rationales for which qualitative research interviews are useful: (a) developing detailed descriptions; (b) integrating multiple perspectives; (c) describing process; (d) developing holistic descriptions; (e) learning how events are interpreted; (f) bridging intersubjectivities; and (g) identifying variables and framing hypotheses for quantitative research.
- 2) Conceptually ordered displays (within-case and cross-case analyses) (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of multiple data such as open-ended pretest and posttest questionnaires, response journals and interview transcripts.
- 3) Constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1987, p. 101) of acquired qualitative data and my reflections from field notes. Glaser and Strauss suggested listing crude data and field notes separately but in a parallel form.

Triangulation of Data Sources

Patton (1990) maintained that no single source of information can guarantee trustworthiness in interpretation of qualitative data. Thus, he recommends

triangulating several data sources through the process of data analysis. “How to choose which? The aim is to pick triangulation sources that have different biases, different strengths, so they can complement each other” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 267). The combination of data sources helped me validate authenticity of the interpretations. In this study, the following data sources were utilized:

- (1) Field notes from observation
- (2) Discussion from the stories
- (3) Open-ended questionnaires (pretest and posttest)
- (4) Response journals
- (5) Interview transcripts

Peer Review and Debriefing

Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that peer debriefing can offer researchers both critical insight and empathic catharsis. Perspectives from outsiders often help researchers explore the data in a more objective manner. I asked doctoral students in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at UNO to help interpret the data with me.

Transferability/Fittingness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) called the degree of authenticity to which researchers can generalize their findings to other contexts as “fittingness” (p. 124). The concept of authenticity often includes the consistency of the data collected. Miles and Huberman (1994) equated the term to “transferability.” In qualitative research, however, generalizing the findings usually does not become an important issue because the naturalistic inquiry of qualitative research respects the emergent natures of the data. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) said, one purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize the findings to other contexts but to generate theory. However, as Creswell (1998) maintained, not all case studies generate a new theory since many case studies are situation-specific. Needless to say, the generalization of the data in this study was also restricted. However, Stake (1995) and Creswell (1998) also asserted that qualitative researchers can develop naturalistic generalizations, which are not intended to generalize the findings to the world but

“either for themselves or for applying it to a population of cases” (p. 154). They recommend that researchers focus on both single and multiple instances from qualitative data and attempt to establish the patterns among them. Consistent data analyses help researchers control their subjectivity and then enhance the credibility of the interpretations. Exploring the patterns of the data helped me establish transferability or fittingness.

Dependability

Miles and Huberman (1994) called consistency from qualitative data “dependability.” Newman and Benz (1998) considered it “replicability.” Replicating the whole research procedure is not always desirable because naturalistic inquiry explores a situation-specific case. That is, the purpose of qualitative research is not to anticipate the same or similar outcomes. However, as Newman and Benz (1998) further maintained,

One must identify changes that are due to identified effects and the frequency of these common occurrences at different points in time, in different settings, by different observers. When these data are available, they are valuable and provide important insights. (p.55)

Replicating the whole research procedure may not be important, but articulating specific research methods may provide audiences of a study with more critical insights into the study. It would be helpful for them to identify their own research needs. Thus, since I considered that demonstrating the replicability was vital, I have included the list of data collection processes at the beginning of the data collection section.

Summary

Interpretations while reading stories cannot be adequately measured quantitatively. As a result, I collected multiple data and analyzed them, and I examined the participants’ perceptual changes and interpretations of the stories.

In terms of writing responses, I provided the participants with two types of writing formats, questionnaires and response journals. One important reason that I administered the questionnaires was in order to obtain regulated responses from

the participants based on the questions that I posited to them. I had them keep response journals during each reading session to give them flexibility for their thoughts, comments, and responses in writing. Some participants could not concentrate on writing after reading a book. They then wrote their responses at home and inserted their brief responses in their folders the next day. One female student in particular had difficulty summing up her thoughts. She spoke out her thoughts after the sessions, and Miss Martin typed up the responses for her.

In this study, individual interviews were used to obtain data saturation. Having the participants elaborate on the questions was challenging because I felt that some of the participants were still afraid of communicating with me. When that occurred, I slowed them down and repeated the same questions in different ways. I also recognized that some individual interviewees felt more comfortable expressing their opinions in writing than orally, and vice versa.

In this study, I provided the participants with alternative ways to express their thoughts and questions about the books. I expected the participants to become reflective and critical while responding to the books. However, it was often difficult to seek the quality of their responses since the participants were still in the fifth grade. Thus, my priority in this study was to give them different means to reflect upon the stories and express themselves comfortably.

As the methods for monitoring the participants' interpretations while reading the two stories, I planned and then implemented three types of data sources: open-ended questionnaires; response journals and individual interviews. Although each method had both strengths and weaknesses, collecting multiple data from the participants helped enhance the trustworthiness of the interpretations of the data and the authenticity of this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Overview

Data collection began on March 12, 2004 and ended on May 25, 2004. Multiple data were collected in the form of open-ended questionnaires, response journals, and field notes from observation. Pretest and posttest questionnaires were administered before and after the participants read each story. A pretest questionnaire was utilized to evaluate the participants' current knowledge of the cultures represented in the stories, and a posttest questionnaire was administered to examine how the participants' interpretations changed after reading each book. The participants wrote their responses on each day. The responses were written on 24 different days and were collected by the researcher. After all of the participants had read and discussed the two books, I conducted individual interviews with selected participants to achieve data saturation. Since all of the participants were fifth graders who were about to graduate from elementary school and then move to middle school, I realized that I would not be able to return to these participants in case I had some questions concerning their written responses. Thus, I considered that data saturation was necessary. I selected nine interviewees out of 19 participants.

In this study, the class contained three types of racial and gender groups: Caucasian males, Caucasian females, and African-American females. I wanted to present balanced data based on this diversity in my final report by reporting data from each of three racial and gender groups. However, I decided not to report the results of all nine interviewees since they were redundant and impractical for the final report. Instead, I decided to examine and report two cases from each of the racial and gender groups in order to focus on the specificity of the data. Regarding African-American girls, however, I needed to focus on one case since I could not acquire the information that I wanted from the two other African-American interviewees.

In this chapter, I first present the findings based on my four research questions obtained from nineteen participants. Based on the data analysis of the four research questions, five themes emerged. I conducted individual interviews with the nine participants who either volunteered or were selected by me. Based on the quality of their responses, I chose five out of the nine interviewees, within-analyzed their interview data, and then reported the findings based on the five emergent themes. Finally, the findings from these interviewees have been further cross-analyzed.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

What were fifth graders' interpretations of Japanese- and Chinese-American cultures before reading the stories?

Prior to reading each story, I conducted a pretest questionnaire in order to evaluate participants' background knowledge about Japanese-American and Chinese-American cultures. The pretest questionnaire consisted of eight questions. Some of the questions were more general than specific. For the analysis of this research question, I examined the following two questions in the open-ended questionnaire:

- 1) What good things do you know about Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans?
- 2) What bad things do you know about Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans?

Regarding Japanese-American Culture

I administered a pretest questionnaire on Friday, March 12, 2004. While filling in the forms, some of the participants began to ask some questions of Miss Berry. I could not hear what the participants were asking her, and she told me that the participants had difficulty answering questions about Japanese-American culture because many of them knew nothing about it. Miss Berry asked me whether it was all right for them to write about Japanese culture. I told her that it would be okay if they had no idea about Japanese-American culture but some idea about Japanese culture.

In terms of research question 1, the participants' interpretations of Japanese-American culture were rudimentary, focusing on food, fashion, and toys prior to reading. Some of the participants responded that Japanese Americans brought new cultural features into American culture, but no one demonstrated any specific example in their responses.

Melissa stated, "The positive things I know about Japanese Americans are we celebrate different thing(s)." Mack also pointed out, "Japanese Americans are real nice people. They bring new cultures and holidays to us." While analyzing the questionnaires, I noticed that many participants simply pointed out differences, but most of them did not elaborate on their comments. It may have been because of the limited space on the questionnaires. Another possible reason might have been that they had not been informed about Japanese or Japanese Americans in the past. Therefore, many of the responses that I found in this pretest questionnaire were quite simple.

However, I also noted some positive attitudes from the participants. For example, Ruth wrote, "I know that they have and learn about different cultures than us for instance the(y) have different languages, traditions and they also have different belives (beliefs) and religions that (than) us." She also stated, "I learned that today in class when my teacher Miss Brooks was teaching us about all kinds of different cultures in social studies." Ruth did not provide any specific comments about Japanese or Japanese-American cultures, but she also stated, "Some cultures are strange to us, but our cultures are also strange to others." It was interesting because she pointed out the uniqueness and idiosyncrasy that all cultures might possess as characteristics.

Two more participants mentioned that they had learned about Japanese-American culture from their teachers in the past. Although I detected a positive attitude from her responses, it was obvious that Ruth had never been exposed to another culture in her life. Thus, her written statements were general, and she had difficulty presenting any specific examples about Japanese-American culture.

Alice also pointed out a unique Japanese cultural feature by stating, “They make preaty (pretty) dolls.” Although she was not familiar with Asian cultures, her response left a positive impression because I felt that she tried to answer each of the questions in the questionnaire seriously. However, I was unable to find out why Alice felt Japanese dolls were pretty or how she learned about Japanese dolls.

Eight of the participants displayed some knowledge about Japanese food. Chris noted, “They make good tasting food such as sushi, hibachi rice and baked salmon.” He said he learned about food, “from eating at Shogun” (one of the Japanese restaurants in the New Orleans area). Other participants also provided similar responses. Since Japanese restaurants are common in the New Orleans area and other parts of the country, many participants were familiar with Japanese restaurants and naturally discussed the restaurants in their responses. Chris’ perception was stereotypical, but his comment also implied that many Americans might develop some cultural sense through eating ethnic foods.

Regarding food, Brian also mentioned, “They make very good fried rice. They also make won-tons.” He continued, “I learned that from going to a Japanese restaurant.” Although Japanese eat fried rice and won-tons, those foods are not Japanese but Chinese. Many Chinese restaurants in the U. S. tend to offer more Japanese food, as do Japanese restaurants. As a result, Brian confused Japanese food with Chinese food, but his confusion was not unusual. Brian, one of the selected interviewees, admitted during the interview that he had never eaten Japanese food. In the beginning of the interview, he constantly talked about the differences between Chinese food and Vietnamese food. I could tell that he was interested in ethnic foods. Although Brian’s comment about Japanese food in his pretest questionnaire was wrong, in the case of Chris, some cultural knowledge may have been acquired through eating ethnic foods.

In terms of negative features about Japanese-American culture, one of the first things the participants pointed out was that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. “Some people in the United States don’t like the Japanese because we were in a war with Japanese,” Tania mentioned.

Vicky also stated, “I know when they first got here we sent them to camps because we were in war with them because they bombed Pearl Harbor.” Although it was true that Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps during World War II, Vicky’s comment was partially wrong. Japanese immigrants were not sent to camps right after they arrived from Japan. Japanese Americans were Americans. The first generation *Issei* had difficulty procuring their citizenship, but the second generation *Nisei* was born in the U. S. Strictly speaking, thus, Vicky’s perception was partially right but partially wrong.

Five participants said that they had already learned about Pearl Harbor and the internment camps from the movie *Pearl Harbor*. One of the respondents told me that he had seen the movie in Miss Wilson’s class. Miss Wilson knew that some of her students were supposed to participate in this study and showed her students the video in her class one day. Since she did not talk about her plan to me in advance, I had no idea about what she had done until the participants pointed it out. Since she teaches math and science in the elementary school, teaching history is not a part of her teaching duty. It was likely that she decided to show the video due to this study. However, the movie, *Pearl Harbor* was a love story and was created by an American movie director. Although the setting of the movie was Hawaii, from my perspective, nothing about Japanese Americans was explicitly described in the movie. Watching the film might have been a great chance for other students to learn about the troubled history between the U. S. and Japan, and it certainly was on their minds throughout the study, since five participants pointed out the movie. However, I wonder if showing this movie was useful or even harmful for this study.

Some students also said that they learned about Pearl Harbor through the History Channel and books. According to Vicky, her father was good at history; her father often talked about history to her, thus, providing her information about Pearl Harbor.

Finally, on the questionnaire, many participants did not attempt to point out negative features about Japanese-American culture. Some participants simply wrote “Pearl Harbor” or left the portion blank. Some of them answered that they did not know any negative things about Japanese American culture. I could not find any concrete evidence to support their statements, but I am certain that my presence as a Japanese researcher was quite obvious to all of the participants. My presence could have influenced their responses since they did not want to offend me with negative answers. However, again, I could not find any evidence in order to support this minor assumption through analyzing their questionnaires.

Regarding Chinese-American Culture

I administered another pretest questionnaire on April 7, 2004. My findings about Chinese-American culture were that many participants showed an indifferent attitude toward Chinese-American culture. They had no perception whatsoever of Chinese or Chinese-American cultures prior to reading the book. Additionally, some participants were still confused about the differences between Chinese and Japanese. Although these are my own assumptions, I can add two possible factors for my findings. They probably made some efforts to find some cultural features when I provided them with the questionnaire on Japanese Americans. However, many participants did not want to show negative attitudes to me since I am Japanese. Another possible assumption is that they had already stated all that they knew about Asians in their previous questionnaires. Thus, they might not have had anything to add on the questionnaire on Chinese Americans.

In terms of positive features about Chinese-American culture, ten participants simply answered either “I don’t know” or “None.” A few participants left the questions blank. I was shocked by their indifferent attitudes to Chinese-American culture since many of the participants made more empathetic comments about *Journey to Topaz* while or after they finished reading the book. In my field notes, I reported,

One of the female participants suddenly said, 'I don't know anything about Chinese!' That's why I said to her, 'Write whatever you know!' By stretching both of her eyes with her hands, she sarcastically started to say, 'Chinese, Japanese, an(d) Vietnamese.' Some of the girls sitting close to her started to laugh at what she did.

