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# A study of the effect of topic preference upon three factors in written composition.

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Thesis

A STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF TOPIC PREFERENCE  
UPON THREE FACTORS IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Submitted by

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(B.S. in Ed., Boston University, 1950)

In partial fulfillment of requirements for  
the degree of Master of Education

1953

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Boston University  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter I	
Statement of the Problem -----	1
Chapter II	
Summary of Research -----	3
Chapter III	
Plan and Procedure of the Study -----	9
Chapter IV	
Analysis of the Data -----	21
Chapter V	
Summary and Conclusions -----	51
Bibliography -----	63
Appendix -----	66

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Preferences of 121 Pupils in Grades 5 and 6 -----	11
II. Titles Disliked by 121 Pupils in Grades 5 and 6 -----	14
III. Comparison of Mean Length of Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions -----	23
IV. Comparison of Mean Number of Sentences Written in Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions -----	24
V. Comparison of Mean Vocabulary Variations in Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions -----	25
VI. Comparison of Mean Length of Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions Written Fifth Grade Pupils -----	27
VII. Comparison of Mean Number of Sentences in Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Pupils in Grade Five -----	28
VIII. Comparison of the Mean Vocabulary Variations in Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Pupils in Grade Five -----	29
IX. Comparison of the Mean Length Of Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Pupils in Grade Six --	30
X. Comparison of the Mean Number of Sentences in Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Pupils in Grade Six -----	31
XI. Comparison of Mean Vocabulary Variations in Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Pupils in Grade Six -----	32
A. Comparison of Mean Length of Preferred Compositions Written by Pupils in Grades Five and Six -----	33
B. Comparison of Mean Length of Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Pupils in Grades Five and Six -----	34
C. The Difference of the Differences of Mean Lengths of Compositions Written by Pupils in Grades Five and Six -----	35

Table	Page
D. Comparison of Mean Number of Sentences in Preferred Compositions Written by Pupils in Grades Five and Six ----	36
E. Comparison of Mean Number of Sentences in Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Pupils in Grades Five and Six ----	37
F. The Difference of Differences of Mean Number of Sentences of Compositions Written by Pupils in Grades Five and Six -----	38
G. Comparison of Mean Vocabulary Variations in Preferred Compositions Written by Pupils in Grades Five and Six ----	39
H. Comparison of Mean Vocabulary Variations in Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Pupils in Grades Five and Six ----	40
I. The Difference of Differences of Mean Variations in Compositions Written by Pupils in Grades Five and Six ----	41
XII. Comparison of Mean Length of Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Girls in Grades Five and Six -----	42
XIII. Comparison of Mean Length of Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Boys in Grades Five and Six -----	43
XIV. Difference of the Differences of the Mean Length of Compositions Written by Girls and Boys in Grades Five and Six -----	44
XV. Comparison of Mean Number of Sentences in Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Girls in Grades Five and Six -----	45
XVI. Comparison of the Mean Number of Sentences of Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Boys in Grades Five and Six -----	46
XVII. Difference of the Differences of Mean Number of Sentences in Compositions Written by Girls and Boys in Grades Five and Six -----	47
XVIII. Comparison of the Mean Vocabulary Variations in Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Girls in Grades Five and Six -----	48
XIX. Comparison of the Mean Vocabulary Variations in Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions Written by Boys in Grades Five and Six -----	49
XX. Difference of the Differences of Mean Vocabulary Variations in Compositions Written by Girls and Boys in Grades Five and Six -----	50

LIST OF CHARTS

Chart	Page
I. Percent of Liking and Disliking Compared to Mean Length of Compositions -----	26

**CHAPTER I**  
**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

1

CHAPTER I  
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century educators and psychologists have worked in close alliance to determine the patterns of development and learning in children. Evidence that interest is a vital factor in learning has been a recurring finding of research studies in education.

Educators have wanted to know more about interests of children. For, it is assumed, that out of interest will emerge more permanent learning. Children's interests in all areas of the school program have been explored. Findings have been reported as to which subjects children like best. Other studies indicate what activities in school are of interest to children. Still other research studies have been reported that tell of specific sub-areas within larger subject matter areas that are liked or disliked by children. For some years now the work in interests has been very evident in educational literature.

In recent years research in the area of children's interests has gone a step farther. Some exploratory work has been done to determine the relationship of preference or interest to achievement. The work done to date has not been singularly significant. However, the studies do point to a need for further research in this area and to get at the specific factors involved in the relationship of interest to achievement.

The problem of this study is to specifically investigate the relationship of interest or preference to achievement in one small area of the curriculum. This study is an endeavor to determine the effect of topic preference upon certain aspects of written composition.

The study will specifically seek to find the effect, if any, of topic preference and non-preference upon the number of words, number of sentences, and richness of vocabulary in compositions written by boys and girls in grades five and six. The study will also determine whether or not either grade or either sex is more affected than the other.

**CHAPTER II**  
**SUMMARY OF RESEARCH**

CHAPTER II

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

In reviewing the research related to this study it was found that there is a real limitation of experiments dealing with the effect of preference upon performance. There were some studies of childrens' interests in reading and language. The early efforts at measuring merit in composition were also studied.

The areas investigated were measurement of written composition and interest studies.

Measurement in Written Composition

In order to objectively measure the quality of the compositions to be scored a system of rating had to be devised. Therefore, it was necessary to study the research in the area of measurement of written composition.

In 1911 Thorndike<sup>1</sup> stated, "An ideal scale for merit in English writing would consist of a series of compositions (1) which would range from one that possessed zero merit to one that possessed the utmost possible merit, (2) whose respective amounts or degrees of merit were exactly known and whose nature was such that other compositions could be compared with them easily."

This keynote by Thorndike led to the development of the following scales.

- The Hudelson English Composition Scale by Earl Hudelson
- Hudelson Typical Composition Ability Scale by Earl Hudelson

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1. Thorndike, Edward L. "A Scale for Merit in English Writing by Young People." Journal of Educational Psychology. 2:361; September 1911.

- Nassau County Supplement to the Hilligas Scale by M. R. Trabue
- Thorndike Extension of the Hilligas Scale, by E. L. Thorndike
- Scales for Measuring Special Types of English Composition by E. E. Lewis
- Van Wagenen English Composition Scales, by M. J. Van Wagenen
- Scales for Measurement of English Compositions, by Frank W. Ballou
- Scales for Measuring Written Composition by M. H. Willing

Willing<sup>1</sup> recognized the weakness in his composition scale when he stated, "In common with other composition scales it shares the disadvantage of subjective derivation of unproved underlying statistical assumptions, of necessary training in the techniques of its use and of relative uselessness for individual diagnosis."

Knudsen<sup>2</sup> in testing the Hudelson Typical Composition Scale found that "eighteen graduate students trained in the use of the scale were unable to show that a significant difference in composition existed between a ninth grade group and an eleventh grade group in the Peabody Demonstration School."

Greene<sup>3</sup> says, "In general the development of measurement in language has followed the traditional and very difficult procedure of undertaking to evaluate the broader, more general qualities of expression before attacking the more specific abilities which are involved."

- 
1. Willing, Matthew H. "The Measurement of Written Composition in Grades IV to VIII". English Journal. 7:200; March 1918.
  2. Knudsen, Charles W. "A Test of the Practicability of the Hudelson Typical Ability Scale." Peabody Journal of Education. 8:117; September 1930
  3. Greene, Harry A. "English-Language, Grammar and Compositions" Encyclopedia of Educational Research. (Edited by Walter S. Monroe.) New York: The MacMillan Co., 1950. pp. 393-394

The composition scales in their present form were considered inadequate for objective measurement of the compositions to be written by the children.

Studies of the more specific objective factors in the measurement of written composition were investigated.

Harris<sup>1</sup> analyzed compositions for five factors--length, total errors (adjusted for length), complexity of sentence structure, number of different punctuation marks, number of different words of more than one syllable. In establishing the reliability of the scores obtained he found the coefficients to be quite low.

Healy<sup>2</sup> prepared two charts to be used in diagnostic work in composition. The charts are too detailed for use in scoring large numbers of compositions.

Jones<sup>3</sup> scored ideas only. She stated, "An idea is general if it does not name a definite specific idea. General ideas receive one half point of credit.

