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A Study of Comic Books In The Sixth Grade of The Whitebird School, Picher, Oklahoma

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A STUDY OF COMIC BOOKS IN THE SIXTH GRADE OF THE
WHITEBIRD SCHOOL, PICHER, OKLAHOMA

A Problem Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Course
in Research Problems, 390b

By
Pete Russell

KANSAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE
Pittsburg, Kansas
July, 1952

FOOTBALL LIBRARY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was threefold:

1. To determine those comic books which would prove beneficial in the increasing of reading abilities, knowledge and morals of elementary children.¹
2. To determine those books which seem to be detrimental to the moral values advocated by the teaching profession.
3. To attempt to improve the quality and kind of comic books sold by Picher merchants.

In an intensive study of the comic book problem in the Whitebird School, Picher, Oklahoma, teachers in sixteen schools were invited to submit questions for use in regard to the reading of comic books in the home, such as: What are in the comics? What is their fascination for children? How may this kind of reading affect tastes, manners and morals? Will this type of entertainment destroy their interest in reading materials that have no ludicrous and fascinating colored pictures to aid them in their imagination? If comics are as harmful as claimed by many, should they be banned by law?

¹Jesse L. Murrell, "Cincinnati Rates the Comic Books," Parent's Magazine, XXV, No. 2 (February, 1950), 38.

After much consideration of the various questions submitted by the teachers of the sixteen schools, a questionnaire was compiled and sent to the parents of the sixth grade students. From their replies much useful information was secured. The parents were given an opportunity to name books they considered character-building through teach of good morals, and those which they could recommend as helpful in improving the child's reading ability. They were also asked to name the comic books they considered harmful.

In another phase of the study, a local committee was selected from members of the Parent-Teachers Association, civic clubs, churches, and women's clubs to read and classify one thousand comics sold in the Picher stores, as good, fair, objectionable and bad. Later, titles of the better comics approved by the committee were presented to the merchants with a view to improving the quality of comics sold in the community.

The Origin of the Comics

John Amos Comenius, a Czech educator and bishop in the sixteenth century, was the author of the first pictorial textbook for children. His book was entitled World Illustrated.² France and Germany are thought to have had comic strips over a hundred years ago.³

²John Amos Comenius, World Book, III (Chicago: W. F. Quarrie Corporation, 1942), 1580.

³Martin Sheridan, Comics and Their Creators (Boston: Ralph T. Hale and Company, 1942), p. 16.

Charles Dickens, in the nineteenth century, produced comics which were forerunners of those used today. His subjects were chiefly common objects of the street or the market place, and were sometimes illustrated by Cruikshank. In the early stages of the story, the illustrator is sometimes more important than the author. The earlier sketches by Dickens were signed "Boz," which soon became his recognized pseudonym. Dickens, with the help of Seymour, a well-known artist, produced a series of illustrated stories depicting the adventures, or misadventures, of the Nimrod club, a group of amateur sportsmen which was typified by the single figure of Nathaniel Winkle. These were later published as the "Pickwick Papers."⁴

Comic cartoons including the popular "Katzenjammer Kids," "Happy Hooligan," and "Buster Brown" seem to have made their first appearance in American newspapers about 1890.⁵

The Status of the Comic Book in American Life Today

Any grown up who has spent much time with unpoetic, unliterary, active children finds painful discrepancies between the books children ought to read and the materials they are actually reading. Common complaints are: "Our children don't read outside of school. They listen to the radio, or they spend all their Saturdays and Sundays in the moving

⁴Charles John Huffman Dickens," Encyclopedia Britannica, 14th ed., VII, 331-2.

⁵David H. Russell, Children Learn to Read (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1949), p. 261.

picture theaters." "My children are so busy reading the comics they won't even try a long book." "Books children like and books they ought to like are two different things for most children."

Why don't children read more and better books? Many complain that the popular comic book is the reason for such neglect.⁶

The comic magazine in modern format is nearly twenty years old, dating from the publication of Famous Funnies in 1934. Gerling North tried to rouse parents and teachers to "band together to break the 'comic' magazine." In a newspaper article entitled "A National Disgrace" he said that ten million copies of these magazines, sold monthly, are lurid, "sex-horror serials," depending for their appeal "upon mahem, murder, torture, abduction---often with a child as the victim."⁷ Since this blazing invective, which was widely quoted in schools and churches throughout the country, the sale of comic magazines has doubled. Twenty million copies are now sold monthly according to the latest data.

Comic strip magnates are not hiding their light under a bushel these days, nor are they inhibited by any shrinking violet complexes. Instead, their sponsors write of their value. They trace the history of the comic strip from the

⁶ May Hill Arbuthnot, "Children and the Comics," National Council of Teachers of English (April, 1951), pp. 171-73.

