The Watsons Go to NRC—2007: Crossing Academic Boundaries in the Study of Children's Literature

Patricia Enciso
The Ohio State University

Karen Coats
Illinois State University

Christine Jenkins
University of Illinois (at Urbana-Champaign)

Shelby Wolf
University of Colorado at Boulder

Many heroic people died in the struggle for civil rights. Many others were injured or arrested or lost their homes or businesses. It is almost impossible to imagine the courage of the first African American children who walked into the segregated schools or the strength of the parents who permitted them to face the hatred and violence that awaited them. They did it in the name of the movement, in the quest for freedom (Curtis, 1995, p. 210).

These words from Christopher Paul Curtis's epilogue offer a perspective that helps young readers interpret the story of the Watson family, who journeyed through one of the most violent acts of the Civil Rights era—the bombing of Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church that killed four young girls. Throughout his award-winning novel, Curtis draws readers into the past as he challenges us to reach courageously for a more just and nonviolent future. *The Watsons Go to Birmingham —1963* is a touchstone text for many educators and literary scholars: its blending of humor, strong characterization, metaphor, and history personalizes as well as challenges us to examine the enduring consequences of racism in the U.S. As a Newbery Honor and Coretta Scott King Honor book, it is familiar to reading educators, and it is also widely recognized among English and Library Science scholars as a book that initiated new narrative forms in the genre of historical fiction (Bishop, 2007). Although the novel is widely known and assigned in courses on children's and young adults' literature, it is by no means read or interpreted with the same lenses or intentions for inclusion in the same settings. In Library and Information Science (LIS) courses, Curtis's novel raises questions of its historical significance in relation with other Civil Rights era narratives. In education courses, students discuss how they will mediate children's responses and how they will develop critical, intertextual insights across this story and other novels, poems, and curricula. While English professors might address all of the questions considered by education and LIS scholars, they focus primarily on theoretical frames to interpret the story's narrative structure, character development, extended metaphors, and imagery.

As scholars of children's and young adults' literature, the authors of this article have been engaged in a multi-year effort to understand the intersection of our three disciplines—English, LIS, and education. In the long term, our aim is to produce a *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature*, inviting scholars representing all three disciplines to describe and analyze

different aspects of literary reading, texts, and contexts. That project is still very much in process, but has brought to our attention the immediate need to forge more occasions and spaces for scholars to talk and learn across our disciplinary boundaries.

Academic Figured Worlds

In the view of theorists Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (2003), the three fields we represent and the artifacts, practices, and relationships we construct operate as distinct "figured worlds." By figured worlds, Holland and her colleagues mean "the socially and culturally constructed realm(s) of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (p. 52). We argue that the realms of interpretation for children's literature have, likewise, developed particular practices of reading, writing, and constructing audiences that carry accompanying values for determining useful ways of describing and analyzing relations among readers, texts, and contexts. We are interested in what is considered normal practice regarding the teaching of children's and young adult literature in our disciplines, how the book is transformed within and across different academic figurations of reading and interpreting children's literature. We ask, "What 'gets accomplished' and what is valued about books and readers from the locations of these different figurations of interpretation?" In this article we take *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* as a shared focal text through which we can illustrate how a novel might be transformed within and across different academic figurations of reading and interpreting literature.

For all of us the book is a central "pivot" (Holland et al., 2003, p. 61) through which it is possible for us to focus our conversations and examine what we know and how we know it. In general, we recognize the book as a place we can all turn to as we consider the changing forms, purposes, and social practices that accompany research and scholarship in children's literature. For example, we are all interested in award-winning books, but we differ in how, where, and with whom we value their inclusion in our scholarship. We argue that a view of our fields as figured worlds can help us begin to examine the continuities in our practices that create boundaries, as we also point to the edges and intersections that could be productively exploited for expanding our conversations—and the scholarship of children's and young adult literature.

In the following sections, we highlight the theoretical and research perspectives of each of our disciplinary fields through our readings of two episodes in *The Watsons*. Both scenes focus on the narrator, Kenny's, encounters with the "Wool Pooh." We conclude with a proposal for creating dialogue among academics and practitioners who are committed to describing and analyzing the changing world of literature for young people, and who work to create more contextually sensitive and robust ways to bring books and readers together.