"She meant that more Asians have slanted eyes," I wrote. Their responses and reactions left me with a distinctly negative impression.

As a positive feature, three participants responded, "Chinese make good food." Chinese food is popular and inexpensive in the U. S., and there are many Chinese restaurants across the country. The participants' interpretations were basic and stereotypical.

Some of the participants tried to provide more factual responses. For example, Tania stated, "They have different languages." Although it was hard for me to evaluate her background knowledge about Chinese culture, it was possible that she knows that many dialects are spoken in China.

Mack stated, "They are real smart and nice like the Japanese." In a way, his comment was thoughtful, but he confused the differences between Chinese and Japanese. His comment was also simply stereotypical since it was a type of generalization, similar to "All Asians are good at math." As a matter of fact, this is not always true, and Mack's perception revealed this type of stereotypical thinking, although he stated that he learned about the fact through reading books about Asians.

As previously mentioned, Brian confused Japanese food with Chinese food. In the questionnaire, Cindy confused Chinese with Japanese. She stated, "My favorite cartoons are Chineses" (Chinese). She continued, "I learned it over my long, long life." Although Cindy likes animation, she did not know her favorite cartoons came from Japan. It was a simple sort of confusion, but many of the interpretations presented in this questionnaire were also superficial. Validating why many American students confused Japanese and Chinese would be difficult. One possible reason is that more Japanese and Chinese items and products are available than

any other Asian items in the U. S. Although these two Asian cultures are widely and equally known to many Americans, many Americans do not attempt to discern the differences between the two cultures, seeing them as almost interchangeable.

Another interesting finding was that none of the participants pointed out any negative features about Chinese-American culture. When I conducted a pretest questionnaire on *Journey to Topaz*, few of the participants pointed out negative features about Japanese-American culture. It seemed to me that they were afraid to express their negative feelings and simply avoided doing so. I also felt that it was probably because I was the only Asian in this study. It seemed that they were afraid to offend me with negative comments.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What were the interpretations of fifth graders when they engaged in writing and discussing their thoughts while reading literary works from two different Asian cultures?

Regarding Journey to Topaz

In order to explore the participants' interpretations while reading each story, I examined their response journals. On March 23, 2004, the participants started to read *Journey to Topaz* after Miss Berry had briefly described the outline of the story. *Journey to Topaz* is a story about one Japanese-American family in California. After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, all Japanese-American families in the U. S. were sent to internment camps. After her father was arrested and then sent to another internment camp by the FBI, Yuki, the protagonist in *Journey to Topaz*, and her family were sent to Topaz, Utah, where one of the internment camps was located. The story depicts her and her family's experiences and hardships as Japanese Americans during World War II.

Miss Berry asked the participants some questions about the book's prologue. She asked, "How much do you know about World War II? Why were Japanese Americans sent to the internment camp?"

One of the female students answered, “Because Japanese dropped the bombs. They were the second generation. So, they were Japanese citizens.”

Then, Miss Berry reminded the participants, “It was a violation of their civil rights and the Constitution.” She read the statement of President Gerald R. Ford. “Not only was that evacuation wrong, but Japanese Americans were and are loyal Americans....we have learned from the tragedy of that long-ago experience forever to treasure liberty and justice for each individual American.” After reading the President’s statement, she started to ask questions, “What do you think about the story? How about the main character, Yuki? Old Salt? Who was the old lady? Who were the strangers? How did Mrs. Sakane treat the police? How did you feel about the treatment by the police? They must be embarrassed?” The participants actively answered those questions. Then, Miss Berry began to read Chapter 4, *Ten Days to Pack*, which is the part of the story in which Yuki and her mother were discussing evacuation.

I was surprised because some of the participants had already read the first several chapters in class. I expected that all of them would read the story together. I wanted to observe all of the scenes that the participants were involved in while reading the story. Thus, I was initially discouraged because I had already missed getting the students’ immediate reactions to the opening chapters of the book.

While reading Chapter 4, Miss Berry often emphasized vocabulary words such as *unfairness* and *injustice*. She explicitly used the phrase “the violation of civil rights.” Before the participants were engaged in writing their response journals, Miss Berry asked them, “Do you want to say anything about this book?” She also asked the participants, “Do you like this book?” Everyone answered, “Yes.”

While reading *Journey to Topaz*, more of the female participants responded with empathetic comments than the male participants, possibly because the protagonist in the story was also female. The female participants seemed to be more comfortable relating to the protagonist in the story through the process of reading. On the other hand, their interpretations were at times quite simple, focusing on food, fashion, and clothes.

After the first day's meeting was over, two female students stayed in the library and kept writing their responses. The following was written by one of the two female students:

If I were Yuki, I would tell them that the Japanese (Americans) did not bomb the people. If they told me to evacuate I would bring important stuff like books, journal, diary etc. If they took my father away, I would cry also. I would miss my pets Goliath NOLA, Duncan, Donuts and Apollo. If it got cold, I would bring my whoopi (blanket). My special pillow, my build-a-bears Erika, Cover, and Chloe. I would bring warm clothes, summer clothes and spring clothes. I would also bring a calendar to mark down important days like birthdays, holidays, and when is the next time I would be able to see my father. I would try my best to accomplish in being educated although they (there) will be no schools or teachers around. I would try to teach myself. It is important to get an education if you want to accomplish your goals.

(Betty's Response Journal on *Journey to Topaz*)

I soon realized that Betty was more reflective than the others. Not only did she try to identify herself with Yuki, but she also tried to explain that Japanese Americans did not bomb Pearl Harbor. I felt that she confused the difference between Japanese and Japanese Americans when her response was written. She felt that Yuki had experienced unfairness and injustice. She said she would have been upset if her father had been taken away somewhere by the FBI agents.

Betty mentioned that she would take her pets if she needed to move to a prison camp. She also pointed out that she would bring pillows, blankets, and her own clothes to camp. Since Betty's father and mother had divorced, for Betty, having a good relationship with her father might be a priority in her life. Her other family members were all of the pets that she mentioned in her response journal. Betty attempted to identify herself with Yuki's position, but her perceptions about the story were often simplistic. I realized that she was struggling between Yuki's story and her own.

Tonia demonstrated similar features in her writing as Betty did, spelling out the items that she would probably bring with her if she needed to go to camp. However, she also described her feelings about the living conditions in the internment camps.

So far, I've read about a family that has to move away from home just because the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. If I was in Yuki's position, I would try to do something about that. Yuki's family tries to make themselves at home. I would feel embarrassed if I had to use the restroom out in the open. The food there sounds nasty and I wouldn't want to eat it but if that was it I would have to eat it. I couldn't just stay in a horse's old stall with bugs. Sleeping on a straw mattress would feel (feel) uncomfortable (uncomfortable). If I had to pack only enough bags that I could carry, I would pack a lot of food in one bag. Clothes, clothes, clothes in the other. And candy in my purse. (Tonia's Response Journal on *Journey to Topaz*)

Tonia liked the book; however, she showed her embarrassment when she learned that Japanese Americans were forced to use the restroom without a door. Bringing food and clothes to the camps was a good suggestion, but the idea of bringing candy in her purse was somewhat immature. Although the female participants tended to write more empathetic responses than the male participants while reading *Journey to Topaz*, some of the male participants, such as Chris, wrote empathetic responses in their response journals.

I think that the book is cool and interesting. The food is horrible. Their stall has very little light. It was a good way to decide who should get the towels. Yuki must feel very sad to have lost her dog. It must feel weird to have lost something important. One time I had strep throte (throat) and I had to get shots in my bootie. We are the same because we both have to get shots. (Chris's Response Journal on *Journey to Topaz*)

Chris insisted that pain was pain regardless of the degree. I was a little confused when I read his response because I could not incorporate his personal experience into Yuki's situation in the story. His personal experience was not as

serious as Yuki's experience in the camp, yet he used his own experience to understand the events in the story. However, this was the level at which he could form a personal connection to the character.

While reviewing the participants' response journals, I saw that many participants demonstrated unsophisticated interpretations. An example was when Miss Berry had them choose between two things. She told the participants, "Write down two things you had to decide in your life? What did you choose?"

Tonia wrote, "Once before I had to make a choice at a mall. I could have picked to spend my money on a pretzel or spend money on a lot of candy. I chosed (chose) candy but it was very hard."

Chris wrote "One time when I was little, I had to choose between a toy or small fish. I choosed (chose) the fish."

Edward wrote, "I had to choose between going to a friend's house or visiting my aunt. But I choose to visit my aunt."

While reviewing the choices that they made in their response journals, I felt that there was a gap between the tragedies in the book they had read and the participants' experiences. According to their choices, it was obvious that they have never been forced to make any major decision in their lives. Their choices between two things were not considered as matters of great consequence. For example, for Tonia, choosing to spend her money between a pretzel and candy was a big deal at that time. Chris chose a fish rather than a toy. He may have wanted to express his maturity through his choice since taking care of living animals requires a certain degree of responsibility. Finally, it was obvious that Edward's decision was influenced by his parents. His parents probably advised him that he could probably visit his friend's house whenever he wanted. That is why he chose to visit his aunt.

Although many participants demonstrated relatively immature choices, Amy presented a more serious decision that she was once required to make in her life. She wrote, "I had to choose between living with my mother or dad. It was hard so they said come back when your 10 years old and I picked my dad." Since Amy's parents divorced, she was required to make her decision quite recently, and her

memory of the difficult decision might have been still vivid. Although the issue that Amy experienced in her life was quite different from Yuki's, reading about Yuki's situations encouraged Amy to become more empathetic.

Although Japanese Americans were interned during World War II, the U. S. government offered them an opportunity to contribute to the country in order to show their loyalty and patriotism, by volunteering to join the Army and to fight for the nation. When the participants read about Ken's (Yuki's older brother) decision to join the Army, some of them wrote more empathetic comments. Tonia wrote in her response journal, "If I was Ken, I would choose to stay with my mom and sister to take care of them and wait until dad comes home." Betty wrote in her response journal, "Ken was talking and Yuki overheard that Ken is planning a wedding. It was two good chapters. I think Ken should go to college to get a good education to take even better care of his family." Amy also identified with the struggle she imagined Ken facing. "I think Ken shouldn't go to college yet because then who would do Ken's work," she wrote in her response journal.

Not all of the participants discussed this issue in their response journals. Therefore, I am not sure how many participants actually felt that either Ken should join the Army or that Ken should stay with his family and then seek a chance to continue his education someday. An interesting finding is that none of the male participants discussed this issue in their response journals, possible because it might not have been an intriguing aspect of the book for them. All of the participants who discussed this issue were female. Tonia's response was more stereotypical because she considered taking care of a family to be a man's role. Betty insisted that Ken should go to college to get an education. It was possible that her response about education might be influenced by her parent(s). Amy insisted that Ken should not go to college but should rather stay with his family. Although Amy did not discuss what she considered a man's role in a family, she also demonstrated a similar view to Tonia's.

In terms of volunteering for service in the Army, the participants elucidated their perspectives about loyalty and patriotism.

If I was a Nesei (Nisei) I would volunteer because I would like to prove that I am a real and loyal American. First they were trying to put them someplace where they wouldn't be in the way but now they are asking them to fight for their country. The United States might have did them wrong but they need them now. (Jenny's Response Journal on *Journey to Topaz*)

Melissa's entry showed her agreement. "I would go because I would represent myself as an American and not just as a Japanese. I would represent my country. I would write my family every day to know what's happening," she wrote in her response journal.

Again, not all of the participants specifically discussed their decisions or choices for volunteering for the Army in their response journals. However, when I reviewed all of their response journals pertaining to this issue, five participants insisted that they would probably join the Army and go to war if they were a Japanese Americans, and eight participants said that they would not volunteer for the Army. For example, Jenny stated she would volunteer for the Army if she were *Nisei* in order to show her loyalty as a Japanese American.

Melissa's response was interesting because she stated that she would fight for the country as an American but not as a Japanese American. She told me that her mother used to serve in the U. S. military and often talked about her experience in the military. Thus, Melissa's response and decision might have been influenced by her mother. Edward expressed his view of volunteering for the Army if he were Japanese American, writing in his response journal, "I wouldn't join the Army because they took away their house and dad." Since the U. S. government confiscated properties from Japanese Americans and interned them in the camps, Edward was furious about how the U. S. government treated Japanese Americans. For example, the U. S. government took away Yuki's father in the story. Thus, he said, "I wouldn't join the Army if I were a Japanese American."

Betty and Tonia also opposed to the idea of volunteering for the Army. Betty mentioned that her reluctance to join up was related to her concern for her family. For Betty, her family was always her first priority. "I would not go to the Army because I wouldn't want to leave my family and they (the Army) might just put me in a horrible position," she wrote in her response journal.

Tonia also expressed annoyance at the unfairness and injustice done to Japanese Americans by the U. S. government:

I wouldn't go and help them in the war because of what the other American Citizens had done. They put them behind a barbed wired fence. In the first place, they've shouldn't have taken the American Japaneses (Japanese Americans) from all of their homes and things that are important to them. But Ken thinks he should go and stand up for his country, America. I hope Ken comes back and they go home, home sweet home...." (Tonia's Response Journal on *Journey to Topaz*)

Tonia's response was emotional because she wished for Ken's safety in her response journal. Possibly because she tried to identify with the characters in the story, her response sounded emotional.

