MORE THAN JUST A GOOD BOOK:
EMPLOYING U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GUIDELINES TO TEACH
CHARACTER EDUCATION USING LITERATURE

by

Suzy F. Besson-Martilotta

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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March, 2013
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APPROVED BY:

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ABSTRACT

Suzy F. Besson-Martilotta. MORE THAN JUST A GOOD BOOK: EMPLOYING U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GUIDELINES TO TEACH CHARACTER EDUCATION USING LITERATURE. (under the direction of Dr. Rick Bragg) School of Education, Liberty University, March 2013.

The purpose of this research study, which was conducted as a qualitative content analysis, was to discover to what extent children’s literature from a popular anthology could be used to teach the tenets of character education according to U.S. Department of Education (2005) guidelines in a pre-Kindergarten through second grade setting. A team of participant-coders, which consisted of experienced early childhood educators, evaluated and analyzed each of the 44 complete books contained in the 320 page anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), in order to investigate opportunities to explore with students the 10 values identified by U.S. Department of Education guidelines. Data collection consisted of: (a) ratings in a codebook, (b) narrative notes, and (c) discussions with participant-coders. In the report of research findings, a summary for each book was provided to determine the applicability of the themes to character education. Based on the content analysis of the 44 books in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud*, it was determined that 26 (59%) of the stories in it contained at least 1 of the character traits suggested by the U.S. Department of Education.

Descriptors: character education, moral education, values education, U.S. Department of Education, children’s literature, anthology, content analysis
Dedication

“What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?” (Unknown).

I told the parents of my first grade students I would be graduating with my Ed.S. that semester, and Brenden came up to me to ask a question. He told me “My mom says that you are almost a doctor. Are you going to go back to school to be a doctor?” “No,” I replied sadly, “Brenden, I’d love to, but that’s a lot of work... and I really don’t think I’d make it. . .”

He looked at me in the way that only a 7 year old boy can, and said “Ms. B. . . you always tell us that it’s okay if we don’t actually know how to do something. . . but it’s not okay if we don’t even try! You should at least try to be a doctor.” Well, Brenden, you got me. You were right. I needed to try. The Beavers can now say that Ms. B. puts her money where her mouth is!

In my attempts to complete this degree, so many people who were traveling the same path helped me: Thank you to Dr. Jim Gregory in New York, who always e-mailed me back and prayed for me—no matter what was going on in his busy life. My L.M.U. team of Ann, Lisa, Lori and Susan started me on this road when they encouraged me to pursue my Ed.S with them, and if it were not for their insistence, I would never have even been able to start this program. Thank you to all of my L.U. and other friends who shall remain nameless for all of your assistance and support. When I needed a helping hand or a kind word, there you were. I could not have done this without you. Proverbs 20:6 says: “Many will say they are loyal friends, but who can find one who is truly reliable?” (NIV) There is no doubt without the hand of God upon me and the reliable friends He put in my life, I would not have made it this far in this program.
For my family and friends: my sister Sylvia, my brother Daniel, my dad, my father-in-law Lou and my neighbor Tina: Thank you for all of your encouragement and for not asking me four thousand times when I’d be finished. Thank you for your belief that I would get done some day. Mimi, you always told me “You’re smarter than you think you are…” Thank you for that. I think of you often. Papa, you always wanted me to be a doctor, and here you go!

My girls, Emily and Elisabeth: Mommy has been working so hard on this “big project.” Thank you for being such sweet girls and for understanding when I had to “work on school.” I hope that seeing your mother go through this inspires you to do the same. If you work hard, and keep at it, your dreams can come true. Despite setbacks-- don’t give up.

Bob: No matter what crazy idea I’ve ever had, thank you for being a roll-with-the-punches kind of guy. Your support means a lot, especially when it meant taking care of the girls when I was in Virginia, not having a wife who could hang out with you a lot, and of course, funneling money into my education instead of into a 401K. When we got married almost 27 years ago, I thought we knew exactly what we’d do with our lives. HA! I am so glad I took this crazy and unforeseen journey with you. Thank you, and I am happy to tell you the kitchen table will no longer be “dissertation central.” It will now be a kitchen table. This is dedicated to you.
Acknowledgements

Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (KJV)

I would like to thank my chair, Dr. Rick Bragg, for agreeing to take me on. I know you are not an early childhood educator, and I appreciate your willingness to work with me. I am grateful for your kindness, your encouragement, and your expediency.

Dr. Jessica Talada: Thank you for your enthusiasm and positive remarks. I always smiled when I got an e-mail from you. You were so encouraging.

Dr. Dan Wilder: On our last day together at LMU, you told the class in your wonderful Tennessee accent: “If there’s ever anything I can do for you... please don’t hesitate to ask.” When I typed the e-mail asking you to be on my committee, I was thinking perhaps you weren’t serious about what you had said. I should not have worried! Thank you for all you have done for me. It was wonderful to work with you again.

Dr. Fred Milacci: Thank you for all of your help with this, especially during EDUC 980. I appreciate all of your assistance in making this a better body of work.

Dr. Ruth Pace: Your gentle nudge to do this was just what I needed. Thank you for your belief I would actually get this done.

And finally, to my participant-coders: Thank you both so very, very much for agreeing to spend many Saturdays in a row talking about children’s literature and character education. It was such a pleasure to work with you. What a blessing it was to be able to have people on whom I could rely to help me. I know you took valuable and precious time away from your families for me. I owe you a lot, and I know it!
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<td>(AYP)</td>
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<td>American Library Association</td>
<td>(ALA)</td>
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<td>Child Development Project</td>
<td>(CDP)</td>
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<td>Georgia Department of Education</td>
<td>(GADOE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investing in Education Excellence</td>
<td>(IE2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Review Board</td>
<td>(IRB)</td>
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<tr>
<td>King James Version</td>
<td>(KJV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M.E.</td>
<td>An acronym for participant-coder 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education</td>
<td>(NCATE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>New International Version</td>
<td>(NIV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Child Left Behind</td>
<td>(NCLB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.A.</td>
<td>An acronym for participant-coder 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Department of Education</td>
<td>(USDOE)</td>
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<td>United States Department of Justice</td>
<td>(USDOJ)</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The faculties of elementary schools have been tasked with teaching the three Rs: (a) reading, (b) writing, and (c) arithmetic. However, due to changes in state and federal laws, Berkowitz and Bier (2007) reported they have now been charged with the addition of a fourth R, that of respect. The movement to increase the teaching of character education has expanded recently, and school staff are required to teach it as a part of the requirements of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2012) and the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2001) Act. However, educators need guidance in order to find books which are written for students in Grades pre-K-2 and are appropriate for teaching character education.

Background

The lack of character education for the youth of this generation has had a profound impact on communities today. In this section, this researcher identifies the specific impact on the United States, the roadblocks to teaching character education, and some of the research done in the areas of character education and children’s literature.

Character education and its impact on society.

Why should educators place an emphasis on character education in the curriculum? The United States is in a moral crisis. In 2010, over 8,200 children, who were 10 years of age and under, were arrested for various types of crime (U.S. Department of Justice [USDOJ], 2010). The charges against these young children included such violent crimes as: (a) forcible rape, (b) larceny, and (c) aggravated assault (USDOJ, 2010). According to Schultz, Richardson, Barber, and Wilcox (2011), current teachers were not surprised by these figures. They reported that many of those young
children who committed these crimes had established a pattern of social problems even before they reached elementary school. Many parents have allowed their young children to watch television shows which contain sexual references or violence, and to play video games which depict stabbings, shootings, and theft (Alexander, 2012; Wilson 2008). Unfortunately, many parents do not consider how to make sound parenting choices, and they allow their children too much freedom because they do not want to upset them (Brannon, 2008). Helterbran (2009) stated, “Children are often coming to school with problematic behavior and attitudes” (p. 73). These types of problems can notably impact the behavior of young children. Young children who are continuously aggressive can establish a pattern of serious social problems by the time that they have reached lower elementary school (Schultz et al.). The members of society cannot allow this decay in morality to continue; therefore, public officials have attempted to rectify the situation, and there is requirement for an increase in the emphasis on character education. The teaching of character education is necessary in schools (Helterbran, 2009).

**Roadblocks to character education.**

Directives from state legislatures and mandates from the NCLB (2001) legislation have been made in an effort to return character education to the schools (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007; Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2012). However, in general, the staff members of educational institutions who attempted to follow these mandates were confronted by two roadblocks. The first was the struggle about how to teach character education and still maintain a high level of academics. According to Stiff-Williams (2010), “The character education movement . . . collides head-on with another thrust: the drive for standards-based education” (p. 116). Similarly, Winton (2010) observed, due to
“recent reforms requiring evidence of continual improvement in students’ academic performance, subjects like character education have been given short shrift” (p. 220). In general, school staffs have been allowed to decide on an individual basis how they would approach the teaching of character education (Helterbran, 2009). Some have chosen simply to adopt a word, which emphasized a positive character trait, on a monthly basis (Milliren & Messer, 2009). In many schools, only lip service is paid to character education, because “teachers and administrators see character education as simply one more thing that they must jam into an already crowded curriculum” (Manley & Hawkins, 2010, p.18).

For many schools, the second problem is that in order to present specific lessons on character education, it is necessary to purchase pre-packaged character education programs, which are financially out of reach. In her study of character education programs, Yandles (2008) found the least expensive program cost $125 per teacher, and the most expensive program could cost as much as $ 6,500 for the faculty of an entire school to be trained in its use. For many schools, an expenditure of this amount of money on a non-academic subject is not possible. “With decreasing revenues and rising costs, many school district administrators have been forced to make tough decisions to balance their budgets and still meet the needs of their students” (Hull, 2010, para. 1). As a result, the budget crisis and the push for school time to be spent on academics have meant that there is minimal time and money for character education.

