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**Reading Aloud with an Octogenarian:
Journeys into a Liminal Space Created by Shared-Reading During the 2020 Pandemic**

Beverley Brenna
University of Saskatchewan

Author's Note

Beverley Brenna, Ph.D. is a Professor in the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan where her research interests include the teaching of reading and Canadian children's literature (for more information please see: <http://www.beverleybrenna.com>). She can be reached at: bev.brenna@usask.ca.

Abstract

This qualitative retrospective self-study, framed by reflexive inquiry, explores the context of telephone shared-reading during the worldwide pandemic of 2020. Findings extend into benefits for the researcher related to relationship-building and self-reflection within the liminal space of the shared-reading context.

Keywords: reading aloud, shared-reading, adult education, 2020 pandemic

In March 2020, at the beginning of the COVID crisis that stretched around the world in pandemic proportions, I was a faculty member at the University of Saskatchewan, teaching classes through a newly implemented online delivery method. My responsibility for English Language Arts content for elementary teacher candidates demanded a focus on reading instruction. We had recently covered the importance of reading aloud to our students and listed an extensive number of classroom goals for students that could be reached through teacher read-alouds. In addition to curricular outcomes involving enhanced vocabulary and syntax, as well as the opportunity to model effective reading comprehension strategies, we had also talked about how interactive read-alouds can build student engagement and reader-response.

As I wasn't spending hours each week in the classroom, due to the recently imposed social isolation regulations, I found myself at home with extra hours each day that began to weigh heavily. My winter term was generally whirlwind busy, and the current state-of-affairs was in stark contrast to my usual schedule. Watching news reports on television added to my personal stress and although I swerved into additional reading and writing activities, along with some home-based exercise, I still had time to spare.

In addition to presenting teacher read-alouds as an important classroom framework for student learning, I had been for some time researching various outcomes related to *re-reading*, and had explored conceptualizations of the literary chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981) through myriad projects (Brenna, 2019, 2012, 2011). When a package arrived at my home, containing Inga Moore's illustrated edition of Frances Hodgson Burnett's children's novel *The Secret Garden* (first published in 1911), I began to think about my childhood encounters with this text, and the difference between those early responses and my current reader response. I'd ordered it online as part of an earlier investigation into some of my childhood books, and its arrival inspired a number of research endeavors; the first of these, as I will illustrate in this reflective paper, took a turn away from an isolated focus on the experience of rereading and into a broader exploration of both rereading and shared reading. This study connects to literacy in older populations as well as exploring the value of reading-aloud in terms of benefits to the *reader*.

Tearing open the bubble wrapped package, I immediately delighted in the newly illustrated edition of *The Secret Garden* that had arrived for me. I suddenly recalled the pale green colors of the jacket on the original edition and excitedly wondered what other kinds of time travel I'd experience in this current re-reading of an old classic. I perused the first page, beginning with the chapter title: "Chapter One: There is No One Left":

When Mary Lennox was sent to Misselthwaite Manor to live with her uncle, everybody said she was the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. It was true, too....One frightfully hot morning, when she was about nine years old, she awakened feeling very cross, and she became crosser still when she saw that the servant who stood by her bedside was not her Ayah. (p. 7)

I was immediately engaged in the story, and after skimming the first few pages, I realized that this book began in the context of the late 18th century, during the cholera epidemic in India, and followed the story of Mary Lennox—a little girl who quickly found herself alone in the world.

I had empathized with Mary’s lonely state in my original reading of this text as a young girl. I was an “afterthought” in my family, with twelve years separating me from other siblings, and I spent a great deal of my time outside school in an unhappily solitary state. I hadn’t connected at that time to Mary’s background, how it would feel to lose family members—something I can understand now, having lost both my parents and many extended family members some years ago—and I certainly hadn’t comprehended the actual events associated with India’s cholera epidemic.

A phone call interrupted my contemporary reunion with *The Secret Garden*, and it was “Rose,” an older friend calling to touch base during what had been a particularly long day in self-imposed isolation. The flash connection between book-time and real-time was unmistakable. Two worlds collided. An epidemic. Loss. Loneliness. Individuals finding their way forward.