Studying The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963

Story and episode overview. The story, set in Flint, Michigan in 1963, introduces readers to the Watsons, a Black middle-class family whose year in Flint and travels to Birmingham, Alabama are narrated by ten-year-old Kenny. Kenny is a middle child, who sees the world through the angle of his slightly crossed eyes and vivid imagination. He spends his time trying to survive his older brother Byron's bullying and bravado while steering clear of trouble and finding friendship. His little sister Joetta is a minor character, but their sibling bond enables him to survive two experiences that bring

him close to death. Christopher Paul Curtis initially draws the reader into a story of family love and comedy but guides us eventually to Alabama, where Kenny faces a singular violent event—the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.

In this article, we focus on scenes from the last three chapters in which Kenny faces death in a quarry where he is accidentally pulled into a whirlpool; in a later episode, he witnesses the aftermath of the church bombing, and then enters the church, believing that his sister Joetta is inside. In both scenes, Joetta appears to him as an apparition who directs him out of these life-threatening experiences. As he is dragged underwater by the whirlpool and as he enters the site of unbearable destruction in the church, Kenny imagines he sees the Wool Pooh, a character invented by Kenny's brother to warn him against entering the quarry. Although Kenny's brother humorously pegs the Wool Pooh as "Winnie-the-Pooh's Evil Twin," (p.170), there is no doubt of the danger in the character. In Kenny's experience, the Wool Pooh appears to be a giant golem-like figure possessing the power to cause death and destruction.

Figuring Out Figured Worlds

The written word requires ordering of ideas, and thus creates a representation of an apparent hierarchy of status. We hesitated about the order in which to present our disciplinary perspectives in the context of the *NRC Yearbook* because we have the opportunity, here, to disrupt the usual primacy of an educational perspective. While writing this section, we were reminded of a wonderful story Christine Jenkins tells of her first encounter at NRC (1992) in which she arrived just in time for a pre-conference reception: "A well-dressed man, who was clearly a seasoned member of NRC, kindly struck up a conversation with me. He saw from my nametag that I was a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and mentioned the names of several people on the College of Education faculty. Was I working with any of them? I explained that although I had met some of them, I was not working with them directly because I was a doctoral student in Library and Information Studies (as the program was named then). There was a pause. 'Oh,' he said, followed by 'So what are you doing here at NRC?'"

Christine also recognized in that uncomfortable moment that she had only recently encountered the work of Louise Rosenblatt (1978), having worked on a paper with Patricia Enciso to describe children's lived-through experience of reading. The coda of her story continues, "Clearly the lack of knowledge ran both ways: I hadn't known who Louise Rosenblatt was, and he couldn't think why someone in LIS would be at the National *Reading* Conference."

As Holland et al. (2003) would argue, the figurations of our academic worlds are enacted through storylines and subject positions. The boundaries of our expertise and, consequently our research questions, methods, and findings, operate through expectations and relationships that are presumed to be shared, familiar, and equal. In fact, much of what we do within and say about our fields is thoroughly conventionalized and learned through close attention to a wide variety of academic genres, mentoring, and extended relationships. When experts cross fields and question one another, storylines are exposed and subject positions—the reciprocal recognition of one another's belonging and status—become de-centered. In new configurations of relationships and discourses, we are forced to reconsider how status and histories of belonging might matter. We argue that through shared dialogue about our expertise, it is possible to lower the potential threat of not knowing storylines or losing the status so carefully cultivated within our separate fields. In turn, the

research questions we raise across our fields can be informed by more robust analyses of texts, more contextualized understanding of readers' interests, and greater depth and breadth in our knowledge of book production and circulation in multiple contexts beyond schools.

In the next few sections, we describe the storylines that define our work so we may begin to create more openings in the ways we position our fields and ourselves as scholars who study literature, children, and reading. We begin with the field of English in order to offer a closer view of Curtis's vision and craft and to foreground a disciplinary perspective that is less central to the scholarship of many reading researchers. We follow with a view of literature and reading developed in LIS, and conclude with theories and practices more familiar to educational researchers.