**Research on character education and children’s literature.**

The authors of previous studies on the topic area of children’s literature and character education have included research on: (a) Black, female, male, immigrant, and
multi-cultural characters in children’s literature; (b) character traits in literature written for older children; (c) gender roles and emotions found in picture books; and (d) visual narratives found in Caldecott Award books (Bones, 2010; Flannery-Quinn, 2003; Gomez, 2003; Paynter, 2011; Ryan, 2006). Specific topics have been covered in these books such as: (a) the role of farmers portrayed in picture books (Sano, 2009); (b) the presence of character traits from the Josephson Institute (2012) in books written for older children (Bones); and (c) the portrayal of Canadian First Nations people in picture books (Dufault, 2003).

There have been several authors who have investigated more general topics related to character education for early childhood educators, but those findings have limited recommendations for educators. In one author’s list (Helterbran, 2009) of recommended books for use in teaching character education, only eight books are listed. Putnam (2004) reported that a North Carolina school was provided with recommendations for books to use in their character education program, but only five books were mentioned. The purpose of the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE, 2005) list of books is to “support character development” (p. 53). Although the books are separated according to various age groups, many of the books listed for young children (e.g., for ages 1-6) are too difficult for this age group. The Journey of Charles Lindbergh (1997), Hiawatha (1996), and The Lighthouse Keeper’s Daughter (1987) are on this list and are suggested for infants to 6 year olds; yet all are inappropriate for a child even in second grade. In fact, The Lighthouse Keeper’s Daughter is recommended by the publisher for children in fourth grade and higher. These are examples of haphazard, incomplete, and inappropriate book lists for early childhood educators.
Character education as part of subject area instruction.

The solution to the lack of time and money to obtain character education programs is for early childhood teachers to present character education as part of a subject area. Haegerich and Metz (2009) stated that, “Elementary school is thought to be a critical time for prevention--the average age at which students begin their pathways into problem behavior is around age 7” (p. 5). Young children are able to learn from a variety of methods, but one that is simple to implement is to teach character education through the use of picture books. Berkowitz and Hoppe (2009) observed that “many subjects are rife with opportunities to mine the character-related content. . . already in readings [and] lessons” (p. 135). Similarly, Elias, DeFini, and Bergmann (2010) noted that use of books in language arts “allowed for easy integration of such themes as compromise and empathy in ways that required no curricular add-ons” (p. 32). Helterbran (2009) maintained that the use of children’s picture books to teach character education allows children to make connections between the curriculum and their own lives.

Use of a low-cost anthology for character education.

Currently, educators search for books which address character traits in a somewhat haphazard manner, and they have to guess at which books might contain good examples to use for a character education lesson. However, it would be helpful to early childhood educators if they had access to one easily obtained, low-cost anthology, in which specific positive character traits are identified, so that they could link language arts instruction to character education. In the low cost anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), there are 44 books, and many of them are classified as top rated books.
for children (American Library Association [ALA], 2010). The findings from a qualitative study, which linked these books (i.e., the majority of which are either award-winning or produced by award winning authors or illustrators) to character education lessons for young children, would help to reduce the guesswork for teachers as they select literature.

**The U.S. Department of Education character education guidelines.**

In 2003, the staff of the USDOE issued a booklet titled, *Helping Your Child become a Responsible Citizen*, and updated it in 2005 as a part of the NCLB (2002) program. In the booklet, it was noted that “if young children do not learn proper values and behavior when they are very young, problems can develop” (USDOE, 2005, page ii). As opposed to other character education programs, for which fees are charged for the literature and information, the USDOE character education booklet is available in the public domain. In the inside cover, it is specifically stated that there is no charge for anyone, whether they be parents, educators, or administrators, to use it or reprint it.

**Situation to Self**

This researcher is a first grade teacher, and she was motivated to conduct this study because there is a lack of information about the themes of values within children’s literature, as defined by staff of the USDOE (2005), and the extent to which the books in such an anthology could be used in an early childhood classroom. The paradigm in this study is a formational one, with an emphasis on Biblical teachings. In a formational paradigm, Miller (1995) emphasized that teachers have “the opportunity and responsibility, then, to demonstrate the viability of a Christian faith commitment by living that out before his or her students” (para. 5). He maintained that this should take
place both in and out of the classroom. A teacher, who views character education as part of his or her educational focus, places Proverbs 22:6 (NIV) at the forefront: “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”

The philosophical assumption of axiology, since values and morals are being examined in this study. The researcher has a bias in favor of teaching values and morals in the early childhood classroom.

Statement of the Problem

Currently, based on this researcher’s review of the literature, there are no studies in which the authors provided an outline of materials for early childhood educators to link language arts and character education instruction as recommended in the USDOE (2005) guidelines, through the reading of children’s literature from a low-cost anthology. In many schools or school districts, teachers do not have a clear curriculum or set instruction for character education provided to them (Delisio, 2008). Although the teaching of character education is mandated by federal law (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007), educators who desire to follow the law are left to their own devices as to how they should teach this subject.

In addition, when faced with the vast array of books from which to choose, teachers do not always know which books they should select. Stephens (2006) noted that, “with the immense number of available texts and materials, choosing the best books can be a challenge to less experienced teachers” (p. 145).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative content analysis was to discover to what extent, if any, the 44 children’s books contained in the anthology, The 20th Century Children's
Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud (Schulman, 2005), could be used by early childhood educators to blend language arts instruction with the tenets of character education according to USDOE (2005) guidelines in grades pre-K through Grade 2.

**Significance of the Study**

Currently, in 17 states, including the state of Georgia, educators are mandated to teach character education (Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2012; McElmeel, 2002). In part, this requirement is in place because Legislative members believe in character education, and also because character education is required under the NCLB act of 2002 (as cited in Berkowitz & Bier, 2007). However, the increased focus on test scores means that teachers are limited as to how much time they can devote to the explicit teaching of character education (Gauld, 2012; Hall, 2000, Mather & Weldon, 2006). In some school districts, teachers are required to spend as much as 150 minutes per day on language arts education, which means a literature-based character education program could be of interest to early childhood educators.

Kephart (2009) reported that several of the books contained in the Schulman (2005) anthology addressed character values. The book, Swimmy (Lionni, 2005), addresses the values of: (a) leadership, (b) friendship, (c) courage, (d) cooperation, and (e) responsibility. The book, Ferdinand the Bull (Leaf, 2005), lets children know that “it’s okay to be different” (Jones, 2011, para. 3), which is linked to the value of self-respect. Although Noe (2012) maintained that the book, Sylvester and the Magic Pebble (Steig, 2005), supports “traditional values” (para. 2), she did not indicate specifically what values the book teaches.
There is no current research study in which all the books in this low-cost anthology (Schulman, 2005), are linked to the free character education program provided by the USDOE (2005) for children. Therefore, the findings from this study are helpful for early childhood educators, who wish to link language arts instruction through the reading of children’s literature along with character education, as determined by the USDOE guidelines.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions framed this content analysis:

**Research Question 1.** What, if any, themes relating to values and morals, do participant-coders identify as being present in books contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005)?

**Research Question 2.** To what extent are books contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), appropriate or suited for use by an early childhood educator who wishes to link language arts instruction and character education, as defined by USDOE (2005) guidelines?

**Research Question 3.** How do the 44 books in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), compare and contrast in terms of opportunities to explore character education traits contained in USDOE (2005) guidelines?

**Research Plan**

Content analysis was defined by Babbie (2008) as the interpretation of recorded
human communication, including the study of books. In addition, Babbie indicated that content analysis can be qualitative, since “not all content analysis results in counting. Sometimes a qualitative assessment of the materials is most appropriate” (p. 359). In content analysis, “text is coded or broken down in manageable categories on a word, phrase, sentence or theme” (Klenke, 2008, p. 89). She added that content analysis can be conducted “qualitatively without generating word frequency codes” (p. 90). In a study to describe the content analysis of children’s books, Taylor (2003) indicated that qualitative analysis of themes in popular children’s books could be conducted. He asked his participants to look at children’s books and “examine the ideologies, symbols, and themes embedded in the messages and write out summaries of their findings” (p. 303).

A qualitative content analysis study was appropriate for this study because experienced educators (termed participant-coders) evaluated various books within children’s literature and rated the level of positive character traits demonstrated within those books. This type of analysis was appropriate, because the researcher wanted to “determine the presence of certain concepts within texts” (Klenke, 2008, p. 89). Taylor (2003) reported that, in a content analysis, one could examine artifacts that “can include written documents for other forms of social communication such as children’s books” (p. 302). Grbich (2009) noted that use of thematic content analysis can provide details and insight in regard to the depths of exploration of themes found in literature. Thus, content analysis can be used to effectively provide insight into relatively complex models of human thoughts and intentions (Busch et al., 2005).

Two participant-coders, who were experienced in teaching early childhood grades, were asked to read the books contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century*
Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud (Schulman, 2005). They compared the themes found in the books to the 10 themes identified in the USDOE (2005) guidelines for character education, and then rated the strength of the values found in those books, according to the positive character traits listed by the USDOE. These values are: (a) compassion, (b) honesty, (c) fairness, (d) good judgment, (e) respect for others, (f) self-discipline, (g) self-respect, (h) courage, (i) responsibility, and (j) citizenship. These guidelines were specifically defined in the participant-coders’ codebook, a sample of which is located in Appendix A.

In the case of content with both words and illustrations, a review of each of these properties was crucial (Neuendorf, 2002), and participants were to examine both. Grbich (2009) noted that it is possible to do this with established a priori codes. These codes, which were used in this study, were discussed at length with the participant-coders in order to “make the set so complete and unambiguous as to almost eliminate individual differences among coders” (Neuendorf, p. 132).

In addition, the codebook, which the participants used, needed to be tested in advance of the study. Schulman (2005) compiled a list of books by authors who had “new books too good to miss” (p. xi), and for which only a brief summary was included in the 2005 version of the anthology. Therefore, this researcher obtained multiple copies of three books from this list and used them as a pretest for the codebook, in order to accomplish the goal of reliability among the raters (Creswell, 2007; Neuendorf, 2002).
Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

A team of participant-coders, which consisted of experienced early childhood educators, rated the 44 books contained in the 320 page anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005). This researcher was not one of the participant-coders. However, in her review of several content analysis studies (Bones, 2010; Boulais, 2002; Bryant, 2008) of books for children, several of those researchers used between two and five coders, but inter-coder reliability was not conducted by any of them.