“Would you like me to read to you?” I asked slowly into the phone, unsure of what the answer would be. “I’ve just gotten a book that I read a long time ago, and I wonder if you might like to share it—or some of it—over the telephone? I could read it... to you?”

“Yes!” said Rose. “I would love that!”

We set a time for me to call her back to share the first chapter of *The Secret Garden*. We planned to evaluate, after that initial reading, whether we would continue with the rest of the story. And thus our telephone reading connection had begun!

Notes in my reading journal later served as retrospective field notes, offering the chance to develop this inquiry and the basis for this article. My initial focus related to the listening response of one participant, an octogenarian of 88 years old, alongside my own experience reading aloud a semi-familiar childhood novel. What would begin to emerge is that the study wasn’t so much about Rose’s listening responses as it was about my own reflections on what it meant to be inside this “liminal” book space that united Rose and me during our phone conversations.

Literature Review

Research on the literacy experiences of older adults remains limited. While conducting a previous study on the writing experiences of seniors involved in a public library literary contest (Park & Brenna, 2015), a number of gaps emerged as well as some evidence related to studies of writing with senior participants (Brady & Sky, 2003; Butler, 1985; Butler & Bentley, 1992 and 1997; Byrd, 1993; Dreher, 1980; Hoskyn & Swanson, 2003; Kazemek, 1997 and 1999; Koch, 1977; Staples, 1981). In contrast, only a handful of studies are available related to reading comprehension in older adults (e.g., Kemper, Jackson, Cheung, Anagnopoulos, 1993; Rawson & Touron, 2015), and even fewer studies document the effects of shared-reading groups on quality of life in senior populations (Longden, Davis, Carroll, Billington, & Kinderman, 2016).

Much previous research related to reading has focussed on emergent and beginning readers, but there are only a handful of studies that explore the value of interactive read-alouds with adults (Hoffman, 2011; Wiseman, 2011). The disparity between available data on seniors' writing and seniors' reading is noteworthy. A previous study (Brenna, 2012) offers a portrait of a ninety-four-year-old reader and her response to Canadian picture books, resulting in the notion that worthwhile literary experiences invite senior readers into reading through familiar patterns, with accessible language, and through elevated possibilities for inspiring personal connections. The books "Em" preferred were ones that sparked a memory of past experiences rather than offering new learning or particularly clever repartee.

Sumara's (2002) work on literary resources for schools discusses personal connections with texts and intergenerational relationships, with Sumara himself sharing personal anecdotes about his mother alongside connections to theory, resulting in an argument that "literary experience is a place" (p. xiv). For "Em" in my earlier study (Brenna, 2012), this *place* was an easy-entry point of connection to her own life story.

Much has been previously written about "liminal spaces" in Education. One literal definition of "liminal" is that it denotes a sensory threshold and being situated just at that edge; the term could also refer to being in an intermediate state: in-between, transitional (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Drawing from the latter meaning, the idea that shared-reading produces a liminal space, between two or more people, is intriguing. The liminal space that encompasses two or more stances is presented in research as a transformative state in the learning process that

includes a reformulation of the learner's meaning frame as well as a shift in the learner's ontology and/or subjectivity (Land, Rattray & Vivian, 2014).

As I proceeded to read to Rose over the telephone, gaps in the current research connected to possibilities inherent in the current project. Two key research questions arose to frame this new study:

1. What patterns might appear in relation to aesthetic and efferent reader-responses via the listening experiences of an eighty-eight-year-old reader?
2. What experiences might develop between a researcher sharing aloud a semi-familiar childhood novel, and a senior citizen hearing it for the first time, considered within the liminal space of their shared reading?

With these two questions in mind, I devised this qualitative retrospective reflexive inquiry to explore further our responses throughout our read-aloud endeavour, and this paper specifically focuses on data gathering in relation to the second research question. In this way, my self-study attempts to explore something that hasn't had traction in previous research: what effect does reading aloud have on the *reader* in relationship to shared-reading events?

