

**Traveling the World with Jack and Annie:
A Playful Exploration of the Magic Tree House Series**

Lisa Marie Lewis

Introduction

Each year I start using my read aloud time to introduce my students to the magical characters Jack and Annie from Mary Pope Osborne's fantastic Magic Tree House series. They often start off somewhat disinterested in hearing a book that does not offer pictures to view on each page. I promise them that by the second chapter, they will be hooked. I have yet to be wrong about this. There is something truly magical about this book series. It exposes students to advanced vocabulary, facts about cultures and periods in history, and grabs their attention from the first page. As I was reading the series aloud to my first graders last year I felt pulled to do more with the series. I wanted students to truly be transported to the places highlighted in the books. That initial thought has led me to this unit of study. I hope that some or all of the ideas in this unit will be usable in your classroom!

Background and Rationale

I teach first grade at a full immersion Dual-Language program. My school is comprised of a diverse population of students. 13% are African American, 60% are Hispanic, 19% are White, and 8% range from Asian to Indian-American. Our LEP (Limited English Proficiency) population is 60%. That is significant to note, because it means that in each classroom, ESL strategies need to be in place. Before the students come to first grade they learn in a Kindergarten classroom where 80% of the day is taught in Spanish and the other 20% of the day is taught in English. When they start first grade their day is divided in half. My students spend fifty percent of their day in a Spanish-speaking classroom and fifty percent of their day in an English-speaking classroom. I am responsible for teaching the English portion of the day. I currently have 48 students that come to me with a range of skills, abilities, and background knowledge. As shown in the numbers above, half of the students that I teach come from homes where English is the primary language spoken. The other half speak a language other than English at home. This equates to instructional challenges. Over the past four years, I have noted that my ESL (English as a Second Language) students struggle with reading comprehension and using key vocabulary words appropriately. Writing is also an area of weakness because they run into translation issues such as grammar and word order.

My mission is clear. I need to enhance vocabulary instruction so that all of my learners can succeed with comprehending text. The Magic Tree House series contains

advanced vocabulary that can be explained in context by the main characters. There are also pictures on various pages that support the reader's understanding of the text. It is crucial to build background about these words to help the students understand the key elements of what is happening in the story. Therefore, I would like to incorporate engaging vocabulary building activities before reading each chapter book. I will be using the text Vocabulary Games for the Classroom to plan vocabulary-rich activities. I anticipate that by increasing my students' vocabulary that the stories will become more meaningful. In addition to increasing student vocabulary, the adventures that Jack and Annie go on excite students to learn more about the topic. By creating a project based on the book, students can creatively write and draw extensions of the story to further enhance their understanding of the book's topic. For example, the first book travels to prehistoric times. Jack and Annie are confronted with real dinosaurs. A great project would be to make fossils. The students could use what they learned on their expedition as well as what they learned from making their fossil to deepen their understanding of dinosaurs. Another great part of this unit will be to keep a scientific journal, similar to the one that Jack keeps in the each story. After assembling something from the book, such as a fossil, the students can take notes about their findings the way that Jack does in the story. By doing this, the students have actually become the characters and therefore can expand on the experience by talking about their "findings" as if they were actually there.

I want to set the stage for my students to fully engage them in the unit. My classroom is going to be transformed into the Magic Tree House so that when we are reading, students feel like they are Jack and Annie. By reading the books aloud for at least ten minutes each day and creating a classroom that resembles the Magic Tree House, I will develop an engaging learning environment that will make the unit more meaningful. Part of turning my classroom into the Magic Tree House will include a special location for the artifacts that are found in each book. In the first book, Jack finds a gold medallion with the letter M on it. The real Magic Tree House would not be complete without this artifact being present! These items will be crucial in bringing the Magic Tree House to life.

Another exciting aspect of this unit will be the passports that the students are going to develop. Upon the start of the unit, each student will be given a blank passport with their name and picture on it. On the Magic Tree House web-site, passport stamps can be printed out after the reader is able to answer three comprehension questions about the book. By the end of the unit, students will have a passport full of stamps that will remind them of their journeys on the Magic Tree House.

Play Theory

One of the most important components of this unit is the element of play. The activities and strategies used encourage students to respond playfully to the text. Many theorists have stated that play is an essential part of a child's academic development. Jean Piaget(1896-1980) was known for his work on studying children (particularly his

own three children), and particularly to his contribution to that of "cognitive/intellectual development" and "constructivist theory of knowing". He was a biologist and also a professor of psychology for over 45 years at the University of Geneva. His theories on play are based on his four stages of development namely,

1) Sensorimotor stage:

- Through play, children learn the actions of movement and the senses and of object permanence (using their senses of touch, taste, hearing, seeing and smell).