In his content analysis study of gender roles in children’s books, Boster (2005) used two coders as well and provided inter-rater reliability. Also, Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, and Young (2006) used two coders to study gender stereotyping in children’s books, and they calculated Cohen’s kappa based upon the rating provided by those two coders.

To calculate inter-coder reliability, Cohen’s kappa was used in this current study. Calculations of Cohen’s kappa can be performed only if there are exactly two participant-coders. In discussion of qualitative content analysis, Schreier (2012) indicated that it was acceptable to have “two independent coders categorize your material” (p. 41). She added that even a researcher who works alone can successfully use qualitative content analysis. Similarly, Berg (2001) stated that “one college student working alone can effectively undertake a content analysis” (p. 258).

The Schulman (2005) anthology is fairly comprehensive, 320 pages long, and there are stories from 62 authors. All 44 books in the anthology were reviewed. The
rationale for this was that all 44 books are contained in one easy to obtain anthology, and early childhood educators, who choose to teach character education with the use of literature, would only need to purchase the one book. Content analysis, with the use of a whole book, was recommended by Weber (1990), when he stated, “where possible, the entire text should be analyzed” (p. 43). The two participant-coders examined these 44 books for the 10 traits promoted in the USDOE (2005) guidelines (2005). These values included: (a) compassion, (b) honesty, (c) fairness, (d) good judgment, (e) respect for others, (f) self-discipline, (g) self-respect, (h) courage, (i) responsibility, and (j) citizenship (USDOE, 2005). The study of these 10 values meant that other tenets in character education were not examined.

While each of the 44 books in the Schulman (2005) anthology was examined, other popular children’s books were not examined or reviewed. It is possible that the selection of books by the editor, Schulman, was not representative of the quality of children’s literature as a whole. According to Babbie (2008), it is appropriate to use a sample of the material under study, when content analysis is conducted. The 44 books in Schulman’s anthology (2005) comprised the sample for this study.

Limitations

This researcher examined only the books in the Schulman (2005) anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud*. Other books published in the genre of children’s literature were not examined, primarily, because other researchers had analyzed some of those books. Details on these other studies are provided in Chapter Two.

The focus of this research study was limited to the teaching of character
education for early childhood educators, defined as teachers of children who are in pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2, and it did not apply to teachers of children who are older or younger. In addition, the purpose was to determine the extent to which the 44 books contained in the anthology can be used to teach character education according to the USDOE (2005) guidelines; other possible uses for the books in the early childhood classroom were not examined. As detailed above in the Significance of the Study section, several of the books contained in this anthology have been found by other researchers to contain some values. This researcher did not investigate whether the books in the anthology contained values which were not listed in the USDOE guidelines.

A pre-analysis was completed with the group of participant-coders, and it was found that the inter-coder reliability was assured, with use of Cohen’s kappa (Grbich, 2007). It is possible that different participants, who read identical books, might have reached different conclusions, since they could interpret values differently if they were not been trained in each of the 10 values. A detailed description of Cohen’s kappa is provided in the Content Analysis Procedures section. In addition, the participant-coders were located in and have taught early childhood education in Metro Atlanta, and since Georgia has a low number of male teachers (National Education Association, 2011), no male was found who wished to participate; thus, both participant-coders were female. It is possible that cultural or gender bias was present in this the study.

The Anthology

The anthology, The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud (Schulman, 2005), contains 44 complete works of children’s literature. With access to this anthology, an early childhood educator with a
limited budget would not need to search for or purchase multiple copies of various books in order to teach character education. At various blogs and websites, this anthology was available for a very reasonable price. “I found this awesome book a couple weeks ago at a book store for $1” (KatieB, 2010, para. 1). The suggested retail price for the anthology is over $40; however, “most online booksellers are offering the title with a pretty significant discount, dropping the price down to around $25 and making it a much more affordable purchase for families with a real passion for reading” (Brozio-Andrews, 2012, para.6). At the popular bookstore, Barnes and Noble (2013), the anthology was listed as one of 35 “stories every kid should own” (para 3.). If the books in the anthology provided models of virtues, as recommended by the USDOE (2005), then its use would mean early childhood educators would have an inexpensive and effective way to teach character education with the use of literature.

Definitions of the 10 USDOE (2005) Character Education Values

In 2003, the USDOE issued a booklet titled Helping Your Child become a Responsible Citizen, and updated it in 2005 as a part of the NCLB (2002) program. It was noted in the booklet that “the most important thing that we can do for our children is to help them acquire values and skills that they can rely on throughout their lives” (p. ii).

In the booklet, the specific values which provide strong character for children are: (a) compassion, (b) honesty, (c) fairness, (d) self-discipline, (e) good judgment, (f) respect for others, (g) self-respect, (h) courage, (i) responsibility, and (j) citizenship. The USDOE (2005) staff provided a limited definition for each of these character traits. In order to more fully explain what each trait encompassed, definitions from experts in the area of character education and the Bible were added and discussed with the participant-
coders. A definition of each of the values was agreed upon by the participant-coders and the researcher. The definitions are presented below.

**Compassion**

In Ephesians 4:32 (NIV), the value of compassion is mentioned. “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Those with compassion have empathy for others who are weaker or who are in a negative situation. They are sensitive to the needs of other people and animals (Knowles & Smith, 2006). They try to understand the feelings of other people or animals, and they go out of their way be helpful (Findlay, 2001). They are willingly generous with their time and supplies, and they make themselves of service to others. They do this without expectations of anything in return for their actions.

**Honesty and Fairness**

Book characters who demonstrate honesty, do more than just tell the simple truth. These characters demonstrate honesty in either their words or their actions. They admit mistakes, do not exaggerate to impress people, and never take credit for the words or ideas of others (Findlay, 2001). They try to be sincere and truthful. They commit honest acts even if no one is watching or keeping track of what they are doing. They earn the trust of others through their actions. Book characters demonstrate this fairness in either their words or their actions.

They try to give everyone the rights and opportunities that they themselves have (Lewis, 2005). They willingly share, and they take turns when they participate in an activity. Matthew 7:12 (NIV) mentions fairness: "Do to others whatever you would like
them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.”

People who are fair to others, take turns when they participate in activities.

**Self-Discipline**

Book characters who demonstrate self-discipline control their conduct and desires (Hall, 2000). These characters demonstrate this self-discipline in either their words or their actions. They regulate their actions so that they can accomplish tasks or improve their behavior. Sasson (2010) stated, “One of the main characteristics of self-discipline is the ability to forgo instant and immediate gratification and pleasure, in favor of some greater gain or more satisfying results, even if this requires effort and time” (para. 2). They do not act on feelings of anger or laziness. They set reasonable goals and make plans to accomplish them (USDOE, 2005).

**Good Judgment**

Book characters who demonstrate good judgment think about situations that they find themselves in, consider what is right or wrong, and make the appropriate choice at a turning point in the plot for that situation (USDOE, 2005). They consider the consequences of different reactions, which they might make in these situations. These characters listen to their conscience rather than to the crowd (Findlay, 2001). They consider the consequences or what they might do, and then make a decision.

Lickona (2004, p.47) indicated that to show good judgment, before acting, people should ask themselves questions such as: Does this go against what my parents want for me, my religion, or my conscience? Do I want people to do this to me? “Would I like it if everyone did this?” How would my mom and dad feel if they found out I did this? Does what I am about to do go against my conscience or my religion? Is there a
time in my future I might regret doing what I am about to do? How would I feel if my actions were to be reported on the front page of the newspaper?

**Respect for Others**

According to 1 Peter 2:17, people should “show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king” (NIV). Book characters who demonstrate respect for others care about how others feel. These characters demonstrate this respect for others by believing that the ideas, thoughts, and feelings of others are important (Lewis, 2005). They treat others with kindness and respect. They ask themselves certain questions, such as “Does this follow the Golden Rule?” They show respect for others in the way that they speak and in the way that they behave (Bartier & Young, 2009). They accept the differences of others, even if those differences are: (a) mental, (b) physical, or (c) cultural.

**Self-Respect**

Self-respect means thinking of yourself as worthy. Book characters who demonstrate self-respect have a positive identity, which is focused on their integrity and talents (USDOE, 2005). They try to reach their goals through hard work and the choices that they make. “They do not need lots of money or power to feel good about themselves” (USDOE, p. 12). They believe in the power of hard work, and will strive to reach their goals through this.

**Courage**

Courage is defined as having the strength to face a tough or scary situation even though you are fearful (Mather & Weldon, 2006). Also, courage means standing up for yourself or others, even though it may be uncomfortable for you to do so. Book
characters who demonstrate courage face their fears and do what they believe is correct, even when others do something else (Bartier & Young, 2009). They defend those who are not able to defend themselves. They try to develop an internal sense of toughness to do the right thing, not only for themselves, but on behalf of others.

**Responsibility**

Responsibilities are duties and jobs which people must perform (Bartier & Young, 2009). Book characters who show responsibility do what they need to do without being nagged or reminded. These characters try their best to do what they are supposed to do. They are accountable for their choices. They consider the consequences of what they do before doing it. They keep promises made to others, and they complete tasks that they are obligated to fulfill. The Bible (NIV) mentions responsibility in 2 Corinthians 5:10 where is stated, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

**Citizenship**

Someone with good citizenship gets involved in the community and works to contribute to the place in which they live (Findlay, 2001). A good citizen speaks out when an injustice has been committed. Book characters who demonstrate citizenship, demonstrate pride in their community in either their words or their actions. They make the effort to get along with those in the community, and they encourage those in the community to get along with each other. They obey laws or rules and respect authority even when no one is watching (Findlay, 2001). They encourage adults to vote, and they are patriotic and respectful of national symbols. According to Davies (2002), “Children need to be taught that citizens of the United States are not free by accident, but because
individuals made great sacrifices to protect their rights” (para. 4). They understand the sacrifices which members of the U.S. military have made to secure and protect the freedom of Americans.