Regarding Dragon's Gate

The participants began to read *Dragon's Gate* with Miss Martin on April 15, 2004. They met 11 times in order to read this book. As already described, I depended on Miss Martin's discretion as a teacher. Miss Martin often assigned some participants to read the book, and then the participants read the story aloud. Although they were supposed to read the book in class, *Dragon's Gate* was a long story. Thus, Miss Martin encouraged the participants to read some of the chapters at home.

Dragon's Gate is about several Chinese immigrant workers who came to America in order to construct the Transcontinental Railroad. Otter, the protagonist of *Dragon's Gate*, wished to go to America in order to join his father and uncle who were already construction workers in the mountains there. Otter's wish came true in a strange way, and he eventually joined his father and uncle. However, he also

learned that he was not an invited guest to America but a cheap slave laborer.

Miss Martin was aware of the difficulty that the study's participants had in reading *Dragon's Gate*. In order to help reinforce their background knowledge, Miss Martin wrote the following questions on the blackboard on the first day and discussed them with the participants:

1. What is the Lord of the Golden Mountain?
2. Who is Otter? What roles does he play?
3. Who are Foxfire and Squeaky?
4. How did they get their names?
5. What is the "Middle Kingdom?"
6. What is the "Work?"
7. What is "Three Willows?"
8. What group was Otter born into? Who are these people?
9. Why was the town having a banquet and party?
10. What were the villagers addicted to and who introduced it to them?
11. Why is Mother upset with Otter?
12. Why is Otter surprised that in America everyone is equal? (p. 42)
13. What is Dragon's Gate? (p. 49)
14. What happens at Dragon's Gate? (p. 52)
15. As a result, what happened to Otter?
16. Who was "weeping with the graveyard?"

After Miss Martin gave some background knowledge on Lawrence Yep, she asked the participants the questions that she had written on the board. Miss Martin described to the participants how Otter, the protagonist in *Dragon's Gate*, wanted to go to America with Uncle Foxfire (his uncle) and Squeaky (his father). He wished for his dream; however, his wish came true in an unexpected way. Otter accidentally killed a man in Manchu (a tribe). In order to prevent any revenge planned by the Manchu tribe, Otter's mother sent him to America, according to Miss Martin's explanation. Vicky responded strongly to the idea of a wish fulfilled in her journal.

Be careful what you wish for it might come true is very valuable advice. Otter wished to go to America and now he wishes he didn't wish it because the man wouldn't have died and he wouldn't have had to go to America under that circumstance. They have better opportunities. Some people would do it to get richer personal(l)y. I wouldn't do it. (Vicky's Response Journal)

Since it was the first day of the participants' reading of *Dragon's Gate*, not many of them had read the story before the first reading session. Many of the participants seemed to enjoy reading *Journey to Topaz*, but I did not feel that they were enthusiastic about reading the new story, *Dragon's Gate*. It seemed that some of the participants were a little tired of reading the story. In fact, it was a major difference between *Journey to Topaz* and *Dragon's Gate*. Although I could not tell the exact reason for their reluctance to read the book, one reason was probably because *Dragon's Gate* was about two times longer than *Journey to Topaz*. Additionally, the book contains many figurative expressions, one of the cultural features of Asian writing and discourse.

I found Vicky's response interesting because when she read *Journey to Topaz*, she wrote more emotional responses to that book. Vicky was a proficient reader, and she understood the meaning of figurative phrases such as "The wish may come true but might not come true by the way they want." However, her response in *Dragon's Gate* was less sympathetic than she showed in *Journey to Topaz*. In reviewing her responses, I felt that she thought the purpose for many Chinese Americans coming to the U. S. at that time was simply to become wealthy. She stated, "They have better opportunities. Some people would do it to get richer personal(l)y. I wouldn't do it." Although I do not want to interpret her response cynically, it seemed that Vicky thought that being born as an American was a privilege that all others would want since she did not have to have a similar experience in her life.

A few days after the participants began to read *Dragon's Gate*, Miss Martin asked them how they would feel about being on their own. Since Otter, a protagonist in *Dragon's Gate*, came to the U. S. alone, as he wished, she asked the participants about their reactions to the ideas of being independent from their parents and responsible for themselves. The following responses were some of the examples that the participants wrote in their response journals:

I wanted to cross River Road and my mom said no and now she says yes. They made me wait because I was too young and now they say I am old enough. It made me feel good.” (Charlie’s Response Journal)

Carla was also able to identify with those feelings. “I was nine. I wanted to stay home alone but my parents said I was too young. I couldn’t stay home (alone) till I was 10,” wrote Carla on her response journal. Melissa’s entry also showed a similar concern.

What I wanted to do on my own is stay at home by myself. Why my mom didn’t let me stay home because she was scared something would happen. I felt happy when I got my way. The only negative thing that happen was when it was raining and the smoke alarm got water in it and I got scared.” (Melissa’s Response Journal)

Kathy also experienced doing things on her own.

I wanted to walk home from school by myself and my mom would not let me walk home because she said I was too young. But then she finally let me go because I begged (begged) her. Then she finally let me go and it was very scarry (scary) crossing the car going so fast. I was so scared. I will never cross the highway without someone else. But just until I am 13 years old. (Kathy’s Response Journal)

When I reviewed their response journals, I found that many male participants did not seriously discuss their experiences and opinions in their response journals. I cannot state the reasons that male students did not write about their experiences and opinions, but female participants tended to discuss advice from their parents more openly when I reviewed their responses. Charlie and Carla

expressed some frustration because their parents did not allow them to do what they wanted simply because of their ages. In contrast, in their responses, Melissa and Kathy implied that listening to their parents' advice was important. That is, through reading the story, it seemed that Melissa and Kathy tried to incorporate their experiences with Otter's experience in the story.

While the participants were reading *Dragon's Gate*, I often thought that it seemed more difficult to interest them in the book than when they read *Journey to Topaz*. Miss Martin encouraged them to read the new chapters, but many of them did not try to do so. In fact, over the course of the study, many participants wrote less day by day. Still, Miss Martin tried to find some cultural features in the story and have the participants compare the differences in the story. One day, she asked the participants what the Chinese view of status and the American view of status were. Although Otter was adopted and raised in a wealthier environment in China, he had little money or possessions in the U. S. The participants attempted to compare these differences while reading the story. Mack wrote, "The Chinese view of status is if you have been good in your previous life you may be rich. The American view of status is that if you dress nice you have good status." In his response journal, Brian also described a similar perspective by saying, "Chinese status is you have to be born in it. American status is you have to have money and power to be in a high status."

Cindy's entry also explored status as had Mack and Brian's, but she elaborated on her point of view a little more than they had.

The Chinese view of status was what your family did in the past. Basically, you were born into it. The American view of status is how rich, how peaceful, and how you dress. Status is what people are judged on. It affects your life by the way people treat you. It is important in the story because that is how Chinese people are treated by the Americans. (Cindy's Response Journal)

In a lengthy entry, Kathy pondered the question and elaborated on her thoughts. In her entry, she pointed out the unfairness that Chinese workers encountered and further discussed the status issue by incorporating the concept of

social injustice.

What is status? How does it affect your life? Why is it important in the story? I think it's like when someone is treated better than others because of what they achieved in life. It is important in life because it would not be fair if you do lots of good thing(s) in life and that would just be wrong if you just sit down and do nothing and then you get treated the same way as someone who do all those achievements and get treated the same it is not write (right). Because the Chinese Americans are getting treated like dirt while the Americans are getting treated like almost like they are famous and the Chinese Americans are getting treated like there nothing, but workers or more like slevel (slaves). (Kathy's Response Journal)

As Mack and Brian stated, in order to have a high status in China, it was important to be born to that status. Many participants shared similar perspectives. Some of the participants also expressed that the American view of status was more secular than the Chinese view of status. An important finding was that some of the participants such as Cindy and Kathy tried to incorporate their opinions about status into their interpretations of the situations of the Chinese immigrants in the story. Kathy, especially, showed a critical observation and interpretation about status. She expressed the unfairness of Americans' attitudes toward Chinese immigrants in the story. However, in the beginning of her response, she also criticized the Chinese view of status. Miss Martin had provided the participants with a chance to consider cultural differences between Chinese and Americans by asking them the differences between Chinese view of status and the American view of status.

After reading further in *Dragon's Gate*, however, more participants started to point out and then discuss their opinions and thoughts regarding the unfair treatments given to Chinese immigrants by Americans on the mountain. For example, the Chinese workers were required to work longer hours than the American workers but were paid less than they were. The American workers also received more food and amenities than the Chinese workers on the mountain.

Additionally, when the participants learned that Americans called all of the Chinese workers on the mountain “John”, many of the participants became furious and expressed their anger. For instance, Edward wrote in his response journal, “I would feel mad because that is disrespectful. Also, that is not write (right) because you wouldn’t know if he was calling you or someone else. So, you might get confused. And I really don’t like that name.” Vicky also wrote, “If I were called John and not my real name, I would be calling that disrespect. That is not right. I would want to go back home too.” Both Edward and Vicky used the term “disrespectful,” which was interesting because many participants also used this term in their responses. Edward and Vicky expressed their anger about the events in the story, but Alice indicated how she wanted to be called if she were a Chinese worker. In other words, she pointed out how the Americans should have called the Chinese workers.

I would hate that I would get sike (sick) for it. I wish that people would be niser (nicer). I would get so angry. I would ake (ask) if they could call me my own name. I would also akek (ask) if they could call everybody there (their) own name. (Alice’s Response Journal)

Miss Martin asked the participants why they were troubled by someone being called “John.” Charlie suddenly said, “My brother’s name is ‘John.’” When Miss Martin asked him, “What does John mean?” Charlie said, “Strong!” Miss Martin further continued, “Then, what is wrong?” Many participants then responded by saying, “It’s disrespectful and confusing.”

When Miss Martin further asked the participants, “What are you going to do if you can’t stop being called John?” Then, the participants became quiet as though they could not imagine what actions they could take.

Regarding the unfair living conditions surrounding Chinese workers, many participants expressed both anger and sympathy. For example, Melissa wrote in her response journal,

I would feel bad because I wouldn’t feel right. I would not be confortbule (comfortable) with taking bath in front of people after another person. Then they didn’t have torliotes (toilets) and we (they) had to use the bathroom in

the bucket. (Melissa's Response Journal)

Since Melissa is a girl, it was understandable that she would not want take a shower in public and share the bathroom with someone else. However, a male participant also expressed similar reservations about the lack of privacy. For example, Edward wrote,

I would feel mad because you might have to share a bed or sleep on the floor. It would be crowded (crowed), also. And I would have to share water that they already used. It would be hard to see it the electricity was out. I don't think that is fair to them. It had to be horrible to live with a lot of people that would really stink. I just don't think it is right. (Edward's Response Journal)

Edward did not complain about taking a shower in public or sharing a bathroom. Rather, he complained about the lack of privacy. It seemed that it was difficult for him to accept, according to his response.

Although the event was too extreme for her, Tonia attempted to identify with Otter in her response.

If I was Otter, I would be mad, no angry. If I had to share rooms and bath water on, and split up with my with my best friend, and only friend so far, I would run away. Sean and Otter are in a problem. They have to split up just because they are different, but have a lot of things in common. Now, they are against the world. Sean hates his dad, and Otter now feels that he doesn't belong with his adopted parents. They both feel like they don't belong there. (Tonia's Response Journal)

The three participants expressed discomfort about hygiene while living on the mountain, and almost all of the study's participants expressed similar opinions. An interesting finding was that only Tonia tried to identify herself with the main character in the story. Additionally, she pointed out the friendship that Otter developed with Sean, the son of the overseer on the mountain and attempted to express and to contrast her perspectives with the incidents in the story in her response journal.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

How did participants' interpretations change after they read each story?

In order to understand the participants' perceptual changes after reading the two stories, I examined the comments and responses provided by the participants in their posttest questionnaires. Demonstrating interests about the stories did not mean that the participants understood the stories. However, they developed a certain degree of empathy through the interactions with the stories.

Regarding Journey to Topaz

Before reading *Journey to Topaz*, many of the participants had little knowledge about Japanese Americans. However, after reading the book, some of the participants started to express different reactions. Some participants recognized that individuals often judge others negatively due to physical differences and traits. Some of them also recognized that all human beings are equal.

For example, Charlie stated, "I learned that you can't judge a person by their looks." Although expressions were often different, many participants showed similar interpretations. In fact, Japanese Americans were not interned due to their physical traits and differences. Thus, Charlie's response did not directly stem from the story. However, he knew that physical differences could often become a target for racism and discrimination. Charlie further expressed his feelings by saying that he did not like that Yuki's father was taken away to another internment camp by the FBI agents. "I did not like when they took the father away from their family because it should have been wrong to do that." He could not hide his indignation toward the injustice done to Japanese Americans by the U.S. government.

Betty stated, "Japanese Americans aren't so mean and they love each other as any other person would." In a way, Betty complimented Japanese Americans, but she also revealed a bias that she had embraced against Japanese Americans, that she had once considered them mean. The reason that she responded in this way was probably that she did not know the difference between the Japanese and Japanese Americans. The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, but the Japanese Americans did not. Before she read the story, she did not know this fact, but she knows it now.

Vicky also expressed that all human beings are equal. “Japanese Americans were as loyal as us,” she said, further mentioning that they were not considered so at that time. Before Vicky began to read *Journey to Topaz*, she knew little about Japanese Americans. Thus, she left many questions blank in her pretest questionnaire. Once she began to read the story, she repeatedly said that it was a sad story. She also stated that she could not imagine that Americans were responsible for these cruel acts. After reading the story, she stated that reading this story had taught her the importance of justice.

Tonia, too, left blank some emotional comments in her posttest questionnaire. Tonia also had difficulty discerning between Japanese and Japanese Americans when she started to read the story. However, after reading *Journey to Topaz*, Tonia stated, “The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the U. S. locked the Japanese Americans behind barbed wire because they thought that they was part of the bombing.” Japanese Americans were interned because Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Tonia further continued by saying, “They (Japanese Americans) would stand up for this country too. Some are just like us.” In her response, Tonia implied that Japanese Americans were as loyal as other Americans.