Ideas that name a specific observation receive one point of credit---If the observations contribute toward a general impression that interprets a trait of character, mood, or type of person, ten points of credit are added to the score".

- 
1. Harris, Chester W. "An Exploration of Language Skill Patterns." Journal of Educational Psychology. 39:322-323; October 1948.
  2. Healy, Katharine L. "Study of Factors Involved in the Rating of Pupils' Compositions". Journal of Experimental Education. 4: 51-52; September 1935.
  3. Jones, Mary Magdalene. Evaluation of a Method for Improving Personal Description and Characterization in Written Composition. Unpublished Doctor's dissertation. Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University, 1947. p. 82.

Corson<sup>1</sup> scored children's compositions by use of the Durrell Remedial Reading Vocabulary for Primary Grades list. She found that "The average amount written increases steadily from grade to grade. These grade differences are statistically significant."<sup>1</sup> She states further, "The children who wrote the largest amounts tended to use the most varied vocabulary, although there were some conspicuous exceptions."<sup>2</sup>

Donovan<sup>3</sup> scored compositions on the following basis:

1. Number of specific ideas--1 point for each
2. Number of general ideas--1 point for each

Brownrigg<sup>4</sup> scored ideas in compositions written about a film. Developmental ideas were given two points, single ideas received one point. Each word off the Durrell Remedial Reading Vocabulary for Primary Grades List received one point.

Wallace<sup>5</sup> scored compositions in the following manner--"simple, single thoughts would be given a score of 1 each. Thoughts which showed that they could be elaborated upon were given a score of 2 each."

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1. Corson, Hazel. Individual Differences in the Extent and Level of the Vocabulary Used by Intermediate Grade Children. Unpublished Master's thesis. Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University, 1938. p. 26.
2. Ibid., p. 27.
3. Donovan, Martin W. An Experimental Evaluation of the Relative Effectiveness of Two Methods of Composition Assignments in Stimulating Ideas. Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University, 1947. p. 20.
4. Brownrigg, Helen R. An Evaluation of Exercises in Written Composition Planning. Unpublished Master's thesis. Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University, 1950. pp.41-43.
5. Wallace, Michael F. An Evaluation of Exercises in Composition Planning. Unpublished Master's thesis. Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University, 1950. p. 27.

### Studies of Written Composition Interests

Several studies of preference only were done by Coleman<sup>1</sup>, McDonald<sup>2</sup>, Leary<sup>3</sup>, and Wilcox<sup>4</sup>. These studies had no bearing on the problem of this study--to determine the effect of interest upon performance in written composition.

### Study of the Relationships Between Preferences and Achievement

Dean<sup>5</sup> in reporting a follow up of an interest study found "In the subject areas, no significant differences were found in reading and language. This development leads to the belief that the relationships between preference and achievement for these subjects are negligible".

### Topic Versus Situation Assignment Studies

Closer to the problem of this study are the studies dealing with topic assignments versus situation assignments.

Donovan<sup>6</sup> found that "the situation assignment proved itself to be superior to the topic assignment, for a majority of the pupils measured against themselves, in drawing forth a greater response in ideas".

1. Coleman, John H. Written Composition Interests of Junior and Senior High School Pupils. Contributions to Education No. 494. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1931.
2. McDonald, Catherine B. J. Student Preferences in Written Compositions Assignments in the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Grades. Unpublished Master's thesis. Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University, 1945.
3. Leary, Genevieve, "Free Compositions as an Aid to the Teacher in Child Guidance," Journal of Experimental Education. 5:26-36; September 1936.
4. Wilcox, Glenn W. Student Preferences for Written Composition Topics and Assignments in the Ninth Grade. Unpublished Master's thesis. Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University, 1947.
5. Dean, Stuart E. A Study to Determine the Relationships Between Preferences and Achievement. Unpublished Doctor's dissertation. Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University, 1949. p.204.
6. Donovan. Op. cit., p. 46.

Nicolson<sup>1</sup> found that the situation assignment produced better results. He says "The results of this experiment would indicate that in the teaching of composition the situation assignment definitely produces better results in the form of more words and more ideas."

Although no one study related directly to the problem of studying the effect of preference upon written composition, many ideas of value in developing the procedure of this study were gained from reviewing the related literature.

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1. Nicolson, George H. An Experimental Evaluation of the Results Obtained by Two Types of Composition Assignments. Unpublished Master's thesis. Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University, 1939. p. 25.

**CHAPTER III**  
**PLAN AND PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY**

### CHAPTER III

#### PLAN AND PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY

This study is based on a preference study by Viglione.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of her study was to determine the written composition interests of children in grades five and six. A list of one hundred topics and types of letters were drawn from language arts series. These topics were then broken down into four forms with topics arranged in a definite order: a personal experience, an emotionalized title, a humorous situation, a look up and tell item, and a making and doings item.

Viglione's study was limited to determining the interests of children in grades five and six. This study provided a point of departure for a study to determine the effect of topic preference upon written composition in grades five and six.

The same one hundred titles using the same four forms were administered to 121 pupils in grades five and six of Woodbury and Southbury, Connecticut.

Each form was given to the pupils on successive days. The pupils were given these instructions:

"The following topics may be used for composition work. Read each one carefully so that you may select the one you like very much, like fairly well, or do not like at all.

Check the column marked LVM if you like the topic very much; check column marked FW if you like the topic fairly well; and, check column marked DL if you do not like the topic at all."

- 
1. Viglione, Julie C. "An Evaluation of Written Composition Interests Suggested by Five Language Series in Grades Five and Six". Unpublished Master's Thesis, Boston University, 1948. 87pp.

When the questionnaires were completed the preferences were tabulated for likes, and dislikes. The order of the liked very much topics is shown in Table I and the order of disliked topics is shown in Table II.

TABLE I

## PREFERENCES OF 121 PUPILS IN GRADES 5 AND 6

<u>Title</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1. Buffalo Bill, the Pony Express Rider	67.76
2. If I Had a Million Dollars	63.64
3. If I Had a Million Dollars	54.55
4. A Lucky Escape	54.55
5. A Motion Picture I Liked	53.72
6. Tracing a Wild Animal	53.72
7. No More School on Wednesdays	53.72
8. Narrow Escape	51.24
9. My Favorite Hero	49.60
10. A Tricky Pony	49.60
11. How Indians Sent Messages	48.76
12. An Attack by the Indians While the Railroad was Being Built	48.76
13. Catching a Playful or Runaway Animal	47.93
14. The Funniest Thing that ever Happened to Me	47.11
15. Monkey Business at the Zoo	45.45
16. Why Beavers Build Dams	43.80
17. A Hallowe'en Joke	43.80
18. Write to the Department of Agriculture, Washington D.C., asking for booklets about birds, plants, insects, hogs, fruits, or other topics	43.80
19. Trips that are Pleasant to Take	42.98
20. A Pioneer School	41.32
21. Meeting the Author of My Favorite Book	40.50
22. A Birthday Surprise	39.67
23. Caught in the Act	38.02
24. Fun I Had with My Family	38.02
25. Fighting a Forest Fire by Airplane	38.02
26. How I Learned to Swim	35.54
27. Frightened at the Movies	35.54
28. How the Leopard Came to Have Spots	35.54
29. How We Made Ice Cream	35.54
30. Welcoming New Pupils in Our School	34.71
31. How to Make a Model Airplane	34.71
32. Caught in a Trap	34.71
33. Chased by a Cow	33.88
34. Write a Letter Thanking Someone for a Gift	33.06
35. What Makes a Rainbow	32.23
36. Father's Favorite Story	32.23
37. Kinds of Airplanes	32.23
38. My First Experience on Skates	32.23
39. A Funny Thing that Happened to Me	31.40
40. A Mischievous Pet	31.40
41. What Benjamin Franklin Believed About Thrift	30.58