English – Karen Coats. Professors of English often have an uneasy relationship with children's texts. After all, children's literature is the only kind of literature that we study that is defined by its audience and not its authors or its form. That crucial feature draws us into questions of ethics and ideology, the difference between presenting the world as it is, and presenting it as we would like it to be, as we remember and misremember our own childhoods and seek to fashion them into stories that might interest and inform contemporary children, and teach them something about what it means to be human. Despite the fact that children's literature is defined by its audience, English professors spend almost no research time or ink investigating the interaction between books and real children.

The question that drives literary analysis is usually some variant of "How does this text work?" That is, "what are its thematic statements and how do its plot devices, rhetorical strategy, characterization, and setting promote or undermine these statements?" We literary critics have earned our bad reputation for a fondness for "isms" that tend to accrue impenetrable jargon and become so self-referential as to be not at all useful to people who actually work with children. In our defense, however, our theoretical approaches do help us place children's texts into larger cultural frameworks, artistic movements, and the history of ideas, and to show the pivotal role children's literature and culture plays in developing cultural and individual identities.

So how do university English professors read and interpret children's books with their students? In the case of *The Watsons* we might start with the character of Kenny. What do we know about him and how do we know it? What are his contexts, and is it believable that his character would develop in those contexts? We notice, for instance, that he has a kind of disability, and immediately take that, not as a benign and random example of verisimilitude, but as something meaningful. Kenny has a "lazy" eye. Since it is through Kenny's perspective that we receive this first-person narrative, a particularity with regard to his vision indicates that we are getting the story slant, so to speak, at once clear-sighted but with a peculiar focus that comes from our narrator's slightly skewed vision. This marks Kenny as a limited or even unreliable narrator. We also note, through close reading, that Kenny's older brother Byron helps Kenny with his vision in the beginning of the Watsons' saga, by giving him "seeing lessons" in the family's bathroom mirror. Byron teaches Kenny to look at people so as to hide his difference; this fact becomes important to the shape of the narrative when, at the end of the story, Byron takes Kenny into the family's bathroom following their return from Alabama and again offers Kenny a way of seeing things. This time, however, Kenny decides for himself whether he should accept Byron's view of the world. As Kenny faces himself in the mirror after Byron leaves, he distances himself from Byron's perspective; he details those things that he can

accept of Byron's way of looking at the world, but he also adds the things that come to him from his own unique perspective. He is sorting things out for himself, rather than accepting his brother's angle, thus completing an arc of growth for his character.

When we come to the passage where Kenny meets the Wool Pooh for the first time, we have had a long enough acquaintance with Kenny to understand that here is a boy who has led a very sheltered life up to this point. His everyday problems thus far have not been life-threatening, and yet he has sufficient imagination to make them larger than they really are. In this scene, he leaves the safe, readerly, little-boy world of Winnie-the-Pooh but takes his intertextual associations with him and uses them to make sense of the experience of drowning. We also know that Joetta plays the protective angel on behalf of her brothers, so it makes sense that Kenny would envision her calling him up from certain death. On site in the aftermath of the bombing, we find the Wool Pooh hovering again, and we take up the task of hermeneutics, of finding the meaning of the whole in relation to its parts and of parts in relation to the whole. We flesh out the Wool Pooh's metaphoric significance. We read these two scenes in the context of the shape of the book as a whole. Just as a light-hearted, comedic family story suddenly shifts mode into the tragic, the placid surface of an inviting lake hides hidden danger, and a seemingly calm, self-contained family life gets sucked into a swirl of racial hatred and violence. The Wool Pooh is not only a symbol of death in these passages, but an especially meaningful symbol of the loss of childhood innocence and naiveté; Kenny's idyll in the Hundred Acre Wood of childhood is not something he can peacefully put away as does Christopher Robin (Milne, 1926, 1928). This leads to questions about the material differences and social consequences of a working class, African American child in 1960s America having his imagination colonized through and through by a text written for and about an upper class White British child. For the latter, childhood's end can be a site for fond nostalgia, whereas for Kenny and the children of his generation and circumstances, it has been twisted into something unspeakably evil.

The question then becomes, did this transition from gently comic family story to tragic historical fiction really come out of nowhere? Or were we as readers somehow warned? I think that, like Kenny, we saw signs that we either didn't recognize or chose to ignore. Curtis does a masterful job of laying out clues in the peritextual features of the book that play to latent or passive cultural knowledge for adults, and only become meaningful to children after the fact. For instance, "Birmingham 1963" in the title should be a clue. His author's dedication to the four girls who died in the church bombing should be a clue. That those clues fail for many readers shows us where we live—on the placid surface of a welcoming lake of forgotten or vaguely remembered history that covers over a still dangerous present.