2) Pre-operational stage:

- Through play, children acquire motor skills.

3) Concrete operational stage:

- Through concrete activities (hands-on activities and things that can be seen) and games with simple rules, children begin to learn to think logically.

4) Formal operational stage:

Through rules and instructions, children begin to learn to think abstractly and independently.

These stages directly relate to play, as he stated that intellectual growth occurs as children go through the stages of assimilation, or manipulating the outside world to meet one's own needs--playacting--and accommodation, or readjusting one's own views to meet the needs of the outside environment, or work.ⁱ

In a study designed to explore cognitive change underlying pretend play and understanding of narrative structures, Kim (1999) compared 4- and 5-year-old children in conditions involving pretend play enactment of stories to conditions using storytelling only and found that children in the pretend play conditions used more elaborative narratives and had higher levels of narrative structure. Ability to use narrative is an important emerging literacy skill. Children in the study also had better narrative recall immediately after the pretend enactment and at a later time period when prompted by pictures and doll figures.ⁱⁱ Kim's findings suggest that there is a growing body of evidence supporting the many connections between cognitive competence and high-quality pretend play. If children lack opportunities to experience such play, their long-term capacities related to metacognition, problem solving, and social cognition, as well as to academic areas such as literacy, mathematics, and science, may be diminished.

SIOP – Sheltered Instruction Operation Protocol model

SIOP strategies will be used throughout this unit to support my second language learners. As stated above, SIOP stands for Sheltered Instruction Operation Protocol and it was developed to make content comprehensible for (English Language Learners) or ELLs. It is also used to facilitate high quality instruction for English Language Learners in content area teaching. One can find the strategies used in hundreds of schools across the U.S. as well as in several other countries. According to Echevarria, Short, and Vogt, the

developers of the SIOP model, there are five components that must be present in vocabulary instructions for ELL learners:

1. The words must be intentionally selected and directly related to the topic being learned.
2. Direct instruction must take place.
3. Modeling must take place. Examples of how to use the word, as well as providing the students with visual representation of the word, aids in acquisition.
4. Multiple exposures to the word are necessary. The word or words cannot be used in an isolated situation and become engrained in the memory.
5. There needs to be a system to track these new vocabulary words so that they can be reinforced and reviewed as necessary.ⁱⁱⁱ

SIOP strategies are essential in this unit, especially when you consider the group of students that will be taking part in the activities. It is suggested that students have multiple exposures to newly introduced words. In fact, research done by the developers of the SIOP model state that students need at least sixteen exposures to a words to commit it to memory.^{iv} The Magic Tree House books do an excellent job of revisiting unknown words to help readers gain meaning; however, it is not enough for students who are acquiring a second language. Included in this unit are vocabulary activities that will give students the additional exposure that they need to commit essential vocabulary to their memory. As stated previously, vocabulary knowledge goes hand-in-hand with listening and reading comprehension.

The SIOP model also encourages teachers to provide as much background knowledge as possible when teaching a new concept. Each book that is read during this unit takes place during a specific time period. To help the students follow the story line I will teach them about the place that the characters are traveling to. If applicable, I will show them where the place is located on the map. In the first book, Jack and Annie go to the Paleozoic Era and meet with the dinosaurs. Building background in this scenario would include showing the students fossil samples, sharing pictures of the dinosaurs featured in the book, and introducing key words from the story that are essential to the plot that would affect the meaning of the story if left unknown.

This unit has a heavy focus on teacher read-alouds. Many of the activities are based on a story that will be read to the students. Lightbrown and Spada suggest that reading and being read to while using picture cues to determine meaning is beneficial.^v A comprehension-based study done with students who were attending an (English as a Second Language) or ESL class showed that students who listened to the teacher reading or read independently during the thirty minute class period performed just as well as non-ESL students in the classroom on comprehension tests. With the addition of teacher feedback and classroom interaction, the progress was even greater, and in some cases surpassed the progress of peers solely in the regular classroom setting.