⁷ Gerling North, quoted in The Journal of Educational Sociology, December, 1944, p. 193.

caveman and the Egyptian picture-writers to "Superman" and his "love-appeal" counterpart. They recommend the comic stories as beneficial to the reader in terms of art, literature, and psychiatry. They modestly admit that one hundred million Americans can't be wrong in reading the comics, and sum it all up by labeling them "America's most popular mental vitamin, the wish-fulfilling picture story."

Investigation shows that neighborhood small-fry are loyal to certain favorite characters in the comic books they buy, and must have them or else. However, they take time occasionally to investigate others, and the books they buy serve as a kind of juvenile wampum, or medium of exchange on Saturdays or after school.⁸

There was a time when the comic strips were predominantly funny, but that was long ago. Now the happy daftness of people and situations has almost disappeared and it is seldom that we hear a reader laugh when he reads the comics. "Mutt and Jeff," "Popeye," "Myrtle," "Blondie and Dagwood," "Bringing Up Father," "Barney Google," and a few others testify daily to the once carefree mood of cartoons, called the "funnies." A few more genuine "funnies" might be a good thing.

Animal cartoons are still amusing. Children and adults alike have loved "Mickey Mouse" from the time Walt Disney created him. Now the terrible-tempered "Donald Duck" has

⁸ Arbuthnot, op. cit., pp. 174-5.

added to the hilarity. "Funny Animals" and the big weebegone dog "Napoleon" are entertaining, but Walt Disney's creations remain favorites in this field.

Adventures in "Orphan Annie," "Batman," "Joe Palooka," "Flash Gordon," "Terry and the Pirates," or "Superman," may be real or possible, or they may have all the magic of the old fairy-tales in a modern setting. In either case they make a strong appeal to the spirit of adventure of children as well as of many youthfully-minded adults.

Horrors and torture are introduced into the comic strip less frequently than they used to be, but they still occur.⁹ Parents, teachers, and psychologists have criticized such stories severely, apparently to good effect; then the stories are printed again, and the same protests are made once more. Some children suffer intensely when their favorite character is tortured, kidnapped, or killed. Crime and detective stories have been on the gain the last five years.

War comics of every variety marked the war period. Comic strip Wacs and Waves, all very attractive and competent, helped to keep up the feminine morale, and once in a while native girls gave valuable service without benefit of uniform, or many clothes of any kind.

The love interest in the comics is usually slight and mild and at the child's level. "Superman" has been toying

⁹ Ibid.

with the idea of marriage for years. "Wonder Woman" seems to have a mate, but one who does not cramp her style. Usually the love quotient is used to make the story more interesting, but occasionally the undressed, hippy female is used, and the story loses some of its appeal and is not so wholesome.¹⁰

In response to the criticism by parents and teachers against the time wasted by children in reading such poor material, several series of educational comics have been published. These are the "True Comics," which give the biographies of real men and women in picture script style. From Winston Churchill to Clara Barton, this series selects men and women from public life, social service, or science, and relate their childhood adventures, youthful struggles, and mature achievements. Another series which includes "Ivanhoe," "Robinson Crusoe," "The Three Musketeers," and "Moby Dick," is devoted to briefing the classics in interesting picture story style.

Gaines is the author of the enormously popular series, "Picture Stories from the Bible," which has brought many appreciative letters from parents, teachers, and Sunday School leaders. It is agreed that the Bible is hard to read, and that poor readers will accept the simplified form found in the illustrated short story book in place of the difficult book which they just cannot read at all.¹¹

¹⁰Ibid., p. 177.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 178-179.

There is no question about the popularity of the comics. Readers include nearly one out of every five adults in the United States, and nearly a quarter billion are sold each year. Witty estimated that about eighty million Americans read the Sunday newspaper supplements which include the comics. Studies of children's reading interests show that pupils in the intermediate and upper grades of the elementary school, and in the junior high school read many comic books but that the interest declines in the senior high school.

Many children's books sell fewer than 5,000 copies while comic books sell over 15,000,000 a month. Witty found that a group of 334 boys and girls in grades four, five and six were reading an average of thirteen comic books, or magazines, and twenty-five comic strips, regularly. Thirteen of the comic strips in the newspapers were read all of the time. The favorite books were "Superman," "Batman," and "Famous Funnies." It was found, too, that boys read more comic magazines than girls, and that Negro children read more comics than white children.¹²

The favorite comic strips appearing in newspapers include "Dick Tracy," "Blondie," "Smiling Jack," "Donald Duck," "Flash Gordon," and "Terry and the Pirates."

The comics, or certain features about them, have been defended by Emery, Frank, Sones, Strong, Thorndike and others.

¹² Russell, op. cit., p. 260.