Some of the participants wondered why many Japanese Americans tried to show their loyalty to America by joining the Army. Some of them also asked Miss Berry why the Japanese helped America although the U. S. government put them in camps. They mentioned, for example, that Mrs. Sakane offered tea to the FBI agents and treated them politely, and they asked Miss Berry why Mrs. Sakane tried to be nice to them (FBI agents). No one pointed out that returning a good deed for an evil deed might have been an element of Asian culture.

Some of the participants mentioned positive aspects in their posttest questionnaires: “The good things I learned about Japanese American were even though American police put them out of their homes they still help them,” wrote Melissa. “I learned that no matter how other people treat them some of them are willing to help their country because they are true Japanese Americans,” wrote

Maria. In this way, after reading the story, some of the participants demonstrated better awareness of Japanese Americans.

Regarding Dragon's Gate

After finishing reading *Dragon's Gate*, the participants, regardless of their gender, responded empathetically to the issues of social justice and injustice. One conspicuous difference in the findings between *Journey to Topaz* and *Dragon's Gate* was that more female participants tended to provide more empathetic comments while reading *Journey to Topaz*.

In reading *Dragon's Gate*, at first, many participants tended to show indifferent attitudes. However, they became interested in the story after they learned such facts as Chinese workers being required to work longer hours but being paid less than American workers, as well as their human rights being denied by being calling "John," and being whipped by an overseer. Several participants became emotional while reading the story and started to demonstrate more empathy in their responses.

For example, Vicky stated, "They helped build the railroad and that they really are hard working people. The Americans called all the Chinese 'John.' I felt heart broken and sad because it was wrong. I also felt mad. They were whipped and not able to leave the railroad when they wanted until, July 1, 1867." Interestingly, Vicky left many questions unanswered in her pretest questionnaire. While reading *Dragon's Gate*, she insisted that she preferred *Journey to Topaz* to *Dragon's Gate* because the protagonist in *Journey to Topaz* was a girl her age. Thus, she felt more connections to *Journey to Topaz* than to *Dragon's Gate*. Vicky also pointed out that Chinese immigrants had an option to come to the U. S. Thus, she was confused about why many Chinese immigrants voluntarily put themselves in such miserable conditions. She did not change her impression about this point while reading the book. However, Vicky also became empathetic while reading the story and wrote empathetic responses for that book as well as for *Journey to Topaz*.

Although Tonia's responses in her posttest questionnaire were not particularly expressive while reading the story, she often mentioned that she was confused to learn that the Chinese workers chose to accept such treatments in a foreign land. In her posttest questionnaire, she wrote, "Chinese people came to America to build a railroad for their dreams to come true." However, she also expressed unhappiness at how Chinese workers were treated on the mountain. "That wasn't right the way the(y) were treated. Being called John and not your real name is disrespectful," she wrote.

Many participants were also furious when they learned that an overseer whipped Otter, the protagonist of *Dragon's Gate*. Tonia was one of them and explicated in her posttest questionnaire, "Kilroy wasn't respecting anyone. And he wants them to do the job for him. Hitting someone or something isn't right. It's disrespectful." As did Vicky, Tonia expressed her heartbroken feeling about this sad part of American history with which she had been unfamiliar.

Although the words used were different, other participants also explicated similar perspectives. Mack expressed his anger by saying, "I did not like when the Americans treated the Chinese like trash. I would feel like I'm a piece of trash that know (no) one likes. It would be very painful. Everyone would need to cooperate."

Melissa also stated, "I think it was horrible. I would be mad because it's just like their calling me out of my name." As a part of her response in the posttest questionnaire, Melissa wrote, "you can learn that Chinese Americans can help real Americans also." Although Melissa's intentions were good, I found it was somewhat odd for her to differentiate between Chinese Americans and "real" Americans. Strictly speaking, Chinese workers were not American citizens yet but immigrants at that time. From Melissa's perspective, it seemed that she thought Chinese Americans were not a part of "real" Americans. Thus, I had difficulty determining whether or not her response was empathetic.

In *Dragon's Gate*, Squeaky, Otter's father, was forced to work at a dangerous spot on the mountain, and when dynamite exploded before he completely left the site, he subsequently became blind. Learning about this incident while reading the

story made many participants emotional. Some of the participants shared their feelings in the posttest questionnaires, considering how they would feel it if their fathers would become blind, “If my father was blind I would be sad. I must be better and cooperative more,” wrote Edward.

Melissa also shared a similar perspective by saying, “It wouldn’t be the same and I will help him by doing whatever I can to help him.”

Vicky also shared her reactions. “I would be very sad but my family and I would have to hold it together and make a lot of adjustments.” Since most of the participants in this study had never had blind fathers in their lives, I perceived that the blinding incident in the book was beyond their expectations and capacities. Their lack of relevant experience must have made it even harder for them to relate to the incident in the story. Thus, no one spelled out concrete plans and strategies in the responses for coping with a blind father.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4

What were the similarities and differences in the participants’ interpretations and understanding between the two stories?

Although the participants identified similarities between the two books since the characters in both books experienced unfairness and injustice, they also saw differences in the types of problems that the characters experienced. Additionally, the participants’ personal or vicarious experiences helped them articulate their emotion and empathy about the incidents in the stories.

Once I started to examine the participants’ responses, I immediately had difficulty analyzing this research question because many responses from the participants were based on the facts in the books. Therefore, their responses were not always necessarily either emotional or empathetic. In the interview sessions, I asked them, “How were Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans alike in the stories?”

When I asked for similarities between the stories, many participants pointed out the unfair living conditions and treatments in this country at that time. For example, Brian stated, “Well, they both got treated unfairly. And, uh, they had

to live in these broken-down places.” Brian’s observation was surely accurate because in *Journey to Topaz*, the Japanese Americans were forced to live in horse stables, and in *Dragon’s Gate*, the Chinese workers were forced to rest in an old and nasty stall with no privacy. He described an additional difference between the stories. “They are different because, uh, it was, uh, in two different times. *Journey to Topaz* is during World War II. *Dragon’s Gate*, I’m not sure, but it’s uh, it’s when they were building the Transcontinental Railroad.”

Although Brian preferred *Journey to Topaz* to *Dragon’s Gate*, when he was interviewed, he often pointed out issues in *Dragon’s Gate* that interested him. Brian mentioned that Otter, a 14 year-old boy, needed to endure hard labor on the mountain in a foreign land. He mentioned that one day he had to help his mother although he did not want to do so. However, Otter’s situation was not like his situation. He said,

His work wasn’t like the work that I have to do. He had to build the railroad. And all I had to do was to take out the tables. I don’t think a kid that young should be working to be doing some job like that. I would be scared. I mean, going, working with all these men you don’t even know....

Brian was often absent from the reading sessions; thus, he failed to turn in his response journals and to fill out his questionnaires. His sporadic participation made it difficult for me to ascertain his interpretations while reading the stories. Thus, I was surprised to find out during the interview that he was quite aware of the differences between his personal situation and Otter’s ordeal on the mountain in *Dragon’s Gate*.

Mack also pointed out similarities between the two stories and then elaborated on the differences based on those similarities.

They both were treated wrong. Well, in *Dragon’s Gate*, they all were called “John” and they didn’t respect them. And in *Journey to Topaz*, they had to go to the nasty camp, the horse stalls and stuff like that. They stayed in the camp.

As some participants expressed their anger in their posttest questionnaires, during the interview, Mack also revealed his anger about the unfair treatments and living conditions that the Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans endured in the books. Although he did not elaborate on his opinions about justice when he was interviewed, Mack showed hatred against the injustice Kilroy inflicted on Otter. “I don’t treat other people like other Americans like Kilroy was treating Otter and them with the whip. I don’t treat people like....”

Regarding similarities and differences in the two stories, Mack further pointed out two more issues during the interview. He mentioned that both the Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans were forced to live in the internment camps. “Well, the Japanese and the Chinese, uh, both, had to be sent to the camps. Because the Chinese, they were building the railroad, they had to be put in the camps. And the Japanese had to be put on the camps.” He further indicated that Japanese Americans did not have to work in their camps while the Chinese workers were required to work in order to construct the railroad. Mack’s observation was accurate because in *Journey to Topaz*, the author does not describe any forced labor by the Japanese Americans. However, in reality, the Japanese Americans were also required to work in the camps.

During her interview, Melissa pointed out that,

The Japanese people were sent away from their families, but the Chinese people were, and the Chinese people had, they volunteered to go to America, and help....The Americans made men (Japanese) up in the family to go. The rest of the families had to leave and go out into camp. But Chinese Americans had a choice.

While reading *Dragon’s Gate*, some of the participants made similar comments, observing that the Chinese workers probably chose to come to the U. S. while the Japanese Americans were forced to go to internment camps. Melissa’s observations of similarities and differences between the two stories were correct; however, in reality, many Chinese workers did not realize how harsh conditions in the U. S. would be.

As a similarity between the two stories, Melissa further mentioned, “They both helped the Americans, even though the Americans did bad things to them. Ummm, I’ve never been forced out of any places. I’ve never been whopped because I didn’t listen....” Especially in *Dragon’s Gate*, the Chinese workers were treated as cheap laborers, but they tried to help each other in order to survive their harsh living conditions. No one had ever forced her to go somewhere, and she had never been beaten with a whip. Her response indicated the limitation of her own personal experience, which she herself realized. Thus, Melissa’s perception should be valued. It was interesting to find out that Melissa had unconsciously excluded Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans from the category of Americans in her response. At a glance, her response seemed empathetic; however, I had difficulty analyzing her intention in her response.

Regarding the differences between the stories, some interviewees pointed out that the stories occurred during different times. *Dragon’s Gate* is a story about when the Transcontinental Railroad was built, but *Journey to Topaz* takes place during World War II. Victoria pointed out, “....they (Japanese Americans) were in camp, while they (Chinese Americans) were building the railroads. And they (Japanese Americans) were in camp because of the war. Yeah, I didn’t know any similarities in the stories.” Victoria could point out the differences between the two stories in her interview; however, she could not point out that the protagonists’ having problems was a similarity between the two stories.

Alice also spelled out similarities and differences between the two stories by saying, “They were alike because they both, because they had problems in the stories. Otter had a lot of problems in that story. When...he was a kid, he wasn’t really strong, when he went beat the pickaxe into the mountain. That was a problem because he got beat for the ax.he needed to build the strength to work. And he also had to bathe in front of people. In that story, (indicated *Journey to Topaz* by her index finger), her father (Yuki’s father) had to leave them (his family). With really short, short, notice, which...they (FBI) came to their house....”

I realized that the participants attempted to have vicarious experiences as they read, although they often struggled to relate to the stories and to identify themselves with the story characters. However, few participants tried to respond based on their own personal experiences, since so many incidents and events in the two stories were beyond their experiences and capacities. Still, they could relate to the fact that in both stories, the protagonists lost something or someone important in their lives. Although the participants' age range was only 10 to 12 years old, many participants had already experienced the loss of pets. For example, Alice spoke,

Yuki's dog died (*Journey to Topaz*) and Uncle Foxfire died (*Dragon's Gate*). Or something of heartbreaking news. I just, just, like, makes me....it just freaks me out.I can't imagine losing a pet, cause I lost three pets....Once of the doggies got cancer. He ended up dying.

Alice further described feelings about losing her pets in her response journal.

I had a dog that died. His name was "Sonke." He had cnase (cancer) and die(d) slowly....when I was only 8. He died at the veate (vet). My dad was the one that was the one that was heart (hurt) most. He cryed (cried) that was the first time I sine (seen) cry.

Alice could incorporate her personal experience and feelings into her responses, but as I analyzed the data, I could not evaluate whether or not her empathetic responses stemmed from either her personality or experience. However, not only Alice but also some of other participants tended to present more empathetic responses while writing about losing their pets.

Tonia developed her own values and demonstrated her empathy and sorrow toward Yuki and her dog while reading *Journey to Topaz*.

Now I feel that America was wrong of making the Japanese in America go to camps and on top of all of that Yuki lost her dog. (It died.) My dog died too. It was my best friend. I love that dog. His name was "Spot." I felt so horrible. He died because he tried to follow me to school and he was hit by a car.

As another example, Amy noted in her response journal,

Yuki has lost her dog Pepper and she couldn't go anywhere to cry about his death. She couldn't be alone. I lost 4 hamsters there (their) names were: Gittles, Pinky, Lucky, and Little Devil. It was very sad. I couldn't be alone either. Everybody tried to make me feel good.

Both male and female participants expressed their sorrow about losing pets.

For example, Edward noted in his response journal:

Yuki felt sad. I know because I had a dog and he was great. One time my dad left the door and gate open and he got out. I was sad that we couldn't find him even when we put up flyers.

It seemed that many participants wanted to avoid reminiscing about losing their pets because it was not a comfortable experience. However, many of the participants attempted to have vicarious experiences about Yuki's loss. I am not certain whether or not their responses stemmed from either their personalities or experiences; however, having had similar experiences might help them relate to the stories.

Emergent Themes

While analyzing the data based on the four research questions, five themes emerged. Through reading the two stories, the participants attempted to (a) *identify themselves with story characters and expressed their feelings for the characters*. Some of the participants further (b) *developed their empathy toward the characters* and (c) *projected themselves in to a particular situation in the process of reading*. Some of the participants started to (d) *become more sensitive about social justice and injustice issues* and (e) finally, began to *develop their own individual values through the process of reading*.