For child readers who may not have learned this history, the peritext gently forces them to acknowledge that this isn't just a story, that the characters that they have come to love may not have actually lived, but that there were real people referenced in this story who actually died. From a literary standpoint, then, we could say that Curtis conveys his complex and challenging theme through both the success of the metaphor of the Wool Pooh, and the failure of the foreshadowing in the peritext. The afterword, another peritextual element, then speaks directly to the audience to remind them that we write the stories of both our cultures and our selves, and that those stories are drawn and crafted from pieces we know and pieces we half know.

Library and information science – Christine Jenkins. The field of LIS has a long-standing relationship with texts for young readers. The first definitive list of recommended books for American children, Caroline M. Hewins's 94-page *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children*, was published in 1882. From the beginning, librarians have evaluated children's books both on their own merits as individual works and as compared with other books of the same genre, by the same author, published in the same year, written for the same age group, and so on. When librarians analyze and evaluate a children's book, they ask: What can we say about this book when we place it alongside the other books on our shelves? In what context(s) could this book be the right book for the right child at the right time?

LIS scholarship is characterized by its dual focus on the text and the reader, a connection that is further illuminated by analyses of shifting cultural trends. Thus, we recognize that a book can be beautifully written but unappealing to young readers. Conversely, a poorly written book on a "hot" topic can be wildly popular. Indeed, *Voice of Youth Advocates*, *VOYA*, the major reviewing journal for books for teens, evaluates each book on two scales, receiving 1-5 Q points (for quality) and 1-5 P points (for popularity).

Research on the myriad connections between books and readers may be conducted via social science methods, using data gathered from sources that include focus groups, bibliographies, unobtrusive observation, collection analysis, semi-structured interviews, and bibliometrics. Historical investigations of books—and their readership(s)—may utilize trend analyses and historical surveys. *Winnie-the-Pooh*, for example, has been in children's library collections since it was first published in 1926. In the 80-plus intervening years, the original text is still on the shelves of most libraries, but the collection now includes the many Winnie the Pooh tie-ins and spin-offs generated by the Disney movie. Thus, in the eyes of many children, the 1926 Pooh might appear to be a somewhat drab variant of the far more familiar Disney Pooh. What impact do these changes in context have on contemporary readers' experiences of the original Pooh and, in the case of *The Watsons*, readers' interpretations of a malevolent Pooh? A question like this one calls out for the shared expertise of LIS, English and education scholars.

Historical and contemporary surveys of children's and young adult books also identify publishing trends over time. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s heightened LIS scholarly awareness of the disparity between the diversity of race, class, and culture in contemporary American society and the White middle-class monoculture portrayed in books for young readers. Historians have noted that the roots of the Civil Rights Movement may be found in the social movements of the 1940s. Not coincidentally, LIS scholars and librarians of the 1940s and 1950s were beginning to document the presence of African American protagonists in a small but significant number of books for young readers (Baker, 1949; Rollins, 1941, 1948).

One of the key professional responsibilities of youth services librarians is facilitating young people's engagement in reading. Choice in reading is an essential element in the development of lifelong readers. In order to ensure genuine child-directed reading choice, librarians are continually evaluating books in the context of potential readers. Who will find this book engaging? Entertaining? Intriguing? Informative? And finally, if a child enjoys this book, what other books could it lead them to? What else might we recommend?

One important role of the librarian is that of fellow-reader, as the reading of a common book allows readers of various ages, abilities, and experiences to come together for a book discussion. Such book discussions can provide further opportunities for choice in reading and certainly the possibility of greater engagement with the text. The questions that the LIS field asks of texts may not differ substantially from those asked by other disciplines, but the elements of shared inquiry and comparative reading, and multiple interpretations are commonly present. Alongside a librarian, in school or in a public library setting, readers could examine selected parts of the same text; similar passages or representations made across different books or books by the same author; focal literary elements and their construction, such as theme, setting, and character development across different books; and whole books considered representatives of the same genre.

