Reading as Constructed and Enacted: 
What Counts for Australian Students

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Declaration of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed:

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Declaration on Ethics

The research reported in this thesis was conducted with the guidelines for research outlined in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (1999), and the *Griffith University Human Research Ethics Manual*.

The methodology for this study received clearance from the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee – Reference Number EPS/20/04/HREC.

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Abstract

At the time of this study, reading improvement was espoused in media, political and educational arenas as a national priority and empirical sources such as National reading achievement data and State and territory distributions of Australian achievement on PISA underscored the reasons for this priority. The study reported in this thesis contributes to action on this priority. It is a case study of what constitutes reading and what students in one middle years’ classroom in an Australian school take up as reading.

A review of the literature found more contestation than concordance in conceptualisations of reading. Although attempts (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Durrant & Green, 2000; Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003; Kalantzis & Cope, 1997; Kress, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004; Luke & Freebody, 1999a, 1999b; The New London Group, 1996, 2000; Unsworth, 2002) have been made to clarify the confusions that arise from the contestations in the field, few have resulted in general take-up within the teaching profession of a procedural conceptualisation. Luke and Freebody’s ‘four roles/practices’ has been an exception. Nevertheless, it too, has had several changes in name as educators have tried to communicate broadly about what it is readers do when they read.

Another finding of the literature is a tendency to legitimatisate and privilege school and school-like literacy to the detriment of other forms of literacies. Privileging school and school-like literacy formalises and sanctions the use of particular texts and ways of doing literacy, while marginalising and silencing other forms of literacy, their texts, and the ways of doing these literacies. This finding is problematic in that (a) it does not align with contemporary theories of literacy which show that there are multiple and multi-modal literacies; (b) it privileges school literacy to the detriment of other literacies, and (c) it restricts the potential for children to be flexible and competent users of a diverse range of literacies as required to participate effectively in contemporary society.

The literature also showed that studies of people’s use of literacy (which includes reading) in homes, communities and schools are informed predominantly by adults and their observations. Despite snippets of children’s actions, work and voices being evident throughout
various studies, typically, their perspectives are not sought. If we consider children as “social actors in their own right” (O’Kane, 2000, p.136) and that “the views of adults may not necessarily represent children’s perceptions and experiences” (Cook & Hess, 2007, p.29), a significant gap in the research findings to date becomes evident. It is timely and warranted for research about reading to be conducted with children’s voices at the fore-front. In taking this stance, this study adds to a growing body of work in which children’s voices enable the meanings of particular phenomenon to be understood.

This review found reading to be a complex notion, rather than the simplistic conceptualisations that currently exist. Furthermore, it revealed a field riddled with contestations, rather than being concordant. Add on to this, the introduction of new and innovative ways of communicating and combining these to form multi-modal texts and texts of diverse form and types, and we encounter a world where texts place new and different demands on readers. Amidst these findings, adult voices speak loudly on the matter of reading. Meanwhile, the voices of children are largely marginalised and silenced. Now is a time for change. A time for children to be recognised as active social players in their own right and to let their voices contribute to what those in political, media and educational arenas consider a national priority: reading.

This study investigated children at work in reading and as readers in a middle years’ classroom made available to me for this research. Additionally, it examined where others such as teachers and parents might significantly affect, or attempt to affect, what constitutes reading for children and what they take-up as reading.

Students, parents and teachers in this study were found to be situated in a variety of mind-contexts as they drew upon reading experiences from various times and places to form their conceptualisations of reading. What emerged was a blinding vision of difference. While there were some shared elements, constructions of reading were defined differently by each participant. These differences were extensive and occurred regardless of whether the ‘aspect of case’ under study was teacher, parent, or student.
What was taken up as reading was different for individual students. What a teacher sanctioned constituted ‘what must be done’ as reading in each of the cases studied. A teacher’s imperative always superseded a child’s preference for what to read, except in moments made by some children as students to persist with a personal interest. With one of the teachers, provision was made explicitly for children to spend formal time in free reading and this lightened the imperative for those of my cases who were in his class group. A parent’s imperative, however, was actively resisted in a number of cases reported. Moreover, a student’s take-up of what counted in reading for an appraising teacher or parent invariably affected how they were recognised as a reader by teacher and/or parent.

What emerged from this study was a rich conceptual formation that is represented as a descriptive framework. The Descriptive Framework of Reading Alignment and Divergence informed discussion and plotting of the pathways of alignment and divergence found amongst children as cases. This framework advances attempts to assist with research and practice in the field of reading improvement.
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Publications Relevant to This Thesis


# Table of Contents

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY ................................................................. III
DECLARATION ON ETHICS ........................................................................... V
ABSTRACT ....................................................................................................... VII
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................. XI
PUBLICATIONS RELEVANT TO THIS THESIS ............................................ XIII
TABLE OF CONTENTS .................................................................................. XV
LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................... XIX
LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................ XX

CHAPTER 1 ........................................................................................................ 1
INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................. 1

BEGINNING IN FAMILIAR TERRITORY: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY ....................... 1
MOVING BEYOND THE FAMILIAR: RECONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY .......................... 2
Empirical significance ....................................................................................... 2
Methodological significance ............................................................................. 4
Conceptual/Theoretical significance ................................................................. 6
AIMS OF THE STUDY ........................................................................................ 7
OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS ............................................................................ 8
SUMMARY ......................................................................................................... 8

CHAPTER 2 ........................................................................................................ 9
LITERATURE REVIEW ...................................................................................... 9

WHAT CONSTITUTES READING: WHAT THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES SUGGEST. .................................................................................................................. 9
Traditional skills-based approaches to reading .................................................. 11
Bottom up approaches: Cracking the visual codes .......................................... 12
A two-stage process of reading development .................................................. 12
What constitutes one’s competency as a reader? ............................................. 13
Progressive child-centred approaches to reading ............................................. 14
Language-Experience: Meaning-making beginning from the child. ............... 15
Whole Language: Reading as meaning-making .............................................. 15
What constitutes one’s competency as a reader? ............................................. 17
Cultural-critical approaches to reading ........................................................... 18
Literacy to Multiliteracies ............................................................................... 21
Reading: A social critical practice ................................................................. 22
Situated Literacy ............................................................................................... 24
Reading: An inherent element of Critical Literacy ......................................... 27
What constitutes one’s competency as a reader? ............................................. 28

What theoretical perspectives offer as an explanation to what constitutes reading .................................................. 28

WHAT CONSTITUTES READING: WHAT STUDIES OF SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES SUGGEST .................................................................................. 30

WHAT CONSTITUTES READING: WHAT STUDIES OF CLASSROOMS SUGGEST. .................................................................................................................. 34

What constitutes reading: What teachers’ perspectives suggest. ....................... 34
What constitutes reading: What students’ perspectives suggest. ......................... 36
SUMMARY ......................................................................................................... 38

CHAPTER 3 ........................................................................................................ 41

METHOD .......................................................................................................... 41

1. EMPHASIS ON EXPLORING PARTICULAR SOCIAL PHENOMENA. ........................................ 42
2. USE OF PRIMARILY UNSTRUCTURED DATA ........................................................................ 43
Multi-staged approach to the investigation......................................................................................................................45
Stage 1: Gaining ethical clearance and access to a site for research. .................................................................45
Stage 2: In the field. .......................................................................................................................................................47
  National Literacy Crisis? .........................................................................................................................................51
  Blame talk .................................................................................................................................................................54
  Reading curriculum debates .....................................................................................................................................55
Stage 3: Follow-up in the field........................................................................................................................................56
Data collection tools and procedure...........................................................................................................................56
  Participant Observation and Field Notes ..................................................................................................................58
  Audio .........................................................................................................................................................................60
  Observations .............................................................................................................................................................60
  Interviews .................................................................................................................................................................61
  Video .........................................................................................................................................................................63
  Photographs .............................................................................................................................................................65
  Other Communication Modes.......................................................................................................................................67
  Archive of paper .........................................................................................................................................................68
3. INVESTIGATION OF A SMALL NUMBER OF CASES .................................................................................................69
  Setting .......................................................................................................................................................................70
  Participants .................................................................................................................................................................70
  Paradise School curriculum ........................................................................................................................................74
4. DATA ANALYSIS .......................................................................................................................................................75
  Sorting, categorizing and analysing data ..................................................................................................................75
  Intertextual analysis ..................................................................................................................................................76
REFLEXIVITY .............................................................................................................................................................78
CONCLUSION ...............................................................................................................................................................80
CHAPTER 4 .................................................................................................................................................................81
RESULTS .................................................................................................................................................................81

QUESTION 1: WHAT MARKERS SHOW WHAT CONSTITUTES READING IN A CLASSROOM SETTING? ..........81

Data from Mr. Green’s class. ..........................................................................................................................................81
  What constitutes reading: What Mr. Green’s timetable suggested. .................................................................81
  Silent Reading sessions ..........................................................................................................................................83
  Reading the Blackboard .........................................................................................................................................84
  What constitutes reading: What Mr. Green suggested when talking about reading .............................................85
  In Reading sessions ..................................................................................................................................................86
  In Language Arts sessions ......................................................................................................................................87
  Resourcing for reading ............................................................................................................................................87
  Reading integrated across the curriculum .............................................................................................................89
  What constitutes reading: What students’ perspectives suggested. .................................................................95
  Reading as a content area ........................................................................................................................................95
  Reading as a regular practice ................................................................................................................................97
  Reading and writing as complementary processes ............................................................................................97
  Reading as work ......................................................................................................................................................98
  Reading as regulating behaviour and time ............................................................................................................98
  Reading as learning .................................................................................................................................................101
  Reading to be informed .........................................................................................................................................103
  What constitutes reading: What parents’ perspectives suggested. .................................................................104
    What Ellen’s mother suggested ..........................................................................................................................104
    What Fraser’s mother suggested .........................................................................................................................107
    What Christopher’s mother suggested ...............................................................................................................109
    What Lisa’s mother suggested ............................................................................................................................109

Data from Mr. Brown’s class .........................................................................................................................................114
  What constitutes reading: What Mr. Brown’s timetable suggested. .................................................................114
  Reading computer skill exercises ..........................................................................................................................115
  Reading the whiteboard ..........................................................................................................................................116
  What constitutes reading: What Mr. Brown suggested when talking about reading .............................................116
  In Reading Groups rotations ................................................................................................................................116
  In Spelling Sequencing Tasks ................................................................................................................................118
  In Listening Comprehension Sessions ..................................................................................................................120
  In English .................................................................................................................................................................121
In Spelling activities .................................................. 123
Reading integrated across the curriculum ...................... 125
What constitutes reading: What students’ perspectives suggested .................................................. 128
Reading as a content area ............................................. 128
Reading as learning ..................................................... 128
Reading as meaning making ........................................ 130
Reading elicits an affective response ................................ 132
What constitutes reading: What parents’ perspectives suggested .................................................. 132
What Emma’s parents suggested .................................... 133
What Wayne’s mother suggested ................................... 136
What Jay’s mother suggested ....................................... 140
What Simon’s mother suggested ................................... 141

WHAT MARKERS SHOW WHAT CONSTITUTES READING IN A CLASSROOM SETTING? .................. 142
What constitutes reading: Teachers’ accounts suggested ................................................................. 142
What constitutes reading: Students’ accounts suggested ............................................................... 144
What constitutes reading: Parents’ accounts suggested ................................................................. 154
What Ellen’s mother suggested ........................................ 156
What constitutes reading: What Christopher’s mother suggested ................................................. 156
What Lisa’s mother suggested ....................................... 157
What constitutes reading: What Fraser’s mother suggested ............................................................ 157
What Emma parents suggested ..................................... 157
What Wayne’s mother suggested .................................... 157
What Jay’s mother suggested ....................................... 158
What Simon’s mother suggested .................................... 158

QUESTION 2: WHAT DO STUDENTS TAKE UP AS READING IN THIS SETTING? ......................... 160
Case Study 1: Tess ..................................................... 160
What Tess took up as reading at school ......................... 160
What Tess took up as reading at home ......................... 164
Case Study 2: Ryan ..................................................... 165
What Ryan took up as reading at school ......................... 165
What Ryan took up as reading in school situation 1 ............ 167
What Ryan took up as reading in school situation 2 ............ 170
What Ryan took up as reading at home ......................... 173
Case Study 3: Wayne .................................................. 174
What Wayne took up as reading at school ..................... 174
What Wayne took up as reading at home ..................... 176
Case Study 4: Fraser ................................................... 179
What Fraser took up as reading at school ..................... 179
What Fraser took up as reading in school situation 1 ............ 182
What Fraser took up as reading in school situation 2 ............ 183
What Fraser took up as reading at home ..................... 183
Case Study 5: Ellen ..................................................... 185
What Ellen took up as reading at school ..................... 185
What Ellen took up as reading at home ..................... 189
Summary ..................................................................... 190

CHAPTER 5 ...................................................................................................................................................... 191

DISCUSSION ..................................................................................................................................................... 191

Q1: WHAT MARKERS SHOW WHAT CONSTITUTES READING IN A CLASSROOM SETTING? .......... 191
Mr. Green ................................................................. 193
Karen (Fraser’s mother) ................................................ 194
Elements of Sameness .................................................. 196
Distinct Separations ...................................................... 201
Summary ..................................................................... 207

Q2: WHAT DO STUDENTS TAKE UP AS READING IN THIS SETTING? ................................. 209
Elements of Sameness ............................................... 209
Tess ........................................................................... 209
Ryan ........................................................................ 211
List of Tables

TABLE 1 .................................................................................................................................................................20
TABLE 2 .................................................................................................................................................................86
TABLE 3 .................................................................................................................................................................89
TABLE 4 .................................................................................................................................................................125
TABLE 5 .................................................................................................................................................................144
TABLE 6 .................................................................................................................................................................154
List of Figures

**FIGURE 1. LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION (SPRADLEY, 1980, P.58)** .......................................................... 58
**FIGURE 2. LETTER EXPLAINING HOME/COMMUNITY READING TASK** .............................................. 67
**FIGURE 3. PATHWAYS FOR MOVING THROUGH THE STAGES OF SCHOOLING OFFERED IN PARADISE SCHOOL** ................................................................. 72
**FIGURE 4. MR. GREEN’S TIMETABLE** .................................................................................................. 82
**FIGURE 5. LISA’S PHOTOGRAPH OF THE CLASSROOM RULES’ POSTER** ........................................... 99
**FIGURE 6. LISA’S PHOTOGRAPH OF THE CLASS RULES IN THE LOTE ROOM** .................................. 100
**FIGURE 7. LISA’S PHOTOGRAPH OF THE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC TIMETABLE** ................................ 101
**FIGURE 8. PHOTOGRAPH OF BOOK ELENN READ AT HOME** ......................................................... 106
**FIGURE 9. PHOTOGRAPH OF MAGAZINE ELENN READ AT HOME** .................................................. 106
**FIGURE 10. LISA’S PHOTOGRAPH OF A WALL HANGING SHE READ AT HOME** ................................ 111
**FIGURE 11. LISA’S PHOTOGRAPH OF A POSTER SHE READ AT HOME** ....................................... 111
**FIGURE 12. LISA’S PHOTOGRAPH OF A BOOK SHE READ AT HOME** ............................................ 113
**FIGURE 13. LISA’S PHOTOGRAPH OF A BOOK SHE READ AT HOME** ............................................ 113
**FIGURE 14. LISA’S PHOTOGRAPH OF A BOOK SHE READ AT HOME** ............................................ 113
**FIGURE 15. MR. BROWN’S TIMETABLE** ................................................................................................ 115
**FIGURE 16. CLAIRE’S PHOTOGRAPH OF HER DICTIONARY AND THESARUS SITTING ON HER DESK** .... 130
**FIGURE 17. CLAIRE’S PHOTOGRAPH OF HER READING NOTEBOOK SHOWING A PAGE OF WORK COMPLETED FOR SPELLING ACTIVITIES** .............................................. 131
**FIGURE 18. CLAIRE’S PHOTOGRAPH OF THE NEXT PAGE OF HER SPELLING WORK** ...................... 131
**FIGURE 19. EMMA’S PHOTOGRAPHS OF ITEMS SHE READ AT HOME (APPENDIX M)** .................... 133
**FIGURE 20. WAYNE’S PHOTOGRAPH OF A BOOK HE READ AT HOME** ......................................... 137
**FIGURE 21. WAYNE’S PHOTOGRAPH OF REAL ESTATE ITEM HE READ AT HOME** ........................... 139
**FIGURE 22. WAYNE’S PHOTOGRAPH OF A JUNK MAIL ITEM HE READ AT HOME** ........................... 140
**FIGURE 23. JAY’S PHOTOGRAPH OF ITEMS HE READ AT HOME** .................................................... 140
**FIGURE 24. PHOTOGRAPHS OF ITEMS SIMON READ AT HOME** .................................................... 141
**FIGURE 25. TESS’ PHOTOGRAPH OF A BOOK SHE READ AT SCHOOL** .......................................... 160
**FIGURE 26. TESS’ PHOTOGRAPH OF A BOOK SHE READ AT SCHOOL** .......................................... 161
**FIGURE 27. TESS’ PHOTOGRAPH OF BOOKS ON THE BOOKSHELVES IN HER CLASSROOM** ........... 161
**FIGURE 28. TESS’ READING-WRITING RESULTS** ................................................................................. 162
**FIGURE 29. EXTRACT FROM TESS’ SEMESTER 1 SCHOOL REPORT CARD (APPENDIX O, TESS)** ...... 162
**FIGURE 30. EXTRACT FROM TESS’ SEMESTER 2 SCHOOL REPORT CARD (APPENDIX O, TESS)** ...... 162
**FIGURE 31. TESS’ PHOTOGRAPH OF BOOKS SHE READ AT HOME (APPENDIX M)** ....................... 165
**FIGURE 32. EXTRACT FROM RYAN’S SEMESTER 1 SCHOOL REPORT CARD (APPENDIX O, RYAN)** .... 166
**FIGURE 33. PIE CHART OF RYAN’S READING-WRITING RESULTS** ................................................. 166
**FIGURE 34. EXTRACT FROM RYAN’S SEMESTER 2 SCHOOL REPORT CARD** ..................................... 167
**FIGURE 35. RYAN’S BALLAD** ............................................................................................................. 169
**FIGURE 36. EXTRACT FROM FIELD NOTES, BOOK 1, MR. GREEN’S BLACKBOARD NOTATIONS, 30 MAY 2005** ................................................................. 170
**FIGURE 37. RYAN’S PHOTOGRAPH OF A FISHING MAGAZINE THAT HE READ AT HOME** ............. 173
**FIGURE 38. RYAN’S PHOTOGRAPH OF A MAGAZINE THAT HE READ AT HOME** ........................ 173
**FIGURE 39. EXTRACT FROM WAYNE’S READING NOTE BOOK** ...................................................... 175
**FIGURE 40. PIE CHART OF WAYNE’S READING-WRITING RESULTS** ............................................ 175
**FIGURE 41. EXTRACT FROM WAYNE’S SEMESTER 1 SCHOOL REPORT CARD** ............................... 175
**FIGURE 42. EXTRACT FROM WAYNE’S SEMESTER 2 SCHOOL REPORT CARD** ............................... 176
**FIGURE 43. WAYNE’S PHOTOGRAPH OF ‘FIVE ON KIRRIK ISLAND AGAIN’** ................................... 177
**FIGURE 44. EXTRACT FROM FRASER’S SEMESTER 1 SCHOOL REPORT CARD (APPENDIX O)** ......... 180
**FIGURE 45. EXTRACT FROM FRASER’S SEMESTER 2 SCHOOL REPORT CARD (APPENDIX O)** ......... 182
**FIGURE 46. ELENN’S PHOTOGRAPH OF A TEXT READ DURING READING LESSONS** ................... 186
**FIGURE 47. PIE CHART OF ELENN’S READING-WRITING RESULTS** ............................................... 187
**FIGURE 48. CONSTRUCTIONS OF READING** ........................................................................................ 195
**FIGURE 49. TEXT SELECTION** ........................................................................................................... 205
**FIGURE 50. INCLUSION OF DIMENSIONS OF ALIGNMENT AND DIVERGENCE** ................................. 207
**FIGURE 51. TESS’ PATHWAY OF ALIGNMENT IN COMPLETING READING TASKS** ......................... 211
**FIGURE 52. RYAN’S PATHWAY OF ALIGNMENT AND DIVERGENCE IN THE PRODUCTION OF A BALLAD** .............. 212
FIGURE 53. RYAN’S PATHWAY OF ALIGNMENT AND DIVERGENCE IN ART TASK................................................215
FIGURE 54. WAYNE’S PATHWAY OF ALIGNMENT AND DIVERGENCE WHEN RESEARCHING FOR A NEW CAR ....216
FIGURE 55. WAYNE’S PATHWAY OF ALIGNMENT AND DIVERGENCE WHEN READING NOVELS OF HIS OWN CHOICE ...................................................................................................................................................................217
FIGURE 56. FRASER’S PATHWAY OF DIVERGENCE WHEN READING TEXTS SELECTED BY HIS MOTHER ..........218
FIGURE 57. FRASER’S PATHWAY OF DIVERGENCE WHEN READING TEXTS THAT HE PREFERENCES .................219
FIGURE 58. DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK OF READING ALIGNMENT AND DIVERGENCE ..........................222
Chapter 1
Introduction

It helps to begin your research in familiar territory (Silverman, 2005, p.41).

In this chapter, I describe how I have used Silverman’s advice to study an issue that was both familiar to me and of significant practical concern in education. I then outline where the study is positioned in the literature, where this positioning had indicated questions that framed my research, and show the methods used to obtain and focus pertinent data to enable those questions to be addressed.

Beginning in Familiar Territory: Contextualising the Study

This research arose from my desire to understand reading in today’s classrooms and why it is that some children, as students, behave and perform as readers so differently. I have been uncomfortable with explanations of difference in deficit terms, that is, that those performing below standard lack some crucial capacity. During my teaching career, I have encountered peers, researchers, parents and children themselves who talk in a deficit way about such differences. Yet, in several instances, students who have been so described have underperformed as a reader in some contexts, but not others. My problem with ‘deficit’ descriptions is that they preempt children’s capacity to be skilful readers in any of the many contexts in which they read – at school, and out of it.

There is literature (Perfetti, 1991; Rumelhart, 1977, 1994; Stanovich, 1986) supporting a view of reading as an activity for which some applications might be poor, some good. This is a view that allows for ‘difference’ before foreclosing on ‘deficit’. However, others have a perspective that Gee (1990) defined as the traditional view; a view that encapsulates reading as “an asocial cognitive skill” (p.46) which has little or no link to social relationships. Street (1984; 1995) identified this view as an autonomous model which focuses on an individual’s success or failure in attaining universal skills, a focus that can lead to the labeling of individuals as either literate or illiterate. Those who are unsuccessful are seen as “deficient” as they lack “necessary skills” (Anstey & Bull, 2003, p.58). Locating blame for failure in a child is associated with remediation on the child-situated deficit more often than on other aspects of the complex phenomenon of education. What concerns me is that focusing blame on a child not only promotes issues for the child’s self-concept and efficacy, but also draws attention away from a thorough analysis of reading pedagogy.
In my masters’ study, I investigated students’ reading in and across reading intervention, specifically Reading Recovery classrooms, and Year 2 classrooms (Rossow, 2001). Using findings from that research, I constructed a conceptual framework to illustrate the complexity of interrelationships between a reader and contextual factors involved in his/her reading. These factors had potential either to enhance or inhibit the child’s reading development and performance, and the extent to which s/he generalised reading skills across contexts.

These findings whetted rather than sated my interest in how reading expertise is developed and transferred across contexts. This led me back to reconsider what counts as reading and what students take up (use) as reading in various reading contexts and how particular views of reading influence these things. This was the point at which I commenced my doctoral research.

**Moving beyond the Familiar: Recontextualising the Study**

My study investigates what constitutes reading and what is taken up as reading by students in one middle years’ classroom. It sought significance on three fronts: empirical, conceptual-theoretical, and methodological. First, empirical sources such as reading achievement data substantiate the ongoing need for research of reading and readers. Second, the methodological techniques used in my study extend the growing body of work incorporating students as researchers of their social worlds. Third, my study provides conceptual-theoretical advances in the field of reading pedagogy.

**Empirical significance.**

Although much research has been conducted on reading, new areas in the field have evolved as human communication has been extended through electronic media, and as innovative ways of coordinating multiple sources of communication have developed. Reading is now a national priority in Australia. Thus, it is both timely and warranted to investigate what constitutes reading and what is taken up as reading by students if educators are to help Australian students improve the capacity and utility of their performance as readers.

Demands for improved reading outcomes for all students are regularly heard within mainstream media as well as within academic and political arenas. Proclamations of a national reading crisis (Lovat, 2004; McGrath, 2004; Nelson, 2004a, 2004b) used reading achievement data to support a call for changes in teacher training and policies.
and practices for the teaching of reading. Within these arenas, reading achievement data from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2004; Lokan, Greenwood, & Cresswell, 2001), the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) (Rothman & McMillan, 2003), and National School English Literacy Survey (Department of Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 1997b) were used to mount an argument that 10% to 30% of Australian students were not succeeding in reading (see Cole, 2004; Kemp, 2004; Maiden, 2004; Peake, 2004). More recently, national assessments in 2008 and 2009 of Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students in the area of reading show approximately 90% of Australian students in each cohort perform at or above the national minimum standard for reading (Ministerial Council on Education Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2009). This is a more positive depiction. The data also are more relevant to reading achievement in primary schools. However, its account still includes a substantial minority (about 10%) of Australian students in each cohort who are performing in reading below the national minimum standard. There remain concerns about these students’ development as readers.

Differences in reading results across these data sources are evident for particular groups of students – for example, between males and females (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2004; Department of Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 1997a, 1997b; Rothman & McMillan, 2003); indigenous and non-indigenous (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2004); non-English and English speaking backgrounds (Department of Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 1997a, 1997b; Rothman & McMillan, 2003); low, medium and high socio-economic groups (Department of Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 1997a, 1997b; Rothman & McMillan, 2003); rural and urban (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2004). Female students’ reading results generally are better than males’, and non-Indigenous students’ reading results typically are better than those of Indigenous students’. Rural students, those in low socio-economic circumstances and those with non-English speaking backgrounds in most cases underperform against their comparison group.

The position I take in this study is that individuals are members of multiple groups or communities. I adopt this stance because the focus on particular groups is problematic as it can lead to simplistic analysis and potentially inaccurate representations of individual member’s reading performance. To support my position, I draw upon Luke,
Woods, Land, Bahr and McFarland’s (2002) research which identified the Year 2 Net and Years 3, 5 and 7 literacy tests results to be disaggregated in a manner that “inaccurately group[ed] all Indigenous students as if they are a homogenous category of learners” (p.55). Luke et al.’s research indicate that simplistic disaggregation of results according to indigeneity can result in all Indigenous students being seen as at risk, and thus not recognise result variability due to factors such as socio-economic circumstance, location or English language competency. Thus, simplistic disaggregation of results can not acknowledge the likelihood to succeed when students are in only one at-risk category versus increased propensity to achieve failure when students are in more than one at-risk category (e.g., indigeneity, rural location, and male gender).

I have observed how homogenised understandings can result in schools adopting reading programs to cater for particular groups of students, for example, by concentrating on all male students. Indeed some males, but certainly not all males, experience difficulties reading. Thus, where a need for reading programs tailored for males (or any particular group) of readers is met in an informed way, the issues of who of a targeted group needs what, when, where and how needs to be recognised, addressed and monitored as part of the curriculum cycle (assess, plan, implement and evaluate). Furthermore, focusing on particular groups of students fails to acknowledge that readers may be members of two or more at-risk groups, for example male, low socioeconomic status, and indigenous, therein, increasing the likelihood that where such students are experiencing reading difficulties, the underpinning contextual reasons may draw from circumstances both in any single-background feature and in interrelations amongst them all. Focusing on at-risk groups also often fails to acknowledge the complexities involved in becoming a reader regardless of the aspirations people have to use literacy to attain membership of a specific community, such as an interest group. Gee (2004) posits that being a reader is about attaining membership in a group or community. And yet, readers are members of many groups or communities. I propose that research of readers as members of a number of communities is warranted at this point in time to challenge and extend upon existing perceptions of readers.

At this point, I need to clarify that I am not subscribing to a view of the individual as a separate autonomous being and reading as an individual cognitive activity. My study is underpinned by sociocultural views of learning. Building upon Vygotsky’s (1962; 1981)
work, sociocultural perspectives enable us to contend as Wertsch (1991) did that “human action, on both the social and individual planes, is mediated by tools and signs” that are part of people’s social life and culture (p.19). Moreover, people may be viewed as “cultural participants, living in a particular community at a specific time in history” (Rogoff, 2003, p.10). Constructs of reading and reader, therefore, cannot be understood independently of the community or context in which they occur. Furthermore, sociocultural views enable the consideration of reading as practices that are constructed over time and spaces (Alloway, Freebody, Gilbert, & Muspratt, 2002). This signals the need for studies of reading in multiple times and spaces.

In summary, I propose that it is timely and warranted for my study to investigate what constitutes reading and what is taken up as reading by students. Since constructs of reading cannot be understood independently of the community or context in which they occur, this study sees participants as members of multiple communities with the central study site in one middle years’ classroom, its school and community.

I now move to examine how my study adds methodologically to the field.

**Methodological significance.**

Contemporary research acknowledges that children as “indigenous social actors” should engage in self-documentation of their settings and communities (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p.56). However, research traditionally has portrayed solely adult interpretations of what children experienced. Cook and Hess (2007) highlight the danger in continuing to follow this approach: “the views of adults may not necessarily represent children’s perceptions and experiences” (p.29). Since the late 1980’s, there has been increasing interest in listening to children’s viewpoints and including them as active participants in research. My study acknowledges the issues with using adults solely to interpret children’s experiences and perceptions and thus incorporates children as “social actors in their own right” (O’Kane, 2000, p.136). My study thus adds to a growing body of research which incorporates children’s voices directly in the study of their own communities, lives and experiences.

I now explain how this study is significant in a conceptual and theoretical sense.
Conceptual/Theoretical significance.

I am working in a field that has a rich research tradition and in an area that is highly contested. In the next chapter, I examine this rich tradition with its many ways of understanding reading. However, here I clarify how I intended that my study would add conceptually/theoretically to the field. In my study, research that considers reading is examined and critiqued as a phenomenon situated within specific contexts, rather than a generalisable capability.

Research over the last couple of decades has suggested literacy development, which incorporates reading development, is contextually bound to the context or community of participation (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, 2000; Heath, 1983; Hill, Comber, Louden, Rivalland, & Reid, 2002; Li, 2001; McNaughton, 1995, 2002; Thomson, 2003). This situated perspective proposes that what constitutes good reading is influenced by the reading behaviours that are valued within the context or community (Apple, 1999; Castanheira, Crawford, Dixon, & Green, 2001; Heap, 1991). Thus, signaling what constitutes reading will be specific to a context or community. This notion of reading and readers tends toward a bounded idea without accounting for the potential for boundary crossing of reading practices, knowledges or abilities.

The situated perspective of reading implies that boundaries exist around each context or community of participation. While some studies (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Green & Meyer, 1991) substantiate the situated and bounded notion of reading, they do not take into account the ways in which individuals transfer their understandings of reading from one context to another. By defining reading as a socially and contextually constructed practice, this situated view of reading challenges the idea that it is a generalisable, individualistic commodity that transfers readily across contexts. Supporters of the generalisable, individualistic view of reading have claimed that, since reading matter permeates society, individuals can be expected to transfer their reading capabilities easily across contexts (Anderson, Reder, & Simon, 1996; Perkins & Salomon, 1989). Despite the masses of available reading research, reading transfer appears to have received limited attention. I argue that this largely unmapped area requires investigation.

It is crucial that educators and academics gain insights into how reading is constituted and if it is transferred across contexts as the increasing diversity of students, their communities and the texts which they have available to read play a critical role in the
learning and teaching of reading. If as Gee (1990) proposed, the problematic nature of reading transfer is due to a member of a community of practice needing to appropriate each community’s ways of using reading and the associated discourse, then educators need insights into how reading is achieved and how they might assist their students in performing reading.

Reading is identified as a key concern within political and educational contexts. Acknowledging these concerns, I have focused my study on what constitutes reading in the students’ class, and on what readers take up as reading. In the next chapter, literature that led to this focus is examined.

While limited by what I was able to observe and record from participants in a single classroom and their contexts in and outside it, my study is significant in two areas.

First, it challenges situated notions of reading and extends understandings beyond this bounded notion of reading. It does so having explored the ways in which reading, readers and contexts are shaped intertextually by multiple voices and spaces. Second, my study adds to an identified gap in the reading field by deriving from its data an informed position that may help other researchers, educators and students in relation to better understanding of what constitutes reading and what readers take up (use) as reading.

In drawing together the above-mentioned areas, I have shown the three ways in which this study is significant and has sought to add to existing fields of knowledge. I now provide the aims of the study and an outline of its report in this thesis.

**Aims of the Study**

I aim to investigate children at work in reading and as readers in a middle years’ classroom made available to me for this study, and where significant others such as teachers and parents intersect with them in recognising what constitutes reading. In addition, I aim to explore what children in this class take up (use) as reading.

In order to do this, I have framed the study by the following research questions:

- What markers show what constitutes reading in a classroom setting?
- What do students take up as reading in this setting?
Overview of the Thesis
In this chapter, I have introduced my study. In conjunction with the next two chapters, it provides the foundational base of the thesis. In Chapter 2, I present exploration of what has already been researched and said about what constitutes reading and what students take up (use) as reading. In Chapter 3, I outline the research design and method employed in my study including the three stages involved in data collection and the techniques and tools used to collect and analyse data.

In Chapter 4, findings from the study are presented and organised around the research questions. My thesis concludes in Chapter 5 with discussion of the findings and their implications. This chapter includes recommendations for reading pedagogy and for future research.

Summary
This chapter has offered an introduction to my study; identified its aims and research questions; and proposed three ways in which my study aimed to be significant to contemporary education. In addition, it provided an overview of my study and this thesis.

In the next chapter, Chapter 2, what has already been said about what constitutes reading and what is taken up as reading by children is examined as background to the issues identified for research and report in my doctoral thesis.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

This review indicates that across existing literature of our knowledge on reading and readers there is a critical gap concerning what frames children’s views and operationalisation of reading. It led to the two questions outlined in Chapter 1 that present areas of research pertinent to my investigation, namely:

- What markers show what constitutes reading in a classroom setting?
- What do students take up as reading in this setting?

The review commences with examination of theoretical perspectives of reading with a position taken that what they offer is not yet sufficient in its explanation of the accounts of children-as-readers. This is followed by analyses of studies of reading in schools and communities with a conclusion drawn that it is timely and warranted for classroom research about literacy to be conducted with children’s voices at the forefront. Finally, research of classroom enactments of reading are reported in relation to their discernment of what constitutes reading in classrooms and what students take up as reading. This final section concludes that teachers typically use an eclectic approach to the learning and teaching of reading which privileges some forms of reading to the exclusion of others. Moreover, it indicates that classrooms operate as sites of socialisation and regulation of reading and readers. In closing, a synthesis of this review indicates gaps in the field where the research questions will seek to explore, and the timeliness of this study in progressing such exploration.

What Constitutes Reading: What Theoretical Perspectives Suggest

In recent years, there has been some agreement on the usefulness of a balanced approach to reading and how it is taught. Freebody and Luke (1990) offered the view that a successful reader is able to adopt all or any of four roles to accomplish the goals of reading. The roles (code breaker, meaning maker, text user and text critic/analyst) permit the reader to decode text with increasing fluency and accuracy, to participate and make sense of what is read, to use reading to achieve particular purposes, and to perform reflection as a critical reviewer of content and author. This conceptualisation made sense to many in the field and the ‘four reader roles’ have been adopted by educational systems throughout Australian as a balanced approach to the learning and teaching of reading in schools. For example, the Literate Futures materials produced and used in Queensland State Schools is underpinned by this framework (Anstey, 2002,
2004a, 2004b) as are the curriculum resources provided by the Tasmanian Department of Education (Department of Education Tasmania, n.d.). Meanwhile, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (n.d.) and the South Australian Department of Education and Children’s Services (Government of South Australia: Department of Education and Children's Services, n.d.) provide the ‘four reader roles’ as a theoretical model and resource for teachers to use to inform their teaching of literacy to students in the middle years of their schooling. The literature shows that this framework also has been utilised to inform research about literacy (e.g., Honan, 2008; Radha, 2007; Tan & McWilliam, 2009), to consider the literacy work needed with students in higher education settings (Nash & Sacre, 2009), and to enhance the practices of teachers in the field (e.g., Honan, 2008; Macken-Horarik, 2009). Such appropriation of the conceptualisation by educators and researchers in school-based and other educational contexts indicates its relatively wide acceptance as a useful framework for informing practice and research.

Nevertheless, Luke and Freebody (1999a) acknowledged the ‘four reader roles’ were “necessary but not sufficient ... for ... [a] reader in a postmodern text-based culture” (¶ 1). Analysis of their work over time (1990-2007) shows that they have not been confident that ‘four reader roles’ was an adequate explanation. Individually and jointly, they have continued to revisit and modify this work. They found fault in their original use of the term ‘roles’. Subsequent publications stressed it was about the ‘resources’ that a reader brought to the ‘roles’ that was most important (Freebody, 1992). They then shifted to emphasise the ‘practices’ involved in reading with these being referred to as being part of a family or repertoire (Freebody & Luke, 2003; Luke & Freebody, 1997, 1999b, 2007). From focusing on a reader as someone who had to fit each of the roles in order to be successful in reading texts, Luke and Freebody (1997; 1999a; 1999b; 2007) moved to a view that characterised reading as something that was done when a reader broke the code of texts, participated in the meaning of texts, used texts functionally, and critically analysed and transformed texts. Whilst none of the essential elements changed across these different depictions, the variation reflects an historical tendency in the field for change rather than stasis.

In addition to change by theorists where they are finessing their own theories, explanations of reading across theoreticians show the field as generally contested rather than as concordant. Different parties have debated and continue to debate what it is, and how best to approach its learning, teaching and assessment (Chall, 1967; Deegan,
1995; Green, Hodgens, & Luke, 1994; Mills, 2005; Shanahan, 2003; Snyder, 2008; Stanovich, 1990; Taylor, 1998), and new media and technology (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2000; The New London Group, 1996, 2000; Unsworth, 2001) have added to the scope of what requires explanation. Underpinning the contestations, however, are particular views of reading which shape theories of reading instruction, reading assessment and identification of readers’ competency in different ways. Because the basis of my investigation is an exploration of what constitutes “reading” in the study setting, these differences warrant a closer examination of what underpins the contestations.

The literature and popular media regularly bring divisions and debates about reading to our attention. Mills (2005) explained that the debate around reading operates in three sets of binary oppositions: reading acquisition being skills-based versus whole language based, print-based materials versus multi-modal ones, and cultural heritage versus critical approaches. Rather than focus on the debates or binary oppositions, however, I want to highlight the shifting views about reading and how this has lead to the silencing of reading in some arenas. Moreover, I propose to examine how each perspective of reading positions what counts as reading in different ways and consequently differentially affects readers and the identification of reader competency.

To explore the different ways of defining reading, I use Luke and Freebody’s (1997) framework which clusters reading into three groups: traditional skills-based, progressive child-centred and cultural-critical approaches. This framework aided me in tracking the journey of reading as it shifted from the forefront as a pivotal element of children’s learning to the current concentration on literacy and literacies, where “reading” as a descriptive title seems to have become subsumed to the point of being silenced. It also allows the complexity and variance in these constructions of reading to be shown.

**Traditional skills-based approaches to reading.**

“Traditionalists advocate a sequential, skills-based approach to reading instruction” with a focus on “basic skills” (Gee, 2004, p.10). They propose that reading development begins with attention to the print features of text and teaching should focus on phonics and whole-word instruction (Pearson & Stephens, 1994; Sloan & Whitehead, 1986). Bottom-up approaches are the most well known of the traditional
skills-based ways of understanding reading. The following outlines what is involved in bottom-up approaches to reading.

**Bottom up approaches: Cracking the visual codes.**

Pearson and Stephens (1994) propose that the main concern of teachers using this approach is “to make sure that children [can] ... discriminate among the visual symbols they encounter on the printed page and that they [can]... translate them into a verbal code” (p.23). Reading is seen as a perceptual process that involves a translation process. Readers have to perceive the graphic symbols (letters) and translate these “into an oral code (sounds corresponding to those letters)”, and after that listen to the sounds and words “produced in the translation process” to gain meaning of the print (Pearson & Stephens, 1994, p.22-23). The ability to read fluently and to comprehend text is correlated to a reader’s ability to access letter and word knowledge readily or, as Samuels (1994) described it, automatically. Thus, good readers are thought to have “sensitivity to letter-sound associations and automatic recognition of words” (Jones, 1996, p.9). Learning letters and words forms the first stage of what Luke and Freebody (1997) perceive as a two-stage process of reading development.

**A two-stage process of reading development.**

Underpinned by traditional skills-based ways of understanding reading, the first stage of this process focuses on the basics of word recognition and reading aloud, while the second involves “exposure to a canon of valued literature … the classics” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p.186). Thus, the capacities to use basic reading skills, at the first stage, and to read the classics in the second stage, are seen as requirements of competent readers.

In the first, reading instruction focuses on “the learning of the alphabet, the rehearsal and practice of sound-letter correspondences, and the recitation of key words to be learned eventually by sight” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p.185-86). Once basics are mastered, reading instruction focuses on oral reading of the classics: poetry and short pieces of literature. This combination constructs reading as an individual’s capacity to develop a set of skills at letter, sound and word levels and to use these to read texts. It also constructs two types of readers, “[those] who managed the first stage of reading development, and [those] others who managed both stages” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p.186). Furthermore, it is expected that these understandings will be “transportable [by
a reader]... from context to context” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p.189). The cognitive capacities of a reader thus become crucial to effective reading in any context.

**What constitutes one’s competency as a reader?**  
When reading is construed as involving in-the-head processes and skills (Clay, 1991; Gough, 1970; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Winser, 1988), one’s competency as a reader becomes aligned with an ability to construct and manage this head space. In order to read effectively, the reader must engage in “doing brain work, solving the literacy puzzle” (Comber & Cormack, 1997, p.22). Developing in-the-head processes and skills emerges as a learning objective essential to effective reading performance and comprehension, and a teaching goal. Subsequently, regardless of the physical space in which reading occurs, a reader should be able to use his/her cognitive abilities to read. As Lankshear, Snyder and Green (2000) pointed out, once a person has learnt to read, they were expected to:

> get on with learning through the medium of texts – by studying subjects in a curriculum or by other print-mediated means.... they can use ‘it’ (the skill repertoire, the ability) as a ‘tool’ to pursue all sorts of ‘goods’ (employment, knowledge, recreational pleasure, personal development, economic growth, innovation). (pp.27-28)

Thus, reading may be seen as following a developmental pathway progressing from learning to read to reading to learn. Implicit in this is the notion of preparing a child to use reading skills as a tool to fulfill adult roles. Nevertheless, the locus of success or failure in reading was situated within the individual’s cognitive space and his/her ability to manage this space to read.

Contemporary supporters of traditional skills-based reading approaches who view reading as an individualistic cognitive process, such as Anderson (1994), LaBerge and Samuels (1974), Samuels (1994) and Winser (1988), use terms such as processing, knowledge, understanding, control, assimilation, schema, metacognition, automaticity, memory, recall, retrieval, and self-regulation. Inherent in these views of reading is the notion that no matter where a reader is located in physical space, s/he is expected to be able to draw upon their internal cognitive capabilities to read. The success or failure in reading then, initially, seems to be situated within the space of the reader’s cognition, a head space in which cognition develops, operates and strengthens. What constitutes good reading is having the internal cognitive space, capacity and procedures for knowing letters, their sounds and words in a manner that allows quick accession of
these knowledges whenever required in any physical space. Accuracy involves effectiveness in retrieving, processing and applying letter, sound and word knowledges. Together with ‘automaticity’ which provides efficiency in these practices, and motivation for using them, accuracy is a foundational plank of good reading.

Whilst many theorists, researchers and educators acknowledge quick access to letters and words as an important element of reading, some, for example Cambourne (1984; 1992), Clay (1991), and Jones (1996), have challenged the notion that word knowledge should precede the reading of books in a child’s development as a reader. The basis of this challenge is that a child’s experience with texts may stimulate awareness, competence and confidence with reading holistically. Regardless of this perspective, advocates of skills-based approaches to reading, including Chall (1967; 1996) maintain that learning letters, sounds and words formulates the building blocks required before children are able to read words within texts. Traditional skills-based ways of understanding reading are also criticised on the basis that they portray a limited perspective of reading development by failing to acknowledge the influence of the reader, culture and context (Winch & Holliday, 2001). Progressive child-centred ways of understanding reading attempt to address these oversights. Thus, these two approaches to reading are polarised in their beliefs and practices regarding the learning and teaching of reading.

**Progressive child-centred approaches to reading.**

In the 1960’s, progressive educators proposed “that people learn to read best when they pick up the skills stressed by the traditionalists as part and parcel of attempting to give meaning to written texts” (Gee, 2004, p.10). Reading is seen rather as a constructive, top down, meaning-making process involving interactions between an individual and a text (Brown & Mathie, 1990; Sloan & Whitehead, 1986). Prior knowledge and experience were deemed crucial to selecting and processing text, and enabled its comprehension. According to Weaver (1994), text processing and meaning-making proceed top down from the individual’s cognitive schemata of prior knowledge and experience to the printed words on the page of a text. From this perspective, a reader’s activating prior knowledge and experiences and knowing that they relate to the text’s message were essential to making any text meaningful. These descriptions, however, continued the theoretical line that reading is an in-the-head activity.

Language-Experience and Whole Language are two progressive, child-centred approaches to reading. These are described and examined in the following section.
Language-Experience: Meaning-making beginning from the child.

Language-Experience draws together speaking, listening, writing and reading as macro-skills of human communication (Smith & Elley, 1997). When applied by teachers, this approach commences from children’s own related and relatable experiences. Discussion about such experiences are utilised by a teacher as a basis for talking, drawing and writing about the experience. Thus, children learn that oral language can be transcribed into sounds, images and words. Such productions offer subsequent opportunities for children to relive their experiences through reading. Beginning reading materials, therefore, consist of teacher-written texts often using individual children’s experiences, language structures, and illustrations, reconstructed into individual texts, or a collage of several such accounts combined around common content in the interests of efficiency, but where sufficient of the differentiated content is present to gain each individual’s attention.

Where commercially-published reading materials are used in a classroom, they are chosen on the basis of containing language structures that are likely to be familiar and predictable to those who will need them. Smith and Elley (1997) proposed that Language-Experience provides “real, motivated learning of words, letter-sound relations, spelling, punctuation and syntax” (p.32). Thus, Language Experience positions an individual’s experiences and oral language as the foundations for beginning to learn about writing and reading. Stahl and Miller (1989) referred to Language Experience as providing “a bridge from oral to written language” (p.88).

Whole Language: Reading as meaning-making.

Rather than viewing reading as a skills-based approach, Whole Language is concerned with “the construction of meaning in the internal cognitive space of the reader” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p.189). Advocates such as Cambourne (1984; 1992) and Goodman (1970) maintain learning to read is a natural process, in the same manner that acquiring one’s first language is a natural process.

In whole language classrooms, children are read to by more-able readers, read with more-able readers, and read independently. In most instances, the more-able reader is the teacher. Immersion in oral language and reading rich environments therefore is crucial to learning to read. Thus, reading, writing, speaking and listening come together in an integrated manner in the Whole Language approach. According to Winch and
Holliday (2001), recognition of “the reciprocal links between reading and writing” (p.12) comes from Marie Clay’s work (1972; 1979) in which both reading and writing are seen as contributing to learning about print. Reading and writing thus are viewed as similar and complementary processes that revolve around constructing and reconstructing meanings of the text (Anstey, 1986).

Although the overall goal is to make meaning through comprehension, reading is viewed as an individualistic, cognitive process. Despite, there being “a shift away from the passive reception of information and skills ... toward an apparently more active and oral construction of ideas that relate to a text” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p.189), the focus remains on the development of a reader’s in-the-head space.

Whole Language supporters identify a reader’s in-the-head prior knowledge as “the driving force in reading” (Sloan & Whitehead, 1986, p.6) and the starting point to enabling a text to be comprehended and meaning made. Meaning-making is more than recalling information that has been read. Goodman and Goodman (1994) proposed that it consists of a two-stage process: comprehending and comprehension. Comprehending is “what the reader does to understand during the reading of a text”, while comprehension is “what the reader understands at the end of the reading” (Goodman & Goodman, 1994, p.109).