Strong's arguments are:

1. Comics constitute a kind of modern folklore as did the Greek and Norse myths.
2. They meet children's needs for overcoming, in imagination, some of the limitations of their age and ability for obtaining a sense of adventure denied them in real life.
3. To normal children the comics offer the mental catharsis which Aristotle claimed for the drama. Thus, the readers are released from feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, and from fear of the aggression of others.
4. The comics supply to children of limited reading ability a form of reading experience which is thoroughly enjoyable.
5. If the children actually read the text of the comics, they will profit by extensive supplementary reading and will be introduced to a wide range of vocabulary, using many words which they repeatedly encounter in other reading. The comics may be a first step in creating the habit of reading for enjoyment.¹³

The publishers of "Superman" offer workbooks to improve reading skills. Every month Captain Midnight visits some American city where facts and pictures are worked into the plot. Many teachers find it easy to transfer interest from undesirable comic books to better comic books and strips.¹⁴

Attempts to give intelligent direction to children's interests in the comics are needful, since excessive reading may lead to a taste for shoddy, distorted presentations. Survey after survey show that children in the middle grades develop unwholesome tastes.

¹³Ibid., pp. 261-65.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 266.

Reading the comics brings to the reader the same sense of exciting adventure as do the radio stories or the motion picture. It is important that the teacher study each child's interests in order to obtain an understanding of his activities, preferences, and behavior. It may be found that a seemingly excessive interest in the comics is not interfering with a wholesome development along many other lines. One example was a fifth grade pupil who read more comics than any of his fellow students. However, his pattern of reading was varied and he usually chose books of good quality. His conduct and behavior at school and at home was excellent, and he was a favorite with his teachers. In his case, the reading of comics was not considered as a problem.¹⁵

In other cases, students were found to be reading highly exciting, adventurous comic books and were neglecting reading materials which were instructive or which would develop worthy interests or tastes.

The teacher should first make a thorough study of the child's interests to better understand the unique nature and needs of each child.

From this study the teacher is offered an opportunity to recommend a variety of good literary sources which contain adventure, surprise, and excitement. There are many good books on the market at a reasonable price, and many may be

¹⁵Paul Witty, Reading in Modern Education (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1949), p. 39.

found in well-equipped libraries. Because the comic books are known to have such a strong appeal and are so universally read, a wonderful opportunity is presented to supervise the quality and to guide the students in selecting the better class of comics.

The newspapers attract young children and continue to hold their interest as they grow older. The comic strip is read before any other part of the newspaper. Periodicals are popular with some elementary and high-school students, especially the Saturday Evening Post and the Reader's Digest.¹⁶

An intensive study shows that the gifted child reads better material and that his reading increases as he grows older. Children with lesser intelligence tend to read less and to choose mystery or adventure stories instead of classics or good books.¹⁷

The Joplin Globe newspaper added four pages of comics to its regular Sunday group, this year, beginning Sunday, April 6, 1952. This was due to their ever-increasing popularity, as reflected in the many requests received from their readers. Their popularity was further attested by the fact that many national advertisers preferred to have their advertisements on the comic pages.

The quality of most newspaper comics, today, is much improved over those of some years ago, and many of them

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 41-44.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 44.

devote their efforts not only to entertaining the reader, both adult and youth, but also to patriotism and clean living. The youth movement ever is uppermost in the minds of the great majority of artists who originate and draw the newspaper comics.¹⁸

The comic book business is booming in Tulsa, Oklahoma! And it's all because the great classics are being streamlined, and published in comic book style. Youngsters still read the stand-by favorites: westerns, and Walt Disney comics, but they are turning more and more to the sugar-coated classics by famous authors like Charles Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain, and Jonathan Swift.

Sales of these comic magazine classics lagged for several years, but dealers report that their distribution is increasing each month. One dealer reports that at least a good half of the general comic sales are made to adults; women buying stories of romance and the men buying the westerns, murder mysteries, and fantastic books. Also noted was the fact that the children buy all kinds, but have been buying the classics more during the last few months. The more they read, the better they seem to like them, and more than ninety-two different classics have been published during the last several months. Titles reveal a selection from authors of all countries, and many different ages in literature.

¹⁸ Personal letter from Ray S. Cochran, Managing Editor, Joplin Globe Publishing Company, Joplin, Missouri, March 28, 1952.

Fantasies, histories, mysteries, adventure stories and novels are found on the list which reads like a public library card catalog.¹⁹

Among these items are American favorites such as "Moby Dick," "The Oregon Trail," "Song of Hiawatha," and "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer."

English novels from the age of romance are represented in "Oliver Twist," "Alice in Wonderland," "Tale of Two Cities," and "Swiss Family Robinson."

Shakespeare's comedy "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and his historical play "Julius Caesar" come in for their share of modernization.

Greek legends such as "The Iliad," "The Odyssey," "Arabian Nights," "Gulliver's Travels," and "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" capture and intrigue the youthful, imaginative minds.