Chapter Summary

Although no list of desirable character traits can be all-inclusive, this list from the USDOE (2005) combines many of the traits espoused in the formal character education programs which are described in Chapter Two. In Chapter Two of this dissertation, this researcher presents a review of the literature in regard to character education and children’s literature and explains the theoretical framework and research base for this qualitative study, which linked previously conducted studies and recent research findings with current research. This background information will lead to Chapter Three, which details the researcher’s rationale for use of the methodology of content analysis, along with the specific procedures that were followed.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“Americans must provide children with a moral vision;”

Pope John Paul II, after the shootings at Columbine High School, April 1999 (as cited in Hall, 2000, p. xvii)

Introduction

Most Americans agree that one of the most important goals of public school education is for students to develop good character. Dewey (2010) emphasized that, in the process of educating children, the building of character should be given more importance than the teaching of subject areas. Similarly, Ozolins (2010) noted that “the State has a vested interest in ensuring that its citizens are equipped with the values and skills that will enable them to be functioning members of the community” (p. 410)

When asked what the term, character education, embodies, different authors responded in a variety of ways. Eder (2010) and Pike (2010) noted that good character involves understanding, caring about, and acting upon a set of core ethical values; also, it must include a focus on moral values and appropriate classroom conduct. Ryan and Bohlin (1999) claimed it should teach children about “knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good” (p. 5). Other authors (Bartier & Young, 2009; Borba, 2001) simply listed the virtues they consider to be essential to those who teach character education. Pearson and Nicholson (2000) maintained that a universal definition of character education could not be given. Despite the unclear terminology, the character education of young children in public schools is required in many states, including the state of Georgia (McElmeel, 2002), and the federal act of No Child Left Behind (2002).
The background and purpose of this qualitative study, which is to examine and study the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005) as it relates to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE, 2005) guidelines for character education, was detailed in Chapter One. In Chapter Three, this researcher described the codebook, developed by this researcher, which was used to explain and define each of the 10 character traits listed in the USDOE government publication in regard to the character education of children. With use of the 44 books in the anthology to evaluate for character traits, this will ensure that teachers have access to the literature mentioned and evaluated in the study, since the anthology itself is easy to locate (Brozio-Andrews, 2012; KatieB, 2010). In addition, the individual books in it are very often found and occupy places of honor, in: (a) public libraries, (b) bookstores, and (c) school media centers (Reilly, Gangi, & Cohen, 2010).

In Chapter Two, the focus of the literature review is on the following topics: (a) the need for character education in the U.S.; (b) the history of character education; (c) current perspectives on teaching character education; (d) theories regarding character education; (e) results of teaching character education, (f) values embodied in character education; (g) the theoretical framework; (h) strategies for teaching character education; (i) the use of authentic children’s literature to teach character education; and (j) an examination of the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005).

**The Need for Character Education in the United States**

In the U.S., there are signs of moral decay among its youth (Watson, 2006). Crime statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2010) show that almost 4,000
children, age 12 and younger, were arrested in 2010 for violent crimes in the U.S. These crimes included: (a) murder, (b) rape, (c) robbery, and (d) aggravated assault. The same year, almost 20,000 children under the age of 13 were arrested for property crimes such as: (a) car theft, (b) burglary, and (c) arson (U.S. Department of Justice [USDOJ], 2010).

Problems with gang violence have been reported to be present in all 50 states (Cohn, 2011), and over 60% of children under the age of 12 were either directly or indirectly exposed to violence. In addition, Cali (1997) reported that children are exposed to a variety of adult topics both on television and on the internet. A first grade student was overheard when she asked other students whether they felt she was “sexy.” The same little girl told her teacher she wanted to meet “hot boys.” In another school, it was found that second grade students started a “sex club” (para. 1), where membership required participation in sexually oriented activities.

Although parents, teachers, and members of society decry the increase in violence and moral decay in youth, today, this problem appears to be increasing. Frequently, students who bully others have been personally treated poorly and need to be taught to respect themselves and others (Henkin, 2005). In addition, some children have: (a) been teased, (b) been involved in fighting and stealing both at school and at home, and (c) actively defied the teacher (Watson, 2006). Over 20% of teen-aged youth have participated in sexting (Diliberto & Mattery, 2009), and even younger children have been victimized by cyber-bullying (Mishna, Saini, & Solomon, 2009) and in-school harassment. With over 7 million U.S. adults either incarcerated or on parole (Glaze, 2012), today, children do not always have an effective role model at home. How can
school staff provide the lessons of morals and virtues, which students need to learn in order to be effective participants in society? The answers lie in character education.

**Historical Teaching of Character Education**

“A free society cannot survive unless the values upon which it is grounded are fully comprehended and practiced by each succeeding generation” (Benjamin Franklin 1706-1790, as quoted in Rickermann, 2011, p. 10).

According to Groce (2009), “Character Education is so basic and essential that it dates back to our founding fathers and their emphasis on citizens participating in a democracy that promotes the common good”(p. 117). In the early 1900s, teachers were advised to directly instruct character education as a part of their day and to tell children how to deal with certain moral situations in an absolute and definitive way (Hopkins, 1930). Prior to the early 1960s, many children learned cultural and moral values through lessons taught by the Bible. Students were expected to memorize not only Bible verses, but were asked to recite the Lord’s Prayer and focus on their own sinful nature (Leming, 2000; Reese, 2008). Students learned right from wrong through reading Bible stories, which the teacher selected to share with the class. Lickona (1991) maintained that, “Through discipline, the teacher’s good example, and the curriculum, schools sought to instruct children on the virtues of patriotism, hard work, thriftiness, altruism, and courage” (p. 7). Some educators went so far as to coerce the children into proper behavior, in the belief that good behavior would lead to good character. Teachers and school leaders felt that, if they were lax in this area, the saying “Spare the rod, spoil the child” might be true (Cunningham, 2001, p.4)]
According to Threlkeld (1930), in the 1800s teachers in the public schools were required to be church-going pillars of the community, and parents believed their children needed to be exposed to morals in school as well as at home. Administrators and citizens of the community believed that teaching children about morality and virtues would be “most effective only when offered in a school which itself as a whole is pointed right for character education” (p. 223).

Some argued that, if children were left on their own, character and moral development would follow naturally. Children would naturally develop qualities and interests in things they needed to cope in the world (Dewey, 1933/1989). Teachers would simply serve as guides, and the children would direct and study topics according to their interests. However, moral decision-making could not fall under this umbrella. Children needed to be trained and guided to behave in a cooperative manner (Dewey), and teachers were expected to study each child’s social and spiritual development.

All of this changed in 1962, when the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed the use of school-sponsored prayer and teacher-led Bible reading as literature in public schools (Feiler, 2005). After the Supreme Court ruling, teachers no longer had a book, a formal program, or any direction to use as an automatic moral compass for their classrooms. “One example of the crisis of ‘cultural illiteracy’ from which we have been suffering in recent years is the loss of knowledge of the Bible” (Kirkpatrick, Wolfe, & Wolfe, 1994, p. 130). According to some school district administrators, teaching these qualities were unnecessary, not only in public education, but in society in general. In some schools, beliefs were fostered that gave rise to the autonomy of children.
Eder (2010) stated that “The American Educational System soon began to focus on academic learning as opposed to advancing the needs of the entire community” (p. 8). The implication was that the teaching of virtues and morals could brainwash the children into adopting the value systems of the adult who taught it. “In our district . . . word came down from the administration that we were no longer to teach values; we were to stick to academics” (Lickona, 1991).

The Progressive era was ushered in with books, in which the authors decried traditional morality, which was rooted in the Christian faith (Hunter, 2000). In the 1960s and 1970s, a new type of morality came into vogue, where teachers were told in many cases to allow students to freely choose their values, and the values selected were to be taught in a non judgmental way. Through this system, which was termed values clarification, the emphasis was placed on the process of thinking about values rather than the consideration of judgments of right and wrong. In this system, students were allowed to express themselves about values without the provision of any input from the teachers (Fine, 1995). Teachers were to instruct students that, no matter their opinions, there is no right or wrong answer within the issues of morality, even if the values might be as repugnant as: (a) racism, (b) shoplifting, or (c) advocacy of lying (Fine; Hunter). Iscan (2011) noted some teachers preferred this approach because it made them seem open-minded. He added that, although some teachers were not ready to give their students a chance to make their own choices, doing so was considered to be an important part of the values clarification method of character education. Teachers used role-playing, in which students’ choices were examined, and teachers would then help students “change the environment in line with their needs” (Iscan, p. 251). An instructor who taught during
this era, noted that teaching character education based on the use of values clarification was “the easiest teaching I ever did back in the 1960s and '70s — I didn't have to know a thing about the virtues or character” (Greer, 2007, p. 40).

Some teachers did attempt to continue the teaching of morality and character (Fine, 1995). They used their own discretion to determine what character traits to emphasize and what values to teach. Since they were no longer allowed to use the Bible to teach standards or to clarify truth, they were left to their own devices.

**Theoretical Framework**

An axiological assumption was utilized in this research since it is related directly to the teaching of values. Although the participant-coders searched for the values suggested by the USDOE (2005), their value systems were evidenced in the rating system of those books. The values of educators are paramount to the teaching of character within the classroom.

A Biblical worldview with a formational paradigm shaped this research. The Biblical worldview is related to the idea that character education is mentioned in the Bible. In Proverbs 22:6, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (NIV). As educational leaders in the classroom, teachers must consider the words of Jesus, when He said “For I seek not to please myself, but the one who sent me” (John 5:19-20, NIV). Miller (1995) stated that teachers who hold a formational paradigm, believe they need to “challenge the wayward and give comfort to the hurting” (para. 6). It is not enough for educators to simply pay lip service to the teaching of character education. They must teach it, not only because it is required by state or federal law, but because it is Biblically mandated.
The practical implications are that early childhood educators who teach pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2, will be able to use the research contained in this study and apply it to their teaching. They will be able to see, precisely, which books can be used to teach a specific positive character trait. Currently, many teachers lack a great deal of knowledge about children’s literature (Allen, Freeman, Lehman, & Scharer, 1995), and the findings from this research study will assist them in this area.

