

A SIX WEEK PROGRAM TO DEVELOP
READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS IN
CHILDREN IN STANDARD II AT
EPWORTH METHODIST SCHOOL USING
BELIZEAN FOLK-TALES, PUPPETRY
THROUGH COOPERATIVE LEARNING.

Submitted to: The Principal
Belize Teachers' Training College in
partial fulfillment of the
requirement for a
Trained Teacher's Diploma.

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CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter I	
<u>Introduction</u>	
Background of the Study	4
Identification of the Problem	7
Purpose of the Study	8
Significance of the Study	9
Definition of Terms	10
Chapter II	
<u>Review of Literature</u>	
Importance of Comprehension as a Part of the Reading Process	12
Improving Comprehension	14
Methods for Improving Comprehension	17
Chapter III	
<u>Research of Design</u>	
Method	21
Instrument	22
Sample	23
How Data Were Collected	24
How Data Were Analyzed	25
Chapter IV	
Description of Program	27
Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data	45
Chapter V	
Conclusion and Recommendations	54
Bibliography	57

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In our Belizean Primary Schools, teachers are always faced with the challenge of teaching Reading. Today, another challenge from our media-oriented students makes teachers reexamine the importance and need of reading. Reading has always been referred to as one key to educational success since almost every aspect of learning uses reading as a major component. The written word is turned to for explanation and elaboration even when demonstration and imitation are necessary. To be able to function adequately in society people need to be literate. That includes read, write, understand and communicate so as to effect changes in civic, economic, social and political process of one's society. According to the Encyclopedia (1989),

"Literacy is the ability to read and write, to sign one's name, completion of certain amounts of schooling and the ability to read and write a simple message. However, a person could meet these criteria but yet be considered functionally illiterate, that is unable to understand the reading matter encountered in everyday life."

This shed some light on the idea that literacy in Belize must also be understood in conjunction with the multi-lingual dynamic of our country. The majority of Belizeans speak another language or dialect prior to speaking English, the official language of Belize. The other languages are Creole, Spanish, Garifuna, Ketchi/Mopan/ Yucatec Maya, Hindu, Arabic, Chinese. Usually when reference is made to literacy in English, very little attention is given to the other languages mentioned. Belize has boasted a ninety (90%) percent literacy which have been declared a myth by Diane C. Haylock (1992). Her claim can be seen as an echo of the Minister of Education (1990) Said Musa's address to the 1990 Annual Convention of the B.N.T.U. He insisted that,

"Belizeans must finally shatter the over ninety (90%) percent literacy myth and strive to take on the challenge of meeting the nation's basic learning needs by the end of this century."

The researcher believes that adequate development of comprehension skills can effect developing literacy.

For the past six (6) years of teaching at various schools, the researcher became aware of the problem of reading comprehension. This problem range from Infant to Upper Division students. Other teachers have claimed in workshops that students exhibit much difficulty in answering comprehension questions. Results from Flores (1993) on investigation conducted at three (3) schools in Belize City at Standard V level, the students performance decreased when test involved higher level questions.

The problem of reading comprehension is also carried over to our Secondary Schools. According to Worrell (1992) his research showed that students at Corozal Community College performed poorly in Comprehension and were not able to reason and answer inferential questions. Similarly is the claim of Villafranco (1995) at the Stann Creek Ecumenical College. Students are extremely good at content recall but do extremely poor at inferential and analysis questions. Pearson (1985) stated that,

"Comprehension questions should be changed from recall to higher level questions; inference and critical level."

The researcher agrees with Pearson and believes that more inferential questions other than content recall should be used in the Primary Schools Comprehension lessons. The researcher became more observant of the difficulty experienced by pupils when answering comprehension questions during internships and block practice during her studies at the B.T.T.C. Level 1 and Level 2 programs. While teaching at Epworth Methodist School, Stann Creek District, the researcher observed that answering comprehension questions at the higher level was a problem throughout the school. As a part of

the institution and being in the position to effect change, the researcher was motivated to implement a program to help develop and improve comprehension skills. Based on her experience and results from Literature Courses directed by Leroy Green, Lecturer at B.T.T.C., the researcher believes that a program using puppetry and drama could help to effect changes in the reading comprehension dilemma.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

After pre-testing the researcher identified that approximately 75% of the pupils in Standard IIB, Epworth Methodist School, Dangriga Town had difficulty answering comprehension questions. These pupils were of various ethnic background - Creole, Garifuna and Mestizo. This factor made it clear to the researcher that reading comprehension had to be examined and considered in two context, within the context of Class Curriculum and the context of Multi-lingual State.

During discussions the researcher noticed that pupils exhibit confidence when they answered in unison. If the question was content recall all were eager to answer. When they were asked to answer individually, many were not able to answer or chose not to answer. When given written task most pupils responded correct to content recall and majority responded wrongly or ignored higher level questions.

The researcher noticed that after probing and complimenting pupils and even coaxing some pupils their first language responses improved. The researcher believe that it was necessary to implement a program in which some of the comprehension skills could be taught to them. She planned a six (6) week reading comprehension program in which some of these skills were used and developed using puppetry, dramatization and tales through cooperative learning.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Since reading comprehension was a significant problem for the pupils in Standard IIB, the purpose of this study was as follows:-

1. To develop comprehension skills to enable pupils to become critical thinkers.
2. To empower pupils with skills so that they will be able to understand and analyze what they read even beyond the writer's text.