Strategies

Role-Playing

This strategy will be used throughout the unit. The students are to take on the role of Jack and Annie in order to develop a deeper understanding of the story. Poorman (2002) observes that “true learning cannot take place when students are passive observers of the teaching process”.^{vi} The students need to truly become part of the story. In role-plays, students attempt to increase their understanding of circumstances and roles that are beyond their immediate experience. Role-plays are much more likely to be successful if they place students in settings with which they have some familiarity through their reading or general knowledge. Students also need clear guidance through sharply defined scenarios and roles.

Artifact Sharing

The students will be collecting artifacts that are introduced in the stories to aid in vocabulary development. Often times, students cannot visualize solely using the text. Students need something concrete to help them make meaningful connections. By allowing the students to “become” Jack and Annie and have them touch, feel, make, or manipulate the artifacts from the books, it will help them make connections about what is going on in the text. My young students need to connect their vocabulary words to experiences or situations that they can relate to so that they can internalize the meanings of the words and commit them to memory. Jan Hulstijn and Bhatia Laufer provide evidence that vocabulary development is more successful when learners are fully engaged in activities that require them to attend carefully to the new words and use them in productive tasks.^{vii-viii} Manipulating artifacts gives them a task to do and provides them with some frame of reference when they see the words in context.

Think-Alouds

The think-aloud strategy asks students to say out loud what they are thinking about when reading, solving math problems, or simply responding to questions posed by teachers or other students. Getting students into the habit of thinking out loud enriches classroom discourse and gives teachers an important assessment and diagnostic tool. As students think out loud, they learn how to learn. They learn to think as authors, mathematicians, anthropologists, economists, historians, scientists, and artists. They develop into reflective, metacognitive, independent learners, an invaluable step in helping students understand that learning requires effort and often is difficult.^{ix}

Cooperative Group Activities

Students need to be proactive in the learning process. (Ovando & Collier, 1998). A vigorous, inquiry-based learning style is recommended as an effective method for students to become “actively engaged in solving a problem, discovering new ways of perceiving their world, intensely applying learning strategies to the next task, developing family-like community among classmates, sharing the excitement of a special discovery”.^x These activities include “Numbered Heads Together”, “Think-Pair-Share” and “Jigsaw”.

Numbered Heads Together is a cooperative learning strategy that holds each student accountable for learning the material. Students are placed in groups and each person is given a number (from one to the maximum number in each group). The teacher poses a question and students "put their heads together" to figure out the answer. The teacher calls a specific number to respond as spokesperson for the group. By having students work together in a group, this strategy ensures that each member knows the answer to problems or questions asked by the teacher. Because no one knows which number will be called, all team members must be prepared.

Think-Pair-Share is a three step cooperative learning strategy. The teacher provokes students' thinking with a question or prompt or observation. The students should take a few moments (probably not minutes) just to THINK about the question. Using designated partners, students PAIR up to talk about the answer each came up with. They compare their mental or written notes and identify the answers they think are best, most convincing, or most unique. After students talk in pairs for a few moments, the teacher calls for pairs to SHARE their thinking with the rest of the class.

Jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy that enables each student of a "home" group to specialize in one aspect of a topic (for example, one group studies habitats of rainforest animals, another group studies predators of rainforest animals). Students meet with members from other groups who are assigned the same aspect, and after mastering the material, return to the "home" group and teach the material to their group members. With this strategy, each student in the "home" group serves as a piece of the topic's puzzle and when they work together as a whole, they create the complete jigsaw puzzle.

Text Connections

Text connections occur when the reader makes a personal connection from the text with something in their own life, another text, or something occurring in the world. There are three types of text connections: text-to-self (T-S), text-to-text (T-T), and text-to-world (T-W). Text connections are taught best through a meta-cognitive strategy (thinking about your thinking) called "thinking out loud." The teacher reads the text and models their own connection by verbalizing their own thoughts. This gives students a glimpse into the the reader's mind, and helps children to understand that good readers make connections with the texts they read. Good readers make personal connections with the text

throughout the reading. Good connections help readers to use what they already know (prior knowledge; schema) to help them understand the text and create vivid mental images. Good readers use their connections to help make predictions throughout the reading of the text. Good readers learn how to read deeper with more meaning when they make real-world connections to the text. Strong world connections deepen readers' understanding of the text and helps them to become critical thinkers.^{xi}

Choice Boards

Choice boards can be used in the classroom to facilitate differentiation (offering choice and differing levels, depth, or complexity to student based on interest and readiness). The board can be offered as a set of options to practice a skill, or the teacher can help students select work from the board that is most appropriate and interesting to the student. The choice board can be laminated and reused. Upon hearing the story, the students can respond to what they have heard by choosing an idea that appeals to them. For this unit, choice boards will be used during their Discovery Journal writing time. They can choose to write about an aspect of the story that appeals to them. One student may choose to write about the place Jack and Annie are visiting. Another student may choose to focus on responding to the point-of-view the story is written in.