According to Bandura’s (1977) theory of social learning, the beliefs an individual holds influences his or her thoughts and actions, and they lead to behaviors influenced by both. Bandura also maintained that children could learn from symbolic models, and that picture books, which contain fictional characters, can be a useful tool to portray experiences and a model from which a child can learn (Zambo, 2006). Not only can the children’s literature presented in a school setting be able to help young children learn how to read, but these books can have relevance in helping these children become more fully developed human beings (Cooper, 2007).

Also, self-regulation is a feature of social learning theory. Bandura (1977) held that, when the environment of young children is changed to support their cognitive development, in order to allow natural consequences for their actions, students could be expected to exercise some measure of self-control over their activities. Although the family is the most important source for the modeling of morals, the school is “the second major habitat that the child encounters, since he or she is typically there for thirteen years” (Ozolins, 2010, p. 414). The use of books to educate children about experiences and emotions will allow them to adjust their behavior according to the norms of society,
while they are allowed to reflect upon the potential results of undesirable actions (Bandura).

Dewey’s (1915/2001) contributions to the field of character education are presented through his work in psychology. He believed that values should be presented in a way that defines them as motivators in the lives of children. These ideas can be modeled within a school, since schools are really small versions of society. He maintained that young children (e.g., specifically those in Kindergarten or first grade) should be instructed in morals and values, because if they are not, their activities can result in amusement, but not result in intellectual or educational growth.

In Dewey’s (1915/2001) reflection upon what educators should provide to children, he stated that “character is more than subject matter. Not knowledge or information, but self-realization is the goal” (p. 107). He added that learning within a child takes place in a higher plain when the child is educated in the areas of morals and judgments. Also, Dewey believed that education about a subject matter was of limited value unless children learned how to work together and became aware of how their actions impact the lives of others (Parmental, 2010).

**Current Methods of Teaching Character Education**

During the earlier part of the 20th Century, “character education moved to the ‘back burner’ and the development of students’ value system virtually disappeared in favor of more emphasis on academics” (Bryan, 2005, para. 2). During the 1990s, there was a resurgence of discussion about character education although, often, public school teachers were unclear as to how exactly they could teach these types of values (Groce, 2009). Schwartz (2007) cited the staff of the National Council for Accreditation of
Teacher Education (2002), who requires that students in schools of education should model “dispositions that are expected of educators” (para. 2). However, there is no specification about what those characteristics are, or how these college students are expected to teach them to others once they secure teaching positions.

Much discussion has been centered on exactly what type of character education should be taught. Pritchard (1988) noted that, even among character education experts, few could agree on exactly which skills are crucial. Almost 30 different skills were identified by four groups and individuals involved in the field of character education (Pritchard, 1988, p.472), such as: (a) The American Institute for Character Education, (b) William Bennett, (c) the Maryland Values Education Commission, and (d) Edward Wynne. Some skills on the list of one group or individual (e.g., traits such as good humor and respect for property) were not noted on the list of others. In addition, there can be limited consensus as to the extent to which a particular value should be taught. Should the teaching of honesty include simply instructing children to not lie, or should it go as far as telling them to volunteer the truth even when it is not asked of them?

In 17 states, character education is either required or encouraged to be taught as part of a public school curriculum, and 37 states as well as Washington, D.C. have qualified for federal grants through the Partnership in Character Education project (McElmeel, 2002). In addition, staff of the USDOE (2002) called for the establishment of “safe, disciplined, and drug-free educational environments that foster the development of good character and citizenship” (p. iv) as one of its strategic plans. Part of this emphasis on character education is because the state legislators believed in encouraging children to have good morals and values. A second part of this requirement was related
to the fact that character education is required under the No Child Left Behind act (2002, as cited in Berkowitz & Bier, 2007). However, the increased focus on test scores and academic achievement means teachers are limited in regard to how much time they can devote to the explicit teaching of character education (Mather & Weldon, 2006; Priest, 2007). In Georgia, in the state performance standards (GPS), positive character traits are listed under the guise of teaching about American heroes (Georgia Department of Education [GADOE], 2007b).

Part of the focus of early childhood educators is to make children’s literature used in the classroom relevant to the lives of their students and meaningful to the children’s world (Hassett, 2009). In Kindergarten, students learn about Martin Luther King Jr. and Christopher Columbus, and then also learn about American customs which relate to holidays. The character education standards linked with this are identified as Standard, SSKCG2: “The student will retell stories that illustrate positive character traits and will explain how the people in the stories show the qualities of honesty, patriotism, loyalty, courtesy, respect, truth, pride, self-control, moderation, and accomplishment” (GADOE, 2007b, p. 2).

The heroes to be studied in first grade are: (a) Lewis and Clark with Sacagawea, (b) George Washington Carver, (c) Theodore Roosevelt, (d) Harriet Tubman, (e) Thomas Jefferson, and (f) Ben Franklin (GADOE, 2007a). The specific standards linked to the characters are identified as Standard, SS1CG1: “The student will describe how these historical figures display positive character traits of fairness, respect for others, respect for the environment, conservation, courage, equality, tolerance, perseverance, and commitment (p. 2).
Many schools have not been provided with any funding or a formal way to teach character education (Delisio, 2008), and thus teachers are left to their own devices as to how they should best approach this important topic. According to Greer (2007), “In too many schools, character education has become a hodgepodge: drug-abuse prevention, conflict resolution, health education, social and emotional skills acquisition, athletics, and service-learning. Just about anything can be called character education these days” (p. 40).

Although the teacher has been identified as crucial in the presentation of character education (Milson & Melig, 2002), some teachers simply improvise as they go along (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006; Kohn, 1997). There are individual programs, which can be purchased by schools, but they can be inconsistent and, typically, each of them defines character education in as many as a dozen different ways (Priest, 2007; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999, Yandles, 2008). Some teachers use the instruction of school rules as their teaching of character education, and yet others use a “word of the month,” whereby a set list of words is mentioned in the morning announcements. “What schools do with these words is quite variable. . . sometimes they pay lip service to them” (Berkowitz, 2002, p. 46). Greer (2007) noted that students, who are exposed to the “word of the week” or “word of the month” type of character education, will never learn that these character traits are intertwined. He provided an example, “the virtue of ‘friendship’ involves courage at times, respect always, self-control often, and it draws on wisdom while demanding responsibility” (p. 40).

Principals and counselors may mention a monthly focus of character education, but “what goes by the name of character education nowadays is, for the most part, a
series of exhortations” (Kohn, 1997, para.5). Evidence of this is seen in a song set to the
tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” Students are encouraged to sing “I am
wonderful, I am wonderful” as part of an activity to build their self-esteem (French &
Danielson, 1991). However, there is no mention of why the students are wonderful or
what they have done that merits their being called wonderful.

Many school staffs simply lack the requisite knowledge to successfully implement
character education when they try to do it without purchase of a program (Ryan &
Bohlin, 1999, Sugai & Horner, 2006). Ledford (2011) found that most teachers “are
unprepared for this challenge” (p. 256). Lickona (1993) noted that, although character
education is more difficult to teach than mathematics or reading, teachers were unlikely
to receive training on how to best instruct character education or how to introduce morals
and values into their classrooms. In Ledford’s recent survey of more than 2,500 teachers
in a large district in the southwestern U.S., they were asked “Have you received any
coursework or staff development on character education?” More than one-third said they
had received “no training” (p. 264) on this subject at any time during their teaching
career.

Some teachers have tried to teach character and values as a unique subject. An
example was given by Ecken (1997, as cited in Watson, 2006), “When I started out that
first year to try to build community, I had it listed in my plan book for forty-five minutes
a day, from 1:00 to 1:45” (para. 8). With young children, this way of teaching does not
work. “If we are to draw out and help develop social interest and character in others, it is
important that we validate it when we see it (or hear about) it happening” (Milliren &
Messer, 2009, p. 19). As teachers interact with young children, any praise given or points
made must be made at the time the incident occurs. If not, the opportunity to reinforce a certain tenet of character education may be lost until the next similar incident occurs. “It sounds embarrassing now, but I really thought that it was something that you could write in your plan book for a certain time” (Ecken, as cited in Watson, para.8). Constructivists maintain that students learn best by doing. They need chances to see, hear about, and participate in applying values such as compassion, responsibility, and fairness (Glanzer, 2005).

Unfortunately, the concept of constructivism can be interpreted to mean that any conclusion students reach as part of a study of values is a correct one. Van Brummelen (2002) stated that values are often “caught rather than taught” and that “true freedom exists for those who uphold Biblical values” (pp. 58-59). The caught, rather than taught theory certainly seems to be a part of constructivism, and unless teachers want students to believe “whatever you believe is fine” and “anything goes,” then it must be rejected. Increasingly, parents want their children to learn virtues and character in school. When school staff asked parents about the teaching of values and morals, most parents agreed that “moral principles such as honesty, compassion, and respect are the sorts of attributes that parents want their children to learn in school” (Schwartz, 2002, p. 1). Dewey (1933/1989) contended that values as they exist can be both “obscure and conflicting” (p. 83). No set of values is complete, for if it was “education would be infinitely simpler than it is” (p. 83). While many support the ideals of Biblical values, how can a teacher in a public school teach them?

Although social learning theorists feel a child’s behavior depends on the situation, children must have some previous learning upon which to reflect when confronted with a
moral decision (Miller, 2011). Some children act in immoral ways because they simply have no effective role model on which to base their behavior. Recently, “many community support systems have crumbled, leaving large numbers of youth with few or no meaningful sources of human connection” (Borba, 2001, p.194). In addition, children who attend church services, no matter the denomination, were found to act in more moralistic ways than children who did not. These children bring consistency to the moral decisions they make about choices in their lives, and these patterns exist regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, or family background (Hunter, 2000). However, in some states, the number of children who never attend church is as high as 50% (Zill & Fletcher, 2008).

For children who do not attend religious services, school is an area of major formal and informal socialization (Hunter, 2000). For these children, the education they receive in an early childhood setting is crucial in the determination of their future moral direction, and the beliefs and training of their teachers may strongly impact the curriculum being taught (Fleer & Raban, 2006; Priest, 2007). The moral education students receive in school can have a major impact on the moral decisions they make in the future.