With aiming at developing pupils comprehension skills at literal, inferential and critical levels, the research emphasized the following through the program:-

1. Main Idea
2. Judgements
3. Predicting Outcomes
4. Draw Conclusions
5. Interpret Implied Cause and Effect Relationship
6. Comprehend Characters' Perspective

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

When implementing this program the researcher hoped that the entire educational system would benefit from it; such persons include Principals, Teachers, Researchers, Students (children) and the Ministry of Education.

1. The Ministry of Education

At this level the results of this program can remind the decision making body in our Education System of a critical problem in our Society. That is one of Reading Comprehension.

Such awareness can motivate the Ministry to encourage a more adequate and appropriate planning of our national Reading Curriculum. Hopefully, they will address the needs of workshops and seminars and evaluation of the execution of the education curriculum at Primary Schools.

2. Principals

To motivate and remind Principals that they are a part of the problem of our pupils not being able to comprehend what they read. They should find the time to supervise and assist the teachers in developing programs that emphasize higher level skills.

3. Teachers

Hopefully teachers will be motivated to conduct research and implement similar programs with their pupils. That they may utilize all the creative ideas taught at B.T.T.C. and come up with some of their own.

4. Other Researchers

B.T.T.C. students that want to do a similar program can use this study as a guide and inspiration. They can get an idea of how to design their study. Hopefully they will implement the comprehension skills used in this study and incorporate other skills and current ideas that were not used in this study.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

B.T.T.C.	Belize Teachers Training College
Tata Duende	One of Belize's popular folk character named from The Maya title Tata for "old man" or "grandfather" and Duende Spanish for "dwarf".
Xtabay	A famous enchantress originated among the Maya. A beautiful woman who turns into a snake.
Anansi	Belize's most celebrated folk character. Anansi crossed over the new world from Africa on slave ship and has been adopted throughout the Caribbean. His Akon Ashanti name of Kwaku Anansi has been shortened to "Anansi" a word that translates as "Spider".
La Lorano	A character that translates as "Weeping Woman"

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

IMPORTANCE OF COMPREHENSION AS A PART OF THE READING PROCESS

Recent explanations of the Reading process suggest that the meaning of a text does not reside in the material itself, but in the transactions and the interactions that take place between the reader and the text. The notion that it is just a matter of identifying words have been dismissed by experts such as Goodman (1976) and Smith (1978) two of the leading advocates of Psycho-linguistic view of reading. Reading is a language process whereby the reader interacts with print by using inferences, analyzing data and comprehension skills.

One part of the reading process which is very essential in all aspects of life is Comprehension. Comprehension is a key factor in the job opportunities and quality of life for each one of us. Through comprehension a person understands what is heard or read, which enhances communication between a transmitter and a receiver. Miller (1984) stated,

"In our high speed world of computer technology and satellite transmission of electronic signals, one find that reading is our most fundamental tool for effective communication."

Being able to comprehend what one reads has become one of the most important factors contributing to success in many fields today. Doctors, Scientists and Laboratory Technologist analyze their findings and the works of others through research documents. Stock Brokers and Business Executives read current journals, marketing and management reports. Lawyers and Councilors review recent developments in their professional journals. Home makers read magazines that provide them with valid information about child care, home improvement and economic factors. Like those mentioned above it is also important for students to read and comprehend what they read. This is especially relevant for the students who are faced with the daily task of grasping many new concepts in all subjects in the school curriculum. Likewise teachers and students need comprehension skills to do research papers on topics given at school.

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We as teachers may not be able to measure or see how much the individual comprehend as stated by Corey (1980),

"Comprehension is a thinking process that is not only difficult to define but also does not lend itself well to being quantified or observed."

Even though Comprehension cannot be seen, the depth of the individual understanding can be reached through testing. This is possible by administering a test based on the material the individual has read. This idea is supported by Miller (1984),

"In order to measure Comprehension it must be tested in some way to see how much you remember of what was read."

In addition to remembering, whatever is read must be understood in order to get meaning out of the printed words. Comprehension allows and encourages students to think critically.

Since one needs to make judgements, draw conclusion and make constructive criticism in order to comprehend it can be said that through comprehension one can become a critical thinker. It is the duty of the school to ensure that students acquire skills that will empower them with the abilities to analyze situations and make relevant decisions. We are living in a fast changing society where individuals need to be conscious of issues that affect their lives. Much information is received through newspapers or magazines and one cannot appreciate such material if one cannot read and understand what is printed. This is one valid reason why teachers should strive to help children develop comprehension skills. Such skills will enable them to make relevant decisions in their adult lives.

People need to be good readers as young students, as well as adults. If Belizean Primary Schools produce good readers the probability is that Belize would approach a higher percentage in literacy. This is a good reason why teachers need to be aware of the students reading comprehension weakness. After all we read in order to understand, regardless of what we read or whether we read for pleasure or for information.