Embellishing a Story

Have students add another character to the story in a Magic Tree House fiction adventure. This character should join in the dialogue with Jack and Annie or add to the existing scenes in order to insert bits of information learned in the corresponding research guide. The story line is not substantially changed, but more information is offered to the reader. This activity can be done through written or verbal communication, depending on the age of the student. It is best to do this after the student has read the fiction and the nonfiction books in their entirety so the addition of information will not affect the ability to follow the story line. For an example of a story embellishment from Hour of the Olympics, visit the Magic Tree House Classroom Club.

Mentor Texts

A mentor text is a piece of writing that can be used to teach a writer some aspect of the writing process. Specific texts will be chosen so that students can study the way an author writes while connecting to the theme. The zone of proximal development comes into play here. The zone of proximal development is a concept created by psychologist Lev Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky, the zone of proximal development "is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." (Vygotsky, 1978) In other words, it is the range of abilities that a person can perform with assistance, but

cannot yet perform independently. According to Vygotsky, children learn best when they are in the “zone of proximal development” and can work in collaboration with a more knowledgeable other (mentor text).^{xiii} The purpose of using mentor texts will be to provide the students with opportunities to use work of the chosen author as a model as well as to develop comprehension skills through the stories that we read together. In this context, the mentor texts used will be the Magic Tree House books. Students will study how these books are written. This will allow them to use the author’s model to create their own original stories.

Story Maps

A story map is a strategy that uses a graphic organizer to help students learn the elements of a book or story. By identifying story characters, plot, setting, problem and solution, students read carefully to learn the details. There are many different types of story map graphic organizers. The most basic focus on the beginning, middle, and end of the story. More advanced organizers focus more on plot or character traits. This strategy will be used to complete the culminating activity.

Activities

Pre-reading Activities

Each student will be given a passport that they will use to travel to each of the places featured in the books. To earn a passport stamp, students must be able to identify where they went and answer three questions about their trip. They will be able to answer these questions by completing hands-on and group activities. The experiences that they have playing out the stories together will help them fill up their passports.

This entire unit is based on the Magic Tree House Series and many of the activities that the students will do require them to hear the story first. Therefore, I have broken down this section to cover the first four books in the series. Each book will be read aloud with comprehension and vocabulary-building activities scattered throughout the reading. There are some activities that will be completed with each book. One of them is the “Discovery Journal”. These journals will mimic the journal that Jack keeps. The students will write about what they have discovered during their trips to the various places they will visit. They may include pictures of what they saw as well as describe their feelings during these events. For example, they may describe the extreme fear they experienced when they saw a real live Tyrannosaurus Rex. Not only will this help them to feel like they are actually in the story, but it will remind them the sequence of events that take place. It is important to complete journal entries for each book that students can refer back to as the unit moves forward. Some sample questions that students may consider while responding in their journal include:

- Where did Jack and Annie travel?

- How do they feel about their journey?
- What dangers are they facing?
- What clues were they given to help them on their journey?
- What can you tell about Jack based on his actions?
- What can you tell about Annie based on her actions?
- What magical elements are in the story?
- Who are the characters involved in the book besides Jack and Annie?
- What is the setting?
- What is the problem?
- What is the solution?
- If you were Jack or Annie, what would you have done differently?

Role-playing is a great way for students to embody the characters and build comprehension. This will be done in two ways. The first way will be an interviewer scenario. To give all twenty-four students in my class a chance to play the role of a character, I will put the students in groups of two. After reading each book, they will get with their partner to review the story. One partner will start by being the interviewer and the other group member will be either Jack or Annie. I will supply questions that specifically relate to each book that the interviewer will need to ask Jack or Annie. The students will need to take on these roles while remembering key parts of the story. The second way will take place after reading the fourth book. Students will have an opportunity to act out the main events of the story by choosing the story they enjoyed the most. Each student in the class will get to choose which story they would like to be a part of. They will determine which scenes they want to act out, design the necessary props, assign roles from the book, and be prepared to present their favorite scenes to their classmates. To help my young students tackle a project as in depth as this, I will have parent volunteers come in to facilitate the conversations and planning that need to take place.