<u>Title</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
42. Write to a Life Insurance Company to Ask for Pamphlets About Health	30.58
43. Our Gang Does a Good Deed	30.58
44. A Trick I Taught My Dog	29.75
45. Meals on an Airliner	29.75
46. Ten Minutes in the Air	29.75
47. The Wrong Road	29.75
48. Why Cats See in the Dark	29.75
49. A Joke on Me	29.75
50. How to Make a Soap Carving	28.93
51. How Sailors Read the Stars	28.10
52. My Favorite Subject	28.10
53. A Good Game Every Day	27.27
54. A Cautious Chipmunk	27.27
55. Making a Model Airplane	27.27
56. The Fright that Made me Laugh at Camp	27.27
57. A Banquet for the Birds	26.45
58. A Strange Nest	26.45
59. If I Could be a Pilot	25.62
60. Falling in a Puddle	25.62
61. Something Interesting that Happened to Me	25.26
62. Write a Letter Inviting a Friend to a Party	24.79
63. How to Play My Favorite Game	24.79
64. How to Make Candy	24.79
65. Scared by a Monkey	23.97
66. An Unexpected Call	23.97
67. Why the Porcupine has Quills	23.97
68. Announce a Hobby Show	23.14
69. A Forgotten Message	23.14
70. An Important Person Visiting our Community	23.14
71. How Do Birds Help Us	22.31
72. Building a Bird House	21.49
73. How I Help at Home	21.49
74. How Milk is Purified	21.49
75. Building a Bird House	20.66
76. How to Make a Block Print	19.83
77. How to Save our Trees from Insects	19.83
78. Showing My Report Card to My Parents	19.01
79. If I Could be a Bird	19.01
80. How a Football is Made	18.18
81. An Embarrassing Mistake	18.18
82. How to Weave	18.18
83. A Burnt Supper	17.36
84. Pretend you are a Character in a Book. Describe yourself.	17.36
85. Pioneer Singing Game	17.36
86. Making Valentines	16.53
87. Play Ground Quarrels	16.53
88. Canadian Fete of the Big Sheaf	15.70
89. How to Make a Bead Mat	15.70
90. How to Pop Corn	14.88
91. How to Make a Block Print	14.88
92. Etching Glass	14.05

<u>Title</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
93. The Complaint of a Misused Book	13.22
94. Making Something Out of Scrap Material	13.22
95. Something I Cooked	12.40
96. The Cost of Children's Books	10.74
97. When I Made an Unwise Purchase	10.74
98. My Last Cent	9.09
99. Conversation Between a Book and a Careless Reader	5.79
100. Getting Sunburned	4.96

TABLE II

TITLES DISLIKED BY 121 PUPILS IN GRADES 5 AND 6

<u>Title</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1. The Cost of Children's Books	66.12
2. How to Make a Bead Mat	64.46
3. Getting Sunburned	62.81
4. Etching Glass	61.16
5. My Last Cent	56.20
6. How Milk is Purified	54.55
7. Conversation Between a Book and a Careless Reader	53.72
8. Playground Quarrels	53.72
9. Falling in a Puddle	52.89
10. An Embarrassing Mistake	52.89
11. How to Weave	52.89
12. Making Valentines	51.24
13. How to Make a Block Print	50.41
14. If I Could be a Bird	50.41
15. Something I Cooked	49.60
16. The Complaint of a Misused Book	49.60
17. How to Make a Block Print	49.60
18. Building a Bird House	49.60
19. Making a Model Airplane	48.76
20. A Pioneer Singing Game	48.76
21. Canadian Fete of the Big Sheaf	47.11
22. Showing My Report Card to My Parents	46.28
23. If I Could be a Pilot	44.63
24. How a Football is Made	43.80
25. Kinds of Airplanes	43.80
26. When I Made an Unwise Purchase	42.98
27. A Burnt Supper	41.32
28. How to Save our Trees from Insects	40.50
29. How to Pop Corn	39.67
30. Scared by a Monkey	39.67
31. How to Play my Favorite Game	39.67
32. Something Interesting that Happened at Home	39.67
33. A Fright that Made me Laugh at Camp	39.67
34. Making Something out of Scrap Material	39.67
35. Write to an Insurance Company to Ask for Pamphlets About Health	38.84
36. How to Make a Model Airplane	38.84
37. Announce a Hobby Show	36.36
38. A Joke on Me	36.36
39. Pretend You are a Character in a Book. Describe yourself.	35.54
40. A Good Game Every Day	34.71
41. How Sailors Read the Stars	34.71
42. An Important Person Visiting in our Community	34.71

<u>Title</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
43. Building a Bird House	33.06
44. A Cautious Chipmunk	33.06
45. Write a Letter Inviting a Friend to a Party	33.06
46. Frightened at the Movies	33.06
47. Why the Porcupines Have Quills	33.06
48. Chased by a Cow	32.23
49. Meals on an Airliner	31.40
50. Caught in the Act	31.40
51. The Wrong Road	31.40
52. Caught in a Trap	31.40
53. How the Leopard Came to Have Spots	31.40
54. A Birthday Surprise	31.40
55. A Forgotten Message	31.40
56. What Benjamin Franklin Believed About Thrift	30.58
57. A Banquet for the Birds	30.58
58. My Favorite Subject	30.58
59. How We Made Ice Cream	30.58
60. Why Cats See in the Dark	30.58
61. Ten Minutes in the Air	29.75
62. How to Make Candy	29.75
63. Write a Letter Thanking Someone for a Gift	28.93
64. How I Help at Home	28.10
65. An Unexpected Call	28.10
66. A Pioneer School	28.10
67. Monkey Business at the Zoo	27.27
68. How do Birds Help Us	27.27
69. How to Make a Soap Carving	27.27
70. Write to the Department of Agriculture, Washington D. C., asking for booklets about birds, plants, insects, hogs, fruits, or other topics	27.27
71. A Funny Thing that Happened to Me	26.45
72. A Strange Nest	25.62
73. Father's Favorite Story	25.62
74. Meeting the Author of My Favorite Book	24.79
75. A Mischievous Pet	24.79
76. Welcoming New Pupils in our School	23.14
77. No More School on Wednesdays	23.14
78. A Trick I Taught My Dog	22.31
79. What Makes a Rainbow	22.31
80. Why Beavers Build Dams	22.31
81. How Indians Sent Messages	22.31
82. Our Gang Does a Good Deed	21.49
83. The Funniest Thing that Ever Happened to Me	20.66
84. An Attack by the Indians While the Railroad was Being Built	20.66
85. Fighting a Forest Fire by Airplane	20.66
86. How I Learned to Swim	19.01
87. My First Experience on Skates	19.01
88. A Hallowe'en Joke	18.18
89. Trips that are Pleasant to Take	18.18
90. Catching a Playful or Runaway Animal	18.18

<u>Title</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
91. A Motion Picture I Liked	16.53
92. If I Had a Million Dollars	16.53
93. My Favorite Hero	16.53
94. Tracing a Wild Animal	15.70
95. A Tricky Pony	15.70
96. Fun I Had With My Family	14.88
97. If I Had a Million Dollars	14.05
98. A Narrow Escape	14.05
99. A Lucky Escape	12.40
100. Buffalo Bill, the Pony Express Rider	10.74

In order to determine the effect of liking or disliking upon written composition the children were asked to write upon five preferred topics and five non-preferred topics.

The topics to be written upon were the ten top ranking topics in Tables I and II.

The titles to be written upon were:

TEN PREFERRED TITLES SELECTED FOR COMPOSITION WRITING

<u>Title</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
1. Buffalo Bill, the Pony Express Rider	67.76
2. If I Had a Million Dollars	63.64
3. A Lucky Escape	54.55
4. A Motion Picture I Liked	53.72
5. Tracing a Wild Animal	53.72
6. No More School on Wednesdays	53.72
7. Narrow Escape	51.24
8. My Favorite Hero	49.60
9. A Tricky Pony	49.60
10. How Indians Sent Messages	48.76

TEN NON-PREFERRED TITLES SELECTED FOR COMPOSITION WRITING

<u>Title</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
1. The Cost of Children's Books	66.12
2. How to Make a Bead Mat	64.46
3. Getting Sunburned	62.81
4. Etching Glass	61.16
5. My Last Cent	56.20
6. How Milk is Purified	54.55
7. Conversation Between a Book and a Careless Reader	53.72
8. Playground Quarrels	53.72
9. Falling in a Puddle	52.89
10. An Embarrassing Mistake	52.89

In order to offer the children some choice in the selection of titles the titles were grouped in pairs, the pairs ranking in order of preference.