Like teachers, librarians work directly with young readers to facilitate their understandings of the text. The ambiguity and symbolism in *The Watsons*' episodes would be recognized by librarians as points in the book where readers could be helped to identify their uncertainties and questions. And in elaborating on the questions raised by readers, librarians would be likely to suggest intertextual links that could build a process of "thinking through" the reader's suppositions and queries. For example, a librarian might begin a discussion by suggesting that, on the face of it, Kenny's grandmother's southern pronunciation of "whirlpool" as "wool pooh", and Byron's tall-tale elaboration of the Wool Pooh as Winnie-the-Pooh's evil twin, are playfully amusing. From the reader's viewpoint, however, does the humor of the name soften or intensify the fearsomeness of Kenny's Wool Pooh?

Like English professors, LIS professors work comparatively with students by reading within and across texts to seek similarities in structure, theme, and genre. Reading intertextually across *The Watsons*' episodes, we might point out that to Kenny, the Wool Pooh of the first passage is just like that of the second. But he finds the Wool Pooh of the first passage lurking in deep water, while that of the second appears in the rubble of the bombed church. The first is actively pulling Kenny down, while the second is passive and makes no attempt to grab Kenny. Are these two different monsters? Or could they be the same monster at two different points in its development? Is the Wool Pooh simply a product of Kenny's imagination? Why might Byron be the one who describes the Wool Pooh, but Kenny be the one who sees it?

At its most basic level, LIS research in youth literature emphasizes *both* the text and the reader, finding questions in the interface between reader and text that will enable librarians to draw readers' attention to connections across texts, as they think about, discuss, and evaluate the book. LIS scholars of children's and young adult literature may utilize a number of theoretical perspectives with which to frame their work. Our work may be informed by research in the fields of education and English, but our study of this literature may also draw upon research in a number of other disciplines, including (but not limited to) communications, history, psychology, sociology, anthropology, area studies, ethnic studies, gender studies, and queer theory. LIS scholarship in youth literature ranges from Eliza Dresang's (1999) use of characteristics of "the digital age" to analyze the radical changes she sees in contemporary literature for young readers, to Betsy Hearne's (1993a; 1993b) careful explication of criteria for evaluating picture books drawn from folklore, to Catherine Sheldrick Ross's (1995) study of historical and contemporary young readers' responses to Nancy Drew.

Education – Patricia Enciso and Shelby Wolf. The study of literature by educational researchers has, since the early 1980s, viewed stories as not simply given or taken; rather, stories are made between the reader and text (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Iser, 1978; Meek, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1978; Sims, 1983). Developmental studies, for example, have noted the changing foci of a book during the playful reenactments and questioning that mark parent-child shared reading and child-teacher interactions (Hickman, 1981; Wolf & Heath, 1992). In the 1970s and 1980s researchers conducted interviews with children about their sense of various stories' moral dilemmas, showing how young readers' appreciation of ambiguities and contingencies in story plots and character formations develops as children see and think more about their experiences in their everyday and literary worlds. Like authors of children's literature, educational researchers are attuned to the perspectives of child and young adult readers.

As is evident in a wide range of textbooks about literature in education, we are interested, like scholars in LIS, in connecting the right book with the right reader at the right time. However, educational scholars want to go beyond that initial connection and discussion. As teacher educators and researchers we want to figure out, with teachers and children, how it might be possible to extend the contact, to make engagement–or "critical engagement" (Lewis, 2001, p. 150)—possible for not only one reader but a whole class of children, coming into a room together with a multitude of experiences related to books, reading, classroom talk, not to mention friendships and popular cultural references that often escape even the sharpest eye of a veteran teacher. Like Christopher Paul Curtis, educational researchers try to see children and their ways of making meaning in relationship with the social, historical and political contexts and events of their lives.

Throughout the 1990s and into the 21ˢᵗ century, educational research on reading expanded considerably to attend to the multiple contexts that shape and are shaped by children and adults as they participate in social norms about who reads, what is read, and how reading should be organized. This "social practice" view of reading is expressed by a number of scholars (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 2004; Lewis, 2001; Mehan, 1974; Street, 1985), and has become an important theoretical frame for researchers who use an ethnographic paradigm and discourse analysis methods to *look through* the story's images and narrative to the social practices of literary reading. Sometimes the book was lost in the process of paying attention to what young people were doing with books. But when the book was located as a pivot, it was possible to continually think about what was offered to an individual or group as the event of reading a book became public (Lee, 2007; Spears-Bunton, 1990).