IMPROVING COMPREHENSION

In order to improve comprehension skills the reader must learn not only literal interpretation of an author's word but also interpretation of his mood, tone, feeling and attitude. This means the reader must comprehend implied meaning and prejudices of writers, recognize summary statements, make inferences and applications and recognize the broader implication of a passage. The reader ought to familiarize himself with the place, time and atmosphere in which words were written. Also knowing the use of periods, commas, exclamation and question marks as aids to interpretation. The teacher in turn needs to set a purpose for reading. This will enable the reader to see that the purpose of reading the written word is meaningful to them. When a child lacks basic comprehension skills he is not able to appreciate or interpret what he has read. Norton (1980) supports as he claims that,

"Comprehension skills deals with word meanings as well as the literal or inferred meaning of reading material and their interpretation."

Strang, McCullough and Traxler (1986) also supports this when they stated that,

"Comprehension involves reading the lines, reading between the lines and reading beyond the lines."

"Reading the lines" refer to the literal meaning of the material, clearly the most basic level, without which no other is possible. Literal is referred to as the first level in comprehension which requires reading and recalling details and facts from the passage or story. Whether the words, sentence structure, concepts, or any combination of these create the problem of comprehension, or whether the students' training, ability or background is involved much be determined by the teacher. Through direct and indirect questions, the teacher informally diagnoses pupils' problems and checks the diagnosis by experimenting and observing responses. Then the teacher can use alternate texts, varied reading assignments, and

different guide questions to assist students with this level. Pre-reading and post-reading discussions are essential to provide stimulus and reassurance. From observations of finds made by researchers, this method seems to be overused in Belizean Primary Schools.

The second level, "reading between the lines" is one of which the reader is asked to think or infer. The inferential level require the reader to think and read beyond the written lines: predict outcomes, give the main idea of the passage, interpret character traits; comprehend from the characters' perspective, understand cause and effect relationship and draw conclusions. Thomas and Robinson (1973) states,

"Reading between the lines the reader recognizes the author's intent and purpose, interprets the thought, passes judgement on his statements, searches for and interprets clues..., distinguishes between fact and opinion, and separates his own ideas from the author's."

The reader also judges the merit of the author's evidence or source. This is obviously a mature level of reading, requiring thinking and experience. From observations made by researchers the most prevalent error point regarding the teaching of this skill appears to be in making assignments. The researcher agrees that in many of our schools students are not prepared by the teachers to perform the task that is set for them. The purpose for the activity is not clearly established therefore the reading is done without adequate orientation and motivation nor stimulation. One way to improve this area of comprehension is to let the students record their predictions about the content to be read. This will make the reader excited and eager to read and contrast their own predictions against other class members and the actual story.

The third is the critical thinking skill. this is also referred to as "reading beyond the lines". Strang, McCullough and Traxler (1980) states, that reading beyond the lines,

*"involves deriving implications,
speculating about consequences, and
drawing generalizations not stated
by the author."*

This goal is perhaps the highest and most difficult to attain, yet some aspects are within the reach of the more mature pupils. The reader is required to evaluate what is read, identify relevant information, perceive and make bias judgements. As teachers we can offer such questions as - If what the author says is true, what additional conclusions not mentioned in the selection can we draw? What changes can be expected to occur if things continue as the author predicts? What changes would you like to see and why? Reading imaginative literature, especially drama and poetry commonly involves reading beyond the lines.

Reading Comprehension skills can be developed and improved through various methods of activity based approach and contextual rich learning experiences. The researcher choose to use drawing, puppetry, dramatization, folktales and poetry to develop these skills. These activities enable the teacher to set a purpose and the students to use their initiative and originality to discover new insights and to reflect on the significance of the ideas.

METHODS FOR IMPROVING COMPREHENSION

Reading Comprehension is an active process and cooperative learning is a terrific method by which teachers can facilitate content area, comprehension and learning strategies. Through Cooperative Learning children get the opportunity to work in small groups to accomplish common goals. They are able to share and discuss ideas and give support which encourages active participation. This allows relationships to develop and in certain environment extend cultural awareness where group members are of different ethnic background. High level reasoning and problem solving skills are also developed through cooperative learning. Sharon etal, (1988) states,

"Cooperative learning improves social and effective development among all students. Some two dozen studies have demonstrated that when students are allowed to work together they experience an increase in a variety of social skills. They become more able to solve problems which demands cooperation for solutions."

In cooperative learning groups pupils work mutually. Children can read together or in pairs so everyone has a opportunity to read in a caring atmosphere. While reading no one fears making errors and self-confidence excels. By expressing information and ideas to other group members, difficult learning tasks such as divergent thinking, decision making and conceptual attainments are successfully completed. Various activities can be utilized in groups to enhance learning; such are brainstorming ideas, discussion, team-work, semantic maps, drawing and presentations. While the teacher is the observer the children become facilitator, reporter, recorder and material person. Each child has a task to complete or the group does not reach its goal.

Along with these cooperative learning activities: Dramatization and Puppetry are useful tools in developing reading comprehension. It brings realism to what children read and understand. Dechant (1964) states,

"Acting out the activity frequently is the best way to teach the meaning of words."

When children dramatize what occurred in the story they give a clear demonstration of what they interpret and understand from the passage.

Dramatization using puppets also help slow learners by seeing actual examples to better understand what was read. Understanding story characters is not only a valuable means for our students to develop desirable human qualities and a love of literature. Understanding characters is also essential for comprehending the story as a whole. Character states such as their desires, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs, are the glue that ties the actions of the story together.