The pairs of preferred and non-preferred topics were alternated to attempt to compensate for practice and possible disinterest.

## ORDER OF PAIRS OF TITLES

## Group I

Buffalo Bill, the Pony Express Rider  
If I Had a Million Dollars

## Group II

The Cost of Children's Books  
How to Make a Bead Mat

## Group III

Lucky Escape  
A Motion Picture I Liked

## Group IV

Getting Sunburned  
Etching Glass

## Group V

Tracing a Wild Animal  
No More School on Wednesdays

## Group VI

My Last Cent  
How Milk is Purified

## Group VII

Narrow Escape  
My Favorite Hero

## Group VIII

Playground Quarrels

Conversation Between a Book and a Careless Reader

## Group IX

A Tricky Pony

How Indians sent Messages

## Group X

Falling into a Puddle

An Embarrassing Mistake

The children wrote one composition a week over a period of ten weeks. The writing situations in the four classrooms were made as similar as possible by asking the teachers to follow these written directions.

1. Write both titles on the board.
2. Read each title to the class.
3. Inform the children that they may choose either topic as their subject for a composition.
4. Urge the class to remember all the techniques they have been taught in composition writing.
5. Refrain from giving suggestions or help to the children.
6. The maximum time allowed should be 40 minutes.

Scoring

The compositions were collected and scored. Because of the lack of an adequate objective instrument for judging merit in composition, three objective criteria were selected for scoring purposes.

They were:

1. The number of words in each composition
2. The number of sentences used in each composition.
3. The number of words used which do not appear on the Durrell Remedial Reading Vocabulary for primary grades.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Durrell, Donald D. Improvement of Basic Reading Abilities. New York; World Book Co., 1940. pp. 345-350.

These three criteria are hereafter referred to as length, sentences, and vocabulary variations.

The data obtained from scoring, using the criteria described above, was then analyzed to determine the effect of preferring or not preferring to write on a topic upon each of the three criteria of length, sentences, and vocabulary variations.

The data was also analyzed to determine sex differences and differences of performance between grades five and six in written composition.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

CHAPTER IV  
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The data gathered from scoring the compositions was analyzed to determine the effect of topic preference upon the three criteria of length, sentences, and vocabulary variations. The data was analyzed to find the effect of topic preference upon grade five and grade six. The effect of topic preference upon girls and boys was also investigated.

An examination of the data in this study revealed that the critical ratios had to be defined statistically in terms of their varying significance for interpretation.

Garrett states, "A difference is said to be significant when the evidence is strong that the result found can not be attributed solely to accidents of sampling. By the same token, a difference is non-significant when we are confident that it might easily have arisen from sampling fluctuations--and implies no 'real' difference."<sup>1</sup>

Garrett says further that " 1.96 marks the point in the normal distribution to the left and right of which lie 5% of the cases. If a CR is 1.96 and the N is large, therefore, we reject the null hypothesis with some confidence on the grounds that the difference can hardly be attributed to sampling errors."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Garrett, Henry E. Statistics in Psychology and Education.  
New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947. p. 197  
2. Ibid. p. 201.

McNemar states, "A significance level represented by a P of about .003 goes with a CR of 3.0. This last level is obviously a rigorous one, and a strict adherence thereto means that one can be reasonably sure of the dependability of the conclusion that a real difference exists.

There are times when one might desire the assurance represented by a P of .003 (CR 3.0), but it should be noted that the acceptance of a null hypothesis because CR does not reach 3.0 may lead frequently to another type of erroneous conclusion.---to accept it too often because we insist on a high level of significance for rejection means that we are apt to overlook real differences." 1

On the basis of these two opinions as to when to accept or reject the null hypothesis it was decided to interpret the differences found in the data to be analyzed as follows.

1. If the CR is 3.0 or higher the difference is significant for purposes of this study.
2. If the CR lies between 2.99-1.96 the difference is considered to be statistically significant.
3. If the CR is below 1.96 the difference is considered to be non-significant.

The first question to be answered in the analysis of the data is: How do the compositions based on high rated topics compare with those of low rated topics?

Tables III, IV, and V show the difference between high and low rated topics when judged by the three criteria used in this study.

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L. McNemar, Quinn. Psychological Statistics. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1949. p.67.

TABLE III  
 COMPARISON OF MEAN LENGTH  
 OF PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS

Topics	N	Length Mean	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	530	121.01	3.01	17.76	3.87	4.59
Non-Preferred	549	103.25	2.44			

The above table shows a comparison of the mean length of preferred and non-preferred compositions. The mean length of the preferred compositions was 121.01. The mean length of non-preferred compositions was 103.25. The difference of the means was 17.76. The critical ratio of 3.87 shows that the difference is significant.

TABLE IV  
 COMPARISON OF MEAN NUMBER OF SENTENCES  
 WRITTEN IN PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS

Topics	N	Mean Sentences	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	530	9.61	.240	1.86	1.01	1.69
Non-Preferred	549	7.75	.211			

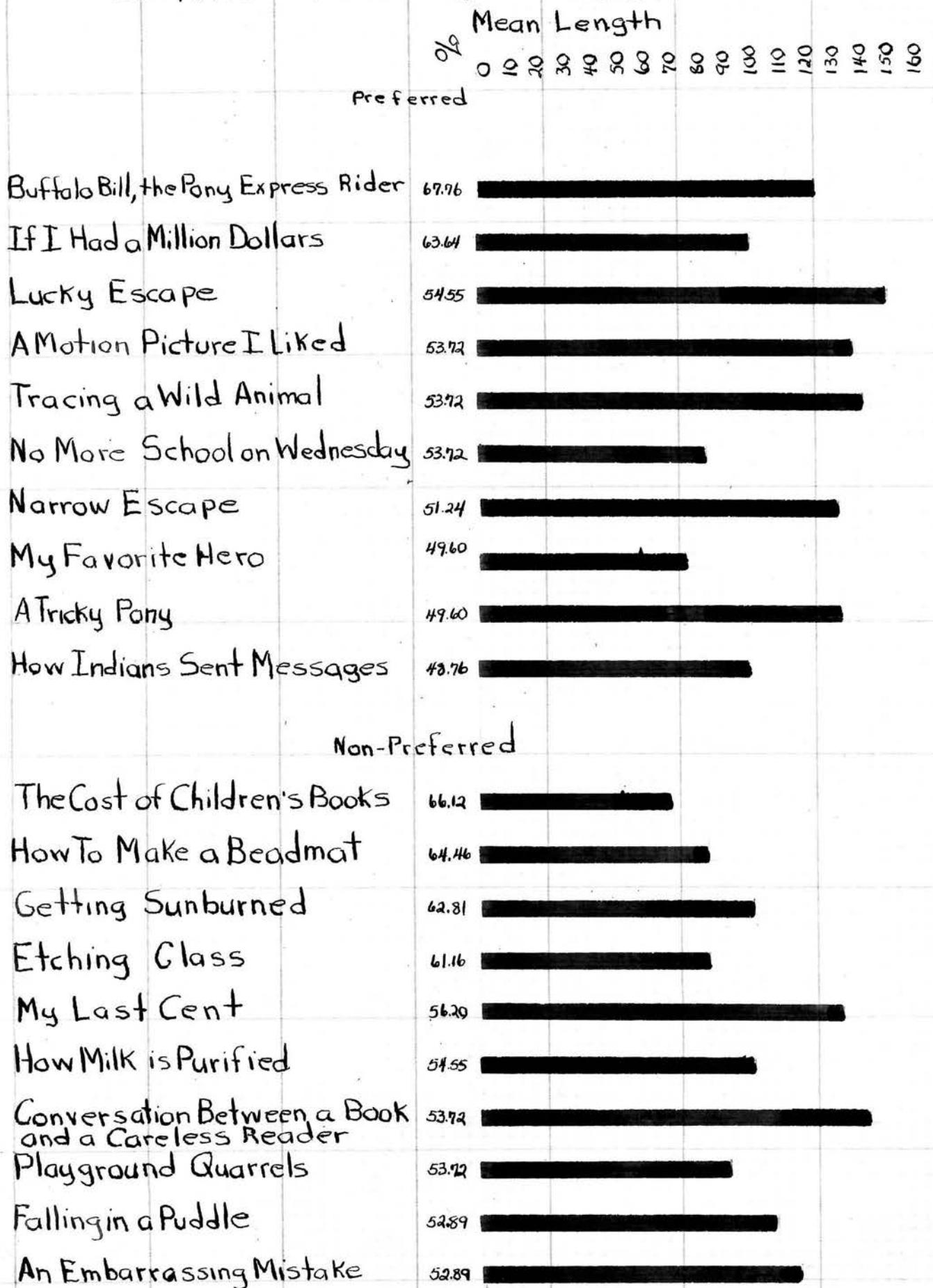
The above table shows a comparison between the mean number of sentences written in preferred and non-preferred compositions. The mean sentences in the preferred compositions was 9.61. The mean sentences of the non-preferred compositions was 7.75. The difference of the means was 1.86. The critical ratio of 1.69 shows that the difference is not statistically significant.