Within-case Analyses

Case 1

Alice was one of the female Caucasian participants, who stayed in the classroom for a long time in order to finish writing her response. She was shy and often afraid to articulate her thoughts during the reading sessions, and I often had

difficulty understanding her statements. While writing her journal responses, however, she usually tried to talk with me. Although I wanted to talk with her in order to get to know her more, I needed to discourage her from doing so since I was afraid that she would be late for her school bus. Before she read the stories, she had little background knowledge about Japanese-American and Chinese-American cultures. However, I recognized that she attempted to identify herself with story characters as she read.

In her response journal, Alice discussed the death of her dog. It was a very difficult experience for her because she was only 8 years old. Additionally, her dog died slowly because of cancer. Her father cried in front of her, which also became a shocking experience for Alice, since her father was always a strong male figure, both mentally and physically. During the interview, Alice stated “Sonke,” her dog, was like her father’s baby. Although Yuki’s dog in *Journey to Topaz* did not die in front of Yuki and her family, but rather occurred after they were put in an internment camp, Alice stated that she could understand how difficult it was for Yuki and her family to lose a pet.

In addition to the loss of her pet, Alice was the only participant who talked about a relative’s death during her interview. She wanted to share her experience with me during the interview because the topic related to *Dragon’s Gate*. In the story, Uncle Foxfire, Otter’s uncle, died in a blizzard, which was a heartbreaking event for many participants in the study. Since the participants were fifth graders, few of them had any experience losing their family members and relatives. Alice’s experience became especially invaluable. When she began to talk about her experience of her grandfather’s death, I was confused since she started to call her grandfather “Papa.” During the interview with Alice, Miss Martin was in the classroom. As soon as she noticed the misunderstanding between me and Alice, she advised me that “Papa” means a grandfather in many Southern states. Alice went into detail about her grandfather’s death. She described how Kate, her younger sister, was still a baby at that time, but she realized how serious her grandfather’s condition was and that he would eventually die. Alice remembered that Kate kept

crying over that. His death was certainly a sad and horrible experience in her life. Due to that experience, however, she also noticed that she could more easily relate to Otter while reading *Dragon's Gate*.

During the interview, as she elaborated on her response to *Journey to Topaz*, I often felt that she confused Japanese and Japanese Americans while discussing the book with me, because at times she used them interchangeably. She stated during the interview that Americans put Japanese Americans in prison but did not provide Japanese Americans the right kind of medicine, food, and shelters. She stated that it was not right.

Before she began to read the stories, she had known nothing about either Japanese Americans or Chinese Americans. I am not sure how much she learned about the differences between the two cultures while reading the stories. However, after reading the stories, at least, she started to relate to the two stories since she identified herself with the story characters and developed empathy for them. Since Alice mentioned that the characters in the stories were put in such unfair situations, I considered that she knew what was right and wrong in the stories. In other words, she perceived social justice and injustice as she read. However, while analyzing her individual data, I could not find any concrete actions and determinations that she would probably take in the future. Additionally, I realized that she could identify herself with the story characters but was not able to project herself into the situations in the stories.

Case 2

Melissa was one of the three African-American girls in this study. Soon after the study began, she asked me how long the study would last because she said she found it boring. A girl sitting next to her said to her, "It's rude." However, Melissa further countered, "But my mom told me to be honest." In fact, I was shocked by her remark. According to my observations during the entire study, however, Melissa was not articulate and tended to be quieter than others. Thus, I had the impression that she was rather shy. She often raised her hand and attempted to respond, but her responses did not answer the teacher's questions. For example, once Miss Martin

did not understand what Melissa said. When she requested further elaboration from Melissa, Melissa grew quiet and avoided any elaboration. However, her responses in the response journal and the questionnaires were often more detailed than other participants. She seemed to become more involved in the study once she started to read the book.

In the interview, Melissa stated that she liked *Dragon's Gate* better than *Journey to Topaz*. One reason was that there was more action in the story. For example, Squeaky, Otter's father, became blind because of the dynamite explosion, Otter was whipped by Kilroy because he did not follow Kilroy's orders, and Uncle Foxfire, Otter's uncle, was killed in a blizzard. Melissa felt that it was very sad to learn that these incidents happened in this country in the past.

Although Melissa was sympathetic about the situations that the Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans encountered in the two books, when I asked her about the Chinese Americans, she stated that her honest impressions about Chinese and Chinese Americans before reading *Dragon's Gate* were not positive. For example, she had seen movies about the Chinese Mafia and did not like the way they treated Americans in the movies. However, after reading *Dragon's Gate*, she began to realize that the Chinese people had worked for Americans in earlier times. When I asked her about *Journey to Topaz*, she also stated that the Japanese Americans tried to be nice to Americans although they were put in the internment camps.

I felt that she developed a certain degree of empathy toward the story characters while reading the two stories, but I was also confused while conducting an interview with Melissa because she did not acknowledge the Japanese and Chinese Americans as Americans. As previously mentioned, Melissa described in her posttest questionnaire, "You can learn that Chinese Americans can help real Americans also." It seemed that to her, Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans were simply foreigners. Although I felt that she developed empathy, I also felt that she had an ethnocentric perspective about herself as an American.

During the interview, I also asked Melissa to elaborate on some of the comments in her response journal. She mentioned, “You can’t learn from people that are different.” Although she did not use terms such as “racism” and “discrimination,” she mentioned that differences are not negative and should be considered positive features of human beings. In other words, she meant that we could not simply evaluate human values from physical appearances. While analyzing the data, I often found similar comments from other participants. As already delineated in the findings of this study, the Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans did not experience discrimination due to their physical traits and differences. While reading the two stories, however, Melissa developed her own values on this issue, which I considered a positive aspect of my findings for this study.

During the interview, I asked Melissa why she would want to volunteer for the Army if she had been in Ken’s situation. In her response journal, she stated that she would want to volunteer for the Army not as a Japanese but as an American. According to my observations, she did not try to project herself into Ken’s situation. Possibly, Melissa had difficulty relating to Ken since she was a girl, although I was unable to obtain concrete evidence to sustain this observation.

During her interview, she described how she was influenced by her mother. Her mother, who had been in the military before Melissa was born, would have traveled if she had not given birth to Melissa and her brother. Initially, she learned the significance of learning about cultural differences from her mother, she mentioned. While reading the two books in this study, this influence was further reinforced, according to her description. Through the process of reading the two books in the study, this influence eventually formed part of her values.

Case 3

Vicky, one of the Caucasian female participants in this study, was an articulate student who was often assigned to read the stories aloud. I realized that she had already developed a high level of reading comprehension and skills, making her reading fluent. I had some opportunities to talk with her after the reading

sessions. Although she had learned some aspects of culture from her father, since he likes history, Vicky was unfamiliar with any Japanese Americans or Chinese Americans before reading the stories. One of the reasons that she participated in this study was that she was not familiar with Asian cultures, even though her mother was originally from the Philippines. Vicky thought that might be a good chance for her to learn something about Asians.

Vicky told me that she could relate to *Journey to Topaz* more easily than *Dragon's Gate* because of the age and the gender of the protagonist in the story. Yuki, the protagonist of the story, was an 11 year-old girl. Vicky felt sorry for Yuki because they were close in age, and yet Yuki had to endure hardship in her life such as losing her house, personal belongings and her pet, and finally, being separated from her father. Understanding the story events was simply beyond her expectations and capacities. She did not want to believe that these things occurred in a time in the history in this country. Vicky mentioned that "they were betrayed by their own country." I felt that she was upset by the injustice done to Japanese Americans by the U. S. government during World War II. Although she said that she could relate to the story, during the interview, I also realized that she was afraid to project herself into such a situation because she did not want to imagine the emotional pain if her father were taken away by the FBI agents.

Since Vicky liked the book *Journey to Topaz*, I asked her how she was different from Yuki. "We lived in a different time," she said, also pointing out the issues of citizenship. She mentioned that Yuki was not allowed to become a citizen while Vicky herself was an American citizen. Since Yuki's father was *Issei*, a first generation of Japanese American, he was not considered a U. S. citizen at that time. When Vicky brought up this issue, I thought that she misunderstood it because Yuki was a *Nisei* (second generation) and a U. S. citizen. Although her perception was incorrect, however, I realized that Vicky meant that the U. S. government did not want to treat Japanese Americans as citizens at that time, which made her sad and mad while reading the story.

Pertaining to *Dragon's Gate*, Vicky described her emotional distance while reading the story compared with while reading *Journey to Topaz*. Otter, the protagonist of the story, was a 14-year-old boy. His age and gender differences created emotional distance and made it more difficult for her to relate to the story, according to Vicky. Additionally, some incidents in the story were simply beyond her expectations and capacities. Thus, she was often confused about how to interpret the situations and incidents in the story. For example, Otter accidentally killed one of the members of the Manchu tribes in China, and then he was brought to the mountains in America in order to join his father and uncle. According to Vicky, *Dragon's Gate* was a good story, but some incidents in the story were too extreme and too monotonous. Vicky often noticed that she was thinking about something else while reading the story. Although she tried to devote herself to reading the story, she also recognized that she had difficulty concentrating on the story and projecting herself into the situations in the story.

During the interview, Vicky described how she felt while reading the two stories. Although Vicky was a good reader, I often noticed that she did not elaborate much on her thoughts in her response journal, which was another reason that I wanted to conduct an interview with her. According to my observations, however, I realized that she developed empathy while reading the two stories and tried to identify with the protagonist while reading *Journey to Topaz*.

Although Vicky expressed sympathy toward the characters in both stories, I could not find concrete evidence through the interview to support that she developed her own personal values while reading the stories.

Case 4

Mack, one of the six Caucasian boys in the study, was a good reader and writer who enjoyed participating in the study. He liked to read long stories such as the *Harry Potter* series. Not only was he a good reader, but he was also a confident reader. One of the reasons that Mack decided to participate in the study was that his father is an Iraqi, his mother is an American, and he himself was born in Iraq. He said he was always interested in learning about cultures outside his own.

According to his description during the interview, he had some chances to learn about World War II, Pearl Harbor, and the Civil War. However, he had not known that Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, or that the Chinese workers helped construct the Transcontinental Railroad while the North and the South were fighting during the Civil War. Although both stories were sad as many of other participants insisted, Mack was interested in the stories and also said that he was more educated than before. During his interview, Mack explained that he liked *Dragon's Gate* better than *Journey to Topaz* because the book was longer than *Journey to Topaz*. Mack also liked *Journey to Topaz* and wondered what happened after the story characters were released from the camp. From his point of view, *Journey to Topaz* was not long enough.

While conducting the interview, I often felt that Mack was sympathetic toward the characters of the stories. For example, Mack pointed out, "Kilroy pulled out the whip and was gonna beat Otter" in *Dragon's Gate*. "Well, I was like, I really didn't know that Americans were going to do this." From Mack's perspective, "people should be treated equally. It doesn't matter where they are from." Through reading the story, he became sympathetic and emotional toward the main character in *Dragon's Gate*; however, at the same time, Mack did not try to identify himself with Otter. In other words, he showed indignation toward the injustice to the Chinese Americans by the Americans. He did not try to identify himself with any story character or to project himself into a particular situation.

Although I did not see that Mack tried to identify himself with the story characters while reading *Dragon's Gate*, once I found a comment that he tried to project himself when he discussed *Dragon's Gate* in the beginning of the interview. It seemed that he did not want to accept the fact that in the story Americans had treated people from another country such as China with so much violence. Mack succinctly said, "I don't treat other people like other Americans like Kilroy was treating Otter and them with whip. I don't treat people like that...." Although it was a brief verbal comment about *Dragon's Gate*, Mack attempted to identify with one of

the characters in the story. Other than that, I was unable to observe that he tried to identify himself with any of the characters during the interview.

Finally, Mack preferred *Dragon's Gate* to *Journey to Topaz*, continuing to elaborate on his thoughts and ideas about the story. While reading the story, Mack wondered why many Chinese workers decided to stay on the mountain to help complete the Transcontinental Railroad. This became an issue among the participants while reading the story. According to Mack's interpretation, the Chinese workers decided to stay on the mountain in order to earn respect from Americans and to show their respect for their own native country. Leaving the harsh living conditions was possible and at times easier than enduring unfairness and violence, according to Mack. Learning about his own individual values was interesting. However, Mack ignored the fact that the Chinese workers did not have an option either to stay on the mountain or to descend from the mountain until they completed their tasks.

Case 5

Brian, one of the six Caucasian boys who participated in this study, often missed the reading sessions, and I could not acquire all of the data I wanted from him. I read his response journal, but he often did not elaborate on his thoughts in his journal.

When I was looking for an interviewee, he volunteered to talk about the stories with me. In the beginning of the interview, he described his Vietnamese friend and Vietnamese food. He compared Vietnamese food and Chinese food, telling me that although he had never tried any Japanese food, he definitely would do so in the future. At first, I thought that Brian had simply developed some stereotypical concepts while reading the stories. However, during the interview, he also demonstrated his own unique findings while reading the stories.

Brian said that he preferred *Journey to Topaz* to *Dragon's Gate* because the story included more action, stating that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor; thus, the U. S. government was afraid of the Japanese Americans. The government ultimately put them into internment camps. When I asked him whether or not he

understood the differences between Japanese and Japanese Americans, he confidently responded to me by saying, “yes.”

Although Brian was a boy, while describing *Journey to Topaz*, he was able to identify himself with Yuki and further attempted to project himself into the situations in the book. For example, he stated, “If I was the one who got taken away from my family, if I was Yuki, uh, I would be like pretty upset, if they took my dad away...” Brian was not hesitant in doing so and honestly started to express his feelings about the story, which was one of the positive findings.