**Theories regarding Character Education**

The broadness of the term, character education, as well as the magnitude of the concept of good character, can make it difficult for individuals to agree on how and to what extent it can and should be taught. In products sold by companies, character education is defined in a variety of ways. The one constant is that learners must see the virtues modeled to them by others. Schunk and Zimmerman (2007) maintained that
“Learners without models in their environments may bypass these levels and learn largely on their own” (p. 5). “The modeling of positive behavior, which naturally occurs within prosocial guidance, encourages children to respond to others with the same consideration and respect” (Priest, 2007, p. 154).

Results of Teaching Character Education

What are the effects of using character education in public schools? The various studies, which have addressed the effects of character education, are rather limited, but Berkowitz and Bier’s (2007) study of the existing Child Development Project (CDP) “suggest that the effects of character education last beyond the school years in which they are experienced” (p. 42). Deming (2011) indicated that educators can have a positive influence on youth and decrease their future criminal behavior. Watson (2006) found that there were long-term effects from an elementary school teacher’s effort to positively impact her class in both social and ethical development. Although the high school students were taught character education years ago, while they were elementary school students, all of them reported they were personally and positively changed by their experiences when they learned about social and ethical values when they were young students. One student reported that the teacher’s use of literature helped him to learn, when he noted the teacher taught him “how the book relates to us in life” (Watson, p. 9).

At some schools, character education is taught through use of the CDP (Muñoz & Vanderhaar, 2006). When this model was used, quantitative analysis showed that students had a positive increase in both their concern for others and their achievement on the Kentucky Core Content Test (2006, as cited in Muñoz & Vanderhaar).
In addition, character education, when taught with the use of literature, helps “children learn positive coping behaviors to apply in their daily lives” (Haeseler, 2009, p.113). The use of picture books can expand “children’s experiences and heighten their awareness of life’s moral dilemmas” (Hall, 2000, p. ix). Pritchard (1988) maintained that the provision of character education in school helps children’s social and academic growth as well. In addition, students who discuss moral dilemmas in class have a higher rate of moral development as opposed to those students who are left to figure out values on their own (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007).

The social learning theorists, Bandura and Collins reported that the second source of self-knowledge occurs when children have had “the vicarious experience of observing others fail or succeed on similar tasks” (Miller, 2011, p. 244). The teaching of character education through the use of literature, in which individuals within a story experience success or failure based on their morals and values, can have an effect on a child’s perception of right and wrong. High quality children’s literature provides a “springboard for conversations and ways of talking through the story later” (Hassett, 2009, p. 367). After reading a picture book with characters who attempt to solve a problem, “children can reflect on the moral actions of book characters and relate these behaviors to their own lives” (Hall, 2000, p. ix). Teachers, schools, and school districts in which character education programs are implemented can take to heart the following fact: “When implemented with fidelity, character education can and does work” (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007, p. 41).

In reality, the basic tenets of character education are continuously being taught, if only in an informal sense. “In fact, wherever adults and children are together, grown-ups
are teaching kids about character whether they realize it or not” (Mather & Weldon, 2006). While constructivists would agree with this, scholars who follow Biblical standards want to ensure the values and morals being viewed and taught are ones which support a Godly view of the world. Parmental (2010) indicated that educators cannot simply assume when educators interact with students about moral issues that effective learning has taken place. Educators must be deliberate in their teaching about experiences within the moral realm of life in such a way that the students have their interest transformed “in the light of those ideas about morality” (Parmental, p. 23). Hall (2000) warned that teachers should not instruct about trendy issues, instead of the values which will help develop the character of a child. The act of teaching character and virtues in the classroom “may be a positive tool for finding ways to build unity, peace, and common ground among the peoples of the world” (Helterbran, 2009, p. 70). In addition, “deliberately teaching virtues at home, at school, and in our communities is the best assurance we have that our kids will lead decent, moral lives” (Borba, 2001, p. 12).

**Values and Costs Involved in Formal Character Education Programs**

The values embodied in character education vary according to the person, who teaches it or the group, which promotes it. Issues, which preclude the adoption of a formal program, include cost and lack of knowledge. In her study of character education programs, Yandles (2008) found the least expensive program cost $125 per teacher, and the most expensive program could cost as much as $6,500 for the faculty of an entire school to be trained in its use.

In an examination of the popular CDP, Sanger and Osguthorpe (2009) found the primary values being taught were justice and caring for others. According to Solomon,
Battistich, Watson, Schaps, and Lewis (2000), embodied in the values of justice and caring for others were the values of: (a) fairness, (b) consideration for the feelings of others, and (c) responsibility. In the schools where this program was used, the students: (a) decide on the class rules, (b) learn under a system of no punishment and no rewards, and (c) are encouraged through the use of literature to form a positive relationship with other students and teachers (Sanger & Osguthorpe). Watson (2006) studied students who lived in the inner-city, had attended a second or third grade classroom, and who attended schools where the CDP was used. She found that these children benefited from exposure to the CDP learning even after they were no longer in a school in which the program was used (Watson). In addition, positive effects were found for literacy achievement in schools where the CDP was used (Muñoz & Vanderhaar, 2006).

Despite the results, the cost of the CDP program is prohibitive for many schools. The fee to introduce the program to a school is $245 per classroom and $425 per school for the Leadership Package (Developmental Studies Center, 2011a). In addition, professional development costs $2,400 for up to 40 participants, with an additional fee of $50 per teacher for materials (Developmental Studies Center, 2011b).

One of the larger character education programs popular in the 1990s was the Heartwood Institute, “An Ethics Curriculum for Children” (Leming, 2000). This program was based on the use of read-aloud books to instruct children from Grades 1-6 on character education. In this curriculum, children are exposed to stories which contain seven virtues: (a) courage, (b) loyalty, (c) justice, (d) respect, (e) hope, (f) honesty, and (g) love. The Heartland Institute is a non-profit organization, and their products are used in schools in almost all 50 states (Paff, 2007). While teachers who used the program
found markedly fewer behavior problems vs. those in a control group (Leming, 2000), the price of the curriculum means that the products which they offer are beyond the reach of many schools. A basic “Building Character Kit” costs $495 per grade level.

Another popular pre-made program is Character Counts!, which was developed by the staff of the Josephson Institute (2012). This program, started in 1992, has been used with over 7 million children across the U.S. The program is based on the “Six Pillars of Character” as part of a school-wide program to build building character among students today. Within the six pillars are the positive character traits of: (a) trustworthiness, (b) respect, (c) responsibility, (d) fairness, (e) caring, and (f) citizenship. The program is provided through a series of lesson plans, which are developed for five different age groups. The early childhood age groups are ages 4-6 and ages 6-9. Each set of lesson plans is available for $109, the discussion cards are another $17, and student workbooks are $14 each.

According to Cohn (2011), the developers of the Positive Action Program (2012) maintain that use of their program increases academic achievement and decreased behavior problems. At a fee of $390 per teacher, the cost is out of reach for many schools and school districts. When asked about barriers to working with young children in order to prevent juvenile crime, a group of over 1,600 professionals from the juvenile justice system cited a lack of funding and the need for early intervention and prevention (Cohn).

**Strategies for Teaching Character Education without a Formal Program**

Schuitema, Dam, and Veuglers (2008) noted that the education of students about morals and values cannot be an extra-curriculum program. Such instruction needs to take
place during regular school hours and during specific subject instruction. This instruction needs to be based on making meaning out of teaching morals and values, because for children, connections between what they know and what they are learning is dynamic and related to their own personal experiences (Wason-Ellam, 2010). How can teachers more effectively plan to teach character education on a consistent basis, while they include the Biblical view expected by God, as well as instruct the academics which public schools hold as their primary priority? How can they do this without the purchase of a formal character education program?

U.S. Department of Education Character Education Guidelines

The USDOE (2005) offers a free publication titled Helping Your Child become a Responsible Citizen. This 77 page publication was updated and re-published in response to the NCLB (2002) mandate that educators teach character education. The difference between this program and other programs is that this program is offered at no charge to both schools and parents. Since it is in the public domain, no permission is needed to use it, and there is nothing to purchase. The authors described activities which can be completed with children, and they included a short list of books to read to children.

In the USDOE (2005) publication, 10 values are outlined, which children should be taught in order to become responsible citizens. While the list of values is not all-inclusive, the focus is on the qualities which need to be taught to the “very young” (p. ii).

The Use of Authentic Children’s Literature

Many examples of children’s literature portray certain values to teach to young children and do so in an enriching way (Findlay, 2001). The use of “teaching stories—stories containing implicit lesson for living a life that includes caring for the well-being
of others—has been important to many people around the world” (Eder, 2010, p. 2). In a study of over 500 elementary school teachers, all of the participants indicated they were interested in the use of authentic children’s literature in their classroom (Allen et al., 1995). This literature read to, or with, students as part of the core curriculum, and the integration of such, can be part of an effective character education program (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007). Milliren and Messer (2009) noted that the use of stories with a theme or character issue can be very effective with young children. “These kinds of books are wide-ranging and reach a broad audience of children having numerous, diverse needs with which to cope” (Haeseler, 2007, pp.113-4). In addition, Hall (2000) reported that the use of a “literature-based approach to character education can be implemented without extensive training in how to teach character” (p. ix).

What qualities should such literature have? What details of a story might be critical if teachers wish to use a book in order to advance character education? Among the many varieties of children’s literature from which to select, teachers must be judicious in their selection. “Children who have read or listened to good literature will recognize a hollow story. It is an insult to their intelligence when they are not provided with books of substance” (Harper, Bryan, & Walker, 2008). Books which have both an interesting story and good virtues are not always easy to find (Kilpatrick, Wolfe, & Wolfe, 1994).