Publishers of the series known commercially as "Classics Illustrated" say that the books have a high language level and original text of the classics, and that teachers in many schools over the nation are adopting them for use in the classroom.

Recently local representatives of circulation displayed samples of their books at an Oklahoma City teachers meeting. Since then they have had several inquiries, as the classic

¹⁹The Tulsa Daily World, March 30, 1952, p. 14.

comics are comparatively new in that area.²⁰ The books are beautifully colored and illustrated, and teachers have found that the classic comics may be used as correlative reading along with the original classic.

"Classics Illustrated" are distributed in Tulsa through the Curtis Circulation Company, subsidiary of the Curtis Publishing Company, and their Tulsa outlet, the Oklahoma News Company, publishers of the book, are the Gilberton Company, Incorporated.

About sixty to sixty-five per cent of the local dealers in Tulsa handle the classic comic books, but plans are being made to spread the distribution to every news outlet in the area.²¹

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

CHAPTER II

FINDINGS OF THE LOCAL STUDY

Report on Questionnaire to Parents

Letters were sent to sixteen schools in the Picher area requesting suggestions as to appropriate questions to ask parents about comic books. Fifty-five teachers in those schools submitted eight to ten questions each, from which was compiled the questionnaire* used in this study. Of the forty-five questionnaires sent to the parents of the sixth grade pupils of the Whitebird school at Picher, Oklahoma, forty were returned in usable form. The questions, together with tabulations of the parents' responses, are presented and discussed under two categories.

I. The Selection and Use of the Comics

Question: Do you permit your child to read comics?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
Number	37	3	0
Per cent	92.5	7.5	0

Apparently most of the children do read the comics. As there were no comments on this question, it would appear that the parents were not seriously opposed to the use of comics.

*See Appendix for an exact copy of the questionnaire.

Question: Do you allow him to trade comic books?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
Number	34	6	0
Per cent	85.0	15.0	0

By trading comics the child obtains more reading material at less expense to the family pocketbook, and at times the books are a means of barter for other items which is good experience in thrift and a source of great satisfaction to the child who would be unable to secure coveted items otherwise.

Question: Do you select the best comic books to be brought into the home for your children?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
Number	27	13	0
Per cent	67.5	32.5	0

The responses to this question may be interpreted variously. It is gratifying to find that over two-thirds of the parents are concerned about the quality of the comics which their children read.

Question: What comic books are purchased most frequently?

Replies: The thirty-one comics listed as most-frequently purchased comics were Red Ryder, Roy Rogers, Buck Jones, Lone Ranger, Black Hawk, Famous Funnies, Looney Tunes, Andy Pand, Little Iodine, Little Lulu, Mickey Mouse, Raggedy Ann, Lil Abner, Donald Duck series, Felix the Cat, Boz, Bible stories, classics, sports, science, Tom and Jerry, Archie, Wilbur, Love Story, Joe Palooka, Chamber

of Chills, Mr. District Attorney, Crime Busters, Flash Gordon, Porky Pig, True Love Romance.

Some of the above-mentioned comic books are rated as good or fair, while some of them have been rated as unsatisfactory or bad by many. The listing shows a variety of subjects.

Question: Do you, as a parent, read comic books?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
Number	20	20	0
Per cent	50.0	50.0	0

It was interesting to find that half of the parents were themselves readers of comics. Some parents say that they read comic books for entertainment, while others show no enthusiasm whatever for such light reading.

Question: How much of your child's allowance is spent on comics each week? each month?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Parents reporting</u>	<u>Weekly</u>	<u>Monthly</u>
	23	\$.30	\$1.20
	17	\$.20	\$.80

Question: Do comics strengthen imagination?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
Number	35	5	0
Per cent	87.5	12.5	0

There was a high degree of agreement as to the value of comics in developing the child's imagination. Mental ability, perhaps, would determine to some extent the capacity to express imagination. Some children are naturally expressive

while others find it hard indeed to go beyond the simple statements in the story.

Question: Do you know what kind of morals the comic books teach your children?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
Number	17	23	0
Per cent	42.5	57.5	0

The majority of the parents were no doubt aware that they did not know the answer to this question. It would have been interesting to have gotten the specific reactions of the seventeen parents who answered in the affirmative. Parents are often too busy to pay close attention to the reading material their children bring home. Some parents are no doubt too critical of their children's activities, while others appear too indifferent. By a bit of psychology the children could be persuaded to try another type of story, should the morals of the comics be objectionable.

Question: Do you think that there are any comic books with character-building content?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
Number	23	0	17
Per cent	57.5	0	42.5

Of those replying, eight listed classics, nine Bible stories, and six sports as having character-building values.

Classics bring out the idea of courage, courtesy, truthfulness, love of fellowmen, faithfulness and moral integrity. Bible stories depict the same attributes plus Christ-like

characteristics. Sport stories show fairness, kindness, value of health, cleanliness of body, and team work or cooperation.