Pertaining to Brian’s perspectives about social justice and injustice, I found some unique aspects. For example, when he discussed *Journey to Topaz*, Brian mentioned that Japanese Americans were innocent people, and it was wrong that they were treated badly. Brian emphasized that they were American citizens but not Japanese. I perceived that his observation about Japanese Americans was not only accurate but also empathetic. During the interview, Brian implied that it was sad that American citizens were threatened by their own government.

Another finding Brian demonstrated during the interview was that in *Dragon’s Gate*, many of the Chinese workers were called “John” by American overseers. Brian mentioned that it was not right for Kilroy, an overseer, to call the Chinese workers “John.” I asked Brian what they should have been called. He responded that at least they should be called “John 1, John 2, or something like that.” Since it was still not right for them to be called in that fashion, I was shocked; however, Brian immediately corrected his suggestion. He stated, “Well, they should have been called by their real names.” Although he corrected his first suggestion, he was the only one who suggested that they should be called “John 1 and John 2.” I am not sure why he provided me with such a suggestion, but he may have been simply exploring the possibilities when I asked him the question.

Cross-case Analysis

I conducted interviews with nine out of 19 participants in this study. Out of nine interviewees, I then chose five people, and within-analyzed and reported the findings. Based on my data analysis, I realized that all of the five participants

developed empathy while reading the two stories, but at the same time, they also demonstrated some uniqueness.

For example, Alice was reflective but not verbal, compared with the other participants. She often stayed in the classroom after each session and tried to write down her thoughts. When she could not write a long reflection because of the time constraints, she, at times, elaborated on her thoughts at home and submitted her responses the next day.

Although Alice was not familiar with the books read in this study prior to the study, during the interview she responded to me that she knew a few things about history during the Civil War and slavery. I asked her how she learned about them, and she responded that she learned them at school, from the books, or on the Internet. However, Alice said that she was not familiar with anything about World War II. During the interview, she said, “I heard that they had said that the Japanese Americans were put in prison. I heard a little bit but not...I certainly didn’t learn as much as the book [*Journey to Topaz*] taught me.” Her comments confirmed what Miss Berry told me about students no longer learning about recent history issues in elementary school. Recent history such as World War II is now taught at middle school in Louisiana, according to Miss Berry. Thus, according to Alice, my study provided her with a new and positive experience. She basically liked both books, but she liked *Dragon’s Gate* better than *Journey to Topaz*. However, she liked *Journey to Topaz* very much. She related her own experience with the story characters and events. Alice discussed the loss of her pets during the interview with me.

It just, just, like, makes me...it just freaks me out. Even though I can imagine losing a pet, cause I lost three pets. A bird, a bunny rabbit, ah..., a doggie. A doggie, doggie, doggie.... One of the doggies got cancer. He ended up dying....Yeah...I wrote that....That was his baby.... It [her doggie’s death] caused my dad to cry...he doesn’t cry....

Alice also discussed this issue in her response journal, where she elaborated further: “If I had a odaer [an order] to move agin [again], I would be confused, scared and it would be weared [weird].”

Many of the events in the book were extreme and sad, but Alice was positive all the way through reading *Journey to Topaz*. Through reading the stories in this study, Alice projected herself into the situations and identified herself with the story characters. Her daily experience helped her relate to the stories. She also became more sensitive about social justice and injustice issues while reading the two stories. I realized that she translated the social justice issues in the book to social justice issues within her own life experiences. She also discussed her opinions about the importance of names during our interview.

I was ashamed about that....That was sad. It wouldn't...what if they thought, they had just called one person? I think they should be called by their own names. And not by their nicknames. They didn't make an effort to learn their names. ... I would go and ask your name.

As previously mentioned, Alice was not very verbal during our interviews. Additionally, I realized that she had some peculiar ways of interacting with people that often made it difficult for me to transcribe what she said during the interview. Although she was more comfortable with expressing her thoughts and ideas in writing, she stated that it is best to ask a person's name directly if she does not know someone's name. I interpreted that this was one of her values, and that it stemmed from her own life and her parents.

Compared with Alice's case, Vicky was more verbal and sensitive about unfairness and injustice in the two stories when I interviewed her. She expressed herself well and was a proficient reader. She had never been hesitant reading the stories assigned by the teachers in the study.

According to Vicky, she could identify herself with a story character only if the gender and age matched with hers. “I like *Journey to Topaz* better because I could relate to it because she was an eleven-year old girl just like me.” She further

continued, “In *Dragon’s Gate*, I couldn’t relate, uh....I couldn’t relate to it....Because he was a 14 year-old boy, and he was...I couldn’t really imagine the situations.”

During our interview, Vicky shared her thoughts about the two books. When I reviewed her response journal, I often thought that she understood the contents of the books well. She was a good writer but often simply commented on major points from the stories. She avoided elaborating on her thoughts after reading. According to my observations, however, Vicky could also relate to a story character fairly easily even if the gender of the story’s protagonist was male, contrary to her own evaluation.

For example, as she mentioned during the interview, in *Dragon’s Gate*, Otter was a 14-year-old boy, and in *Journey to Topaz*, Yuki was an 11-year-old girl. A three-year age difference exists between Yuki and Otter. From my perspective, a three-year age difference was not a huge gap, although it might seem like a much larger gap from a child’s point of view. However, the incidents in both stories were out of the realm of Vicky’s life experiences. Thus, although Vicky did not realize it herself, she could relate to both stories, according to my observations. However, she occasionally tended to be afraid of projecting herself into the situations described in the books because of the extremeness of the story events. For example, during the interview, she pointed out how Otter was brought to the U. S. “Like, like um, when, in *Dragon’s Gate*, when he went and the Manchu died, how he went to the camp, and everything...his friend fell in the culvert. I just, I couldn’t imagine that happening.” When she discussed *Journey to Topaz*, Vicky further mentioned, “It was sad that her dad got taken away and like, I could imagine my dad got taken away and how sad I would be, ah...I could relate to that.”

While analyzing the interview data from Vicky, I realized that her comfort relating to the female story character in *Journey to Topaz* as opposed to connecting to a little older male character in *Dragon’s Gate* might have simply stemmed from her preconceptions. I did not see this type of feature when I analyzed Alice’s reactions and responses. Although Vicky demonstrated hatred toward the events in the books, I could not observe that she developed any strategies in order to cope

with such unfairness in her life. Neither could I see this feature in the data obtained from Alice.

Melissa was another female participant in this study. While reading her responses in the questionnaires and response journal, I recognized that she had developed empathy toward the characters but that she was not good at expressing her thoughts in public. Thus, conducting an interview was another means for me to acquire her interpretations as she read the two stories. She definitely demonstrated her uniqueness in her interview. Although she was sympathetic and also expressed her dislike of the unfairness and injustice in the stories, she had not openly attempted to identify herself with the story characters and project herself into the situations when I interviewed her. Melissa often confused the Japanese Americans and the Chinese Americans during the interview. Although she did make comments and responses that revealed sympathy for the characters, still, she designated the Japanese Americans and the Chinese Americans as foreigners or outsiders during the interview. For example, in her interview, she stated, “No matter what...um, what the most Americans did to them, they worked together. They helped together, and they constructed the railroad” when she was describing *Dragon’s Gate*. Strictly speaking, at that time, most Chinese workers came to the U. S. to work. Thus, her interpretation was correct, but she further differentiated in a similar way by saying, “They (Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans) both, they both helped the Americans, even though the Americans did bad things to them.” Although her statements were partially accurate, I felt a little awkward when I heard these sentiments from her. Additionally, in the end of her interview session, Melissa stated, “[Just because] Chinese Americans look different than other Americans that are in America doesn’t mean you can’t learn from a Chinese person.” As mentioned before, she confused Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans. However, during the interview, I realized that she also confused Chinese and Chinese Americans in her interview and revealed biases toward Asian and Asian American people in general.

I found similar features when I reviewed her written responses from the questionnaires and response journal. For instance, in her posttest questionnaire on *Journey to Topaz*, Melissa responded to the question: “What did you like least about the story?” She responded by saying, “the way Americans put them (Japanese Americans) out of their homes.” Additionally, in her posttest questionnaire on *Dragon’s Gate*, she mentioned, “Chinese Americans can help real Americans also.” Although she attempted to provide a positive comment for both Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans, she unconsciously excluded both Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans from the category of Americans.

In her response journal, Melissa also discussed whether or not she would volunteer for the Army. Many female participants responded that they would not volunteer for the Army. Thus, Melissa became one of few female participants who showed a willingness to serve her country. Melissa was influenced by her mother who had herself served in the U. S. Army. Although she demonstrated her willingness to volunteer for the Army, Melissa did not mention anything about Ken’s situation in her response (Ken was the Japanese American character who volunteered for the Army in *Journey to Topaz*). Thus, I interpreted that she did not project herself into Ken’s situation in the story in her response journal. Melissa wrote in her response journal, “I would go because I would represent myself as an American and not just as a Japanese (American). I would represent my country. I would write my family every day to know what’s happening.” Although she tried to become more inclusive of Japanese Americans in her response, it also seemed as if Melissa differentiated Japanese Americans from the category of Americans. Additionally, she confused the differences between Japanese and Japanese Americans in her statement. Interpreting her written responses was often confusing and prompted me to wonder whether she really had developed empathy while reading the stories.

The two male participants I interviewed, Mack and Brian, both developed empathy while reading the stories, but they also demonstrated different characteristics from one another. Mack preferred *Dragon’s Gate* to *Journey to Topaz*

because *Dragon's Gate* included more action, and the story was longer than *Journey to Topaz*. Like Melissa, Mack often confused the differences between Japanese and Japanese Americans during the interview. For example, he stated, "I didn't know that they (Americans) took all the Japanese men and put them into camps, like they were different from their families, and their families had to go into a different camp." However, I did not realize that Mack demonstrated this confusion until I began to analyze his interview data. Mack was furious about the unfairness and injustice done to the Japanese Americans and the Chinese Americans. However, regardless of the stories, or the gender or age of the story characters, he did not attempt to identify himself with the story's characters during the interview. It is difficult to find quotes from our interview that specifically demonstrate this feature, but Mack repeatedly stated, "I feel like I was educated" in this study or "That's something I learned" from this book.

Mack seemingly avoided identifying himself with any story character during the interview although he attempted to express some positive features that he developed by reading the two books in this study. I thought that was merely due to the fact that he was a boy and that boys might tend to identify with characters from books less frequently than girls. However, when I conducted an interview with Brian, he showed some different features, stating that he preferred *Journey to Topaz* to *Dragon's Gate*. Although Yuki, the protagonist of the story, was female, Brian began to identify himself with Yuki and projected himself into some of the situations in the story. Brian mentioned during the interview, "If I was the one who got taken away from my family, if I was Yuki, uh, I would be like pretty upset, if they took my dad away...." Brian also mentioned, "They were just innocent people," and "The Japanese Americans didn't like the fact, Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor because they were Americans citizens." I did not hear similar statements when I interviewed Mack. However, I did not see this feature from other male participants who were involved in the study, either. Since he liked *Journey to Topaz*, Brian discussed *Journey to Topaz* during the interview.

Regarding *Dragon's Gate*, Brian discussed the fact that Chinese workers were called the same name such as "John" in the story. Although Brian finally changed his suggestion, at first he mentioned that Chinese workers should have been called "John 1" and "John 2" in lieu of being called simply "John." Realizing that his suggestion was perhaps insensitive, he then suggested that they should have been called by their own names. "They should be called by their real names," he said. Based on this statement, I would conclude that Brian became more sensitive about social justice and injustice issues. However, Brian was the only participant who provided me the above suggestion such as John 1 and John 2 in the study, and I believe this suggestion demonstrated initial insensitivity toward the Chinese workers in the story.

While cross-analyzing the data, I also found some idiosyncrasies in the interviewees. For example, Melissa stated, "[Just because] Chinese Americans look different than other Americans that are in America doesn't mean you can't learn from a Chinese person." I found similar comments when I analyzed research question 3, because some of the participants often pointed out this issue in the questionnaires and response journals. In fact, this feature was also found when I analyzed question 4 from other participants. However, Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans did not endure the ordeals because of their physical traits and differences, but I realized that Melissa developed her own individual values through the process of reading. During the interviews, however, she was the only one to point out this issue.

While analyzing the data, I realized that the participants' interpretations as they read the two stories often changed and developed. Their interpretations had further evolved once they finished reading the stories. At first, many participants focused on a particular character in each story and then attempted to find similarities and differences between themselves and that character. It is difficult to conclude how much the participants in the study became sensitive to the cultural issues and differences represented in the two multicultural books. However,

providing an opportunity to read stories from different cultures encouraged many readers in the study to have vicarious experiences through the process of reading.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Summary of the Findings

Literature-based instruction demands that readers nurture high level thinking about texts (Au, 1998). When I talked with one of the teachers before the study began, she mentioned that all of the fifth graders at Filmore Elementary School were familiar with reading trade books. Although her comment was true, the participants were not particularly familiar with reflecting upon story events as they read, according to my observations. However, while reading the two books in this study, many participants began to learn how to read stories differently. In other words, they demonstrated differences in their interpretations while reading the stories.

In this section of the chapter, I will present my summary of the findings based on the four research questions, along with my observations.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

What were the fifth graders' interpretations of Japanese- and Chinese-American cultures before reading the stories?