“With teacher support and scaffolding, children can begin to use new ways of thinking and talking” about literature (Hassett, 2009, p. 367), and the use of appropriate books can help children draw on the learning. Mol, Bus, and Jong (2009) found interactive reading in a classroom setting did help young children, even if the reading was
conducted in a large group setting. Henkin (2005) listed several criteria for literature, which is used to teach values to youngsters. Among them, “the book is culturally authentic,” “the text and illustrations are accurately depicted, without stereotyping,” “the text and illustrations are detailed and vivid,” and lastly, “the book stimulates questions” (p. 15). This final piece is crucial, as Berkowitz and Bier (2007) indicated when students discuss stories with moral dilemmas or issues, they show “accelerated development of moral reasoning relative to comparison subjects” (p. 41).

Some resources for educators advocate the use of authentic literature that explicitly “integrates social and ethical content into the curriculum” (Muñoz & Vanderhaar, 2006, p. 50). Occasionally, such books come with a teaching guide to assist educators in their use of the book as a tool in the classroom. For educators who have not been given such a list, it is particularly important to use books which expose children to a variety of literature and contain heroes (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007). “You should be looking for books that reinforce courage, responsibility, and perseverance” (Kilpatrick et al., 1994, p. 55). Also, stories which contain issues concerning children and have a gratifying sense of “truth, fairness, integrity and honesty” (Hassett, 2009, p. 365) are also appropriate for use with young children. Stories and their illustrations can help children imagine how people who must make a difficult decision should act when they try to do what is best (Hall, 2000). Vitz (1990, as cited in Kilpatrick et al., 1994), a Professor at New York University, discussed the need for stories with a moral theme to be shared with young children. He pointed to “the central importance of stories in developing the moral life” (p. 20). As an example, in the Caldecott Award book, *Amos and Boris* (1971),
teachers indicated that the theme of friendship was one character trait for which they could use the book (as cited in Allen et al., 1995).

Some schools have used children’s literature written about people who are well-known for their contribution to society. The use of real-life individuals, who have modeled character in their lives, is a way to show how morality can be studied by students. It is important to note, however, that “young people need to have heroes that represent themselves and where they come from. It is easier for children to relate to someone who looks like them and has similar backgrounds” (Creasy, 2008, p. 7). At Somers Elementary School in Connecticut, literature about character education “includes readings about Rosa Parks, Maya Angleou, and others” (Dovre, 2007, para. 10).

Yet other teachers use fairy tales, such as the ones created by the Brothers Grimm (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/2004). In these stories, morality and values are an integral part of the story. The best fairy tales to use are ones, where there is a strong sense of morality, and where “evil is punished, virtue is rewarded, things are set straight, effort pays off, and riddles are solved” (Kilpatrick et al., 1994, p. 49). The Grimm fairy tale, The Frog Prince (1905), teaches children they must keep the promises they make in haste, and “when we honor our commitments, things usually turn out well” (Bryan, 2005, para. 8). In the story, The Salad (1905), a young hunter gives what he has to an old woman and is rewarded for his actions (as cited in Bryan). This is directly related to the Biblical principle from Luke 16:25 (NIV) “But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.'
Using an Anthology to Teach Character Education

Some teachers do not have a good grasp of the books which are available for children, and need support to develop programs with the use of literature (Allen et al., 1995; Taylor, 2012). Therefore, many rely on a selection of a very few number of authors, most of whom were their personal favorite when they were young (Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell, & Stafford, 2009). Others rely on books introduced to them by another classroom teacher at the same grade level, or they gravitate toward books by familiar authors or illustrators (M. E., personal communication, 2012).

The anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), is readily available to teachers (Brozio-Andrews, 2012; KatieB, 2010). It contains 44 books in their entirety, and it is accessible so that teachers can obtain all of these stories, when they purchase 1 book instead of all 44. Generally, the anthology is available on the Internet for less than $10 (Marketplace, 2012), which makes it affordable to both schools and individual teachers. The anthology is of high quality, and Mercer (2003) described this book as “the best collection of children’s books that I’ve ever seen!” (para. 5). Bush (1998) and Hawkins (2009) indicated that the editor selected well, in her compilation of a large collection of many popular and most-loved children’s books. Gervasi (2011) commented, “If I were limited to only one book to read to children, this would be the book.” (para.8). The editors of *Parent and Child Magazine* (2013) selected the “100 greatest books for kids” (para.1),” and 10 of the books on this list can be found in the anthology, including 4 of the top 10 books selected. The staff of the New York Public Library (2013) focused on books for younger children, and their list of “100 picture books everyone should know”
(para.1) contained 19 of the books in the anthology. Finally, the anthology has been categorized as an “impressive collection of concept books, wordless books, picture books, and read-aloud stories” (Snelson, 2012, para. 2). Since some teachers continue to rely on the same books year after year, an analysis of what the books in the anthology have to offer would open up the category of children’s literature to more teachers.

Schulman (2005), the editor of *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud*, spent nearly 40 years in the children’s literature industry, and she was the editor for such authors as Dr. Seuss and Marc Brown (Staino, 2011). In her examination of books for inclusion in the anthology, she selected a large variety, which range from books appropriate for pre-Kindergarten students to books appropriate for second grade students. Some books are geared toward the very young, some toward children who are a bit older, some contain no words at all, others contain a mix of words and illustrations, some are from the genre of realistic fiction; yet others are pure fantasy.

Four of the books in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005) are Caldecott Award winners, and eight of them are Caldecott Honor books (ALA, 2012). The Caldecott Award is given by the ALA to the picture book printed the previous year and illustrated by a person who is a U.S. citizen or resident. Kennedy (2013) stated that, “In the United States, receiving the Randolph Caldecott Medal is the highest honor an artist can achieve for children's book illustration” (para.1). Caldecott books tend to explore a large variety of cultures, themes, and genres, making them ideal for stimulating
classroom conversation (Christiansen, n.d.). No matter what the type, genre, or title, award-winning books tend to be popular with librarians, teachers, and parents.

**Previous Research on Children’s Literature and Character Education**

Researchers (Flannery-Quinn, 2003; Gomez, 2003; Paynter, 2011; Ryan, 2006) have examined the topics of Black, female, male, and multi-cultural characters in children’s literature, as well as the gender roles and emotions portrayed in picture books, and visual narratives, which are found in Caldecott Award books. Opat (2008) focused on the use of books to teach struggling readers and writers, and Novelli (1998) examined the use of children’s books for science instruction. Although a few researchers have examined the use of children’s literature for character education, the studies are either old, focused on books inappropriate for young children, or incomplete.

In her study of morals and virtues found in children’s award-winning picture books, Sano (2009) examined this literature for such virtues as masculinity and creativity. Her study is a quantitative one, and each virtue is associated to a percentage, according to the appearance of a virtue in the 20 Caldecott books she evaluated. The primary purpose of her study was to determine how farmers and immigrants were portrayed in Caldecott award books. She did not discuss how to use the books, which she listed in her research, to teach character education, and thus teachers would find it difficult to use her study to do so.

In Dufault’s (2003) study, a Canadian First Nations link to character education was examined. She defined the relationship between character traits which are important to First Nations people, but did not list specific books to assist teachers to address this with their students. Primarily, DuFault advocated the use of songs, and she noted the
lack of literary connection to character development when she observed, “concern with character development is central to holistic schools of thought yet they have not been officially included in the American-led literacy character education movement” (p. 88).

Bones (2010) discussed the use of award-winning books in her recent study in regard to the Newbery Award books and character education. Her study included a detailed identification of both positive and negative values found in these books, all of which were published in the last 10 years. However, these books are quite long, do not usually contain pictures, and have more involved plots. In fact, the average reading level for all Newbery winners is 6.8, which places many of the books as appropriate for middle school students (Leal & Chamberlain-Solecki, 1998). In a recent analysis of Newbery Award winners, Taylor (2012) found that there were no books written below a third grade reading level, and some were written for children as old as ninth grade students. Therefore, Newbery Award books are considered generally inappropriate for young children.

Helterbran’s (2009) emphasis on the use of children’s literature to teach character education is fairly recent. She listed several thought provoking opening questions, core questions, and closing questions teachers could ask to have students examine the virtues presented in the various stories. However, only eight works of children’s literature are identified as examples of books useful for teaching character education, and of those eight, not one of them is available in the media center of the elementary school in the local area (Forsyth County Schools, 2011).

In a discussion of books, which promote character education and recommended to a school in Charlotte, North Carolina, Putnam (2004) listed five specific books. These
books were selected because they had “strong characters that exemplify eight traits: respect, responsibility, caring, honesty, justice and fairness, courage, citizenship, and perseverance and hope” (p.12). Of these books, only one is available in the media center of the elementary school in the local area (Forsyth County Schools, 2011).

**Chapter Summary**

Current researchers have not addressed a way for early childhood educators to combine inexpensive and easily obtainable children’s literature with a free character education program provided by the USDOE (2005). If a qualitative content analysis was conducted, and found virtues espoused by the USDOE in a low-cost anthology, this would help teachers who do not have access to a formal program. Those teachers would be able to acquire the low-cost anthology, use their professional expertise to teach literature, and use the research recommendations to systematically teach character education. Doing this would fulfill the requirement of reading children’s literature out loud, while infusing it with a lesson on character education.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative content analysis was to determine to what extent the children’s literature contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), could be used by early childhood educators to teach the tenets of character education according to U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) guidelines in a pre-Kindergarten through second grade setting. According to Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorenson (2006), in an overview of “common qualitative research types” (p. 468), the basic question a researcher who conducts content analysis should try to answer is “What meaning is reflected in these materials?” (p. 468). Several of the books contained in this anthology have been found to contain some values (Jones, 2011; Kephart, 2009; Noe, 2012), but not all of the books have been examined, and the values contained in them have not been matched to the USDOE guidelines.

Research Design

A qualitative content analysis was conducted of the 44 books contained in Schulman’s (2005) anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud*. The findings from this study can provide early childhood teachers with specific guidelines in regard to the level of appropriateness of the use of these books to teach literature and link them with various tenets of character education according to the USDOE (2005) guidelines.

A qualitative content analysis approach was a valid method for this study, since the focus was on the teaching of character to young children, and the participant-coders
were asked to read and analyze literature while they looked for themes to indicate potential use in lessons on morality and values. Zhang and Wildemuth (n.d.) stated that, “qualitative content analysis pays attention to unique themes that illustrate the range of the meanings of the phenomenon rather than the statistical significance of the occurrence of particular texts or concepts” (p. 2).