Question: What do you, as a parent, think about your child reading Bible story comics?

Replies: There were thirty-six parents who thought that the comic illustrations made the story interesting and valued the Bible stories for their children, while four parents made no reply to this question.

Most people think of Bible stories as being good for their children to read. Most Bible characters are admirable.

Question: Can funnies based on historical facts such as the story or life of Washington or Lincoln be classed as of educational value?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
Number	38	0	2
Per cent	95.0	0	5.0

It is evident that the parents approve heartily of the patriotic type of comics. Such comics no doubt add interest to the stories of Washington, Lincoln, and other great Americans found in history books and other worthwhile books for children.

Question: Does reading comic books lead your child to read the better books?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
Number	26	14	0
Per cent	65.0	35.0	0

The replies of the parents on this question are interesting as well as consistent, when studied in connection with their responses on several related questions.

II. Value and Effects of Comics

Question: Is the print of comics injurious to your child's eyes?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
Number	6	34	0
Per cent	15	85	0

It is apparent that the parents were not much concerned as to the effects of reading comics upon the children's eyesight. It must be remembered, however, that the parents may not be competent to pass judgment on this question. It is true that some of the comics use print as satisfactory as that found in the better types of children's books.

Question: Do you consider comics harmful?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
Number	13	27	0
Per cent	32.5	67.5	0

No comparable data were found on this question, and no definite conclusions can be drawn from this very limited sampling as to the attitude of parents, generally, respecting the harmfulness of comics.

Question: Do you think your child's interest in comics increases as he matures?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
Number	15	25	0
Per cent	37.5	62.5	0

It appears that children's interest in comics decreases as they become older. Because they are older they can work, fish, and play games; their mentality is stronger and they are more apt to enjoy newspaper stories and better literature. Library books become desirable. A simple story is not as interesting and books with deeper meaning are read with more pleasure.

Question: Does your child read comics in place of stories or library books available?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
Number	18	22	0
Per cent	45.0	55.0	0

One is surprised to find that there was not a larger per cent of affirmative replies. A child who spends much time on comics would have less time, as a rule, for the better types of reading material.

Some children buy two or three comics each week, and sell them later for five cents each, using the money to buy other funny books or to buy ice cream or pop. Some children enjoy trading their books and thereby have twice as much reading material.

Question: Are there any particular comics that you wish your child would not read? List.

Replies: Forty parents responded to this question. The chief types of comics listed as undesirable were: crime, horror, supernatural, fantasy, weird, murder, Mr. District Attorney, and obscene stories.

Question: Are comics read and passed on, or filed away and read again?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
<u>Number</u>	19	21	0
<u>Per cent</u>	47.5	52.5	0

It is likely that these responses represent the usual, rather than the habitual, practice in many cases. Whether a comic is retained or not would depend, no doubt, upon the child's interest in it.

Question: Does your child gather any useful information from comic books?

<u>Replies:</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unanswered</u>
<u>Number</u>	28	12	0
<u>Per cent</u>	70.0	30.0	0

The parents again in their responses to this question seem to be fairly well agreed in their attitudes regarding the influence of the comics.

Evaluation of the Comic Books

By the Committee

Forty persons formed a committee to evaluate the value of the comic books and met two different days in the auditorium of the Whitebird school. The delegation represented the Parent-Teachers Associations, mothers of cub scouts, Women's Society of Christian Service, Women's Missionary Society, the En Avant Federated Club, teachers, librarian, and several ministers. Each one was given twenty-five comic

books to rate according to a rating scale constructed by the writer.* Each comic was rated on a four-point scale as follows: A. Good, B. Fair, C. Objectionable, D. Bad.

The comics evaluated by the committee are listed alphabetically below according to their ratings.

Rating A (Good)

All True Romances	Glamorous Romance
A Midsummer Night Dream	Ha Ha Comics
Andy Pandy	Harlem Globetrotters
Bill Boyd	Hedy of Hollywood
Boy Meets Girl	Henry Aldrich
Bozo	Heroic
Brownies, The	Hi Ho Silver
Buckskin Comes to Town	Howdy Doody Comics
Captain and the Kids	How It Began
Captain Marvel and the	Hubert at Camp Moonbeam
Good Humor Man	If the Devil Would Talk
Charlie McCarthy	Irma, My Friend
Christmas Carols, Classic	Jackie Robinson
Coo Coo Comics	Joker
Date With Judy	Jughead Comics
Deary	Jute Box Comics
Diary Secrets	Kewpies
Donald Duck series	King, Ze Gray
Don Newcombe	Larry Doley
Dottie Dripple	Lassie
Duck de Coffin family	Leave it to Binky
Dudley	Life Story
Egbert	Little Ann Rooney
Elsie the Cow	Little Audrey
Enchanting Love	Little Iodine
Freckles and His Friends	Little Lenny
Friskt Fables	Little Lizzie
Funny Folks	Little Lulu
Funny Stuff	Little Scouts
Gabby Hayes	Look to the Mountains
Gasoline Alley	Love at First Sight
Gene Autry	Man
Gene Autry Champion	Man of Peace
Girls Love Stories	Margie Comics

*See Appendix.