Reflexive inquiry supports a researcher's own critical consciousness of positionality, including interpretations at the analysis stage (Pillow, 2003). Explorations in this framework are not intended to be generalized to other contexts, but considered as tenable to *this* particular context, with *these* people involved, at *this* time—so that “another researcher in a different relationship will unfold a different story” (Finlay, 2002, p. 531). Considerations of how reflexivity connects the personal and the professional (Cole & Knowles, 2000) unfolded in this study as I pondered how the shared reading experience had affected me personally, and might affect me in future contexts including the field of Education.

Context of the Study in Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reading

Methodology, Methods and Limitations

This qualitative inquiry was resourced by field notes recorded after each of the 26 phone-calls wherein *The Secret Garden* was read aloud, chapter by chapter, by the researcher to an 88-year-old family friend. Limitations of the study are related to its participant design and retrospective analysis of field notes kept in a personal journal format, although the results, while contextualized within this project, offer implications related to lifelong literacy support and

opportunity for relationship building, through literary resources, between adults (and perhaps people of any age) whose interests connect to the text at hand.

As I began to see the value of any reflections I might keep on this project, I chatted with Rose about my ideas for this study and shared the notes I had taken. The ethical parameters of the study were negotiated, and Rose agreed to the publication of any data related to her participation (approval certificate available upon request). She selected her own pseudonym and member-checked sections of this article as it moved through various drafts.

Participant Description

Rose hadn't heard of *The Secret Garden*, but she was quite fond of stories and regularly watched a particular daytime soap opera that had many twists and turns. In her late 80s, she wasn't able to read a great deal, partly due to macular degeneration, but she demonstrated lifelong learning through various interests in home-making, world events, and sports, especially interested in following the life stories of her sports' heroes.

Findings

I began the read-aloud project tentatively, unsure whether my friend would find the text sufficiently interesting and feeling somewhat vulnerable as I had independently selected the text we were to read. My uncertainty was quickly put to rest, however.

"Let's have it," Rose said. Each time I stopped to check, she responded positively. "I'm enjoying it!" she encouraged. "Keep going!"

When we reached the end of the chapter, she reiterated that it had been very interesting. "Would you like us to read a little more?" I asked. "Or save it for another day?"

"For another day," she responded. "I'm going to make myself a cup of tea right now."

"We could leave it open or set a date," I suggested.

"How about tomorrow?" she asked.

As time went on, the drama of the story swept us both into the novel and Mary's journey forward. We chuckled at Mary's snappishness, and agreed that she was, as one of the chapter titles suggested, very contrary indeed! Rose shared connections of being read to while attending a country school, and I was reminded of various classrooms I'd taught in, reading to many students over the years.

"It was one of the best parts of the day," Rose announced, speaking here for both of us.

I still worried whether the reading was unfolding well. Was the silence on the other end of the line avid listening? Or abject boredom? Perhaps Rose was too polite to indicate any real desire to cease and desist. I settled on a plan, which I told her about in no uncertain terms. “Just call STOP if you need a break. Or say ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!” We both laughed, and although this agreed-upon code made me more comfortable, assured of a willing audience, Rose did not apply it during any of our read-aloud sessions.

We began each day by spontaneously summarizing the previous part and predicting what might happen next. As each reading finished, we talked about particular vocabulary that came clear through that section, and personal responses we’d had.

“I found out what a moor is,” Rose said, after one of the early chapters, when “moor” had been misinterpreted as “Moor”—because of Mary’s early context in India— instead of a stretch of open English countryside with particular flora and fauna. As the reader, I hadn’t been thinking about multiple meanings, or the difference between shared reading and independent silent reading where opportunities arise when one can quickly re-read to clarify something.

“I’m so interested to know what happens next,” was a common sentiment from both of us as we plowed through the rest of the book, one chapter every day.

After a chapter where the robin in Mary’s story is particularly visible, Rose talked about her battle with robins on the farm where she used to live.

“I love the sound of them,” she said. “We had a lot of robins at the farm but they were not good to my garden. I grew strawberries and the robins were annoying. I had to cover the strawberry patch with netting so that the birds couldn’t get the berries, because what they would do is peck a hole into each berry, rather than eating all of it. So they were a real annoyance.” She waited a moment and then said, “There are no birds around here, no birds at all. A few years ago we’d see some, but not anymore... We did have a rabbit and her two young ones all last summer, though. That was something to see. They hopped all around the buildings and the flower beds.”