As with Language-Experience, awareness of alignments between each reader’s background knowledge about the content and contextual features of particular texts and reading materials available plays a critical role in what is selected. All texts in a Whole Language classroom are real books, authentic print-based texts (Snyder, 2008). Appropriate reading materials are those that reflect familiar concepts and are relevant to the reader’s prior knowledge and experiences, while using familiar language to express the text’s message. As a consequence of meaningful engagement with appropriate texts, readers develop a range of skills including awareness of print and book conventions; control of directionality; ability to draw upon prior knowledge and experiences to aid prediction of words and textual content; and positive attitudes towards reading (Brown & Mathie, 1990; Sloan & Whitehead, 1986). Instead of books with controlled vocabulary, Whole Language supporters utilise children’s literature. To aid children to read any literature which is beyond their current capabilities, teachers read these books aloud, demonstrating good reading behaviours, and introducing children to new vocabulary and language structures. Big book versions of children’s literature are used to enable children to both see and hear what is being read.
Snyder (2008) noted that progressive child-centred ways of understanding reading in Australia have been enacted in a variety of ways. For example, some teachers pick up on the idea that children’s interests should inform reading resource selection along with attention to the reader’s age and cultural background. Some teachers wait for children’s reading skills to emerge through immersion in reading activities. Yet others provide focused instruction in either small group or whole class settings. Nevertheless, by the late 1980s, Whole Language and its variations dominated reading instruction in Australia’s primary classrooms (Snyder, 2008). Synder’s findings were to be expected given that during the 1980s, all Australian primary school teachers were provided with professional development which was underpinned by progressive, child-centred notions of reading. From 1983 to 1988, the Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC) was systematically implemented across Australia. Subsequently, in the late 1980s, the Further Literacy Inservice Course (FLIP) also was provided to many Australian teachers. What constituted “reading” in the views formed or forming amongst the nation’s educators at this time was that it was an internal cognitive process focused on meaning-making.

**What constitutes one’s competency as a reader?**

A reader’s competency is attributed primarily to describing his/her capacity to comprehend a text. In order to understand how readers comprehend texts, educators are required to consider reading via two lenses. The first lens, a miscue analysis or running record of a child’s reading, provides insights into what is happening in the child’s cognitive space as he/she comprehends while reading. Analysis of this record shows how the child is integrating “reading strategies such as predicting and confirming with the language cueing systems, the graphophonics, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic systems” (Goodman, 1982, p. 301). The second lens involves either an oral or written retelling of what the child has understood after reading. Rather than being detached, objective recall of information from a reading, retellings include “personal, genuine, and emotional responses” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p.189). Under this conceptualization of reading, “ways of showing motivation to be a reader and particular displays of authenticity, voice, and response” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p.189) became crucial to being considered a good reader. Authenticity and voice are terms used here to capture a sense of a reader’s personal response to the text he/she has read. This perception of reading means a reader’s competency could be measured at two levels of meaning-making: comprehending and comprehension.
Although progressive, child-centred approaches and traditional skills-based approaches hold different perspectives about the learning and teaching of reading, both view reading as, “essentially an internal, individual and silent practice” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p.190). In addition, both perspectives view reading as transportable from context to context within an individual’s cognition.

In more recent times, new ways of understanding reading have emerged including cultural-critical perspectives, a change from literacy being seen as a unitary concept to one of multiple types of literacies, reading as a social critical practice, situated literacy, and reading as an element of critical literacy. These are examined in the following sections.

**Cultural-critical approaches to reading.**

Researchers such as Barton and Hamilton (2000), Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000), Chambers (1991), Gee (1990), Green and Meyer (1991), Heath (1983; 1991) and McNaughton (1995) proposed that reading, writing, speaking and listening involve more than developing in-the-head understandings and that these ‘bits’ should be (re)conceptualised as embedded components of literacy. This (re)conceptualisation attends to literacy as a critical social practice that occurs in particular ways in particular social and cultural spaces. Literacy attends to more than the individual. What constitutes literacy in any context is recognised as being affected by social, cultural and political forces. Consequently, learning to read, write, speak and listen are subsumed into literacy and associated with learning about the world and how it works socially, culturally, historically and politically (Gee, 1996; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003).

Moreover, as Lankshear and Knobel (2003) point out, separating reading, writing, speaking or listening from literacy is seen as not possible as these literacy bits are unable to “exist apart from the social practices in which they are embedded” (p.8).

As conceptual and theoretical understandings shifted from separate bits such as “reading” to the holistic umbrella “literacy”, so too did the associated educational language. Instead of attending individually to oral language, reading or writing, literacy became the educational focus. This subsumption of oral language, reading and writing within the broader notion of literacy meant there should be limited or no physical space provided for them to operate or be examined individually. Educational language such as *emergent literacy* and *literacy development* replaced *learning to read* and *reading development*. Lankshear and Knobel (2003) note, “emergent literacy’ subsumed the
conventional overall term ‘reading readiness’, ‘literacy development’ was used in place of reading and writing development; ‘literacy studies’ instead of ‘language arts’ and the like” (p.7).

With this shift in educational language, reading, writing, speaking and listening seemed to be subsumed to the point of virtual invisibility. Lankshear and Knobel (2003) noted that the term “literacy” had superseded “oral language”, “reading” and “writing” within school timetables, program and policy documents, and professional journals.

The following extracts illustrate how evidence of these shifts is present within curriculum and policy documents in the Queensland Education context. In the 1991 English Syllabus, students are signified as needing to “speak, listen, write and read, and use associated non-verbal, visual and auditory language” in order to develop “their ability to use English effectively” (Department of Education Queensland, 1991, p.13). Within this document, reading is strongly aligned with language use with particular attention to attitudes, processes, skills and knowledge that enable effective use of a range of written genres. In essence, reading, writing, speaking and listening involve a set of technical skills with focus being on an individual’s acquisition of these.

A decade later, the Literate Futures report stated “being a child, being an adolescent and, indeed, becoming literate, have changed in some fundamental ways. The toolkit of basic skills that served many of us in the 1950s is inadequate today” (Education Queensland, 2000, p.7). Instead of a repertoire of skills in order to be an effective reader, writer, speaker or listener, this document maintained that to be literate in the 21st century a person must have “… the flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communication technologies via spoken language, print, and multimedia, and the ability to use these practices in various social contexts” (Education Queensland, 2000, p.9). The terms, “reading”, “writing”, “speaking” and “listening”, do not feature within this definition of literacy. They are invisible. Yet reading does have space at a later point within this document; in fact, it has a full section of its own. Within this special section, reading is defined “as a self-monitoring, problem-solving activity where the context and purpose of the task are analysed, a plan of action decided and appropriate resources are identified and accessed” (Education Queensland, 2000, p.27). Subsequently, the document attends to people’s uses of reading unearthing variability in reading types and reading practices. In addition, reading is identified as “constructed (perceived) and enacted (practiced)”
(Education Queensland, 2000, p.28). In contrast to the skills-based foci of a decade previously, reading is associated with use, practices, and resources.

At the same time as these changes were occurring, professional journals targeting the learning and teaching of reading were renamed to focus on literacy learning and teaching. Some examples of these changes are listed in Table 1.

Table 1
Changes in the names of professional journals about reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Journal Name</th>
<th>New Journal Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Reading</td>
<td>Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Reading Behavior</td>
<td>Journal of Literacy Research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New publications such as the *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* (established in 2001), *Literacy Today* (established 1994) and the *Journal of Literacy and Technology* (launched 2000) also employed the term “literacy” in preference to “reading”. In some instances, the changes in journal titles also aligned with changes in the names of professional associations; for example, the *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, and *Literacy Learning: The Middle Years* align with the Australian Literacy Educators’ Association. This professional association was previously known as Australian Reading Association.

Although the tendency has been to adopt “literacy” within journal names, there remain a few journals which have maintained “reading” within their titles, including *The Reading Teacher*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Reading Improvement*, and *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. Although reading seems to have more typically become subsumed into literacy, in 2005, the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005) signaled that it was time as a nation to look again at the learning and teaching of reading. The learning and teaching of reading thus became highly visible again, and now as a national priority. Recognising this national priority, my study has used the term “reading” and within its setting has sought to ascertain what constitutes reading in children’s schooling today.

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the positioning of reading and literacy within the publication world also seemed pertinent to establishing what was valued in the broader educational field. Hence, I continued to survey what was and had been published in recent years. A survey of books and other resources related to reading and
literacy reveal the publication of books with literacy in their titles commenced in the early to mid-1990s. Titles include:

- *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses* (Gee, 1990);
- *Literacy Lexicon* (Bull & Anstey, 2003);
- *Critical literacies in the classroom* (Knobel & Healy, 1998);
- *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000);
- *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context* (Barton et al., 2000), and

“Literacy” is shown in these relatively recent titles in singular or pluralised iterations. Not surprisingly the content of the publications listed above attends to defining and illustrating literacy.

**Literacy to Multiliteracies.**

The New London Group (1996; 2000) played a key role in the transformation of literacy as a conceptualisation and term into the plural “literacies”. This small group of professionals originated during a one week meeting in September 1994 in New London, England. The group consisted of Courtney Cazden, James Gee and Sarah Michaels from United States of America, Bill Cope, Carmen Luke, Joseph Lo Bianco, Martin Nakata, Allan Luke, Mary Kalantzis and Gunther Kress from Australia, and Norman Fairclough from England. They subsequently dubbed themselves The New London Group. The New London Group (1996) proposed that since the ways in which our personal, public and work lives operated had changed radically, it was time to (re)conceptualise understandings of literacy and literacy education. The development of new technologies and multimedia resulted in the emergence of diverse and different texts that permeate people’s private, public and work lives. Rather than just one literacy, The New London Group (1996; 2000) identified a multitude of literacies in our contemporary lives, or as Unsworth (2002) defines them “multiple literacies” (p.63), also dubbed ‘multiliteracies’. Inherent in multiliteracies is the idea that texts are diverse and different, with many being multimodal; that is, they use a combination of print, visual and/or oral communication modes.

The New London Group (1996; 2000) was the first to signal that these new multimodal texts necessitated new ways of thinking about texts and text engagement as well as about literacy learning and teaching. In accordance with this view, The New
London Group (1996; 2000) offered a framework for reconceptualising literacy pedagogy with their conceptualisations of *what* (Available Designs, Designing, and The Redesigned) and *how* (Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice) of a multiliteracies pedagogy. Subsequently, their work has been taken up and extended by others including Chandler-Olcott and Mahar (2003), Cope and Kalantzis (2000), Fairclough (2000), Hagood (2003), Henderson (2004), Kalantzis and Cope (1997), Kress (2000), Luke (2000), Stewart-Dore (2003), and Unsworth (2001; 2002). In many instances, the notion of “texts” being diverse and multimodal seems to be the only aspect that has been taken up and used to reconceptualise literacy pedagogy. In contrast, the *what* and *how* of Multiliteracies pedagogy, as espoused by The New London Group, seems to have received little attention.

Street (1984) employed the term “different literacies” to describe the mixtures and plurality of oral and written modes of communication. The notion of there being more than one pure or universal type of literacy is also acknowledged through the use of terms such as “literacy practices” (Anstey & Bull, 2003; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Freebody et al., 1995; Lewis, 2001), “local literacies” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998), “new literacies” (Garton, 1997; Lankshear & Knobel, 2000, 2003), “new media and online literacies” (Hagood, 2003), “multiliteracies” (Kalantzis & Cope, 1997; The New London Group, 1996, 2000), “situated literacies” (Barton et al., 2000), and “technoliteracies” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2000). The term “literacies” is now commonly utilised to represent the multitude of literate practices, individuals participate in and ‘do’ as part of their everyday social lives; in their homes, communities and workplaces. As Reeves (2004) asserted:

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understandings[s] of what a text is and, therefore, of what reading a text means, … that now films, images, music, mathematics, social interactions, and social structures of all kinds are included in … definition of texts to be “read”. Any sign system can be the source of a text. Indeed, any artefact, object, or event can be “read” or examined for its history or other information. (p.15)
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Thus in this view, reading is defined as being shaped by society and its cultural tools and practices. Reading attains the status of being a social practice that plays a critical role in people’s lives as explained in the following.

**Reading: A social critical practice.**

Understanding reading as a social critical practice is a social constructivist stance which draws upon Vygotsky’s (1962; 1981) and Rogoff’s (1990) work. Through engagement with real and purposeful texts and activities, a reader appropriates the understandings
and ways of being a reader in a particular society or culture. Although children play an active role in learning to read, interactions with more capable others, educators or peers, support them in reaching out to new learning in this area. Beginning readers therefore are novices moving with the assistance of more expert others towards reader competency. Interactions with more expert others, according to Berk and Winsler (1995), should never occur in whole class grouping situations as they have limited potential to enhance children’s reading. Rather Berk and Winsler and other Social Constructivist supporters advocate the use of small groups and one-to-one pairings as the best way to facilitate the interactions required to promote children’s learning.

According to this perspective, reading is a social process and thus learning to read must be recognised as involving more than development of in-the-head understandings. Chambers (1991), Gee (1996) and McNaughton (1995), for example, proposed that a reader needs to understand both the purpose and value of reading activities and how to participate in them. Being a reader encapsulates a particular way of being, a social identity, in a community or social and cultural space within which the reader is a member and participant. Barton and Hamilton (1998), Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000), Heath (1983) and McNaughton (1995), for example, have studied how people become readers within particular communities. These studies suggest community members’ reading is situated within particular social and cultural spaces.

McNaughton (1995; 2002) maintained people are socialised into ways of doing literacy that are valued in the social and cultural spaces of family and school. Within any family or school context, particular literacy practices are selected, arranged and deployed. These practices “provide a zone within which particular activities are promoted” (McNaughton, 1995, p.20). Through particular selections, arrangements and deployments of reading practices, the family or school socialise children into particular ways of thinking about and acting out reading that are appropriate for that community (McNaughton, 1995). The socialisation of reading occurs through ambient, joint and personal activities. Ambient activities include any reading that is observed by the child. This includes watching other community members read. Joint activities involve the child being read to and the child reading with another community member. Personal activities are when a child reads or explores a book by themselves. Through engagement in these three kinds of reading activities, the child learns what counts as reading within particular social and cultural spaces and appropriates these into his/her
reading repertoire. Reading, thus, becomes tied to particular spaces and situated within them.

Situated Literacy.
Underpinned by social constructivist views, situated literacy theories have evolved to be a compelling force in the field of literacy education. The notion of literacy practices being embedded in literacy activities events has lead to increased focus on contextual influences. For example, Street (1984) posited that “the particular practices and concepts of reading and writing ... for a given society depends upon the context; ... they are already embedded in an ideology and cannot be isolated or treated as ‘neutral’ or merely ‘technical’” (p.1).

The importance of context is taken up by Anstey and Bull (2003) and Gee (1996) in their explanations that literacies emerge from the range of contexts in which individuals participate and that each context necessitates different but appropriate ways of behaving and interacting with these literacies. The focus on contextual significance underpin many contemporary studies, including Barton and Hamilton’s (1998), Barton et al.’s (2000), Heath’s (1983) and Thomson’s (2003) work. These studies invariably identify continuities and discontinuities between the literacies used in school and other contexts (home and/or community). These studies also suggest that community members regulate and are regulated by literacy practices.

Heath showed the continuities and discontinuities between community and school literacies. For example, when examining the literacies of children living in Roadville, Heath (1983) identified, “When they enter school, their home world and that of the school seem to match well. There is a lulling sense of a familiar continuity of past experiences in the new setting of school” (pp.347-348). Conversely, children who lived in Trackton experienced “a series of minor discontinuities” in their preschool years and “a sudden flood of discontinuities” upon entering school (p.348).

This study also revealed limited attempts by educators to acknowledge and build upon children’s existing literacy competencies. Heath’s study illuminated how recognition of the diversity of children’s prior-to-school literacy experiences prepares them for participating in literacy events in different, diverse and functional ways.
In a similar vein, Thomson’s (2003) investigation of the literacies of ‘rustbelt kids’ illuminates the different ways in which community members become literate. This study showed the consequences of continuity and discontinuity between school and community literacies upon children’s literacy learning and participation. Thomson used the metaphor of a virtual school bag to explain how all children enter school contexts with a range of literacies’ knowledges and behaviours. For some children, school experiences allow them to unpack a significant proportion of their virtual school bag contents and bring it to the task of school reading. For other children, the majority or some of their school bag contents remains unpacked. Those children who are able to unpack their virtual school bag of literacies in the school context are identifiable as having already participated in and gained expertise in school literacies within their home and communities. These children commence school at an advantage position. Conversely, children who have limited opportunity to utilise their virtual school bag of literacies in the school context are positioned from the beginning as lacking, deficient, deficit and behind from day one.

Proponents of socio-cultural theories of reading, such as Barratt-Pugh (2000) and Comber and Cormack (1997), claim students gain different understandings about what counts as reading and how it is conducted from their observations of, and participation in, home, community and school reading activities. The manner in which reading is conducted in each context is shaped by a number of factors including cultural and social values, beliefs, and purposes. This theoretical stance indicates reading to be a practice constructed by social, cultural, historical and political influences. In this sense, reading is not a value free practice, but a product of such influences (Luke, 1993). Whilst these influences shape reading as a social and cultural practice, students’ understandings, beliefs, and values about reading will be defined in particular ways. Comber and Cormack (1997) identify what count as ‘good’ reading behaviours as being reflective of what is valued within a particular context. People shape reading to suit the purposes and needs of particular audiences, communities and events (Luke, 1993). These events and communities also shape what people read, how they read, and what counts as the characteristics of ‘good’ reading. Thus, reader competence becomes tied to displaying socially and culturally appropriate behaviours for particular contexts, situations and purposes. Consequently, each community may produce readers who differ from those in other communities. In addition, the teaching and learning of reading will be informed by the social, cultural, historical and political influences that individual teachers are exposed to and align with. It is feasible to consider that some
teachers may be cognisant of these forces and others may not be. Regardless, a teacher’s alignment with a particular theoretical approach or mixture of theoretical approaches to reading will shape what is counted as reading within a particular community. Furthermore, students will be expected to conform to what is valued in reading in that community if they are to achieve success.

This perspective of reading indicates that what constitutes reading will differ from classroom to classroom, context to context, community to community, physical space to physical space. In addition, this perspective of reading suggests boundaries exist around each space: school, home, and community. These boundaries may create barriers that limit some students’ potential to participate effectively in school reading. Thomson (2003) and Hill, Comber, Louden, Rivalland and Reid (2002) utilise case studies to illustrate this point with particular reference to how differences between students’ home and school literacy practices limited their potential to gain access to what counted as school success. Conversely, where there were similarities between students’ home and school understandings, success within the school context was enhanced.

With this in mind, Heath (1991) and Bausch (2003), supporters of a socio-cultural approach to reading, advocate teachers become more aware of the literacies used in students’ communities, and to utilise these understandings to inform their literacy planning. Teachers, who adopt this approach to reading, may employ teaching-learning methods that acknowledge and utilise the differentiations in students’ reading understandings and capabilities as strengths and view these as positive, rather than negative, factors of the diversity within their community of practice. Teachers may empower students by making them aware of the similarities and differences in the reading practices in the different communities of practice and how they need to adjust their language and behaviours to enable them to perform appropriately when and where required. Through this approach, students have the potential to develop flexible reading behaviours and awareness that as a participant in any community of practice, they need to make choices in regard to what is appropriate for that reading task and purpose. As a result, it is conceivable that students will exhibit more competencies in some reading tasks and some situations than in others. These differing levels of competency would lead to the construction of multiple reading identities. As a result, reading competence may be considered a demonstration or display of social and cultural practices (Comber & Cormack, 1997). Therefore, when a student is
experiencing difficulty reading a text, the initial investigation would focus on identifying elements of the social and cultural aspects of the reading context and activity that have restricted the reader. Assessment of reading practices would need to focus on examining multiple dimensions with the reader engaged in reading in different tasks, situations and contexts and observational records being taken at these times. Assessment of reading would need to be an ongoing process involving the use of a range of assessment tools.

**Reading: An inherent element of Critical Literacy.**

Another way of understanding reading as a social critical practices is taken up by critical literacy advocates such as Delpit (1992), Lankshear (1994) and Luke, Comber and Grant (2003). While Delpit, Lankshear, and Luke, Comber and Grant support the idea of reading as being socially constructed, they highlight the need to recognise reading as a component of the broader political scene. This stance posits that the power bases underpinning reading enable some children, those immersed within the dominant culture from birth, to develop control of dominant literacies. From the moment these children enter school, they are empowered to develop school literacies which are synonymous with dominant literacies. Meanwhile, these power bases inhibit the potential of others, for example members of minority groups, from becoming literate as they are not positioned to attain control of the literacies of the dominant culture. These children enter school at a disadvantage.

Supporters of the critical literacy position are concerned with making visible and challenging the ways in which dominant literacies enhance the potential of some while disadvantaging others. As Hill (1997) reported, critical literacy supporters focus on “change and social action, contending that social practices are set up to meet the interests and help maintain the privileged positions of those within the dominant culture” (p.270).

As Knobel and Healy (1998) outlined, educators:

> who subscribe to critical literacy have a stake in social change – no matter how small – and aim to encourage their students to investigate, question and even challenge relationships between language and social practices that advantage particular social groups over others. (p.2)

Teaching informed by this theoretical stance focuses on developing children’s awareness of world views, social justice issues, the existence of dominant literacies and
power associated with them, as well as an awareness of ways to deal with the conflicts that can arise from the discrepancies between minority and dominant literacies (O'Brien, 1998). Since as Luke et al. (2003) suggested texts are “not innocuous, neutral texts requiring simple decoding and ‘appropriate’ response”, critical analysis of texts is required to facilitate a “reading of the cultures’ around, behind, underneath, alongside, after and within the text” (p.21). Consequently, texts are analysed to identify the ways that they shape social identity and power relationships.

As well, this approach maintains that educators need to reflect upon their actions to ensure they are not using analysis of controversial issues or texts to engage in manipulation of children or to promote their own opinions. Rather, text analysis activities and discussion need to be open to exploring “different, or multiple, points of view” (Knobel & Healy, 1998, p.5). In addition, educators need to be aware that “taking a critical literacy stance in classroom practices is not a neutral act, but comes loaded with issues that need to be carefully considered and monitored” (Knobel & Healy, 1998, p.4). Using a critical literacy approach provides one way to (re)conceptualise why some children perform well with literacy from day one of their schooling, while others seem to enter schooling at a disadvantage.

**What constitutes one’s competency as a reader?**

At the point where literacy integrated reading, writing, speaking and listening as central to people’s social and cultural learning potentials, competency became aligned with appropriate usage of literacy within different social situations and contexts (Freebody, 1993). Moreover, what counts as appropriate usage of literacy is “situationally defined and redefined” by community members (Castanheira, Crawford, Dixon, & Green, 2001, p.354). Thus the community and its culture construct “not only what counts as reading when reading really counts, but also who counts as a reader”(Alvermann, 2001, p.689).

**What theoretical perspectives offer as an explanation to what constitutes reading.**

In summary, this review found “reading” conceptualised throughout existing literature in a number of different ways and where comparisons seem more about contestation than concordance. In some instances, reading is identified as skill-based underpinned by a developmental attainment framework focused on the individual moving from novice to expert. Other perspectives, however, focus heavily on the context in which
reading occurs and thus emphasis moves away from the individual to rest more with community practices. Nevertheless, reading is associated with skills, actions/use and performance. Thus skills, actions and the state of being a (competent/incompetent) reader emerge as key constructs interchangeable with the term “reading” (Langer, 1988). Like Langer (1988), I discern that each construct of reading is underpinned by different traditions and belief systems. Thus, what counts as skills, actions and state of being mean different things to different people when defining “reading”. Although these variations do little to clarify the confusions and issues within the field of education, they highlight a concern in what effects these might have upon teachers and children.

There have been attempts to clarify the confusions that have arisen from the contestations in the field. These attempts recognise that contestations do not help educators at the chalk face. Durrant and Green (2000) offered a three-dimensional model of operational, cultural and critical aspects of literacy, but with the exception of Education Queensland’s use of this model within one of its draft English syllabus in the 1990s there has been limited take up of this by education systems and teachers. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) proposed four roles of text designer, text bricoleur, text mediator and text jammer to characterise what people do with literacy. This proposal has been used by some researchers (e.g., Marsh, 2006a; Marsh, 2006b) and advocated for use in teacher education (e.g., Larson & Marsh, 2005), but has received little attention in education systems. Luke and Freebody’s ‘four reader roles’/‘four families of literacy practices’, however, has been recognised by educators and researchers as providing a means to navigate around the contestations by recognising and incorporating items of value from each of the theoretical constructions of reading (Freebody & Luke, 1990, 2003; Luke & Freebody, 1999a, 1999b). Despite its acceptance as a way of conceptualising what constitutes reading, their ongoing reshaping of this framework reaffirms that the concept is a slippery, complex notion to define.

In each of the conceptualisations of reading examined here, attention is focused on what constitutes reading and gaining insights into what is needed for the teaching of reading. Although each conceptualisation provides a clear explanation of what constitutes reading, what they offer is not sufficient. What is needed is an investigation or investigations of what constitutes reading in classrooms, schools and communities in which children live and work. Some research has been done in this area. The
following section examines what studies of schools and communities suggest constitutes reading and, what these show in relation to what children take up as reading.

What Constitutes Reading: What Studies of Schools and Communities Suggest

Gee (1996) asserted that what counts in reading includes what is valued and the rules associated with reading within a particular task or context, and that this influences what it means to be a reader: how to act, think, and be. Thus, reading may be seen as a socially-constructed practice which affects how a reader can act, think and do reading.

Studies conducted by Mahiri and Godley (1998) and McNaughton (1995; 2002) discerned that this socialisation process begins early with contributions offered by both families and schools. This finding suggests that researchers should study family and school contexts simultaneously when investigating what constitutes reading and what readers do when reading. This is affirmed by Street’s (1984) recognition that “the particular practices and concepts of reading and writing ... for a given society depends upon the context; ...[as] they are already embedded in an ideology and cannot be isolated or treated as ‘neutral’ or merely ‘technical’” (p.1). Recognising that to separate studies of schools from families would not be appropriate, my research will investigate what constitutes reading in children’s homes and school.

Research on literacy has been conducted in family and school contexts but, typically, it is done in only one of these contexts. Given the stance taken in my study, the following examines research that has explored both contexts.

Studies such as Barton and Hamilton’s (1998), Heath’s (1983), Hill, Comber, Louden, Rivalland and Reid’s (1998; 2002), McNaughton’s (1995; 2002) and Thomson’s (2003) work have studied people’s use of literacies, of which reading was a part, as they went about their home, school, and community lives. Their studies show that literacies emerge from the range of contexts in which individuals participate and that each context necessitates different but appropriate ways of behaving and interacting with these literacies. These studies found continuities and discontinuities existed between the literacies people used in school and other contexts (home and/or community). Their findings are presented and critiqued in the following.
Barton and Hamilton (1998) conducted an ethnographic study of one community in England to investigate the ways in which community members used literacy (reading and writing) in their every-day lives. Different literacies were being used within people’s homes and, thus, a singular concept of what constituted home literacy was not discerned. Home literacy was found to be rich in its diversity and not worthy of the stereo-typical and blame-ridden views often held by schools. This study also revealed that people brought their work home and in so doing, “different aspects of [their literacy] life [were] negotiated and fitted in with each other” (p.189). In one sense, literacy was situated to a home context but, in another, people actively worked to cross the boundaries between home and work contexts.

Barton and Hamilton’s study “concentrated on adults and their practices in order to point out how powerfully adults’ lives and practices structure home literacy” (p.189), and then examined how home literacy and home-school communications affected children’s literacy learning. In attending to adults’ voices only as an explanation of what constituted literacy in this community, Barton and Hamilton offered children no opportunity to input their perspectives and experiences. In considering children as “social actors in their own right” (O’Kane, 2000, p.136), I propose that this indicates a significant gap in their findings.

Heath (1983) also studied the home, community and school literacies of people in an English community. She attended to their talk, what they read and what they wrote and how these literacy elements were used in their every-day lives. She found in comparisons of Roadville and Trackton samples, distinctive continuities and discontinuities between home/community and school literacies. Heath advocated that educators recognise the diversity of children’s prior-to-school literacy experiences and to see this as preparing children to participate in literacy events in different, diverse and functional ways. Heath proposed educators identify and build upon children’s prior-to-school literacy competencies, whilst also cautioning that to fail to do so would legitimise school literacies to the potential of some in the community and to the detriment of others. Her work highlights the potential to create a binary amongst children as students for those who have the privileged literacies and those who do not.

Although Heath’s work predates Barton and Hamilton’s by more than a decade, it too focused on gaining insights into homes, community and school through the eyes and voices of adults. Snippets of children’s actions and voices are evident throughout this
work. However despite this, their perspectives were not sought. This is a significant
gap in Heath’s theorisation. Cook and Hess (2007) proposed that “the views of adults
may not necessarily represent children’s perceptions and experiences” (p.29),
suggesting that research such as Heath’s should incorporate the voices of children and
adults if a ‘true’ representation of their lived experiences is to be gained.

Hill et al. (1998; 2002) conducted a longitudinal study of young Australian children’s
literacy development from the year prior to commencing school to the fourth year of
their formal schooling. Through the use of case studies, Hill et al. showed diverse
variability existed in the literacy experiences and what counted as literacy in children’s
home lives. Continuities and discontinuities between children’s literacy experiences in
their homes and school were found to affect children’s performance and ratings as
literacy users at school. Children who had learned school-like literacy at home were
advantaged when they entered school. These children experienced continuity between
their home and school literacy practices making the transition to school relatively easy.
This worked towards positioning them as ‘good’ literacy users from their first day of
school. Children who had learned ways of doing literacy at home that were not
recognised or valued in a school context experienced discontinuities which made their
transition to school difficult and tended to position them and their families in deficit
ways.

Observations of children “getting” literacy were crucial to the understandings Hill et
al. (2002) gained about what literacy learning was happening in the homes and schools
of these Australian children. These observations, however, provided limited
opportunity for children to express their opinions. Again, this is a study where the
findings are filtered through the eyes and voices of adults.

From studying communities in New Zealand, McNaughton (1995; 2002) proposed
that within any family or school context, particular reading practices are selected,
arranged and deployed. These reading practices “provide a zone within which
particular activities are promoted” (McNaughton, 1995, p.20). Through particular
selections, arrangements and deployments of reading practices, the family or school
socialise children into particular ways of thinking about and acting out reading that are
appropriate for that community (McNaughton, 1995). The socialisation of reading
occurs through participating in a range of ambient, joint and personal reading activities.
Despite placing a child as central to the literacy learning experience, McNaughton provides no guidance for how and when opportunities their voices may be heard.

In a similar vein to Barton and Hamilton (1998) and Heath’s studies, Thomson (2003) investigated the literacies of a community to discern the ways in which community members became literate. This study, conducted in an Australian context, a post-industrial ‘rustbelt’ community, revealed the consequences of continuity and discontinuity between school and community literacies upon children’s literacy learning and participation. Thomson uses the metaphor of a virtual school bag to explain how all children enter school contexts ‘containing’ a range of literacies’ knowledges and behaviours. Her case studies of Vicki and Thanh illustrate how, for some children, school experiences enable them to draw on a significant proportion of their virtual school bags’ contents, while for other children, the majority or some of their school bag contents remain unpacked. Thomson explains that children who are able to unpack and use their virtual school bag of literacies in the school context have participated and gained expertise in school-like literacies within their homes and communities. These children commence school at an advantage position. Conversely, children who have had limited opportunity to draw on and use their virtual school bag of literacies in the school context are positioned from the beginning of their schooling as lacking, deficient, deficit and behind. Although Vicki and Thanh’s experiences are used to effect to highlight notions of continuity and discontinuity, children’s voices receive little attention in Thomson’s work. Instead the attention is on the voices of adults and deriving information to inform the work of adults.

Reviewing the research of communities and schools revealed several findings of significance in regard to what constitutes reading and what children take up.

First, there is a tendency to legitimatise and privilege school and school-like literacy to the detriment of other forms of literacies. Privileging school and school-like literacy formalises and sanctions the use of particular texts and ways of doing literacy, while marginalising and silencing other forms of literacy, their texts, and the ways of doing these literacies. This finding is problematic in that (a) it does not align with contemporary theories of literacy which show that there are multiple and multi-modal literacies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kalantzis & Cope, 1997; Kress, 2000; The New London Group, 1996, 2000; Unsworth, 2002); (b) it privileges school literacy to the detriment of other literacies, and (c) it restricts the potential for children to be flexible
and competent users of a diverse range of literacies as required to participate effectively in contemporary society.

Second, those who enter school with school-like literacy are privileged and positioned as “able”, while those who enter school with different understandings and ways of doing literacy are marginalised from the start and positioned as deficient or deficit. This sets up a binary of haves and have-nots which enables and entitles educators to slip easily into deficit talk; a position which I consider to be non-productive.

Third, studies of people’s use of literacy in homes, communities and schools are informed predominantly by adults and their observations. Children’s voices receive little descriptive space in research and talk about literacy and its parts: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Like James and Prout (1990), I dismiss the idea of children being passive and acted upon and take the stance that children “are and must be seen as active in the construction of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live” (p.8). I propose that it is timely and warranted for research about literacy to be conducted with children’s voices at the forefront. In taking this stance, I aim to add to a growing body of work in which children’s voices enable the meanings of particular phenomena to be explored. In this study, the phenomena to be investigated are what constitutes reading and what students take up as reading.

The next section explores what studies of classrooms have suggested about what constitutes reading and what students take up.

**What Constitutes Reading: What Studies of Classrooms Suggest.**

Analysis of studies of classrooms must consider the specific contexts afforded by the classrooms, teachers and their students. This section begins with exploration of teachers’ perspectives of reading, followed by attention to discerning how children’s voices have contributed to studies of reading in classrooms.

**What constitutes reading: What teachers’ perspectives suggest.**

In an analysis of how two teachers went about teaching critical literacy (reading and writing) in their classrooms, Honan (2004) found that most used an eclectic approach, drawing upon “an assemblage of practices, ideas, and theories to create meaningful classroom practices” (p.109). This is consistent with Morrow, Tracey, Woo and
Pressley’s (1999) investigation of an effective year one classroom where they observed that teachers used an eclectic approach when reflecting views of what constitutes literacy learning and what teaching they did. These studies indicate that teachers draw upon a mixture of theoretical and practical ideas to inform the teaching of literacy in their classrooms: an idea that is reflective of what Mountford (1996) coined “informed eclecticism” (p.62).

Speaking generally, Shavelson and Stern (1981) maintained teachers’ beliefs inform and shape what should be taught, how it should be taught, and what constitutes characteristics of competency. Teachers’ beliefs and understandings about reading may be viewed as situated in teachers’ cognition. Accordingly, when considering what constitutes reading and effective teaching of reading as well as what counts as the competencies of a “good” reader, this position would hold that teachers draw upon their mind spaces to inform their work, thus affecting what must be taught, learned, and assessed about reading.

In contrast, Gee (1992) postulated that a lot of “what we think of as ‘mental’ is, in fact, ‘social’” (p.141). According to this view, people are socialised into ways of thinking, believing, and acting that are reflective of the dominant discourse that shapes their community, power relationships and identity (Gee, 1992). The tools (language, texts, and assessment tools) that people use are constructs formulated by and for particular cultural and social purposes. These ideas imply that teacher beliefs and decision-making processes should not be viewed in terms of cognitive formations, but rather as practices gained through participation in specific discourses. So rather than continue to think of teachers as being cognitive, individualistic entities, teachers should be thought of as having been shaped by the social and cultural discourses within the various personal, academic and employment communities in which they have participated. This signifies that teachers may differ due to their exposure to experiences including different teacher training programs, professional development and teaching situations. Alternatively, Schirmer, Casbon and Twiss (1997) posited teacher beliefs “probably originate in the ways teachers are parented… our teacher education programs then reinforce, and sometimes even indoctrinate, beliefs that become increasingly internalized” (p.690). Although some confusion exists in regard to when teacher beliefs are developed, the common understanding is that they are constructed socially.
I hypothesise that teachers have learnt to be particular kinds of practitioners and to think about reading in particular ways. It is feasible to propose that due to different experiences, teachers may hold different views of what counts as reading and what counts for competent reading. This notion appears to be substantiated in some existing research. For example, Jetton and Alexander’s (1997) study of reading in high school science classrooms inferred the differences from classroom to classroom to be due partially to what teachers value in regard to reading. In addition, they posited that a teacher’s knowledge and pedagogical strengths influenced what was valued and, therefore, how reading was constructed in their classroom. Moreover, it was thought that the differences in teacher knowledge and pedagogical strengths had been shaped by their different experiences, that is, that they had been socially constructed.

It follows from the proposition that teachers’ beliefs about reading shape what constitutes reading in any classroom that students will be offered ranges of opportunities for growth as readers, and resources to promote this, that align with teachers’ particular conceptualisations of reading. These conceptualisations may highlight some aspects of reading while marginalising or silencing others. Therefore, it is posited that opportunities for students to take up reading in their classrooms typically will be limited by what is available within the learning spaces organized by their teachers, unless students themselves act to find and use resources from elsewhere and/or what they have learnt about reading in other situations and contexts.

**What constitutes reading: What students’ perspectives suggest.**

There appears to be limited literature about what children/students say and think about reading. In most instances, their perspectives are represented by adult voices which draw upon observations of children/students doing reading or literacy work. In the main, these adult voices posit that what constitutes reading is a situated experience. Despite being focused on children’s writing, Haas Dyson’s (1997; 2001; 2008) work plays a role in aiding me to challenge this perspective.

Haas Dyson views children as agents who actively draw upon their home, community and school reading experiences to inform their writing. Her work shows with samples of children’s work and the inclusion of their voices how they are “always situated in multiple worlds” (Haas Dyson, 2008, p.313). Although her attention is focused on children’s writing, Haas Dyson shows how children use their reading of popular-culture materials in conjunction with what they have read and learnt about at school to
construct their own texts. These constructions are not direct copies of what children have read, rather they are (re)contextualisations (Fairclough, 2003; Linell, 1998) of what they have read in different times and places. Haas Dyson’s work indicates that situated perspectives of literacy fail to explain adequately what children do with reading and writing. At the same time, it signals the need for further research to ascertain what children in different communities and schools “think” and “understand” about reading and what they “do” when and with reading.

Building on Haas Dyson’s notion, Hull and Schultz (2002) brought together a collection of work about how unofficial literacy practices such as popular culture materials could be incorporated in classrooms. These studies challenge the continuity-discontinuity binary by offering examples of work which “bridge” the in-school and out-of-school literacy divide. One of the studies in this body of work signals the need for further research to examine the reading world of children, instead of continuing to see it as a world that is “filled with the desires and designs of adults” (Eidman-Aadahl, 2002, p.245); a point with which I agree.

Children’s perspectives need to be sought if comprehensive understandings are to be gained concerning what constitutes reading for all in the general context of classroom learning, and of what children contribute. Yet, it also must be recognised that “it is not possible to interpret” what children are saying and doing, that is “the meaning of the social experience they are invoking … without an ethnographic understanding of their social practice” (Maybin, 2006, p.21). With this in mind, my study employs an ethnographic approach to understanding phenomena under investigation.

Simultaneously, attention needs to be paid to the socialising and regulatory powers that operate in classrooms. Consider Foucault’s (1979; 1980) claim that classrooms discipline children into particular ways of behaving and being. In application, this means children are expected as students to perform reading and to be readers in ways that conform to what counts as reading in their classrooms. An example of this is found in Maybin’s (2006) classroom study where children were inducted “into particular reading and writing practices … mediated through talk” and teacher-selected activities which regulated their “movement, behaviour and attention” towards officially-recognised practices (p.182). Children took up classroom reading practices, thereby conforming to what was officially recognised as reading. However, they also took up opportunities to participate in “unofficial” practices. Snippets of children’s talk
when at work illustrate the official and unofficial practices they engaged in. Yet, their perspectives were not sought - again.

Broughton and Fairbanks (2002) offer insights into the struggle involved should a student attempt to negotiate around the conforming practices of a literacy classroom. Their depiction of a child trying to operate outside the “official” framed all of her attempts in deficit terms: impulsive, resistant, non-accepting, and needing corrective measures. Such depictions lead to a conclusion that a person who conforms with what counts officially as reading is a good reader, while one who does not is likely to be adversely labeled.

Reviewing classroom studies indicated two findings of significance in regard to the central issues of my research.

First, what constitutes reading in any classroom will be an eclectic mix informed by a teacher’s beliefs and understandings. The result is the inclusion of a sub-set of all possible forms of reading where some elements are legitimatised and privileged in a classroom, while others are marginalised and silenced. Children as students and students as readers are situated in classroom spaces where they are expected to take up what is mandated for them as reading – the quasi-official position.

Second, there is some evidence that students may draw from what occurs in a classroom’s space to personalize their engagement in reading and writing events in their classrooms. Students may conform and take up what counts in the quasi-official way as reading in their classroom. However, they also may flirt with what lies as opportunity beyond such a mandate. However, conforming or not conforming with the mandate may affect how students are viewed as readers.

Summary

This review found reading to be generally described as a complex notion. Furthermore, it revealed a field riddled with contestations, rather than one where iterative understandings have led to a consistent and forceful conceptualization that is available to practitioners and researchers. In addition, new and innovative ways of communicating and their combination with traditional print forms in creating multi-modal texts and texts of diverse form and types, have meant that texts are likely to be
placing new and different demands on readers and those who teach them. Amidst these findings, adult voices speak loudly on the matter of reading. Meanwhile, the voices of children are largely marginalised or silenced. Now is a time for change. A time for children to be recognised as active social players in their own right and let their voices contribute to what those in political, media and educational arenas consider a national priority: reading.

I propose that it is both timely and warranted to investigate what constitutes reading and what is taken up as reading by students if educators are to help Australian students improve the capacity and utility of their performance as readers. I offer that the best way to do this is to talk with and observe Australian students in a particular setting, their classroom, at particular times of their engagement with reading. I also posit that it is crucial that students play an active role in collecting data about what reading means in that setting and how they as readers “do” reading there.
Chapter 3
Method

The overall approach used in this study is a qualitative ethnographic methodology (Flick, 2002; Kushner & Norris, 1980-81; Robson, 1993; Spencer, 1994; Tesch, 1990). This methodology is employed because “ethnographic studies of learning and knowledge in education ask the question ‘what counts as knowledge and learning in classrooms to teachers and students?’” (Freebody, 2003, p.76). My study which is framed to investigate what constitutes reading in a middle years’ setting and what is taken up as reading by its students thus aligns with an ethnographic methodological approach. Furthermore, a qualitative ethnographic approach with embedded case studies is adopted to enable the potential multiple realities (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995) about reading and ways of taking up reading to be explored in this study. These potential multiple realities are not assumed to be objective understandings but rather “a function of personal interaction and perception” (Merriam, 1988, p.17). That is, “multiple realities are constructed socially by individuals” (Merriam, 1998, p.4). My study thus attends to capturing the potentially “different and even contradictory views of what is happening” (Stake, 1995, p.12) in regard to reading and what is taken up in reading by students in the class.

I have drawn upon Atkinson and Hammersley’s (1994) proposal that ethnography should consist of four elements:
1. emphasis on exploring particular social phenomena
2. the use of primarily unstructured data
3. investigation of a small number of cases
4. data analysis which provides descriptions, explanations and interpretations of the meanings and functions of human actions.

I have framed my ethnographic study by the following two research questions:
- What markers show what constitutes reading in a classroom setting?
- What do students take up as reading in this setting?

In the following, I explain how the current study has been designed to address these questions through the use of Atkinson and Hammersley’s (1994) four elements of ethnography.
1. Emphasis on Exploring Particular Social Phenomena

Ethnographic studies focus on examining and describing human life and culture (Saville-Troike, 2003; Wolcott, 1999). In particular, ethnographic studies are concerned with investigating “the various ways different groups go about their lives and the belief systems associated with that behaviour” (Wolcott, 1999, p.25). The ethnographic perspective underpinning my study focuses on examining reading and readers within one middle years’ class as its members (students, parents, teachers, and other pertinent school staff) go about their everyday lives. In particular, my study investigates what constitutes reading in this setting and what students take up as reading.

Nevertheless, Silverman’s (1993; 2005) warning about not naively accepting the ways in which community members describe their lives and experiences is considered. A naïve acceptance that all that is said represents reality would be couched in romanticism. This is not to say that what the participants in this study verbalise will not provide insights into their lived experiences. Instead of a “mirror reflection of the[ir] social world... it may provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds” (Miller & Glassner, 2004, p.126). Moreover, Denzin (1991) explained “what the subject tells us is itself something that has been shaped by prior cultural understandings” (p.68). Thus, intertextuality with its focus on “how texts draw upon, incorporate, recontextualize and dialogue with other texts” (Fairclough, 2003, p.17) is a key focus within the data analysis component of my study. In addition, reflexivity plays a crucial role throughout this study in recognition that the researcher can impact upon the study and its findings in a number of ways (Hertz, 1997; Reinharz, 1997).

Having determined elements crucial to exploring particular social phenomena, I add clarification here of the social phenomena being explored in my study. The two phenomena investigated within my study are reading and what has been taken up in regard to reading within a class of students in the middle years of their schooling (subsequently, referred to as a middle years’ class). Goetz and LeCompte (1984, p.3-4) identified the purpose of ethnographic studies as being focused on constructing “descriptions of total phenomena within their various contexts and to generate from these descriptions the complex inter-relationships of causes and consequences that affect human behaviour toward and belief about the phenomena”. That gaining understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena is the main purpose of ethnographic studies is also recognised by Knobel and Lankshear (1999). My study however does not remain focused solely on gaining descriptions. Instead, an interpretative stance is
adopted. Since the studied phenomena are viewed as lived experiences that are socially constructed, the inquiry mode used in my study is inductive and acknowledges that multiple realities are socially constructed (Merriam, 1998).

2. Use of Primarily Unstructured Data

Ethnography research can also be referred to as field research, which incorporates face-to-face encounters and the gathering of observations, conversations and detailed descriptions within real life contexts (Doheny-Farina & Odell, 1985; Knobel & Lankshear, 1999; Kushner & Norris, 1980-81). Field research however may be conceptualised as being located along “a continuum of analytic foci” with traditional ethnography involving “conducting observations and collecting field notes or through interviews with informants” on one end, and “studies of naturally occurring discourse” involving the recording and transcriptions of face-to-face interactions on the other (Spencer, 1994, p.267). Spencer (1994) however posits that naturally occurring discourse and ethnography are intrinsically linked and complimentary. Within my study, both traditional ethnography and naturally occurring discourse are incorporated and considered complementary to addressing the identified research questions.

In order to attain naturally-occurring discourse with my qualitative ethnographic field work, close observations were conducted of the students’, teachers’ and other participants’ behaviours in the natural class setting. These observations were recorded, transcribed and analysed in order to gain a comprehensive understanding or rich description of what was happening when participants engaged in reading-associated activities and events. The aim here was to investigate the phenomena happening in one or more real-life contexts, which had not been manipulated in any manner. However, despite all good intentions to maintain the naturalness of any environment, it must be acknowledged that the mere entering of the researcher into the environment results in change (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). I was an outsider who entered the targeted class and therefore to some extent I would have changed the natural setting by my presence (Silverman, 2001). Moreover the ‘being watched’ phenomenon in itself was likely to cause change. In addition, some data collection methods, for example focused discussions and email communications, would add to and thus modify the existing environment. These points of contextual change need to be acknowledged and reflected upon by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2000). Thus reflexivity is a crucial element of the ethnographic study field experience and is used throughout my study. Despite these inevitable changes, the researcher must remain open and flexible enough.
to “graft his/her study onto pre-existing systems of activity” and to accommodate “the study population’s other commitments” (Baszanger & Dodier, 1997, p.10). In accordance with this, the timing of field visits was structured around days and events that the teachers informed me as most opportune or convenient for them and their classes. When teachers asked that I not attend, I respected and abided by their requests.

As stated above, the intention of qualitative ethnographic studies is to attain “a rich, or ‘thick’ description which interprets the experiences of people in the group from their own perspectives” (Robson, 1993, p.148). In order to attain rich descriptions within the targeted context, I utilised the observational tools of the ethnographer: interviewing, participant observation and artifact analysis. Data collected included recording of class interactions; collecting work samples and other extant artifacts; talking with teachers, other relevant staff members, parents and students; taking photographs by students, and engaging in email communications with students. This resulted in the collation of a comprehensive data corpus. These data enabled close analysis of what constituted reading in the middle years’ class and the ways in which reading was taken up by students.

Ethnographers are concerned with capturing rich descriptions of particular contexts and associated persons and activities as well as documenting the narratives of its members. Since the research subjects are the ones “familiar with the shared meanings that exist in a culture” (Doheny-Farina & Odell, 1985, p.507), the voices of class members were captured in my study. In addition, all participants in this study were provided with opportunities for their voices to be heard, concerning their narratives, opinions, recounts, descriptions and recollections associated with reading, what it was and what they did.