Researchers asked "What is challenging about the book, for this particular group of children, from the standpoint of its literary qualities, themes, and cultural references? And, what does the teacher or adult in the setting need to know to mediate these challenges?" From this standpoint, the book is always an agent—an event that introduces people, places, images, dialogue and actions to a context that is already highly animated by the children and teacher's particular ways of "doing reading", talking about books, and figuring out how to be together. As researchers of literature in educational settings, we want to make the narrative, the mediation of the narrative, and children's relationships and meanings visible as everyone becomes engaged with and reflective about this literary event.

In our experiences of reading *The Watsons* with elementary school–aged children, we have found that many students find it difficult to grasp what is happening around the Wool Pooh episodes. When Kenny is drowning, he fights with what he believes is a heavy, powerful evil force called the Wool Pooh, described earlier by his older brother Byron. Few young readers have ever experienced drowning, and they don't readily shift from the comedic tone to the menacing tone invoked in Curtis's narrative. If they are not attuned to the ways Kenny's imagination is revealed through Curtis's blend of visual and verbal humor, they are likely to be quite lost. Further, because these episodes are formed through the narrator's imagination and in part through historical fact, readers may become minimally engaged as they try to pinpoint what is real; in so doing, they may become distant from the emotional power of this episode. In research and in teaching, educational scholars want to know what happens as adults try to mediate readers' engagement, the narrative's possible meanings, and the public event of describing and discerning what characters are doing, feeling, and anticipating. We do not assume that everyone in a classroom is equally engaged or everyone is invested in experiencing the story alongside Kenny.

Researchers working within classroom settings examine with children what it means to have moved into someone else's world and what it might mean to bring that journey back to everyday life—among teachers and peers (Carter, 2006; DeNicolo & Fránquiz, 2006). Rudine Sims Bishop (1994) describes readers' movements between narratives and their everyday worlds as the passage between windows and mirrors—seeing our own and seeing others' landscapes, as we also see the reflection of ourselves in the window—knowing we are invariably tied up in the meanings we make with others.

It makes sense to educational researchers that *The Watsons* is to be read and analyzed within the context of a group rather than read individually. This is especially true as the narrative becomes much more ominous and even confusing, as readers try to figure out the changes and meaning of the Wool Pooh's presence in the book's final chapters. Rather than facing the more straightforward danger of drowning, Kenny has to face a monster-like figure that has transformed itself into an embodiment of racism, dragging small Sunday school girls to their deaths.

When Patricia Enciso (2004) asked fifth graders to use paper cutouts to depict the episode of the church bombing and then asked them to locate themselves in the images they made, many children placed themselves with the stunned, grieving adults, on the street across from the church. It was difficult to enter the space of such devastation alongside Kenny. Others, however, wanted to be right beside him, searching, anxious, fearful and hoping. Through these multiple images of themselves as readers, it was possible for all the children to see that the author made room for many ways of participating in Kenny's world. It was also possible to see that such an event came from a place of hate and destruction—and that a profound struggle would have to ensue in order to see and feel hope again. Following their work with symbolic representation, Enciso asked the children to create a book about discrimination, in which they catalogued how discrimination functions, what supports it, and how it can be challenged.

As educational scholars, we know that children's engagement with and movement through the text is crucial, but it is not really enough. Children need to return to the text to be able to recognize and value the literary qualities of Curtis's writing. We would want to know, like English scholars, how young people attend to and explore the metaphor of the Wool Pooh and its transformation,

the image of the three little girls dressed in the red, white, and blue of the American flag, and the flutter of the hands of the grieving adults. We would want to know, too, how the epilogue becomes a touchstone for examining present day race-based violence and the potential for understanding and acting on anti-racist and anti-oppressive values.

Like Curtis, we would be interested in the ways readers talk about and draw on multiple textual and digital resources to understand what it means to be a hero—what it meant for Black children to march in U.S. streets against racial violence and Jim Crow laws, to be jailed, and attacked by police dogs; and what it meant for White adults to travel to the South, having limited knowledge of the realities of systemic racism. We would, in short, recommend reading *Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Stories* (Levine, 1993) so students could have access to first-person narratives by adults who remember their childhood decisions to become involved in a struggle for social justice. As researchers, we would also want to understand how a theory and practice of multicultural education operated in the classroom. How does *The Watsons* fit into an analysis of equity? How does this reading function beyond a surface exploration of what Banks (1989) called the "heroes and holidays" approach?