Puppets can be used especially to represent characters of stories. Children's tendencies to project their own responses onto story characters are especially apparent when the literature comes from a culture different from the readers own. This is why the researcher decided to incorporate puppetry to represent folklore characters such as Tata Duende, Anansi, LaLorona and Xtabay. This is supported by Shipley etal, (1968),

"Many teachers use puppets to illustrate the characters in stories from the world of Literature and History. Puppet character of story add realism."

Puppetry helps shy children who are afraid to speak to express themselves through this medium. The use of puppetry lets the child gain self-confidence since his thoughts are reflected and expressed through the puppet. The child is not visible to the audience so no one can laugh or make fun of him. The child read aloud and answer questions more confidently with the use of the puppets.

Puppetry and Folktales provide good entertainment for children. They enjoy listening and are motivated to tell their own story. It arouses interest and motivates them to listen and to read. In Belize, folktales form part of the core of the children's background experiences. The use of Belizean Folktales as reading materials enable pupils to relate the information they read to their real life experiences. Rebecca J. Lukens (1986) states,

*"Folk-tales have been called the
spiritual history of human kind."*

Most reading materials used in our Primary Schools are irrelevant to our Belizean culture. To motivate children, teachers should provide students with reading material that is relevant to their experience. Reading about their culture through Folk-tales and other stories with Belizean background are appropriate for children's experience and will motivate them to want to read.

As Language Arts instruction increasingly involves quality children's literature, students need to be exposed to literary forms where character perspective must be inferred, where relationships are central to understanding of the story, and where character motives and beliefs are followed. The researcher hoped that using Folk-tales, drama and puppetry through cooperative learning would help pupils use background experiences, complete fully developed assignments, use texts properly get meaning from printed words. Also consideration of the perspective of story characters might help children grow in their comprehension of stories, it might also help them grow in understanding other people too, a benefit that will serve them well in all parts to their lives.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN

METHOD

The design of this study was on action research. The researcher designed, implemented and evaluated an action research in Reading Comprehension incorporating folktale and puppetry through cooperative learning. The program was executed with fifteen (15) children from Standard III at Epworth Methodist School. This study included a program which contained a pre-test and post-test given to sample pupils. Scores of the pre-test and post-test were recorded for analysis purpose.

This study was carried out over a six (6) week period from February 19th, 1996 to March 29th, 1996, for forty-five (45) minutes periods, three (3) times a week - Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

A pre-test was administered at the beginning of the program. The samples were given a task to read silently and then answer ten questions individually that were based on the story, "Tata Duende". The format of the questions were three literal, four inferential and three at the critical levels of comprehension. The researcher discovered that some children experienced difficulty when answering questions at the literal level.

Throughout the program, the samples were provided with the activity based approach in cooperative learning folk-tales to develop comprehension skills. Devices used consist of group work, drawing, dramatization, puppetry, group discussion, group discussion and presentation of semantic maps. Specific activities were used depending on its maximum usefulness and how it lends itself to the story.

INSTRUMENT

The researchers instrument used to collect data were a pre-test and a post-test.

The pre-test was given then the program was implemented. The post-test was given at the end of the program. The instrument consisted of ten (10) questions - three literal, four inferential and three in the critical levels of comprehension. Those at the literal level were recall. Those at the inferential level were related to main idea, cause and effect relationship, predicting outcomes and character trait. Those at the critical level were questions on drawing conclusions, character perspective and making judgements.

The pre-test was given on February 13th, 1996. The post-test was given on March 29th, 1996. Both pre-test and post-test carried the same pattern.

HOW THE DATA WERE COLLECTED

A pre-test was given on February 13th. Based on the results a program was designed to meet the pupils needs and enhance development of comprehension skills. The pre-test consisted of a reading passage and ten comprehension questions. Questions were based on literal, inferential and critical levels. Pupils were provided with multiple choice questions and answers; some questions required answers in their own words. Each question answered correctly scored 10 percent. The entire test valued a total of 100 percent.

The post-test questions followed the same pattern as the pre-test. The post-test questions also valued the same points.

HOW THE DATA WAS ANALYZED

The results of both pre-test and post-test were put on tables and graphed to simplify the presentation and analysis of the data. This was done at the end of the program.

The scores obtained in the pre-test of each sample were present on an overall table. The results of both tests were compared and discussed. A difference of points indicates that the program was successful.

A Bar Graph was used to show the difference of both tests. The results of the questions answered in each level of comprehension were also displayed on a table and discussed.

The data on both tables and graph were analyzed to discover how the subjects performed and the implications it had for the program.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The main objective of this program was to develop reading comprehension skills of the children at the literal, inferential and critical levels.

The material used during this program included; puppets, puppet theatre, handouts of stories, drawings of Tata-Duende, Xtabay and Anansi, flash cards, pocket chart, cinema box and flannel board, index cards with paragraphs, costumes and props

Week 1 - Lesson 1

Topic: Vocabulary Development through Context Clues

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objectives: Using ten (10) sentences with multiple choice answers, pupils will be able to complete these with an appropriate vocabulary word getting at least seven (7) correct.

Activities: Present a drawing that relates to the sentences to be used. Discuss picture briefly. Present a sentence strip with a specific word underlined. Discussion was held to elicit clue words in the sentence so that pupils could get meaning of word. If the pupils had difficulty they were given three (3) words for choices. Additional practice were given orally and written.