Traditionally, adults have spoken on behalf of students. This research practice however has been challenged as neglecting students’ rights to participate and to have their own voices heard (Christensen & James, 2000; James & Prout, 1990). The inclusion of students’ voices acknowledges them as “social actors” within their real-life contexts and active participants in research rather than passive objects and studied bodies (Christensen & James, 2000; Scott, 2000). Given that my study investigates constructions of reading and ways in which reading was taken up by students, the inclusion of both adults’ and students’ voices seem crucial to attaining comprehensive insights into these phenomena. Providing opportunity for the inclusion of students’
voices in my study acknowledges they are social actors within home and school contexts, and therefore experts about their communities and their own lives.

By providing the members of this community with active roles in the collection of data in this study, I wanted to show them that I valued their expertise. This study could not have happened had they not allowed me to enter their world and been so open in sharing their stories. I move on now to describe the multi-staged approach and the tools used to collect data in the field work component of this study.

**Multi-staged approach to the investigation.**

I planned my study in accordance with the relevant university and education department legal and ethical policies and procedures. This necessitated the development of a multiple-staged approach to conducting this investigation and the adoption of particular principles of practice.

Within this portion of this chapter, I will detail the multi-staged approach utilised within the fieldwork component of this investigation. This section explains how data were collected in three stages. The initial stage concentrated on gaining ethical clearance and access to an appropriate site for the study and began in November 2004. The second stage involved the collection of initial data and the employment of a range of data collection methods to collate the corpus of data, and occurred during the period of May to December in 2005. During the third stage, the school, teachers and parents were followed up as required to redress any oversights in what data were gathered in Stage 2 and to collect any additional artifacts pertinent to the research questions. In the following, I elaborate further on what occurred during each of these three stages.

**Stage 1: Gaining ethical clearance and access to a site for research.**

I was bound by university and educational system policies to abide by particular legal and ethical requirements when conducting my study. Therefore, the first stage in the fieldwork portion of my investigation focused on addressing the ethical requirements of research involving human subjects. I began by seeking information about the ethical clearance procedures and requirements at university and state education levels. At this time, the university’s ethical clearance was compiled progressively in an online format. Although the university ethical clearance procedure and associated ethical requirements were in the process of being redesigned and updated, I was informed all in-progress
applications would transfer over into the new system. With this in mind, I commenced compiling my online ethical clearance documentation. Unfortunately, the redesign process resulted in the dumping of all partially completed online ethical clearance applications which meant that my ethical clearance application was lost and I had to restart the process in January 2005.

In December 2004, I was in the process of deciding which school or schools to approach, when my partner, a teacher in a state education school, indicated his interest in being involved in this investigation. I was uncertain about the feasibility of this research partnership arrangement but was reassured by one of my supervisors that this was a workable situation which was employed by some researchers. She also advised me that I would need to reflect upon the implications and impact of this research partnership arrangement as the study progressed.

Since I was proposing to conduct my study in only one school, the education system’s requirements for ethical clearance was situated at the school level. It required only verbal approval from the principal. However, the university’s ethical clearance requirements necessitated procurement of written documentation of the principal’s permission. I provided the principal with an information package for participants and a consent form on which he acknowledged ‘informed consent’ for me to conduct the proposed study in his school.

With both the university’s and state education system’s ethical clearance approvals in place, it was officially recognised that the site for the fieldwork component of this study would be one state public school in the state of Queensland, Australia.

Upon signing the consent form, the principal indicated his willingness for me to work with any teacher and in any area within the school. He also wrote a letter of introduction for me to include in the packages to be distributed to parents/guardians. University ethical clearance policy, however, required me to gain written permission from all staff members, parents/guardians of students, and the students who were willing to participate in this study. As stipulated in the university’s ethical clearance requirements, each of the potential participants was to be adequately informed about the study’s purposes and proposed modes of participation. With this in mind, I ensured an information package and consent form, that I had compiled and that had been approved by the university’s ethical committee, were distributed to the teacher, all
of the students in his class and, via the students, all of the students’ parents/guardians. I included the principal’s letter of introduction in the parent/guardian’s packages. I also provided information packages and consent forms to other teachers and any school-based personnel who worked with these students. Prior to distributing the information packages and consent forms, I also explained the study verbally to the teachers, other school-based personnel and the students. I wanted all potential participants to be aware that they had an option to either participate or not participate, as well as the right, should they choose to participate, to “withdraw from the study at any point in time, without comment or penalty”. I also wished to reassure them that measures such as the use of pseudonyms would be in place to protect their identity.

When I visited the classroom to explain the study verbally and to present information packages and consent forms to the students, the other teacher sharing the double teaching area approached me to inquire about my study. On subsequent visits to collect the signed consent forms, he approached me again to discuss my intended study which including asking about the kinds of participation required by the students and the class teachers. Since he seemed interested in knowing what was going to be happening at the other end of the double teaching area, I provided him with an information package. A couple of days later, I received a message to come and see this teacher as he was interested in participating in the study. I met with this teacher and followed the same procedures as with the other teacher to distribute the information packages and consent forms to him, the students in his class and their parents/guardians.

I needed the signed consent forms in order to be able to enter the classroom and begin collecting data. Signed consent forms were received from the two (2) classroom teachers (who I named Mr. Green and Mr. Brown), two (2) specialist teachers (one who taught Languages Other Than English – Japanese, and the other who taught Music), two (2) teacher aides, thirty-three (33) students, and twenty (20) parents/guardians. In some instances, students signed a consent form but their parents didn’t. These students were not included in the study. I was now officially able to enter the field site to begin collecting data.

**Stage 2: In the field.**

The ethically-approved site in which this study was to be conducted was within one state public education school in the state of Queensland, Australia. I named this school
Paradise School. As with the human participants, within this thesis, I have used pseudonyms for this school and other places involved in the study. This was done to further protect the identity of participants.

At the beginning of May 2005, I began visiting the school. Initially, I made five (5) visits to familiarise myself with the students and the class routines. These included locating various places within the school that students worked: for example, the library, the LOTE room, the Music room, the classroom. Further details as to the timing and nature of these visits are represented in Appendix A.

I was already familiar with the general layout of the school as I had had an office in this school a few years earlier when I worked in an itinerant role. Although my office was in this school, I did not teach there. While I knew some staff members, I was not familiar with the places within the school where the targeted class worked. I was mindful at this time and throughout the fieldwork that my prior relationships, experiences and status within the school and the local educational district could influence my relationship with the study’s participants.

While the previous professional linkage eased my access to the school, I very quickly found that it restricted the relationship that I could have with the participants in my study, or perhaps it is fairer to say that it shaped my relationship with the students, parents, teachers and other participating staff members in particular ways.

The first day that I visited the classroom, I introduced myself by my first name. One of the teachers promptly interjected and introduced me as a teacher. This set the mode for a teacher-student relationship rather than the researcher-students-as-active-participant relationship that I had envisaged. Of particular concern to me was that this relationship was now forged into a distinctive arrangement of power and authority according to teacher-student relationships. For several weeks, I continued to resist the “teacher” label but found even when I communicated with the students via email and signed off with my first name, students invariably replied with a teacher name moniker. I eventually decided that this mode of relating was so ingrained in the educational arena that I was wasting time and effort challenging it. After all, Silverman (2001) did warn that one’s identity as a researcher can be influenced by professional affiliations and “... ‘accounts’ which are historically situated” (p.60). Throughout this study, I continued to monitor how this relationship impacted on the interactions between the
students and me, as well as the influence upon my relationships with other study participants. For example, on several occasions, the classroom teachers involved in the study approached me for advice about particular students and situations thus recognising my previous role as an ‘expert’ in literacy learning and teaching.

Gold (1997) stressed that it is important for the researcher to establish a relationship with participants that will facilitate the development of trust because, during the data collection process, the researcher must “rely heavily on them for information regarding what is going on there and what it all means to them” (p.389). Researchers “do more than just question informants” (Gold, 1997, p.398). At times, they may express puzzlement; seek further clarification or elaboration; engage in discussion about the participant’s situation, and use other methods to develop a relationship that enables participants to respond and express themselves as fully and effectively as possible. I used a mixture of these techniques throughout the study but, in the initial visits, I focused on learning students’ names and familiarizing myself with where the buildings were. I saw these initial visits as providing a window of time in which to begin to develop my relationship with the study’s participants, in particular the students, without also having to attend intently on data collection.

During these initial visits, I did not use the video or audio tape recorders. I did however make some observational notes of what happened and when, and I drew a sketch of the classroom’s layout showing where students sat. I saw this as a time when I could become familiar with students: their names, where they sat in their classroom, and the kinds of things their class did during the school day. I had found in the past that I could learn students’ names quickly by noting where they sat. However, I soon found out that this was a technique that did not work in this situation. After further visits to the classroom, I became aware that keeping track of where students sat was impossible as students moved their desks either at their own volition or at teacher request. In addition, students often moved from their desk to work with other students in group situations.

As part of this relationship building, I wished to ensure that everyone understood that I saw them as the ‘experts’ about their community and its practices. First communications with the class included my comments about valuing their knowledge and experience and inviting them to share with me what they know about and do with reading and in reading. This expert-novice relationship idea was quickly picked up by
one of the students, Sarah, who designated herself as my guide in the early weeks of the study. Every so often through the initial visits she would turn to me and ask “Do you know what’s happening now?” or provide me with a description of what was happening at that point in time. As the study progressed other students joined in, acting as my guides in making sense of my context. This relationship of community expert sharing with the newcomer was evidenced at various times during the data collection process, including during discussions about photographs that students had taken when they said, “I wanted to show you ...”. Throughout this study, I often turned to either the students or one of the teachers to provide me with an explanation, or further elaboration of an event or to show me something when I did not understand. This proved to be a productive method to gaining insight into the classroom reading events.

During one of the initial visits, I spend time planning with Mr. Brown and Mr. Green suitable times and sessions to visit in the following week. This set the beginning of a collaborative process in identifying suitable times and sessions in which to collect data. Baszanger and Dodier (1997) recommended that a researcher remain open and flexible enough to “graft his/her study onto pre-existing systems of activity” and to accommodate “the study population’s other commitments” (p.10). The timing of field visits to the school therefore was structured around days, lessons and events that the teachers informed me as most opportune or convenient for them and their classes. This meant visiting the classroom for an hour on some days. At other times, I stayed for the whole school day. At one point, several weeks lapsed where no visits were made due to teachers’ acknowledgements that on particular days or weeks there were going to be multiple interruptions to their programs. Interruptions occurred due to other school events such as arts events, sports training, excursions and sports day. When teachers asked that I not attend, I respected and abided by their requests.

I visited Paradise School regularly between June and December of 2005 in order to collect data. During this time, I observed students engaging in a range of activities that involved reading. I observed them in LOTE (Japanese), Mathematics, Science, Arts, SOSE, English, Library and Music lessons. I also observed them using the computers for a range of activities that involved reading. I talked to students at lunch breaks and before and after school. I wrote observational notes and drew sketches. I also video-taped and audio-taped students and teachers engaged in various lessons. I talked with teachers, teacher-aides and students either audio-taping the discussions or writing notes.
about what was discussed. I also talked informally with some parents/guardians and conducted interviews with available parents/guardians. Some parents/guardians who were unable to attend the school wrote me responses to key questions that I had planned to use to frame my interviews with them. In addition, I provided students with a digital camera so that they could photograph reading in the school, the community and their homes. I also familiarised myself with the school's computers and what students used these for. From time to time, I met with the principal and kept him informed with my involvement and the study’s progress. In addition, during the course of the data collection, I spent time in the classrooms with students and/or teachers and joined in classroom activities. At these times, I actively sought to participate as part of the community in order to gain membership in this community. As Spradley (1980) puts it, I sought “to do what other people [were] doing, not merely to gain acceptance, but to more fully learn the cultural rules for behaviour” (p.81). While I had some knowledge about the school and these classrooms before I entered as a researcher, being in these classrooms regularly during this extended period of time allowed me different insights about what counted as reading and what students took up as reading in the middle year’s class.

Mindful that social, cultural and political forces shape what constitutes literacy and its components, reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing (Gee, 1996; Lankshear & Knobel, 2000; Street, 1984), during this time, I followed what was happening in relation to the National Inquiry into Literacy and in the Queensland state education system. I monitored online publications and collected newspaper articles and letters to the editor that were related to the National Inquiry into Literacy. As a member of a district Literate Futures Reading team, I have access to the documents and professional development supported by the Queensland state education system at this time. My analysis of artifacts related to the National Inquiry into Literacy revealed three recurring themes: national literacy crisis?, blame talk, and reading curriculum debates. I now move on to unpack and explain these themes.

**National Literacy Crisis?**

The first theme is national literacy crisis? I include the question mark to signify the uncertainty of whether a literacy crisis existed. Public outcries of a literacy crisis occur every ten to fifteen years and thus “controversy over literacy has become a permanent fixture of educational debate and policy” (Green, Hodgens, & Luke, 1997, p.7). A review of articles in The Australian supports the claim that literacy crises occur in a
regularly recurring pattern in national media. The following extracts illustrate this pattern:

- “Illiteracy is the great Australian disease…” (cited in Green et al., 1997, p.6)
- “The real issue facing our schools is the teaching of functional literacy – the ability to read and write usefully…” (McGuinness, 1994, p.2)
- “Literacy now matter of primary concern” (Maiden, 2004a, p.1)

Green, Hodgens and Luke (1994) also proposed that “simple claims that standards and practices of literacy have ‘declined’ at best risk being unfair and/or illogical…and that people] need to consider a range of historical, contextual and population variables” (p.8).

Literacy never seemed to be a concern in its own right. Rather, it was tied to other concerns and debates in political, societal, and education arenas, often aligned with concerns and debates about nationalism, unemployment, crime, technology, and immorality (Green et al., 1997). Extracts from *The Australian* showed how the literacy crisis was couched in concerns of unemployment:

- “Rhetoric hides the human face of illiteracy” (Albrechtsen, 2004, p.15)
- “Literacy now matter of primary concern... He [Brendon Nelson] said employers are “sick and tired” of university graduates unable to spell or write” (Maiden, 2004a, p.1)
- “Schools not ‘for profit’ ...The emphasis on teaching school students skills to find jobs has been questioned by the national teachers’ union…” ("Schools not 'for profit'" , 2005, p.1).

Instead of substantiating the notion of a literacy crisis, close analysis of data challenged it. In the first instance, data reported as latest ranged from 1998 to 2001 and was outdated and possibly not representative of current literacy learners. In the second instance, the reported literacy failure ranged from 10 to 30 percent depending upon who is interviewed and what data they call upon to be informed. These data show that literacy concerns are not relevant to the full population of literacy learners. In the third instance, the reality of the nation’s literacy situation was complicated by data drawn from studies of readers of different ages and using different literacy types. What was discerned from examining original data sources is that a proportion of the population experiences difficulties becoming successful literacy users. Moreover, literacy difficulties are apportioned to particular groups of students: indigenous students, boys, those from rural locations and those with low socioeconomic backgrounds. Those in
these groups are more likely to perform poorly in literacy and are at risk. Note that I use tentative language more likely to signify that data showed that some people, not all people, within these groups might experience literacy difficulties. Since data specified that literacy concerns were the premise of particular groups of people, I propose that claims of a national literacy crisis for all people cannot be substantiated. Attention towards improving literacy learning outcomes for those potentially at risk however continues to be needed.

Exploring these artifacts further, the purported concern with literacy was focused strongly on ‘reading’. Speaking, listening, viewing and writing were very rarely mentioned. Repeatedly the headlines and/or content of newspaper reports referred to ‘reading’ not ‘literacy’ - as evidenced in the following examples:

- “Reading inquiry welcome... announcement that the federal Government will undertake an inquiry into the teaching of reading is a critically important opportunity for the whole country...” (Pearson, 2004, p.15)
- “Promise of a new chapter for readers… timely first step towards transforming the way in which reading is taught in schools throughout the nation” (Hempenstall, 2004, p.15), and

Even when report headlines were phrased as focused on ‘literacy’, the content related to ‘reading’. Concerns about reading consistently overshadowed concerns about other aspects of literacy. For example, in Maiden’s (2004a) article titled ‘Literacy now matter of primary concern’, discussion around “modern literacy teaching methods” quickly shifted to focus on how teachers are trained to teach reading - “review of the way in which we train our teachers how to teach our kids to read, but also an examination of the way in which reading is being taught in our schools” (p.1). From the second sentence in Robert’s (2004) article ‘Jury out on literacy row’, the focus is on reading rather than literacy advocating the use of phonics approach to reading over whole language. Quotes from this article which show attention was on reading include: “advocates of the phonics method say that it is a necessary part of learning to read”, “it is a fallacy to say learning to read was an ‘either or’ proposition”, and “no whole language teacher will try to teach students to read without using phonics” (p.16).

Hence, reading emerged as the area requiring national investigation. Subsequently, the
focus on reading was picked up and echoed through various early years, middle schooling, and secondary schooling publications.

Blame talk.
The second theme is blame talk. Blame talk was discernible in many of the artifacts and is apportioned to six levels: parents, schools, curriculum, education systems, teacher unions and universities. Parents were blamed for not reading to their students and for allowing television watching as a substitute for reading. Reports such as “Turn off TV and tune in to reading” (Maiden, 2004c), “Reading inquiry gets first lesson...reading aloud to your child may be deemed basic “common sense”...” (Maiden, 2004b), and “Reading to students feeds the brain” (Signey & Cresswell, 2005) told parents what they should be doing to improve students’ reading capabilities.

Schools were blamed via reports such as “Students ‘let down’ by English education” (Gosch & Macnamara, 2005) for letting students down by not providing them with the literacy skills they need when they graduate from school and enter the workforce or university. In addition, the tests schools use are stated to be faulty in that they failed to identify poor readers as reported in Buckingham’s (2004c) article “School tests not catching poor readers”. Schools and curriculum also were blamed for ‘dumbing’ down lessons and thus ‘letting down’ students. This blame talk was evident in articles like Donnelly’s (2005a) “Dumb English lessons can be disastrous”.

Teacher unions and education systems were blamed in Kemp’s (2004) article “Reading left off the education agenda” for failing to make reading ‘the’ top priority in schools’ curriculum.

Universities were blamed for setting entry scores too low and thus allowing students who have low literacy levels to enter teaching programs. In addition, concerns were raised about universities’ capability to prepare new teachers for the realities they will face in the workforce, including knowing how to teach students to read. For example,

- “Nelson flags teacher training inquiry” (Perry, 2005, p.5),
- “Trainee teachers need remedial English classes” (Maiden, 2005a, p.1), and
- “Wanted: Graduates who can teach students to read” (Maiden, 2005b, p.12).

Blame talk formulated a cycle of blame which failed to clarify any singular intervention towards achieving positive or productive change. Instead, it resulted in the
identification of a complex process focused on change at multiple levels. However, particular ways of learning to read seemed to be privileged. For example, reading to children was indicated to be the way parents could make a difference to their children’s reading abilities. Other modes of learning about reading within home and community environments were not discussed. Meanwhile, the third theme indicates ways of reading instruction privileged in the popular media domain.

Reading curriculum debates.
The third theme is reading curriculum debates. Analysis of media reports revealed three binaries in regard to what constitutes effective reading curriculum: whole language – phonics, literature – popular culture, critical literacy: indoctrination – empowerment. The whole language-phonics binary was employed to privilege the phonics approach to reading curriculum through articles with headlines like:

- “All teaching methods are not equal” (Buckingham, 2004a, p.4)
- “Phonics needs more than lip-service” (Buckingham, 2004b, p.16)
- “Unsound approach won’t take us far” (Donnelly, 2005c, p.26)

In a similar way, the literature-popular culture binary and the critical literacy indoctrination–empowerment binary were used to privilege literature inclusion and use in reading curriculum. This was evidenced in articles including:

- “Classics stand up to Bollywood” (Westwood, 2005, p.14),
- “Exploding the literacy cannon. The trend to teaching texts means primary school students are being taught sludge instead of literature...” (Donnelly, 2005b, p.23), and
- “Attack on critical literacy rings Shakespearean Bell. School students who are not taught Shakespeare are being denied their heritage and are victims of an elitist attitude...” (Rowbotham, 2005, p.3).

Analysis of the binaries underpinning the reading curriculum debates revealed phonics instruction and the use of literature to be essential for enhancing reading learning and outcomes in schools.

Meanwhile, my analysis of Queensland education system documents on literacy revealed the top priorities to be (i) multiliteracies with dimensions of multimedia and technology, cultural and linguistic diversity, and critical literacy and (ii) the teaching of reading using the Four Resources Model (Freebody & Luke, 2003; Luke & Freebody, 1999a, 1999b). Interestingly, what constituted reading at the state level did not align with what was being promoted at the national level and within popular media.
**Stage 3: Follow-up in the field.**

The third stage of the field research was conducted from the beginning of December 2005 and during 2006. During this time, I made occasional visits to the school and organised liaisons with parents and teachers as required. I collected a copy of the *School Literacy Plan* and further photocopies of students’ written and drawn responses to texts read in their class.

From both the school and parents, I was able to acquire copies of report cards, recent and past. When the Year 7 test results were received by the school, I was provided with a copy of the school’s report. Through discussion with some parents, I was able to access their child’s report which was sent directly to them. Most of these documents proved to be relevant and beneficial to my study.

The students were keen to show me what they had been doing since my previous visits. Some used my camera to take photos of their most recent work. Others talked with me about what had been happening. In the event useful additions to my study might be attained, I audio-taped these interactions. I also wrote field notes during and after each of these visits.

This section has provided an account of the three phase process utilised during the field work component of this study. I move on now to detail the tools utilised within the data collection process.

**Data collection tools and procedure.**

Deciding on a research design which would allow me as researcher to search for and locate information pertinent to clarifying the practical concern was foremost in my mind at first. I needed to ensure that I chose the right tools, went to the right places, and spoke to the right people to gather the right information. With no desire to limit my findings, however, in the first instance, I selected approaches that would enable me to collect data from available moments and the range of available sites in the school when students were engaged in reading. I wanted to ensure that I used data collection approaches commensurate with contemporary views of data collection and methods and which would enable involvement of all participants in the data collection process. In the following, I outline how these elements influenced my approach to data
collection in this study. I then move on to detail the data collection tools and their use in the field.

Traditionally, fieldwork has incorporated face-to-face encounters and the gathering of observations, talk, print documents, conversations/interviews and detailed descriptions by the researcher in situ, that is, within real life contexts (Knobel & Lankshear, 1999; Kushner & Norris, 1980-81; Silverman, 2001, 2004). This view of fieldwork implies that the researcher must be physically present to collect data. Certainly within this study, traditional fieldwork modes of data collection featured highly. However, I was also attentive to contemporary fieldwork notions of using technological advances to collect data (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004; Markham, 2004; Silverman, 2004). With the understanding that electronic and digital resources such as email communications, blogs, and websites are data collected in contemporary fieldwork, I sought ways to utilise these in my data collection process. I also noted that various forms of visual data increasingly are gathered in contemporary fieldwork (Cook & Hess, 2007; Emmison, 2004) and thus considered ways that these might be incorporated within my study.

In addition, contemporary fieldwork acknowledges that the “indigenous social actors” engage in self-documentation of their settings and communities (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p.56). Such documentary work forms part of the social fabric of the everyday lived experience of community members and therefore should not be neglected in the fieldwork data collection process. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognise that these documentations are representations of the settings and communities and as such provide descriptions which have been designed in accordance with the purpose and audience for whom the documentations were produced, for example publicity, competition, justification and report.

I was alert to locating approaches that would provide opportunities for all participants to actively contribute to data collection. This included the students. I wanted all voices to be heard. I was aware from Alderson (1995) that “traditional ethics” with its focus on “non-interference, and of avoiding deliberate harm” resulted in the “protecting students” to the point that they are “silenced and excluded from research” (pp.53-54). Therefore, traditionally, much research has portrayed only adult interpretations of what students experienced. Cook and Hess (2007), however, highlight the danger in using this approach when they say “the views of adults may not necessarily represent children’s perceptions and experiences” (p.29). Since the late 1980’s, these views have
resulted in increasing interest in listening to children’s viewpoints and including them as active participants in research. As O’Kane (2000) points out, this is “a move away from seeing children as passive recipients of adult socialisation, to a recognition that children are social actors in their own right” (p.136).

In thinking of children as social actors in their own right, Prout and James (1997) identified children as being “both constrained by structure and as agents acting in and upon structure” (p.28). This view of children highlights the necessity of linking “the social competencies integral to children’s real-world activities with the structural and interactional frameworks of everyday life” (Hutchby & Moran-Ellis, 1998, p.14).

Drawing upon this view of children, I positioned the students in my study explicitly as participants in the data collection process by providing them with tools which they could use to gather data. I also provided opportunities for students to voice their opinions and explain their involvement, choices and actions in their own words. These opportunities were captured by various means: email communications, video recording, or audio recording.

**Participant Observation and Field Notes.**

Every researcher has to consider the pertinent degree of involvement and the types of participation required to gather the relevant data. Spradley (1980, p.58) posits that the degree of involvement and the type of participation are influenced by the researcher’s involvement, “both with people and in the activities they observe”. Five types of involvement which spread along a continuum of involvement are utilised by Spradley (see Figure 1) to illustrate the observation options available to the researcher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Involvement</th>
<th>Type of Participation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(No involvement)</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonparticipation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1. Levels of Participation (Spradley, 1980, p.58)*

For researchers who want to study situations in which they are “already ordinary participants” (Spradley, 1980, p.61), there is a high degree of involvement. They participate “completely”. Certainly, this was the case for the students who assisted with
data collection in my study. However, my level of participation ranged from moderate to active, though a majority of data was collected from a passive participant observer stance.

Spradley (1980) envisaged the participant observer as keeping “a detailed record of both objective observations and subjective feelings” with this record “sometimes being made on the spot; at other times you will record it later, when you have left the social situation” (p.58). In building upon Spradley’s work, Silverman (2005) maintains that there are two practical rules to employ when recording field notes:

- thinking about what we can see as well as what we hear
- expanding field notes beyond immediate observations.

To address the first practical rule, I employed my eyes and my ears when doing the observation data collection in this study. During my visits to the school, I kept written notes about the observations I made: where the observation occurred, who was involved, and the method used to capture the data. I also wrote notes about who I talked with and any actions taken; for example, the collection of materials from teachers and the photocopying of various documents. Sometimes, while a lesson was being taught and the video camera was focused on a particular child or students, I wrote down what was written on the board by the teacher and snatches of the interaction that occurred between the teacher and the students. These notations gave me an overall sense of who I had or had not observed during each visit, and what types of lessons that I had or had not observed.

Expanding upon the field notes occurred either immediately after the observation or at a later time. Examples of the way in which I expanded upon my observations included writing questions and/or reminders of what I should do next alongside or beneath the observation records. I also included reminders to re-read particular literature or talk with my supervisor about particular items of interest or concern. In addition, I kept copies of the classroom timetables and records of the meetings with the principal and teachers. This included a record of the negotiated observation days and times. By the end of the data collection process, I had collated three journals of field notes (see Appendix B). These journals have been an invaluable guide in revisiting the data collection process and have added and aided the data analysis processes. These journals however were not the only methods that I used to gather/record data.
My general approach was to record as fully as practical all events that occurred during my data-gathering sessions. I did this as opportunity allowed with an audio-digital recorder, a hand-held video recorder and field notes.

**Audio.**

The tool I used to audio-record observations and interviews was an Olympus Digital Voice Recorder DS-50. It had a sound microphone(s) positioned at the top.

**Observations.**

I used two approaches to audio-record observations. Generally, I placed the recorder on a desk beside students when they worked in one place or when they conferenced with their teacher. Students would alert me should the recorder stop. This mode of audio-recording often continued when I was elsewhere in the site, for example when using the hand-held video. When students worked at activities which required them to move from place-to-place and when I wanted to capture information from more than one or two students, I carried the recorder and conducted “opportunistic ‘on the wing’ discussions” with them (Robson, 1993, p.199). In both instances, the focus of these observations was to capture what students said as they worked, as well as what they said about their work.

I found that some times a student or group of students would ask if the audio recorder could be turned off or moved to another area. For example, Lisa requested that I remove the audio recorder because she was embarrassed that she had sworn when she was frustrated with a task (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 2, 29 September 2005). I respected, and abided by, students’ requests. This approach was particularly pertinent given that I often placed the audio recorder on a desk near a student or a small group of students and then moved to another area in the room or into the adjoining class area to make other observations, for example, when using the video recorder.

When the batteries in the audio recorder went flat, this caused either a break in the data collection while I changed batteries or cessation of recording. If no replacements were available, I made field notes.

Numerous specific events were audio-recorded and are listed in Appendix C by date, topic and participants involved. Transcripts of these recordings are provided in Appendix D.
Interviews.

The interview can be defined as “a kind of conversation; a conversation with a purpose” (Robson, 1993, p.228) and “a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p.140). These conversations may range from “highly structured” interviews to “free-flowing informational exchanges” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p.141). This definition of interviews exemplifies the way in which researchers traditionally perceive interviews.

Holstein and Gubrium (2004), however, provide an alternative way to consider interviews. Their focus is the activeness of interviews and how meaning is socially shaped. They propose that “treating interviews as a social encounter in which knowledge is actively constructed suggests the possibility that the interview is not so much a neutral conduit or source of distortion, but rather a site of, and occasion for, producing reportable knowledge” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p.141). From this perspective, interviewees “not only hold facts and details of experience, but, in the very process of offering them up, constructively adds to, takes away from, and transforms them into artifacts of the occasion” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p. 145). This notion of interviews offers a researcher a means for considering the information offered by an interviewee as a particular representation of his/her social world.

I originally entered the field with the idea that through the use of interviews I would be capturing participants’ narratives and as a consequence would be collecting facts about their lives and social world. As I wanted participants to be relaxed when they were interviewed face-to-face, I decided to use semiformal guided conversations which were captured by a digital audio recorder. At the beginning of the semiformal guided conversations, I contextualised the study and then opened the way for the interviewee to talk by using “Tell me about...”.

I discovered very quickly that there were difficulties in fitting interviews in the busy life schedules of the adults and students involved in this study, as well as into my own busy schedule. The use of free-flowing informational exchanges emerged as a solution. While at times, these exchanges were initiated by the research participants, there were times when I initiated them. I usually began these exchanges with an observation statement such as “lots of reading today” or “I noticed...”. In the end, the semiformal guided conversations only involved adult participants (the researcher and the teachers, or teacher aides, or parents/guardians), while free-flowing informational exchanges...
generally occurred between the researcher and child participants. Occasionally free-
flowing informational exchanges between the researcher and adult participants were
recorded with these being conducted whenever time afforded: after a lesson, during
lunch recesses, before school, or after school.

Most of these interactions were recorded within digital audio files which were
subsequently transcribed. The transcripts were compiled using most of the
transcription conventions listed in Silverman (2004). Appendix E shows the
conventions used to transcribe the digital audio recordings. For example, a notation in
double parentheses was used to indicate when it was not possible to decipher
participants’ talk. In addition, the spelling of words was matched as closely as possible
to articulated words. The transcripts however do not include time references and
minimal effort was placed on recording tonal and pitch variations. Major variations in
tone and pitch however were indicated with single parentheses notations. Like
Silverman (2005), I acknowledge that my transcriptions are not “perfect”, but “they do
serve the purposes at hand” (p.27) as they have captured considerable detail in talk and
behaviours that occurred within the interviews and other discussions that were audio
taped. The full record of interviews recorded during this study are listed in Appendix
F. Transcriptions of these are compiled in Appendix G.

As I began analysing the transcribed talk from these interviews, I identified that what
was said was being drawn from different experiences and points in time and that the
interviewee was providing me with selected experiences which in part could be
attributed to the topic being discussed but which I also perceived presented the story
that the interviewee wanted to share or thought was expected to be shared. At this
time, I began to question the idea of interview data as factual information. When
discussing my analyses’ dilemma with my supervisors, it was suggested that I read
Holstein and Gubrium’s (2004) article on the active interview. For me, this article
espoused ideas that fitted with what I perceived. For example, instead of an
interviewee being viewed as a “passive vessel of answer” (p.144), I recognised s/he
played an active role in the interview process. Accordingly, it was not sufficient to plan
“to ask the right questions and the other’s reality would be [mine]” (p.143). Rather, it
was crucial to establish an environment that opened and enabled an interviewee to
present his/her “experiential reality” (p.156). From this point on, I conducted and
analysed interviews with a recognition that what an interviewee offered was a socially-
constructed version of the interviewee’s world.
**Video.**

The tool was a Sony Digital Handycam 7 Video Camera. It had a sound microphone(s) positioned at the front.

Whole and part lessons were video recorded. Whether a full or part lesson was recorded depended upon the life of the batteries that were available, the tapes available, and the timing of entry into a lesson. Some free-flowing interactional exchanges with students also were captured on video tape. Appendix H summarises details about video data collected at Paradise School. Some instances presented within this thesis are drawn from parts of the video data in Appendix I.

Video data gathered in the study contain audio-visual recordings of the study’s participants engaging in various lessons and activities within which reading was embedded. I perceived limitations in relying on my field notes, the audio recordings and my recollections to provide me with informed insights into ‘how’ participants interacted in various reading activities. I utilised the recommendations of other researchers to do this as well as Heath’s (2004) explanations of how video data can enable a researcher to observe and analyse the vocal, “bodily conduct”, and material aspects involved in “conversational and institutional environments” (p.267).

As I observed students engaged in particular activities and lessons, the pertinence of this advice became evident. In one instance, a student was participating bodily in a music lesson but at the same time was reading a comic book, which he had placed strategically within his music book. A record of the talk alone would have failed to capture this reading event, the student’s bodily actions and the positioning and use of particular materials. The use of video taping was not envisaged to replace the study of a participant’s talk but rather to further enhance my understandings of participants’ use of their bodies and physical materials in conjunction with associated talk, what Heath (2004) defines as “the production and intelligibility of everyday social actions and activities” (p.280) or as Lefebvre (1991) would describe it, the enactment of lived space.

Although the use of video recording equipment comes with the benefits of being able to capture vocal, body action and material aspects, it also comes with problems. As I began to use the video camera to record observations, I came to the realisation that I could not record everything and therefore had to make decisions on the run about
what to record and what to leave out. As Peräkylä (2004) points out, this meant “a loss of some aspects of social interaction” (p.286). To try and compensate to some degree for this loss, I made written notations in my field notes. This however was not always easy to do as often I was trying to do this whilst holding the video recorder.

I held the video recorder to track teachers and students as they moved about. What started as an observation of a student or group of students engaged in a lesson using a stationary camera often would end as a recording of an empty desk. I noted that Peräkylä (2004) acknowledged that “the whole richness of ambulatory interaction can hardly be encapsulated using a stationary video camera”(p.287) and recommended use of multiple cameras to redress this issue and to ensure the capturing of comprehensive video data. This however was not an available or workable option for me. As I had only one video recorder available, I had to figure out some way to use it as productively as possible. My ‘solution’ was to act like the roving investigator and carry/hold the video camera and move when and where the participants did. This also enabled me to redirect the focus of the camera to interactions that I perceived on the run might be of value to the study.

Another ongoing issue with using the video recorder was working out how to capture effectively the action and talk without being too close to the participants. Notations in my first field journal show my early concerns about video taping:

“Reflection

* Need to consider remote recording
  - some students camera shy [Lisa and Mason]
  - also so students can work without awareness of or interference from me”

(Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 4 June 2005).

I investigated the potential for remote video recording. Unfortunately, the costs involved in attaining such equipment were outside my financial capacities. Trailing a microphone from the camera to pertinent desks was suggested by one of my supervisors, but I found this to not be a viable option due to occupational health and safety rules. With barely space enough between the blackboard and desks and between desks to walk, there was no potential to set up the video camera on a tripod. Attempts at balancing the camera on books and other bits of furniture were generally unsuccessful as it either slid off the item or was knocked over by a passerby.
Another issue initially was that both adult and child participants displayed an awareness of the camera and my presence. At times, teachers referred to the camera when they identified potential lessons, activities or groups of students to observe. Similarly, I noticed that students would glance up and often smile at the camera when it was near them or focused in their direction. I found also that when I was standing or sitting near a student or students struggling with a particular task, they invariably turned to me as the nearest teacher for assistance. On a couple of occasions, students reminded others of the camera presence and the need to ‘behave’ appropriately. Positioning the camera as the regulator of students’ behaviour did not sit well with me. Although initially I had concerns that these behaviours would inhibit my data collection, by the end of the data gathering, I was more reconciled that this did not prove to be the case. Upon final reflection, my concerns had been allayed.

My ethical considerations included option for participants to withdraw at any time. An example of how I abided by this ethical consideration is evidenced in the following situation. One student Mason who had submitted all the required signed consent forms began the study by asking me not to video him. I respected his request. A couple of weeks later he approached me and asked why I was not filming him. I reminded him of his request and he recanted it. I included him in the filming from that point.

Photographs.

Cook and Hess (2007) identify the taking of photographs as a data collection method that is “quick, easy and something (students) are likely to enjoy” (p.32). While this seems a valid reason for employing photography as a data collection mode, my experiences in this study did not demonstrate it to be easy or necessarily enjoyable. In many cases, students’ initial response to being provided with the digital camera was trepidation. Many of them asked “Are you sure?” I often found that they had no experience using a digital camera and so were unsure about how to manage the equipment. Some reported that the camera at home was only for adults and therefore were questioning whether I was sure that a child could or should use the camera. This report was confirmed by a parent who thanked me for trusting her child with my camera and stated that cameras were only used by adults in their home. I reassured students that I wanted them to use the camera and in order to enable this use I gave each of them a quick lesson on its use prior to assigning it to them for one day and night.
I experienced difficulties with having the camera returned after a night at home with a student. This meant that moving the camera on was held up until it was returned to the school. In a couple of instances, it took a week for this to happen; the potential for all students to engage in this mode of data collection was inhibited by the failure-to-return phenomenon. A few opted not to take the camera home, expressing concerns about younger siblings touching it or their own tendency to forget items. I respected and abided by their decisions.

In my initial planning, I envisaged students taking photographs of items that they read and writing about them. However, as I approached the implementation of this part of the data collection process, I realised that writing about the photographs during school time would be impossible for students given the task and time demands of daily school life. Therefore, I opted to audio-tape students describing their photographs (Appendix J). Subsequently, these recordings were transcribed and positioned against the pertinent photographs (Appendix K). I retained the task of writing about the photographs taken within the community and home environments, providing each student with a book containing a letter (Figure 2) outlining how to undertake the task and making space in the book to write their responses. Appendices L and M respectively show the schedule for photographs students took at home and the photographs accompanied by the written descriptions of these. Utilising these techniques enabled students to play an active role in the data collection process.

According to Cook and Hess (2007), providing students with “control of the camera” means that “the choice of photographs was more likely to reflect what they considered to be important” (p.32). In the majority of school reading instances, students photographed items that either the class or they personally read. Meanwhile, home and community reading selections focused on personal preferences. Because I did not adopt the “popular maxim” that “photographs ‘speak for themselves’” (Emmison, 2004, p.247), I incorporated a ‘telling’ about the photographs element in this part of the data collection process. Emmison (2004) refers to this use of photographs as “‘autophotography’” (p.248). Like Cook and Hess (2007), I perceived that using the photographs as a visual prompt would make it much easier for students to talk about “reading” in the abstract. This enabled me to differentiate between the items that students photographed as personal reading material and those designated as class reading materials. I was also able to discern that reading occurred for other purposes, for example, regulation of one’s own behaviour as in the reading of class rules.
Allocating control of the camera to students came with its share of issues. Most of them had never used a camera before. In two instances, despite some training in camera use, the camera was returned to me with no photographs in its memory. These students reported having taken photographs. One had written descriptions of the photographs that were supposedly taken. Lack of technical nous regarding digital cameras resulted in these students pressing the shutter button, but not holding it down long enough to activate the camera.

**Other Communication Modes.**

As previously mentioned, I was keen to incorporate contemporary data collection modes within my study. Mindful of Prensky’s (2001) recognition of students today being digital natives and taking into account teacher reports that students often worked on computers, I planned for students to communicate with me via the computer. In the first instance, I needed to ensure that adequate security measures were in place; that is, that access was only available to the study’s participants. Subsequently, I set up a blog. Unfortunately, accessibility issues and students’ lack of knowledge about how
to use blogs meant that I needed to rethink and change this mode of communication. I then changed to what I perceived to be a simpler and more common mode of electronic communication: email communication. Once again, problems arose. None of the students had ever used the email accounts that were available to them in the school. To get this mode of data collection operational, I had to access information pertinent to students’ email accounts from the principal and class teachers. I then had to demonstrate to each student how to open and use their email accounts to communicate with me.

In the middle of the first session of students using their email accounts, the principal walked in to the computer laboratory and requested two students leave the room. Following a meeting between the principal, classroom teacher and the two students, one student was banned for six weeks from using the school’s computer. I was informed that the security system which monitored email use in the school had picked up an inappropriate word being used in an email sent from one student to another. When the principal and classroom teacher explained what had happened and apologised to me for any inconvenience this would cause to my study, I was concerned that I had inadvertently created a dilemma for the teachers. Subsequently, all students were spoken to about email etiquette and the student who was banned from email use was given an option to respond to me via a written format. He never took up this option. The email communications by other students in this study are listed in Appendix N.

**Archive of paper.**

The collection of pertinent artifacts was an important part of the data collection before, during and after the field work component of this study. Artifacts collected included popular media reports about the National Literacy Inquiry into Reading, and reports associated in any other way with reading. During the fieldwork component of my study, I collected copies of students’ class report cards (Appendix 0), their computer generated texts (Appendix P), some of the school’s state literacy testing reports (Appendix Q), and of the School Literacy Plan (Appendix R). In addition, I photocopied texts read by students (Appendix S) and work associated with reading that was completed by students (Appendix T). In addition, I accessed pertinent information and documents available on Paradise School’s website. These are not included to protect the identity of the school and its community.
As a final word about the data collection process and tools, I need to clarify that despite the best laid plans things did not always go as planned. For example, there were times when I wanted to record a lesson but found all of the available batteries were flat. There were also times when the presence of students or adults who were not consenting participants in the study meant that I could not record a particular event. At times, I wished I had more than two hands and two eyes, more than one digital camera, and more than one digital video recorder. Nevertheless, throughout the data collection process, I remained focused on capturing what I physically could manage of the ways in which reading was part of the social world of the targeted participants’ lives within the school context and within their lives beyond the school gate. By the time I finished collecting data, I had achieved what I set out to accomplish.

3. Investigation of a Small Number of Cases

Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence... At the heart of it is the idea that “the case is studied in its own right, not as a sample from a population” (Robson, 1993, p.5).

Yin (2004) maintained that there are two case study designs: single- and multiple-case studies. From these two case study designs, researchers may choose to conduct a single case study or a selection of case studies or have embedded case studies within an holistic case study (Yin, 2004). In the one sense, the current study involved an holistic single case study of participants in one setting. However, within this single-case study, multiple individual case studies were also conducted. Thus, multiple individual case studies embedded within the class case study formulate the qualitative ethnographic case study design within my study.

Silverman (2005) pointed out that a key issue in carrying out research is understanding how data are contextualized within particular settings, processes and experiences. A researcher cannot make sense of data if he/she is not familiar with the context/s from which the data have been gathered.

The details of the research context for my study follow. After describing the setting, the physical space in which the current study is conducted, I provide information about the participants and the school curriculum.
Setting.
Paradise School is located on the east coast of Queensland, Australia in a popular tourist strip. It is one of eight (8) schools in the local area. Schools include four (4) state primary schools of which Paradise School is one, three (3) state high schools and one (1) Catholic Education school.

Paradise School is situated within the urban boundaries of the coastal city which is acclaimed for its natural resources and associated tourism. The school takes up one full city block and as such is bounded by roads on all four (4) sides. The beach is close by; being only two city blocks and two main roads away from the school.

Suburbs surrounding the school historically have been labeled as low socio-economic areas with public housing commission estates located within each of the two suburbs closest to the school. There are small canal developments nearby. Historically, the local area has been one of the less-developed spots along the popular tourist strip. However, in more recent years, housing redevelopments on the coastal strip and new subdivisions have become increasingly popular places to live for more affluent people. This has subsequently impacted on all housing in the local area. Many older apartment buildings and houses have been either demolished and replaced, or renovated. Accordingly, rental and house prices have risen significantly. In personal communications with principals of schools in the local area, I learned that this has resulted in a change in the population of students attending the local schools. This has also resulted in the loss of funding previously awarded to these schools because of socio-economically disadvantaged status.

Participants.
At the time of the study, Paradise School serviced approximately 570 students, which deemed the school to be a ‘small school’ in comparison to other local state education schools which boasted enrolments of 1 000 students or more. There was a small but increasing population of students with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island heritage attending the school at this time. As well, there were students with other ethnic backgrounds including Maori, Yugoslavian, and Chinese. Some had been born in Australia, others had been born overseas. This therefore meant that some students had English as a Second or Other Language. There also were some students identified as having learning difficulties, behavioural difficulties, or a disability. They were serviced by the Support Teacher (Learning Difficulties) or one of the two (2) Reading Recovery
teachers who are based at the school and work these positions on a part-time basis, or one of the visiting support personnel: Advisory Education Adjustment teacher, Behaviour Advisory Teacher, Guidance Officer.

The school had the equivalent of fifteen (15) classroom teacher positions, some of which are shared on a part-time basis, one (1) teacher librarian, one (1) LOTE (Japanese) teacher on a part-time basis, and one (1) Health and Physical Education teacher on a part-time basis. There are also a number of part-time teacher-aides and two administrative staff.

Two (2) classroom teachers (Mr. Green and Mr. Brown), two (2) specialist teachers (one who taught Languages Other Than English – Japanese, and the other who taught Music), two (2) teacher aides, thirty-three (33) students, and twenty (20) parents/guardians nominated to participate in my study.

Throughout the thesis, I have used pseudonyms for each of the participants and the setting. This is an ethical consideration used to protect their identities, “preserve anonymity and retain confidentiality” (Silverman, 2005, p.30).

Paradise School was established in 1975. For more than a decade, it operated using a multi-age organisation. This has evolved into a non-graded system based on three (3) stages of learning development: Junior, Intermediate, and Senior. At the time of the study, the school also had a Preschool grade which preceded the non-graded organisation of the rest of the school. Preschool and Junior stage were recognised in the school as encompassing the early years of schooling, while Intermediate and Senior stages were defined as addressing the Middle Schooling years of students’ education.

This non-graded staged approach to organising the school was used in preference to the organisation by age and years of schooling as per graded or lock step approach generally used in state education schools. The school promotes this non-graded approach as providing the flexibility to address individual learning needs. This flexibility is evidenced in the way in which the non-graded staged organisation allowed the majority of students to spend either two (2) or three (3) years in each stage. The flexibility inherent in this organisational model enabled different learning pathways as illustrated in Figure 3. Within this figure, I have included the graded approach to aid
understanding of how this non-graded stages organisation fits against the more universally-employed graded system.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Preschool</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
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<th>Year 5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3. Pathways for moving through the stages of schooling offered in Paradise School*

An additional option for students who were progressing very well in the Senior stage was inclusion in the Accelerated Learning Program that operated in conjunction with a local state high school. Teacher nomination and parent approval were required before students could enter this program.

All the original school buildings were ground-hugging and one-leveled. Seven (7) of these buildings contained classrooms; one other building comprised the library, and another the administration office. The library was one of the places within the school which was visited to collect data. A separate building housed the school hall. At one end of the hall’s building, there was a room which at the time of the study was being used as a classroom. Music and instrumental music lessons were conducted in the hall. This was another of the areas in the school that were visited to collect data. Each of the classroom buildings had two (2) double teaching areas separated by a withdrawal room. In the building where the students’ and their teachers’ classroom was housed, the withdrawal room was established as a computer laboratory. The classroom and the computer laboratory were rooms regularly visited to collect data. The school had established three (3) dedicated computer laboratories between classrooms in order to provide opportunities for integration of computers into classroom programs. Two recent building additions were a demountable building which consisted of four (4) single teaching areas and a ground-hugging, one-level block building which housed the Out of School Hours Childcare Centre. One of the single teaching areas was dedicated to LOTE learning and teaching. This was another of the rooms which was visited to collect data. Two (2) separate buildings which contained toilets were joined by an undercover area which was used as a lunch area for senior stage students. Another
undercover area contained the lunch area for younger students in the school plus the tuckshop.

This study occurred in a particular space, Paradise School, and at a particular time, May to December in 2005. The targeted classes have since disbanded and individuals have dispersed to a number of different educational contexts.

Yin (2004) proposed that the case study approach is best used in the following two research situations:

- when asking either descriptive or explanatory questions, and
- when needing to conduct an in-depth investigation of people and events within real-life contexts.