Thus, for educators, children as readers hold a key place in our research, but their central location is balanced by our interest in children's social worlds and the cultural milieu that shapes their reading, and by the specificity and narrative force of the book. Indeed, close narrative analysis as well as deep discussion of the social context of the book and its relationship with the social lives of readers' peers and communities, would be necessary to draw readers more deeply into the text and toward the visions that frame new ways of being readers of words and worlds.

SUMMARY

Three disciplines and one text yield multiple figurations of questions and meanings for readers, texts and contexts. In English studies, readers are far more theoretical than actual; narrative form and intertextuality are interpreted through relationships among the textual whole and episodic part; and contexts may be elaborated through analyses of the cultural and economic circumstances of possible readers. Thus, most publications, conferences, and valued professional practices for English scholars have to do with the quality of insight and nuance in analyses of literary arts and theorizations of the reader. And yet, the study of children's literature is susceptible to marginalization and distortion in the broader field of English.

LIS scholars and practitioners understand readers as group members whose choices can be seen through historical and contemporary trend analyses. In face-to-face interactions, LIS practitioners view readers as engaged citizens whose decisions to read and discuss meanings are a cherished part of life in a democracy. The professional practices and publications of LIS reveal scholars' interests in providing informed, useful book recommendations, evaluations of new trends in publishing, and analyses of historical and popular views of literary works. Unlike English studies, LIS has long held scholarship related to children's and young adults' literature and library services as a focal point of its field. The issue of marginalization is only relevant in terms of the field's status and connectedness within and across other university departments where literature is taught.

Literature professors in the field of education are concerned with the social experience of reading together in a classroom setting; thus, the reader is conceived of as a member of a social-political group, the text is an event that elicits multiple stories and perspectives, and the context is specific, local, and invested in literature and learning across the curriculum. While these foci would seem relevant to concerns about student achievement, education professors have seen a waning status for literature studies in departments that once hired professors specifically to focus on children's literature. Today, reading education dominates literary education and when specialized literature courses are offered, they are not easily balanced with the programmatic (and state-mandated) emphasis placed on phonics, strategies, and struggles.

We argue that by examining the figurations of our fields and initiating dialogues about the intersections of our scholarship, we may be able to bring greater insight and force to the value of children's and young adults' literature in academia, schools and communities. As demonstrated here, each field's figuration offers tremendous possibilities for expanding on facets of one another's interests and aims. For example, in the figured world of education, the increasing emphasis on skills and phonics in reading is well-documented, but this change could be traced, in parallel, by LIS scholars who could use trend analyses to show increases (perhaps) in the publication of books about reading difficulties. Similarly, English scholars could offer close analyses of narratives that represent how and why reading is valued by characters in books for children and young adults. And education scholars could complete the picture with analyses of discussions among young readers about their experiences of reading and literature education.

In the epilogue of Curtis's (1995) novel, he discusses the true American heroes "who have seen that things are wrong and have not been afraid to ask 'Why can't we change this?'" (p. 210). While we would never equate our roles as scholars with the heroic action of Civil Rights activists, we take Curtis's simple yet powerful question to heart. For far too long the fields of English, LIS, and education have pushed ahead in their various directions—exploring theoretical ideas, conducting wide-ranging research, writing books and articles, and attending conferences within our separate figured worlds. We've rarely stepped out of the small spaces of our own circles. This article and subsequent scholarship and presentations will enable us and our colleagues across disciplines to redraw the map of our separately figured worlds so we may enlarge the scope of our scholarship and dialogue.

REFERENCES

Baker, A. (1949). *Books about Negro life for children*. New York: New York Public Library.

Banks, J. A. (1989). Integrating the curriculum with ethnic content: Approaches and guidelines. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (pp. 189-207). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Bishop, R. S. (Ed.). (1994). *Kaleidoscope: A multicultural booklist for grades K-8.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Bishop, R. S. (2007). *Free within ourselves: The development of African American children's literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Bloome, D., & Egan-Robertson, A. (2004). The social construction of intertextuality in classroom reading and writing lessons. In N. Shuart-Faris & D. Bloome (Eds.), *Uses of intertextuality in classroom and educational research* (pp. 17-64). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Press.