Evaluation: Pupils read the sentences twice, and were given time to consider the underlined word. They were able to give definition of most of the words and had to use given choices for some. The choices made it easier for them to get the correct answer.

Lesson 3

Topic: Predicting Outcomes

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objectives: After reading a specific part of "Xtabay" pupils will be able to predict how the story ended or what happened next in the following paragraph.

Materials: Handouts, pictures, cinema box

Activities: Presented everyday situations on film on cinema box. Pupils observed and predicted what they thought would happen next. Pupils read a short passage related to what they saw and told what would happen at the end. In groups pupils discussed events in short paragraphs and predicted orally what will happen at the end. (The ending was omitted so that groups would come up with a variety of endings.)

Week 2 - Lesson 1

Topic: Vocabulary Development

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objective: Given ten (10) words based on the story "Xtabay", the pupils will be able to give the definition of each word in the sentence.

Materials: Flash cards, flannel board, pocket chart, dictionary

Activities: Pupils read passage; elicited ten (10) unfamiliar words; pupils got into groups of three's and looked up the words in the dictionary. A matching game was played in which group members matched word to definition.

Evaluation: After pupils found the correct meaning of the ten (10) words, they showed understanding of the meaning by correctly matching words with a sentence that gave the correct meaning of each word.

Lesson 2

Topic: Drawing Conclusions

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objective: Given six (6) questions based on the passage selected from the story "Xtabay", pupils will be able to answer at least four (4) correct by drawing own conclusion.

Materials: Handouts, newsprint, crayons markers

Activities: Presented situations to children. Pupils work in group of fives. Drew pictures on the different events that occurred in the story. Present pictures and gave descriptions on it. Then brief discussion followed and pupils gave conclusions of different events.

Evaluation: Pupils read passage. Discussion followed. Pupils gave events that took place and answered the questions.

Lesson 3

Topic: Making Judgement

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objective: Given five (5) situations based on the passage "Xtabay" pupils will be able to answer questions making judgement getting at least three (3) correct.

Materials: Puppet theatre, puppets, pocket charts, sentence strips

Activities: Pupils read short passage. pupils discussed what they read in small groups. Through discussion pupils told the events of passage. Explained a situation to pupils. Explained how to make judgement. In groups of five pupils, pupils expressed main section of passage by dramatization.

Evaluation: Pupils read "Xtabay" orally and it was discussed. Pupils learned what it meant to make judgement. Through dramatization pupils showed their interpretation of the main section of passage.

Week 3 - Lesson 1

Topic: Vocabulary Development through Context Clues

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objective: Given ten (10) sentences with multiple choice answers, pupils will be able to replace the underlined words with its appropriate word that gives its meaning, getting at least seven (7) correct.

Materials: Handouts, flash cards, sentence strips, pocket chart

Activities: Presented a sentence strip to children with one word underlined, discussion was held and elicited definition of clue words. If children did not come up with adequate responses, they were given three (3) words for choices. Children were given several sentences with underlined words for practice orally and written.

Evaluation: Presented sentence strips to children and they read it twice. Elicited definitions of the underlined words. Volunteers gave correct answers when they used the given choices written on flash cards. Pupils did on tasks that included handouts with sentences that had an underlined word and multiple choice answers.

Lesson 2

Topic: Main Idea

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objective: Given three (3) short paragraphs pupils will be able to read and give the main idea of each paragraph.

Materials: Posters, handouts

Activities: Distribute posters to groups. Each group read paragraph printed on poster. They discussed and gave opinions. Elicited the main idea from each group. Groups compared responses.

Evaluation: Pupils got practice in developing main idea using short paragraphs. Pupils worked individually on handouts to select main idea of three short paragraphs.

Lesson 3

Topic: Making Judgement

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objective: Given five (5) questions based on the passage "Anansi and Bra Tiger" pupils will be able to make judgement answering at least three (3) correctly.

Materials: Puppets, pictures, flannel board and pocket chart

Activities: Pupils were given pictures to observe and describe orally. Gave short paragraphs for pupils to read individually. Pupils discussed events in groups of three's. Elicited the events of the passage. Reviewed how we make judgement. Pupils used puppets to dramatize main section of passage.

Evaluation: Read summary of story "Anansi and Bra Tiger" orally and guided discussion followed. This was good practice that prepared them for task they completed. Teacher assisted pupils who had difficulty in writing their answers in standard English

Week 4 - Lesson 1

Topic: Vocabulary Development

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objective: Given ten (10) words pupils will be able to give definition of each word and choose the correct word in the sentence getting at least seven (7) correct.

Materials: Flash cards, sentence strips, pocket chart, dictionaries

Activities: Pupils read a passage; elicited ten (10) unfamiliar words; pupils got into groups of four's and five's and looked up the words in dictionaries. Played a word matching game.

Evaluation: While pupils looked up unfamiliar words teacher observed and took note of the quantity of words that were not understood. In groups, pupils used dictionaries to assist. Discussion followed and a word game followed where they used the definition of words to match a word.

Lesson 2

Topic: Predicting Outcomes

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objective: Given three (3) short paragraphs from the story "Xtabay", pupils will read paragraphs and predict what will happen next in the story; using story clues and their own experience.