This personal reflection inspired me to think of so many things. A robin I’d found as a child, getting a neighborhood vet to splint its broken leg and then feeding it worms all summer until it was healthy enough to fly away. How robins heralded spring, and how anxious I was for

the warm weather to arrive. And how difficult it must be to live in a place where there were no birds, after spending most of one's life in a rural setting.

The next day, Rose told me that she'd seen birds flying outside her window that very morning. Perhaps they'd been there all along, but she hadn't looked for them. I went right to the window to see if I had any birds in my neighborhood, and there they were. Sparrows!

Rose confided that she'd been telling the story of *The Secret Garden* to friends in her building, and some of her relatives. Her daughter had asked specifically for the name of the title and the author, and later confirmed that she herself had read the book when she was a child. Interestingly, I'd been doing the same—re-telling our shared reading with other family members. Somehow the context Rose and I were building around the story was connecting us even more deeply to other people as well as each other.

One of the most memorable incidents in the story involved mice, and the connections both Rose and I made to these animals were striking. Rose's fear of mice could have begun when her children were little:

“When my oldest son was a little boy, and we still lived in the old yard, he came in and had this mouse in his hand. Its head was poking out one side and its tail was poking out the other. ‘Mom,’ he said. ‘A little kitty!’ Well, I hated mice so much. I squealed and jumped back and told him to get it back outside. He would have been about two years old at that time.”

It may have been the same for me. I have a real phobia about mice now, and the story I shared with Rose related an experience with used hockey equipment, and how a family of mice made their way into our living room.

“I have another story,” said Rose. “I’d been away on holiday and a neighbor had been coming over to check my place. When I got back, everything seemed fine and I was getting ready to go to bed when a little mouse ran right across the floor of my bedroom! I yelled and climbed on top of the bed and the mouse ran into the closet. Well, I stayed up there for a little while but I knew I couldn’t go to sleep with a mouse in the house. What was I going to do? My late husband always looked after mice like that, but now there was nobody to do that. ‘I won’t be able to sleep if I don’t get it,’ I said to myself. And so I closed the bedroom door and the door into the bathroom, and put towels into the cracks

underneath. Then I got a broom and stood back up on the bed. Finally the mouse came out of the closet, but it ran right under the bed! I jumped up and down on the bed until the mouse ran out. Then I threw the broom down. And I got it! Then I stood up there for a while wondering how I was going to get rid of it. But I threw something over top and got it taken care of... I don't know how that broom hit it," she said, "but it did!"

Many feelings surfaced for me, here. An increased bond with Rose, of course, because of our mutual hatred of rodents. But also admiration for her courage in keeping on, after the passing of her long-term partner. I wondered how I would fare in these times, as a singleton, and thought about how grateful I was to have my family safe, and intact. Rose had been reading her bible before our phone call that day, and I thought about the solace she found through spirituality.

The chapters we were reading now offered opportunities to connect to some of the older characters in *The Secret Garden*—characters I'd definitely given cursory treatment as a child-reader. Martha's mother, in particular, intrigued me, and I admired her integrity at not speaking ill of others. I also pondered how tasks such as housecleaning kept her feeling productive, even when the world seemed off kilter. In a flash of insight, I saw many of this good woman's qualities reflected in Rose. She had told me at the beginning of one phone call that she'd set out the vacuum cleaner so that she'd remember to do the living room when the chapter was done. Since the pandemic began, for health-safety reasons, Rose hadn't been able to receive her regular housecleaner.

"It's too much for me to do the whole place, but I can do one room at a time, and I've been planning to do that."

We were eight chapters into the book, and I noticed an interesting pattern in my field notes. I continued to jot down Rose's responses to the story, but in addition to highlighting her use of comprehension strategies such as predicting and summarizing, and then checking her predictions as we went on, I was intently recording my own connections to Rose's reflections. Our shared reading context was not simply two individuals responding in turn to a piece of text. It was much more complex than that, as we listened to each other and responded to those reflections, as well as to the story at hand, functioning within a liminal space that this novel, and our conversations, had produced. As we explored our connections to a chapter where Dickon

uses invented spelling in his note for Mary, Rose was reminded of a note she'd received from one of her grandchildren that showed all the sounds he knew. She was inspired to take out her photo albums and relive early times, and on a few long afternoons at home, I did the same thing, enjoying the reminiscence and also looking forward to chatting about it with my reading partner.