Marmaduke Mouse
 Mel Allen's Sports
 Merry Christmas
 Miss Beverly Hills
 Mitzi's Boy Friends
 Monkey Shines
 Mutt and Jeff
 Nancy and Fritzi Ritz
 Nellie the Nurse
 New Funnies
 Nursery Rhymes
 Oscar
 Oswald the Rabbit
 Our Gang
 Ozzie and Harriet
 Pathfinder
 Pop Comics
 Peter Porkchop
 Peter Rabbit
 Pictorial Romance
 Polly Pigtales
 Popeye
 Porky Pig
 Porky Pig, Isle of Missing
 Men
 Porky Pig to the Rescue
 Prize Comics, Western
 Rags Rabbit
 Real Comics
 Real Screen Comics
 Roy Campanella Baseball
 Hero
 Rudolph
 Sad Sack
 Scribbly
 Sparkle
 Sparkler Comics
 Spectacular Feature
 Magazine in Iowa Jima
 Star Spangled Comics
 Superman Comics
 Sweethearts
 Teen Age Romance
 Television Comics
 Television Puppet
 The Call of the Wild
 The Iron House
 The Three Musketeers
 Tom and Jerry Comics
 Topix
 True Movie and Television
 Tubby, Captain Yo Yo

Uncle Wiggly
 United Comics
 Unkept Promise
 Vacation Parade
 Walt Disney Comic series
 Westward Ho, Classic
 Wonder Book of Rubber
 Wonder Woman
 Woody Woodpecker
 Young Hearts
 Zane Gray's Comeback
 Zane Gray's Forlorn River
 Zane Gray's Thunder Mountain

Rating B (Fair)

Adventures of Mighty Mouse
 All Romances
 All Star Comics
 Andy and Woody
 Animal Antics
 Animal Crackers
 Apache Kid
 Barney Google and Snuffy
 Smith
 Betty and Veronica
 Billy the Kid
 Black Arrow Classic
 Black Hawk
 Blondie
 Bob Hope
 Boy Illustrious
 Boz, the Clown
 Buck Jones
 Buck Rogers
 Caesar, Julius
 Campus Loves
 Candy Comics
 Cinderella's Love
 Cindy Smith
 Cisco Kid
 Cody of Pony Express
 Dagwood Comics
 Daisy and Her Puppies
 Dale Evans
 Deer Slayer Classic
 Detective Stories
 District Attorney
 Drift Fence
 Feature Presentation

Felix the Cat
 Flash Gordon
 Fox and the Crow
 G. I. Joe
 Goofy Comics
 Green Mansions
 Gulliver's Travels, Classic
 Hap Hazard
 Heart Throbs
 Here's How
 High School Romance
 Ideal Love and Romance
 Indians
 Intimate Love
 Joan of Arc
 Joe College Comics
 Joe Palooka
 Kathy
 Kid Zoo Comics
 Kilroy
 Krazy Comics
 Lana
 Lash Larue, Western
 Laugh
 Little Max
 Little Miss Sunbeam
 Little Roquefort
 Lone Ranger
 Love Letters
 Lovelorn
 Love Romances
 Love Tales
 Marvel Family, The
 Mickey Finn
 Mickey Mouse
 Milly the Model
 Nancy and Sluggo
 National Comics
 Negro Romances
 New Romances
 Ozark, The
 Ozark, Ike
 Patsy Walker
 Paul Terry
 Pedro
 Pogo Possum
 Popular Romance
 Puddin Head Wilson
 Red Rabbit
 Red Rider
 Real Life
 Rex Allen

Rex Heart
 Rex the Wonder Dog
 Robin Hood Classic
 Rod Cameron
 Romances Secret
 Romantic Adventure
 Romantic Stories
 Roy Rogers
 Sea Wolf Classic
 Smiley Burnette western
 Snow White and the Seven
 Dwarfs
 Superboy
 Suzie Comics
 Tarzan
 Tex Ritter
 The Lone Ranger
 The Man in the Iron Mask
 Tim Holt
 Tip Top Comics
 Tip Topper
 Today Romances
 Tonto
 Vicky Comics
 Western Hearts
 Western Hero
 Wiz Comics
 Wolf Gal
 Wolf Gal Comics
 Young Love
 Young Romance

Rating C (Objectionable)