TABLE V  
COMPARISON OF MEAN VOCABULARY VARIATIONS  
IN PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS

Topics	N	Mean Variations	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	530	11.95	.364	4.61	.437	10.54
Non-Preferred	549	7.34	.270			

The above table is a comparison of the mean number of variations found in preferred and non-preferred compositions. The mean variations in the preferred compositions was 11.95. The mean variations in the non-preferred compositions was 7.34. The difference of the mean was 4.61. The critical ratio of 10.54 shows that the difference is highly significant.

Percent of Liking and Disliking  
Compared to Mean Length of Compositions



The second major question to be answered from the data is:  
 What is the effect of topic rating among fifth grade students?  
 Tables VI, VII, and VIII show the effect of topic preference on pupils  
 in grade five.

TABLE VI  
 COMPARISON OF MEAN LENGTH OF  
 PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY FIFTH GRADE PUPILS

Topic	N	Mean Length	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	268	98.18	3.77	8.08	4.90	1.63
Non- Preferred	272	90.10	3.13			

The above table shows the comparison of the mean lengths of preferred and non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade five. The mean length of the preferred compositions was 98.18. The mean length of the non-preferred compositions was 90.10. The difference of the means was 8.08. The critical ratio of 1.63 shows that the difference was not statistically significant.

TABLE VII  
 COMPARISON OF MEAN NUMBER OF SENTENCES  
 IN PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADE FIVE

Topic	N	Mean Sentences	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	268	7.85	.338	1.16	.426	2.71
Non-Preferred	272	6.69	.260			

The above table shows the mean number of sentences written in preferred and non-preferred compositions by pupils in grade five. The mean number of sentences in preferred compositions was 7.85. The mean number of sentences in the non-preferred compositions was 6.69. The difference of the means was 1.16. The critical ratio of 2.71 shows the differences to be statistically significant, but not significant for a study of this type.

TABLE VIII

COMPARISON OF THE MEAN VOCABULARY VARIATIONS  
 IN PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADE FIVE

Topics	N	Mean Variations	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	268	9.56	.463	3.62	.550	6.54
Non-Preferred	272	5.94	.299			

The above table shows the mean variations of preferred topics as compared to non-preferred topics written by pupils in grade 5. The mean variations of the preferred topics was 9.56. The mean variations of the non-preferred topics was 5.94. The difference of the means is 3.62. The critical ratio of 6.54 shows the difference to be significant.

The third major question to be answered by analysis of the data is: What is the effect of topic rating on sixth grade pupils? Tables IX, X, and XI show the effect of topic preference on sixth grade pupils.

TABLE IX  
 COMPARISON OF THE MEAN LENGTH  
 PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADE SIX

Topic	N	Mean Length	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	262	143.19	4.35	27.50	5.60	4.91
Non-Preferred	277	115.69	3.53			

The above table shows the mean length of preferred and non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade six. The mean length of the preferred compositions was 143.19. The mean length of the non-preferred compositions was 115.69. The difference of the means was 27.50. The critical ratio of 4.91 shows that the difference is significant.

TABLE X  
 COMPARISON OF THE MEAN NUMBER OF SENTENCES IN  
 PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADE SIX

Topic	N	Mean Sentences	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	262	11.40	.415	2.61	.528	4.92
Non-Preferred	277	8.80	.326			

The above table shows the comparison of mean sentences in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade six. The mean sentences in the preferred compositions was 11.40. The mean sentences in the non-preferred compositions was 8.80. The difference of the means was 2.61. The critical ratio of 4.92 shows the differences to be significant.

TABLE XI  
 COMPARISON OF MEAN VOCABULARY VARIATIONS  
 IN PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADE SIX

Topics	N	Mean Variations	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	262	14.35	.522	5.37	.672	7.99
Non-Preferred	277	8.97	.423			

The above table shows a comparison of the mean vocabulary variations found in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade six. The mean variations in preferred compositions was 14.35. The mean variations in non-preferred compositions was 8.97. The difference of the means was 5.37. The critical ratio of 7.99 shows this difference to be highly significant.

The next question to be answered from the analysis of the data is: Does topic rating affect one grade more than another? Tables A through I show the effect of topic rating on each grade and the differences between the differences.

TABLE A  
COMPARISON OF MEAN LENGTH OF PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Grade	Mean Length	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
VI	143.19	4.34	45.01	5.75	7.83
V	98.18	3.77			

The above table shows a comparison of the mean length of preferred compositions in grades five and six. The mean length of compositions in grade six was 143.19. The mean length of compositions in grade five was 98.18. The difference was 45.01. The critical ratio of 7.83 shows the difference to be highly significant.

TABLE B  
COMPARISON OF MEAN LENGTH OF NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Grade	Mean Length	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
VI	115.69	3.53	25.59	4.72	5.42
V	90.10	3.13			

The above table shows the comparison of mean length of non-preferred compositions in grades five and six. The mean length of compositions in grade six was 115.69. The mean length of compositions in grade five was 90.10. The difference of the means was 25.59. The critical ratio of 5.42 shows the difference to be significant.

TABLE C

THE DIFFERENCE OF THE DIFFERENCES OF MEAN LENGTHS  
OF COMPOSITIONS WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Topic	Diff.	S. E. Diff.	Diff. $D_1 - D_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	45.01	5.75	19.42	7.45	2.61
Non-Preferred	25.59	4.72			

The above table shows the difference of the differences in mean length of preferred and non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grades five and six. The difference in mean length of preferred topics between grades five and six was 45.01. The difference in mean length of non-preferred topics between grades five and six was 25.59. The difference of the differences was 19.42. The critical ratio of 2.61 is statistically significant. The critical ratio of 2.61 shows the difference to be not significant for this study.

TABLE D  
COMPARISON OF MEAN NUMBER OF SENTENCES IN PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Grade	Mean Sentences	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
VI	11.40	.415			
V	7.85	.338	3.55	.535	6.63

The above table shows the comparison of mean number of sentences written on preferred topics by pupils in grades five and six. The mean sentences of sixth grade pupils was 11.40. The mean sentences of fifth grade pupils was 7.85. The difference of the means was 3.55. The critical ratio of 6.63 shows that the difference is highly significant.

TABLE E  
 COMPARISON OF MEAN NUMBER OF SENTENCES IN  
 NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Grade	Mean Sentences	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
VI	8.80	.326	2.11	.417	5.06
V	6.69	.260			

The above table shows a comparison of the mean number of sentences in non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grades five and six. The mean sentences written by sixth grade pupils was 8.80. The mean sentences written by fifth grade pupils was 6.69. The difference of the means was 2.11. The critical ratio of 5.06 shows the difference to be significant.

TABLE F  
 THE DIFFERENCE OF DIFFERENCES OF MEAN NUMBER  
 OF SENTENCES OF COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Topic	Diff.	S. E. Diff.	Diff. $D_1 - D_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	3.55	.536	1.44	.679	2.31
Non-Preferred	2.11	.417			

The above table shows the difference of differences in number of sentences in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grades five and six. The difference of mean sentences in preferred topics was 3.55. The difference of the mean sentences in non-preferred compositions was 2.11. The difference of the differences was 1.45. The critical ratio of 2.31 shows the differences to be statistically significant. The critical ratio of 2.31 shows the difference not to be significant for this study.