Before the participants began to read *Journey to Topaz*, many of them could not differentiate between Japanese and Japanese Americans. When I administered a pretest questionnaire on Japanese-American culture before they read *Journey to Topaz*, many participants were able to point out only the names of Japanese foods such as sushi. When Miss Berry asked me whether or not it was acceptable for the participants to point out something about Japanese culture instead of Japanese-American culture in their questionnaires, I agreed but at the same time, I was somewhat shocked at the lack of their knowledge about Japanese-American culture. However, I also realized that I was a cultural outsider of Japanese-American culture, and that I needed to be aware of the students' difficulties in pointing out something new in their lives. Thus, I documented this issue in my journal, as follows:

Today was the first day of my data collection. I administered the first open-ended questionnaire. I was a little nervous since I still couldn't tell their names. It seemed they were also nervous. Oops, many kids didn't bring their pencils and notebooks. Once they started to fill out their questionnaires, they became quiet. Yeah, five minutes, well, no, no, probably a few minutes. They talked a lot. Miss Berry said to them, "Be quiet!" I gave them the questionnaires and then they started to fill out the forms. Some girls were staring at me. Why??? Hey...Then, one of them started to ask Miss Berry something. I just turned a blind eye. Then, Miss Berry asked me whether it was OK for them to write something about Japanese culture. Sure, sure! No problem! I hope they know something about Japanese culture. Unconsciously, I looked at one of the questionnaires. One of the male participants, I still don't know his name.... He wrote SUSHI on his questionnaire. Oh, my God! All right, that's fine with me! fine! That's what I thought!

This journal entry was briefly written on the first day of data collection. Since it was the first day, I did not elaborate on my thoughts.

Before reading *Dragon's Gate*, some of the participants clearly indicated confusion regarding the Chinese and Japanese, essentially seeing no difference between them. It occurred in their questionnaires and informal conversations. Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans share the same physical traits such as black hair and a medium-tone skin color. The differences between them are not obvious such as those between black and white individuals. They seemed disinclined to distinguish the differences although that distinction was important to me as a researcher. In informal settings, I often made a correction when the participants interchangeably used the terms such as Chinese and Japanese. Some participants corrected their mistakes soon, but some did not often care about my correction at all.

More participants tended to show indifferent attitudes toward these two groups of Asian Americans before reading the books than after reading the books. I did not have an opportunity to confirm that they began to differentiate between the Japanese Americans and the Chinese Americans by analyzing the two sets of questionnaires. In fact, during the interviews, some of the interviewees still unconsciously used the terms interchangeably.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What were the interpretations of fifth graders when they engaged in writing and discussing their thoughts while reading literary works from two different Asian cultures?

Regarding their initial indifferences toward *Dragon's Gate*, once the participants started to read the book, their empathy for the story characters grew. Although this finding overlaps with one of the findings in Research Question 3, many participants, regardless of their gender, made emotional comments about the situations that Otter and the other Chinese workers encountered in the book, *Dragon's Gate*. Some of the participants stated that they could not believe that those things were simply done by people in this country, and that they would be very sad if they were forced to work at dangerous places on the icy mountains and were treated by someone with a whip. As Au (2000) maintains, and I found to be true in this study, reading stories motivates young readers and narrows the distance between the texts they are reading and their own lives.

The participants began to relate to the characters while reading the stories. A major difference in the findings between *Journey to Topaz* and *Dragon's Gate* is that more female participants related to the main character in *Journey to Topaz*, most likely because of her age and gender. Cherland (1992 & 1994) reports that in her studies, more female participants developed empathy than male participants, and her female participants also included more emotional comments in their responses. However, in *Dragon's Gate*, regardless of their gender, the participants began to relate to the book's main character. "The characters in a story influence children's response, since children tend to identify with protagonists of their own

age or slightly older,” according to Davison (1988, p. 38). Although I did not see this characteristic while the participants read *Dragon’s Gate*, Davison’s observation on gender and age of readers was true when my participants read *Journey to Topaz*.

Journey to Topaz and *Dragon’s Gate* are classified as multicultural stories, which means that in this study, the participants read stories outside their culture. Not only were the cultures represented in the stories different than their own culture but also they were foreign to them. In fact, many of the participants knew almost nothing about either Japanese-American or Chinese-American cultures prior to the study. Because they had only limited contact with other cultures, they would not have to deal with these cultures unless they wanted to do so. This is also common for many older students such as teacher trainees who read stories outside their cultures. As Chevalier and Houser (1997) maintain, many participants struggled to understand the meanings of the stories at first because their previous beliefs were challenged. There was no exception with the fifth graders in this study. They must have felt more emotional distance about the two stories in this study than they might have while reading stories with more familiar cultural contexts. However, those differences are not always perceived negatively (Goodman, 1970 & Smith, 1971). I realized that differences between the participants’ culture and the cultures in the books did not necessarily work in a negative fashion. Rather, while reading the stories, some of the participants formed more favorable and empathetic comments about the cultures depicted in the stories.

In this study, I also realized that reading the stories and discussing socially sensitive issues became a threshold for many participants in order to consider the significance of social justice issues in their future lives. By focusing on the story events, the participants became more reflective while and after reading the stories than before participating in this study. Although the story events were often extreme and shocking, some of the participants were informed of historical facts through the stories, which in turn, became established as new knowledge.

Based on my observations, I further discovered that each student had different styles of expressing his/her thoughts about the stories while reading. As Bruner (1996) asserts, different types of narratives, providing the participants with alternative means to express their thoughts and questions about the stories, worked well. For example, Alice and Melissa were more comfortable expressing their thoughts through writing than the others were. Alice occasionally tried to find a chance to talk with me about the stories in private. Melissa did not attempt to talk to me in private, but I realized that she was more comfortable expressing her thoughts during the individual interview. She often elaborated on her written responses during the interview. The response journals served as a useful communicative means for interaction as Wollman-Bonilla & Werchadlo (1995) had found in their own study. Collecting multiple forms of data such as field notes, questionnaires, response journals, and interviews also helped enhance the trustworthiness of the interpretations of the data from the participants in this study and allowed the participants to express their thoughts about the stories.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

How did their interpretations change after they read each story?

I had difficulty knowing when the participants began to develop empathy, either while or after reading the stories. It sometimes occurred while reading each book or after they finished reading the book. My finding for this research question was that their interpretations had been evolving all the way while they were engaged in this study. Additionally, I could not justify whether the participants developed a true understanding of Japanese-American and Chinese-American cultures while or after reading the stories. However, as Bruner (1990) maintains, the process of reading and recounting narratives encourages readers to have vicarious experiences. In fact, some of the participants began to relate to events in the books, although they still felt a tremendous gap between their current lives and the situations that the characters in the books experienced.

Another important finding was illustrated by comments of some of the participants, such as Charlie when he pointed out, “I learned that you can’t judge a person by their looks.” Charlie meant that to apply to Japanese Americans in *Journey to Topaz*. As previously mentioned, Japanese Americans were not sent to internment camps because of their physical traits or differences, but because Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. As Stephan (1999) asserts, stereotypes are beliefs, and prejudice is comprised of negative attitudes toward a particular social group or the differences that they exhibit. Through analyzing Charlie’s comment in his posttest questionnaire, I realized that Charlie had disconfirmed the stereotypical concepts that he had previously embraced about Asians. The participants who made similar comments probably believed that physical traits and differences would become the causes of racism and discrimination.

I also felt that Betty disconfirmed her stereotypical concept in her posttest questionnaire by saying, “Japanese Americans aren’t so mean and they love each other as any other person would.” It seemed that she had her own stereotypical concepts about Japanese Americans disconfirmed through reading the story.

In the cases of Charlie and Betty, it was impossible to indicate the degree of their disconfirming levels through this study since Stephan (1999) did not provide any measurement in his discussion. However, I felt that some of these participants started to learn how to observe their own beliefs from different angles through the process of reading.

In the posttest questionnaire on *Dragon’s Gate*, the participants demonstrated some different features. The participants actively participated in reading and discussions regardless of their gender. Thus, many social injustice issues made the participants more sensitive through the process of reading the story.

I am uncertain how much the participants developed their decision-making strategies in terms of social injustice issues after they finished reading the stories. Through data analysis, I realized that some of the participants had become responsive to social justice and injustice issues in the stories, and had also

demonstrated their individual values regarding decision-making issues in *Journey to Topaz* when they said that they would be willing to volunteer for service in the Army.

While or after they read *Dragon's Gate*, many participants also demonstrated a sense of unfairness concerning the fact that the Chinese workers were forced to work under such gruesome living conditions on the mountains. The participants became sensitive about the book's events, and their interpretations were certainly refined. "The more sophisticated the reader, the better equipped he is to accept or reject such habitual patterns to see (the) limitations or interdependence" (Rosenblatt, 1938/1996, p.136). The participants were not familiar with reflecting upon their thoughts and questions before participating in the study. In this study, they were encouraged to become emotional and empathetic and to think about the similarities and differences between the characters' situations and their own lives. In other words, they could not depend on their own styles of reading stories. As a result, some participants began to compare and contrast between the story events and their lives, and between the reality with which they were familiar and the imaginary world. I felt that their reading styles became more sophisticated.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4

What were the similarities and differences in the students' interpretations and understanding of the two stories?

Many events in the two books were too extreme for the fifth-grade participants. Generally speaking, it was impossible for them to connect these extreme events with their personal experiences. However, some of the events, such as the loss of a family pet in *Journey to Topaz*, were more common to the students than were other events, and often encouraged some of the participants to relate to the events, further allowing them to elaborate on their thoughts and experience. "Story, in a word, is vicarious experience, the treasury of narratives into which we can enter includes, ambiguously, either 'reports of real experience' or offerings of culturally shaped imagination" (Bruner, 1990, p. 54). Although the books' events were both too extreme and also imaginary, I realized that these stories had the

power to connect readers with texts. When the participants attempted to see a story as a culture, it seemed that they had difficulty relating to the story. However, when they tried to see a discrete character within a story, it seemed that they could relate to the story and then develop empathy. Additionally, reading stories outside their culture seemed to be a stressful experience for them at first. Eventually though, it stimulated and motivated the participants and then helped them to pursue unknown reality in the stories. I observed that some of the participants tried to fill the gaps between their current personal lives and the surrounding situations in the stories and to express their thoughts and feelings.

Another issue that I want to highlight is that the participants developed individual values while comparing the two stories or comparing their lives to a particular event in the stories. As is the case with other multicultural stories, *Journey to Topaz* and *Dragon's Gate* also depict issues of racism and prejudice and of unfairness and injustice in society. In a fiction format, these two books particularly describe how many Asian immigrants were treated during a certain period of time in this country. In reality, however, the facts in the books are rarely taught in schools in this country; they are at times intentionally ignored because of the sensitivity of the issues. There was no exception with the participants in this study. Through data analysis, I felt that many of the participants might not have had a chance to consider these issues before participating in the study.

Regarding racial issues, I often felt that the participants were comfortable being Americans and being called Americans. For example, I categorized the participants in this study either as Caucasian Americans or African Americans. However, when I conducted an individual interview with the selected participants, I realized that the father of one of the male participants was an Iraqi, and his mother was a Caucasian American. In another individual interview, I further realized that the mother of one of the female participants was originally from the Philippines, and her father was a New Orleans native, a Caucasian American. Although their skin color was fair, strictly speaking, these two participants should not be categorized as Caucasians. This is probably a major difference between the

participants and me. Because I am Japanese, thus, I am not comfortable to be generalized myself as an Asian or to be referred to as belonging to other Asian groups such as Korean and Chinese. However, these two students were happy to be called Caucasian Americans.

In this study, some of the participants began to point out the similarities and differences between the two stories after reading the novels. Additionally, some of the participants started to point out the similarities and differences between the story characters and themselves. However, no participants explicitly pointed out the similarities and differences between Japanese and Chinese or Japanese-American and Chinese-American cultures. Finally, in my study, I realized that reading two multicultural stories from different Asian cultures helped the participants develop their empathy and build their own individual values as they read.

Implications of the Findings for Classroom Practice

Three pedagogical implications emerged as the results of the study. First, the use of multicultural literature helps readers humanize and distinguish individual members of a heretofore indistinguishable racial or cultural group. Participants' preexisting knowledge, motivation for learning, and interests in Japanese-American and Chinese-American cultures were limited before reading the two stories. While reading the stories, they began to expand their capacity to understand others, and to attempt to relate their own lives to the extreme situations in the stories while struggling with the gaps between their own reality and the imaginary world of the books. The participants had difficulty relating to the stories when they attempted to see them as one broad cultural context; however, some of them began to have successful vicarious experiences when they started to focus on one story character or a specific event in the stories.

Since a primary responsibility for reading teachers is to teach their students how to read stories, it becomes crucial for them to contemplate how their students relate to stories being read, connect themselves with a particular story event, and then have a successful vicarious relationship with a story character. This study suggests that teachers should strive to select books with either characters or

situations to which the children in their classroom might readily relate. This implication can be invaluable for many reading teachers who want to infuse multicultural literature into their instructional settings.

This study reinforces the positive effect of multicultural literature on students who are unfamiliar with the cultures represented in that literature. It suggests further that the use of multicultural literature should become a significant pedagogical practice for reading instruction. Multicultural literature helps readers observe social justice and injustice and prompts them to create their own values through the process of reading. Many individuals avoid thinking about or talking about differences because they consider such actions discriminatory. However, ignoring the reality of individual differences is not an ideal pedagogical practice since it creates another type of discrimination in the learning environment. Multicultural literature allows teachers to introduce socially sensitive elements to students as examples and provides students with the opportunity to develop their own individual values in the imaginary world found in stories. Multicultural literature is an indispensable literacy tool, and its use in the classroom is highly valuable.

Multicultural literature allows readers to develop personal connections with literary characters and helps them develop empathy. Readers often do not know whether their personal issues are either ordinary or extraordinary, or culturally related or not. Multicultural literature not only teaches a reader cultural differences but also similarities through the process of reading. Readers will realize that human beings share many types of common issues in their lives although some story events are often culturally specific. Developing personal connections helps develop empathy, which can be a sound pedagogical suggestion for future reading instruction.

Limitations from the Findings

(1) Participants were not purposefully selected to ensure a balance of gender or cultural representation. This limitation restricted my ability to explore the data based on gender and the participants' racial or cultural backgrounds.