“How” and “why” questions are generally used in case studies to ask description or explanatory questions. My study, however, uses “what” questions which are essentially ethnographic in design. Nonetheless, this study still looks for descriptive and explanatory elements which are akin to the second of Yin’s research scenarios, that is multiple, embedded cases. This is evident in that my study involves an in-depth investigation of what constituted reading for participants in the holistic case study context. What is taken up as reading by students is examined using embedded case studies.

In presenting the findings from the holistic case study, I included the voices of all participants wherever possible. However, I found that purposive sampling (Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2005) was required to select particular cases to illustrate “some feature or process” pertinent to answering the second research question (Silverman, 2005, p.129). Typically, purposive sampling is used to identify research sites and subjects before a study commences. However, it may be used to purposefully select “information-rich” cases which represent samples of the phenomena being studied, and to facilitate “insights and in-depth understandings rather than empirical generalizations” (Patton, 2002, p.230). The latter form of purposive sampling is used to investigate what was taken up by students, the second question of my study.

In commencing my investigation into what constituted reading for participants in my study, and what students had taken up as reading in their middle years’ class in Paradise School, I examined the existing school curriculum. The following is an extrapolation.
Paradise School curriculum.

Paradise School uses curriculum documents that are available throughout the state education school system. These documents are organised around eight key learning areas (KLA), English, Mathematics, The Arts (Music, Performing Arts, Visual Arts), Science, Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE), Health and Physical Education (HPE), Languages Other Than English (LOTE) and Technology. They provide systematic guidelines for teaching-learning content. Seven (7) levels (Foundation, 1 - 6) of achievement which represent ten (10) years of compulsory schooling are incorporated within them.

The documents state that the majority of students at the end of their third year of compulsory schooling will have attained Level 2; by their fifth year of schooling, they will have attained Level 3, and by their seventh year, Level 4. Within the ungraded system used at Paradise School, this was interpreted as students ready to exit Junior stage would have achieved Level 2; students ready to exit Intermediate stage would have achieved Level 3; and students ready to exit Senior stage would have achieved Level 4. At the time of data collection, the approaches used in each of the classrooms were informed by the systematic curriculum guidelines. How each teacher interpreted and employed these guidelines in conjunction with their differing beliefs, values, and experiences and the availability of particular resources resulted in different things occurring in different classrooms at the same stage of schooling.

I also discerned during my visits to Paradise School that the school’s location close to the beach had resulted in close affiliations being established between the school and local Surf Lifesaving Clubs. This enabled provision of a Surf Education Program and a Surfing Excellence Program. The curriculum was further enriched by a range of state and national academic competitions, sporting events and competitions, community performance opportunities, and excursions.

Since my study was concerned with investigating what constituted reading, I also examined the School Literacy Plan (Appendix R) to ascertain how reading was defined. This analysis resulted in identification of five key points articulated as pertinent to Paradise School’s teaching of reading:

- what is conceptualised as literacy;
- what is conceptualised as reading;
- how planning will work;
how assessment will work, and
what is conceptualised as parents’ role in the schooling of their child/ren.

To show how each of these are articulated within Paradise School’s Literacy Plan (Appendix R), extracts from the overview and other documentation of the School Literacy Plan are provided in Appendix U.

4. Data Analysis

As previously explained, my study employs a qualitative ethnographic methodology. Like other qualitative researchers, I am “interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 1998, p.6). Therefore, during the processes of collecting and analysing data in my study, I focused on understanding and interpreting the meaning of reading and readers in the targeted context. Thus, like other qualitative studies, a product of my study is “richly descriptive... [with] words and pictures... used to convey” what I learned about the investigated phenomena, reading and readers (Merriam, 1998, p.8). Analysis of data within my study draws from spoken, written and visual data including researcher descriptions, participants’ own words, photographs taken by participants, video-taped observations, field notes, and extant documents.

In the following, I explain the two data analysis methods used within my study. In addition, before closing this chapter, I clarify the vital role that reflexivity played throughout my study, including during data analysis.

**Sorting, categorizing and analysing data.**

Data were examined, sorted and categorised manually involving ‘close reading’ (Tuffin & Howard, 2001). I considered this preferable to computer methods, as close reading can reveal “aspects of the topic which were not originally considered by the analyst, but which emerge” from the data (Tuffin & Howard, 2001, p.201). Double and triple checking of the findings from these processes, in conjunction with remaining open to further findings, often resulted in additions and adjustments to the initial categories and their content. Subsequently, I (re)combined my findings into two-dimensional matrices (Robson, 1993) in order to portray identified recurring phrases and emerging patterns, themes or concepts in a clear and concise manner. These processes formulated the first stage in data analysis in my study. Moreover, these processes of
data analysis reduced the data corpus into manageable and meaningful segments which facilitated answering the study’s research questions at a descriptive level.

Further analyses of these data were required to enable explanations and interpretations to be generated. In this instance, texts refer to oral, written, visual, and multimodal communication modes. Like other ethnographers, I am “concerned with the processes through which texts depict ‘reality’ rather than with whether such texts contain true or false statements” (Silverman, 2001, p.128). I recognise that “multiple realities are constructed socially by individuals” (Merriam, 1998, p.4). With this in mind, analysis of data in my study attends to unpacking texts to identify the multiple realities in relation to reading and readers as constructed by participants. To this end, my study employs an interpretive stance in analysis of data. In some instances, the tabulated findings are examined through the lens of existing conceptual and theoretical understandings about reading and readers. In others, the tabulated findings are interpreted upon in regard to potential impacts of what constitutes reading upon readers within the targeted context.

**Intertextual analysis.**

Data were subjected also to another mode of analysis focused on identifying how texts include traces of texts from other times and spaces. Acknowledging socio-cultural experiences as complex events interrelated with other times and spaces, I used intertextual analysis as it offers a tool for examining connections between texts and people’s experiences in different contexts. Fairclough (2000) maintains “that contemporary social life is ‘textually-mediated’ - we live our practices and our identities through such texts” (p.165).

Texts are cultural artifacts, producible and recognizable by cultural members as acts that communicate meaningful content. That a member of a culture can produce and recognize a meaningful text is explicable in terms of the cultural history that has gone before and the ways in which that member can draw on that history to enact the cultural practices relevant to the particular communicative context into which the text is to be or has been delivered. (Freebody, 2003, p.179)

Intertextuality refers to the manner in which “any particular text or type of text, there is a set of other texts and a set of voices which are potentially relevant, and potentially incorporated into the text” (Fairclough, 2003, p.47). Thus texts are seen as being socio-historically shaped. Bakhtin (1981) uses the term ‘voices’ to explain how a speaker’s dialogue is a hybridisation of prior dialogical moments in time. Hybridization of dialogue does not mean a direct copy of prior interactions, but rather a mixing and reshaping of multiple voices in the new situation with “no formal – compositional and
syntactic – boundary between these utterances…” (Bakhtin, 1981, p.305). Drawing upon Bakhtin’s notion of dialogue, Fairclough (2001) proposed that “texts always exist in intertextual relations with other texts” (p.129).

When a person consciously or unconsciously uses a text or voice from a prior experience in a new situation, they are recontextualising the text or voice. Kristeva (1986) is emphatic that the recontextualisation or “transposition” of a text into another context “demands a new articulation” (p.111). This new articulation may be either explicit or implicit, attributed to a particular person or institution, a redesign of the original, or a hybridisation of a multitude of texts.

In respect to what is included and what is excluded, selectivity is a key element of intertextuality. It may be argued that every text has selective intertextual relationships with other texts. As Lemke (1997) points out, intertextuality is used to make meaning in particular situations … we interpret a text or situation in part by connecting it to other texts and situations that our community or individual history has made us see as relevant to the meaning of the present one. Our community, and each of us, creates networks of connections (and disconnections) among texts, situations, and activities. (pp.49-50)

“Intertextual analysis crucially mediates the connection between language and social context, and facilitates more satisfactory bridging of the gap between texts and context” (Fairclough, 1992, p.195). Intertextuality acknowledges the meaning making aspect of texts, but it also needs to be acknowledged that intertextuality with its “dense network of cross-referencing, and shared textual formats, creates a powerful version of social reality” (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p.74). Inherent within these realities and intertextual linkages are positions of power, hierarchy and authority (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004).

In my study, intertextuality offers a useful lens, an analytical tool, for examining how people draw beyond physical boundaries, across time and space, to formulate their constructions of reading and what is taken up in reading by students. Therein, I propose that people occupy multiple spaces in multiple communities at any point in time. In my study, intertextual analysis will focus on the way in which re-voicing, intertextual links across texts, creates particular versions of reality as to what constitutes reading and what readers ‘do’ as they take up reading. Inherent in this
analysis is careful consideration of how positions of power, hierarchy and authority enable and constrain.

**Reflexivity**

Before closing this chapter, I need to explain one other crucial element of my study, that is, ongoing thoughtful inquiry (Seltzer & Rose, 2006), reflexivity (Reinharz, 1997), otherwise known as a “habit of mind” (Seltzer & Rose, 2006, p.484). This habit of mind enabled me to question proposed research methods and search for alternative explanations, data collection tools and data analysis techniques. In addition, reflexivity enabled me to thoughtfully consider the influence of self within my study. The following provides some insights into how reflexivity influenced my study.

Reflexivity is a crucial fieldwork tool as both the self we bring to the research context and the self we create within this context impact upon the data collection processes, and subsequently data analyses (Reinharz, 1997). Within this study, the process of reflexivity was not always comfortable or easy. I had to explore my own understandings of how the world works including my beliefs about literacy/ies and reading in order to consider how these shaped the data that I collected and the ways in which I interpreted what I saw. With the help of some constructive feedback from a colleague, I came to realise that I was drawing on my own understandings and experiences in literacy teaching and learning to inform my analysis and descriptions of what was happening. The key concerns arising from this realisation was whether it was blinkering me and how I might avoid this occurring as I progressed in my analyses of data. Since I was trying to examine the particular ways in which participants viewed what counted as reading, I was worried that my beliefs would limit my interpretations of data, It became clear to me that I needed to acknowledge that the affording and constraining of particular views of reading and readers was pertinent also to me and how I viewed the world. While acknowledgement of this was a good first step, I had to be vigilant in discerning when I allowed my own views to restrict my interpretations. This certainly brought to my attention the need for all researchers to be reflexive upon how their own knowledges and experiences shape their findings including what is attended to and why, and what is emphasised and why.

Hertz’s (1997) comments that "since researchers are acknowledged as active participants in the research process, it is essential to understand the researcher's location of self (e.g., within power hierarchies and within a constellation of gender,
race, class, and citizenship...)” (p.viii) brought to my attention that I needed to consider how I was positioned and being positioned within the study site. Very much like Reinharz (1997), I found that “being a researcher” was only one of the positions or roles that I held while collecting data in the field. I also held a range of “brought” and “created” selves (p.4). Using Reinharz’s (1997) three main categories of different selves (research based, brought, and situationally created), I discerned the multiple roles in which I was positioned during the course of data collection in the field. I perceived that my research based selves included being the researcher, being the negotiator, being the observer, being the listener, being the questioner, and being the person who came and went. My brought selves included being a teacher, being an academic, being a woman, being a grandmother, being a mother, being 46 years old, and being a keen reader. My situationally created selves included being a temporary member of the classrooms and school in which I conducted the study, being a teacher, being an expert teacher on the teaching of reading, and being a teacher-colleague. Like Reinharz (1997), I perceived that these positions shaped my relationships in the field in such ways that I had not predicted and therefore influenced the information that I was able to obtain and the ways in which I interpreted it. For example, similar to Buckingham’s (1994) experience, although I had told students that I was investigating how students their age read in various school, community and home contexts, none of the students challenged my right to do so. Students know that teachers approve of particular kinds of reading and ways of reading so in fact there was potential for students to only tell me what I, in the role of teacher, would approve of. Buckingham (1994) describes this as students playing “what they perceive to be the researcher’s game: they can try to tell us what they think we want to hear” (p.95). Equally Buckingham asserts, students can “choose to subvert”, to challenge or “outrage” the researcher by providing information that may conflict or be contrary to what they perceive adults expect of them. These reflections illuminated the importance of considering the impact of the power relationships between the adult researcher and those being researched. Moreover, it stressed the need to consider the researched as having agency, rather than viewing them as passive participants who were socialised in particular ways of being without having any voice or choice. Therefore within this thesis, I have made explicit the ways in which my positioning seems to have influenced the data, its collection and subsequent analysis. This study thus combines “discussion of what the researcher became in the field with how the field revealed itself to the researcher” (Reinharz, 1997, p.5).
Conclusion
In this chapter, I have unpacked the research methodology used in my study. I have provided details of the context for this study and explained the data collection process in enough detail to make the inherent decision-making visible. In addition, I have clarified the data analysis processes and emphasised the crucial role reflexivity played in my study.

In the following chapters, I shift to presenting the findings from my analysis of the data. The first of these chapters, Chapter 4 puts forward the findings from my study at a descriptive level. Chapter 5 follows with an interpretive lens informing discussion of the findings.
Chapter 4
Results

In accordance with the ethnographic methodology used in this study, the following is a descriptive response to each of the two research questions:

1. What markers show what constitutes reading in a classroom setting?
2. What do students take up as reading in this setting?

Sources that informed responses to the research questions are a combination of direct contacts with participants (discussions, emails, field notes, audio and video observations with students, teachers and parents), and a range of artifacts (timetables, report cards, students’ work, photographs of items taken by students and their descriptions).

Data derived from these sources are presented in this chapter and structurally organised around each of the two teachers, their students and parents who shared the classroom site.

**Question 1: What Markers Show What Constitutes Reading in a Classroom Setting?**

This section outlines how “reading” was signaled, identified or enacted in various discussions, extant artifacts and reading events constituting the data of this research. It includes also data indicating the phenomenon as it was captured in the home setting of student participants. Comparisons and contrasts across the data provide a summary in response to this question.

**Data from Mr. Green’s class.**

The exposition begins with an analysis of Mr. Green’s timetable because its structure and content generally stipulated what was to be delivered, when and where.

**What constitutes reading: What Mr. Green’s timetable suggested.**

Mr. Green’s timetable, reproduced in Figure 4, shows a structure and content which he had negotiated with Mr. Brown and specialist teachers in Library, Music, Health and Physical Education (HPE), and Languages Other Than English (LOTE). The
timetable regulated both teachers’ and students’ activities and work in regard to content area, time, and place.

Mr. Green’s timetable represented literacy learning and teaching within three sections: “Reading” (shaded yellow) for which 4.5 hours per weeks is scheduled, “Language Arts” (shaded green) shown across 3.8 hours per week, and “Library” (shaded pink) which has a 30-minute allocation (see Figure 4). The term, “English”, a Key Learning Area (KLA) for Australian Schools (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 1999, 2008) was not included in the timetable.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Term:</th>
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<th>Thursday</th>
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<tr>
<td>9:50</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:50</td>
<td>Morning Tea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:20</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:50</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:20</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Religious Education</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>12:00 Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:50</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30</td>
<td>Science [with Mr. B] / SOSE [45 mins]</td>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Sports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>LOTE</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Art</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:50</td>
<td>Notes:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4. Mr. Green’s Timetable*

Mr. Green’s terminology fits that used by his employing authority. One example of this is where he uses “reading” specifically to refer to morning content occurring daily. This reflects a need for schools to concentrate explicitly on reading that had been presented in two documents commissioned by Education Queensland (*Literate Futures: Reading*, Anstey, 2002); *Literate Futures: Professional development: The teaching of reading for a multiliterate world*, (Anstey, 2004a, 2004b). Both documents prioritised reading instruction for the work of Queensland teachers. The daily positioning of “Reading” in
Mr. Green’s timetable signifies its status as one of two most important elements of teaching and learning in his class, Maths being the second.

Mr. Green’s address of “reading” as teaching and learning content also is spread across slots for “Language Arts” and “Library”. The term “Language Arts” was used by the systemic authority in English syllabus materials (Department of Education Queensland, 1991) to refer to literacy teaching and learning. For example, the goal of English Language Arts was specifically “to develop students’ ability to compose and comprehend spoken and written English – fluently, appropriately and effectively – for a wide range of personal and social purposes” (Department of Education Queensland, 1991, p.13).

Mr. Green’s timetable, however, did not include space or reference for silent reading sessions that occurred after lunch, or, students’ reading of Mr. Green’s blackboard notations that he required on a regular basis. These are described with examples in the following.

**Silent Reading sessions.**

Mr. Green’s daily practice of having students engage in a silent reading session after lunch, not shown on his written timetable (Figure 4), was observed and recorded in my field notes (e.g., Appendix B, 10 June 2005, 4 August 2005, 8 September 2005, 3 October 2005) as well as in audio-taped (e.g., Appendix D, 10 June 2005, 3 October 2005) and video-taped (e.g., Appendix I, 6 June 2005, 8 September 2005) sessions. This daily practice occurred in the 15 minutes or so period immediately after students returned from the lunch break. When discussing this reading time, Mr. Green explained:

I don’t mess around with them in their free time by making them read things that are related to the theme. In free time which we usually have after lunch for 15 minutes each day they can do whatever they like. But I have started reading a book called Green Mantle to them and since then probably 2/3 of the class seem to be interested in it. I am going to have to keep reading it now. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 64, 4 June 2005)

I don’t care what they read as long as they are reading. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 72, 4 June 2005)
Mr. Green read aloud during free time reading while students were supposedly engaged in their own reading. At interview he provided an example of this in practice when he stated:

I have started reading a book called Green Mantle to them and since then probably 2/3 of the class seem to be interested in it. I am going to have to keep reading it now (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 64, 4 June 2005).

Mr. Green read Green Mantle to students, while they themselves read various things (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 6 June 2005). He did not articulate the reasons for reading to his students. However, his choice of novels fulfilled the first two of three purposes that Smith and Elley (1997) suggest for such activity, viz: “provides modeling of appropriate reading behaviour, enjoyment of good literature and exposure to different genres” (p.39). His promotion of students’ reading for enjoyment was consistent with his provision of opportunities for students to choose and read their own books during this free reading time and during Library sessions.

Reading the Blackboard.
Students read Mr. Green’s blackboard notions and instructions to inform work that they recorded in their notebooks (e.g., Appendix I, Video-taped observations, 3 June 2005, 6 July 2005). Yet, neither Mr. Green nor his students mentioned this source of reading in any of my data gathering episodes. Although reading the blackboard occurred daily and often, it was so automaticised that it was not consciously recognised. These parts of regular class practice were expected and done but not acknowledged. Thus, they were silenced in what and how the teacher and students talked directly to what constitutes reading.

Underpinning the indirect presence of such activity as reading from the blackboard lay the expectation that all students could and would read what was written. Observations suggest otherwise. For example, Dwayne had a problem understanding the instructions written on the board: “In this it says you have to draw … a diagram showing the Earth, comet, probe and the impact” (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 6 July 2005). He reported that he and his partner did not know what “impact” meant. In a second example, Sarah and her reading partner stalled on encountering “elliptical” (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 6 July 2005). In both situations, students’ lack of understanding of particular words restricted their capacity to complete the assigned task. With self and/or teacher-guided reference to a dictionary, these students were able to continue with the task.
Although the teacher’s task in this instance stipulated students were to use one newspaper article and the instructions written on the blackboard, Sarah and her reading partner used a combination of the teacher’s notations on the board, a dictionary to help them understand them, the newspaper article, and an atlas to enable them to do the assigned task (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 6 July 2005). Other students also referred to an atlas. Students needed to find and use a range of resources – some to help understand the task, others to complete it. While I was unable to discern if this was a practice installed by Mr. Green or not, students’ uses of dictionary and atlas suggest so. Regardless of whether it was planned or not, this activity promoted and necessitated multi-source reading.

*What constitutes reading: What Mr. Green suggested when talking about reading.*

Whenever I asked Mr. Green to tell me about reading in his class, he always mentioned “writing”. When I queried him about this, his response was:

> It’s not just the writing, because my writing and reading are almost the same thing. They only have a name to separate them because the reading is predominantly building up the information base and experience base for the kids and the writing is where they take that information base and then they try and generate it themselves. So I can’t separate the reading and writing into….like they are reading Energy and Our Earth, Our Future so they couldn’t do the writing without the reading. And I would just never do it any other way. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 54, 4 June 2005)

Mr. Green’s comment that “my writing and reading are almost the same thing” presents a position consistent with the view that the two can be defined as similar, complementary processes revolving around constructing and reconstructing text meanings (e.g., Anstey, 1986; Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000; Langer & Flihan, 2000; Pantaleo, 2006; Spivey, 1990). Meanwhile, his comment that “the reading is predominantly building up the information base and experience base” signifies his belief about reading as an instrument of learning. His statement suggests that he sees students in his middle years’ class no longer at the stage of learning to read. To him, they are users of reading, manipulating it as a macro-skill in the interests of learning.

These perspectives underpinned what happened in Reading and Language Arts sessions as outlined in the following.
In Reading sessions.

An audit of audio-taped and video-taped observations (Appendices D & I) summarised in Table 2, revealed the complementary processes of reading and writing being enacted in Reading lessons. Typically, students engaged in independent, silent reading of teacher-provided texts and question sheets. After reading, they responded in writing to the questions Mr. Green had provided or, alternatively, produced a written summary of the text each had read. In some instances, students were required to provide a visual representation of what they understood from their reading. Students’ responses were recorded in their Reading Notebooks (Appendix T).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books [a mixture of non-fiction and fiction texts, predominantly non-fiction, + question sheets]</td>
<td>• Read independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photocopied text [extracts from books e.g. modules (non-fiction texts) – usually sufficient multiple copies for everyone, but not always]</td>
<td>• Read silently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photocopy A4 sheet containing short non-fiction or fiction text + questions</td>
<td>• Read texts provided by teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own exercise books</td>
<td>• Write answers to questions in own exercise book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summarise key points/main ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Seek peer or teacher support when required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conference with teacher: Explain verbally to teacher about written responses to questions about print text; accuracy of response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To increase students’ knowledge and experience base, Mr. Green typically used Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy to design good quality comprehension questions. Appendix S contains some examples of texts where Mr. Green has attached questions that he constructed with Bloom’s taxonomy. At interview, he stated that this action was not always required:

The Energy book actually has a set of questions in the back so the kids can research through the book, which are as good as anything I could have written. It could be challenging but it has made the kids go back, they have had to use the index and they have had to use the glossary, some of them have had to use the index and the glossary. Some of them go through leaps and bounds through the book till they find something they think is right. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 6, 4 June 2005)

While many of the questions, Mr. Green provided required written or drawn responses, some tasks required students to summarise. At interview, he reported:
The objective was that they read the book and pick out the things that they thought they should write down from each paragraph. But all someone did was changed the sentence into point form and wrote it down, which was alright too. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 6, 4 June 2005)

Observational notes as well as audio and video-taped sessions showed that the typical routine for “Reading” lessons involved students in reading texts (books and modules) that the teacher provided and either writing answers to accompanying questions written by Mr. Green or provided in a text, or summarising the text they had read.

In Language Arts sessions.

In Language Arts lessons, Mr. Green guided students through their reading and deconstruction of texts in a targeted genre. During the period of data collection, his targets appear to have been report, ballad and narrative genres. Following the deconstruction modeling, students were required to reconstruct their own text to match the structure and language features of the genre that Mr. Green had targeted.

In these lessons, he urged students to read about how particular types of texts are structured and compiled. Such reading involved students in studying and deconstructing texts and then using understandings gained to inform their writing. This involved using information gained from a text to produce a different representation of what had been learned, or, in producing a new text of the same generic structure. Mr. Green again explained his belief in the reciprocity of reading and writing as follows:

I can’t see the point in them, spending a term or any period of time writing in one genre only. I think if you are going to write a genre you have to use it, you can use the same thing but you have to be able to be able to write it say as a story, write it as a letter, write it as a newspaper report and make a chart out of it. That involves different thinking and you need different resources to do it. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 52, 4 June 2005)

Resourcing for reading emerged as a topic of concern to Mr. Green which is explored in the following section.

Resourcing for reading.

In discussing the types of texts he selected, Mr. Green said:

I don’t think the reading program was that interesting as such and the thing that surprised me with it was that so many kids were able to read so much non-fiction stuff. Some of it is quite technical because a lot of it needed explanation as it went along and in those terms I think it has been quite good for them actually having to go through that and there has been a lot of peer work with it where they have worked with one or two to find out what it
means and what to do with it, it has had lots of spin-offs into other areas of language, so we have done a lot of writing relating to it. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 2, 4 June 2005)

Mr. Green’s selection of texts was not influenced by any apparent consideration of what interested students. Rather, he selected non-fiction texts that contained technical terminology which was pertinent to the aligned KLA’s and mastery of which required teacher and peer support – or teaching.

The audit of “Reading” sessions (Table 2) showed a large proportion of texts used during reading lessons was non-fiction. When I queried Mr. Green as to why so many of the texts he had chosen and used during the “Reading” period were non-fiction and focused on energy sources. He informed me that, “It fitted in with the science strand for this term. One of the science strands for this semester was Energy” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 24, 4 June 2005). This suggested a deliberate selection of texts during reading lessons to service an integration of purposes with both reading and KLAs. As the discussion progressed, Mr. Green confirmed this. He explained he had integrated reading, writing, science and art into that term’s program. He indicated that typically he used an integrated approach: “I never teach then reading without involving as many other things as possible because that way you strengthen from different perspectives all the time” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 28, 4 June 2005). In this instance, the thematic focus was “Energy”.

Throughout the study, different themes were used at different times to integrate “reading” with content from other curriculum areas shown on Mr. Green’s timetable. Typically, texts were chosen on the basis that they fitted the KLA which informed the current theme. Even the few fiction texts used in Reading sessions (e.g., Sweets from a Stranger by Nicholas Fisk and Miss Faberge’s Last Daze by Jenny Wagner) had been selected by Mr. Green on the basis that their content fitted the Science KLA theme at that time. Similarly, in Language Arts lessons, Mr. Green included narratives (science fiction narratives, Christmas tales, and ballads), reports, recounts and letters based around the theme being addressed. He read and deconstructed these texts with his group of students. Again, the majority of texts were non-narratives as Mr. Green described, “It was mostly non-fiction writing last term too, but I always combine some fiction with non-fiction too, changing it into a newspaper report or something else” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 4, 4 June 2005).
Mr. Green specified resourcing as being more influential than the syllabus or a school planning document in shaping his planning:

I will have to look at what it [School Literacy Plan] is but …yeah. It’s not that stricter guidelines, I only pick them if the resources are available for that period. Some times there are no resources available so there is no point in going off on something that is red hot if it says go red hot on energy and there is no resources on energy, you might as well forget it so you change your emphasis to something you can get resources. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 48, 4 June 2005)

So, the availability of resources played a crucial role in Mr. Green’s selection of a theme. Since all students were to use the text/s at the same time, there were often not enough to go around. I observed that he often made and used photocopies to address this problem. This was not always possible and at times some students did not have the text necessary for the job. Often they reverted to doing homework tasks or reading a text they selected from those available elsewhere in their room or from their own tidy boxes. An example of this was when Fraser was observed sitting with a small booklet on an unrelated topic open on top of his reading notebook (which also was open) (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 3 June 2005).

Mr. Green’s use of themes enabled him to integrate reading across the curriculum. The following section examines this phenomenon.

**Reading integrated across the curriculum.**

To understand better how Mr. Green incorporated reading into his integrated approach to programming, I audited videos and observation notes to identify texts and tasks where reading was involved. Findings from this audit are shown in Table 3.

### Table 3

**Reading texts and tasks in Mr. Green’s class**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/Teacher</th>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>Teacher read aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mr. Green)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Read silently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modules – non-fiction/fiction texts + questions</td>
<td>Read aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newspaper articles</td>
<td>Read and write answers to comprehension questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher instructions/questions on blackboard</td>
<td>Summarising key points/main ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 5 &amp; 7 texts</td>
<td>Conference with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Own notebooks</td>
<td>Read and write using same genre [e.g. ballad]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online texts [e.g. car specifications]</td>
<td>Research internet texts to identify key information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ballads</td>
<td>Write texts [e.g. sales talk] using information found in texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fiction texts</td>
<td>Type up own writing in word document on computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Own typed texts [word documents] on computer</td>
<td>Understand vocabulary [words, phrases]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child writing</td>
<td>Proofread and edit own work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Body gestures [e.g. customs officer gave him a warm smile; face started pouring with sweat]</td>
<td>Read teacher feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guest Speakers</td>
<td>Rewrite using teacher feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christmas carols</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

89
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Students Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Teacher demonstrations/ instructions/questions on blackboard, Teacher written graphs on blackboard, Worksheets, Maths games – instructions, Year 5 &amp; 7 tests, Own notebooks, Calculator, Clock, Fingers, Rulers</td>
<td>Read silently, Write problem solving and answers, Work collaboratively, Play games – read and follow game instructions and solve problems, Analyse, Compare, Construct, Check construction/solution against instructions, Practise test taking, Read own work, Read peer’s work, Checking and marking own/peer's work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Teacher instructions/questions on blackboard, Own notebooks, Module text</td>
<td>Read silently, Copy information, Read graph - Calculate, Discuss info, Collaborative meaning making, Record words and/or diagram representation of understanding, Explain understanding verbally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOSE</td>
<td>Assessment Criteria Sheet, Teacher instructions/questions on blackboard, Teacher explanation/demonstration of text layout, Brochure, Online texts, Own notebooks, Newspaper article [e.g. 12 apostles], Atlas – map of planets, countries, Clipart, Google</td>
<td>Replicate teacher text structure, Research, Search for and locate relevant images, Search for and locate relevant information, Construct project/chart using found info and scrapbooking techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOTE – Japanese</td>
<td>Teacher demonstrations/ instructions/questions on blackboard, Maps, Cards, Worksheets, Games, Japanese [hiragana &amp; katakana]-English conversion tables, Teacher actions as said word, Pictorial depictions for countries, Own notebooks, Class rules in English and Japanese</td>
<td>Reading silently, Reading aloud, Working collaboratively, Read English word – say Japanese word, Copy into own books, Match Japanese &amp; English words, Write missing info, Find Japanese word, Copy/do action to match word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Teacher instructions/questions on blackboard, Musical terms and notations on blackboard, Song words, Sheet music, Listen to taped music, flute fingering chart</td>
<td>Read silently, Read text on board, Understand musical terms [e.g. lento, presto, vivace], Write in notebooks, Read music and play instrument, Read music and sing, Read song words and sing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Teacher instructions on blackboard, Scrapbook guide sheets/design principles, Magazines, Own notebooks/art works</td>
<td>Read and follow instructions to form art works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPE</td>
<td>Not observed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Class rules chart, Timetable, Posters, Newsletter, Purchases Statement, Clock</td>
<td>Read silently, Check stock received, Ring bells on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>Spelling words, Dictionary, News headline, Newspaper articles, Own notebooks</td>
<td>Learn word spelling, Dissect word into syllables, Locate word meaning, Write word in a sentence, Research who, what, where, when for teacher provided newspaper headline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After lunch reading</td>
<td>Teacher read aloud novel, Students read: Own books, Books from classroom bookshelf, Library books, Homework sheets, Own notebooks, Dictionaries – English, Spanish, Japanese phrase book, Book club catalogues, Novels, Surfing magazines, Picture storybooks</td>
<td>Model, Enjoyment, Entertainment, Learn word spelling, Dissect word into syllables, Locate word meaning, Write word in a sentence, Learn new words, Time filler?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This audit revealed reading was used in a range of content areas, with diverse materials, and, for many different tasks. The main purposes for reading were so that students would follow instructions and locate information when doing their tasks.

The audit also showed that in most situations, reading was conducted silently. Occasionally, when working in a small group arrangement, students read aloud. For example, Tess and Mark shared a newspaper article during a science lesson, taking turns at reading paragraphs aloud to each other (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 6 July 2005). On another occasion, Mr. Green told children to work in pairs, reading verses of the provided ballad, alternatively (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 29 September 2005). Another example was when Mark read the instruction sheet for a Mathematics’ problem-solving activity aloud as he and Mason worked together to solve the game-puzzle (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 2, 7 October 2005).

The audit indicated a large range of texts were used for reading. Video-taped lessons showed Mr. Green’s use of newspaper articles (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 6 July 2005) and published reading materials (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 3 June 2005). Although most texts were linear and print-based, there were some non-linear, web-based texts that students had to read when researching. Mr. Green spoke of students selecting and using web-based texts for research purposes:

Most of them they did some computer research on it and most of them copied the stuff straight off the computer and pasted it on, but that’s ok because they found something about energy and energy is on the computer (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 28, 4 June 2005).

They had to choose an alternative energy powered car. They had to research it on the internet and then they had to write a sales talk about it and that is what they are completing at the moment. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 32, 4 June 2005)

Mr. Green seemed to believe all students in his group knew how to read online texts as he provided no teaching in this area.
Reading in Mr. Green’s class focused primarily on the use of print-based materials and silent engagement with these. Students were expected to self-manage their reading of these texts working independently where they could and by seeking support from either a peer or Mr. Green where this was needed. When assessing students’ work, Mr. Green assumed that what students wrote as summaries or as responses to his questions always followed what they had read. He used one-to-one conferencing to check, query, challenge, and reinforce what students were doing or had done. Mr. Green conferenced with each student, during reading lessons, marking their work in accordance with what they had written and what they said. He offered, “I just assess them by how well they have answered the questions initially and how well they discuss it (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 24, 29 September 2005). He looked at their Reading Notebooks as part of the conference. Their responses typically were marked with a tick or cross (Appendix T, Reading Notebooks). Occasionally, Mr. Green added the correct answer or put a question mark against an answer or item – usually where a student had not responded. On rare occasions, students were awarded with a sticker. Occasionally, he added a numerical value equivalent to the number of correct responses or a written comment, for example “Well done!” on Tess’ work marked on 20 August (Appendix T, Students’ Reading Notebook, Tess). He concluded the conference by assigning an overall mark which he circled (Appendix T, Students’ Reading Notebooks). At interview, Mr. Green reported that, “Most of these kids are getting 7s on this sort of work, 6s or 7s’ with five (5) being “the standard mark, 5 is what I expect, 5 is sort of the average (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 30, 29 September 2005).

Mr. Green’s marking of students’ work also was affected by his perception of the difficulty level of assigned tasks. He reported that some reading-writing tasks were more difficult than he had anticipated:

Well I started off saying I wanted them to summarise the text and went through and I taught summarizing to start with but the concept of summarizing is very hard and I think it is too difficult a thing for most of them to do, especially on a text which has as much information on it as that one has. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 6, 4 June 2005)

He further explained:

Initially I wanted them to pick the key words out of the paragraph and then re-write it in their own words just using key words from the paragraph, but that proved too difficult for most of the class so I just let it go. I thought the exercise of what they were doing was worth while in itself but I thought my expectation of doing that kind of summary was something that needed to be
taught page by page basically. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 14, 3 June 2005)

Within this account, Mr. Green attributed difficulty students had experienced in Reading lessons to the complexity of their summarising task, students’ different skills in summarising, and to a text with insufficient substance. He indicated that he adjusted his expectations when he recognised the task to be too difficult for students. He went on to explain how he accepted dot points and any other format that showed students were able to identify the gist of the message within the text.

Typically, when Mr. Green was concerned that task was more difficult than he had anticipated, he modified his expectations and approach to marking. This is further exemplified in his comments about the ballad reading-writing task conducted during Language Arts’ lessons:

I wasn’t happy with what they were producing because it didn’t give them enough freedom to talk from their own minds and the real problem was as you said them finding rhyming words – that’s a real hassle for them. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 26, 29 October 2005)

That wasn’t very successful the writing of the ballads but I didn’t pursue as much so I never actually gave them a rating on that I just went through them and marked them for presenting it. I think I did in the end give them a rating I got a couple that were a bit better. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 24, 29 October 2005)

Despite this tendency to modify his expectations when he discerned a task to be difficult, Mr. Green encouraged and expected students to edit and resubmit their Language Arts’ work to improve their grade. In an informal conversation (not recorded), Mr. Green reported that most took up this opportunity and submitted their work one or two more times. He recounted how a couple of students had reworked and resubmitted their writing up to six times in order improve their grading.

Observations showed students taking up this opportunity to improve their work, and consequently, their grade. Liz exemplified this in refining a text that she had completed for Language Arts. She reported, “I got a “7” for it which is pretty good [because] you usually get 3s and stuff” (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, Turn 9, 11 October 2005).

In summary, Mr. Green’s account of reading is that it is:

- a daily event (timetable; claim verified by researcher’s observation)
• timetabled (timetable; verified by researcher’s observation)
• a curriculum area or subject (timetabled heading; report card; verified by researcher’s observation)
• primarily performed silently (audio; video; verified by researcher observation)
• about comprehension/meaning making (interview; report card; claim verified by researcher’s observation, students’ comments and work samples)
• about different levels of thinking and meaning making (interview; claim verified by researcher’s observation, child comments and work samples)
• about building up the information base and experience base – reading to learn (interview; claim verified by researcher’s observation)
• interrelated with writing (interview; claim verified by students’ work and researcher’s observation)
• about reconstructing/reproducing what is read in visual and/or written formats (interview; claim verified by students’ work and researcher’s observation)
• about using structure and language features of studied genre (interview; verified by students’ work books and researcher observation)
• using what is read, researched and heard to write (interview; audio; video; claim verified by researcher’s observation)
• integrated with other curriculum areas (interview; video; claim verified by researcher’s observation)
• about reading to students (interview; video; claimed verified by researcher’s observation)
• an individualistic and/or collaborative venture (interview; video; verified by students’ comments and researcher’s observation)
• affected by resource availability (interview; claim verified by researcher’s observation)
• mainly about using print-based texts – mainly non-narrative texts, some narrative texts (interview; claim verified by students’ comments and photographs and researcher’s observation)
• about using web-based texts for research purposes (interview; audio; video; claim verified by researcher’s observation)
• measured using 1-to-1 conferencing, different levels of thinking and observation of students’ reading note books (interview; audio; claim verified by researcher’s observation)
- sometimes focused on attaining accurate answers (audio; researcher observation; students’ work books)
- about the difficulty level of a task (interview; claim not verified)

I move on now to examine how reading was defined by students in Mr. Green’s class.

**What constitutes reading: What students’ perspectives suggested.**

When explaining to me what constitutes reading, students gave their opinions, took and described photographs of texts they read, recounted personal experiences, and described what they perceived constitutes reading. What resulted were accounts describing reading at school and beyond the school gates.

To show the range of ideas students held about reading, I sorted their accounts into seven categories of reading as a content area; reading as a regular practice; reading and writing as complementary processes; reading as work; reading as regulating behaviour and time; reading as learning, and reading to be informed.

**Reading as a content area.**

The first category identifies reading as a content area.

Analysis of students’ email communications indicated that generally, students held Mr. Green’s view that reading is a content area. The following analysis indicates characteristics students ascribed to this content area and the kinds of texts and reading tasks they saw involved.

Mark reported, “I feel that reading is a subject were (sic) everyone works at there (sic) own pace so it will be easier (sic) to understand” (Appendix N, Email, n.d.). To Mark, “reading” and “subject” are one and the same. “Reading” is some *thing* rather than some procedure. Further, Mark described reading as individualistic, yet something where “everyone works”. In one sense, reading places responsibility on students in relation to participation. The reader is expected to participate, albeit independently, with regard to “there (sic) own pace” in this subject area. Reading therefore may not necessarily be easy, though Mark’s espoused view is that working at one’s “own pace” will make it easier. His final proposition is that reading involves understanding, a perception consistent with the meaning-making role described in the authority’s documentation (Anstey, 2002; Freebody, 1992; Luke & Freebody, 1999). For Mark, the
subject “reading” is represented by the corporate expectation of work, individualistic effort and independence linked to capability, and a quest for understanding.

Shane wrote “I describe reading as a very boring subject but helps us to read and answer Q’s” (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005). Like Mark, Shane uses and relates the abstract nouns “reading” and ‘subject’. However, the adverb “very” is used to strengthen his statement of an opinion that the subject is “boring”. Nonetheless, Shane’s use of “but” signals his recognition that the subject has some value. This value is generalised rather than personal. The “us’ in Shane’s response represents an impression that this boring procedure has some utilisation where a task is something that all students must do. To Shane, reading involves “us’ in the actions “to read” and “[to] answer Q’s”. He has presented reading as both the subject (noun -“I describe reading”) and a performance (action verbs – “… helps us to read and answer Qs”).

Derrick’s explanations were more situated than that of his two peers, viz:

in reading you get given a book to read and a question sheet and you have to read the whole book and then answer the question so I would say for example the question would say why did john act nervous the question so I would say for example the question would say why did john act nervous in the court on page 33 so you would have to read the book and find the answer and he was nervous because he was guilty. (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005),

Like Mark and Shane, Derrick nominalised “reading”, though he did not use the term, “subject”. Rather, the manner of his response indicates that reading is the particular time slot in which a specific activity occurs, therein implying it to be a content area. Derrick’s use of personal pronouns, “you” and “I”, individualises reading although he sees little personal agency in reading - “you get given a book to read...”. Reading involves compliance. Students must use teacher-provided texts. Also, there is “a question sheet” to be “answer[ed]” after you “read the whole book”. This indicates his view of reading is one of attending of his teacher’s tasks, something that requires navigation across and within two texts, “a book …and a question sheet”. As illustrated in Derrick’s example, cross-referencing of a page number stated on the question sheet with the book may be required to locate the answer for the question. What this suggests is that the “answer”, and there is only one correct answer, is to be found hidden somewhere in the book. All this action focuses an individual on comprehending print-based text, a position Derrick’s emailed account shares with those of Mark and Shane.
Across these three emails, Mark, Shane and Derrick positioned reading as a content area. Additionally, each presented in his definition a view that reading is individualistic, that it is shaped by experience with the teacher’s tasks, and that it has evoked some affective personal response. All three spoke of reading as a receptive form of communication, a means of arriving at information to understand generally (Mark) or to understand in order to answer questions (Shane and Derrick). None of the boys mentioned writing as their teacher did in discussions with me.

Reading as a regular practice.
The second category sees reading as a regular practice.

Some of the students’ descriptions mirrored Mr. Green’s view of reading as a practice that is engaged in regularly. This is exemplified in Christopher description: “our reading activity what we have to do every day for our 50 minutes” (Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, Turn 13, 19 July 2005). Christopher recognised reading as a daily event that involved using particular texts selected by his teacher. He also described this reading activity as involving the answering of questions:

well what you have to do is you hae (sic – have) these questions. There is knowledge, application and another one and you have to answer all the questions what are there and once you have answered them Mr. [Green] will call you out and then he will come and mark your work for you. (Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, Turn 15, 19 July 2005)

Christopher’s description of what constitutes reading included language which echoed Mr. Green’s explanation of work done during Reading, that is students were expected to read texts provided by Mr. Green and then to write responses to questions compiled by Mr. Green using Bloom’s taxonomy.

Reading and writing as complementary processes.
The third category recognises reading and writing as complementary processes.

Lisa was the only student in Mr. Green’s class to mention a link between reading and writing. She wrote, “I like reading a lot of different books but mostly I like adventurous (sic) and mystery books because I get hooked into them and they help me to write my own stories” (Appendix N, Email, 29 September 2005).
Lisa recognised that what she enjoyed helped her to write “stories”. She referred explicitly to her preference for adventure and mystery books. She made no mention of using reading to help her in class to write narratives or other genres.

**Reading as work.**

The fourth category recognises reading as work.

Several students referred to reading as requiring effort and/or levels of difficulty. Accompanying their descriptions of reading as work was the idea that it may not be interesting to an individual. The following are samples of data attesting to reading being work. Tess wrote:

> My opinion on reading is that for some poeple (sic) it can be hard to understand pictures, Words, and sometimes what they are saying. It really depends on the person who is reading the book. Some poeple (sic) are really good at reading and other poeple (sic) can not even read a word out. It depends on how much they try. (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005)

Christopher reported “I find reading boring and hard” (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005). Shane described “reading as a very boring subject but helps us to read and answer Q’s’ (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005).

Tess’ and Christopher’s comments recognised reading as “hard” work for some students. To Tess, reading was difficult for people who are not “good at reading”. Christopher, however, recognised reading as a task that was difficult for him to do. Both Tess and Christopher placed the difficulty within the individual’s domain, while Mr. Green had situated it within the tasks provided.

Tess offered the opinion that “it depends on how much they try” as to whether people find reading difficult. She perceived “effort” as the difference between reading being easy or hard work. This matched one of the elements of reading (Effort and Participation) in Mr. Green’s School Report Card (Appendix O).

Shane described reading as some thing that “helps” with the work of reading and answering questions. To him, reading was both a tool and work.

**Reading as regulating behaviour and time.**

The fifth category sees reading as bought to the task of regulating behaviour and time.
Lisa reported using the class rules in the classroom to help her and her peers to regulate their behaviour. In describing one of her photographs (Figure 5), she said:

The next one is our class’s rules. Like if you talk when a teacher is talking you get put in time out which is like rule one and you go to different stages. And I think the last stage is an amber card because we have done something like really bad. And so what I do is I look at that and I like say to myself, if you are going to say something remember the rules so I don’t get myself into trouble.

(Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 14 June 2005)

![Figure 5. Lisa’s photograph of the classroom rules’ poster](image)

Ellen also took photographs of these rules. She described them:

That’s the [class] rules. So normally a lot of people read them to know what we expect in [class]. (Appendix K, Audio-taped descriptions of photographs, 10 June 2005)

This one is also about like [class] rules and it says like the steps you take if you do break one of those rules. You should like think about it. Tell you teacher why you done that. (Appendix K, Audio-taped descriptions of photographs, 10 June 2005)

On another occasion, Lisa photographed the rules in the LOTE classroom (Figure 6). She described how they helped students to regulate their behaviour.

The LOTE rules from our LOTE room. Well they are just about what happens in the classroom and what we are allowed to do and what we are not allowed to do so we look at it and make sure that if we are about to say something we put our hand up and make sure the teacher’s not speaking while we are speaking. (Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 14 June 2005)

Some of them have got like a Japanese meanings next to them and then the English but most of them are just written in English because we aren’t up to the stage of reading Japanese straight out. (Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 14 June 2005)
My field notes contain a notation about a pattern in the photographic data: “all students so far” had taken photographs of “school rules” (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 5 July 2005).

Another example of how Lisa used reading to regulate her behaviour was depicted in a photograph of the overdue books list which was posted on the notice board behind Mr. Green’s desk. In describing this list, Lisa reported:

> These are our overdue books from the library. I read them to make sure if I have an overdue book I can bring it in and get my name crossed off.

(Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 14 June 2005)

In addition, Lisa reported that she read the instrumental music timetable (Figure 7) to help her know when she needed to go to instrumental music lessons. Her photograph and description explain how she used this to inform and regulate her timetable:

> The next one is my instrumental music time table. It has all like the times and what groups on. Since I am in group A I look at the date and I’m in Group A so I look at Group A and it tells me what time I have to get my flute and go practice so I read that.

(Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 14 June 2005)
Although Lisa was the only student to mention reading to regulate her time, students who were assigned to bell-ringing duty also were seen to refer to (read) the clock to manage their duties. Since the class group had to move to other areas in the school for library, music, LOTE and Health and Physical Education classes, reading the class timetable and clock had to happen so students could attend these classes. Nevertheless, these were not called reading by Mr. Green or his students. Rather they were regular class practices that involved reading with this act being naturalised to the point of invisibility.

**Reading as learning.**

The sixth category identifies reading as learning.

In their emails, Jack, Juliana, Fraser, Liz and Ellen described reading as a learning experience that affected their lives in and/or out of school.

Jack said, “I believe that reading is the key to learning and always read in my spare time” (Appendix N, Email, 5 October 2005). He further commented, “My mother and Father would always encourage me to read books when I was younger and have learnt many things from reading”. Jack called upon home-reading experiences to describe reading facilitating his learning.

Juliana reported, “I would describe reading as a great time to learn about your favourite subject and explore a bit about other countries, people etc” (Appendix N, Email, 26
September 2005). Her description indicated reading helped her to learn and pursue her interests.

Fraser also associated reading to learning when he wrote:

I think that reading is about lerning (sic) to think about things more and lerning (sic) more then the story says e.g. the we had to read about manmad (sic) – desaters (sic – disasters) like and it helped to explane (sic) more than it was an axerdent (sic – accident) and more mans folt (sic – fault) for not caring for what we do. it also might help u be a better person, cause there might be somthing (sic) that u do and it might affect (sic) the way u live, and thats when the reading comes in. (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005)

He related reading to work done in class as part of a thematic study of natural disasters. This work involved learning to think and increasing one’s knowledge about a topic. Fraser’s description of reading echoes that in Mr. Green’s comments that students read in class to build their knowledge base (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 54, 4 June 2005).

Fraser also identified reading as something that affected people personally as well as other aspects of their lives. Similarly, Liz and Ellen described reading as learning and something that affects people’s lives.

Liz thought:

reading [is] important at homes for a young child's benefit so when they are older they are able to read and understand what ever they maybe talking about. Think of street signs warnings and all that type of stuff you have to read to know what they say. (Appendix N, Email, 29 September 2005)

In her use of the phrases “read and understand” and “read to know”, Liz related reading to meaning-making and learning. She identified reading as something of value to all children, beginning at an early age in home contexts and affecting children’s school and community lives.