"I look forward to this every day," Rose told me, refereeing to our shared reading. "It's a real bright spot." I felt the same.

And as the timeline of the story crept, ever so beautifully, towards springtime, so too the trees outside our windows began to bud, and signs of spring unfolded in our own neighborhoods.

"I can see puddles in the back alley, from my window," Rose noted one day. "It's below zero, but the sun is warming things. It's got some real heat in it now."

We talked about Mary's garden, and Rose said, "I bet it'll be just beautiful...with roses everywhere. My mom had roses, she just had lots of them and they came up every year. I don't remember her tending to them at all. They just grew."

I thought about my grandfather, an inveterate rose-grower himself, well into his nineties. And I thought about a place in my own yard where quite possibly I could create a rose garden of my own, once spring arrived in earnest.

My field notes from mid-April demonstrate a sea change in focus. After one of the readings, the connections to the story were entirely mine—remembering stories my father told about his "stubborn" little brothers and the scraps they got into. One story about one of my uncles—who was a lovely, patient man in adulthood—involved him lying on the ground after a fall, refusing to get up because he wanted some attention. The farm dog came and licked his face, and my uncle got up, chased away the dog, and then came back to the same spot to finish his tantrum. No longer was I the "teacher"—eliciting planned responses from my "student." Rose and I were partners in this reading and sharing, with our responses to the story a natural part of interacting both inside and outside *The Secret Garden*.

As I further pondered the family stories I was excavating here, it became clear to me that these memories were not a result of my own singular response to reading *The Secret Garden*. The reflective responses were elicited by the relationship between Rose and me within the liminal space of our shared-reading. Our connectedness within this context had inspired a heightened access to family history on my part. In various drafts of this article, in thinking about

the importance of our relationship through this reading, I revised the title from “Reading *To* an Octogenarian” to “Reading *With* an Octogenarian” – a subtle but important shift.

The excerpt that follows from my field notes demonstrates the kind of real conversations Rose and I were having as part of this exchange. I note with interest the turn-taking that signals both mutual respect and confidence, and I’m struck by how this kind of “conversation” isn’t typically part of the teacher read-alouds I recall from my own classroom days.

Saturday, April 18, 2020

In Chapter Seventeen, Mary and Colin go head to head as Colin is having a tantrum nearing on hysterics. It’s a chapter that made me think about spoiled children and their tempers, and I remembered a story an old friend told me once about when he was a child and got his way all the time because otherwise he’d hold his breath until he passed out. Finally, a doctor told his mother just to let him do it, that he’d start breathing again when he was unconscious, and that it wouldn’t hurt him. After trying it once, my friend never did that again. I’d forgotten about this story until this chapter made me think about it. Rose’s connections went back, at this point, to the secret garden and the robin.

“Do you have any robins’ nests in your backyard?” Rose asked me.

“No,” I said. “We have a few birdhouses, though—for wrens or sparrows—but I’ve never seen a robin use them, or a nest here.”

“We had wrens on the farm,” said Rose. “They built their nests in the binder, where you put the twine. They’d go in and out through a little hole. They’d be out of there by fall, when we used the binder, so they knew what was going on.” She thought a little more and then had another story.

“I used to go looking for nests. We had them in the blacksmith’s shop, too. Up high, where the rafters were, on a ledge. One time I reached my hand in to bring out a baby bird and you know—it was a mouse! A baby mouse!” Her voice is high and quick—we both know that she has a fear of mice.

“It looked just like a bird’s nest,” said Rose, when we’d stopped laughing. “And maybe it was. Maybe it was a bird’s nest that the mice had just taken over.”

I had just begun to think about the pelicans, who usually return to Saskatoon each spring, when Rose said: “Are those big birds back? The big white ones—pelicans?”

“Not yet,” I tell her. “But soon!”