Carter, S. P. (2006). "She would've still made that face expression": The use of multiple literacies by two African American young women. *Theory into Practice*, *45*(4), 352-358.

Cochran-Smith, M. (1984). *The making of a reader*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Curtis, C. P. (1995). *The Watsons go to Birmingham—1963*. New York: Delacorte.

DeNicolo, C., & Fránquiz, M. (2006). "Do I have to say it?": Critical encounters with multicultural children's literature. *Language Arts*, *84*(2), 157-170.

Dresang, E. T. (1999). *Radical change: Books for youth in a digital age*. New York: H.W. Wilson.

Enciso, P. (2004). Reading discrimination. In S. Greene & D. Abt-Perkins (Eds.), *Making race visible: Literacy research for cultural understanding*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Hearne, B. (1993a). Cite the source: Reducing cultural chaos in picture books, part I. *School Library Journal*, *39*(7), 22-27.

Hearne, B. (1993b). Respect the source: Reducing cultural chaos in picture books, part II. *School Library Journal*, *39*(8), 32-37.

Hewins, C. M. (1882). *Books for the young: A guide for parents and children*. New York: Leypoldt.

Hickman, J. (1981). A new perspective on response to literature: Research in an elementary setting. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *15*(4), 343-354.

Holland, D., Lachicotte, W., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (2003). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Iser, W. (1978). *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Lee, C. (2007). *Culture, literacy, and learning: Taking bloom in the midst of the whirlwind*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Levine, E. (1993). *Freedom's children: Young civil rights activists tell their stories.* New York: Putnam.

Lewis, C. (2001). *Literary practices as social acts: Power, status, and cultural norms in the classroom.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Meek, M. (1988). *How texts teach what readers learn*. Stroud, England: Thimble Press.

Mehan, H. (1974). Accomplishing classroom lessons. In A. Cicourel, K. H. Jennings, S. H. M. Jennings, K. C. W. Leiter, R. MacKay, H. Mehan et.al., *Language use and school performance* (pp. 76-142). New York: Academic Press.

Milne, A. A. (1926). *Winnie-the-Pooh*. New York: Dutton.

Milne, A. A. (1928). *The house at Pooh Corner*. New York: Dutton.

Rollins, C. H. (1941). *We build together: A reader's guide to Negro life and literature for elementary and high school use*. Chicago, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Rollins, C. H. (1948). *We build together: A reader's guide to Negro life and literature for elementary and high school use* (Rev. ed.). Chicago, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work.* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Ross, C. S. (1995). If they read Nancy Drew, so what?: Series book readers talk back. *Library and Information Science Research, 17*(3), 201-236.

Sims, R. (1983). Strong Black girls: A ten-year-old responds to fiction about Afro-Americans. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, 16*(3), 21-28.

Spears-Bunton, L. (1990). Welcome to my house: African American and European American students' responses to Virginia Hamilton's *House of Dies Drear*. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *59*(4), 556-576.

Street, B. (1985). *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Wolf, S. A., & Heath, S. B. (1992). *The braid of literature: Children's worlds of reading.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

This unique, two-year Children's Literature, Media and Culture programme at the University of Glasgow provides an interdisciplinary study of the interaction between children, texts and media, along with the opportunity to study and live in at least two European countries. Visit the official programme website for more information. Cross boundaries: children's literature and other media (delivered online by Tilburg). Children's literature and childhood. Children's literature text and media. New media for children & young adults. Developing reading programmes for different contexts. 5. Research Methods The main goal of this literature review is to provide an overview of the available scientific evidence for the effect of music education on child functioning for children in the age group of 3 through 18 years old, based on studies published in peer reviewed journals in the. 1510. eISSN: 2301-2811 Selection & Peer-review under responsibility of the Editors. 5.1 Literature search The following scientific databases were consulted: ERIC, EBSCO and Academic Search Elite, as well as the internet search machines www.googlescholar.com, www.scirus.com en www.picarta.nl. Searches have been conducted only for publications in the English language.