Comprehension and vocabulary development are what I hope to achieve in this unit. Before each book I will build some background knowledge about key vocabulary words that are necessary to know before reading. Prior knowledge plays a huge role in vocabulary development. Some words will be easier to identify by students if they are cognates of their first language. Building upon what they already know helps establish a deeper meaning of the word. This information is riveting in terms of second language acquisition. It provides the basis for why I want to write a unit in which vocabulary is a strong component. It is my goal that my students leave my classroom with stronger vocabulary knowledge so that they can feel comfortable using in context. I will use some SIOP strategies while doing this, such as showing a picture with the words that I introduce.

Activities for Book 1 – Dinosaurs Before Dark

There will be many things tied into this ten chapter book. There are two main characters in these books; Jack and Annie. Jack is an eight-year-old boy who thinks like a scientist. He always takes notes about his adventures. His seven-year old sister Annie is more interested in experiencing things than in writing about them. Together they make a great exploration team, always helping each other escape near danger. To become more like the characters in the book, the students will first get to step into Jack's shoes. After reading portions of the story, I will have students take notes in their "Discovery Journals".

At this time the students will also create their own "backpacks" similar to the one that Jack and Annie take with them on each expedition. To make these backpacks I will staple two file folders together and form a handle at the folder opening. It will look somewhat like a briefcase, but the students will imagine that it is their backpack. In this backpack they will keep all of the "data" they have collected on their trips as well as any artifacts they have collected along the way. In each story, Jack and Annie find an artifact that teaches them more about the Magic Tree House and who owns it.

To make the story come alive for the students I have included an "Explorer Activity" that the students will do after finishing the book. The first of these explorer activities will turn the students into paleontologists. Just as Jack and Annie learned more about dinosaurs, we will be doing the same. They were able to learn about dinosaurs by seeing the real thing. When they returned to Frog Creek, Pennsylvania though, seeing dinosaurs up close and personal was no longer an option. The students are going to pretend that they are Jack or Annie and that they have just returned from their trip. They want to share what they have learned, but they can't let their secret about the Magic Tree House be revealed. To teach their classmates, they will make their own fossils and share what they have learned without being discovered. To make fossils, you will need the following materials:

Small natural object (shell, leaf, bone, etc.)

Petroleum jelly

Plaster of Paris

Water

Small disposable dish (such as a margarine tub)

Step 1: Choose an object to make a fossil of. It could be a shell, a leaf, an animal bone, or another object from nature.

Step 2: Coat the object with petroleum jelly.

Step 3: Next, pour some plaster of Paris and some water in a small dish. Mix them together well. Let the plaster of Paris and water sit for a few minutes, without stirring them.

Step 4: Press the object into the plaster of Paris and let everything dry. This will take at

least one day.

Step 5: When the plaster of Paris is completely dry, remove the object. The impression left behind is like a fossil.

This hands-on activities allows students to make text-to-world connections about the book and shows them how scientists learned about the dinosaurs after they became extinct. To include some role-playing into this activity, the students will do as described above and teach a small group of students about one of the dinosaurs they encountered in the book under the guise of information coming only from the fossil and other research.

At the end of the story, Jack discovered a gold Medallion with the letter M on it. Each student will be given their own Medallion artifact to place in their backpack. This will help them to further connect to the events of the story.

Activities for Book 2 – The Knight at Dawn

In this book, Jack and Annie are headed to England. While there, they are able to discover the grounds of a castle during the Medieval Times. One of the things that the students will do before reading to fully understand what the castle Jack and Annie were in looked like, is to create it. The students will be divided into small groups and each will be given a part of the castle that they need to create. The rooms they will bring to life are the banquet hall, the dungeon, the armory, the hawk house, and the castle entrance. I will supply each group with a description of what each area looked like. Using a shoebox, each group will assemble a diorama of the room they were assigned. When all of the rooms have been assembled, we will construct the entire castle. This visual representation will help learners visually see what the castle looked like and better understand where Jack and Annie were. As we read the story, we will travel through the castle **as** Jack and Annie instead of **with** them. Here are the materials needed for creating a shoebox diorama.