TABLE G  
 COMPARISON OF MEAN VOCABULARY VARIATIONS  
 IN PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Grade	Mean Variations	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
VI	14.35	.522	4.79	.698	6.88
V	9.56	.463			

The above table compares the mean vocabulary variations in preferred compositions written by pupils in grades five and six. The mean variations in compositions by pupils in grade six was 14.35. The mean variations in compositions written by pupils in grade five was 9.56. The difference of the means was 4.79. The critical ratio of 6.88 shows the difference to be highly significant.

TABLE H  
 COMPARISON OF MEAN VOCABULARY VARIATIONS  
 IN NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Grade	Mean Variations	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
VI	8.97	.423	3.03	.518	5.85
V	5.94	.299			

The above table compares the mean vocabulary variations in non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grades five and six. The mean variations in compositions written by pupils in grade six was 3.03. The mean variations in compositions written by pupils in grade five was 5.94. The difference of the means was 3.03. The critical ratio of 5.85 shows the difference to be significant.

TABLE I  
 THE DIFFERENCE OF DIFFERENCES OF MEAN VARIATIONS  
 IN COMPOSITIONS WRITTEN BY PUPILS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Topic	Diff.	S. E. Diff.	Diff. D <sub>1</sub> - D <sub>2</sub>	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	4.79	.697	1.76	.868	2.02
Non-Preferred	3.03	.518			

The above table shows the difference of the differences in vocabulary variations in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grades five and six. The difference of the means of preferred compositions in grades five and six was 4.79. The difference of the means of the non-preferred compositions was 3.03. The difference of the differences was 1.76. The critical ratio of 2.02 shows the difference to be statistically significant. The critical ratio of 2.02 shows the difference to be not significant for this study.

The next major question was: What is the effect of topic preference upon girls and boys? A related question to be answered is : Is either sex more affected by topic rating than the other?

TABLE XII

COMPARISON OF MEAN LENGTH OF PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
WRITTEN BY GIRLS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Topic	N	Mean Length	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	262	132.65	4.59	52.07	6.05	8.61
Non-Preferred	280	80.58	3.94			

The above table compares the mean length of preferred and non-preferred compositions, written by girls. The mean length of the preferred compositions was 132.65. The mean length of the non-preferred compositions was 80.58. The difference of the means was 52.07. The critical ratio of 8.61 shows the difference to be highly significant.

TABLE XIII

COMPARISON OF MEAN LENGTH OF PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
WRITTEN BY BOYS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Topic	N	Mean Length	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	268	108.92	3.77	21.30	4.99	4.27
Non-Preferred	269	87.62	3.27			

The above table compares the mean length of preferred and non-preferred compositions written by boys in grades five and six. The mean length of the preferred compositions was 108.92. The mean length of the non-preferred compositions was 87.62. The difference of the means was 21.30. The critical ratio of 4.27 shows the difference to be significant.

TABLE XIV  
 DIFFERENCE OF THE DIFFERENCES OF THE MEAN LENGTH  
 OF COMPOSITIONS WRITTEN BY GIRLS AND BOYS  
 IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

	Diff.	S. E. Diff.	Diff. $D_1 - D_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Girls	52.07	6.05			
Boys	21.30	4.99	30.77	7.84	3.92

The above table shows the difference of the differences of mean length between boys and girls in grades five and six. The difference of the means of preferred and non-preferred compositions written by girls was 52.07. The difference of the means of preferred and non-preferred compositions written by boys was 21.30. The difference of the differences was 30.77. The critical ratio of 3.92 shows this difference to be significant.

TABLE XV  
 COMPARISON OF MEAN NUMBER OF SENTENCES  
 IN PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY GIRLS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Topic	N	Mean Sentences	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	262	10.65	.450	1.69	.559	3.03
Non-Preferred	280	8.96	.332			

The above table compared the mean sentences in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by girls in grades five and six. The mean number of sentences in the preferred compositions was 10.65. The mean number of sentences in the non-preferred compositions was 8.96. The difference of the means was 1.69. The critical ratio of 3.03 shows the difference of the means to be significant.

TABLE XVI  
 COMPARISON OF THE MEAN NUMBER OF SENTENCES  
 OF PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY BOYS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Topic	N	Mean Sentences	S.E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S.E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	268	8.24	.287	1.78	.387	4.60
Non-Preferred	269	6.46	.259			

The above table compares the mean sentences in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by boys in grades five and six. The mean number of sentences in the preferred compositions was 8.24. The mean number of sentences in the non-preferred compositions was 6.46. The difference of the means was 1.78. The critical ratio of 4.60 shows the difference to be significant.

TABLE XVII  
 DIFFERENCE OF THE DIFFERENCES  
 OF MEAN NUMBER OF SENTENCES IN COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY GIRLS AND BOYS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

	Diff.	S. E. Diff.	Diff. $D_1 - D_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Girls	1.69	.559	.09	.680	.13
Boys	1.78	.387			

The above table shows the difference of the differences in mean sentences between girls and boys in grades five and six. The difference of the mean sentences in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by girls in grades five and six was 1.69. The difference of the mean sentences in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by boys in grades five and six was 1.78. The difference of the differences was .09. The critical ratio of .13 shows the difference of the differences to be not significant.

TABLE XVIII

COMPARISON OF THE MEAN VOCABULARY VARIATIONS  
IN PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
WRITTEN BY GIRLS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Topics	N	Mean. Variations	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	262	12.73	.516	4.68	.646	7.24
Non-Preferred	280	8.05	.389			

The above table compares the mean vocabulary variations in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by girls in grades five and six. The mean variations in the preferred topics was 12.73. The mean variations in the non-preferred compositions was 8.05. The difference of the means was 4.68. The critical ratio of 7.24 shows the difference to be highly significant.

TABLE XIX  
 COMPARISON OF THE MEAN VOCABULARY VARIATIONS  
 IN PREFERRED AND NON-PREFERRED COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY BOYS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

Topic	N	Mean Variations	S. E. Mean	Diff. $M_1 - M_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Preferred	268	11.51	.479	4.92	.605	8.13
Non-Preferred	269	6.59	.369			

The above table compares the mean vocabulary variations in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by boys in grades five and six. The mean variations in preferred compositions was 11.51. The mean variations in non-preferred compositions was 6.59. The difference of the means was 4.92. The critical ratio of 8.13 shows the difference to be highly significant.

TABLE XX  
 DIFFERENCE OF THE DIFFERENCES  
 OF MEAN VOCABULARY VARIATIONS IN COMPOSITIONS  
 WRITTEN BY GIRLS AND BOYS IN GRADES FIVE AND SIX

	Diff.	S. E. Diff.	Diff. $D_1 - D_2$	S. E. Diff.	C. R.
Boys	4.92	.605	.24	.885	.27
Girls	4.68	.646			

The above table shows the difference of the differences in mean vocabulary variations between girls and boys in grades five and six. The difference of the mean variations in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by girls was 4.68. The difference of the mean variations in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by boys was 4.92. The difference of the differences was .24. The critical ratio of .27 shows the difference to be not significant.

**CHAPTER V**  
**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of topic preference upon the length, number of sentences, and richness of vocabulary in compositions written by pupils in grades five and six.

The data obtained was analyzed to ascertain:

1. The effect of topic preference upon length, number of sentences, and richness of the vocabulary of all compositions without regard to grade or sex.
  - 1a. To determine the effect of order of preference upon the mean length of compositions.
2. The effect of topic preference upon compositions written by fifth grade pupils.
3. The effect of topic preference upon compositions written by sixth grade pupils.
4. Whether topic preference affects written compositions in one grade more than the other.
5. The effect of topic preference upon compositions written by boys in grades five and six.
6. The effect of topic preference upon compositions written by girls in grades five and six.
7. Whether topic preference affects compositions written by one sex more than the other.

### Summary

#### The Effect of Topic Preference Upon Written Composition Without Regard to Sex or Grade.

##### A. Mean Length of Compositions:

In comparing the mean length of preferred and non-preferred compositions without regard to sex or grade, a difference of 17.76 in favor of the preferred topics was found. The critical ratio of 4.59 shows that this difference is significant. This indicates that topic preference does affect the length of written compositions when sex and grade differences are disregarded.