As we finished the final sequence of chapters from *The Secret Garden*, spring was inside the book, outside our windows, and pulled even closer with reflections on springs past. Rose remembered that she used to find wild crocuses out in the pasture when she was a girl. “Not many...they were in the fields that had once been turned over and grown over with grasses and brush. They were purple and white, I think...no, maybe purple and yellow! Everybody had them in their pastures in those days.” I remembered that I used to gather crocuses with my elderly parents and bring them in little velvet bouquets to neighbors.

As the last chapter of the book unfolded, I felt surprisingly emotional. The story itself was sentimental, but I was already thinking about how comfortable and inspirational our conversations were, and how I would be missing that once the book was finished.

“I knew it would end with them together,” sighed Rose happily, when the novel was done. “I didn’t think it would come about the way it did, though. I thought he’d just accidentally come upon them in the garden. But this was a great ending and I’ve really enjoyed hearing the whole book...I can still see the garden there,” Rose mused. “So lovely, with all the beautiful flowers, and trees, and birds. I can just see it in my mind!” As could I.

I can also see Rose right in the middle of this garden! She is tending to the plants herself, as she did in her own garden years ago, and enjoying every minute. And I am there, as well. I am beside her. We are magically out of isolation, and free to soak up the beauty of nature, even if it’s only in our imaginations.

Discussion and Conclusion

There are many outcomes I now associate with shared-reading, as a result of this study, including but going beyond my original teaching module—which I have now revised. Of course curricular goals can be reached—vocabulary and syntax are key skills enriched by shared-reading, and comprehension strategies are effectively taught through the kind of modelling that

occurs within this context. Audience engagement with texts and reader-response can indeed be richly encouraged. But all of the above achievements are strictly student-centred, without much thought of the teacher in the read-aloud setting. It is here that my current study illuminates some particularly unique and important findings.

Relationships grow in multiple directions, with all parties involved. In my case, reading with Rose, I gained rich understandings about her and her life, but in return I was also compelled to share my own personal experiences. I looked forward to the shared-reading each day and thought deeply about the connections I was making to our interesting web of responses to *The Secret Garden*. Such responses were clearly co-created and remind me of the kinds of wisdom I harvested from conversations with my parents so very long ago. Rather than a one-way street, or even a two-way street with clear demarcations, my shared-reading experience with Rose reminds me of these informal and very engaging *open* dialogues.

As we think about home-centred classrooms that reflect the very best of how families have been supporting children's development, shared-reading can give us a valuable context in which spectacular conversations can occur that bond participants, enhance reflection and analysis, and offer opportunities to draw sustenance, courage, and self-understanding from the ripples a book makes in our collective consciousness during the experience of shared-reading. It can involve teachers who are drawn to reveal elements of their own lives that students will find humanizing and propel all participants towards that reading time each day when they are truly together in a safe, shared space. Rather than *reading to* our students in classrooms, conceptualizing this interaction as *reading with* can, I think, make an important difference to the texts we select and how we share them as teachers as well as the likelihood of making time for shared-reading as a daily activity.

The “liminal space” created in this rendering of *The Secret Garden* can be thought of as a context where participants in the shared-reading are standing together—metaphorically. We are leaning in towards the book, open at the centre of our circle, but we are also conscious of each other, and available to each other, in ways we would not be available without the impetus of the text that, over time, expands into a group text that informs and entertains, comforts and illuminates, and, perhaps most importantly, allows us to be ourselves together in an open shared space that is both public and personal.

Taking this understanding forward into my own undergraduate teaching in a College of Education context, I have consciously steered shared reading opportunities into my future courses, including my courses taught synchronously online. When developing new syllabi for the remote context, I have listed particular texts as “anchor novels”—selections of children’s literature that I will be reading from each day. I am still exploring student responses to these “teacher read-alouds” but from my own perspective, I am experiencing these aspects of my courses as a time when I can model teaching strategies, most certainly, but also as a time when I can engage with the text as a reader and present my own responses, inviting student responses in return, building the kind of community of response that is so important to cultivate in our teaching environments, whatever these contexts might be.