You will need the following materials:

1 Shoebox

An assortment of Construction paper

Scissors

Stickers

Crayons or colored pencils

Glue (Elmers glue or something similar works great)

some cotton swabs (Q-tips) to apply the glue (optional but neater)

As with the first story, students will write about their experiences and insights in their “Discovery Journal.” They will be given opportunities to write in their journals after chapters 2, 4, 6, and 8. The visual representation of the castle should help the students as they write and draw about their trip through the castle. They will be reminded to draw pictures that will help them remember the plot. They may want to draw the castle and its

rooms, the clothing that the other characters are wearing, or what Jack and Annie looked like when they were riding on the back of the horse with the knight.

To become Jack or Annie, the students must understand what character traits each of them possess. Now that the students have been learning more about what types of characters Jack and Annie are, they will complete a character profile about the character of their choice. If they are to become the character, they must understand what types of character traits Jack and Annie possess. They will need to determine what the character looks like, what the character does (actions), the types of things the character says, and how the character feels in various situations. They will use a character map divided into the four parts mentioned to help them organize their thinking. This finished work will go into their “backpack”.

Similar to book one, Jack and Annie uncover a special artifact bearing the letter M on it while they are on their mission. This artifact is a silk bookmark with the same M found on the medallion. Each student will be given a blue bookmark (made of paper, not of silk) to add to their “backpack”.

Activities for Book 3 – Mummies in the Morning

In this book, Jack and Annie travel to ancient Egypt. They meet Queen Hutepi and help her find the Book of the Dead. She cannot complete her journey to the Afterlife until the book is found. To help her locate her book, they must decipher the hieroglyphics on the wall. To bring this story to life, the students will complete an Explorer Activity. The Explorer Activity that accompanies this book is working with hieroglyphs. We will be making a cartouche. A cartouche is a sign with your name written in hieroglyphs. To make this, the teacher will need to look up the students’ names using this website: http://www.mce.k12tn.net/ancient_egypt/e-name.htm. Print out each name so that the students can have a copy. Make a salt dough mixture by blending 2 cups flour, 1 cup salt, and 3/4 cups of warm water. Shape the salt dough into an oval shape. Next use a toothpick to carve the name into the salt dough. Once it dries, this can be kept in a place that is easy to view by all students.

In this book they do not uncover an artifact on their journey, but they do when they return back to the Magic Tree House. They realize that the letter M is on the floor of the tree house and that the M matches the M on their other artifacts. To give the students something to collect as an artifact, I will take a picture of a large yellow M on a wooden floor. Each student will be given a picture of this to put in their “backpack.”

In addition to adding their artifact to their backpack, the students will need to respond periodically in their Discovery Journal. Some key things to include would be how they felt when they met Queen Hutepi, what they were feeling as they were going through the pyramid, and how they were able to find the Queen’s Book of the Dead.

Activities for Book 4 – Pirates Past Noon

In this book, Jack and Annie travel to the Caribbean Sea and run into pirates! They are asked by the pirates to help them find the Kidd's Treasure. The Explorer Activity that accompanies this book is creating a treasure map. Here are the materials you need to make this:

cold coffee or tea (about 1/2 cup)

piece of white paper

a blowdryer

a little imagination and some markers.

Step One: Take a piece of nice white paper and rip off all the edges. Do not use scissors, as this will make too nice of an edge.

Step Two: Crumple the paper up as tightly as you can into a ball. Flatten the paper out again and put onto a plate or cookie sheet.

Step Three: Pour coffee or tea over the paper. Swoosh around with your hands to make sure it covers everything. If you're doing this with a large group of smaller kids, you may want to get it to this point and set them aside for a couple minutes Then pull out some finished, dried sheets that you pre-made. It keeps the kids from having to sit through the "waiting" parts of the project.

Step Four: Let it sit for about 5 minutes. If you're doing it with a group and time is limited, 2 minutes is enough to give it some color.

Step Five: Blow-dry with a hand held blow-dryer on high for about 5 minutes. Be sure to leave it sitting on the plate while blow-drying or it will tear to pieces. When it's pretty dry and starts to lift a bit, switch the blow-dryer to low to finish off.

Step Six: Once the paper for the treasure map is ready, the students can recreate the experience they had with Cap'n Bones, a main character from this book, by making the treasure map used in the story. If they would like to create their own original treasure map based on their trip to the Caribbean, then that is welcomed as well. The main objective is that they use a hands-on experience to make connections to the story.

In this book, they discover who the magical M person is! She is magical librarian named Morgan Le Fay. I am going to create a life-size poster of her that will hang in the classroom. Each student will get to dress up like Jack or Annie, depending on gender, and have their picture taken with Morgan. I will print the pictures and give them a copy to put in their "backpack."