Material: Index cards with paragraphs, flannel board, pictures

Activities: Presented daily situations using picture on flannel board. Had children predicted what they thought would happen next. Had volunteer read a short passage and elicited what will happen at the end. In groups of five pupils discussed a short paragraph and predicted orally how the paragraph will end. (Teacher discussed answers with groups and reviewed what a prediction is.)

Evaluation: Individually pupils read paragraphs of the story and discussed the paragraphs in pairs. Individually, pupils wrote what will happen next and underlined the story clues that helped them.

Lesson 3

Topic: Cause and Effect Relationship

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objective: Given a short paragraph, pupils will be able to use signal words, story clues and what they already know to figure out four causes and four effects.

Materials: Posters with printed paragraphs, pictures, flannel board

Activities: Presented pictures of events. Pupils grouped photographs and placed them on flannel board to show a cause and an effect. Discussion followed. Elicited sentences to explain cause and sentences to explain effect. In groups pupils listed signal words that tell which event caused other events to happen.

Evaluation: Pupils read paragraphs. Discussed paragraph in pairs. Pupils read four causes and filled in four effects.

Week 5 - Lesson 1

Topic: Vocabulary Development through Context Clues

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objective: Given five (5) pairs of sentences pupils will be able to locate clues to the meaning of the underlined words. Then write the meanings to complete five (5) sentences.

Materials: Sentence strips, flash cards, pocket chart, handouts, puppets

Activities: Presented sentences on sentence strips. Individuals read sentences. Elicited clues to the meaning of underlined words. In pairs, pupils wrote clues to match the underlined words. Then constructed sentences to show meaning of underlined words. Pupils used puppetry to share sentences orally with class.

Evaluation: Pupils read pairs of sentences. They selected clues and wrote the meaning of underlined words to complete five (5) sentences.

Lesson 2

Topic: Characterization

Time: 45 minutes

- Specific Objectives:
1. After reading four sentences, pupils will be able to select a word that tells what the character was like.
 2. Construct sentences to tell what they think of a character.

Materials: Sentence strips, index cards, handouts, puppets, puppet theatre

Activities: Presented sentences on sentence strip. Volunteers read the sentences. Elicited words that tell about the character's actions and words. In groups of three's pupils read a short paragraph printed on index card. Discussed the character's actions and words. In groups of five, pupils dramatized their interpretation of the paragraph.

- Evaluation:
1. Pupils read four sentences about the main character's actions and words. Then selected a word that tells what the character was like.
 2. Pupils wrote between two and four sentences to tell what they thought about the character.

Lesson 3

Topic: Drawing Conclusions

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objective: Using story clues and their own experiences pupils will be able to read three pairs of conclusion and select the correct one for each paragraph.

Materials: Props, costumes, handouts

Activities: Volunteers dramatized three scenarios. Pupils described what happened. Teacher recorded their responses. Pupils discussed their responses. Pupils were given two conclusions. Pupils read both and selected the correct one.

Evaluation: Pupils read three short paragraphs. Pupils read two conclusions for each and selected the correct conclusion for each paragraph.

Week 6 - Lesson 1

Topic: Vocabulary Development through Context Clues

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objective: Given ten (10) sentences with multiple choice answers pupils will be able to locate clues to the meaning of underlined words and choose correct word to complete sentences.

Materials: Handouts, sentence strips, poster

Activities: Presented poster with short paragraph. Pupils read paragraph twice. Pupils worked in groups of three's to select the unfamiliar words. Pupils used dictionaries to find meaning. Pupils constructed sentences orally to show meaning of words. Each group recorded one sentence a strip and share new word and sentence with class.

Evaluation: Pupils read sentences and located clues to the meaning of the underlined word. Then choose correct responses to complete sentences.

Lesson 2

Topic: Drawing Conclusions

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objectives: Using story clues pupils will be able to read three paragraphs and select correct conclusion for each.

Materials: Handouts

Activities: Presented situations to children. Pupils discussed things that did not occur but could be figured out. Pupils read a paragraph in pairs; read two conclusions and wrote the correct one. Pupils read a second paragraph and wrote their own conclusion about the main character.

Evaluation: Pupils read the paragraphs. Figured out things that were not explained. Used story clues and selected correct conclusions.

Lesson 3

Topic: Making Judgement

Time: 45 minutes

Specific Objective: Given four questions based on the passage "La Llorona" pupils will be able to answer making judgement getting at least three (3) correct.

Materials: Handouts

Activities: Pupils get into groups of three's to read passage. Pupils listed events that occurred in passage. Groups dramatized to show the main events. Pupils observed each other and made judgement about what happened.

Evaluation: Pupils read passage and discussed events. Pupils answered the questions after reading passage about "La Llorona".

CHAPTER V

PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND
INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Figure 1

Table of Subject's Pre-test and Post-test Results

Subject	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
A	53	75	22
B	55	90	35
C	38	77	39
D	48	88	40
E	30	78	48
F	40	85	45
G	30	80	50
H	50	70	20
I	40	85	45
J	48	92	44
K	48	88	40
L	60	89	29
M	53	82	29
N	68	96	28
O	<u>62</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>26</u>
Total Scores	<u>763</u>	<u>1263</u>	<u>540</u>
TOTAL AVERAGE	50.8	84.2	33.4

The data shown in Figure 1 shows that the average in the Pre-test was 50.8% while on the Post-test the average was 84.2%; showing a difference of 33.4%.