(2) Participants' background knowledge regarding the cultures represented in the study was not examined as a factor in their interpretations or/and responses to the two stories. The pretest questionnaires confirmed the participants' background knowledge about Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans as their initial knowledge indicators. This is the reason that I examined the participants' interpretations of the two books but not based on their background knowledge.

(3) The findings must be limited to the outsider cultures represented by the participants; there is no way to generalize responses to the Asian-American cultures depicted in the study beyond those of the Caucasian, African-American and Hispanic participants. The findings were taken from the 19 participants at a local elementary school in the New Orleans area. None of their responses procured in this study represented any racial or cultural group. None of the results are applicable to different research contexts.

(4) The teachers' presentations of the books to the children were not directed by the researcher. Differences in children's responses to the books might be due to the different ways each teacher had of sharing the books with the children. Miss Berry provided the participants with more audio-visual materials than Miss Martin. Although Miss Martin at times prepared some handouts, her teaching style was less creative than Miss Berry's. This fact might have affected the participants' responses and attitudes while Miss Martin was reading *Dragon's Gate* with them.

(5) The teachers' background knowledge about the cultures represented in the stories and the events in the stories themselves was not assessed prior to the study. Not only the participants but also the teachers were recruited on a voluntary basis. Additionally, teachers were not informed about the cultural contexts of the two stories by the researcher prior to the study.

Recommendations for Future Study

The following ideas and suggestions resulted from the analysis of data collection during the study.

(1) The differences in the findings based on gender should be examined and elucidated in future studies. Although I found some differences based on gender among the participants, I did not explore the differences in the findings based on gender in the study. I thought that I would not be able to report balanced findings based on gender because I was not able to select participants based on this factor. Thus, in future studies, participant selection should be purposeful.

(2) African-American male participants should be included in future studies. I did not compare the findings based on racial backgrounds in this study. It would be interesting to procure data from African-American males to compare the differences in the findings based on racial backgrounds. As in the case of recommendation 1, the selection of the participants should be purposeful.

(3) I examined the participants' interpretations when they read the stories from two different Asian cultures in the study. Although I checked their prior knowledge of Japanese-American and Chinese-American cultures prior to reading the stories, I did not examine how their background knowledge about the cultures would influence their understanding about the two books in the study. It would be interesting to examine the effects of prior knowledge about the cultures represented in books chosen for use in future studies.

(4) Cultural insiders should be included as participants in future studies. In this study, all of the participants were either Caucasian- or African-American students. I did not include any Asian students such as Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese, or Chinese. Even though I do not believe that cultural insiders would have a better understanding about the stories or be able to provide more insightful comments through the process of reading, clearly, they would have different interpretations while reading the same stories. Examining their perspectives might be beneficial in order to enhance the quality of this study.

(5) It would also be interesting if I included multicultural books written by cultural outsiders and compare the responses to those provided by participants when they read stories by cultural insiders. The comparison is vital because it might help determine the strengths and weakness that both cultural insider authors and outsider authors possess when the participants read multicultural literary works.

(7) It might be useful to educate the reading teacher prior to reading the stories with the participants. I had no way of knowing what cultural knowledge teachers brought to the reading of these texts, and no way to measure what they chose to share with the children before the study began. The research suggestion would be to try to control for background knowledge or at least provide shared background knowledge, before asking teachers to discuss the stories. The results might have been different if the teachers had been educated about some specific elements before reading the stories. Comparing the differences of those effects would improve the quality of this and future studies.

(8) Since the reading teachers involved in this study were cultural outsiders, it would be interesting to include reading teachers who are cultural insiders of the stories being read and to compare the effects and differences between both types of reading teachers.

(9) It might be interesting to explore the effects if I myself taught the two books to the participants, rather than having someone else do it. The effects may vary depending on whether I am a reading teacher and observer, or simply a researcher. The participants' reactions may also vary between the two books. It would also be interesting to compare the differences.

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APPENDIX A
PERMISSION FROM THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS
COMMITTEE ON THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

Form Number: 3AUG03 (please refer to this number in all future correspondence concerning this protocol)

Principal Investigator: Tadayuki Suzuki Title: Graduate Student

Department: Curriculum and Instruction College: Education & Human Development

Name of Faculty Supervisor: Renee Casbergue (if PI is a student)

Project Title: Elementary school students' cultural perceptions and interpretation when reading two literary works from different Asian cultures

Date Reviewed: August 18, 2003

Dates of Proposed Project Period: From 8/03 to 8/04

*approval is for one year from approval date only and may be renewed yearly.

Note: Consent forms and related materials are to be kept by the PI for a period of three years following the completion of the study.

☐ Full Committee Approval

☐ Expedited Approval

☐ Continuation

☐ Rejected

☒ The protocol will be approved following receipt of satisfactory response(s) to the following question(s) within 15 days:

- P.S. Yugoslavia is not in Asia. - Need letter of permission from LEA.
- Need consent form on UNO letterhead. Consent form should have on - campus phone # and e-mail.
- Consent form must have faculty supervisor's Name & contact phone #.
- Consent form from parents required. Assent form from students okay but not required.

Committee Signatures:

Scott C. Bauer Scott C. Bauer, Ph.D. (Chair)

Gary Granata Gary Granata, Ph.D.

Betty Lo Betty Lo, M.D.

Hae Seong Park Hae-Seong Park, Ph.D.

Jane Prudhomme Jane Prudhomme

Jayaraman Rao Jayaraman Rao, M.D. (NBDL protocols only)

Richard B. Speaker Richard B. Speaker, Ph.D.

Gary Talarchek Gary Talarchek, Ph.D.

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE ON JAPANESE-AMERICAN CULTURE

Name_____ Period____ Date / / 2004

1. How do you usually feel about reading a new novel? Why?

2. How do you usually feel about reading a novel whose characters have a different background and history from yours? Why?

3. What good things do you know about Japanese Americans?

4. Where did you learn that?

5. What bad things do you know about Japanese Americans?

6. Where did you learn about that?

7. How do you know all of this information is accurate?

8. If you know more about Japanese Americans, please write here.

Modified from *Teaching and learning about multicultural literature: Students reading outside their culture in a middle school classroom* written by Janice Hartwick Dressel (2003)

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE ON *JOURNEY TO TOPAZ*

Name_____ Period____ Date / / 2004

1. How did you usually feel about reading a new novel? Why?

2. Would you choose to read another novel whose characters have a different cultural or racial background from yours in the future? Why or why not?

3. What good things did you learn about Japanese Americans?

4. Where did you learn that? From *Journey to Topaz*? Page #s? Chapters? Tell me more!

5. What bad things did you learn about Japanese Americans?

6. Where did you learn about that? From *Journey to Topaz*? Page #s? Chapters? Tell me more!

7. What new things did you learn from the story?

8. What did you like most about the story? Why?

9. What did you like least about the story? Why?

10. What did you think the way Mr. Sakane was treated by FBI? How would you feel if it were your father?

11. Like Garvis (Yuki's classmate), some people can say very cruel and hurtful things. Has that ever happened to you? How did you handle it?

12. How did you feel about Mr. Kurihara's death? How would you feel if it were your family member?

13. Please write a letter to Yoshiko Uchida. Ask her some questions that you want to know more.

14. If you want to say more about *Journey to Topaz*, please write. Anything is all right.

Modified from *Teaching and learning about multicultural literature: Students reading outside their culture in a middle school classroom* written by Janice Hartwick Dressel (2003) and *a guide for using Journey to Topaz in the classroom* written by Caroline Nakajima (1993).

APPENDIX D
QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHINESE-AMERICAN CULTURE

Name_____ Period____ Date / / 2004

1. How do you usually feel about reading a new novel? Why?

2. How do you usually feel about reading a novel whose characters have a different background and history from yours? Why?

3. What good things do you know about Chinese Americans?

4. Where did you learn that?

5. What bad things do you know about Chinese Americans?

6. Where did you learn about that?

7. How do you know all of this information is accurate?

8. If you know more about Chinese Americans, please write here.

Modified from *Teaching and learning about multicultural literature: Students reading outside their culture in a middle school classroom* written by Janice Hartwick Dressel (2003)

APPENDIX E
QUESTIONNAIRE ON *DRAGON'S GATE*

Name_____ Period____ Date / / 2004

1. How did you usually feel about reading a new novel? Why?

2. Would you choose to read another novel whose characters have a different cultural or racial background from yours in the future? Why or why not?

3. What good things did you learn about Chinese Americans?

4. Where did you learn that? From *Dragon's Gate*? Page #s? Chapters? Tell me a little more.

5. What bad things do you learn about Chinese Americans?

6. Where did you learn about that? From *Dragon's Gate*? Page 3s? Chapters? Tell me a little more.

7. What new things did you learn from the story?

8. What did you like most about the story? Why?

9. What did you like least about the story? Why?

10. What did you think about the way Chinese workers were treated by their American bosses such as Kilroy? How would you feel if you and everyone else were called by the same name such as *John*?

11. Squeaky, Otter's father, became blind. How would it affect your life if it were your father? Write what you must do in order to help your father and your family.

12. Have you ever wanted to go to another country to work like Otter? What attracts you to go there? What does not attract you to go there?

13. Otter was influenced by Uncle Foxfire. Who influenced most in your life?

14. Write a letter to Laurence Yep and ask some questions about *Dragon's Gate*.

15. You read two books: *Journey to Topaz* and *Dragon's Gate*. Which book did you like better? Why?

Modified from *Teaching and learning about multicultural literature: Students reading outside their culture in a middle school classroom* written by Janice Hartwick Dressel (2003) and A literature unit for *Dragon's Gate* written by Thomas - Vallen (1996).

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM

1. Title of Research Study

Fifth Graders' Interpretations when Reading Literary Works from Two Different Asian Cultures

2. Project Director

Tadayuki Suzuki

Office Phone #: (504) 280-6606

Email: Tsuzuki1@uno.edu

The University of New Orleans

342 Education Building, The Department of Curriculum and Instruction,
New Orleans, LA 70148-2510

3. Faculty Supervisor

Renee M. Casbergue (Ph.D.)

Office Phone # (504) 280-6607

E-mail: rcasbergue@uno.edu

4. Purpose of the Research

Each Asian culture is unique, but many American students tend to generalize and see "Asian" as one vaguely-defined culture. Although the use of multicultural literature has often been reported in major journals, few studies have examined its use in developing students' cultural proficiency. In this study, I want to learn fifth-grade students' interpretations as they read two different Asian literary works. Care should be taken so that multicultural literature promotes respect for cultural diversity without reinforcing racial prejudice and ethnocentricity (Dressel, 2003). Developing learning strategies in order to appreciate cultural differences is important because these strategies can then be applied when they try to learn about other cultures.

5. Procedure for this Research

An open-ended questionnaire will be used as both a pretest and a posttest to assess the students' understanding of the Asian cultures discussed in the books. The

participants will write response journals. I will finally choose some interviewees demonstrated interesting responses in their journals and conduct a brief interview with them. The collected data are further cross-analyzed in order to validate trustworthiness of the data interpretations.

6. Potential Risks and Discomforts

This study should not pose any physical or emotional risks to the participant. If the participant feels uncomfortable on the way of the interview, the participant has the right to discontinue, to withdraw or to terminate this consent at any time without consequence.

If you have any question regarding risks and discomforts in this study, please feel free to contact me at any time.

7. Potential Benefits to you or others

This study may provide the participant with a chance to reflect upon his/her interpretations regarding two different types of Asian literature. Other than that, it will provide the participant with no potential or direct benefits through this study.

13. Alternative Procedures

There are no alternative procedures. The participation is entirely voluntary, and the participant may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequence.

14. Protection of Confidentiality

In terms of the names of the participants, a pseudonym will be used in order to protect their privacy. The information provided here will never be disclosed to any individuals or private agencies regardless of any conditions. Because of the nature of the study, let me also advise you to keep the conversation in this classroom strictly confidential. The obtained data from this study will be securely and confidentially kept in the drawer in my desk. Dissertation committee members may review some of the transcripts with me after identities are disguised.

15. Signatures and Consent to Participate

I have been fully informed of the above-described procedure with its possible benefits and risks, and I have given my permission to participate in this study.

_____ Signature of Guardian	_____ Name of Guardian (print)	_____ Date
_____ Signature of Project Director	_____ Name of Project Director (print)	_____ Date

VITA

Tadayuki Suzuki (Ph.D.) was born in Tokyo, Japan in 1966. He was raised in a suburban area in Tokyo, where he graduated from a public high school there in 1985. In 1989, he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in English as a Foreign Language with a minor in Secondary Education from Takushoku University in Tokyo. He also received teaching certifications in middle and high school English Education upon the completion of his undergraduate degree.

Prior to his graduate study in the U. S., he taught English at Kamogawa Daiichi High School for five years. In 1998, he received his Master of Arts degree in Teaching English as a Second Language from Northern Arizona University. After the completion of his Master's degree, he returned to Tokyo and taught English for one year at Takanawadai High School affiliated with Tokai University. In 2000, he was awarded a three-year scholarship by the Rotary Foundation and began his Ph.D. study in Curriculum and Instruction, pursuing a specialization in literacy studies with an emphasis on multicultural education at the University of New Orleans (UNO).

While working on his Ph.D., he conducted his research studies related to the use of multicultural literature and literature-based instruction. The resulting papers were presented at annual conferences on the International Reading Association, the National Association for Multicultural Education, and the Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies.

In 2002, he was elected to the Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education. In 2003, he was elected to the Phi Delta Kappa International Honor Society. In 2004, he was also elected to the Phi Beta Delta International Honor Society.

Upon the completion of his Ph.D. at UNO, he will be teaching at Western Kentucky University as an assistant professor of reading education and literacy studies.