This will be the final opportunity that students will have to write in their Discovery Journal. They will be encouraged to draw pictures of key elements of the plot as well as answer as many questions as they can about their journey to the Caribbean. The more details they include in their journals, the easier the culminating activity will be for them.

Culminating Activity

The culminating activity for this unit is the creation of new Magic Tree House stories written by the students. As they will notice, the books take on a very specific pattern. It typically starts off with Jack and Annie venturing back to the tree house from their home in Frog Creek, Pennsylvania. The mysterious librarian who owns the tree house has some type of mission waiting for the Jack and Annie to complete. She leaves a book for them to help them complete their mission. She does not tell them exactly what they need to do, but leaves clues instead. They wish to go there and instantly they are transported. They must complete a mission before they can return home. Through the usage of their Discovery Journals, they will be able to identify the format of each story. They have been taking notes throughout the unit that may help them determine the format they need to follow.

The students at my school come from many different countries and bring cultural differences with them. They will tap into these experiences by writing their own Magic Tree House story. With the help of a story planner, the students will choose a place they are familiar with and start developing their own book. The first step in this process will be coming up with a story planner that the students can use to plan out their ideas. I would like the students to be involved in the creation of the story planner. To support them I will provide a basic format that they may change as needed. They will need to consider the setting they would like for their story, the characters that will be involved, the problem they will need to solve, as well as how they are going to have the characters solve the problem. In the Magic Tree House stories, Jack and Annie are provided with clues that help them. In the planning process, the students need to consider what clues they will be given. To assist the students I will share a version of my own Magic Tree House story. The setting will be Pamplona, Spain. The characters will be myself, Jack, Annie, the bulls, and two other characters (I will name them after students from my current class). The problem is that Morgan needs to get a book about the history of bull-fighting from the center of the city. To get to the city, Jack, Annie, and myself have to participate in the event called “The Running of the Bulls”. The event is a very dangerous yearly festival where people run through the streets with live bulls. To make it to our destination, we will meet two native people that will help us get there safely. We will return with the book (and maybe a few cuts and bruises) to our tree house in Frog Creek, Pennsylvania. The ideas that I have just presented will be posted on a large poster so that students can see how to plan their own. I will also color code each story element on the poster. The key is as follows: setting – red, characters – blue, problem – orange, clues provided – green, solution – purple. After completing the story planner, I will model for the students how to take the ideas from their story planner and turn them into a story. Remembering that they are first graders, their stories will more than likely take the form of a first, next, last type of story as opposed to a chapter book. The main

objective of this activity is to encourage students to see the form that these books take and create their own. Having an example to use as a model will be beneficial for your visual learners.

After students have had the opportunity to create their own Magic Tree House stories, we will spend the rest of the year traveling in the Magic Tree House with them. Some days we will read the next few chapters in the books by Mary Pope Osborne and some days we will be transported to the magical places that my first graders have written about. It will promote a love of reading, a deeper understanding of plot elements, and a true sense of playfulness in our classroom environment.

ⁱ Lightbrown, Patsy M., and Nina Spada. *How Languages are Learned*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 110.

ⁱⁱ Echevarria, Jana, Deborah J. Short, and Maryellen Vogt. *Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP Model*. (Boston: Allyn & Amp, 2007), 15.

ⁱⁱⁱ Echevarria, Jana, Deborah J. Short, and Maryellen Vogt. *Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP Model*. (Boston: Allyn & Amp, 2007), 20.

^{iv} Lightbrown, Patsy M., and Nina Spada. *How Languages are Learned*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 100.

^v Lightbrown, Patsy M., and Nina Spada. *How Languages are Learned*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 72.

^{vi} Poorman, P. B. Biography and role-playing: fostering empathy in abnormal psychology. *Teaching of Psychology*. 23

^{vii} Lightbrown, Patsy M., and Nina Spada. *How Languages are Learned*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 25.

^{viii}

^{ix} Tinzmann, M. B., Jones, J., Fennimore, T.F., Bakker, J., C. Fine, and J. Pierce NCREL. *What is the Collaborative Classroom*. (Oak Brook, 1990), 5.

^x Collier, Virginia P. & Ovando, Carlos J. *Bilingual and ESL Classrooms: Teaching in Multicultural Contexts*. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 58.

^{xi} Harvey, Stephanie, and Anne Goudvis. *Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding*. (New York: Stenhouse Publishers, 2000), 70.