Name

Epworth Methodist School

Std II

Comprehension

Read the passage carefully and answer the following questions.

1. What time of day was it when Tata Duende was returning home?
2. The main idea of the story is that
 - (a) Rivers are very dangerous
 - (b) The villagers are dangerous people.
 - (c) Pa Brown was carried away by Tata Duende.
 - (d) Pa Brown was a curious person.
3. How were the farmers travelling?
4. Which of the following does not describe Tata Duende?
 - (a) he looked frightened
 - (b) he looked happy
 - (c) he looked sad
 - (d) he looked evil
5. Where did the event take place?
 - (a) In a stable
 - (b) on the narrow road
 - (c) Near the mangrove
 - (d) In a boat

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The subjects gained from the development and improvement of their comprehension skills. Hopefully they will be able to transfer these skills and apply them to the context of their daily lives in making judgements and decisions.

The program helped the pupils to "read the lines", "read between the lines", and to "read beyond the lines". They are now eager to discuss the characters from the character's perspective. They can make valid judgement and draw conclusions. They enjoy making predictions, discussing the author's purpose and cause and effect relationships.

The researcher believes the children are talented and have potential to much better. The recommendation that the teaching should be continued throughout the school year so that the children can continue to develop and improve their comprehension skills.

The researcher also recommends that the Teacher of Standard II share what she experienced with the program with other teachers. She expressed that she learned a valuable technique and recommended the cooperative learning method. The researcher also recommends that teachers create their own stories based on the children's needs and interests. She found that using stories she created about folk characters really got the pupils excited. They felt very special when they saw storybooks in the library created by someone who thought they were so special that she wanted to make storybooks especially for them.

Most of all the researcher recommends that Principals and Ministry of Education be aware of the books used in our Primary Schools that are not relevant to our children development.

The books used should be published and standardize books with folktales with Belizean background. These along with books about the Caribbean and other neighboring countries as well. The researcher realizes that pupils need to be aware of global context, however, she believes that Belizeans need to learn to appreciate their historical and spatial context before they can truly appreciate the world at large.

This researcher designed this study to develop comprehension skills for a group of fifteen pupils in Standard II at Epworth Methodist School using folktales and puppetry through cooperative learning.

Through examination of results of the overall data the researcher believes there is evidence to convey that an improvement in performance occurred. Subjects showed improvement in answering questions at higher level. Besides the numerical data, parents and class teacher observed an increase in self-esteem and a positive attitude towards reading from their children. The Pre-test and Post-test difference indicate an increase in their test performance. This can be the result of their direct involvement and enthusiastic participation in the Reading Comprehension lessons. Pupils were extremely motivated by use of folktales, puppetry and dramatization and approached each activity with zest. Dupius and Askov (1982) said,

"Motivation is a matter of attitude, and affective concern. Students who are motivated have a desire to learn, to achieve in class."

Pupils work well with the cooperative learning method. They were allowed and encouraged to develop variety of skills not only in Reading Comprehension, the main purpose of the program. They developed leadership skills, social skills, listening skill and most of all they learned to respect each other and break down racial barriers. They learned that each person worth a great deal regardless of ranking or percentage. They experienced achievement as an individual and as a group. They worked and played together and succeeded as a family with a common need.

They also learned that self respect and self improvement does not appear magically. They learned that each person has a responsibility for his own learning. They discovered hidden talents and developed confidence in their ability to plan and carry out tasks. Those who often consider themselves to be low achievers, had the opportunity to experience a great change. They went from "cannot do" to "group leaders and decision makers". This definitely contributed to a better self perception and appreciation.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Figure 4 is the table showing the results of the Post-test in terms of questions answered correctly. The table indicates that all the Subjects got the three literal level questions correct. From the four inferential, 4 Subjects got all four correct. Eight (8) Subjects got three correct and 2 Subjects got two correct. At the critical level 'A' and 'E' did not get any correct. All the other Subjects got two correct at the critical level.

The researcher concluded that all the Subjects improved, however, there is still a need to keep on working to improve their skills at the Critical Level.

even the shy subjects are aware that they have talent and can succeed if they work hard and attend school regularly.

Figure 2 is a Bar Graph showing the Subjects Pre-test and Post-test. It indicated that all Subjects made an increase in the Post-test. All subjects obtained lower than the 70% passing mark at the school in the Pre-test. It also shows that 14 Subjects scored higher than the 70% average mark and 1 Subject scored exactly 70%.

Figure 3 is a table displaying the number of questions answered by the subject on the Pre-test and Post-test in each level of comprehension.

The questions pertaining to the Pre-test were based in the three categories in which the exercise was presented. They were literal, inferential and critical levels of comprehension. In the Pre-test the researcher observed that the Subjects did not answer all the questions in each level. From a total of three at the literal level, only Subjects 'G' and 'N' answered questions in this level. They got all three correct while majority of the others got only one correct, some answered two and got one correct.

For the inferential level, four questions were given. Subject 'H' and 'O' got three correct. Nine (9) Subjects got two correct and four (4) Subjects got one correct.

At the critical level only 10 Subjects got one correct. Five (5) Subjects got all three questions wrong; some did not attempt all three questions.