Ellen commented:

I would decribe readind (sic) as a life long gift which you can receive imformation (sic) from and also enjoy it at the same time. It also helps you with your spelling which is also an extremely important gift. (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005)

In identifying reading “as a life long gift”, Ellen recognised it as affecting both the present and the future. She defined it as an enjoyable learning experience, specifying
spelling as skill that was improved by reading. In so doing, she associated reading with writing, but in a way that differed from Mr. Green’s view of how reading and writing were related.

In defining reading as a way to learn, these students presented messages that were similar in some regards, but different in others. Some mirroring of Mr. Green’s views of reading was evident, but differences also existed. Reading was referred to as something that crosses home-school boundaries and moments in time.

Reading to be informed.

The seventh, and final, category sees reading used to be informed.

Lisa, Maya and Liz stated that they saw reading as a means for staying informed. In describing the cover and an internal page of the school newsletter which she had photographed, Lisa said:

The next one is our newsletter. I like to read them to find out things that I might have missed on the intercom, just like who got Child of the Week, discos, if there is anything on like people coming in for scrap booking or something, this was what the principal was talking about. (Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 14 June 2005)

She also photographed a large sign at the front of the school. She commented:

And my last photo the sign outside of our school which just tells you what happening like around this kind of time. So when I walk to school or ride to school get drove I just look at it and it tells me so I can remember things. (Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 14 June 2005)

Lisa’s description shows that she used these items to stay in touch with school events and news.

Maya photographed the cover and an internal page of a booklet provided to Year Seven students by a local high school (Appendix K). This booklet contained information about the school which she was going to in 2006 (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 3, 19 October 2005).

Ellen photographed a number of items that she read for information including newspaper articles about the school on display in the library; a list of students’ perceptions of the environment which were displayed in the library, a poster that
advertised a competition, a poster advertising an upcoming school disco, a list of spelling words, and a certificate given to the school for participating in a Global Neighbourhood Project (Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 10 June 2005).

In summary, students’ views of what constitutes reading at school fell into seven distinct categories: reading as a content area; reading as a regular practice; reading and writing as complementary processes; reading as work; reading as regulating behaviour and time; reading as learning; and reading to be informed. They also indicated that reading involved the use of a range of narrative, expository and procedural texts. There was some similarity between students’ perspectives and those of their teacher, Mr. Green. However, there also were differences. Differences also were evident between students’ perspectives.

The next section examines parents’ perspectives on what constitutes reading. The parents of students in Mr. Green’s class are involved in this analysis.

**What constitutes reading: What parents’ perspectives suggested.**

Data from interviews with five parents who were able to meet with me at the school, along with responses to a questionnaire from two parents were used to identify what parents viewed as reading. All parents commented on the kinds of texts that their child preferred to read. Their responses indicated that their child’s preference in reading materials was not always viewed by them as appropriate. Parents also commented on features of reading that they considered important.

In the following, responses from four parents in Mr. Green’s group are presented. These are the parents of Ellen, Fraser, Christopher and Lisa.

*What Ellen’s mother suggested.*

Ellen’s mother, Tammy commented that she thought “understanding and enjoying what you read” were important in reading (Appendix V, Response to item 4 on the questionnaire). Tammy’s view of reading being about understanding what you read is similar to Mr. Green’s perspective of reading for comprehension. Unlike Mr. Green, she did not call for Ellen to reproduce what she has read. In identifying reading for pleasure as important, Tammy specified a purpose that was not part of reading in Ellen’s class.
Tammy drew upon her own experiences to identify an attribute that she deemed crucial to reading and being a good reader: confidence. She wrote: “I was a terrible reader as a child but discovered novels at 16 and have been an avid reader since. Reading well = confidence” (Appendix V, Response to Item 8 on the questionnaire). This comment revealed Tammy’s view of reading had been influenced by her own experiences as a reader. Events that had occurred in her childhood and teenage years affected her interest and performance in reading, as well as her rating of herself as a reader. She also indicated her preference for reading novels.

Tammy said Ellen was “interested and (sic – in) science fiction” (Appendix V, Response to item 3 on the questionnaire). In this, she recognised Ellen’s preference for reading science fiction texts. In addition, she stated that the kinds of things she saw Ellen reading at home included books, magazines and newspapers, all of which are print-based materials.

She indicated that she was “not crazy about her reading Dolly as I think a lot of the content is a bit too old for her – but she is very level headed” (Appendix V, Response to item 7 on the questionnaire). Although Ellen’s mother expressed some concerns that Dolly magazine was more suitable for older people to read, she recognised the reading of this magazine as being manageable by Ellen, contributing this to her being “very level headed”. Tammy drew upon her own experiences with reading to justify this opinion: “I was probably reading the same at her age” (Appendix V, Response to item 7 on the questionnaire).

According to Tammy, reading consisted of confidence, preferences for particular reading materials, reading for pleasure, reading for understanding, and the use of print-based texts.

Ellen’s photographs of reading at home and associated written descriptions matched her mother’s claims that Ellen read books and magazines that were of interest to her (Appendix M, Photographs and written descriptions; Figures 8 & 9). In describing her photographs, Ellen indicated that she “enjoy[ed] reading books that [she] like[d] in [her] leisure time”. Most of her photographs were of print-based texts that she read for pleasure. However, she also photographed an “information table on food packages...
situated in my food pantry” (Appendix M, Photographs and written descriptions).

Ellen stated that she read this table in order to find out about the contents of food:

I read it when I wonder how much fat and sugar I am putting in my mouth. I read it when ever I think about how much fat and sugar I am placing in my mouth. I read it because I like to know what is in the food I am eating.

(Appendix M, Photographs and written descriptions)

Although Tammy did not identify Ellen as reading food labels at home, she did comment that in the local community Ellen read “shopping labels, signs on the beach, street signs [and] advertising” (Appendix V, Response to item 2 on questionnaire). She associated this reading for information with Ellen’s engagement in community life.

Figure 8. Photograph of book Ellen read at home

Figure 9. Photograph of magazine Ellen read at home

Ellen’s comments showed that she read regularly at home: “most nights before I go to bed” and “mostly every night” (Appendix M, Photographs and written descriptions). This practice of reading regularly matched Mr. Green’s attention to providing reading as a daily activity at school.
What Fraser's mother suggested.

Fraser’s mother, Karen said that the texts Fraser preferred to read were “usually something like Star Wars or umm Runescape” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 26, 31 October 2005). She continued on to explain that she disliked the fantasy and computer game texts Fraser chose to read, labeling them “these awful things he’s into” (Turn 26).

Karen mother reported that she worked hard to get Fraser “to try and contact the real world” (Turn 40). Through her actions to provide Fraser with some “real world” texts, for example, “some articles from a newspaper” (Turn 26) and “National Geographic articles’ (Turn 40), she hoped that “a bit of the real world [would] seep in every now and then” (Turn 318) because “he will never do it off his own bat” (Turn 40).

However, she reported Fraser’s comment to her about these texts was, “but mum I’m a kid” (Turn 318). This comment indicated Fraser did not see the value in him, a child, reading the “real world” texts his mother valued. In his child’s world, these texts were of little interest or use.

Recounting the usual routines, Karen showed reading was a regular, planned event:

After he’s done his homework, I usually get him to read say from a Harry Potter book while I’m getting dinner - Can be up to an hour. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 22, 31 October 2005)

But I we try to do that umm and then if he goes to bed at 8 o’clock I say well take a book for half an hour now that’s usually something like Star Wars or umm Runescape or some of these awful things ((laughed)) he’s in to umm the other thing we do is try to get him to read some articles from a newspaper maybe once a day umm and once on the weekend we read a book together he’ll read for so late at night on Saturday night or something he might read for only 3 or 4 pages and then I’ll read and he’ll drop off to sleep so that’s sort of our routine (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 26, 31 October 2009).

Within this routine, reading was involved the use of print-based texts of Fraser’s personal preference and those about the “real world” that were selected by his mother.

Karen identified that for Fraser reading was a difficult task. She described these difficulties:

As I said when he says he reads to himself I don’t know I guess he reads … page by page but I don’t think he would do more than in quarter of an hour he probably wouldn’t do more than 2 or 3 pages (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 76, 31 October 2005)
Karen defined Fraser’s reading difficulties as consisting of slow reading and minimal amounts of reading completed within a particular time. In doing this, she drew upon fluency, which was one of the three major elements of reading within the School’s Report Card, to describe Fraser’s reading. These problems could have been attributed to the difficulty level of a text or to his lack of interest. Instead Karen linked the difficulties to his lack of reading competency when she described Fraser’s reading as:

Stunted. Lacks expression. Lacks fluidity. Does it under endurance. He’s still very substandard in my books. … He doesn’t read ahead to see whether a sentence finishes and how he should use inflections and how just put a bit of interest into the reading. It will just be nuh which I think you know most of us would have got through in Grade 3 really. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 66, 31 October 2005).

The first reader characteristics referred to by Karen focus on expression and fluency. These responses draw upon two of the three major elements of reading used in the School’s Report Card. As she reported listening to her son reading aloud several times each week, it is feasible that Karen would call upon these elements to define Fraser’s reading. Her responses, “very substandard”, “doesn’t read ahead” and “use of inflections”, incorporate the kinds of talk teachers often use to describe and categorise reading. Her capacity to use this talk displays her experience of discussions with teachers about her son’s educational progress over the last seven years. Additionally, her experiences with mainstream media will have provided her with considerable exposure to discussions about phonic and motivational elements of reading. Karen also draws upon her own experience as a student. This is evident when she says “most of us would have got through in Grade 3”. Using her experiences as a measuring stick, Karen rates Fraser’s reading performance as four years below his current grade level. Her description of Fraser as a poor reader is shaped by a complex mix of ideas about reading from her own experiences and those with her son.

Through her descriptions of Fraser as a reader, Karen identified reading to be a complex, multi-variable process informed by historical reading experiences. What constitutes reading is the use of print-based materials, preferably with a real-world focus, effort, expression, fluency, and strategic in-the-head control of reading strategies by the individual.
Since Fraser did not take photographs of what he read at home, there was no way to compare what he considered reading at home to be and what his mother reported. I need to clarify here that Fraser did have an opportunity to take the camera home. However, he did not take any photographs. Instead, the camera and notebook were returned with a note from his mother (Appendix M).

*What Christopher’s mother suggested.*

In her written responses, Christopher’s mother, Carrie reported that Christopher read a variety of print-based texts including skate-boarding magazines, Harry Potter, joke books and items on surfing (Appendix V, Response to item 1 on questionnaire). Carrie accepted that his choice of texts seemed to make reading an enjoyable experience for him: “Interests well they’re important and enjoyable” (Appendix V, Response to item 3 on questionnaire). However, she specified “understanding what you are reading” to be an important characteristic of reading (Appendix V, Response to item 4 on questionnaire).

According to Carrie, reading at home involved the use of print-based texts, personal preference informed by interests, reading for enjoyment, and should be about reading for understanding. As Christopher did not have an opportunity to take the camera home, there is no evidence available via that means to attest to what he read at home. In conversation though he said, “I like to read surfing mags, skateboarding mags, um some stories. Heaps. Really anything basically at home” (Appendix D, Audio-taped conversation, Turn 4, 6 December 2005). He continued, “I’ve got these comics. I’ve got these Spiderman comics and that. Marvel, I’ve got comics like that, um that’s about all” (Appendix D, Audio-taped conversation, Turn 6, 6 December 2005). Christopher’s comments about reading magazines and “some stories” match his mother’s account of his preferences. Furthermore, they attest to his predominant use of print-based texts for reading.

*What Lisa’s mother suggested.*

Lisa’s mother, Ella described Lisa’s reading preferences:

> I think she likes adventure stories. She loves animals. She really loves animals. She loves to ... she loves to find things out. She’s a very inquisitive person if it suits her so she will source things out to do that. She’ll read things on the internet at the moment more than books because they’re having to because I feel they’re having to use the internet or have been using the internet to research things. So she’s probably been finding things out on the computer
more than looking into books. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 2, 29 September 2005)

Reading at home for Lisa involved engagement with print-based texts such as books about animals or adventure stories. In addition, due to school reading demands at that time, Lisa researched and read web-based texts at home. Having explained that at home Lisa’s reading was affected by school reading demands, Ella returned to describing Lisa’s reading preferences:

She does love to read. … When we were cleaning out recently she had her old books … won’t part with them. She loves story books loves um … non-fiction too, things that are interesting. She loves to sing. Anything creative, anything to do with music she loves to look at or read. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 7, 29 September 2005)

At this point we were interrupted but already I had some insights as to what constituted reading within Lisa’s home. Reading at home involved a combination of online texts informed by school reading demands and print-based texts selected in accordance with Lisa’s personal reading preferences and interests.

At a second interview, Lisa’s mother reiterated what she had told me previously regarding the affect school reading demands had on Lisa’s use of the home computer and what Lisa’s reading preferences were. She extended upon this, saying “she does have things that are special and she reads those” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 4, 13 October 2005). The special things she referred to were plaques and wall hangings with quotes and poetry written on them which she explained further in the following:

She loves quotes. Things that are meaningful. She likes to read things that are meaningful rather than things that don’t have any value. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 8, 13 October 2005)

Amongst her photographs of items she read at home, Lisa had two examples of these special things (Figures 10 & 11).
In describing the photograph shown in Figure 10, Lisa said:

I read this because I love to Sing, Dance, and love others. It sits in my room on a wall where it hangs next to my special friends. My mum got it for me from the Witsundays (sic) while my mum and Dad were on their 20 Aneversery (sic) holiday. I read it every morning because it helps me to think before I say. Mum and I read it together sometimes (line put through ‘sometimes’) sometimes. (Appendix M, Photograph and written description, Lisa)

Lisa described the photograph in Figure 11:

This is my special cloth poster that I read because I love it and it also helps me to think before I say. It also relaxses (sic) me. It hangs on my wall above my head so I can read it every morning My mum and I read it togher (sic - together) a lot but whe (line put through “whe”) we are running out of spare time together. I love reading it. (Appendix M, Photograph and written description, Lisa)
Lisa’s photographs of reading at home and associated written descriptions indicate what constitutes reading at home involved the use of a range of texts (computer-based, print-based and plaque-based) (Appendix M, Photographs and written descriptions, Lisa). Her descriptions showed reading could be either a personal or shared experience.

Regardless of what text she read, Lisa’s reading at home was meaningful and purposeful. At interview, Ella stressed the importance of reading being meaningful and purposeful to Lisa.

She doesn’t read the newspapers. She doesn’t read as I said. She really doesn’t read magazines. She would much rather sit down and read a really interesting story than look at stuff that doesn’t really relate to her or not important to her. She would see herself as having better things to do with her time than that, unless there was an article there that she was interested in reading. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 10, 13 October 2005)

As I said at this point in time … she reads music, she reads songs. She loves to read songs that she’s singing. She’s just at a very creative point in her life. She’s doing things much more than (at this point, Lisa’s mother compared Lisa to one of her older sisters). (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 18, 13 October 2005)

I know what Lisa reads. She agonises over the Kmart and Big W and Target magazines and she is talking about how she can make a wish list for Christmas (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 1, 13 October 2005)

Lisa’s photographs, and written descriptions, of reading at home attest to her reading items that were meaningful and purposeful to her. She described the purpose of reading the book in Figure 12 at night was “so that I have fun and happy dreams” (Appendix M, Photograph and written description, Lisa). She described Figure 13 similarly: “also read it before I go to bed to give me nice dreams and things for me to think about” (Appendix M, Photograph and written description, Lisa). Figure 14 was described as: “I love to read because it helps me to think and I learn something new ey (line put through “ey”) every time I read it” (Appendix M, Photograph and written description, Lisa).

In these instances, “meaningful and purposeful” are associated with relaxing, attaining pleasure, or thinking and learning new things.
According to Ella and Lisa, reading at home involved the use of a range of texts, meaningful and purposeful reading, and reading as either an individual or shared experience. Lisa’s case provides insights into how reading tasks that were assigned by her teacher permeated her home, resulting in the inclusion of web-based texts in her home reading repertoire.
In summary, each parent presented a view of reading which was similar to Mr. Green’s perspectives in some regards (e.g. print-based) and different in others. Each parent also viewed reading in ways that were similar (e.g. preferences) and difference to the opinions and descriptions of reading offered by their child. Some evidence of home-school boundary crossing also is event in parents’ reports of what constitutes reading.

I now examine what markers signaled reading in Mr. Brown’s class. I follow by drawing together findings from both groups to form a collective response to the first research question.

**Data from Mr. Brown’s class.**

This section investigates what signified reading for participants (teacher, students and parents) in Mr. Brown’s class who shared the classroom space with those in Mr. Green’s class.

**What constitutes reading: What Mr. Brown’s timetable suggested.**

Mr. Brown’s timetable, reproduced in Figure 15, stipulated what content areas were delivered, as well as when and where. He had negotiated its structure and content with Mr. Green and specialist teachers in Library, Music, Health and Physical Education (HPE), and Languages Other Than English (LOTE). He led both class groups for Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE), while Mr. Green who took responsibility for both class groups in Art.

Literacy teaching and learning is represented in Mr. Brown’s timetable by five sections: “English” (shaded purple) for which 2.3 hours per week was scheduled, “Reading Groups – rotation #” (shaded blue) shown across 3 hours per week, ‘spelling Activities’ (shaded gold) with a 1.8 hour allocation per week, “USSR” (shaded grey) with a 20-minute allocation per week, and “Library borrowing” (shaded brown) which had an allocation of 50 minutes.

Mr. Brown’s terminology fits that used by his employing authority in ways that differ from Mr. Green’s. An example of this is the way in which Mr. Brown takes up the core business of teaching reading which is espoused in systemic documents. Observations showed the act of “reading” permeated the five content areas and other curriculum areas (Appendix B, Field Notes; Appendix D, Audio-taped observations). Yet, in his timetable, Mr. Brown only used the term “reading” in “Reading Groups – rotations”.

114
Also, in contrast to Mr. Green’s timetable, Mr. Brown included “English”, a recognised KLA for Australian Schools (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 1999, 2008), as a component of the literacy teaching and learning sector of his timetable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term:</th>
<th>Week:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:50</td>
<td>Math Groups #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:50</td>
<td>Reading Groups - rotation 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:50</td>
<td>Morning Tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:20</td>
<td>Spelling Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:50</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:50</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30</td>
<td>SOSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00</td>
<td>Science [Mr. G]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30</td>
<td>Spelling Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:50</td>
<td>Notes:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15. Mr. Brown’s Timetable

Mr. Brown’s timetable, however, did not include space or reference to computer skill exercises which involved reading of print-based materials and the computer screen, or students’ reading of his whiteboard notations. These are described with examples in the following.

Reading computer skill exercises.

Mr. Brown had compiled a range of computer skill exercises in spiral-bound booklets. The cover of each booklet specified that students were to do the provided tasks; glue copies of the work they had completed in their “reading book”, and to ensure that they had written the title of the activity and the date in their book (see samples in Appendix S). Although this task involved reading from two different sources (page and screen),
neither Mr. Brown nor any of his students referred to this “reading”. This was an accepted part of the classroom practice that was done, but was not consciously considered as “reading”.

*Reading the whiteboard.*

As in Mr. Green’s class, Mr. Brown’s students read his whiteboard notions and instructions every day to inform work that they recorded in their notebooks (e.g., Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 27 September 2005 & Book 2, 4 October 2005). One example of this was in a Mathematics’ lesson when Kari moved back and forth between reading the whiteboard notations and what she had written in her notebook (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 27 September 2005).

Yet, neither Mr. Brown nor his students mentioned this source of reading. Reading the blackboard was a daily class practice. It was expected and done, but it was not consciously recognised as reading.

*What constitutes reading: What Mr. Brown suggested when talking about reading.*

Typically, Mr. Brown spoke about reading as a component of his timetabled activities.

*In Reading Groups rotations.*

The label “Reading Groups – rotation #” in Mr. Brown’s timetable suggests that reading involved groups rotating from reading task to reading task during each lesson, but this was not the case. At interview, Mr. Brown described what happened during this session:

> All the same activities rotate around. I keep it all year and this goes year by year. That is just one of the routines I have tried to establish: the spelling activities and that is probably one of the best parts of the timetable now because the kids that I had last year, a lot of them teach the others how it works, so basically it can run itself after a while. It’s good though to have the teacher-aides to come in so I try to use them for those times. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 36, 6 July 2005)

Mr. Brown had established three activities (Guided Reading Groups, Spelling Sequencing Tasks, and Listening Comprehension Tasks) for students to participate in during the timetabled “Reading Groups – rotation”. These activities operated consistently in the same manner establishing “one of [Mr. Brown’s] routines”. Students were placed into groups by Mr. Brown for these reading activities. Since the groups
remained static throughout the year and the task requirements stayed consistent, this routine required little ongoing attention or as Mr. Brown coined it, the routine “basically [ran] itself”.

The groups of students rotated from task to task. Rotations, however, did not occur in each session. Instead each group worked on one task, with each group being assigned different tasks. For example, while one group of students worked in the Guided Reading Group, the other groups were engaged in one of two available tasks: Spelling Sequencing Task or Listening Comprehension task. In total, each group spent one hour once week on each task. By the end of a week, students had participated in the three literacy activities that had been organised by Mr. Brown.

Despite being an expected routine, Mr. Brown acknowledged that teacher-aides were an invaluable resource when it came to the running of these sessions. Typically, a teacher-aide was deployed to facilitate Guided Reading (e.g., Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 26 September 2005).

Guided Reading sessions began with the designated group moving with the teacher-aide to the courtyard adjoining the classroom (e.g., Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 2, 3 October 2005). Once everyone was seated on chairs in a circle formation, the teacher aide distributed to students the text provided by Mr. Brown. She asked them to talk about what they already knew about the text topic. Typically, the first portion of these sessions involved students taking turns to read a section of a selected text aloud. The turn-taking nature of Guided Reading was confirmed by my observations of the group in action (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 18 October 2005 & 3 November 2005). Whenever a student mispronounced a word, the teacher aide provided the correct pronunciation (e.g., Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 2; Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 18 October 2005 & 3 November 2005). Similarly when an error was made by a student, the correct word or words were provided by the teacher aide (e.g., Field Notes, Book 2, 3 October 2005). If a student did not know a word, the teacher aide said it, followed by the child repeating the word and then continuing on with the reading. Students were not given the space or time to monitor and correct their work or attempt unknown words. The capacity to problem-solve one’s own mistakes or unfamiliar words was not seen as the responsibility of students. Instead adult support was provided whenever problems were experienced by a student or detected by the teacher aide. There was no evidence in the observations of the teacher aide using
prompts or any kind of feedback to support strategic actions such as decoding unknown words, self-monitoring and correcting or to foster fluency and phrasing. Observations of the reading group sessions in action revealed this oral reading session to be akin to round robin reading (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003) with reading being about attaining accurate renditions of a text. Moreover, reading proved to be a task that could be achieved successfully only with adult support.

Following the oral reading of the text, the teacher aide read aloud the questions provided by Mr. Brown, and asked students to provide answers verbally (e.g., Appendix D, 3 October 2005). Once this was completed, everyone moved back into the classroom. Students sat at their desks and wrote their responses to the questions in their Reading Notebooks (Appendix T). Most students talked with one or more peers about their answers (e.g., Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 6 July 2005). Typically, one child wrote down the answer and others read his/her work and copied it. When confronted with a difficulty, students generally asked the teacher aide for help. On several occasions during the observed sessions, Mr. Brown told the teacher aide and students that group discussion was required before students attempted to write individual responses (e.g., Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 3, 18 October 2005). The teacher aide attempted to enact this advice but usually was ignored by students who continued to work either individually or with their peers. Upon completion of the session, students placed their notebooks on Mr. Brown’s desk in readiness for marking.

The later section of guided reading sessions focused on students comprehending the text and representing these understandings collaboratively in an oral format and individually in a written format. What constitutes reading was the reproduction of a text shaped by collaboration and discussions around aspects of the text’s meaning. A child’s accuracy in answering the questions was judged by Mr. Brown.

*In Spelling Sequencing Tasks.*

Mr. Brown reported that the “words that [students] are doing [in Spelling Sequencing Tasks] are related to all the other three spelling groups (Appendix G, Audio-taped discussion, Turn 40, 7 July 2005). While for spelling, students were divided into different ability groups and given different spelling words per group, within the Spelling Sequence Task, all spelling words were used. This meant that some words would not be familiar to all students.
He used these words to construct sentences which, subsequently, he cut into word and phrase segments and stored it in a resealable plastic packet. The packets were stored in a folder which was stored on a shelf to the side of the room. The folder and its contents were managed each day by a student designated by Mr. Brown to be the monitor.

The Spelling Sequencing Task required students to reform the dissected segments into the sentence structure written by Mr. Brown (e.g., Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 28 September 2005 & Field Notes, Book 2, 4 October 2005). This task was similar to the sentence reformations in Breakthrough to Literacy (Mackay, Schaub, & Thompson, 1970), Reading Recovery (Clay, 1993) and transformations (Kemp, 1987). After they had reformed a sentence, children wrote their findings into their Reading Notebooks (Appendix T). Then, the sentence segments were placed back into their storage packet and returned to the container on a student-sized desk where they were stored permanently. Upon completion of several of these, children asked the monitor (a peer) to check the accuracy of their work. The monitor used information provided by Mr. Brown to check and mark the accuracy of their peers’ work.

Mr. Brown identified that while most students coped well with this task. However, he recognised Jake as experiencing difficulties with the task in its existing form. [Jake] is the person that I really need to look at what I am doing with him in the room (Appendix G, Audio-taped discussion, Turn 38, 7 July 2005)

He could still do spelling sequencing but I might make his sentences easier and relate it to his spelling list words because those words that they are doing are related to all the other three spelling groups (Appendix G, Audio-taped discussion, Turn 40, 7 July 2005).

Mr. Brown described the Spelling Sequence Task as an activity that “helps [students] with their grammar and they are using a dictionary and a few things that help them” (Appendix G, Audio-taped discussion, Turn 37, 7 July 2005). He associated reading in this task with students using syntactic and semantic knowledge, although he did not use this terminology. In using the term “grammar”, he referred to syntactic knowledge. His mentioning of the potential to use “a dictionary” suggested students needed to search for and employ semantic knowledge when doing these tasks.

I, however, perceive to successfully do this task students would have to use graphophonic, syntactic and semantic knowledge. Since students were only provided
with fragmented words and phrases, the use of graphophonic knowledge would be an essential starting point. In the case of semantic knowledge, students could draw on their knowledge of word meanings and in the event that a word was unknown, the presence of a dictionary on a child’s desk afforded the opportunity to attain the meaning of an unknown word from the dictionary. Syntactic knowledge relied on students’ awareness of sentence structures in particular how words go together to form simple and complex sentences.

The aim of the Spelling Sequence tasks was for students to attain an accurate representation of each of the sentences that Mr. Brown had constructed. To achieve this, students needed to draw on each of the three cueing systems and to monitor the quality of their reformation attempts. Where required, adjustments towards correction needed to be made. Neither Mr. Brown nor his students mentioned self-monitoring as playing a part in this activity. It may be argued that, typically, reading in the Spelling Sequence Task was an individualistic task involving an in-the-head process of using cueing and monitoring systems to attain accurate renditions of the teacher-constructed sentences.

In Listening Comprehension Sessions.

The Listening Comprehension sessions were run by Mr. Brown. The task required students to listen to a taped reading of a text. Prior to listening to the tape, students read the question sheet (see examples in Appendix T). Teacher prompts were provided at this time to enable students to unpack what each question was asking. When the tape finished, the teacher facilitated discussion around the questions and the text heard. Students wrote their answers to these questions in their designated notebook (Appendix T). Following the session, students placed their notebooks on Mr. Brown’s desk and, later in the day, he marked the accuracy of their written responses.

What constitutes reading in Listening Comprehension sessions was listening to someone else read and attaining meaning from this. Students’ written responses to teacher-provided questions represented the meaning they gained from listening to the text being read. Herein, meaning making from listening to someone else read is associated with writing. Moreover, reading was associated with attaining accurate reproductions of the meaning of the text read.
Mr. Brown used the English timeslot to teach students how to write particular teacher-selected genres. While the focus appears to be on writing, analysis reveals reading played a significant role in English sessions.

In third semester, when the report genre was beginning to be focused on, Mr. Brown explained how his decision to cover this genre in the way he did was impacted upon by a range of influences:

Lately because I know it is an important genre, it is probably the most important genre that kids are going to get at high school and if they do go on to ways of research and types of reporting. So that was a big influence. If they want to do well at high school, they have got to be able to write an information report and be able to research it and not just copy chucks of it down because it won’t pass obviously. You see university students come in and talk about plagiarism and what happens when you go further on in education so I don’t want them to get into any bad habits or anything. Research just taking chunks of information from someone else’s work and pretending it’s theirs. (Appendix G, Audio-taped discussion, Turn 12, 6 July 2005)

The report genre is identified by Mr. Brown as “probably the most important genre” due to its dominance in students’ future schooling. Prior to this discussion, I observed Mr. Brown introducing the topics to be addressed using the report genre and noted that he explained to students how feedback from the high school had influenced his decision to cover the report genre in third term. Mr. Brown also implicated feedback from pre-service teachers (“university students”) as influencing how he covered the research component in the planning stage of report writing. His attention here was on students learning how to take notes and use these to shape their writing, rather than developing “any bad habits” such as copying. Mr. Brown’s concern was in setting students up with a good model of how to use research to inform report writing. Herein “research” referred to what they had to do: searching, reading and note taking.

Mr. Brown described the process he used to help students learn how to use the report genre which was the focus in English at that point in time:

we went through it all yesterday but then I gave them phase by phase so then I’ll start on the planning phase and I won’t worry about the draft. So we are going to…. Yesterday we went through and looked at a map of South America and listed all the countries that would be an appropriate topic to choose from. Now we are going to look at um search engines and things on the net and that and have a look at what words you can type in so you can do quick searches. (Appendix G, Audio-taped discussion, Turn 6, 6 July 2005)
Teach them how to copy and paste into a word document so they are not printing out copious amounts of things they don’t need. I was going to develop a planning format for them but I am actually going to get them. We are going to do New Zealand together, a very quick one and get them to design a planning format from their notes and that will teach them how to note take so we are not writing sentences out or paragraph after paragraph out of books. (Appendix G, Audio-taped discussion, Turn 8, 6 July 2005)

No, what we are going to do today is we are going to go through the ...word fact and then, in our books, then in our books list down the sub headings that that site would help us find and that will leave us with what sub headings we don’t have, then in our English books we will write down some search words and web sites for the other sub-headings that would help us so when they go home at least they can use the internet (Appendix G, Audio-taped discussion, Turn 16, 6 July 2005)

So it is not as though they’re reading there, like for example the capital city, so I’ll be teaching them the capital city of Brazil is Brasilia. So some of these scenes won’t be as detailed. For example – native fauna – all they really need to do is find me a few native fauna, they don’t need to write a paragraph about it, just maybe a few graphics, or it could just be labels. So a list: some of the native fauna of Brazil (Appendix G, Audio-taped discussion, Turn 20, 6 July 2005)

I'll do that when we get to the publishing phase. I have said the more visual it is, so we are obviously trying to make it, the information report from illustrations and pictures to match as many sub-headings as possible as we can get here. So it’s not just going to be typed up on a word document report where they just hand it in. (Appendix G, Audio-taped discussion, Turn 22, 6 July 2005)

Well it’s totally interlinked isn’t it. Yeah you have to be able to read and it's got a lot of skills like. Well, just being able to note take, you are going to have to identify by the key words, so there are a lot of skills and… It just as well that I left it to term 3. It's not the easiest genre to teach if you were going to go through the whole process properly. (Appendix G, Audio-taped discussion, Turn 24, 6 July 2005)

But with this report writing, most of the times I have scheduled in my timetable are ah short stints with this group, no more than probably 30 minutes am I finding. Over the years that I have had time to go for 50 minutes, a lot of these kids need a lot more support. I find with 50 minutes of writing time I won’t get I will probably get better results this time with 30 minutes of writing time than I would in the 50 minutes. It’s a long time for these students. So what I want to do this week is hopefully go through a Country and I might just do the New Zealand one, something similar that they might know a bit about it. We will just go and research all the sub headings on New Zealand and note take with them and that is as far as we will go, we won’t turn any notes into our draft. Then I will go it is your planning time, choose your country and note take, so I will have modeled that. So once we have got all our notes together and then we will go and I will model New Zealand notes and we will work together and do a joint construction on the draft, so they will see that for a few days and then I will go now its time for you to do your notes
Mr. Brown indicated he used a multi-step approach involving planning (Turns 6 and 8), researching (Turns 6, 8, 16, 20, and 24), writing (Turn 36) and publishing (Turn 22) phases similar to the Process Writing approach (Graves, 1983, 1985). Within the writing phase, Mr. Brown described (in Turn 36) how he used modeling and joint construction to support students before they attempt independent writing. Mr. Brown described using a process akin to the Genre approach to writing (Derewianka, 1990; Rothery, 1984). Although both processes used are writing ones, Mr. Brown stipulated that reading and writing are “totally interlinked” (Turn 24) in English sessions. Research and associated reading were essential elements required to inform the writing and rewriting students were had to do in order to produce their report. Print-based (Turn 8) and internet (Turn 16) texts were used by students to locate and read information pertinent to their selected country. In addition, students had to locate “illustrations and pictures” (Turn 22) for inclusion in their published report. Research necessitated searching, reading and viewing illustrations, maps and photographs to find ones that matched topics covered on the selected country.

What constitutes reading in English sessions was teacher-supported prior to students participating independently in research, associated reading and writing. Reading involved the use of print-based and web-based texts for meaning making purposes; that is, to find information pertinent to each child’s selected country. Reading was not associated with accurate copying of information from a text. Instead, pertinent information was to be located and transformed into notes, which subsequently were to be (re)transformed into sentences. Reading was to be (re)produced into two different written formats: notes and then sentences. In addition, visual items were to be sought and used to complement the written words in the published report. Reading and listening were pertinent to understanding and following teacher modeling and descriptions of how to research, read and take notes, and write their reports. In English reading was associated with writing as reciprocal (Anstey, 1986; Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000) and constructive processes (Langer & Flihan, 2000; Spivey, 1990).

**In Spelling activities.**

Spelling Activities were designated times provided by Mr. Brown for students to work on the teacher-set homework tasks. The homework tasks for both Mr. Brown and Mr.
Green’s students were the same. These tasks required students to locate the meaning of teacher-provided spelling words within a dictionary or another pertinent source. Students then had to write sentences using each word appropriately. Students also had to identify the number of syllables within each of the words, and to place the words in alphabetical order. Each of these tasks required students to read a text be it the teacher-provided spelling words, a dictionary, and/or their own work.

In one Spelling activities lesson, Mr. Brown told students to “make sure you are looking up the right meaning” (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, Turn 1, 11 October 2005). He told them to be careful that they were looking for the right word. Citing a child’s error in using “contraption” instead of “contraction”, he pointed out that one letter difference resulted in a different word and different meaning being used and that this would lead to incorrect work. Mr. Brown also told one child that “putting the number of syllables [wasn’t] good enough”, he wanted “to know where they [were]” (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, Turn 40, 11 October 2005). The processes and rules associated with appropriately and accurately doing the set homework tasks were reinforced by Mr. Brown as he roved the room providing feedback to individuals and the whole class.

What constitutes reading in the Spelling Activities was multi-dimensional involving a combination of matching (accurately locating the designated words within a dictionary), reading (identifying the meaning of each word), and writing (using each word in a semantically and syntactically appropriate manner within a sentence). Students’ ability to do the Spelling Activities was reliant in part upon them following the teacher-set and reinforced rules and having a dictionary that contained the word. When a dictionary did not contain a set word, the potential for errors in students’ work was heightened. Even when the word’s meaning was attained, students needed to be aware of how the word was used in order to be able to write a syntactically correct sentence. When a word was used infrequently or students had no knowledge of how it was used, the potential for errors were raised.

This section has focused on how Mr. Brown incorporated reading in the literacy sections of his timetabled days. In the following section, how reading is embedded in other curriculum areas is examined.
Reading integrated across the curriculum.

In order to gain a clear understanding of how reading was incorporated within other areas of Mr. Brown’s programming, video-taped observations and field notes were audited to identify the texts and tasks where reading was involved in the various curriculum areas. The findings are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Reading texts and tasks in Mr. Brown’s class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/teacher</th>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Teacher demonstrations/math problems on black/whiteboard, Graphs, Year 5 &amp; 7 tests, Benchmark tests, Own notebooks, Calculators, Clock, Fingers, Rulers</td>
<td>Silent reading, Read and write answers, Calculate answers, Work collaboratively, Play games – follow instructions and solve problems, Practice test taking, Teacher write solving on board, Child write solving on board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mr. Brown)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Teacher instructions/questions on blackboard, Own notebooks</td>
<td>Read silently, Copy information, Discuss information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mr. Green)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOSE</td>
<td>Teacher instructions/questions on blackboard, Assessment task criteria sheet, Teacher demonstration of text layout, Brochure, Own notebooks, Google, Online texts e.g. CIA World Book website</td>
<td>Read silently, Search and locate relevant information via Google, Cutting and pasting relevant information from web text to word document, Represent understanding in word and pictorial formats, Construct project/chart using found info and scrapbooking techniques, Take home criteria sheets – parent to sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mr. Brown)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOTE – Japanese</td>
<td>Teacher demonstrations/ instructions/questions on blackboard, Maps, Cards, Worksheets, Japanese-English conversion tables, Pictorial depictions for countries, Own notebooks</td>
<td>Copy into own books, Match Japanese-English, Write missing info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Miss J)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Teacher instructions/questions on blackboard, Musical terms and notations on blackboard, Song words, Sheet music</td>
<td>Read silently, Read text on board, Write in notebooks, Read music and play instrument, Read music and sing, Read song words and sing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mrs. H)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Teacher instructions on blackboard, Scrapbook guidesheets, Magazines</td>
<td>Locate relevant letters, words and pictures, Replicate guides sheet layouts, Select layout, Follow instructions, Construct artworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mr. Green)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPE</td>
<td>Not observed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Modules – text with instructions about editing using particular skill</td>
<td>Type up text, Edit text using specific skill, Print out and submit to teacher for marking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mr. Brown)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Ed</td>
<td>Not observed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Report cards</td>
<td>Read silently, Identify 2 personal learning goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mr. Brown)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The audit showed reading was an element of all content areas. Reading was conducted silently in most areas. Reading primarily involved engaging with print-based texts, though there was some evidence of web-based texts in use. Reading was used for a range of purposes, although the main purposes seemed to be to locate pertinent information and to use reading to inform the actions to be taken. A contrast to this
occurred within the LOTE context, where reading involved matching English to Japanese words and/or symbols, and vice versa.

The following exemplifies Mr. Brown’s attention to reading in areas other than those designated as literacy sessions.

As Mr. Brown roamed around the room watching students doing a mathematics’ benchmark test, from time to time, he emphasised the role of reading in working out mathematical problems:

Someone’s not reading the question properly.

Read the question.

The other [section] has a whole lot of words where you have to be able to read the question. I’m going to pick the questions out and we’re going to read them together. You might put in other words that make sense to you and then you can attempt to answer the question. The word problems a lot of us don’t know what they’re asking. (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 11 October 2005)

Mr. Brown identified reading as affecting students’ capacity to do mathematical problems successfully. He explained that “just one little word in the problem” could cause difficulties for students (Appendix G, Audio-taped discussion, Turn 2, 11 October 2005). He further elaborated, “it’s the language of maths, they don’t understand that it has its own language” (Turn 4). Mr. Brown’s concern about students not understanding the mathematical words they read reflected in his teaching. What constitutes reading in mathematics lessons was ensuring students understood the meanings of words in mathematical problems. To try and assist with this, Mr. Brown provided a high level of guidance and support.

Observations revealed reading in mathematics lessons was about meaning making of the numbers and words written on teacher-provided print materials and teacher-written notations on the whiteboard; copying and ensuring a match between teacher-written items and one’s own work, and comparing one’s own work with one or more peers and with teacher-written notations on the whiteboard to ensure accurate problem-solving and answers. In summary, reading in mathematics lessons comprised matching, meaning making, achieving accuracy, and self-monitoring.
In summary, Mr. Green’s account of reading is that it is:

- timetabled (timetable; verified by researcher’s observation)
- a regular event (timetable; claim verified by researcher’s observation)
- a familiar routine (discussion; verified by researcher’s observation)
- about groups (timetable; discussion; claim verified by researcher’s observation)
- about rotations (timetable; discussion; claim verified by researcher’s observation)
- about taking turns (audio; field notes; verified by child's comment and researcher observation)
- about using teacher-provided texts (audio; students’ comments; verified by researcher observation)
- about using teacher-constructed materials (discussion; audio; field notes; verified by child’s comment; verified by researcher observation)
- facilitated and supported by adults (teacher/teacher aide) (discussion; audio; video; verified by child’s comment; verified by researcher observation)
- about attaining accuracy (discussion; students’ workbooks; researcher observation)
- an individualistic and/or collaborative venture (discussion; audio; video; verified by researcher observation)
- conducted aloud in reading groups (audio; verified by researcher observation)
- conducted silently primarily (audio; video; verified by researcher observation)
- “interrelated” with writing (discussion; verified by students’ workbooks and students’ workbooks; researcher observation)
- an individualistic and/or collaborative venture (discussion; audio; video; verified by researcher observation)
- conducted aloud in reading groups (audio; verified by researcher observation)
- conducted silently primarily (audio; video; verified by researcher observation)
- “interrelated” with writing (discussion; verified by students’ workbooks and researcher observation)
- about researching – reading to learn (discussion; verified by students’ work and researcher observation)
- about studying genre (discussion; verified by researcher observation)
- about answering teacher-prepared/provided questions (audio; video; researcher observation)
- about reconstructing understandings in oral and/or written formats (discussion; audio; video; verified by students’ work and researcher observation)
- about meaning making (video; audio; verified by researcher observation)
• about matching – child’s work to teacher’s; picture to information (audio; video; teacher comment; verified by students’ work and researcher observation)
• integrated with other curriculum areas (video; researcher’s observation)
• about following rules (video; researcher observation)
• about using a dictionary for meaning making (discussion; video; verified by students’ work and researcher observation)
• supports syntactic knowledge development (discussion; verified by researcher observation)
• marked by teacher/peer (discussion; audio; verified by students’ comments and researcher observation)

The following section explores how students in Mr. Brown’s class defined reading.

**What constitutes reading: What students’ perspectives suggested.**

Mr. Brown’s students described what they perceived constitutes reading giving their opinions, recounting personal experiences and taking and describing photographs of texts they read. What resulted were accounts describing reading at home and school.

Students’ accounts of what constitutes reading were sorted into four categories: reading as a content area, reading as learning, reading as meaning making, and reading as an emotive experience. These categories show the range of ideas students held regarding reading.

*Reading as a content area.*

The first category positions reading as a content area.

Claire wrote that she would, “discribe (sic) reading as a subject because (sic) you use it in every subject” (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005). Claire was the only child in Mr. Brown’s group to identify reading as a content area. In defining reading as a subject, Claire also acknowledged its usage within each curriculum area; matching the cross curriculum approach to reading employed by Mr. Brown.

*Reading as learning.*

The second category recognises reading as a mode for learning. In email communications, Jake, Claire and Kari identified reading as being associated with learning.
Jake wrote, “Everyone gets a turn at reading … [and] shares their comments and you learn when you read” (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005). His description of reading as involving taking turns exemplified how reading occurred within Reading Groups. In this timetabled event, students took turns at reading aloud the text provided by Mr. Brown, and then responded to the questions that accompanied the text (e.g., Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 2, 3 October 2005). His remark, “everyone shares their comments”, matches the way in which students discussed potential answers to the provided questions indicating the learning in this session to be of a collaborative nature. Jake also associated reading with learning when he commented that “you learn when you read” and when he stated that he thought “some people are bad at reading but they have to learn” (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005). Jake recognised reading as a way of learning information and something that people had to learn how to do.

Like Jake, Kari recognised reading as something that people have to learn how to do. This was evidence in her comment, “I think reading is fun but it only occurs when some thing visual is in front of you and that’s how you learn to read” (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005). She linked this learning with seeing “something visual”.

Taking a different stance on how reading helps people, Claire stated, “reading would help you with your writing and how to maybe spell the right words so you can look things up in the dictionary” (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005). To Claire, reading was a mode of learning things that could be applied to writing situations. She specifically identified how reading a dictionary helped a person (“you”) know how to spell words accurately. If there were other ways in which Claire perceived reading helped with writing, it was not evident within this email communication or other discussions held with her. Claire’s recognition of the link between reading and writing reflects the process involved in the spelling activities conducted in class and as homework. In this sense, Claire’s definition of reading mirrors an element of Mr. Brown’s program.

One of Claire’s photographs of what she read at school shows a dictionary and thesaurus sitting on her desk (Figure 16). She said she took this photograph “because they help us learn and all that” (Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, Turn 20, 6 July 2005). She elaborated: “when I am looking for a certain type of word it helps me like how to understand it and that” (Turn 22). Claire recognised the
dictionary and thesaurus to be tools that enabled her and other students to learn words and their meanings.

Figure 16. Claire’s photograph of her dictionary and thesaurus sitting on her desk

In defining reading as learning, each student presented a related, but different message. In most instances, these messages matched school reading experiences, with learning to read and reading to learning being identified as two different ways in which reading was associated with learning.

Reading as meaning making.
The third category associates reading with meaning making.

Kari said, “Reading is not just about words it means something”. In this comment, she associated reading with meaning-making and, therein, provided a definition of reading to learn. Kari also recognised that students needed to attend to a word’s meaning if they were experiencing any difficulties in solving a Spelling Sequencing task. She explained, “If you have trouble getting the sentence, you have to get the dictionary, look up the word and the dictionary meaning will help you” (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, Turn 79, 7 June 2005). Underlying this is the idea that if a word’s meaning was known, the task was achievable without support.

Joe also associated meaning-making with the Spelling Sequencing task. He recognised the task as requiring students to use the pieces to form a sentence and to read to “see if it makes sense” (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, Turn 6, 4 October 2005; Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 2, 4 October 2005).
However, Claire linked meaning-making to the spelling homework tasks. One of Claire’s photographs (Figure 17) shows a Spelling Activity task which involved placing words in alphabetical order, identifying the syllables in each word, and locating the dictionary meanings of each word. In describing how it was relevant to reading, Claire stated, “We kind of like read the dictionary meanings and all that and it helps us make bigger sentences” (Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 2 August 2005).

Figure 17. Claire’s photograph of her Reading Notebook showing a page of work completed for Spelling Activities

In Claire’s next photograph (Figure 18), words with their dictionary meanings and sentences using the spelling words have been written in her book. She explained that, “We just had to write them down so when we get our vocabulary test that we know what they mean” (Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 2 August 2005). Although there are a number of graphophonic exercises to be done on the given words, of key significance to Claire was gaining an understanding of the meaning of these words.

Figure 18. Claire’s photograph of the next page of her Spelling work
Reading elicits an affective response.

The fourth and final category positions reading as invoking an affective response.

This view of reading was held by Kari, Jake and Shay:

- “I think reading is fun” (Appendix N, Email, Kari, 26 September 2005)
- “It's a fun activity” (Appendix N, Email, Jake, 6 October 2005)
- “I think it is great” (Appendix N, Email, Shay, 27 September 2005)

Bethany however held a very different view of reading:

I would describe reading as booooooooooooooooooring!!!!!!!!!! (Appendix N, Email, Bethany, 6 October 2005)

These students identified reading as eliciting an affective response. While in three instances, the response was positive, Bethany shows this was not always the case.

In summary, students’ views of what constitutes reading at school reflected some elements of what constitutes reading in Mr. Brown’s program. There were, however, some differences between students’ perspectives and Mr. Brown’s perspectives as well as differences between students’ definitions of what constitutes reading.

The next section examines parents’ perspectives on what constitutes reading. The parents of students in Mr. Brown’s class are involved in this analysis.

**What constitutes reading: What parents’ perspectives suggested.**

Interviews were conducted with three parents who were able to meet with me at the school. Two of these parents were the mother and father of Emma in Mr. Brown’s group and Dwayne in Mr. Green’s group. The interviews focused on gaining insights from these parents about what their child/ren read within home and community contexts. In addition, parents’ views about reading were sought. For those parents who were unable to meet with me, I sent home a questionnaire listing the key questions from the interviews. Two parents from Mr. Brown’s group responded via this method. The following elucidates the findings from these two data sources.

Within focused discussions and the questionnaire responses, all parents commented on the kinds of texts that their child preferred to read. Their responses also indicated that a child’s reading preference was not always viewed by their parent as an appropriate text to be reading. In addition, parents revealed features of reading that they
considered to be important. In the following, responses from four parents in Mr. Brown’s group are presented. These are the parents of Emma, Wayne, Jay and Simon.