^{xii} **Works Cited**

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Collier, Virginia P. & Ovando, Carlos J. *Bilingual and ESL Classrooms: Teaching in Multicultural Contexts*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998.

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Osborne, Mary Pope. *Dinosaurs Before Dark*. New York: Random House Children's Books, 1999.

Osborne, Mary Pope. *The Knight at Dawn*. New York: Random House, 1993.

Osborne, Mary Pope. *Mummies in the Morning*. New York: Random House, 1993.

Osborne, Mary Pope. *Pirates Past Noon*. New York: Random House, 1994.

Poorman, P. B. Biography and role-playing: fostering empathy in abnormal psychology. *Teaching of Psychology*

Annotated Bibliography for Teachers

Carleton, Lindsay, and Robert J. Marzano. *Vocabulary Games for the Classroom*. Denver: Marzano Research Laboratory, 2010.

This book is simple, straightforward, and easy to use. Each game begins with a brief description that identifies the appropriate grade level and subject area, as well as whether or not the students should already be familiar with the vocabulary.

Collier, Virginia P. & Ovando, Carlos J. *Bilingual and ESL Classrooms: Teaching in Multicultural Contexts*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998.

This book is an excellent resource for both ESL and classroom teachers. It provides teachers with strategies that build vocabulary and comprehension skills for second language learners.

Echevarria, Jana, Deborah J. Short, and Maryellen Vogt. *Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP Model*. Boston: Allyn & Amp, 2007.

This book provides teachers with a number of activities that they can do in the classroom to support their second language learners. It explains the SIOP model in language that is easy to understand. The strategies in this book can be used in a variety of classroom settings.

Harvey, Stephanie, and Anne Goudvis. *Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding*. New York: Stenhouse Publishers, 2000.

This book has become an indispensable resource for teachers who want to explicitly teach thinking strategies so that students become engaged, thoughtful, independent readers.

Keene, Ellin Oliver, and Susan Zimmermann. *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop*. Chicago: Heinemann, 1997.

This book provides teachers with ideas that they can use when teaching reading comprehension. They can be used during small group instruction or can be adapted for whole group instruction.

Lightbrown, Patsy M., and Nina Spada. *How Languages are Learned*. Oxford:

Oxford University Press, 2006.

This book provides teachers information on how languages are acquired and shares a number of research studies that have been done on second language acquisition.

M.B. Tinzmann, B.F. Jones, T.F. Fennimore, J. Bakker, C. Fine, and J. Pierce NCREL. *What is the Collaborative Classroom*. Oak Brook, 1990.

This resource discusses how students can assume active, collaborative roles in the classroom. When they take on these types of roles in the classroom they become more active participants in their learning. This resource also discusses how students can set their own learning goals.

Murphy, Frank. *Teaching with Magic Tree House Books*. New York: Scholastic, 2003.

This teacher's guide is packed full of ideas that teachers can use to enhance activities related to the Magic Tree House Series. It contains vocabulary building, comprehension, and fluency building strategies directly related to the book series.

Annotated Bibliography for Students

Osborne, Mary Pope. *Dinosaurs Before Dark*. New York: Random House Children's Books, 1999.

Before Jack and Annie can find out, the mysterious tree house whisks them to the prehistoric past. Now they have to figure out how to get home. Can they do it before dark . . . or will they become a dinosaur's dinner?

Osborne, Mary Pope. *The Knight at Dawn*. New York: Random House, 1993. Jack and Annie find a castle with a secret passage as the Magic Tree House sends them back to the Middle Ages for another wild adventure. In the Great Hall of the castle, a feast is under way. But Jack and Annie aren't exactly welcome guests!

Osborne, Mary Pope. *Mummies in the Morning*. New York: Random House, 1993. Jack and Annie meet an actual mummy when the Magic Tree House takes them back to ancient Egypt. There they meet a long-dead queen who needs their help. Will Jack and Annie be able to solve the puzzle, or will they end up as mummies themselves?

Osborne, Mary Pope. *Pirates Past Noon*. New York: Random House, 1994. Jack and Annie are in for a high-seas adventure when the Magic Tree House transports them back to the days of deserted islands, secret maps—and ruthless pirates! Will they discover a buried treasure? Or will they be forced to walk the plank?

Appendix 1

Implementing North Carolina First Grade Standards

Competency Goal 2 - The learner will develop and apply strategies and skills to comprehend text that is read, heard, and viewed.

Competency Goal 4 - The learner will apply strategies and skills to create oral, written, and visual texts.