It seems that the Subjects' comprehension at the Critical Level was the poorest. From a total of ten (10) questions, the table indicates that on the Pre-test 2 of the Subjects got six corrects, 3 Subjects got five corrects, 4 Subjects got four corrects and 6 Subjects got three corrects.

better care of himself and his family. They often expressed themselves in Spanish especially when they had something exciting to share; Subject 'M' is more fluent in English so he assisted in translation. Subjects 'O', 'F' and 'I' were extremely creative with puppets of "Tata Duende", "Xtabay" and "Anansi". They included details that were based on descriptions they heard from storytellers at Scouts Camp.

Subject 'A', 'C' and 'E' received scores in the 70%. Subjects 'A' and 'C' were very shy and began to show more confidence during the 4th week of the program. Subject 'C' read a lot and showed a marked increase of 48%. Subject 'E's' score went from 30% in the Pre-test to 78% in the Post-test. Subject 'A' and 'E' showed interest in "Anansi" more than any other character. Both live in the village of Sittee River and spend school days in town with an aunt. They claim that "Anansi" does most of his tricks on people in the Sittee River Village. They are Creole and uses a jargon that has slangs and phrases that they pupils in town are not familiar with. For example, to tell someone "Let's go," Subjects 'A' and 'E' would use the Creole expression "Kun go,". Both added a lot of local color to the lessons. Both were very dramatic and made maximum use of puppets, props and costumes.

Subject 'C' was very shy and the researcher had to encourage her daily to participate in group discussions. Subject 'C' was afraid to make errors because she could not stand being laughed at. She was very attentive and observant. She participated in dramatization only when puppets were used. She showed a marked increase of 39%; her Pre-test was 38% and Post-test was 77%. During discussions she listened and preferred to write her ideas rather than express herself orally.

Overall the researcher feels that the program was successful. The marked increase indicated that the Subjects have potential and with a program that caters to their needs they can improve their comprehension skills. They showed interest in reading material that related to their culture and ethnic background. All Subjects obtained an increase of 20 or more and this indicated that the program was successful. Most of all the Subjects have developed confidence and some discovered talents that were hidden due to low self-esteem. Now

DATA ANALYSIS

Figure 1 is a table showing the results of the Pre-test and the Post-test. The data indicates that all fifteen (15) subjects did not achieve the schools 70% average passing mark. All subjects scored below 70% on the pre-test. It also shows that scores ranged from 30% to 68%. Subjects 'F' and 'G' obtained the lowest of 30% and Subject 'N' received the highest of 68%. In the Post-test, Subject 'H' received the lowest score which was 70% and Subject 'N' received the highest score of 96%. The results show that there was improvement in the overall grades of the Subject in the Post-test.

Subject 'N' got the highest score on both Pre-test and Post-test. The data indicates that Subject 'N' made a marked increase of 28%. Subject 'N' displayed strong leadership qualities throughout the program. Subject 'N' always participated eagerly and was willing to assist other group members.

Subject 'E' and 'G' scored the lowest of 30% on the Pre-test. Both subjects did extremely well on the Post-test. Subject 'E' scored 78% and made an increased mark of 48% and Subject 'G' scored 80% and made an increased mark of 50%. Both subjects displayed enthusiasm throughout the program. Subject 'E' was very creative during dramatization and use of puppets. Subject 'G' read a lot and showed good leadership qualities. Subject 'G' was extremely interested in sharing folktales that her father told their family. She claims he actually had encounters with "Tata-Duende" on his plantation. Her favorite character is "Anansi". She admires him because his greatest asset is his intelligence.

Subjects 'B', 'J' and 'N' obtained scores in the 90's, they knew a lot of folktales that their grandparents told them. Subject 'J' and 'N' are from the same family and live on a farm four miles from school. They share many of their own experiences of farm life and excitement of seeing "Tata-Duende" and using many of "Anansi" tricks to get out of tight spots. Subject 'B' was often quiet but very attentive and read a lot. Subjects 'D', 'F', 'G', 'I', 'K', 'L', 'M' and 'O' are those who scored in the 80's on the Pre-test. Subject 'D', 'K' and 'M' are Mestizo and they often related exciting encounters that their uncle had had with "La Llorano". They claimed that "La Llorano" or the weeping woman convinced their uncle to stop drinking and take

Figure 4

Total Number of Questions answered by Subjects on the Post-test.

Subjects	Level of Questions			Total Answered
	3 Literal	4 Inferential	3 Critical	
A	3	4	0	7
B	3	4	2	9
C	3	2	2	7
D	3	3	2	8
E	3	4	0	7
F	3	3	2	8
G	3	3	2	8
H	3	2	2	7
I	3	3	2	8
J	3	4	2	9
K	3	3	2	8
L	3	3	2	8
M	3	3	2	8
N	3	4	2	9
O	3	3	2	8

Figure 3

Table showing the number of questions answered by the Subjects on the Pre-test and Post-test in each level of Comprehension

Subjects	Level of Questions			
	3 Literal	4 Inferential	3 Critical	Total
A	1	2		3
B	2	1	1	3
C	2	1	0	3
D	1	2	0	3
E	1	2	0	3
F	2	2	1	5
G	3	1	0	4
H	2	3	1	6
I	1	2	1	4
J	1	2	0	3
K	1	2	1	4
L	2	1	1	4
M	2	2	1	5
N	3	2	1	6
O	1	3	1	5

Figure 2.

