



# European Journal of Educational Research

Volume 7, Issue 2, 245 - 249.

ISSN: 2165-8714

<http://www.eu-jer.com/>

## The Book of My Dreams

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*Received: December 15, 2017 • Revised: March 2, 2018 • Accepted: March 4, 2018*

**Abstract:** This study offers an opportunity for learning the characteristics of elementary school students' dream books that can increase their willingness to read. In the study, for which the qualitative research method was adopted in line with this main purpose, 275 elementary school students that attended different schools at 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades were asked to describe in writing the characteristics of the book of their dreams that increases their willingness to read. The data obtained were subjected to content analysis, and the characteristics of students' dream books were categorized into "general characteristics", "physical characteristics", "themes", "protagonists" and "expectations". The study findings indicate that the book preferences of students are influenced by the changes taking place in our time. It was found out that the books of students' dreams had also characteristics of e-books as well as printed books.

**Keywords:** *Elementary school student, reading, book characteristics, book of dreams.*

**To cite this article:** Degirmenci Gundogmus, H. (2018). The book of my dreams. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 7(2), 243-247. doi: 10.12973/eu-jer.7.2.245

### Introduction

Introducing qualified children's books to individuals at early ages which they can read enthusiastically is important for rendering their act of reading perpetual, that is, for them to become good readers with the habit and love of reading. The reading habit gained in childhood influences their mental and lingual development, and improves their vocabulary (Adiguzel & Suslu, 2017). In order for reading to become a habit, it is important that a child perceives reading as a pleasure and need (Aksacioglu & Yilmaz, 2007).

Reading, which necessitates an active and effective communication between an author and a reader, is a mental process that expands an individual's horizon by teaching new words, and enhances their creativity and understanding. Building the skills of reading and comprehending is the greatest contribution to of human life's meaningfulness. Due to individual and environmental differences, individuals cannot develop identical reading skills or take an identical pleasure in reading (Akyol, 2013).

As high-quality books can influence the development of individuals' reading skills and their preferences, it is important to choose qualified books that can offer them new perspectives. The reading interest, desire and enthusiasm begin in the elementary school period. In order to teach and enhance reading skills in a qualified way, to promote the love of reading, and to build this as a habit, it is necessary, beginning from early ages, to introduce illustrated children's books to them in accordance with their learning levels, interests, desires, and needs.

There are various studies carried out to identify the factors that influence children's reading fields of interest and preferences (Bamberger, 1922; Norvell, 1958; Gesell, Frances & Ames 1971; Gilmore, 1986; Fleener, Morrison, Linek, & Rasinski, 1997; Clark & Rumbold, 2006).

Gesell, Frances and Ames (1971) explained that a child who is beginner in reading can show interest to words, read and reread a book or passage with pleasure; recognise and comprehend words easily and rapidly at the age of seven and therefore have an interest in visiting a library; that, at the age of eight, girls read more than boys and their preferences on book types differentiate more; that they can discuss what they read and that the subject matters attracting the most interest include children, animals, elements and fairies; that, at the age of nine, individual differences become evident; and that some children read their favorite books repeatedly although others do not read at all.

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Illustrated children's books are known for their children's cognitive, language, social-emotional and personality development (Ulug & Bayraktar, 2014). Choosing beautiful, well-illustrated, interesting and appealing books that a child will take pleasure in reading by also taking the child's personality traits and personal preferences into account will offer them an aesthetic experience to enjoy over and over again (www.readingrockets.org). In the process of building the habit reading, books should be prepared in accordance with children's ages, fields of interest and mental development levels, and have various features that support their mental, physical, psychological and emotional developments (Adiguzel & Suslu, 2017).

As it is important to identify the characteristics of the dream books of children that they would prefer to read, the current research aimed to identify the characteristics of children's dream books that can increase their willingness to read. In line with this aim, the researcher posed students the question, "What are the characteristics of the book of your dreams that can increase your willingness to read?"

### Methodology

This part of the study contains information on the design that was utilised for the research, participant characteristics, data collection and analysis.

#### *Research Design*

The case study design as a qualitative research design was utilised for this study. A case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection (Creswell, 2007).