What Emma’s parents suggested.

At interview, Emma’s mother, Debra said:

Emma is more of a book reader, she reads lots of books, like y know she’s the main book reader in our family out of the four students it is Emma. She does all the reading and if a newsletter comes home, she sits at the kitchen thing and reads the newsletter so everyone hears it. Or in the car on the way home. So Emma is the main reader. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 4, 12 October 2005)

Emma is more into story books (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 23, 12 October 2005)

Emma is identified by her mother as having a preference for reading books, in particular story books. This claim is confirmed by Emma’s photographs of things she reads at home (Figure 19). All of the books she photographed were picture storybooks. This might lead to the impression that these were the only texts Emma read at home. However, accompanying her photographs, Emma wrote, “I also read lyrics to song & magazines [but] these were not able to be photographed” (Appendix M, Written description of photographs).

Figure 19. Emma’s photographs of items she read at home (Appendix M)
Both Emma and Debra stated that Emma read regularly. Emma also acknowledged reading was a regular practice: “I read almost every night before I go to bed” and “I read because I enjoy it & it puts me to sleep” (Appendix M, Photographs and written descriptions). The inclusion of “almost” suggests that reading did not happen every night. What stopped Emma from reading every night is not explained in her account. What is known is that when she read, Emma found it to be pleasurable and relaxing.

Debra clarified that reading was a nightly event, as long as Emma and her siblings went to bed before 8.30pm. She explained the rules associated with reading at night:

> But if they go to bed after 8.30pm, there is no reading that’s how it works. Bed between 8-8.30 you can read, but if you go to bed after 8.30 there is no more reading and they know that. So if there is a particular book they really want to finish or read they will say at 8.00 we are going to bed now to read that book. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 19, 12 October 2005)

In the event that Emma went to bed before 8.30pm, there was time to read. If she went to bed later than this, there wasn’t. This was a rule mandated by her parents.

Emma and her brother Dwayne were expected to listen to their little brother read. Debra explained their responsibilities in regard to this:

> Emma and Dwayne it’s their job. Henry brings home a home reader every afternoon. It is their job to sit down with him, because I don’t have time doing all those other things. So it is their job to do the home reader with him and they will go through it one or two times. They will tell me if he had trouble with that book or that book was really too easy for him. They do the comment and they sign the thing. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 15, 12 October 2005)

Although her little brother had to read every afternoon, sharing this “job” meant Emma only had to listen to her brother read several days a week. Responsibility for monitoring and reporting on her younger brother’s reading was part of the requirements of this job.

In describing Emma and her reading, Debra commented:

> Emma is very independent and I think it is her reading is why she is in the top class. I have always thought that. Because she has always had an interest in reading and that, she has learnt a lot from reading. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 60, 12 October 2005)

The characteristic of independent is associated with Emma’s successful performance as a reader at school. Her independence and success as a reader are attributed to Emma’s
interest in reading and what she had learnt from reading. The attention to Emma’s preferences in texts to read and her interest in reading sounded like a reiteration of Debra’s belief in catering for children’s interests:

If you can find what interest your child – when I was growing up it was horses so I wouldn’t read anything else except for my mum and dad would buy me this book Horse and Hound, no, Horse and Hoof and I would be like, glued to it madly. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 25, 12 October 2005)

She drew upon her own historical experiences when explaining how identifying a child’s interest leads to engagement in large amounts of reading. But it is more than interests that were referred to when Emma’s father, Neville described Emma and her reading: “she is an information gatherer. She will read something and it just seems to sit, she doesn’t lose it” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 53, 12 October 2005).

It is Emma’s capacity to learn from reading and to retain and recall this information at a later date that is considered by her father to be significant. Her mother concurred with his judgment, stating:

She sticks a lot of information in and records it very well. I think that is why she has done well at school you see, she is only 10 years old and she is in the senior class. So I think that is probably why, she has a really good recall of information. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 54, 12 October 2005)

For Emma, what constitutes reading at home was using print-based books primarily for entertainment and relaxation purposes. To her parents, Emma learns from her reading and is able to recall this information readily.

Debra explained that sometimes Emma experienced difficulties with her reading:

When Emma is reading, she will come out and says “I don’t understand this word”. Whereas we then tell her and we’ll explain to her. And if I don’t know the meaning, together we will go and get a dictionary. And I will use that word in a difference sentence to what she is reading so she can compare. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 132, 12 October 2005)

The problem was identified as Emma not understanding the meaning of a particular word. To address this issue, Debra worked with Emma to locate the meaning in a dictionary and then to know how it could be used in sentences. The focus of this support was on Emma gaining an understanding of the meaning of the word in isolation and its use in sentences.
A dictionary also was used by Emma and Dwayne to complete homework tasks. Debra and Neville explained that their children worked together to do their school homework (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turns 78 to 86, 12 October 2005). They had negotiated with their teachers (Mr. Brown – Emma; Mr. Green – Dwayne) to be able to do their homework on their home computer, but they still used a dictionary to locate meanings for the words provided by their teacher. Neville explained Emma’s use of the dictionary for this task:

Yeah Emma will come home and she will use our dictionary to do a lot of the meanings. She will write all the words out – and I don’t know why she uses our dictionary, it’s an old one that all the pages are falling out (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 96, 12 October 2005).

Debra also recalled that at one point, their homework involved reading the newspaper:

There were newspaper articles they had to do. Every Monday they had to bring in an article from the newspaper. I think they were studying disasters, fires, flooding, things like that. So they would have to go – because we don’t buy the paper – get the two local papers we get during the week and they would have to find an article on man-made and natural disasters and they would have to read that, cut it out and they would talk about it on the Monday or Tuesday. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 92, 12 October 2005)

This homework task assumed all families would have access to newspapers. However, Emma’s family did not buy newspapers so Emma had to use the free community papers delivered each week to their home. Since these papers concentrate solely on local community events, the potential for Emma to access information pertinent to the topic being studied at school would have been minimal.

What constitutes reading for Emma was engaging with print-based texts for a range of personal, familial and school-related purposes. Reading was for pleasure, relaxation and learning. Reading was a regular practice fueled by Emma’s interest and reinforced by parental expectations.

What Wayne’s mother suggested.

At interview, Wayne’s mother, Jenny stated:

well he likes he reads a lot of Enid Blyton. He likes that kind of thing um he reads um ah like mysteries he likes that His sister reads a lot of Nancy Drew so he likes to read that kind of he doesn’t read the Nancy Drew but he likes those Hardy Boys ones that he likes to read those kind of things he likes to read a lot of things about like travel things he really … They just did a project on um he did his on oh here you go he just showed to me and handed it in anyway it’s a travel traveling all about a country so he likes that sort of thing he likes reading about traveling and um what else (laughed) that’s a fair bit. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 14, 19 October 2005)
Jenny identified Wayne as reading a lot and reading a lot of things. In this, the frequency and amount of reading that Wayne engaged in at home were emphasised.

Jenny also stipulated his preference was for reading books, primarily Enid Blyton, Hardy Boys, mysteries and anything on travel. While reading the novels and mysteries may have been for entertainment, reading about travel seems more likely to be about gathering information. When I queried if Wayne did other kinds of reading, his mother replied: “he does quite a bit of looking for things on the internet” (Turn 24), and “that’s not really reading books is it” (Turn 26).

Wayne’s interest in reading mysteries is shown in the photographs he took of reading he did at home. His first photograph was of an Enid Blyton book called “Five on Kirrin Island again” (Figure 20).

![Figure 20. Wayne’s photograph of a book he read at home](image)

Wayne wrote about this photograph, “The “Famous Five” book is situated on my bookshelf. At the moment I read it one too 3 times a week. I read it because I belive (sic) it’s inturesting (sic) & I like mystery books.” (Appendix M, Photograph and written description)

Jenny also associated reading with books. My queries lead to her recognising reading as being able to occur on web-based texts. Jenny commented:

> He does quite a bit of that. Like he might look up research mobile phones and then and then he’s just gone into all this research on bank accounts cause he just wanted to open a bank account. So he spent days and days looking up Commonwealth bank accounts, ANZ bank accounts and all comparing. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 30, 19 October 2005)
Researching on the internet involved Wayne in reading for information and comparing his findings in order to address a personal need. As in book reading, Wayne is identified as having spent a considerable amount of time in undertaking this reading.

When I queried whether the reading of web-based texts was solely driven by Wayne’s interests or needs, his mother replied:

I think he’s driven by his own but sometimes I say oh look that up on eBay or something and he’ll go and look and when we were looking for a new car of to buy oh not a new car a second hand car and he went and looked up a particular car on eb (sic) you know what eBay. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 44, 19 October 2005)

Wayne’s reading of web-based texts was influenced by personal and familial needs.

Further discussion with Jenny revealed Wayne was “not a big magazine reader” (Turn 30) and that he occasionally got comics from the community library:

I am just trying to think. I know what he gets, sometimes he gets comics from the library like um, what is the name of that comic – Tin Tin, he sometimes get Tin Tin comics, those sort of things. If we go to the library he might bring something home like that or sometimes he’s got some of those Simpsons comic things home. (Turn 32)

Noticing that Jenny raised her eyebrows when speaking about the Simpsons’ comic, I asked her about this behaviour. She replied:

Oh I don’t know I just happen one book he brought home from the library had a talk like Bart Simpson on it or something and I thought oh gosh (Turn 34)

I thought it was a bit rubbishy. But we are good in our family, because there is so many students, you are always having to deal with people’s attitudes towards others and being kind and speaking correctly and so, yeah. I don’t think they pick up too much from that because they pretty know what the standards are within the home so yeah. And he is a good boy. (Turn 36)

It’s rotten the way they talk to each other on those Simpsons (Turn 40).

Jenny identified the Simpsons’ comics as “a bit rubbishy” because it provided an inappropriate model of how to relate to other people. It did not match how she wanted her children to behave.

In describing the kinds of things Wayne got out of the library, Jenny referred to research required for a school assignment:

Brazil – that’s what his project was on. Brazil yes because he kept on getting lots of books about Brazil from the library he had piles of them because I kept
getting the overdue notices. So he did quite a lot of research and reading into that. (Turn 44)

This is the only instance where Jenny mentioned Wayne’s reading at home as being associated with school work. Here, she again reported that he spent a considerable amount of time reading. In this instance, Wayne read to gather information pertinent to his assignment topic. This saw him reading to learn.

Jenny also reported that Wayne “plays the pianos, so that’s his piano music reading and his theory” (turn 50). She stated that this required him to do “quite a lot of practicing” (turn 52). In reading piano music and theory, Wayne again read to learn as he learnt new information and practised his developing piano-playing abilities.

At interview, Jenny identified Wayne as reading a variety of texts, but demonstrating preferences for some texts (mystery novels and web-based texts) over others. Her initial responses focused on print-based materials for reading, but with some prompting she extended her account to include web-based materials and items such as music. In every account, Wayne’s mother mentioned reading as an event that Wayne engaged in for long periods of time and regularly.

In his photographs of things he read at home, Wayne showed a novel that matched his mother’s report of his interest in reading mysteries. However, he also captured images of items not mentioned by his mother. In describing two of his photographs (Figures 21 and 22 respectively), Wayne stated:

Item is the real estate. It's usually on the table and when finished it's in the bin. I read it in the morning once a week when the paper comes. My mum read it & I read it because it's more like some relaxing time for me. (Appendix M, Photograph and written description)

The item is weekly Junk mail read it as a relaxing time sitting on the table or in the bin. My sister brother dad & mum read it also. (Appendix M, Photograph and written description)

Figure 21. Wayne’s photograph of real estate item he read at home
Both of the texts that Wayne photographed were ones he had read for relaxation. These texts were disposable in that they could be read and then thrown away.

What constitutes reading for Wayne was an activity that involved the use of print-based materials for entertainment and relaxation purposes, and web-based texts for locating information to address personal and familial needs. Reading was an activity that was regularly engaged for long periods of time.

*What Jay’s mother suggested.*

Jay’s mother, Teresa listed the range of texts that Jay read at home and in the community: “newspapers, novels by Paul Jennings, TV – news, surfing & football magazines, Internet research” and “signs, clothing labels, advertising logo’s, prices, scores, products” (Appendix V, Responses to items 1 and 2 on questionnaire). The only items that she considered inappropriate for Jay to read were “some surfing magazines”. She did not explain why.

Jay’s photographs of items he read at home matched his mother’s account of his reading of surfing magazines and Paul Jennings’ novels (Figure 23).
Teresa stated the elements that were important to reading included “comprehension, learning correct spelling of words, general knowledge acquisition, styles of writing & expression” (Appendix V, Response to item 4 on questionnaire). Her response showed that she considered reading to involve meaning-making, learning from reading, and using reading to understand and inform writing.

Jay’s understanding of the purposes for reading was similar in most aspects to that of his mother. He stipulated that he read particular items “because they are interesting, to get better at comprehension and to learn about things and how to write a descriptive story” (Appendix M, Photograph and written description). In only one aspect, interest, did Jay’s view of reading differ from his mother’s perspective. In this, he recognised the personal value of reading.

*What Simon’s mother suggested.*

Simon’s mother, Melissa stated that she had seen her son reading a range of texts at home including “newspapers, magazines, books, instructions, homework, [and] computer” (Appendix V, Response to item 1 on questionnaire). His photographs showed he read newspapers, surfing magazines and take-away food order forms at home (Figure 24). Melissa said that Simon also read “signs, [and] maps (he is pretty good on a road map)” and “has also be[en] able to spot a toilet sign from an early age (nearly drove me mad)” (Appendix V, Response to item 2 on questionnaire). She specified “anything that was “adult material” as unsuitable reading materials.

![Figure 24. Photographs of items Simon read at home](image)

She originally thought “enjoyment was the most important thing, however, [Simon had] slowly changed this view” (Appendix V, Response to item 4 on questionnaire). There was a difference between her previous and present views of what was important
in reading. She indicated that her son was the reason for this change in perspective, and stipulated that she now considered “understanding what your (sic – you’re) reading” as being important to reading (Appendix V, Response to item 4 on questionnaire). In discussing his reading at home, Simon showed a preference for reading for information. He read the newspaper to “I read it to find out what’s been happening in sport” and surfing magazines “to look at results and competitions’ (Appendix M, Photographs and written description).

Melissa recognised Simon as having above-average ability in reading (Appendix V, Response to item 3 on questionnaire). She also said that he had “always had a good ability and [had] learnt “easily” the skills” associated with reading (Appendix V, Response to item 8 on questionnaire). Although she recognised his reading ability and skills as being above-average, Melissa perceived that he could “develop better reading habits” (Appendix V, Response to item 3 on questionnaire). Also, despite “enjoy[ing] reading books when he was much younger”, she was concerned that he didn’t “have a passion for reading ... [and didn’t] read for pleasure” now (Appendix V, Response to item 5 on questionnaire). Melissa perceived there was room for improve in Simon’s reading.

Melissa associated reading with having ability, skills and habits. Despite having indicated that she had had a change in beliefs about what was important in reading, her comments showed that lack of reading enjoyment underpinned her concerns. This suggests that her beliefs had not shifted totally.

What Markers Show What Constitutes Reading in a Classroom Setting?
To answer the first research question, I drew upon participants’ comments, artifacts they used and observations of them engaging in reading. In the above sections, I unpacked the data sources. In this section, a summary of each participant’s account of what constitutes reading is collated with pertinent other data. It is organised into three sections: teacher, students and parents, providing summaries of their accounts and enabling comparisons and contrasts to be made.

What constitutes reading: Teachers’ accounts suggested.
In this section, the professional accounting by Mr. Green and Mr. Brown as to what constitutes reading in their middle years’ class are compared and drawn together to identify what constitutes reading in their shared classroom space.
Shared elements are evident in the way both teachers position reading as a regular class practice that primarily involves engaging silently with, making meaning of, answering questions about and working individually and/or collaboratively with teacher-selected and provided print-based materials. Web-based materials are used for research purposes. Reading-to-learn and reconstructing what has been read in visual and/or written formats are prominent in both teachers’ conceptualisation of reading. Both teachers also associate reading with writing viewing these as complementary processes. Both see reading as being associated with the study and use of different genres. In addition, they both provide reading with its own space on their timetable and integrate it within other curriculum areas. For Mr. Green and Mr. Brown, what constitutes reading is similar in several aspects. However, there also are differences in how each of these teachers conceptualise reading.

The following outlines these differences. Mr. Green programs for reading to be a daily event while Mr. Brown has it timetabled as a regular one. Mr. Green reads to students, Mr. Brown doesn’t. Mr. Green views reading comprehension as involving different levels of thinking, while Mr. Brown sees it as attaining accuracy in making sense of a text. Mr. Brown also views reading as supporting syntactic knowledge development. Mr. Green establishes reading as a silent process, while Mr. Brown provides opportunities for reading silently and aloud. In the event of resource shortage, Mr. Green either changes the focus or makes copies of available texts, while Mr. Brown makes his own resources. Mr. Green grades students’ reading work by using 1-to-1 conferencing and viewing their written work. Mr. Brown marks students’ work taking note of accuracy and grammar aspects. These differences show reading to be a personal construct.

In summary, Mr. Green and Mr. Brown’s professional accounts show what constitutes reading in this middle years’ class is a multi-dimensional construct defined similarly in some aspects and differently in others. The complexity of these constructions is evident in their multi-layered attention to the characteristics of what it means to do reading and the kinds of texts that are read, as well as the ways in which reading competency is ascertained. Moreover, the analysis of each teacher’s perspective of reading reveals it was shaped by their experiences historically, socially and contextually.

These findings reveal the complexities administrators encounter when trying to establish shared understandings of reading and common ways of doing reading instruction in a class or school. Reading is not a singular or simple construct to define.
for these two teachers. For each teacher, reading was a multi-layered, multi-dimensional construct.

**What constitutes reading: Students’ accounts suggested.**

In this section, a summary of students’ accounts of reading as reported above is provided, accompanied by the data source/s (Table 5). Notations are added to signal where a finding matches elements of the teacher’s description of reading and the finding is verified by the researcher’s observations.

Table 5

_Students’ accounts of what constitutes reading_

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<tr>
<th>Students from Mr. Green’s group</th>
<th>Students from Mr. Brown’s group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What constitutes reading…</strong></td>
<td><strong>What constitutes reading…</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mark</strong></td>
<td><strong>Helen</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is…</td>
<td>It is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a subject (email; matched headings in Mr. Green’s timetable and school report card; verified by researcher observation)</td>
<td>- supported by teacher (audio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- an individualistic task (email; verified by researcher observation)</td>
<td>- marked by teacher (audio; matches how marking conducted by teacher; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- done at own pace (email; verified by researcher observation)</td>
<td>- marked by peer (audio; matches Spelling Sequencing being marked by peer; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- work = effort (email; similar to school report card heading)</td>
<td>- about using syntactic knowledge - capital letter and full stop (audio; field notes; matches Mr. Brown’s rules for task and attention to syntactic development; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- about understanding/meaning making (email; work samples; matches Mr. Green’s focus on comprehension; verified by researcher observation)</td>
<td>- conducted silently (field notes; video; matches how reading is primarily done in class; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- about reading about things you like/are interested in (‘likes reading about animals’) (video)</td>
<td>- sometimes conducted aloud (video; matches what is done in reading groups; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- easy or hard – involves a scale of difficulty (audio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shane</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kari</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is…</td>
<td>It is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a subject (email; matched headings in Mr. Green’s timetable and school report card; verified by researcher observation)</td>
<td>- about ‘seeing something visual’ (email)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- very boring – personally uninteresting, uninspiring and/or of little relevance</td>
<td>- pleasurable (email)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- about learning to read (email)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- about using a dictionary to locate word meanings (audio; matches work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Derrick
It is…
- assigned a particular time slot (email; matched teacher timetable heading; verified by researcher observation)
- a particular activity (email)
- a subject (implied in email)
- an individualistic task (implied in email; verified by researcher observation)
- using teacher-provided print-based texts – book and question sheet (email; verified by researcher observation)
- about reading things you like – ‘spiders’ (video)
- something that requires particular actions and effort by the individual
  - to problem solve

### Joe
It is…
- about using syntactic knowledge - capital letter and how you speak (audio; matches Mr. Brown’s attention to syntactic development; verified by researcher observation)
- about making sense/meaning making (audio; field note; matches Mr. Brown’s attention to meaning making; verified by researcher observation)
- conducted silently (audio; matches how reading is done primarily; verified by researcher observation)
- conducted aloud (audio; matches how reading is done in reading group; verified by researcher observation)
- about self monitoring and correcting (field notes; audio; verified by researcher observation)
- about gathering information by searching and researching on the internet (audio; matches Mr. Brown’s attention to researching and SOSE task requirements; verified by researcher observation)
- personally relevant at times (audio)
- about being syntactically correct (audio; work samples; matches Mr. Brown’s attention to syntactic development; verified by researcher observation)

### Observations
- of value to all students (email)
- something you do = performance (email)
- something that “helps” students = affects individuals (email)
- about answering questions (email; matches work samples; verified by researcher observation)
- about using items of interest - likes animals mostly crocodiles and sharks (audio)
- linked to writing (audio; video; matches work samples and teacher report of reading-writing link; verified by researcher observation)
- about meaning making (email; audio; work samples; matches Mr. Brown’s attention to meaning making; verified by researcher observation)
- conducted silently (video; field notes; matches how reading is primarily done in class; verified by researcher observation)
- about comparing (video; verified by researcher observation)
- about self monitoring and correcting (audio; video; verified by researcher observation)
- about being syntactically correct (audio; work samples; matches Mr. Brown’s attention to syntactic development; verified by researcher observation)
- hard at times – scale of difficulty (audio)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christopher</th>
<th>Jake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>It is…</strong></td>
<td><strong>It is…</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a daily event (audio; matches heading in Mr. Green’s timetable; verified by researcher observation)</td>
<td>- an activity (email)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- an activity (audio)</td>
<td>- about taking turns (email; audio; field notes; matches how reading group is run; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- for 50 minutes (audio)</td>
<td>- about sharing comments (email; audio; matches how reading group is run; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- about answering questions (audio; verified by work samples and researcher observation)</td>
<td>- about learning to read (email)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- about responding to different types of questions (audio; matches Bloom’s taxonomy used by Mr. Green; verified by work samples and researcher observation)</td>
<td>- about learning information (email)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- about using print-based texts (photographs; audio; matched theme studied; verified by researcher observation)</td>
<td>- pleasurable (email)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- about using items of interest – surfing magazines (photograph; audio; verified by researcher observation)</td>
<td>- about using syntactic knowledge - capital letter and full stop (audio; field notes; matches Mr. Brown’s attention to syntactic development; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- for entertainment and information purposes (audio)</td>
<td>- conducted aloud (audio; email; matches how done in reading group; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- marked by the teacher (audio; verified by work samples and researcher observation)</td>
<td>- about self monitoring (audio; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- done independently (audio; verified by researcher observation)</td>
<td>- attaining accuracy (audio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- boring– personally uninteresting, uninspiring and/or of little relevance (email)</td>
<td>- about having a preference for picture books (audio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- hard – difficulty level (email)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lisa</th>
<th>Shay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>It is…</strong></td>
<td><strong>It is…</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- conducted daily at home (photographs; written description)</td>
<td>- conducted silently (field notes; video; matches how done primarily; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- used to relax (photograph; written description)</td>
<td>- pleasurable (email)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- for enjoyment (photograph; written description)</td>
<td>- about self monitoring (field notes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- about using print-based materials (photographs, audio; verified by researcher observation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- about using items of interest - preference for adventure and mystery books (email; photographs; audio)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- about using special items – meaningful (photographs; written description)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- used to compile summaries (audio; work samples; matched Mr. Green's explanation of reading task; verified by researcher observation)
- done independently (audio; verified by researcher observation)
- sometimes a shared experience with mother (written description)
- linked to writing (audio; email; matched Mr. Green's explanation; verified by researcher observation)
- used to gather information (email)
- used to self monitor and correct own writing (written descriptions)
- used to monitor and regulate behaviour (photographs; audio)
- used to monitor and regulate library borrowing (photograph; audio)
- used to inform and regulate own timetable (photograph; audio)
- used as prompt to remember (photograph; audio)

**Tess**

It is…

- linked to writing (video)
- done silently (video)
- Difficulty level (email)
- about trying = effort (email)

**Claire**

It is…

- a subject (email)
- in every curriculum area (email; matches teacher’s cross curriculum approach; verified by researcher observation)
- linked to writing and spelling (email; photo; audio; matches Mr. Brown’s linking of reading and writing; verified by researcher observation)
- about word building (audio)
- about gaining multiple meanings of the same word (audio)
- about using a dictionary to locate word meanings (photograph, audio; email; work samples; matches teacher requirements in some tasks; verified by researcher observation)
- about understanding the meaning of words (audio; work samples; verified by researcher observation)
- about learning (audio)
- about understanding/meaning making (audio; work samples; matches Mr. Brown’s attention to meaning making; verified by researcher observation)
- about seeking peer or teacher support when needed (audio)
- hard sometimes – scale of difficulty
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ryan</th>
<th>Emma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is…</td>
<td>It is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• linked to writing – use of class and home reading of poetry to inform his writing (audio; verified by work sample and researcher observation)</td>
<td>• a regular activity at home (written description)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• about particular events (email)</td>
<td>• conducted daily at home (written description)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• happening at particular school times (email)</td>
<td>• pleasurable (written description)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• about using items of interests – long boarding and surfing (audio)</td>
<td>• relaxing (written description)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• applicable to a lot of situations (audio)</td>
<td>• conducted silently (video; matches how done primarily; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• about having a preference for picture story books (email; photographs; audio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• about using a range of print-based texts – picture story books, song lyrics, magazines (photographs; written description)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ellen</strong></td>
<td><strong>Bethany</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is…</td>
<td>It is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• related to library (photographs; audio)</td>
<td>• about gathering information by research (audio; matches SOSE task requirements; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• used to gather information (photographs; audio; email)</td>
<td>• about gathering information searching on the internet (audio; work sample; matches SOSE task requirements; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• used to regulate behaviour (photograph; audio)</td>
<td>• boooooooooooooooring – personally uninteresting, uninspiring and/or of little relevance (email)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• used for pleasure (email)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• used in leisure time (audio)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• about using items of interest - likes jokes and mysteries (self); acknowledge others like different things e.g. surfing (video)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• using print-based texts (photographs; audio)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a “life-long gift” that affects present and future (email)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• linked to spelling and writing (email)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sometimes conducted secretly (video)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fraser</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wayne</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is…</td>
<td>It is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• about learning to think (email)</td>
<td>• conducted regularly (written description; photograph; timetable; verified by researcher observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• about learning information (email)</td>
<td>• about having text preferences - likes mystery books (written description; photograph)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• affects people’s lives and improves them as a person (email)</td>
<td>• used to relax (written description; photographs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• about using items of interest - reads Star Wars books because he liked the movies (video)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• something to do to fill in time while waiting for a particular text or person (video; field notes; verified by)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| It is…
  - “the key to learning” (email)
  - always done in his spare time – leisure activity (email)
  - used to learn (email)
  - about using items of interest - interested in African wars but library doesn’t carry books on this topic (video; verified by researcher observation) | It is…
  - about searching internet (audio; matches SOSE task requirements)
  - about locating relevant information (audio; matches SOSE task requirements) |
| **Juliana** | **Dwayne** |
| It is…
  - about learning (email)
  - something that enables her to pursue her interests (email) | It is…
  - something he doesn’t do (video)
  - about books (video)
  - about using items of interest - surfing magazines (video)
  - using “best articles’ on familiar places; surfing, surfers and skating (video) |
| **Maya** | **Liz** |
| It is…
  - about gathering information (photograph; audio)
  - using the library computer to check books in and out (video) | It is…
  - a home event that benefits young students (email)
  - a tool to enabling future learning (email)
  - about understanding/meaning making (email)
  - about gathering information – to know; to learn (email)
  - employable to community reading situations (email) |
Table 5 provides a summary of data, from students in Mr. Green’s and Mr. Brown’s class groups, used to answer the first research question “What markers show what constitutes reading in a classroom setting?” Although this does not represent the full data set for students, it is a sub-set that provides comprehensive coverage of students’ accounting and enactments of reading. In the following, comparisons are made between students’ accounts and those of their teachers as to what constitutes reading.

Shared elements are evident between students’ accounts and those of their teachers. Echoes of teachers’ views of reading include being:

- conducted silently (Christopher and Tess in Mr. Green’s group; Helen, Kari, Joe and Shay in Mr. Brown’s group)
- conducted aloud (Helen, Joe and Jake in Mr. Brown’s group)
- about meaning making (Mark, Shane, Derrick, and Liz in Mr. Green’s group; Kari, Joe, and Claire in Mr. Brown’s group)
- about gathering information (Mark, Lisa, Ellen, Peter, Fraser, Maya and Liz in Mr. Green’s group; John, Kari, Jake and Bethany in Mr. Brown’s group)
- about answering questions (Shane and Christopher in Mr. Green’s group)
- about working individually (Mark and Derrick in Mr. Green’s group)
- about using teacher-provided print-based materials (Derrick and Lisa in Mr. Green’s group)
- about using web-based materials for research purposes (Kari and John in Mr. Brown’s group)
- linked to writing (Lisa, Tess, Ryan and Ellen in Mr. Green’s group; Kari and Claire in Mr. Brown’s group)

- a content area/subject (Mark, Shane, and Derrick in Mr. Green’s group; Claire in Mr. Brown’s group)

- integrated within other curriculum areas (Claire in Mr. Brown’s group)

- involving levels of difficulty (Mark, Christopher and Tess in Mr. Green’s group; Helen and Claire in Mr. Brown’s group), and

- about attaining accuracy (Derrick in Mr. Green’s group; Jake in Mr. Brown’s group).

These similarities emerged from having shared reading experiences within the classroom. This however does not account for the differences between individual students’ conceptualizations of reading and those of their peers or teacher. The following compares teachers’ and students’ conceptualisations of reading to discern the extent of similarities and differences.

Mr. Green programmed reading as a daily event but only Christopher recognised this. Meanwhile Mr. Brown timetabled it as a regular event which was not commented on by any of the students in his group.

Mr. Green reads to students, Mr. Brown doesn’t. No students mentioned being read to by their teacher.

Mr. Green views reading comprehension as involving different levels of thinking. This is reported by Christopher only but is evident in students’ work samples. Mark, Shane, Derrick and Liz in Mr. Green’s group identify reading as involving meaning making which is term used to refer to comprehension. Like Mr. Brown, Kari, Joe, and Claire referred to reading as a meaning making activity. Joe stressed making sense to be an important element of reading.

Mr. Brown portrayed reading as requiring students to attain accuracy in making sense of a text. Jake is the only child in Mr. Brown’s class who mentions accuracy as being important to reading.
Mr. Brown’s recognition of reading as supporting syntactic knowledge development is reflected in how Helen, Kari, Joe and Jake attend to and use syntactic knowledge to solve Spelling Sequence Tasks.

Mr. Green establishes reading as a silent process and Christopher identifies silent reading as occurring in silent reading time.

Mr. Brown provides opportunities for students to read silently and aloud. Observation records show students reading aloud in reading group rotation times and engaged silently in reading at other times. Helen, Kari, Joe and Shay in Mr. Brown’s group identify reading as occurring aloud, while Helen, Joe and Jake recognise reading as being conducted aloud.

In the event of resource shortage, Mr. Green either changes the focus or makes copies of available texts, while Mr. Brown makes his own resources. Derrick and Lisa identified that they read materials provided by Mr. Green. No mention is made of Mr. Brown providing reading materials.

Although Mr. Green stated that he graded students’ reading work by using 1-to-1 conferencing and viewing their written work, only Christopher mentioned that his reading work was marked by his teacher. Similarly, although Mr. Brown marks students’ work taking note of accuracy and grammar aspects, only Helen commented on reading work being marked by either the teacher or a peer.

Traces of teachers’ views of reading are evident within some individual students’ responses. Moreover, these similarities mirror how reading is done in various reading events in the classroom. These findings are to be expected from a community of learners who have shared experiences of reading. These students have been socialised into a particular way or ways of understanding and doing reading in their class.

However, this does not explain the differences that exist. It might be argued using a sub-set of students’ data has resulted in the differences. Instead the differences evident here are reflective of those of the full data set. It might be proposed that the complexity of reading and the different ways in which it is incorporated in the class program as well as recognition that reading is part of students’ lives beyond the classroom may account for the identified differences. Each child’s account of reading is selective in that it draws upon a one or more ways in which reading occurs in the class. As to what influences each child’s selection may be inferred but also may be
deduced from the researcher’s reflections. In reflection, the timing and type of data collection method enabled particular types of responses and information to be gathered. Each child’s account was influenced by the timing of the data collection, for example, he/she may have just been involved in a particular reading activity and therefore reported on what constitutes reading in that event. This is what happened when a child was asked by the researcher to explain what a particular reading task involved: for example, Spelling Sequence (Mr. Brown’s group), Reading (Mr. Brown’s group), and silent reading (Mr. Green’s and Mr. Brown’s groups). In addition, I noted that some data collection methods (email, photographs and accompanying audio or written responses) were more conducive to students sharing personal preferences and/or dislikes in regard to reading. By using a diverse range of data collection methods, students were provided with multiple opportunities to share their views of reading. As previously reported, some students participated in all data collection opportunities, while others participated randomly at their choice and/or as convenient to the teachers and the researcher.

Despite the limitations of the data collection, the findings presented provide comprehensive insights into what constitutes reading according to individual students in the class. By not being inclusive of all the ways in which reading occurs within the class, each child’s account provided a focused but limited perspective of what constitutes reading in the class. Moreover, it provides insights into how each child’s view of reading was shaped socially by their reading experiences. Together students’ accounts reveal reading in the class to be complex and multi-dimensional.

Students’ accounts also showed elements that were neither part of their teacher’s perspective of reading nor of classroom reading practices. The following outlines two examples that stand out as differing significantly to teachers’ accounts.

Mark, Shane, Derrick, Christopher, Lisa, Jack, Dwayne, Ryan and Juliana in Mr. Green’s class spoke of the items that they were interested in reading. Jack, Dwayne and Christopher indicated that what they were interested in reading was either not accommodated within the school library or not what was read in class. While silent reading time in Mr. Green’s class provided a validated time to read texts of one’s own choice, Fraser, Ellen and Sarah showed at times unauthorized texts were read secretively.
Students also presented their affective responses to reading. Lisa in Mr. Green’s group and Kari, Shay and Emma in Mr. Brown’s group defined reading as a pleasurable activity. Meanwhile, Shane and Christopher in Mr. Green’s group and Bethany in Mr. Brown’s group considered reading to be personally uninteresting, uninspiring and/or of little relevance.

These differences reveal reading to be an individualistically shaped entity. In so doing, it further affirms that reading cannot be explained adequately by a singular or simple definition. Furthermore, they show students actively construct their views of reading based upon their reading experiences and opinions of these. Students have not just been passive beings subjected to what their teachers consider to be reading. In defining reading in ways that do not align with their teacher’s view and in espousing particular affective responses, students reveal agency at work.

*What constitutes reading: Parents’ accounts suggested.*

This section provides a tabulated summary of each parent’s accounts (Table 6). Against each element of a parent’s account is recorded the similarities to the child’s and/or teacher’s definitions of reading.

Table 6

*Parents’ accounts of what constitutes reading*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents of students in Mr. Green’s group</th>
<th>Parents of students in Mr. Brown’s group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What constitutes reading…</td>
<td>What constitutes reading…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen’s mother (from written responses)</td>
<td>Emma’s parents (from interview)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is…</td>
<td>It is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• about understanding/meaning making (matches Mr. Green’s attention to meaning making and the comprehension heading in the School report card)</td>
<td>• about child having a preference for story books (matches Emma’s account)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• for pleasure (matches Ellen’s email comment)</td>
<td>• a regular activity (matches Emma’s account)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• about “reading well = confidence”</td>
<td>• a routine (matches Emma’s account of daily reading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• related to own experiences</td>
<td>• about meaning making (matches Mr. Brown’s attention to meaning making; aligns with “Comprehension” heading in School Report Card)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• about child having a preference for science fiction (does not match Ellen’s stated preferences)</td>
<td>• about supporting and monitoring young brother’s reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• about child using books, magazines and newspapers (print-based texts)</td>
<td>• about having responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• about child using labels, signs and advertising in the community</td>
<td>• about being interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• about interest leading to large amounts of reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Christopher's mother (from written responses)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wayne's mother (from interview)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is…</td>
<td>It is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ about using a variety of print-based texts (matches Christopher and Mr. Green's accounts)</td>
<td>▪ about child having a preference for reading books on mysteries (matches Wayne’s account) and travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ about using items of interest (matches Christopher’s account)</td>
<td>▪ about frequency of reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ for pleasure (matches Christopher’s account)</td>
<td>▪ about amount of reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ about understanding/meaning making (matches Mr. Green’s attention to meaning making and the comprehension heading in the School report card)</td>
<td>▪ about internet searching (matches Mr. Brown’s account of researching; matches SOSE assignment task requirements)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ about gathering information (matches notion of reading to learn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ about learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ about using to address personal needs and interests, and familial needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ used to practice and refine developing piano playing abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ about some texts not being appropriate (Simpson’s comic – “a bit rubbishy” and seen as inappropriate model of how to relate to other people)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Lisa’s mother (from interview)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Jay's mother (from written response)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is…</td>
<td>It is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ meaningful and purposeful for Lisa</td>
<td>▪ about comprehension/meaning making (matches Mr. Brown’s attention to meaning making; matches heading in School Report Card)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ about research of online texts for school-based purposes (matches Mr. Green’s account)</td>
<td>▪ about learning correct spelling of words (aligns with spelling homework)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ about child having preference for adventure books (matches Lisa’s account), story books and items about animals</td>
<td>▪ about general knowledge acquisition (matches notion of reading to learn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ about using print-based texts primarily (matches Mr. Green’s and Lisa’s accounts)</td>
<td>▪ about styles of writing (matches Mr. Brown’s attention to reading-writing links, and the studying of genres) and expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ about using special things - plaques and wall hangings with poetry (matches Lisa’s account)</td>
<td>▪ about some texts (some surfing magazines) not being seen appropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Fraser's mother (from interview)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Simon’s mother (from written response)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is…</td>
<td>It is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ about child preferring fantasy and computer game texts (matches researcher observation)</td>
<td>▪ about using a range of texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ about valuing real-world texts</td>
<td>▪ about valuing reading for enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ a regular planned event at home</td>
<td>▪ about child influencing parent view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ a routine</td>
<td>▪ about changing own values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ about now valuing reading for understanding about</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the following, I compare each parent’s perspective with that of their child and their child’s teacher to discern the similarities. In so doing, the differences become evident.

*What Ellen’s mother suggested.*
In most elements of her definition of reading, Ellen’s mother does not align with either Mr. Green or Ellen’s views of reading. The only element of reading that they all shared was the use of print-based texts. The only other point of similarity with Mr. Green’s perspective is when Ellen’s mother mentions meaning-making. This also aligns with the School Report Card heading “Comprehension”. Ellen and her mother share the view of reading being for pleasure. Beyond this, there are no other similarities in their perspectives. Although both Ellen and her mother mention Ellen’s preferences in reading, their reports do not concur. In relating her comments to her own experiences, Ellen’s mother constructs a historically-informed notion of reading.

*What constitutes reading: What Christopher’s mother suggested.*
All elements in Christopher’s mother’s definition of reading match Mr. Green’s and/or Christopher’s. Her comment about using a variety of print-based texts aligns with Mr. Green’s and Christopher’s perspectives of reading. Christopher and his mother have shared understandings about reading in their identification of it being based on interests and being done for pleasure. When she mentions reading as involving understanding, Christopher’s mother aligns with Mr. Green’s comment about
comprehension (meaning making) and the School Report Card heading “Comprehension”.

What Lisa’s mother suggested.
There are only two elements in Lisa’s mother’s account that matches how Mr. Green defines reading: researching using online texts and using print-based texts primarily. In discussing Lisa’s researching of online texts, her mother identified this as being conducted at home for school purposes. On this occasion, the boundaries between home and school are crossed. Using print-based texts is common to Lisa’s mother and Mr. Green, as well as with Lisa’s report of what constitutes reading. This is the only element that Lisa, her mother and Mr. Green agree. Lisa and her mother, however, agree on Lisa’s preference for reading adventure books and her reading of ‘special things’. In all other aspects, Lisa’s mother’s account does not align with Mr. Green or Lisa’s perspectives of reading.

What constitutes reading: What Fraser’s mother suggested.
Fraser’s mother presents two reading characteristics that are listed as headings on the School Report Card: expression and fluency. Recognition of her son preferring fantasy and computer game texts matched the researcher’s observations, while the use primarily of print-based texts is the only element that aligned with Mr. Green’s account. No elements in her account match her son’s perspective of reading.

What Emma parents suggested.
Within their accounts, Emma’s parents mirror Mr. Green’s attention to meaning making and align with the “comprehension” heading in the School Report Card. This is the only time that they match Mr. Brown’s account. Meanwhile, they align with Emma’s perspective of reading in several aspects: her preference for story books; identifying reading as a regular activity which is routinely engaged in. In all other aspects, their accounts differ from Emma and Mr. Brown’s views of reading.

What Wayne’s mother suggested.
Wayne’s mother agrees with her son’s account that he had a preference for reading books about mysteries. This is the only point in which Wayne and his mother concur. Her account however matches two elements Mr. Brown used to define reading: internet searching and about gathering information. Other elements of Wayne’s
mother’s ways of defining reading differ from Wayne’s and Mr. Brown’s accounts of reading.

**What Jay’s mother suggested.**
As no entries from Jay are used in answering this question, there is no potential to match his accounts with those of his mother. However, there is potential to compare her views with those of Mr. Brown. In doing this, the notion of reading being about gaining knowledge (reading to learn) and her attention to comprehension (meaning making) are revealed as matching Mr. Brown’s perspective of reading. Since comprehension is one of the headings in the School Report Card, another match is evident. Jay’s mother also comments on reading as helping to learn the correct spelling of words. It seems conceivable that this may have arisen from seeing Jay complete spelling homework tasks. Another aspect in which Jay’s mother espouses the same view of reading as Mr. Brown is in her comment about reading helping to learn about styles of writing and expression. This comment mirrors Mr. Brown’s perspective of how reading is linked to writing as well as his attention to studying different genres.

**What Simon’s mother suggested.**
Since none of Simon’s account was used in answering this research question, there is no potential to match his views of reading with those of his mother. Therefore, her perspective of reading can only be compared with Mr. Brown’s account. There are two aspects in which Simon’s mother espouses the same views of reading as Mr. Brown. One is her comment about reading being about understanding. This matches Mr. Brown’s attention to comprehension (meaning making) as well as the heading “Comprehension” in the School Report Card.

The following is a summary of parent’s perspectives of what constitutes reading.

Each parent presented a perspective of reading that in some ways was similar to their child’s and/or their child’s teacher’s. In some instances, there were similarities between their perspective of reading and the way in which reading was represented in the School Report Card. While these similarities are significant in that they indicate shared understandings and experiences, what is more significant is the larger proportion of their views that do not match either their child’s or their child’s teacher’s view of reading. These mismatches may be explained by the complexity of the notion of reading and the multiple ways in which it is used in their own and their child’s lives. An
alternative explanation could be that the questions used to elicit their responses did not provide them with the time and space to provide a more comprehensive response. Yet another reason for the mismatches between their own and their child’s responses is that only some of the students’ accounts were used to illustrate the categories and complexities in reading evident in the classroom.

Comparison of parents’ perspectives of reading with those of their child and their child’s teacher reveal similarities and differences between these participants’ perspectives of reading. In so doing, they suggest each participant’s view of reading has been shaped socially and, therefore, despite some commonalities remain different for each individual. In commenting upon their own experiences, parents also reveal their views of reading to be historically shaped. Furthermore, reading is shown to be complex and multi-dimensional.
Question 2: What Do Students Take Up as Reading in This Setting?

To inform a response to this question, studies were made of cases from Mr. Green’s and Mr. Brown’s groups of students. Purposive sampling (Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2005) was used to select Tess, Ryan, Wayne, Fraser, and Ellen as child cases and the situations that are reported here. In each case, data were provided from a combination of direct discussion and observation of the student together with reports from teachers and parents, and analysis of artifacts such as the students’ School Report Cards, their Reading Notebooks, and items they had photographed and described as depicting reading.

An analysis of each case is presented separately in what follows with the focus on what the child took up as reading at school and at home. Children’s voices and their observed actions feature as the primary data source in these accounts. Data from other sources are used to further exemplify or explain features of significance to answering the second research question.

Case Study 1: Tess.

The first case study is of Tess and what she took up as reading at school and home.

What Tess took up as reading at school.

In describing her photographs, Tess reported that she had read ‘Graveyard School’ by Tom B. Stone twice (Figure 25; Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 3 October 2005). She also stated that she had read the photographed Snoopy book (Figure 26) “on test day”, referring to the day when the Year 7 test was conducted, and “read half of those books [on the shelves], most of them” (Figure 27) (Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 3 October 2005). Tess’ account suggests that she took up opportunity whenever she could to read.

Figure 25. Tess’ photograph of a book she read at school
Observations of Tess across lessons in various KLAs showed she was generally on task and reading (Language Arts lessons– Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 3 June 2005; Appendix D, Audio-taped observations, 28 September 2005, 18 October 2005, & 31 October 2005; Reading sessions – Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 18 October 2005; Free reading time – Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 3 October 2005; Science lesson – Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 6 July 2005, and Mathematics lesson– Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 3 June 2005 & 6 June 2005; Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 29 September 2005). What can be ascertained from these data is that Tess was engaged in the assigned reading tasks whenever she was observed.

Analysis of Tess’ Reading Notebook revealed that she read with a high level of accuracy (88%) in reading-writing tasks marked by her teacher (Figure 28). Moreover, it showed that during ‘Reading’, Tess had taken up successfully what Mr. Green had constructed as reading, that is the use of print-based texts, and demonstration of her understanding in various written formats.
Tess’ attention to assigned reading tasks and success are mirrored in her “excellent” rating on School Report Cards for Semester 1 and 2 (Figures 29 & 30, Extracts from Appendix O, Tess). In both, Tess’ capacity to read and comprehend text was rated at the highest level of competency. This is consistent with the high level of accuracy in her daily classroom reading (Tess’ results for “Reading”). Yet, other students (e.g., Fraser and Ryan) were not rated by Mr. Green as above average readers. The variable of difference seems to be the quantity of reading that Mr. Green knows Tess to have completed.

**Figure 29.** Extract from Tess’ Semester 1 School Report Card (Appendix O, Tess)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading and Viewing</th>
<th>Effort and Participation</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads and comprehends text</td>
<td>C E B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads fluently</td>
<td>C E B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads with expression</td>
<td>C E B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 30.** Extract from Tess’ Semester 2 School Report Card (Appendix O, Tess)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading and Viewing</th>
<th>Effort and Participation</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads with expression</td>
<td>C E B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr. Green described Tess:

is very fluent yeah and because she reads an enormous amount in literacy areas
she actually works above her ability level (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview,
Turn 56, 29 September 2005).

an above average student and fairly meticulous with her work who reads
enormous amounts of books (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 66, 4
June 2005)

she devours books (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 206, 17
September 2005).

In these statements and in Tess’ School Report (semester 2), Mr. Green associated
fluency with amounts read and the speed and easiness that Tess completed reading
tasks. Perhaps because of her relative strengths as a reader, Tess often was given
special jobs during Reading classes, such as checking goods received against the orders
(Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 10 June 2005), distributing receipts to her
peers (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 18 October 2005), and typing-up the
teacher’s notes.

Tess labeled herself “a really good reader” (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005).
Her self-rating and her behaviour of reading regularly matched her teacher’s rating of
her as a reader and the class practice of daily reading. Her peers also rated her as an
above average reader. For example, Ellen identified Tess, along with her mother, as
“extremely good readers”:

To become a good reader you would have to be interested in all types of books
and enjoy reading them. You would also have to be able in reading large
books and be able to understand what the book is about and never lose track
of what is happening in the book. I think that my mum and [Tess] are
extremely good readers. (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005)

Juliana reported, “I think that [Ellen] and [Tess] are very good readers they show that
by reading a lot of books and knowing what they are about” (Appendix N, Email, 26
September 2005).

Ellen and Juliana used meaning-making as a yardstick for their ratings of Tess as a
reader. In so doing, they reflected the element of reading that was used in their class to
rate students for accuracy of comprehension in the timetabled session, “Reading”. In
their evaluation of Tess as a reader, Ellen and Juliana identify Tess as being a
competent meaning maker. In Mr. Green’s view, meaning making featured as an
important element of reading. In labeling Tess as a “good” meaning maker, Ellen and Juliana recognise her as having taken up this element of classroom reading.