Action Comics
 Adventure Comics
 All American Western
 Archie
 Astonishing
 Authors
 Battle Action
 Battle
 Battlefield
 Battle Stories
 Black Rider
 Bronco Bill
 Bugs Bunny
 Combat Kelly
 Complete Love
 Cowboys and Injuns
 Cow Girl Romance

Crack Western Comics
 Crime Does Not Pay
 Crime Exposed
 Crime Smashers
 Danger is Their Business
 Daredevil
 Deadeye
 Famous Stars
 Fast Fiction
 Fighting Yanks
 First Romance
 Flying Saucer
 Frontline Combat
 Funny Feline
 Funny Folks
 Georgie
 Ghost Rider
 Giggle Comics
 Guilty
 Gunsmoke
 House Mystery
 Indian Fighters
 Jet Fighters
 Jimmy Wakely
 Jumbo
 Justice Comics
 Ken Maynard
 Ken Shannon
 King, Royal Mounted
 Lil Abner
 Love Adventures
 Men Against Crime
 Men's Adventures
 Mighty Atom
 Mister Universe
 Namore
 New Heroics
 Nyoka the Jungle Girl
 Operation Peril
 Outlaw
 Pirate Comics
 Planet Comics
 Police Comics
 Police Lineup
 Public Enemies
 Revolt of the Heads
 Saint Comics, The
 Sam Hill
 Secret Service
 Silas Marner
 Silly Billy

Soldiers Fortune
 Space Cadet
 Space Buster
 Space Detective
 Spirit
 Spy
 Star Western
 Straight Arrow
 Strange Adventure
 The Iron Hand
 The Spirit
 Tomahawk
 Trigger
 True Sweetheart Secrets
 Underworld
 U. S. Marines
 U. S. Tank Commandos
 Untamed Hero
 Untamed Love
 Venus
 Wambe, the Jungle Boy
 War Combat
 Wilbur Comics
 Wild Bill Elliott
 Wild Bill Hickok
 Zegra

Rating D (Bad)

All Famous Crime
 Baffling
 Batman
 B-Bar-B Riders
 Beyond
 Big Town
 Black Cat Mystery
 Bloody Red Rose
 Boy
 Boy Detectives
 Chamber of Chills
 Crime Fighting
 Crime Must Lose
 Doll Man
 Down With Crime
 Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
 Durango Kid
 Eerie
 Fate
 Flaming Love

Forbidden World
Gang Buster
Gangster Gun Molls
Headline Comics
Inside Crime
Jessie James Comics
John Wayne Adventures
Journey Into Fear
Judy Canova
Jungle Comics
Justice Crime Can't Win
Kid Colt
Kid Colt Outlaw
Lady Luck
Love Confession
Love Marriage
Martin Kane
Marvel Tales
Movie Love
Murder Gangsters
Mystery in Space
Out of the Night
Out of the World
Penalty
Perfect Crime
Real Clue Stories
Reform School Girl
Romantic Marriage
Shock Suspense Stories
Shock System Comics
Space Horror
Strange World
Terror Tales
Texan Comics
The Hand of Fate
The Hooded Menace
The Mark of Dr. Fu Manchu
The Perfect Crime
The Trap
The Vault of Horror
Torchy
True Crime Cases
Variety Comics
Wanted Comics
War Adventures
War Front
War Heroes
Web of Mystery
Weird Fantasy
Weird Horrors
Weird Science
Zago

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

A large number of comic books were examined and criticized for their art, illustrations, wording, phrasing, and content. It is evident that the comic book is gaining in popularity and increasing in circulation.

The results of this study indicate that purchasers of comic magazines are interested in entertainment. The comic medium plus entertainment probably accounts for its widespread appeal at the present time.

Applying the selected standard, the writer believes the following material is acceptable: "Humor"; "Sport Stories"; "Westerns"; "Superman"; "Love Stories"; about four-fifth of the "Detective-Crime" and "Adventure Stories"; "Classics"; "Bible Stories"; and most "Animal Stories". Most of the "Jungle Stories" definitely are questionable and probably should be excluded from newspaper sections.

The writer concludes that general attacks upon the comic magazines are unwarranted. Unquestionably, it is desirable for persons to graduate from reading comic magazines to the reading of more sophisticated material. There are good and bad comics, with "unacceptable" ones far outnumbered. In trying to improve the reading habits of persons,

it seems more desirable to (1) eliminate unacceptable comic magazines through a selective process of some sort, and (2) make available to readers other books within their experiences.

Conclusions

The comics have universal appeal and are found to furnish considerable useful information for history, science, art and literature. The vivid illustrations make the story come to life for their readers. They furnish recreation and amusement for hundreds of boys and girls as well as a large number of adults. It has been found that the children read more in short form than they do in the large book form.