#### *Study Group*

The study group of the research is consisted of 275 elementary school students that attended different schools at 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades. Demographic characteristics of the study group are shown in Table 1.

*Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participant Students*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>2nd grader</b>	<b>3rd grader</b>	<b>4th grader</b>	<b>Total</b>
Male	28	44	52	124
Female	44	63	44	151
<b>Total</b>	72	107	96	275

Table 1 shows that out of the 275 students who participated in the research, 124 were boys and 151 were girls; among 2nd graders, 28 were boys and 44 were girls; among 3rd graders, 44 were boys and 63 were girls; and, among 4th graders, 52 were boys and 44 were girls.

#### *Analyzing of Data*

The researcher told students about the goal and significance of the research, posed them the question, "What are the characteristics of the book of your dreams that can increase your willingness to read?", made necessary clarifications whenever needed, and the written student answers were collected in about 20 minutes. The data were subjected to content analysis. This analysis included the stages of the treatment of the qualitative research data obtained from the documents, coding of the data, identification of themes, arrangement of codes and themes, and defining and interpreting findings (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). The analysis of the research data was carried out by two academicians, who completed their doctorate on, and professed, elementary school teaching, by identifying codes and creating categories. In the course of determining the base codes, two researchers worked independently on the same data set. It has been examined whether there is compromise on the codes. The views are used as they are to arrive at the code. The data is read again via codes and the final format is given.

### Findings / Results

This part presents the findings reached by an analysis of the data that were obtained from the answers which the elementary school students gave for the questions relating to the characteristics of the book of their dreams that can increase their willingness to read. The findings obtained from the answers of the participants are provided in tables. The answer provided by some participants can take place in more than one category. Therefore, final total data are not provided in the table.

The categories of "general characteristics, physical characteristics, themes, protagonists and expectations" were created by examining the answers that 275 elementary school students gave for the question, "What are the characteristics of the book of your dreams that can increase your willingness to read?" The findings relating to the "general characteristics" category are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. General Characteristics

General characteristics	2nd grader		3rd grader		4th grader		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
	f	f	f	f	f	f	
Adventurous	3	4	16	13	25	21	82
Amusing	4	7	10	13	14	9	57
Informative	1	1	2	4	17	11	36
Different contents	1	3	7	8	7	4	30
Positive examples	2	1		1	1	2	7
Happy ending			1		2	2	5

According to Table 2, general characteristics of the dream books of the participant students include "adventurous, amusing, informative, different contents, positive examples, and happy ending". Among the students, 82 wanted an ideal book to be adventurous; 57, amusing; 36, informative; 30, with different contents; 7, containing positive examples; and 5, with a happy ending. It was determined that as the age of the students increased, they expressed more opinions about the type of book that they wanted to read. Besides, most students preferred to read adventurous books.

The findings relating to the "physical characteristics" category, which was formed by the answers that students gave to the question, "What are the characteristics of the book of your dreams that can increase your willingness to read?, are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Physical Characteristics

Physical characteristics		2nd grader		3rd grader		4th grader		Total
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
		f	f	f	f	f	f	
Illustrations	Many	14	25	18	31	28	18	134
	No			2	3		4	9
	A few			1	2		1	4
Number of pages	Many	3	2	11	13	11	5	45
	A few	6	2	12	9	4	1	34
Page colour	Colourful	9	19	7	7	10	12	64
Book size	Big sized	1	2	6	3	3		15
Type of writing	Handwriting			6	9			15
Book cover	Interesting	1	1	1	2	1		6
	Educative					2		2
	Plain				1			1

According to Table 3, physical characteristics relating to the dream books of the participant students included "illustrations, number of pages, page colour, book size, type of writing, and book cover". Out of the 147 students who expressed an opinion about the illustrations of their dream book, 134 wanted numerous illustrations, 9 wanted no illustrations, and 4 wanted only a few of them. 45 students imagined a book with many pages, while 34 imagined less pages. 64 students described a colourful book, 15 wanted big size, and another 15 imagined books written by handwriting. Out of the 9 students who expressed an opinion about book cover, 6 wanted an interesting cover, 2 preferred an educative cover, and 1 chose a plain cover. It attracts attention that most of the students aspired to have colourful books with many illustrations.