Since Ellen referred to good readers as users of multiple text types and book size, it seems likely that she also used these as indicators to rate Tess. For her part, Juliana considered the number of books read as an indicator. In different ways, Ellen and Juliana saw Tess as a person who read a lot. Similarly, Shane attended to the amount read and speed (called fluency by Mr. Green) to rate Tess as a reader, when he said, “I think [Tess] is a good reader because she reads all of the time and can read fast as well” (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005).

Tess’ accounting, in conjunction with that of her peers and her teacher, indicate that she had appropriated elements of what counts as reading in her classroom. Tess is recognised by her peers, her teacher - and herself - as having taken up these ways of doing reading in a competent manner.

I move on now to explore what Tess took up as reading at home.

**What Tess took up as reading at home.**

Accompanying the photographs she took of her reading at home, Tess recorded, “I read at night for about an hour then in the morning for about half an hour”, and “I like to read on my balcony, couch, my bed and on the way to school” (Appendix M, Written description of photographs). Tess reiterated in her email communications that she read often: “I read for an hour ever night then sometimes in the morning when I first wake up” (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005). Tess attributed reading daily along with taping herself “reading out loud” and focusing on “speaking clearly” and understanding what she was saying as actions that helped to “improve [her] reading a lot” (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005). At home, Tess reads regularly, a practice that matches what is valued in her classroom. Her report also suggests her strategic awareness and action towards enhancing her reading.

Tess’ reading at home has other similarities to reading at school. Her photographs (Figure 31, Appendix M, Tess) of items she read at home showed a preference for reading print-based materials. This reflected the types of texts she read at school and “the large books” that Ellen (a class member) stipulated was an indicator that Tess was a “good” reader.
In summary, Tess’ reports and demonstrations suggest strong similarities in her ways of doing reading at home and school. These include the use of print-based materials and the practice of reading daily. Further investigation would be required to ascertain whether the correspondence is because Tess took class reading practices and materials into her home, or vice-versa. However, it is evident that Tess is a “frequent reader” both at home and at school. Furthermore, she appears proactive in relation to improving her existing competencies as a reader.

Case Study 2: Ryan.

The second case study is Ryan. In the following sections, what he took up as reading at school and home are examined.

What Ryan took up as reading at school.

To Ryan, reading:

\[
\text{can have to do with anything eg: at school we read books after lunch and our subject for reading is we have a question sheet and a book and in our book we write our answers. this is coming from me I think you do read when u r doing anything (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005).}
\]

He recognised reading at school as being comprised of two events: free time reading after lunch and the content area Reading timeslot. His description of reading however extends beyond these when he identified reading as an integral element of everyday activities, “when you are doing anything”.

His email communication showed that Ryan was aware of the requirements for the content area Reading. Yet in his School Report Card for Semester 1 (extract shown in Figure 32; Appendix O, Ryan), his teacher stipulated that Ryan needed “to target reading”. Exactly what had to be targeted was not indicated. Ryan’s performance as a reader had been rated at the mid-range on all aspects of reading (Figure 32).
Ryan's performance in reading and responding to texts and tasks set by Mr. Green in Reading time at a later point in the year shows as ticks, marks and comments provided as marks by Mr. Green in Ryan's Reading Notebook (Appendix T). Ryan's accuracy was rewarded with ticks. Of 286.5 possible correct responses that were marked, Ryan achieved 252.5 correct, which gave him 89% accuracy (Figure 33). The accuracy of his responses suggest that Ryan had in the majority of instances successfully taken up and employed the ways of reading required by the reading-writing tasks, that is, he has read the print-based texts provided by his teacher, made meaning of them, and demonstrated his meaning making in highly-acceptable written responses.

![Ryan's Reading-Writing Results](image)

*Figure 33. Pie graph of Ryan’s reading-writing results*
Four marks had been circled in Ryan’s Reading Notebook (Appendix T, Ryan). These represented his conferences with Mr. Green. He had received a five, “the standard mark … sort of the average” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 30, 29 September 2009), at the first conference. He had been awarded six at each of the following conferences with Mr. Green. These marks illustrate that Ryan’s ranking had shifted consistently from average to above-average, an assessment at odds with these marks and with his comment shortly before compiling Ryan’s Semester 2 School Report Card (Figure 34), viz:

He doesn’t show deep insights there is … you know it’s sort of an average interpretation of what he reads (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 2, 28 October 2009).

![Reading and Viewing Table]

**Figure 34.** Extract from Ryan’s Semester 2 School Report Card

The following are situations where Ryan took up aspects of reading in his class.

**What Ryan took up as reading in school situation 1.**

On 26 September 2005 during the Language Arts lesson, Mr. Green read the ballad “The Teams” by Henry Lawson to his students. Only he had a copy of the text (Appendix B, Field Notes 1, 26 September 2005). Students were expected to listen as he read. His instruction focused on getting students to attend to and identify rhyming words, to develop an understanding of what the ballad was about, and to develop an understanding of the meaning of words and phrases used in it (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 26 September 2005; Appendix B, Field Notes 1).

Two days later, students worked in small groups during the Language Arts lesson to read Henry Lawson’s ballad and answer written questions that Mr. Green had provided (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 28 September 2005; Appendix S, Copy of photocopied text).
Subsequently, Mr. Green asked students to write their own ballad modeled on Lawson’s (Appendix I, Audio-taped interview, Turn 22, 29 October 2005). Mr. Green perceived students learnt about reading and writing by writing about what they had read. He considered that once they had built up “the information and experience base” from reading, students would “take that information base and … try and generate [a ballad] themselves” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 54, 4 June 2005).

On 12 October, Ryan was typing up his ballad, *Last Day of Winter at School*. I noticed in the first three paragraphs of his ballad, he had used a rhyming pattern which was similar to what he had seen used in Lawson’s ballad. The last two lines of his ballad, however, did not follow this rhyming pattern. Ryan explained how he came to use this ending:

> I couldn’t rally (sic – ‘really’) think of anything else to put. So I’ve read in some poems that my Mum’s got. They’ve 3 or 4 verses then in the end they’ve got 2 lines or something. I just thought of that so I thought I might do that.  
> (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, Turn 33, 12 October 2005)

Ryan’s comment indicated that considerable reflection and agency were at work as he addressed this task. He elected consciously to bring his reading experiences from home to the classroom-centered reading and writing tasks associated with ballads.

On 18 October, Ryan showed me the final version of his ballad (Figure 35; Appendix P). Mr. Green had advised him to decorate his ballad so he had added a hand-drawn coloured border and clouds. Ryan had signed his name at the bottom of his ballad. Beside his signature, Mr. Green had written the comment “Great Presentation” and a mark of seven, an above-average grade.
Ryan’s ballad incorporated a rhyming pattern similar to the one studied in *The Teams* showing he had taken up and used what he had learnt in class. The last two lines, however, do not match this rhyming pattern. In these, he did some boundary crossing work - recalled, took up and applied an idea he gleaned from poetry reading experiences at home. Ryan’s divergence here was tolerated. The question “why” has to be asked.

At interview, Mr. Green identified the ballad writing task as problematic:

That wasn’t very successful the writing of the ballads but I didn’t pursue it as much so I never actually gave them a rating on that. I just went through them and marked them for presenting it. I think I did in the end give them a rating I got a couple that were a bit better. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 24, 29 October 2005)

... and sort of ran out of time and I wasn’t happy with what they were producing because it didn’t give them enough freedom to talk from their own minds and the real problem was as you said them finding rhyming words – that’s a real hassle for them. Even I had trouble, I tried writing one. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 26, 29 October 2005)

My observations of Ryan at this task had not indicated it as difficult for him. He appeared to select purposefully from what he was learning in order to produce a text whose content addressed the task requirements. His ballad had been informed by the combination of what he was coming to know about poems and poetry at school and home as his comment on 12 October had indicated. He engaged in boundary-crossing
work to inform the shape of his ballad. An intertextualised product from his poetry reading at home and at school resulted.

*What Ryan took up as reading in school situation 2.*

The following outlines a second event where Ryan was reading at school.

Mr. Green had written on the blackboard what would be involved in planning for art that week (see Figure 36). He told students that they would be producing something to display in the class, library and/or school undercover area (Appendix B, Field Book 1, 30 May 2005). He reminded them that they would be using the *Clean, Classic and Complete Page Layout* (Appendix S) distributed to them previously. This was needed it and should be out and available for reference while they worked. This handout was described by Mr. Green as containing the most common layouts used by authors to organise information so it is appealing to and easily accessible by readers. In so doing, Mr. Green linked students’ artwork to reading and writing.

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**Week 9 Art Planning**

1. Theme
2. Layout (accompanied by a drawing of a layout design)
3. Backgrounds
4. Illustrations – size
5. Cropping
6. Journaling
7. Matting
8. Extras
   - wool
   - pieces of material
   - serviettes
   - raffia

*Figure 36. Extract from Field Notes, Book 1, Mr. Green’s blackboard notations, 30 May 2005*

On 2 June 2005, I observed and video-taped students at work in their art lesson. I noticed that Mr. Green expected students to read and follow the instructions he had written on the blackboard. I observed them at a number of points during the lesson to
ascertain how students used these instructions. This is an account of Ryan as he went about the task.

When I first observed Ryan, he told me, “I’m doing surfing today as my theme” (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 2 June 2005). He showed me the photographs and surfing logos he had prepared and that were ready for use. He also reported that he had selected the background colours and layout that he planned to use:

I’m going to get bits of paper. Do 2 triangles and put them on facing down
I haven’t done this one [layout] before. I’ve mainly done every other one before except this one and this one brings out um some of the stuff I’m doing that I’ve chosen because it’s got two triangles leading into two of the pictures I’ve got down at the bottom.

If you do your own [layout], it doesn’t sort of bring out the stuff and if you use these layouts that people have made up, they bring out the stuff that you’re putting on, the pictures. (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 2 June 2005)

In these descriptions, Ryan revealed that he had read and taken up the artwork notions of having a theme, layout, background and illustrations within his artwork. This followed the order of items for the first four steps of Mr. Green’s sequence. Ryan’s photographs of surfboards had been cropped in a surfboard’s shape and the various logos had been trimmed. He had taken up and used the notion of cropping – the fifth of the eight aspects set for consideration by his teacher.

Later Ryan said, “I was going to use white triangles but I didn’t have enough room” (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 2 June 2005). He reported that he had sought advice from the parent helper and had decided to leave the triangles out, and instead had re-organised his background strips of blue and green paper to allow white to show through. He had to adjust the proposed layout he had originally planned because he had recognised a need to make better use of the available space.

Ryan also reported, “I just have to glue down all the sponsors, all these brand names that I got: SP and Discover, DHD and NEV” (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 2 June 2005). He went on to explain their significance:

Most people have sponsors. They have stuff on their board.
If you’re not sponsored, well half the time they don’t really, people don’t really notice you. They just think you’re just a normal kid that’s not really good at surfing or doesn’t go surfing that much. (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 2 June 2005)
He continued to reveal his knowledge of surfing culture by telling me about a friend’s brother and his father to illustrate the importance of sponsorships in the surfing world.

In identifying a need for sponsors to be part of his artwork, Ryan had taken-up and applied an element of his extensive background knowledge of surfing culture. He wanted to represent his selected theme authentically.

I observed Ryan again as the art lesson was ending. He had his artwork completed so I sought his appraisal of it. He stated, “My final opinion is I think I’ve done a lot of work and I appreciate my work I have done and I think it is alright” (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 2 June 2005).

He proceeded to recount a peer’s evaluation of his work, “[He] said it’s crowded, man. You’ve got to spread it apart.” Another peer, Christopher, told Ryan that his work did not meet the requirements of the task (Appendix B, Field Book 1, 2 June 2005). When I asked his view of these evaluations, Ryan replied, “Most people crowd their work up when they do surfing because a lot of the surfing magazines are all crowded with the pictures and stuff” (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 2 June 2005). In this comment, Ryan revealed knowledge of surfing magazines and specifically of layout attained from his own reading. Herein, Ryan showed that he had transferred this awareness into his artwork at school.

Throughout my three specific observations of him in this lesson, Ryan remained focused on constructing an artwork representative of surfing culture and surfing magazines. The work authentically represented elements of the surfing world. It also demonstrated that he understood and followed the steps his teacher had set for completion of the task. What he produced may not have addressed all elements of the artwork where his teacher had expected it would. But, it was work that had been informed by his reading of materials in contexts outside of school. Ryan again had consciously bridged the school-home boundary to inform his completion of a school-based task.

The following section examines what Ryan took up as reading at home.
What Ryan took up as reading at home.

Since Ryan’s parents did not participate in this study, no data are presented about what Ryan took up as reading at home or how his parents considered him as a reader.

In his photographs of items he read at home, Ryan showed a preference for reading magazines (Figures 37 & 38; Appendix M, Ryan). In describing his first photograph (Figure 37), Ryan said, “At home, we have an endless supply of different fishing mags” because his father bought them each month (Appendix M, Written description of photographs). Ryan explained that he read the “fishing magazines because [he] like[d] fishing” and they contained “interesting stuff”, “not just about fishing [but] also … [about] 4WD cars and camping and boats” (Appendix M, Written description of photographs).

Figure 37. Ryan’s photograph of a fishing magazine that he read at home

In describing his second photograph (Figure 38), Ryan said that he read the Smash Hits’ magazines regularly: “When the new issue comes out or whenever I have spare time” (Appendix M, Written description of photographs). He read these magazines because they offered “free stuff and … a variety of songs” (Appendix M, Written description of photographs).

Figure 38. Ryan’s photograph of a magazine that he read at home.
For Ryan, reading at home was about using print-based materials (magazines) that contained information in which he was interested. In using these materials, he had taken-up and engaged in reading that was of personal significance.

In summary, Ryan has revealed a metacognitive awareness about his purposeful action in merging home and school reading experiences to inform his school work. What counted as reading for the teacher as the powerful other in Ryan’s class worked for Ryan to the extent that it figured in the intertextually-blended home and class reading experiences he made into a hybrid.

Case Study 3: Wayne.
The third case study is of Wayne. His reading at school and at home is reported in this section.

What Wayne took up as reading at school.
Wayne’s email communications provide insights into what he took up as reading at school. His view was that, “I think I am good at all reading EXCEPT lote because japanese because it’s a whole different language all together (sic)” (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005).

Where Wayne’s reading involved English language, he considered himself competent. He observed himself, “as being(sic) a pretty good reader as I am picked to do things in the class to raead (sic) things and am also told by friends that I am a good reader” (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005). He reveals an underlying confidence in his self rating because of the teacher’s validation evident in his selection for special tasks, and his peers’ confirmation.

On 4 October, I observed Wayne answering questions to a guided reading text on biotechnology. The task required him to read a text and booklet containing the associated questions, and to write responses to these questions. Wayne did most of his work silently (Appendix B, Field Book 2). He said that he had, “[to] check if I have got the description right” (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, Turn 5, 4 October 2005), reflecting an attention to accuracy in meaning making. An extract from Wayne’s Reading Notebook illustrates his attention to accuracy (Figure 39; Appendix T, Wayne).
Wayne’s reading-writing work had been rewarded by Mr. Brown with ticks and/or overall scores given as marks for various reading tasks/texts (Appendix T, Reading Notebook, Wayne). Wayne’s accuracy on these reading-writing tasks was 98% (Figure 40). He had attempted all items.

School Report Cards for both Semester 1 and 2 show Mr. Brown, his teacher, rated Wayne’s reading as above-average in all areas (Figures 41 & 42). His Semester 1 rating was at the top level of achievement for “reads with fluency” and “reads with expression”, while “reads and comprehends text” was at the mid-range. The teacher’s comments were that there had been improvements in Wayne’s reading comprehension but that he needed to improve at an inferential level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>READING and VIEWING</th>
<th>Effort and Participation</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
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[Wayne’s] oral presentation on Wimbledon was well prepared and presented with a reasonably confident voice and positive body language. All reading and viewing comprehension tasks show more detailed responses than previous as he becomes more aware of how to attack such tasks. Comprehension with inferential meaning still requires attention.

Figure 41. Extract from Wayne’s Semester 1 School Report Card
Wayne’s School Report Card, for the second half of the year, placed him at the highest Level for all areas of reading. This indicates Wayne had acted on the teacher’s advice at the end of Semester 1 and was addressing inferential comprehension in his reading.

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Wayne’s oral presentation on John Logie Baird was strong in most criterion however was under the minimum time limit required. He usually shows active listening skills. He shows an ability to construct meaning through knowledge of text structure, language features and subject specific language. Wayne is able to identify bias and stereotypes in texts as he becomes a critical reader.

Figure 42. Extract from Wayne’s Semester 2 School Report Card

At the end of both report cards, Wayne received notice of awards from administrators (Deputy Principal in Semester 1 and Principal in Semester 2) in his school (Appendix O, Wayne). These acknowledged Wayne’s work ethic as well as other aspects of his personal and social development. While they did not refer directly to his reading, they suggest Wayne had completed his learning commitments and that these were commendable of success.

The next section examines what Wayne took up as reading at home.

**What Wayne took up as reading at home.**

Wayne reported that he “like[d] to read most mystery books” (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005). His interest is mystery books was evident in the Enid Blyton’s novel *Five on Kirrin Island Again* he photographed at home and designated as one of his favourites (Figure 43). In describing this photograph, Wayne wrote: “The ‘Famous Five’ book is situated on my bookshelf. At the moment I read it 1 to 3 times a week. I read it because I belive (sic) it’s inturesting (sic) & I like mystery books.” (Appendix M, Written description of photograph)
Wayne’s interest in reading books by Enid Blyton and mysteries was recognised by his mother, Jenny:

Well, he likes … he reads a lot of Enid Blyton. He likes that kind of thing, um. He reads um ah like mysteries he likes that. His sister reads a lot of Nancy Drew so he likes to read that kind of … he doesn’t read the Nancy Drew but he likes those Hardy Boys ones that he likes to read those kind of things. He likes to read a lot of things about, like travel things. He really li … They just did a project on um … he did his on oh here you go he just showed to me and handed it in. Anyway, it’s a travel traveling all about a country so he likes that sort of thing. He likes reading about traveling and um, what else. [laughed] That’s a fair bit um (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 14, 19 October 2005).

Yeah, he doesn’t read … He’s not a huge amounts of books, but he likes to read Enid Blyton and he likes mystery books (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 18, 19 October 2005).

“Reading books” featured as important in Jenny’s opinion of what constitutes reading. She didn’t think Wayne read as much as his sister and suggested that he did not read a lot at all. When prompted, Jenny stated, “he does quite a bit of looking for things on the internet” (Turn 24), quickly followed by “that’s not really reading books is it” (Turn 26). Again, Wayne’s mother focused on reading as print-based books. Although indicated a preference for reading mysteries, the amount he read these print-based material was considered by his mother to be insufficient.

Jenny did recognise Wayne’s expertise in using the internet to research personal and family needs, as an important and useful skill, albeit one that did not count as reading. Wayne’s mother acknowledged that she had initially thought of reading as involving the use of books:
Yeah well that was in my mindset, too. I kept thinking now well what sort of books what because he’s not a huge book reader. I mean he will go into bed and read a book when you he’s he’s got he’s one of seven [children] so when it gets a bit chaotic I’ll say now you can all just go in and do something, read or uh uh try and have some quiet [laughed]. Bit hard with seven of them! [laughed] So, but he does spend a lot of time looking up things on the internet and the banking thing was a big thing. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 66, 19 October 2005)

Jenny recounted times when Wayne or his parents had identified particular personal or family needs. In each instance, Wayne used the internet to locate pertinent information. One example was:

when we were looking for a new car of to buy. Ooh not a new car, a second hand car, and he went and looked up a particular car on ebay (Turn 44).

and then when he found the car he actually went into the s …like if it was a Toyota. He then went to the Toyota site to find the actual features of that car (Turn 46).

Jenny reported that Wayne preferred the Internet to reading a book. Yet throughout the interview, she repeatedly stated that she thought he should read more. More specifically, she thought he should read more books. She said he was “not a big novel reader” (Turn 76) comparing the amount he read with that of his sister:

Like he wouldn’t spend hours. My other daughter would spend three hours a day reading books. He is not like that but he would probably spend 2 hours a day if not always research, but this bank thing he was every afternoon home on the internet researching. Probably an hour an afternoon working out. So he would be more of a, probably likes to analyse things, find things and then learn more about them, than to see him actually read a book. (Turn 76)

I think it would be good if he read a bit more. Like I think. I often try to encourage him to go in and sit down and read because his other sister is a big reader and so he is more into doing all this stuff on the computer, but I say to him it is good if you can just…. And it is often when he is restless I will say, it would be good if you could just go and sit down and read a novel for a while. (Turn 107)

In summary, Wayne read successfully in his classroom. He was highly accurate in using print-based materials that his teacher provided. Wayne recognised the basis of his competency as a “good” reader was in his capacity to take up and use reading in a manner that was valued and rewarded by his teacher and peers. His account of reading at home shows a preference for reading mysteries. These were print-based materials as were the texts he typically read at school. Yet, his mother was of the view that her son
spent insufficient time reading. Moreover, she did not considered his online reading for functional purposes as reading of any great value.

**Case Study 4: Fraser.**
The fourth case study is of Fraser and the ways in which he took up reading at school and home.

**What Fraser took up as reading at school.**
Observations of Fraser throughout the year showed that he had a preference for reading Star Wars materials, items related to computer games, and magazines:

- With classmate Peter, reading and answering questions in a Star Wars competition. This was on a notice board in the library, during the library lesson (Appendix D, Video-taped observation, 3 June 2005)
- Reading a magazine in silent reading time (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 16 June 2005)
- Reading a magazine in music lesson (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 28 September 2005; Appendix I, Video-taped Lesson, 28 September 2005)
- “Have noticed [Fraser] often has a book or some sort of text out or easily accessible in his tidy box – often reading when can’t do task” (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 28 September 2005)
- “[Fraser] reading Star Wars book (silent)” (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 2, 4 October 2005). This reading event occurred before school officially started. Fraser was sitting at his desk in the classroom. When queried about what he was reading, Fraser reported, “Oh, I’m just finishing off my book” (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, Turn 2, 4 October). When queried if someone recommended the Star Wars book to him, Fraser replied, “I just like Star Wars” (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, Turn 6, 4 October).
- “[Fraser] reading ‘White Dwarf’ magazine” (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 2, 4 October 2005); “Shortly before the bell for lunch went, [Fraser] was sitting at his desk reading silently his ‘White Dwarf’ magazine” (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 4 October 2005). Fraser reported that this magazine was part of “my painting game that I got”, referring to a computer game (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, Turn 6, 4 October 2005).
- Peer gave Fraser a drawing book which had been taken out on loan from the library. Fraser “began to trace an eagle” in the book when the bell for lunch rang. (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 4 October 2005; Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 2, 4 October 2005).
Throughout the year, Fraser demonstrated a decided preference for reading Star Wars; that is he had taken up as reading anything that carried his interest in Star Wars. He had brought this interest into Mr. Green's classroom and persisted with it across the year. These preferences were mirrored in Mr. Green's account, “[Fraser] reads all the Star Wars” and his mother's report, “Star Wars or umm Runescape or some of these awful things ((laughed)) he’s in to” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 26, 31 October 2005). Throughout the year, Star Wars featured as Fraser's preference in reading materials.

Despite acknowledging Fraser's involvement with Star Wars materials, Mr. Green did not rate the quantity of Fraser's reading as sufficiently high for anything beyond a moderate level, as evidenced in his assessment and comments on Fraser's Semester 1 School Report Card (Figure 44). Mr. Green had used a three-point scale in deciding on “satisfactory” – the mid-point, for his effort and participation. He also had positioned Fraser at the mid-point level in achievement on all of the indicators in reading.

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[Fraser] maintaining a satisfactory level in reading. [Fraser] is able to explain concepts developed in most areas quite clearly to a whole class audience.

Figure 44. Extract from Fraser's Semester 1 School Report Card (Appendix O)
Fraser took up and engaged in any opportunities to read materials of his own preference, usually his Star Wars and games content. Sometimes, he appeared to be doing this Fraser-selected reading secretively, as though it was not sanctioned by the teacher (e.g., Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 2, 11 October 2005). At other times, he read these materials in full view of the teacher (e.g., Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 28 September 2005; Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 3, 17 October 2005). Fraser read these materials before and during the school day (e.g., Before school - Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 2, 4 October 2005; Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 4 October 2005). However, neither Fraser nor his teacher seemed to notice or acknowledge the quantity of his reading.

Fraser identified a good reader as someone who “is reading on a regular bases (sic) which would help u to become a better reader” (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005). In this comment, Fraser reflected his teacher’s view that regular reading was necessary to develop into a good reader. I expected Fraser would rate himself as a good reader, instead he rated himself as “not a very good reader because I don’t read a lot” (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005). Fraser’s identification of himself as someone who does not read a lot puzzled me as I had seen Fraser reading regularly in class. My observation was that Fraser read more than any other child in the class during any school day. I had observed him regularly engaging in reading teacher-provided texts and materials of his own preference. Had I confused the regularity of reading with the quantity of reading which Mr. Green considered necessary to develop into a good reader? Or was there something else happening that I hadn’t considered? Mr. Green had rated Fraser as an average reader but after my comment on how often I had noticed Fraser reading, Mr. Green reported that he “didn’t notice [the] extent of [Fraser’s] reading until [hearing my comment]” (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 2, 11 October 2005). What he had seen was Fraser’s engagement with print-based materials that he had distributed to be read in the classroom by Fraser and others. There was little opportunity for him to see Fraser working with his preferred texts – and these were neither part of Mr. Green’s formal assessment of Fraser’s competence nor his incidental observation of it. The child’s knowing or unconscious perception of Mr. Green’s view may have contributed to Fraser’s not considering working with his own texts as counting as reading.

Fraser reportedly had improved in his effort and participation in reading by the end of the year. His rating had shifted from “satisfactory” (Semester 1, Figure 44) to
“excellent” (Figure 45; Appendix O, Fraser’s School Report Card for Semester 2 2005). Mr. Green’s written comment indicates the change was in recognition of Fraser “completing reading activities regularly and [having] a wide range of reading interests” (Figure 45). His rating of Fraser in the area of effort and participation was influenced by the amount of reading work completed by Fraser in second semester. Yet, he still viewed Fraser as an “average” reader. All other aspects of Fraser’s School Report Card (reads and comprehends text; reads fluently; reads with expression) record this opinion as unchanged from Semester 1.

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[Fraser] has been completing reading activities regularly and has a wide range of reading interests.

Figure 45. Extract from Fraser’s Semester 2 School Report Card (Appendix O)

The following data are derived from two of Fraser’s involvements in reading at school, and an interview with his mother, Karen, about what Fraser had taken-up as reading at home.

What Fraser took up as reading in school situation 1.
Fraser sat with a small booklet open on top of his reading notebook (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 3 June 2005). When I asked what he was doing, Fraser said he was “reading cheats about Pokémon” which another child had loaned to him. He was not engaging in Mr. Green’s tasks that had been set to be completed during Reading.

Several copies of the text Fraser wanted to use had been part of a set of topic-related texts that Mr. Green had selected for reading activities. However, there were not enough for everyone who wanted this particular text and Fraser missed out. He opted to wait for a copy of the one he had started the previous day.
Fraser was willing to take up the reading opportunity provided by his teacher, but lack of sufficient copies of the text restricted him. Although there was potential to commence reading a different text, Fraser did not do this. Instead he read a Pokémon cheats sheet. His reading of this was conducted openly. There was no furtiveness or secretiveness involved, despite its irrelevance to the lesson.

Fraser had begun a task the previous day, and wanted to complete it using the specific text on which he had commenced. He eventually engaged in the lesson, but only after others had finished their work on the prescribed text and had passed it on to him. Once the text he required was available, Fraser put away the Pokémon cheat sheet and restarted the task, reading the text, and Mr. Green’s questions, and writing his responses.

Across both the diversion and the teacher-set activity, Fraser had been totally involved in reading.

The following outlines another situation at school in which Fraser read a text of his own preference.

What Fraser took up as reading in school situation 2.

Fraser read a magazine he had brought from home which was open on top of his music notebook (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 28 September 2005). Students were supposed to be engaging in music activities guided by the music teacher. Yet, throughout the lesson, Fraser often glanced at his magazine and turned pages. His activity with this magazine was unsanctioned by the music teacher but he read it openly in full view of the teacher, his peers and me. Fraser combined his reading of the magazine with participating in the music lesson. If observed by the music teacher, he was not reprimanded and the lesson proceeded to its conclusion with Fraser sharing his attention between the two sources (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 28 September 2005).

What Fraser took up as reading at home is examined in the next section.

What Fraser took up as reading at home.

In the following, Fraser’s mother, Karen, describes how Fraser goes about reading at home.
At interview, Fraser’s mother, Karen, indicated that she disliked the fantasy and computer game texts Fraser chose to read labeling them “these awful things he’s into” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 26, 31 October 2005). She reported that she worked hard to get Fraser “to try and contact the real world” (Turn 40). Through her actions to provide him with ‘real world’ texts, for example, “some articles from a newspaper” (Turn 26) and “National Geographic articles” (Turn 40), Karen hoped that she would enable “a bit of the real world to seep in every now and then” (Turn 318) because “he will never do it off his own bat” (Turn 40). Despite these efforts, she noted that he preferred to read “usually something like Star Wars or umm Runescape” (Turn 26).

Karen reported difficulties in getting Fraser to read to her at home. Typically, it involved “a lot of whinging and complaints and yelling and screaming” (Turn 22), “excuses, getting up, walking about, finding things that he really must do” (Turn 24). “He will also always find excuses it’s nothing it’s not something that comes to him he’d rather do something other than reading” (Turn 30). She also reported Fraser’s response about the real-world texts she wanted him to read: “… but mum I’m a kid” (Turn 318). However, Karen attributed these avoidance behaviours to Fraser’s inherent and generalised lack of reading ability and interest:

stunted lacks expression lacks fluidity does it under endurance he’s still very substandard in my books he’s um he doesn’t read ahead to see whether a sentence finishes and how he should use inflections and how just put a bit of interest into the reading it will just be nuh which I think you know most of us would have got through in Grade 3 really. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 66, 31 October 2005)

What is evidence here is that Fraser’s mother, Karen offered him opportunities to read real-world texts that he neither valued nor seemed prepared to make any attempt of showing possible interest. Consequently, Fraser persisted with a range of avoidance behaviours in these reading opportunities. He did not take up what his mother counted as reading. Rather, he stayed with what he knew and liked. Karen described this persistence in take-up:

he’ll get similar sort of things umm Star Wars and ah some other sort of ancient war thing that he likes and he’s got computer games and things that I guess he has to read instructions (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 38, 31 October 2005).

the latest [interest] is I’m trying to think of the name of it again and then there
are magazines and things it's a computer game but there are magazines and like warlords and ores I think Runescape is a part of it and um it's like the continuation of Star Wars or the regurgitation of Star Wars before they went in to out of space what they did on Earth and things (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 58, 31 October 2005).

These are the same texts (Star Wars) that Mr. Green reported as Fraser’s most common reading at school, and the same texts (Star Wars, magazines and computer games booklets) that I observed Fraser reading in class.

Similar to Mr. Green who had not accommodated Fraser’s preferred reading into the tasks he set in his lessons, Fraser’s mother did not adjust her view of what was “real” or “world” to include what Fraser saw as attractive reading. Fraser did take up the reading texts offered by Mr. Green, when these were available, and reverted to his own reading material when they were not. In this way, he established a pattern of reading around his own interests, a pattern he also used at home, where his choices clashed with his mother’s aspirations for what he should read.

Fraser’s take-up of reading in the middle years’ classroom of this school was generally consistent with what his teacher expected within the realities of available resources. However, for Fraser, the most attractive feature of reading lay in materials, topics and learning that were not explicit in Mr. Green’s work program or in the delivery of the music lesson. Nor, was the reading he did directly described in Mr. Green’s School Report on Fraser’s progress.

In summary, Fraser presented as a child and student who took any available opportunity to read texts of his preference. He read often. But, the texts he read were not those that were valued by his teacher in class or his mother at home. This created tensions for him and led to marginalization and silencing of some of his reading. For example, Fraser did not count engagement with his preferred material as reading. He saw it simply as something that he did because he liked the content.

**Case Study 5: Ellen**

The fifth and final case is of Ellen and her reading at home and school.

**What Ellen took up as reading at school.**

In photographing what constitutes reading at school, Ellen insisted that she had to take photographs of reading at school in the library. Due to the library being closed for
several days, Ellen said that she would not be able to take her turn at photographing reading at school until the library had reopened (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 7 June 2005). When I encouraged her to consider where else she read when at school, she photographed three posters on the tuckshop walls (Appendix M). Two were of advertised upcoming school events. The other informed students of what they needed to purchase to gain points in a competition. Ellen’s photographs and her description of them indicated she read primarily for information about school events and what other students were doing (Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 10 June 2005). I expected that her images in the library would consist of library shelves and books. But, this was not the case. Her photographs were of newspaper articles about people and events in the school and samples of younger students’ writing. These items were on a notice board in the library and taped onto a library window. Ellen’s photographs and her description of them indicated she read primarily for information about school events and what other students were doing (Appendix K, Audio-taped description of photographs, 10 June 2005). Her reading was purposeful in informing her about broader school matters. Ellen’s photographs showed little of the reading that occurred in class.

All of her photographed texts, like those used in her class, were print-based, but only one was of a text read during the timetabled “Reading” session (Figure 46). Ellen described this as “that’s of the comprehension we were doing” (Appendix D, Audio-taped description, 10 June 2005). In this comment, Ellen demonstrated her awareness that reading in this timeslot was about comprehending text.

![Figure 46. Ellen’s photograph of a text read during Reading lessons](image)

Analysis of the reading-writing work Ellen completed in “Reading” sessions provides some insights into what she took up in reading. For example, Ellen had completed
accurately 274 items of the 292 that had been marked by Mr. Green (Appendix T, Reading Notebook). Ellen’s results were at 94% accuracy (Figure 47). Ellen had taken-up and used the different levels of thinking Mr. Green had tested against Bloom’s taxonomy with a very high degree of success. This indicates she was highly competent in making meaning of the print-based texts provided by Mr. Green and in representing her understandings of these tasks in the expected written and visual formats.

Ellen did not rate herself as a reader of any particular ability level. Instead, she described her reading preferences:

I think that I would describe my-self as a person who likes to read Science Fiction adventure books because they are very exciting and adventurous. I got this impression when I started to read Science Fiction books many years ago and relised (sic) that I enjoyed them very much. (Appendix N, Email, 27 September 2005)

![Pie graph of Ellen’s reading-writing results](image)

*Figure 47. Pie graph of Ellen’s reading-writing results*

Yet, five of Ellen’s peers, Lisa, Christopher, Fraser, Sarah and Juliana rated her as a good reader. However, they saw different strengths in Ellen as a reader.

Lisa stated, “I think that [Ellen] is a good reader because she is fluent and comfortant (sic - confident) about reading in front of the class” (Appendix N, Email, 29 September 2005). Lisa used fluency and confidence displayed when reading aloud to the class to inform her opinion. In so doing, she revealed that reading aloud and being able to conduct it in a fluent and confident manner to be important, and that she had witnessed Ellen displaying these attributes.
Christopher commented, “I reckon [Ellen] is a good reader because (sic) she reads books like 500 pages thick and always gets all of her reading activities right” (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005). He recognised Ellen as a reader of thick books, something he viewed as pertinent to being a good reader. Given the description of these books as being “like 500 pages thick”, it is likely that Christopher had seen Ellen reading novels at school. Video-taped observation on 6 July 2005 showed Ellen taking a novel by Philip Pullman out of her tidy box (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 6 July 2005). An event like this would have substantiated Christopher’s opinion. Christopher also acknowledged Ellen’s high accuracy rate in assigned reading tasks in class. He used this as an additional sign that she was a good reader.

Fraser wrote, “I thinks (sic) that [Ellen] is a very good reader, because she seems to be a good reader” (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005). His comment did not specific particular reader attributes. However, Fraser also had stated, “what makes a good reader is reading on a regular bases which would help u to become a better reader also if u actually (sic) like reading will help” (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005). In this, he designated regular reading and enjoyment of reading as two elements necessary to being a good reader. Seemingly, these played a role in informing his judgment of Ellen.

Sarah stated, “[Ellen] is a good reader cause she nows (sic) how 2 pronounce all those long words easily even if she hasn't even heard of them before” (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005). Sarah’s rating indicates that she has heard Ellen read aloud. For Sarah, Ellen’s ability to pronounce multisyllabic words signified that she was a good reader. To Sarah, word recognition was a crucial element of reading. Sarah’s subsequent comment, “I also think that a good reader has 2 b a good speller 2” (Appendix N, Email, 6 October 2005) again signaled word recognition as important to reading. This comment also showed Sarah making links between reading and writing, and in so doing, reflecting an aspect of the class reading program.

Juliana’s opinion was that “Ellen (and Tess) [were] very good readers [because] they show that by reading a lot of books and knowing what they are about” (Appendix N, Email, 26 September 2005). Reading quantity and comprehension were two elements Juliana used to rate Ellen as a reader. Her judgment indicates that she had seen Ellen
reading lots and often. She also counted in Ellen’s high success rate in addressing the reading comprehension activities in class.

Mr. Green also saw Ellen as a “good” reader. His opinion of Ellen and her reading are represented in the following excerpts:

Out of all that stuff probably [Ellen], [Ellen] is the most, gives the most comprehensive and accurate answers what appear to be the most thought out answers (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 194, 27 September 2005).

Yeah I would say she gives the most thought out answers, she actually reveals a greater language ability in her written work than she does in her verbal work, verbally she is very quiet (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 196, 27 September 2005).

She is a competent reader but she is not a, not a – what is the word I want? Um avid reader. She can read and understand in a competent manner but she doesn’t do enough of it to be very fluent and very good at it. I mean she is very fluent compared to the kids who aren’t fluent at all but compared to kids with her level of ability she is not very fluent. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 54, 29 September 2005)

Mr. Green identified Ellen as a reader who was able to represent the meaning of texts in a comprehensive and accurate manner. This comment mirrored scores he had provided in assessing her reading-writing work for the Reading classes (Appendix T).

Although he viewed Ellen as a competent reader, he also saw relative weaknesses: “not …avid, ... not very fluent” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 54, 29 October 2005). In making this comparison, Mr. Green referred to the amount of reading done. While this seemed to refer to the reading of all texts, a later comment separated this into non-fiction and fiction groupings:

She reads non fiction stuff in considerable depth and gets a lot more out of it than any body else does. But she doesn’t get very much out of fiction as [Tess] does and quite a few other kids in the class get a lot more out of fiction. And I think it is because [Ellen] doesn’t read any fiction to speak of so she is not developing that section of her mind and her imagination. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 37, 29 October 2005)

Mr. Green’s comment reveals that Ellen did not read fiction text to the extent he considered necessary for avid and fluent readers.

In the next section, what Ellen took up as reading at home is explored.

What Ellen took up as reading at home.
Contrary to Mr. Green’s account, one of her photographs of reading at home shows that Ellen read some fiction. The photograph was of the novel, *The Subtle Knife* by Philip Pullman (Appendix M, Written description of photograph, Ellen).

Accompanying this photograph, Ellen wrote a series of bulleted descriptions, viz:

- It is a Fantasy/Adventure chapter book.
- It is situated at my home, but it belongs to Mr. [Green].
- I read it most nights before I go to bed.
- I read it mostly every night.
- I read it because I enjoy reading books that I like in my leisure time.

(Appendix M, Written description of photograph, Ellen)

While it cannot be ascertained how much reading of fictional texts Ellen did, the regular practice of reading “books” is evident in her written description of this photograph and her reading at home. Ellen made reading a routine part of her home life, mirroring her regular practice of reading lots at school. Moreover, Ellen had taken up several aspects of reading valued in her class and by her teacher, Mr. Green.

In summary, Ellen had taken up multiple aspects of reading in her class. This was recognised by her peers and teacher in their ratings of her as a reader. Her account of reading at home also indicates descriptions of what was valued at school. There is considerable flow between Ellen’s home and class reading practices.

**Summary**

The data collected in relation to observations, descriptions and actions mark what constitutes reading and what students took up as reading in the setting, at this time, within the operation and limitations of the study.

The meaning these data provide in relation to the questions of the study are outlined and discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter 5
Discussion

The two research questions which guided the current study are:

1. What markers show what constitutes reading in a classroom setting?
2. What do students take up as reading in this setting?

Analyses of data as reported in the previous chapter provided insights about how the two research questions central to the study might be answered at a descriptive level, within the limitations of the study. This chapter builds upon those findings by insinuating the writer’s consideration of their meaning and possible implications in relation to learning and teaching of reading, and for further research. A descriptive framework is offered to support this explanation of what constituted reading in the middle years’ setting and what students took up as reading.

Q1: What markers show what constitutes reading in a classroom setting?

It had seemed likely that the first question would not be difficult to answer given the focus provided by selecting only two classes in one setting, and with only a few students there in. This was not the case. Rather, I found early thoughts of what the data suggested and first drafts of what this meant were overrun with conditional explanations. Fraser was Fraser. He was so very different from Ryan - as Ryan was from Claire. The teachers were different. The parents were different. Difference was thematic.

While there were some shared elements that may have evolved from shared experiences, constructions of reading were defined differently by each participant. These differences were extensive and occurred regardless of whether the “case” under study was either of the teachers, any of the parents, or any of the students. Therefore, while comparing each case offered an authentic response to the question, it is a phenomenon of the data that this record will reveal more about disparity of view than congruency.

The blinding vision of difference sat comfortably with the appreciation of difference that had propelled my professional interest and concern. However, its pervasiveness in
my developing an answer to the question initially unbalanced my consideration of what the finding might mean for teachers and students.

A key finding of the study was that participants were situated in a variety of mind-contexts as they drew upon reading experiences from various times and places to form their conceptualisations of reading. For example, Ryan’s comments about what had shaped his thinking as a balladeer in a school exercise showed his awareness of how home (his recollections of reading his mother’s poems) and school (his class experiences in reading and deconstructing ballads) had helped him to build a view of reading. His scrapbooking efforts in an art lesson provided another instance where reading at home (Ryan’s experiences in reading surfing magazines) and school (what he had learnt about how scrapbooking affects writers and readers in art lessons) had come together to shape his thinking and actions. Ryan’s accounts are reminiscent of Haas Dyson’s (2008) observation of students being “always situated in multiple worlds” (p.313). As Ryan read and wrote in his classroom, his “multiple worlds” were his reconstructions of reading experiences from present and past times and in various places. He intertextualised and (re)contextualised them as he constructed his ballad and art work (Fairclough, 1992; Kristeva, 1986a, 1986b; Lemke, 1997; Lenski, 1998). For Ryan, reading was situated in what it comprised and by name across time and space.

In contrast, Christopher described reading as a regular event shaped by the time and task requirements of the classroom context. Unlike Ryan’s multiple-worlds’ view, his had little evidence of intrusion from events, tasks and places beyond the regular activities of his classroom. He was more complicit with, and driven-by, the school-place determined construction of reading. For Christopher, in this time and place, reading was a process comprised by reading with a text provided by the teacher and answering the teacher’s questions. “Reading” was the routine. For him, it linked totally with school and schooling as a situated (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Gee, 2004; Green & Meyer, 1991; Li, 2001) and regular part of his life in this community of learners (Lave, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The contrasting constructions of reading reflected in these two cases alerted me to be cautious in considering reading solely from a situated perspective. Yet, it may have served Christopher well in forming a view of himself and others in the student role not to have drawn as often upon other parts of his multiple worlds as Ryan had done. Ryan’s multiplicity of sources led to direct conflict with his unconventional
construction of the ballad’s ending and his surfing-inspired art work. Nevertheless, this multiple-world’s approach may serve Ryan well as he moves into other contexts or into schooling with teachers who are more flexible about children’s inclusions of their out-of-school experiences and out-of-school learning as these relate to in-school development in and through reading.

Adults in this study also gave evidence that their views of reading had origins in multiple worlds. The followingunpacks situations where adults, a teacher (Mr. Green) and a parent (Karen, Fraser’s mother), drew upon their own multiple world experiences to explain what constituted reading.

Mr. Green.

Mr. Green’s timetable contained terms which were traceable to a particular literacy curriculum document. He used the term, “Language Arts”, in his timetable to designate a particular time for reading and writing instruction. This is usage that reflects how literacy teaching and learning had been referred to in the 1991 English syllabus materials (Department of Education Queensland, 1991). The time period in which this policy document was published and used can be identified and therefore an historical link to the term “Language Arts” can be determined. Further, Mr. Green’s explanation of how he used Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy to construct questions to accompany texts that he selected for students to read in the timetabled session labeled, “Reading”, reveals another historical link. When Mr. Green acquired this Bloom-ian tool as part of his teaching and language-about-teaching repertoire cannot be established as easily as in the previous example. However, Bloom’s taxonomy (1956) was developed within a community of scholars at United States colleges led by Bloom in 1956 and revised in 1973. Mr. Green’s encounter with Bloom’s taxonomy in one or more of its forms may have occurred during his own initial preparation as a teacher, or perhaps it was in one of the several instances of professional development that have followed since. It may have been in an informal engagement substantively with the literature about the learning and teaching of reading, or dialogue with colleagues or friends outside his profession. It had not occurred within the school itself - and, along with his knowledge of the English syllabus of 1991 - its incorporation has permeated his teaching-of-reading repertoire from the not so recent past. Such “historical” associations are reflected in an element of Figure 48 in an attempt to build an explanatory framework for the findings of the study.
Karen (Fraser’s mother).

Karen exemplified influences of historical and community experiences in her definition of reading. Describing Fraser’s reading, she used the terms “expression” and “fluency” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 66, 31 October 2005). These are two of the three major descriptors that her son’s school had used on its Semester Report Card. She also spoke of his reading with specific qualitative terminology such as “very substandard”, “doesn’t read ahead” and “use of inflections” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 66, 31 October 2005) that also is reflective of talk teachers often use in reporting to parents when describing and categorising reading. Karen may have been displaying her experience of such discussions over the last seven years when speaking with teachers about her son’s educational progress. She commented also on phonic and motivational elements of reading, points of thinking that may have been part of her experiences in school contexts, mainstream media, or both. Comparing Fraser’s reading to that of her own and others’ reading development, Karen commented, “I think, you know, most of us would have got through [that reading] in Grade 3” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 66, 31 October 2005). Karen drew upon her own experience as a child using amount of work completed as a measuring stick to rate her son’s reading performance. If so, Fraser’s mother has exemplified how her own understandings about what constitutes reading had been constructed over time from a range of personal experiences.

What emerged in this study is that what constitutes reading is an intertextual mix, a hybrid of recontextualised experiences and understandings which formed a complex conglomerate unique to each individual. This quality of uniqueness explained to me my early dilemma with “difference”.

I determined that the manner in which participants employ intertextual links to define their understanding of reading indicates boundaries they see between times and places that are neither fixed nor stable around a community. This permeable quality contrasts with what Community of Practice proponents (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and Situated Literacy supporters (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Barton et al., 2000; Gee, 2004) assert about boundaries being clearly defined and permanent. I acknowledge that my findings are limited by the case study design and small participant pool involved in my study, rather than derived across large samples and multiple contexts. Yet, it may be that in studying large cohorts and developing theories from their studies, the theories and associated models have failed to represent the individualistic complexities
involved in reading – the uniqueness that underlies treating difference as “variation”. Therefore, within a descriptive framework (Figure 48), I have used broken lines to illustrate the permeable nature of the boundaries between participants’ historical and community experiences and school and/or home contexts.

**Figure 48. Constructions of Reading**

In addition, since these experiences occur in past and present societal contexts, a broader societal context needs to be represented if the descriptive framework is to account for the wider-ranging affects. The broader dimension incorporates the social and political influences that affect teachers and parents, schools and homes. In Mr. Green’s case, for example, educational curricula which were designed outside the school context affected his construction of reading. For Karen, past school and community experiences shaped her conceptualisations of reading. These school and community experiences would not be stand-alone events but rather would have been affected by the broader society.

The notion that individuals construct knowledge as they participate in and make sense of social experiences and events fits the social-constructivist paradigm of learning (Driscoll, 2000). In one sense, this paradigm of learning gels with what was identified in this study. However, it does not account for the boundary-crossing that was evident. Further explanation of this dimension is examined as the descriptive framework is constructed in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Within the descriptive framework, school and home contexts are represented sitting side-by-side as partners in the educating of students, rather than overlapping as may be the case in other contexts where what constitutes reading is studied. In the regard to the class examined in this study, parents participated in the classroom to a minimal extent. During the course of this study, only one parent entered the class as a volunteer.
assisting Mr. Green with art lessons focused on studying and applying scrapbooking techniques. Although parent-teacher interviews were conducted informally and formally as per the school and system requirements in which event parents entered the class to speak with the teacher, otherwise few parents participated as active supporters in in-class learning and teaching events.