##### B. Mean Number of Sentences in Compositions:

In comparing the mean number of sentences of preferred and non-preferred compositions without regard to sex or grade, a difference of 1.86 in favor of preferred topics was found. The critical ratio of 1.69 shows that this difference is not significant. This indicates that topic preference does not affect the mean number of sentences of written compositions when sex and grade differences are disregarded.

##### C. Mean Vocabulary Variations in Compositions:

In comparing the mean vocabulary variations of preferred and non-preferred compositions, a difference of 4.61 in favor of the preferred compositions was found. The critical ratio of 10.54 shows that this difference is significant. This indicates that topic preference does affect the richness of vocabulary of written compositions when grade and sex differences are disregarded.

### The Effect of Order of Topic Preference Upon Mean Length of Compositions

In examining the mean lengths of topics arranged in order from most liked to least liked no significant pattern was revealed. The most liked title ranked below the seventeenth title. However, the least liked title did have the shortest mean length. The conclusions may be drawn that order of preference of topics in this study did not affect the order of the mean length of the compositions.

### The Effect of Topic Preference Upon Compositions Written by Pupils in Grade Five.

#### A. Mean Length of Compositions:

In comparing the mean length of preferred and non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade five a difference of 8.08 in favor of preferred compositions was found. The critical ratio of 1.63 shows this difference to be not significant. This indicates that topic preference does not affect the length of compositions written by pupils in grade five.

#### B. Mean Number of Sentences in Compositions:

In comparing the mean number of sentences in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade five a difference of 1.16 in favor of preferred topics was found. The critical ratio of 2.71 shows that this difference is not significant. This indicates that topic preference does not affect the mean number of sentences in compositions written by pupils in grade five.

C. Mean Vocabulary Variations in Compositions:

In comparing the mean vocabulary variations in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade five a difference of 3.62 in favor of preferred topics was found. The critical ratio of 6.54 shows that this difference is significant. This indicates that topic preference does affect the richness of vocabulary in compositions written by pupils in grade five.

The Effect of Topic Preference Upon Compositions Written by Pupils in Grade Six.

A. Mean Length of Compositions:

In comparing mean length of preferred and non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade six a difference of 27.50 in favor of preferred compositions was found. The critical ratio of 4.91 shows the difference to be significant. This indicates that topic preference does affect the length of compositions written by pupils in grade six.

B. Mean Number of Sentences in Compositions:

In comparing the mean number of sentences<sup>in</sup> preferred and non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade six a difference of 2.61 in favor of the preferred compositions was found. The critical ratio of 4.92 shows the difference to be significant. This indicates that topic preference does affect the mean number of sentences in compositions written by pupils in grade six.

C. Mean Vocabulary Variations in Compositions:

In comparing the mean vocabulary variations in preferred and non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade six a difference of 5.37 in favor of preferred compositions was found. A critical ratio of 7.99 shows the difference to be significant. This indicates that topic preference does affect the richness of vocabulary in compositions written by pupils in grade six.

Comparison of Effect of Topic Preference Upon Each Grade to Determine If One Grade is Affected More Than the Other.

A. Mean Length of Compositions:

1. Preferred Topics--Grade Six versus Grade Five

In comparing the mean length of preferred compositions written by sixth grade pupils to the mean length of preferred compositions written by fifth grade pupils a difference of 45.01 in favor of sixth grade pupils was found. The critical ratio of 7.83 shows the difference to be significant. This indicates that pupils in grade six write longer compositions on preferred topics than pupils in grade five.

2. Non-Preferred Topics--Grade Six versus Grade Five

In comparing the mean length of non-preferred compositions written by sixth grade pupils to the mean length of non-preferred compositions written by fifth grade pupils a difference of 25.59 in favor of grade six was found. The critical ratio of 5.42 shows the difference to be significant. This indicates that pupils in grade six write longer compositions on non-preferred topics than pupils in grade five.

### 3. Difference of the Differences between Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions

In comparing the difference between grades five and six in mean length of preferred compositions to the difference between grades five and six in mean length of non-preferred compositions a difference of the differences of 19.42 in favor of the preferred topics was found. A critical ratio of 2.61 shows that the difference is not significant. This indicates that the differences in mean length between grades five and six were not due to topic preference.

#### B. Mean Number of Sentences in the Compositions:

##### 1. Preferred Topics--Grade Six versus Grade Five

In comparing the mean number of sentences in compositions written by sixth grade pupils to the mean number of sentences written by fifth grade pupils a difference of 3.55 in favor of sixth grade pupils was found. The critical ratio of 6.63 shows the difference to be significant. This indicates that sixth grade pupils used more sentences in preferred topics than fifth grade pupils.

##### 2. Non-Preferred Topics--Grade Five versus Grade Six

In comparing the mean number of sentences in non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade six to the mean number of sentences in non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade five a difference of 2.11 in favor of pupils in grade six was found. The critical ratio of 5.06 showed the difference to be significant. This indicates that sixth grade pupils used more sentences in non-preferred compositions than fifth grade pupils.

### 3. Difference of the Differences between Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions

In comparing the difference between grades five and six in mean number of sentences in preferred compositions to the difference between grades five and six in mean number of sentences in non-preferred compositions a difference of the differences of 1.44 in favor of preferred topics was found. The critical ratio of 2.31 shows that the difference is not significant. This indicates that the differences in mean number of sentences between grades five and six were not due to topic preference.

#### B. Mean Vocabulary Variations in Compositions:

##### 1. Preferred Topics--Grade Six versus Grade Five

In comparing the mean vocabulary variations in preferred compositions written by pupils in grade six to the mean vocabulary variations in preferred compositions written by pupils in grade five a difference of 4.79 in favor of sixth grade pupils was found. The critical ratio of 6.88 shows that the difference is significant. This indicates that sixth grade pupils use a richer vocabulary than pupils in grade five.

##### 2. Non-Preferred Topics--Grade Six versus Grade Five

In comparing the mean vocabulary variations in non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade six to the mean vocabulary variations in non-preferred compositions written by pupils in grade five a difference of 3.03 in favor of sixth grade pupils was found. The critical ratio of 5.85 shows that the difference is significant. This indicates that pupils in grade six use a richer vocabulary in non-preferred compositions than the pupils in grade five.

58

### 3. Difference of the Differences between Preferred and Non-Preferred Compositions

In comparing the difference between grades five and six in mean vocabulary variations in preferred compositions to the difference between grades five and six in mean vocabulary variations in non-preferred compositions a difference of the differences of 1.76 in favor of preferred topics was found. The critical ratio of 2.02 shows the difference to be not significant. This indicates that the differences in mean vocabulary variations between grades five and six were not due to topic preference.

#### Comparison of Effect of Topic Preference Upon Boys and Girls to Determine If One Sex is Affected More Than the Other.

##### A. Length of Compositions:

###### 1. Girls--Preferred versus Non-Preferred

In comparing the mean length of preferred compositions written by girls to the mean length of non-preferred compositions written by girls a difference of 52.07 in favor of preferred topics was found. The critical ratio of 6.05 shows the difference to be significant. This indicates that topic preference does affect the length of compositions written by girls.

###### 2. Boys--Preferred versus Non-Preferred

In comparing the mean length of preferred compositions written by boys to the mean length of non-preferred compositions written by boys a difference of 21.30 in favor of preferred topics was found. The critical ratio of 4.27 shows the difference to be significant. This indicates that topic preference does affect the mean length of compositions written by boys.

### 3. Difference of the Differences Between Girls and Boys

In comparing the difference in the mean length between preferred and non-preferred compositions written by girls to the difference in mean length between preferred and non-preferred compositions written by boys a difference of the differences of 30.77 in favor of girls was found. A critical ratio of 3.92 shows that the difference is significant. This indicates that the mean length of compositions written by girls is more affected by topic preference than the mean length of compositions written by boys.