The findings relating to the "themes" category, which was formed by the answers that students gave to the question, "What are the characteristics of the book of your dreams that can increase your willingness to read?, are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Themes

Themes	2nd grader		3rd grader		4th grader		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
	f	f	f	f	f	f	
Happiness	4	9	1	7	3	4	28
Love and respect		3	1	2	1	6	13
Friendship	1	3		3		1	8
Cooperation				3	1	3	7
Space				1	4	2	7
Family	1	1		1		4	7

According to Table 4, themes of the dream books of the participant students included "happiness, love and respect, friendship, cooperation, space, and family". 28 students wanted an ideal book with the theme of happiness, 13 chose

love and respect, 8 imagined friendship, 7 preferred cooperation, 7 wished for a space theme, and another 7 opted for the theme of family. It attracts attention that more students mentioned happiness as an ideal book theme.

The findings relating to the "protagonist" category, which was formed by the answers that students gave to the question, "What are the characteristics of the book of your dreams that can increase your willingness to read?", are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Protagonists

Protagonists	2nd grader		3rd grader		4th grader		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
	f	f	f	f	f	f	
Animal	14	17	10	6	7	10	64
Princess		9		3			12
Car	5		1		2		8
Superhero	2	2	1		2		7
Fairy		5		1			6

According to Table 5, the protagonists of the dream books of the participant students included "animals, princesses, cars, superheroes, and fairies". Of the students, 64 wanted the protagonist of their dream book to be an animal, 12 wished for a princess, 8 indicated a car, 7 chose a superhero, and 6 preferred fairies. It catches attention that most students wanted to read books with an animal antagonist.

The findings relating to the "expectations" category, which was formed by the answers that students gave to the question, "What are the characteristics of the book of your dreams that can increase your willingness to read?", are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Expectations

Expectations	2nd grader		3rd grader		4th grader		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
	f	f	f	f	f	f	
Establishment of communication		4	6	10	5	2	27
Oral reading		1	5	8		3	17
Embellish		7		8		2	17
Password entry	1	2		2	6	3	14
Touch-operated			1	4	4	4	13
Audio feedback			1	2	4	5	12
Relevant video			2	3	2	3	10
Automatic page turning		1	2		2	3	8
Come by flying			1	3			4

According to Table 6, the expectations of the participants relating to their dream books included "establishment of communication, oral reading, embellish, password entry, touch-operation, audio feedback, relevant video, automatic page-turning, and come by flying". 27 students expected their dream book to establish communication with them, 17 expected it to offer oral reading, 17 expected it to be embellished, 143 expected a password-protected entry, 13 expected it to be touch-operated, 12 expected it to produce audio feedback, 10 expected it to offer relevant videos, 8 expected their ideal book to turn its pages automatically, whereas 4 expected their dream book to come by flying.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Literary products have an important place in children's reading habits and personal development (Yildiz, 2016). For his reason any material prepared for children should be of a quality that will bring the development of the age group (Gonen, Uysal Bayrak, Celik, Gokdogan & Tutuncu, 2017). The results of this research revealed that general characteristics, physical characteristics, themes and protagonists of books are influential factors in the book selection of elementary school students, and that their expectations from books are influenced by contemporary technological changes and developments. It was determined based on the research findings that as the age of the students increased, they expressed more opinions about the type of book that they wanted to read, and that they generally wanted to read adventurous books with many illustrations, colourful pages, happiness as a theme, animals as protagonists, and books which establish communication with them. Research on children's books report that story content, drawings and surface structure of books are influential in the book selection by children (Bamberger, 1922; Fleener, Morrison, Linek, & Rasinski, 1997). In a study by Pagan (2010) that aimed to explore the situations in which children are enthusiastic about reading, 91% of the children stated they would read more in the case the book/material selection for reading is

made by students themselves, whereas only 26% of them stated they would read more in the case the book selection is made by their teacher. Based on these results, publishers of children's books may take these expectations of children into consideration to design books that appeal to them. Teachers may create classroom libraries along with students according to their wants, needs and interests. Parents in desire of gaining their children the habit of reading may provide the relevant support.

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