With a little attention and careful screening, the parents could help their children pick the better books with good picture illustrations and worthwhile information. In this manner, obscene books and sex literature, murders, crime and horror stories would be eliminated as in time the publishers would cease to place such books on the merchants' shelves for distribution. In their place would be classics, sports, science, Bible stories, animal stories, and other kinds of clean and informative reading material.

The child should be encouraged to discuss with the teacher the books read, and should be taught to be critical of the materials. The teacher should be informed and able to suggest names of the better comic books, and to use them in the classroom once in a while.

Parents make a good public relations group and should be persuaded to face the comic-book problem. Together with the teacher and the various civic organizations, parents may do much to discourage the sale of the objectionable and bad comic magazines. The merchants in Picher will become conscious of what the parents of the children want and will provide what the customers want to buy.

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March 28, 1952.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

To: Parents of the Whitebird School Sixth Grade Students

From: Pete Russell, Teacher

Comics

We are making a study of the use of "comic" books in our class, and are asking for your help. Will you please answer the following questions? Answer all except 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 20 either Yes or No.

It is not necessary for you to sign your name.

1. Do you permit your child to read comics? ()
2. Do you allow him to trade comic books? ()
3. Do you, as a parent, select the best comic books to be brought into the home for your children? ()
4. What comic books are purchased most frequently?

5. Do you, as a parent, read comic books? ()
6. Is the print of comics injurious to your child's eyes? ()
7. How much of your child's allowance is spent on comics each week? _____ each month _____
8. Are there any particular comics that you wish your child would not read? _____

9. Do you consider comics harmful? ()
10. Do comics strengthen imagination? ()
11. Are comics read and passed on, or filed away and read again?_____
12. Do you think your child's interest in comics increases or decreases as he matures?_____

Moral and Educational Values

13. Do you know what kind of morals the comic books teach your child? ()
14. Do you think that there are any comic books with character-building content? List:_____
15. What do you, as a parent, think about your child reading Bible story comics?_____
16. Can funnies, based on historical facts such as the story or life of Washington or Lincoln be classed as of educational value? ()
17. Does reading comic books lead your child to read the better books? ()
18. Does your child gather any useful information from comic books? ()
19. Does your child read comics in place of stories or library books available? ()

20. What do you, as a parent, think about the classics presented in comic books? Explain.
-
-

21. Do the comic books improve the child's reading ability? ()
22. Do you select your children's reading materials with the same care that you use in selecting your canned foods, your model of automobile, or your brand of cigarettes? ()
23. Do comics improve the reading habits? ()

Art

24. Does the comic strip idea help your child to reproduce his own thoughts by creative drawing? ()
25. Do you think the drawings will add to the child's artistic ability? ()

The comics were classified under a four-point scale such as good, fair, objectionable, and bad under the areas listed as cultural, moral and morbid.

Cultural Area

Good

1. Good art, printing and color arrangement.
2. Good diction.
3. Most of the book pleasing.

4. Any situation that does not offend good taste from the viewpoint of art.

Fair

1. Art work poor, printing and color poor.
2. Are the books injurious to the children's eyes; printing small.
3. Grammar not so good, underworld slang.
4. Any harm to American folkways.

Objectionable

1. Propaganda against American institutions.
2. Obscenity, vulgarity, profanity, or the language of the underworld.
3. Prejudice against race, creed, or nationality.
4. Divorce treated humorously or glamorously.
5. Sympathy with criminals as against law and justice.
6. Criminals and their acts made attractive.

Bad

Any exaggerated degree of any of the above-mentioned things.

Moral Area

Good

1. Uplifting plot.
2. Clean characters.
3. People properly dressed for situations.
4. If any crime enters story, it must be incidental.

5. Any situation that does not have good morals.

Fair

1. Criminal acts, or moral violations if given legal punishment.
2. The presence of criminals even if they are not shown as enjoying their crimes.

Objectionable

1. Women as gun molls.
2. Sexy implications.
3. Indecently dressed or exposed.
4. Crime stories even though they show that crime does not pay.
5. Stories that glamorize criminals.
6. Methods of crime, especially if enacted by children.
7. Thwarted justice.
8. Law enforcement officers portrayed as stupid or ineffective.

Bad

An exaggerated degree of the acts or scenes.

Morbid Emotionality

Good

1. Any situation that does not arouse morbid emotionality in children.

Fair

1. Over-realistic portrayal of villains.

2. Grotesque, fantastic, or unnatural creatures.
3. Death of the hero or heroine.

Objectionable

1. Kidnapping of women and children, or anything pertaining to it.
2. Characters shown bleeding from the nose or mouth.
3. The use of chains, ropes, or straps.
4. Any use of the dead body.
5. Stories that upset children.
6. Sadistic implications.
7. Portrayal of murder.
8. People being attacked by animals, reptiles.

Bad

Any exaggerated degree of any of the above-mentioned.