It is possible that a teacher also will be the parent of one or more students. For example, this may be the case in a rural community where the population is small. In such cases, the degree of overlap as shown in Figure 48 of school and home may need to be measured and explained differently. Further investigation is needed to ascertain the validity of this proposition and then to strengthen the model.

What is possible but not so rare is the situation at home where the parent when interacting with their son or daughter on school work acts as a teacher, or a teacher at school acts as a parent. Such situations also require further examination and description if their effects in relation to boundary-crossing are to be better understood and predicted.

I now move on to compare what participants defined as reading. Elements of sameness and then difference are elucidated. Subsequently, distinct separations are examined. Implications of findings from the study are explored throughout these three sections.

**Elements of Sameness.**

One of the elements of sameness within participants’ definitions of reading was when Mr. Green’s timetable and some students’ email responses indicated reading to be a subject. This timetabled subject is recognised by Mr. Green and some of his students as a “daily literacy event” (Barton et al., 2000) in which reading features as an activity. In this case, “the notion of events stresses the situated nature of literacy, that it always exists in a social context” (Barton et al., 2000, p.8). What constituted reading in this literacy event had been constructed through engagement in regular, repeated reading activities in the classroom. Mr. Green had established a daily timeslot in which students knew they were required to participate in silent reading of teacher-provided texts and to undertake the assigned tasks of either summarising or of answering questions, which often were in the format of particular question types. These questions fit what the teacher hoped would test student’s thinking against Bloom’s taxonomy. Indeed,
students’ responses to these questions in their reading notebooks (Appendix T) and one student’s (Christopher’s) definition of reading employ the headings for each category of questions pertinent to Bloom’s taxonomy, although not recognising them as such. To students, the questions were a technique used by Mr. Green. All students in Mr. Green’s group used these headings. They were an expected part of this reading activity. Observation of students’ reading notebooks (Appendix T) revealed they all aligned with this expectation producing written artifacts that were responsive to teacher expectations of the reading-writing task associated with this activity. In this, students appropriated and applied Mr. Green’s ways of doing reading. This established what constituted reading as a situated practice shaped in accordance with Mr. Green’s expectations. What students had to do in reading was mandated by the teacher and the materials he provided.

This brings me to the second element of sameness. Teachers, parents and students defined reading as involving “doing” particular tasks. That is, reading was seen as something that is done, an act or action. The ways of doing reading that were predominant in the class were silently, independently, and with print-based text, regardless of curriculum area. Nevertheless, there were opportunities either provided by teachers or taken up by students to incorporate a social element to reading. In the LOTE class, for example, the teacher organised opportunities for individual and small group reading tasks which primarily involved reading and matching Japanese words/symbols against English words (e.g., Appendix I; Field Notes, Book 1, 14 June 2005 & 2 August 2005; Field Notes, Book 2, 4 October 2005). Another example of social opportunities being organised by the teacher was in Mr. Brown’s reading groups which involved a small group of students taking turns at reading (e.g., Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 18 October 2005 & 3 November 2005). In addition, this reading activity was facilitated by a more expert other, a teacher-aide. Although the teacher-aide was responsible for running this activity, Mr. Brown was heard to remind students to work collaboratively in working out the answers to the questions he provided with the text he selected for them to read.

Within most curriculum areas in the targeted class, doing reading involved the acts of accessing information and applying it to the construction of written and/or visual texts. The act of reading therein was associated with writing and designing. Accordingly, what was read was expected to be recalled and (re)presented in the designated format. The mode of (re)presentation involved was dependent upon the
teacher-assigned task. For example, in Mr. Green’s reading time and Mr. Brown’s reading group time, students were expected to read the teacher-provided text and accompanying questions. Subsequently, they were required to represent or (re)construct what they had learnt into a tabular, diagrammatic or sentence format (see samples of students’ reading-writing work in Appendix T). Another example of students reading and then applying what was read was when after reading and identifying the generic structure and language features of ballads within Mr. Green’s group, students were expected to use the information learnt to construct their own ballads. In these situations, doing reading was associated with (re)presenting what was learnt in a different format. Mr. Green, Mr. Brown and students in their class identify reading as something that is to be comprehended, learnt and (re)contextualized in teacher-specified written and/or visual formats. Doing reading therefore became “partly a matter of intertextuality – how texts draw upon, incorporate, recontextualise and dialogue with other texts” (Fairclough, 2003, p.17).

These examples suggest that doing reading always involved reproducing what had been learnt into another format. This means that what had been read was to be drawn upon intertextually and incorporated, recontextualised, within a new text format. Within the targeted class, the act of reading was a two-step process of comprehending and reconstructing what one has comprehended. This two-step process required students to use what they had just read and recontextualise it into one or more intertextual compilations as per designated by the teacher. This way of doing reading was what counted in the targeted class. Other ways of doing reading were observed but if they did not follow the two-step process, they did not count. Those forms of reading prioritised by the teacher were legitimatised. Others, typically the children’s personal preferences, were marginalised.

The third element of sameness was that all participants identified reading as being associated with particular texts - print-based ones. In the targeted class, acts of reading upon print-based texts were what counted. Reading of other texts occurred but did not seem to count for much, if at all. In home contexts, doing reading involved reading particular types of texts, primarily print-based books. Some texts were identified by parents as rubbish, not worthy to be read. These findings indicate that what constitutes reading involves particular practices and texts that are valued. These practices and texts count. Other ways of doing reading and other texts that do not fit with what counted became marginalised and invisible. Like Lewis (2001), I found teachers’ and parents’
constructions of what constitutes reading included “expectations for appropriate actions and interaction within or against which students perform” (p.176). Doing reading emerged as a set of acts of which some counted and some did not.

It concerned me that these texts were not representative of the diversity of texts in the community and broader society in which the students lived. This limited ways of reading available to students and inhibited what they would learn in their literacy learning in both places. “Reading now involves viewing still and moving images, and recognising and interpreting symbols and icons” (Anstey, 2002, p.4). Moreover, “multimedia technologies produce hybrid, nonlinear interactive texts that contain multiple modes - that is, information is presented in spoken, written, nonverbal, visual or auditory forms” (Anstey, 2002, p.14). To limit reading programs to print-based texts which have a linear presentation of information and that does not account for what the children are reading when choosing to do so, is to restrict students’ capacity to learn how to read the diversity of texts available to them in contemporary society.

Also of concern to me is when what constitutes reading designates that only some texts count. When texts that count align with the view of reading that those in positions of power (in this instance, teachers and parents) hold, what eventuates is the development of what may be termed official or authorised texts. Any text that does not count then becomes an unofficial or non-authorised text. Within this study, there were situations where I considered reading was occurring but adults and students did not acknowledge such as reading. An example was when students were given genuine opportunity to read texts of their own preference. I propose that due to the unofficial or non-authorised status of these texts, the reading became marginalised or invisible. Although McNaughton (1995; 2002) proposed that children learn what counts as literacy, which includes reading, through participating in ambient, joint and personal activities, this study found personal reading activities generally were marginalised and silenced. Fraser offers an example of a child who often attempted to read his preferred texts, but when asked he did not acknowledge this as reading. Despite reading lots being valued in his class, Fraser’s choice of text was not one that had been authorised. Thus, his reading lots was not seen.

Lewis (2001) claimed that “like other features of classroom life, the literary culture of a classroom is created through social codes and practices that authorise particular worldviews” (p.174). This was evident in the classroom studied. I found that particular
constructions of reading authorised particular ways of *doing reading* and ensured no variation from the use of print-based texts.

The ways of *doing reading* in the class could be explained by the description: “literacy must be about taking available designs (current literacy skills, knowledge and processes) and designing new ones (combining and recombining them in new ways, rather than reproducing the available designs) in order to redesign possible social futures” (Anstey, 2002, p.15). Available designs in regard to a range of print-based texts were read and deconstructed. Students used the understandings gained to design new texts. They represented what they learnt in a range of written and visual formats. In some instances, they reproduced the available designs and, in others, they represented the learning in new ways. I propose that deconstructing available designs and reproducing them may enable students to gain mastery of a genre or piece of information. But, it is not sufficient. Students need to know how to transform what they have learnt into a range of text formats (linear and non-linear) if they are to develop “the flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communication technologies via spoken language, print, and multimedia” (Luke, Freebody, Land, Booth, & Kronk, 2000, p.9).

Reproducing is a form of flexibility but, on a continuum of flexibility, it would rate lowly. The transformation involved in taking what one has read and using that to construct a text of the same genre or to answer a question requiring recounting of information gained might be considered a design task with a low level of flexibility. I posit that this level of designing is insufficient for students to develop as informed and competent literacy users in contemporary society.

Another point to consider when viewing reading as an act or acts is that, as Heap (1991) proposed, the act or acts “can be done well, or poorly” (p.115). This construction of reading holds the capacity to position students as having particular levels of competency as readers and in so doing the potential to use deficit talk arises.

The discussion so far on sameness has concentrated mainly on teachers’ and parents’ definitions of what constituted reading. Some instances of students’ views have been included where pertinent. I include here additional comments about sameness in regard to students’ explanations of what constitutes reading.
Students agree in part with what their teacher and parents considered reading to be. This is to be expected if we consider students as being enculturated or apprenticed (Lave, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991; McNaughton, 1995, 2002; Rogoff, 1990, 2003) to what constitutes reading within their home and school. Echoes of teachers’ definitions of reading were evident in students’ descriptions of reading and in their work. Yet, there also were differences. These differences did not appear to be due to resistance or lack of ability. Rather, they can be accounted for by students constructing their own understandings of what constituted reading on the basis of their own observations and experiences. As they did so, they also developed opinions of what counted.

Elements of Difference.
Different messages of what constituted reading were revealed in this study. These multiple realities do not match findings from studies of educational communities in which situated literacy explanations have emerged (Barton et al., 2000; Gee, 2004; Green & Meyer, 1991; Heap, 1991) or those of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Instead these findings showed different constructs of reading shaped intertextually by social, historical and temporal experiences. They showed that teachers, parents and students disagreed on some elements of what counted in reading. In addition, some of what counted for some participants did not count as reading for others. Thus, in instances where there was a power imbalance, some reading for some readers became marginalised and invisible. This typically involved a teacher’s greater status in classroom reading; and some tensions where a parent and child were struggling with what was preferred reading at home.

In the following, three points of difference are examined: students’ interests, texts, and purposes of reading. I begin by examining the first two points of difference, students’ interests and texts, as they are interrelated. Subsequently, differences in regard to the purposes of reading are explored. Overall, these differences show that the teachers, parents and students involved essentially disagreed on what counted as reading.

Neither Mr. Green nor Mr. Brown acknowledged students’ interests when selecting texts for reading in their class. Rather, their selection of texts was driven by what they considered would support curriculum demands. Mr. Green explained his approach to curriculum as thematic, one influenced by the availability of resources. Where resources were not available, he indicated “you change your emphasis to something you can get resources” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 48, 4 June 2005).
Even when Mr. Green was able to locate suitable texts, insufficient numbers of texts proved problematic for the tasks he proposed for students where their completion required students to have individual copies. He was able to accommodate many such instances by making and using photocopies, or by using different but topic-related books. His decisions on what content to teach slanted heavily toward topics where multiple copies of a text or multiple texts on a topic were available. This meant, Mr. Green’s selection of text was informed by very pragmatic interpretations leading to a delivered curriculum and severely-constrained literary choices. At no point did Mr. Green consider students’ interests as they had manifested in their own reading materials and preferences in this planning and delivery of his learning-teaching program. Had he sought to do so, students might have told him as easily as they told me what they sought out to read, liked reading and learnt from as children. This then might have initiated a negotiated co-construction of curriculum which built on their emerging skills and confidence. Whether this would have affected better results for them and Mr. Green in relation to the year’s objectives of some subset of them is an empirical question. Whether Mr. Green will agree to seek an answer to this question will determine next steps in research following this thesis.

Mr. Brown also selected texts based on curriculum demands at any point in time. Like Mr. Green, he selected most texts to match the curriculum focus. Others were selected, compiled or constructed by Mr. Brown to meet the learning involved in particular reading activities. The texts Mr. Brown used in SOSE, he obtained from a community source. These materials were about government structures and processes and, as an election was soon to occur, these were readily available from the local community. The texts that his reading groups used that related to the curriculum often were parts of reading book schemes that were available in the school. For the computer skills’ program he designed, Mr. Brown sourced booklets compiled by a teacher in another school where he had once worked and compiled booklets himself with photocopied activities from computer skill texts (see Appendix S for a copy of one of these booklets). He also wrote sentences and put together the transformation packages and marking sheets for the Spelling Sequencing Task. Overall, Mr. Brown’s selection of texts involved consideration of curriculum demands and what he believed he needed to set learning-teaching tasks. This resulted in a mixture of teacher-made and teacher-selected materials. Like Mr. Green, Mr. Brown did not consider students’ interests when selecting texts.
At one point in the study, both teachers required students to research information related to newspaper headings as part of their homework (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 6 May 2005). Students’ findings were examined each morning as a whole class activity. In addition, multiple copies of newspapers were sourced and included as part of the class curriculum. The inclusion of newspapers may be viewed as the teachers including texts pertinent to students’ lives beyond the school gates and to making them aware of current social phenomena and events. Hobbs (2006) found newspapers to be a “common feature of instruction in many schools since the 1960s” (p.23).

Newspapers have been identified as key texts within some communities studied (e.g., Heath, 1983). Including newspapers in schools make sense if educators want to build upon the reading experiences students have in their homes and as Street (2002) says it makes “good pedagogical sense” (p.131). However, we are surmising here that the students in the targeted classroom like the students in Heath’s study see others reading newspapers in their homes and likewise participate in reading this text themselves. In a quick survey conducted by Mr. Brown as to who in the targeted class read newspapers, the number of hands raised indicated only a few students did so. Of these, one child’s father was the editor of the sports section of the local newspaper. Reading of newspapers as a familial reading practice was to be expected in this child’s case. However, for most students in the class, it must be acknowledged that newspapers were neither familiar texts nor what these students choose to read. This finding is similar to Pardun and Scott’s (2004) where “newspaper readership [was] not a priority to the majority of early teens” (p.81). Given that newspapers now are available online, I consider reading paper-based newspapers is far less important in preparing students for future practice. Nevertheless, the students in the targeted class in my study were able to do the teacher-designated task by using a range of methods including asking their father, watching the news on television, and researching on the internet to locate the required information. However, as a teacher-designated reading activity this homework task failed. Instead it became an information-gathering exercise which could be achieved by a range of communication modes: speaking, listening, viewing and/or reading.

In discussing the kinds of texts their children read, parents also revealed an opinion that particular texts are crucial to reading success. In all instances, these texts were print-based. Usually, novels were identified by parents as the texts their students should read more of. The underpinning message here was that some texts were more important than others in assisting their children’s development as readers. Paper-based
novels and, in Fraser’s mother’s instance, real-world texts were considered the right tools for their sons and daughters’ ongoing reading development. This meant that other texts and reading experiences were less valued. Karen identified “Star Wars or umm Runescape or some of these awful things” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 26, 31 October 2005) as texts that were of little to no value in reading. Similarly, Wayne’s mother targeted *Simpsons’ comics* as “a bit rubbishy” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 36, 19 October 2005). She also identified novels as a better choice than computer researching. Although parents identified some texts as having low value, individual differences were evident as to which texts these were. What was determined is that print-based texts were highly valued, particularly if they came in a novel or non-narrative format.

I propose, however, that it is not the text that is important, but opportunities to read. Like Worthy (1996), I think it is of “paramount important that students read regardless of the perceived quality of the literature” (p.211). Therefore, I propose that parents, and teachers, should be cognisant that reading is the more critical factor, rather than what text is read. Moreover, I advocate both parents and teachers consider and include in their professional activity texts based on students’ interests and preferences. The question pertinent here is what opportunities are available for students to read about topics where their interests lie. In the targeted class, students had few authorised opportunities to do so.

Students in the targeted class were cognisant of which text or texts were pertinent for particular reading tasks and they appeared to accept and align with these arrangements. Yet when invited to tell about what they read, students spoke about their own reading interests. Since text selection was regulated by teachers, the potential for students to select texts initially seemed limited. Closer analysis revealed before school, silent reading and library times for Mr. Green’s class and library time for Mr. Brown’s group were the only occasions when students were able to select and read texts that fitted their interests or preferences somewhat. Texts students brought from home or got from the school library were what was read during these times. Students also selected books from bookshelves containing library books and teacher-purchased materials. This meant that in order to read texts of their own preference, students needed to take some divergent action or align with the class reading regime. In Mr. Green’s class, some students engaged in secretive, unauthorised reading either through small gaps between their desk and open tidy box, as for example Fraser did with his game cheat
sheets (e.g., Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 3 June 2005), and Sarah did her Tamagochi (Appendix D, Audio-taped observation, 19 July 2005) - or secreted within a teacher-designated text as Fraser did during a music lesson (Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 1, 28 September 2005). Several students kept copies of books they preferred (e.g., surfing magazines, superhero comics and books of jokes) on their desks (e.g. Appendix B, Field Notes, Book 2, 7 October 2005 (Mark) & 11 October 2005 (Derrick); Field Notes, Book 3, 19 October 2005). Since Mr. Green allowed these items to be read at silent reading time, students did not hide them. Instead these texts were in full view of Mr. Green and other students as everyone knew that these materials were authorised by Mr. Green for that reading occasion only.

Since selecting texts emerged as the first step in doing reading, Figure 49 includes this as a step in its evolving descriptive framework. In the school context, the framework allows for both teacher and student text-selection opportunities. Similarly, in the home context, the framework provides for both parent and child selection of texts.

![Figure 49. Text Selection](image)

Before moving on from discussion around text selection, I propose that if teachers want to create reading programs which enhance learning outcomes for all individuals in their class, the cases reported in this study indicate that it is crucial that students be provided with opportunities to encounter texts and topics in which they are interested. Ivey and Broaddus (2000) recommended including students’ interests and choice opportunities within “student-responsive reading instruction” (p.77). I concur with this on the basis of this study. Above all else, it is vital that students be reading regardless of the text involved. This message is just as important for parents to hear as it is for teachers. So I advocate that students’ voices be heard when it comes to teachers selecting texts for in-school reading and parents selecting texts for home reading.
The third point of difference is the purposes for reading identified by teachers, parents and students when defining what constitutes reading.

Both teachers placed a heavy focus on accessing and gaining meaningful information. In these cases, reading was concerned with accessing, understanding and learning, components of the notion of reading to learn; therein assuming all students in the targeted class had learnt to read. It is unclear from the data obtained whether all cases did have the skills required to do the things with reading that such an assumption contains. It also made an assertion that reading was about understanding and using particular texts to learn. Thus, meaning was focused by the teachers’ and school’s purposes. By default, it signaled that personal interests were not important.

In contrast to this, parents talked about their children’s reading for a range of different purposes: to learn, to research, to practice, and to be entertained. Fraser’s mother spoke of her son’s preference for reading fantasy and computer games texts, while she perceived a need for him to read newspapers and National Geographic in order for “a bit of the real world to seep in every now and then” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 318, 31 October 2005). The purpose of reading she saw for reading was for Fraser to be informed of world events and to lift him away for short periods of time from his own choices. She saw this type of reading as likely to better prepare him for the future.

Wayne’s mother spoke of her son researching information on the internet to address his own personal and family queries. She also said he liked to read mystery books and travel books, assumedly, the first being for entertainment purposes and the second for information purposes. Wayne’s mother also reported that Wayne “plays the pianos, so that’s his piano music reading and his theory” (Turn 50) and that doing this necessitates “quite a lot of practicing” (Turn 52). At home, Wayne reads to learn, to gain information and to practice and refine his developing piano-playing abilities.

Together the various explanations offered by students were that reading has multiple purposes including to be informed, to improve, to regulate time and behaviour, and to help one do work. These explanations recognise reading as an element of life in multiple communities and society, by associating it with an assortment of school, home and life purposes.
Each of the purposes identified by teachers, parents and students are valid ones for reading. Nevertheless, the differences again signify that what constitutes reading is an individualistic construction where some things count and others don’t. Whether students align or collude (Fletcher, 2004), with what is valued and expected by their teacher or parents in regard to reading purposes or not, emerges as a concern requiring further attention. What are the implications arising from either aligning or diverging from these authorised views of what constitutes reading including the associated ways of doing reading and using authorised texts? This matter is explored further in the discussion around the second question examined in this study.

To accommodate this dimension of reading, Figure 50 includes the potential for aligning and diverging. These additions are provided in readiness for examining the pathways taken when students take up particular ways of doing reading. These pathways are explored in the section on *Question 2: What is taken up as reading by students in this class?* Before moving to that question, however, the distinct separations between teachers’, parents’ and students’ views of what constitutes reading require examination.

![Figure 50. Inclusion of dimensions of alignment and divergence](image)

**Distinct Separations.**

Teachers define reading in separate and cross-curriculum ways that are responsive to curricula and task demands. Most parents reported “trusting” that a teacher would advise them if there was any need, or if there were any concerns about their children’s reading (e.g. Appendix G, Audio-taped interviews, Sally (Liz’s mother), Turns 8, 12 & 14, 19 October 2005 & Jenny (Wayne’s mother), Turns 99 & 101, 19 October 2005). They saw teachers as experts in reading, curriculum design and learning and teaching matters – and deferred to this perception.
Rather than bodies that were acculturated, apprenticed or acted upon, students were competent in defining what constitutes reading and presenting opinions which in some ways are similar to those of teachers and/or parents, and different in others. However, reading was not something controlled and regulated solely by teachers and parents in their view; they believed that they, too, had some degree of agency.

Summary.
Three key findings from the study helped formulate my response to Question 1: What markers show what constitutes reading in a classroom setting?

First, each participant had an explicit answer, though these differed for each individual regardless of whether he/she was a teacher, parent or student/child. Their differing historical and community experiences with reading informed and shaped what they said such that what resulted were individualistic, complex constructions of reading. These data challenge and negate the notion of situated perspectives of reading and literacy where such perspectives fail to recognise reading in any one situation may be affected by people’s reading experiences from other times and places. The clear implications for educators whose contexts and participants resemble those of any of the cases reported here, is not only an imperative to recognise the individualistic and complex ways in which students - and their peers and parents - conceptualise reading and to acknowledge that such differences affect how reading is seen and done by students in school-reading, but also, that there is strength in such recognition and acknowledgement. The strength is in exploring with students ways in which “authorisation” of reading is achieved and revisiting to ensure for each student inherently-better use is made of what interests and motivates them as readers and acquirers of knowledge.

Second, the case study approach enabled issues of “what one does when reading” and “what one reads when reading” to be explored. Doing reading incorporated a set of acts where particular components linked with a child’s developed interests are counted as reading. Children validated and authorised only some texts as worthy “of reading”. They marginalised and silenced non-authorised texts – even if classroom activities or impositions of a parent’s will required them to be “read”. Such validation and marginalisation needs to be recognised as such by students and adjusted if they are to embrace new experiences and opportunities for learning that a non-preferred situation presents.
Third, together the various explanations provided insights into the variability of what constituted reading in the middle-years’ class studied. This variability challenges existing views of reading as a situated practice. It also signals the need for an alternative which constructs reading as individualistic, complex, and informed by experiences in multiple places and times.

These findings have informed my construction of a descriptive framework that might guide practice in middle-year classrooms and through further research provide clearer and more practical clarifications and interpretations of what constitutes reading in middle-years’ classrooms.

I now move on to examine the implications arising from the findings for the second question, *What do students take up as reading in this setting?*

**Q2: What do students take up as reading in this setting?**

Each case examined in this study showed what was taken up as reading was different for each individual. These cases helped to identify the sameness and difference as well as the significant separations between participants’ perspectives of reading and of what individual students took up. Moreover, those examined were found to have differentially complied with what teachers, parents or their peers had seen as authorised reading. This affected how each was recognised as a reader.

**Elements of Sameness.**

To varying degrees students took up what others told them to do in establishing what *needed to be* counted as reading. They “did” what was expected according to another’s view (their teacher, parent or peers). What a student took up affected descriptions that others gave to them as a reader. In the following cases, Tess and Ryan in the school context and Wayne and Fraser in the home context, the elements of sameness (and difference) are highlighted. These instances are used to provide explanations of what students “do” in reading that is an alternative to the existing deficit-framed binary of conform-not conform.

**Tess.**

Mr. Green in defining what counted in reading was dealing with print-based texts. He specified quantity of reading to be pertinent to advancing as a reader, and he described Tess as “an above average student and fairly meticulous with her work who reads
enormous amounts of books” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 66, 4 June 2005) and later stated “she devours books” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 206, 17 September 2005). Throughout several exchanges he attributed quantity as to the defining variable in development of a good reader, identifying Tess as a child who demonstrated the better end of this attribute. He related Tess’ capacity to read lots to her performances in completing assigned reading tasks quickly and with a high level of accuracy. Mr. Green’s report card ratings positioned Tess at the highest level in all aspects of reading, Tess met all criteria of what Mr. Green believed constituted reading and he set out this opinion in the School Report Card, reinforcing further the in-class affirmation he provided to Tess for her performance, development – and alignment. In Figure 51, I have used a green line to plot where Tess aligned with Mr. Green in a view of “what counts”. Her speedy and accurate completion of reading tasks and use of texts provided by Mr. Green are shown with a yellow line. Her conformity created a pathway which led to Tess’ rating (by Mr. Green) as “an above average student” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 66, 4 June 2005) and an “excellent” reader (Appendix G, School Report Card, Semester 2). Tess’ pathway of alignment with text (A1) and task (A2) lead to the production of work (A1 + A2) which matched what Mr. Green expected of students, and did so at a very high level of performance.

It was wonderful that Tess is achieving so well in reading. She demonstrated mastery of the elements of reading valued by her teacher. But, what if her teacher’s view was too narrow? For example, where might Tess have developed in relation to e-literacy? The question is important if teachers, parents and children like Tess are to check what flexibility they have to deal with demands of multiliteracies in contemporary society.
Ryan was aware that his ballad did not comply completely with what the teacher had asked for. He explained this to me by saying that his construction had drawn upon his reading in class and at home. As he articulated the decision-making and reading experiences underpinning the work, Ryan exhibited competency. In his written construction, Ryan reproduced the generic structure including rhyme of those ballads he had read in class as part of a teaching-learning encounter with the poetic form – up to its final two lines. In major part, Ryan aligned his work with what he had learnt at school and the teacher’s task demands for the assignment. However, in thinking the ballad’s ending through to construction in the final two lines, he drew his inspiration from poems he had read at home. He liked particularly one that ended in a way different from the teacher’s model, and decided to use this ending. This is where he diverged from the task requirements and of what the teacher had shown in-class. Thus Ryan aligned and diverged with the “authorised” view during his production of a ballad. His pathway of alignment followed by divergence is shown by the green line in Figure 52. He aligned with text (A1) and task (A2), but also diverged at the task (D2). The outcome at the production level was A1 + A2 + D2: a product mostly aligned but with slight variation. The yellow lines represent the teacher’s role in selecting the text (a
ballad), and the task (to produce a ballad using the generic structure and language features studied, but on a topic familiar to the student).

![Figure 52](image)

**Figure 52.** Ryan’s Pathway of Alignment and Divergence in the production of a ballad

Ryan’s divergence was minor but divergences are significant in that they could suggest to a teacher or parent that a student or son/daughter did not fully understand the task or was unable to (re)produce the textual requirements of a ballad. Divergence seen in such a way is likely to be rated either as poor work requiring further attention to bring it into alignment. It might also suggest some experimentation or intertextualisation where such divergence as Ryan’s final two lines is seen as an innovative re-alignment and accepted. The latter suggestion gels with perspectives on pedagogy, curriculum and resources that feature an educational scaffolding of students’ literacy flexibility. Mr. Green neither praised nor punished Ryan’s divergence. Rather, he formed the view that the task had been badly pitched and departures from the norm were really evidence of this.

According to the Literate Futures Report, to be literate in today’s society one must have “flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communications technologies via spoken language, print, and
multimedia” (Luke et al., 2000, p.9). Ryan’s appropriation and combination of elements from the school-read ballads and home-read poems to produce a hybrid text was, as Haas Dyson (2008) would explain it, a remix “of materials from varied social spheres” (p.313). I propose that Ryan demonstrated innovation and flexibility in marshalling and combining his personal resources that added greatly to what was achieved in the reading-writing task set by his teacher. Whether Mr. Green would agree is debatable as his conceptualisation of this reading-writing task did not call for this level of flexibility, and his post-event analysis swamped opportunities for teacher, Ryan and others in the class to discuss Ryan’s divergence and reflect on its consequences.

This conjecture raises an issue as to whether in constructing reading-writing assignment items teachers sometimes unknowingly limit the educative potential of the learning moments by accenting alignment too strongly. Stipulations of strict alignment may have immediate benefits in establishing students’ basic mastery, and in assessing such in relation to specific knowledge or skills as they are exercised against an expert model. In many instances, such work has great merit. However, an eye to higher Bloom-ian thinking would help many teachers see instances where “stipulation” need not be so rigid, and in fact, students’ divergence could be built into planning and assessment of tasks to better encourage student-centered scaffolding of their conceptualisation, completion and evaluation beyond the teacher’s starting point. Where opportunity is given for students like Ryan to explain the information-gathering, decision-making and production involved in a literacy learning task such as writing a ballad, teachers are likely to want to see beyond their own perspectives, and to appreciate the new horizon such openness will bring. Where it is not, excellent teachers like Mr. Green may be left with only deficit views of their own work - and that of their students

While Ryan’s work might be viewed as deficient in that he had not ended the ballad in accord with the presented model, using the deficit lens erases opportunity for knowledge about his view of composing, or of where in his life experiences, including school, he could and should go to do the best possible job on a task at hand, or of what joy he found in tweaking a good model with something he felt added to its utility. An alternative view proposed from the Descriptive Framework is that Ryan’s uniqueness is visible and practically available in an analysis of where he aligned and where he diverged, with what effect, and with what self-analysed outcomes.
Let me present you with another situation to consider this. In his scrapbooking construction focused on surfing, Ryan read and aligned his reading-art construction partly with Mr. Green’s instructions which were written on the blackboard. He had taken up the artwork notions of having a theme, layout, background, illustrations and cropping (the first five of eight instructions Mr. Green listed on the blackboard - Field Notes, Book 1, 30 May 2005). Two of his peers told him that his work was too busy and did not match what was expected (Appendix I, Video-taped observation, 2 June 2005; Appendix B, Field Book 1, 2 June 2005). Ryan explained that his work needed to be like that in order to represent his selected theme authentically, including references to his knowledge of surf culture and surfing magazines. Ryan’s divergence was significant in that it did not illustrate completely that he understood the textual requirements of the assigned task, but showed his understanding of the social and textual requirements of surfing texts. Ryan’s divergence in this instance could be viewed as either poor work requiring further attention to bring it into alignment with the task requirements, or as an example of sophisticated work which aligns with the idea of literacy users being flexible. Instead of reproducing exactly what the teacher had taught about text layouts, Ryan appropriated a combination of elements from the school-read-and-deconstructed texts, reading of surfing magazines and awareness of surfing culture to produce a hybrid text. Once again, the hybrid text Ryan produced was a blend of texts and reading experiences from in-school and out-of-school.

This hybrid text was the product of performances that aligned at the points of the teacher-selected text (A1) and task (A2) but also diverged at the point of the task (D2). Figure 53 has a green line included to plot Ryan’s pathway of alignment and divergence. Yellow lines are used to show the teacher-selected text and task.

If he had constructed a text that aligned totally with the teacher-set task, Ryan would have produced something that was not in sync with surfing culture or texts. Therefore, I propose that his construction was a more informed and appropriate piece of reading-art work. Moreover, I posit to have viewed Ryan’s work as less than “good” because it did not meet the task requirements in full would be inappropriate and not representative of his competencies as a reader and literate being. The potential to judge Ryan’s work via a deficit lens was evident in his peer’s feedback. The same kind of evaluation was likely to be the case with his teacher given that he did not align completely with task requirements. Therefore, again, I use Ryan as an example to encourage teachers to be cautious when they judge students as readers and when
evaluating the quality of their constructions consider how and where they may have
drawn upon and included elements from their reading experiences in other times and
places. Furthermore, I propose teachers include opportunities for students’ voices to
be heard in regard to what informed their decision-making and actions. This inclusion
(as in Ryan’s case) may be sufficient to enable insights into the variety of reading
experiences students take up when engaged in school reading tasks.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 53.** Ryan’s pathway of alignment and divergence in Art task

**Wayne.**

At interview, Wayne’s mother, Jenny, recounted events where he or his parents had
identified particular needs. A family need cited was buying a new car (Appendix G,
Audio-taped interview, Turn 22, 19 October 2005). Wayne was the person in the
family who researched anything online. He was “the expert”. So it was Wayne who
searched for information about the new car. In this instance, he located pertinent
information and reported his findings to his family. Wayne’s expertise in using the
internet to research to address personal and family needs is recognised by his mother
as an important and useful skill. Figure 54 illustrates the pathway of alignment that
Wayne followed when he researched for a new car. The purple line signifies the parent-identified task (A1) - to find details about a new car. The text (A2), in this instance, was multiple and web-based and selected by Wayne to meet the purposes of the task. His pathway of alignment with text (A1) and task (A2) is shown by a yellow line, leading to the production of work (A1 + A2) which matched what his family needed successfully. The outcome at the production level was A1 + A2: a totally aligned product.

Figure 54. Wayne’s Pathway of Alignment and Divergence when researching for a new car

Despite recognising Wayne’s expertise in using the internet to research personal and family needs, his mother did not identify it as reading, until the researcher designated it as such (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turns 10 & 12, 19 October 2005). At interview, Jenny reported that she would prefer her son to read more novels, but he was “not a big novel reader” instead preferring to use the internet (Appendix, Audio-taped interview, Turn 66, 19 October 2005). Figure 55 shows when Jenny considered novel reading should be happening, Wayne is likely to choose one of his novel preferences, for example a mystery or Hardy Boys’ book. At this point (A1), Wayne takes up and aligns with his mother’s view of novels constituting reading. Although
Wayne liked to read these types of books, according to Jenny, he preferred to use the internet. At the task level (A2), he diverged from his mother’s concept of what counts in reading. Figure 55 illustrates in purple, Jenny’s selection of novels as a text (A1) and reading these as the task (A2). The yellow line plots Wayne’s actions in aligning with his mother’s choice of text and diverging when it comes to the task of reading novels due to his preference for using the internet (D2). In this instance, the outcome at the production level was A1 + A2 + D2: a product partially aligned but with some variation. This divergence is seen by Jenny as problematic to some extent. Her comments show some of the ways that she works to redirect Wayne’s attention back into book reading:

I think it would be good if he read a bit more. Like I think. I often try to encourage him to go in and sit down and read because his other sister is a big reader and so he is more into doing all this stuff on the computer, but I say to him it is good if you can just…. And it is often when he is restless I will say, it would be good if you could just go and sit down and read a novel for a while. (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 107, 19 October 2005)

Figure 55. Wayne’s pathway of alignment and divergence when reading novels of his own choice

Wayne’s case illustrates the complexities involved as students attempt to address their own preferences and understandings about what constitutes reading and those of their parents. Instead of it being a simple case of choosing to either align or diverge (collude
or collide (Fletcher, 2004)), Wayne presents a case where aligning and diverging may occur simultaneously. Where the task affords Wayne the opportunity to use his own choice of text, the potential for alignment is higher than where the choice of text is that of his mother.

**Fraser.**

Fraser’s mother, Karen, maintained that real-world texts were what was important for her son’s development as a reader. To this purpose, she selected newspapers, National Geographic articles and other real-world texts for him to read (plotted over ‘Select Text’ on Figure 56 with a purple line). She also organised times for Fraser to read these texts daily (plotted over ‘Task’ on Figure 56 with a purple line).

Karen reported that Fraser complained and refused to co-operate and participate. He would not take up these texts. In taking this stance, he diverged significantly from his mother’s view of what constituted reading, at least in relation to what literary sources would comprise it. Moreover, his divergence led to Fraser being rated by his mother as a reader who was resisting, non-complying, not motivated: a very poor reader and indeed this is true with respect to the newspapers, National Geographic articles and other real-world texts she gave to him. His pathway of divergence at text (D1) and task (D2) is shown by a yellow line on Figure 56. The outcome is divergence to the full extent (D1 + D2).

*Figure 56. Fraser’s pathway of divergence when reading texts selected by his mother*
The reading Fraser does (and prefers to do) with particular fantasy and computer-based texts are maligned by his mother. She labels these texts as “awful things” (Appendix G, Audio-taped interview, Turn 26, 31 October 2005). They neither aligned with her view of what would enhance one’s life opportunities, nor with what she considered constituted reading (plotted in purple on Figure 57). In reading these texts, Fraser diverged significantly from what his mother counted as reading. Again, the outcome at the production level was D1 + D2 to the full extent. His pathway of divergence is plotted in yellow on Figure 57. Even if Fraser displayed what his mother considered good reader behaviours when reading these texts, it is highly likely his reading would not have been acknowledged by his mother. Consequently, this reading could be marginalised to the point of invisibility and Fraser standing as a very poor reader would remain.

In summary, the cases of Tess, Ryan, Wayne and Fraser show that what counts as reading according to their teacher or parents has always been taken up in varying degrees by the four students. Each case indicates that the degree of alignment and/or divergence impacts upon how the student is viewed as a reader.
These cases also reveal elements of difference which are examined in the next section.

**Elements of Difference.**

Tess’ case suggests that students who do all required of them by their teacher in regard to particular reading tasks, are seen by that teacher as an above average reader. Moreover, as in Tess’ situation, these students are likely to gain privileges associated with this status. Those who do not perform reading as expected are likely to be perceived as “less than good” and receive feedback (written and/or verbal) about deficiencies. In the targeted class, ticks and crosses were given to indicate what was correct and what was not (Appendix T). Students are expected to take up and use a teacher’s feedback and the opportunities this provides for them to improve themselves as readers. Small divergences may be tolerated as happened in Ryan’s case. Students who engage in significant divergences, as Fraser did with his mother, Karen, are positioning themselves by their actions and non-actions to be considered “below average” readers. Through Ryan’s examples, I offer explanations of reading performance other than deficit ones when students engage in divergences. Divergence may mean more sophisticated reading work is occurring. Divergence may be evidence of boundary-crossing with intertextuality and recontextualisation at work. Divergence may be one way of achieving the Redesigned (The New London Group, 1996, 2000), a product informed by reading experiences and which represents authentic texts in society. These explanations of students’ divergences in reading provide space for rejecting as simplistic the binary of good-poor readers and for stimulating conversation about ways to enjoy and use the complexities involved in taking-up reading as part of the teaching-learning process.

Opportunities for students to voice their own perceptions of reading emerged from this study as crucial to gaining insights into what reading means to them and how this influences what they take-up as reading. Without these insights, it would be easy to revert to using good-bad binaries when considering what students are doing in reading.

**Distinctive Separations.**

Ryan’s case provides an example of a student who was complying with the school reading requirements while at the same time, diverging to accommodate another reading event that he perceived enhanced the quality of his work. The processes of aligning and diverging occurred simultaneously as he engaged in the reading-writing task by his teacher. His case indicates that students as writers draw upon more than
school reading experiences to inform their constructions. During this, they are confronted with tensions in regard to alignment and divergence to teacher-set tasks. Since teachers have the power to judge whether a student’s production meets the task requirements or not, acknowledging that this tension exists is crucial to providing valid measures of a student’s competencies as a reader and writer.

The power afforded a teacher in regard to reading in a classroom must be acknowledged and critiqued. This study found that in both cases, teachers established what counts as reading in their classroom. In so doing, they prioritised and mandated particular texts and particular ways of doing reading and its associated literacy tasks. When students, such as Ryan, exerted reflective learning and brought agency in their reading work, tensions emerged and was sometimes problematic, rather than a strategic and positive action. The teachers typically created space that demanded close alignment. There was little room for divergence.

Fletcher (2004) would identify Fraser’s rejection of his mother’s preferred reading materials as colliding with his mother’s view of reading. However, Fraser was given no or limited opportunity to voice what he counted as reading other than with me. His disagreement with his mother’s view is manifest in his behaviours that his mother described as oppositional. And so they might be. But, if he aligned falsely with his mother, Fraser’s personally developing view of reading would be subjugated. By not aligning, Fraser’s voice was still audible. His divergence signaled to Karen an opportunity to be inclusive of his developmental position on what constituted reading and what he preferred to take-up when given the chance to do so.

Recognising and discussing tensions a student experiences in relation to alignment and divergence may help a teacher or a parent to move more constructively toward balances that are workable in the interests of the child’s engagement with reading and through it, with learning. The cases reported in this study show that the children’s reading typically was controlled (regulated and measured) by their teachers and parents. Various factors are shown in the descriptive framework (Figure 58) of how community, time, significant adults, selected texts and tasks for engagement present pathways where alignment and divergence of a child’s constructions might be plotted. Such a depiction allows for comparisons with teacher, parent and peers of what they see that reading is and could be, what they have developed already as preferences for reading and what they take up as reading.
The cases of Tess, Ryan, Wayne and Fraser indicated that students who align with what their teacher or parent counts as reading will be seen as “good” readers and those who diverge are likely to be considered to be in need of improvement and identified as “less than good” readers. These cases of Tess, Ryan, Wayne and Fraser have indicated that they already know that some ways of being a reader are more important than others, dependent upon what constitutes reading to the person making judgments of their reading as students or children. Typically but not always as for Tess, teachers, parents and students in the targeted class disagreed on what counted as ways of being a reader. This sometimes (e.g., for Fraser) led to a child being rated very differently by different people. It also resulted in the selection in of some texts and some ways of doing reading, while others were marginalised and silenced. The relationship between what counts as reading and measures of students’ competency as readers emerged from this study as a point of significance. Some studies (e.g., Green & Meyer, 1991) viewing this relationship through a situated literacy lens have offered explanations that reinforce the idea of reading as being bounded to a particular community, space and time.
Conversely, this study offers insights into a relationship that bridges communities, space and time.

The reading tasks that both teachers, Mr. Green and Mr. Brown, organised in the targeted class positioned students as readers involved in a silent, meaning-making process. Both teachers were concerned with improving and attaining particular standards for their students’ reading. Yet, each teacher differently positioned students as particular types of readers. One implication emerging from this difference is that even with relatively standard-based assessment, there may be important variation in a child’s measured reading performance levels that associates with opportunities the child has to explain, discuss and address as part of his/her learning the alignment and divergence recognised in his/her work and that of the prevailing model.

**Conclusions within Limitations of the Study.**

Findings from the two questions in this study have provided explanations of reading and of the ways in which students take up what constituted reading for them in their middle years’ class. These explanations underpin what outcomes of reading were observed across the cases including the positioning of children as readers by others and the items children and students produced from reading work.

Teachers, parents and children recognised ways of being a reader available to students in the targeted class, differently. Alignment with a particular construct of reading affected the rating of a child as a reader; the same child can be rated differently by those who emphasized different things – including the child him/herself.

These findings were used to design a Descriptive Framework of Reading Alignment and Divergence (Figure 58). In the following section, this framework is explained, and some explanations of reading are challenged.

**Descriptive framework**

The inductive production of the descriptive framework brings together home, classroom and history of those who spoke to me in this research. The way I came inductively to the descriptive framework was via a line by line examination and observation of the data corpus followed by axial treatment of data across people and time. What emerged was development of a rich conceptual formation which is represented in Figure 58. This framework allows interpretation of the similarities and differences in the context of reasonable answers to the two research questions.
Although I adopted a case study methodology in this study, the emergence of the
descriptive framework via a deductive process from the data corpus is akin to the
outcomes generated via grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The answers to the
two research questions comprise “more than a set of findings” (Meetoo, 2007, April
29, p.13) in that the descriptive framework emerged from them - and formed what
might be construed as a “grounded theory” explanation. The framework was used to
both explain and describe the reading pathways that had been identified in students’
reading. In doing this, it fits the complexities of the social phenomenon of reading in
the particular context reported here.

In the following, I have extrapolated the key elements of complexity that emerged
from this study. In so doing, I challenge simple explanations of reading and present
considerations for thought, practice and further research.

A key element of complexity revealed in this study was identification of boundary-
crossing for participants’ reading experiences in home and school contexts, and
between each of these contexts and each participant’s historical and community
experiences. The potential for boundary-crossing is represented as permeable lines.
This finding challenges aspects of existing theorisations such as situated literacy and
community of practice in that it showed reading and readers as not bound irrevocably by a
particular context. Rather, participants’ talk about reading and individual’s reading
often contained evidence of a child’s recontextualisation of historical and community
experiences as reading. It was found too in artifacts that the children as students
constructed during various school-based reading events.

Reading in the targeted class tended to be a multi-voiced construction that typically
was individualistically and historically-shaped, making for a uniqueness about each
participant’s position on the two research questions. This suggested that considering a
child’s reading in a classroom or at home as anything less than a complex phenomenon
was counterproductive where uniqueness is to be genuinely utilised in the interests of
better schooling. While further research is required to explore how this observation
and speculation fit with other children, teachers, parents, schools and other contexts,
the findings here open an alternative lens for examining reading and readers.

A second key element of complexity uncovered in the research was its recording of
alignment and divergence pathways which sometimes occurred simultaneously as
students participated in reading events - regardless of whether they occurred in home or school contexts. This finding challenges Fletcher’s (2004) theorisation that there are two pathways operate in an exclusive way, either a student colludes or collides with expectations and requirements within a particular literacy environment. Fletcher’s theorisation fits with a binary of compliance or resistance that underpins certain measurements of readers as good or less than good, offering up potential to position some readers as deficit. This study provided a different outcome for considering what happens in reading. The cases examined provide educators with opportunity to (re)consider reading as an event that has a multitude of potential pathways dependent upon what the individual draws upon from past and present reading events and where the individual aligns and diverges from their teacher’s or parent’s view of what constitutes reading – and can do both simultaneously. The framework is intended as a helpful device, albeit one that further research may reconstruct as we come to better understand the complexities of uniqueness as they operate for readers.

A third key element of complexity was noted when students constructed hybrid texts by drawing upon and recontextualising textual elements from what they have read in local and remote contexts (out of school, different places at different times). This finding adds to the challenge of literacy notionally being a bounded entity. This finding led me to posit that considering readers’ competences through a situated perspective that is unmoving on the issue of boundary-crossing is fraught with problems. In particular, it opened the better prospect of acknowledging difference as a reader as flexibility, and flexibility as enabling in terms of an increasingly multiliterate nature about contemporary society.

Limitations of the Study
My study was conducted in a middle-years class within a Queensland State School. This site was selected when a teacher in the school expressed interest in my study and interest in participating in it. Although I was uncertain about the feasibility of this research partnership arrangement, one of my supervisors at that time assured me that this was a workable situation and viable as research. In addition, since this school and many of its staff were familiar to me, I was advised to reflect upon the implications and impact of the research partnership arrangement as the study progressed. My previous professional linkage to the school and its staff had made my access into the school relatively easy.
My historical experiences with this context and its people shaped my relationship with the students, parents, teachers and other participating staff members in particular ways. Being known as a teacher and as an expert in literacy learning and teaching by school staff resulted in being introduced to students in the targeted class as a teacher. Recognition of my previous professional linkage with the school and its staff resulted in a teacher-student relationship with students and one of literacy expert-teacher with school staff. Of particular concern to me was that these relationships might set up distinctive ways of operating that might impinge on my investigation of reading within the targeted class. Therefore, throughout the study, I monitored and reflected upon my encounters with participants. Because I presented myself to school staff and students as wanting to understand what reading meant to each participant, I found my previous professional experiences did not prove to be a concern as first. Presenting my findings at conferences as I progressed with the study proved to be a useful tool in that feedback from peers enabled me to monitor my propensity to use my own understandings of reading when analysing and explaining what I was finding. This feedback alerted me to widen my lens so that I could more ably represent and explain what was emerging from the study. To counter this, I used participants’ own words and work to answer the two research questions.

This approach substantiates the credibility of the study’s findings by presenting data as what participants spoke with me, gave me copies of their work and allowed me to observe them (Freebody, 2003).

An important limitation of this study is that it represents those teachers, parents and students associated with this middle-year class – a class which was located in one school in one state of Australia over a particular period of time. Whether these findings are representative of reading in other middle-year classes in other schools and other Australian states require validation through further research. As in any case study, it is inappropriate to generalise findings beyond the cases, context (time and place) studied. Therefore, I have presented my findings in a descriptive framework which may or may not be a useful tool to inform discussion in other educational contexts. Certainly, the framework is presented to be challenged in further small-scale studies such as that foreshadowed in a follow-up with Mr. Green, or in a longitudinal study with a larger sample of middle-year students. The latter would be required to see whether the uniqueness reported here is itself quantifiable across large numbers of students and at various grade levels to the extent that results might be generalised and better shape the
formation of a theory representative of what constitutes reading and explains how all
who participate in a child’s education might constructively utilise capacities an
individual has for working at different levels of take-up, simultaneously.
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