Afterward

The shared-reading experience between Rose and me was deemed so positive that, following the completion of *The Secret Garden*, two other books were shared in this fashion: *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, an intermediate-age novel by Katherine Paterson, and the autobiographical book *Becoming*, by Michelle Obama. And there is the promise of more! A list of these and other suggested titles conceived for future reading with Rose is provided in Appendix A. Appendix B contains an adapted interest inventory that could be used to identify shared interests underpinning book selection for readers interested in connecting with older adults—or anyone—in similar read-aloud sessions.

While research has been conducted on using inventories such as the example in Appendix B with elementary classrooms (e.g., Brenna et al., 2017), it would be intriguing to see further research on the application of interest surveys with older populations, leading to literary projects, as well as additional explorations of reading-aloud with seniors. Most importantly, additional explorations into opportunities for *reading with* versus *reading to*, in multiple settings, may encourage the application of valuable insights related to the practice of reading aloud in community.

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Appendix A: Current and Future Titles for Reading With Rose

Albom, M. (2003). *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*. New York: Hyperion.

*based on Rose's interest in spirituality

Di Camillo, K. (2002). *The Tiger Rising*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick.

*based on the interest in overcoming systemic racism, emerging from discussion about *The Secret Garden*, as well as in children overcoming obstacles

Ernman, M. Thunberg, G., Thunberg, S., & Ernman, B. (2018). *Our House is on Fire: Scenes of a Family and a Planet in Crisis*. New York: Penguin.

*based on an interest in Greta Thunberg's environmental activism

Glaze, Dave (1993). *Pelly*. Regina: Coteau Books.

*based on the shared interest in birds, that emerged during the shared-reading (e.g., see April 18 field notes)

Howarth, J. (2019). *Hello, Friends!: Stories from My Life and Blue Jays Baseball*. Toronto, ON: ECW Press.

*based on avid interest in baseball and, in particular, the Toronto Blue Jays' team

Obama, M. (2018). *Becoming*. New York: Crown Publishing Group.

*based on the interest in combatting racism, emerging from discussions about *The Secret Garden*, as well as a mutual respect for the Obamas in American politics

Patterson, K. (1978). *The Great Gilly Hopkins*. New York: Crowell.

*based on the enjoyment of Mary from *The Secret Garden*, a similarly feisty young heroine

Stanger, M. (1966). *That Quail, Robert*. New York: William Morrow.

*based on a shared interest in birds, that emerged during the shared-reading (e.g., see April 18 field notes)

White, B. (2011). *If You Ask Me: And of Course You Won't*. New York: Putman.

*based on admiration for Betty's White's work as an older female actress

Appendix B: Interest Inventory

Adapted from Cooper, J. D. et al. (1972). *Decision Making for the Diagnostic Teacher*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

1. Are there any sports you like to play/ watch? Discuss.
2. Are you an animal lover? Explain.
3. Do you collect things? If so, what?
4. What language(s) do you speak? What places have you lived in? Are there places you'd like to travel to—and if so, where?
5. What are your hobbies? Please describe.
 - a. digital technology?
 - b. arts & crafts ?
 - c. music?
 - d. repairing/building things?
 - e. cooking?
 - f. science/nature?
 - g. fishing/hunting?
 - h. reading?
 - i. writing?
 - j. other?
6. Suppose you could have a wish come true...what would you wish for?
7. Do you enjoy reading? Or being read to? What is the best book you've read? What did you like about it? Do you prefer to read for enjoyment or for information or both?
8. What forms of reading do you enjoy most, if any:
 - a. essays?
 - b. plays?
 - c. poetry?
 - d. short stories?
 - e. novels?
 - f. graphic novels?
 - g. verse novels?
 - h. cartoons?
 - i. comics?
 - j. emails? texts? tweets? web pages?
 - k. newspaper articles?
 - l. magazine articles?
 - m. other? _____
9. What genres/topics of reading do you enjoy most, if any:
 - a. realistic fiction?
 - b. historical fiction?
 - c. fantasy?
 - d. science fiction?
 - e. mystery?
 - f. folk literature (fairy tales, folktales, myths, legends)?
 - g. romance?
 - h. biography?
 - i. autobiography?
 - j. history?
 - k. travel?
 - l. music?
 - m. science?
 - n. other? _____

10. Is there any other information about yourself and your interests that you would you like to share?