## B. Mean Number of Sentences:

### 1. Girls--Preferred versus Non-Preferred

In comparing the mean number of sentences in preferred compositions written by girls to the mean number of sentences in non-preferred compositions written by girls a difference of 1.69 in favor of preferred topics was found. The critical ratio of 3.03 shows that the difference is significant. This indicates that topic preference does affect the mean number of sentences written by girls.

### 2. Boys--Preferred versus Non-Preferred

In comparing the mean number of sentences in preferred compositions written by boys to the mean number of sentences in non-preferred compositions written by boys a difference of 1.78 in favor of preferred topics was found. The critical ratio of 4.60 shows that the difference is significant. This indicates that topic preference does affect the mean number of sentences written by boys.

### 3. Difference of the Differences between Boys and Girls

In comparing the difference in mean number of sentences between preferred and non-preferred compositions written by girls to the differences in mean number of sentences between preferred and non-preferred compositions written by boys a negligible difference of .09 was found. The critical ratio of .13 shows the difference to be not significant. This indicates that topic preference does not affect the mean number of sentences written by girls any more than the mean number of sentences written by boys.

## C. Mean Vocabulary Variations in Compositions.

### 1. Girls--Preferred versus Non-Preferred

In comparing the mean vocabulary variations in preferred compositions written by girls to the mean vocabulary variations in non-preferred compositions written by girls a difference of 4.68 in favor of preferred topics was found. The critical ratio of 7.24 shows this difference to be significant. This indicates that topic preference does affect the richness of vocabulary in compositions written by girls.

### 2. Boys--Preferred versus Non-Preferred

In comparing the mean vocabulary variations in preferred compositions written by boys to the mean vocabulary variations in non-preferred compositions written by boys a difference of 4.92 in favor of preferred topics was found. The critical ratio of 8.13 shows the difference to be significant. This indicates that topic preference does affect the richness of vocabulary in compositions written by boys.

### 3. Difference of the differences between Boys and Girls

In comparing the difference in mean vocabulary variations between preferred and non-preferred compositions written by girls to the difference in mean vocabulary variations between preferred and non-preferred compositions written by boys a difference of .24 in favor of boys was found. The critical ratio of .27 shows the difference to be not significant. This indicates that topic preference does not affect the mean vocabulary variations of boys any more than the mean vocabulary variations of girls.

### Conclusions

From this study of 121 pupils in grades five and six in two rural communities and with the particular written compositions topics used the following conclusions may be drawn.

1. When all of the preferred compositions were compared with all of the non-preferred compositions topic preference did affect the length of compositions and richness of vocabulary. Topic preference did not affect the number of sentences used.

2. The order of preference of topics does not affect the order of the mean length of compositions.

3. Topic preference does affect the richness of vocabulary used by pupils in grade five. Topic preference does not affect the length or number of sentences in compositions written by pupils in grade five.

4. Topic preference does affect the length, number of sentences, and richness of vocabulary in compositions written by pupils in grade six.

5. The pupils in grade six write longer compositions, use more sentences, and use a richer vocabulary than pupils in grade five.

6. The differences between grade six and grade five are not due to topic preference.

7. Topic preference does affect the length, number of sentences, and richness of vocabulary in compositions written by girls.

8. Topic preference does affect the length, number of sentences, and richness of vocabulary in compositions written by boys.

9. Topic preference affects the length of compositions written by girls more than boys. Topic preference does not affect the number of sentences or richness of vocabulary of either sex more than the other.

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**APPENDIX**

Sex \_\_\_\_\_

The following topics may be used for composition work. Read each one carefully so that you may select the one you like very much, like fairly well, or do not like at all.

Check column marked LVM if you like it very much; check column marked FW if you like it fairly well; check column marked DL if you do not like it.

	LVM	FW	DL
Something I Cooked	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Lucky Escape	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An Attack by the Indians while the Railroad was being Built	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What Benjamin Franklin Believed about Thrift	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Banquet for the Birds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building a Bird House	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Trick I Taught My Dog	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Complaint of a Misedused Book	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What Makes a Rainbow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Cost of Children's Books	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LVM . . . FW . . . DL . . .

The Luckiest Thing that Ever Happened to Me

How to Stop Cough

A Motion Picture I Liked

	LVM	FW	DL
The Hardest Thing that Ever Happened	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to Pop Corn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Motion Picture I Liked	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Barnt Supper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
IF I Had A Million Dollars	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Canadian Pets of the Big Show	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monkey Business at the Zoo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fishing Class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Strange Hunt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welcoming New Pupils in Our School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Why Beavers Build Dams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meals on an Airliner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Author's Favorite Story	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to Make a Beadmat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write to a life insurance company to ask for pamphlets about health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

The following topics may be used for composition work. Read each one carefully so that you may select the one you like very much, like fairly well, or do not like at all.

Check column marked DVM if you like it very much; check column marked FW if you like it fairly well; check column marked DE if you do not like it.

	DVM	FW	DE
Narrow Escape	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scared by a Monkey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Beating the Author of My Favorite Book	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do Birds Help Us?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Funny Thing that Happened to Me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to Make a Block Print	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My First Experience on Skates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When I Made an Unwise Purchase	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Good Game Every Day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How Sailors Read the Stars	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Challenge on Jokes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	LWM	FW	DL
How to Make a Block Print	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How I Help at Home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our Gang Does a Good Deed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tracing a Wild Animal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How a Football is Made	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chased by a Cow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to make a Model Airplane	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An Unexpected Call	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Cautious Chipmunk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If I Had a Million Dollars	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trips that are Pleasant to Take	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caught in the Act	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to Make a Soap Carving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write a letter inviting a friend to a party	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The following topics may be used for composition work. Read each one carefully so that you may select the one you like very much, like fairly well, or do not like at all.

Check column marked VMC if you like it very much; check column marked FW if you like it fairly well; check column marked DN if you do not like it.

	VMC	FW	DN
Getting Sunburned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conversation Between a Book and a Careless Reader	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amusement a Hobby Show	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ruffalo Bill, the Pony Express Rider	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fun I Had with My Family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making a Model Airplane	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ten Minutes in the Air	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Wrong Road	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If I Could Be a Pilot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fighting a Forest Fire by Airplane	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Form D

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Section \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_

The following topics may be used for composition work. Read each one carefully so that you may select the one you like very much, like fairly well, or do not like at all.

Check column marked LVM if you like it very much; check column marked FW if you like it fairly well; check column marked DL if you do not like it.

	LVM	FW	DL
My Last Cent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Showing My Favorite Card to my Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pretend you are a character in a book. Describe yourself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How Different Text Messages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Mischievous Job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How We Make the Cream	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How Interesting that happened at Home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Something Surprised	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How We Can be the Best	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LVM FW DL

How to Talk

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

A Forgotten Message

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

The Bright that Made me Laugh  
at Camp

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

If I Could be a Bird

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

A Pioneer Singing Game

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

A Tricky Pony

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

How to Weave

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

An Important Person Visiting  
in our Community

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Play Ground Details

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Way the Partridge Has Quills

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

How Milk is Purified

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

A Note on Me

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Making Something out of Scrap  
Materials

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Using a Knife - Making someone  
be a pig

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

## Procedure for Composition Writing

The following 30 topics have been selected for use in the second phase of this thesis project.

The children will be allowed to choose one from each pair of titles upon which to write.

The order of these pairs must be adhered to in order to achieve the desired alternation between topics which were liked very much and which were disliked.

In order to make all the writing situations as similar as possible each teacher will please follow these steps carefully.

1. Write instructions to the class.
2. Read each title to the class.
3. Inform the children that they may choose either topic as their subject for a composition.
4. Remind the class to employ all the techniques they have been taught in composition writing.
5. Refrain from giving suggestions or help to the children.
6. The writing time allowed should be 40 minutes.

Group II

The Cost of Children's Party

How to Make a Wedding

Group III

Lucky Messages

A Motion Picture I Liked

Group IV

Getting Submerged

Reading Glass

Group V

Reading a Wild Animal

No More School on Wednesday

Group VI

My Last Year

How Milk is Purified

Group VII

Narrow Escape

My Favorite Hero

Group VIII

Play Ground Questions

Conversation Between a Book and a Careless Reader

Titles (cont.)

Group IX

A Tishy Pong

How Indians sent Messages

Group X

Falling into a Puddle

An Unbelievable Inglistone