In examining how participant-coders evaluated the selection of books in the anthology, it is important to note that both the text and the illustrations were evaluated. Grbich (2009) indicated that a content analysis can be used to analyze “visual images” (p. 112). Hassett and Curwood (2009) emphasized that the pictures contained in these books are important, as “in many children’s books today, written language is indeed no longer central” (p. 271). This is crucial since the participant-coders analyzed the illustrations and the text in the works of children’s literature, and not necessarily only the words in the stories themselves. Hassett and Curwood (2009) provided an example of a children’s picture book which uses “highly visual and textual elements” (p. 270), as *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1992). This book is one of the 44 contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), and thus was analyzed as a part of this study.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions framed this content analysis:

**Research Question 1.** What, if any, themes relating to values and morals, do participant-coders identify as being present in books contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud*?
Read Aloud (Schulman, 2005)?

**Research Question 2.** To what extent are books contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), appropriate or suited for use by an early childhood educator who wishes to link language arts instruction and character education, as defined by USDOE (2005) guidelines?

**Research Question 3.** How do the 44 books in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), compare and contrast in terms of opportunities to explore character education traits contained in USDOE (2005) guidelines?

**Participants**

Two external raters were chosen to analyze the books contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005). There were a total of two participants, which did not include the researcher; these participants served as the participant-coders. These participant-coders were selected according to length of teaching tenure and their willingness to read books written for young children. The participant-coders held valid teaching licenses in the state of Georgia, and both were considered “highly qualified” under the No Child Left Behind (2002) requirements. To be considered as “highly qualified”, teachers had to have a minimum of a Bachelor’s Degree and had to have passed state examinations in their subject area. The selection of these early childhood teachers as participant-coders for works of children’s literature, followed the recommendations from Hak and Bernts (2009), who indicated that “participant-coders
should be ‘professional coders’ (e.g., the researcher’s colleagues)” (p. 222). In addition, early childhood educators are qualified to act as participant-coders for children’s literature, based on Krippendorf’s (1980) statement that coders should “be familiar with the nature of the material” (p. 72) to be examined, and Roberts (1989) insisted that human coders “must be familiar with both the context in which a statement is made and the cultural universe in which it was intended to have meaning” (p. 164). Since early childhood educators live in the cultural universe of young children, they are well-suited to act as participant-coders for the evaluation of children’s literature.

The desired demographics of the participants were that one would have 10-20 years experience, and one would have more than 20 years of experience. Since participant-coders could not be found with experience levels within this range, it was necessary to select participant-coders with various amounts of early childhood education experience. To be considered, all participant-coders would have taught pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, first grade or second grade, and have expressed an interest in character education. Zhang and Wildemuth (n.d.) emphasized that “coders’ knowledge and experience have significant impact on the credibility of research results” (p. 6); thus, participant-coders were selected who had actually taught these grades. The researcher reviewed, but did not rate the anthology. This decision was made so that discussions could take place with the participant-coders in a knowledgeable manner.

An effort was made to find a male who had taught one of these grade levels and was willing to participate. However, Georgia has one of the lowest percentage of male teachers in the nation (National Education Association, 2011), and since it was not
possible to find a male teacher with pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2 experience who was to participate, all of the participant-coders were female.

**Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval**

Prior to commencing any research, approval from the members of Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought and obtained. A copy of the approval letter is provided in Appendix B. The participant-coders were advised of the nature of the study, including the time requirements involved, and asked to sign the consent form before engaging in any analysis or training. A sample of the consent form can be found in Appendix C.

**Selection of Participant-Coders**

After IRB approval was obtained, the search was begun for educators who met the criteria and who would be willing to sign the consent form and participate. I was fortunate to find participant-coders who had taught or were teaching in pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2 in the Forsyth County School system in Georgia.

Pseudonyms were used for each person in the form of initials. Participant-coder, S.A., had been employed for 11 years in education, all with the Forsyth County School system. Three of those years were as an assistant principal at an elementary school in the county. Prior to becoming an assistant principal, she taught for 8 years, also within Forsyth County. Of those years, 5 were spent teaching Kindergarten, 2 spent teaching first grade, and 1 year, second grade. She held a Master’s degree in Education with certification in both early childhood education and educational leadership, and thus, met the definition of a “highly qualified” educator. Her prior experience with character education was when she used the “Second Step” program in her classroom. While she
felt the program gave some structure to her community time within her classroom, she noted that, spending 20 minutes specifically on character education was a lot within the context of a busy school day. In addition, she found that the photos which came with the program were outdated, and said, “The pictures were taken when I was in first grade!”

The second participant-coder, M.E., had only been licensed as a highly-qualified teacher since January of 2012; however she had been involved as an educator for 12 years prior to that. She recently graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in early childhood education from an on-line university, and she was employed as a Kindergarten teacher in Forsyth County. Prior to her employment as a Kindergarten teacher in August of 2012, she graduated with an associate’s degree in early childhood education from an Atlanta area technical college. M.E. spent 6 years in work as an Instructional Assistant in a Kindergarten class in the Forsyth County School System. Prior to this, she spent 6 years teaching pre-Kindergarten in the publicly funded Georgia Pre-K program, which did not require teachers to have a Bachelor’s degree. Similarly, she was familiar with the Second Step program, having used it when she was an Instructional Assistant in the Kindergarten class, and she enjoyed teaching it. She felt the children in Kindergarten enjoyed the chance to role play and use the puppets that came with the Second Step program. When a student in class acted out, other students would comment that he or she were acting “like Impulse Puppy!” who was one of the featured characters.

**Setting**

This research study was conducted with the use of participant-coders who teach or who had taught at the pre-Kindergarten through second grade level. Since the school system standards for Kindergarten through Grade two require teachers to teach positive
character traits as part of the social studies curriculum (Georgia Department of Education, [GADOE] 2007a; Georgia Department of Education, 2007b), all of the participant-coders were experienced in teaching values as part of the curriculum in their classrooms. Both of these participant-coders currently taught or had taught in Forsyth County, located in the suburbs of northern Atlanta. Forsyth County Schools is a public school system, the enrollment is approximately 37,000 students in Grades K-12, and it is the ninth largest school system in Georgia (Forsyth County Schools, 2011).

The Forsyth County School system was selected since it is one of three schools systems, which operate in Georgia under a 4 year old program titled, Investing in Education Excellence (IE2) rules (GADOE, 2011b). The IE2 is a program where local school systems have the right to free themselves from rules “regarding class size, teacher certification, seat time in class, teachers pay, duty-free lunch and graduation requirements” (Dodd, 2010)

Under this program, also, the staff of individual schools can be flexible about what to teach, and as long as students meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on state standards, then the IE2 program continues. McGiboney (2011) described the flexibility which individual school staffs have with the IE2 program when he noted that “school systems may maximize school level governance by granting local schools authority to determine how to reach goals” (p. 9)

Schools which do not meet AYP could be converted to charter status (Forsyth County Schools, n.d.). As a result of IE2, school staffs in this school system have wide latitude as to what and how they teach subjects, including character education, as long as they meet AYP.
In addition to being to one of three systems statewide under the IE2 program, this county is one of the fastest growing counties in the United States, with a growth rate of 10-12% percent each year (Christie, 2010). In 2006, Forsyth County was the fifth fastest growing county in the U.S, and there were over 180,000 residents in July of 2011 (Sami, 2012). Of the top 50 counties in the U.S. where the young and wealthy choose to live, Forsyth County in Georgia is the only county in the southeastern U.S., and it is listed as sixth on the list (Strader, 2009). In addition, it is considered an area of higher income households, with a median income of more than $84,000 per year (Onboard Informatics, 2008).

Content Analysis Procedures

Grbich (2007) identified six questions which should be addressed in all content analysis studies. She emphasized that researchers should address these issues so the study will “translate into practice” (p. 113).

The first issue is the concern of having “sufficient documents to make this form of analysis useful” (Grbich, 2007, p. 112). The anthology, The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud (Schulman, 2005), contains 44 complete works of children’s literature. At 320 pages long and consisting of stories from 62 authors, the anthology is comprehensive.

The second issue is the decision about the sampling approach to be used (Grbich, 2007). Although the anthology itself is fairly long, in order to evaluate its usefulness as a resource for early childhood educators who wish to combine the teaching of character education and literature, all 44 stories were evaluated.

In addition, Grbich (2007) stated that researchers need to ask themselves about
“what particular concepts will be coded for?” (p.112). The concepts, which coders looked for, were the 10 values described in the USDOE (2005) booklet, *Helping Your Child become a Responsible Citizen*. These concepts include: (a) compassion, (b) honesty, (c) fairness, (d) self-discipline, (e) good judgment, (f) respect for others, (g) self-respect, (h) courage, (i) responsibility, and (j) citizenship.

Grbich's (2007) fourth question addressed the manner in which the researcher generates codes. She specifically asked. “Will you impose a predecided (*a priori*) coding frame derived from the literature. . . ?” (p.112). According to Stemler (2001), “when dealing with *a priori* coding, the categories are established prior to the analysis based upon some theory” (para. 13). Since no other researcher had examined the extent to which this anthology can be used in conjunction with the USDOE (2005) guidelines, the codes were *a priori*. Each one of the values was a category.

In the fifth question, Grbich (2007) noted that researchers need to be concerned with “the relationships between concepts, codes, and their contexts” (p. 113). She asked whether the researcher will look at context. Roberts (1989) provided examples as to how the meaning of a sentence “changes considerably” (p. 165), when the context does. Participants-coders needed to look at context when they evaluated the books in the anthology. For example, the use of the word, “please,” did not necessarily make a character in a book respectful. If a character in a children’s book was begging for a toy and yells “please!” as she stamps her foot, then the coder could have taken the word, “please,” and placed it in context. White and Marsh (2006) noted that qualitative content analysis involves coding that is “subjective” (p. 35). The key to making judgments such as this is through coder training. “Three words describe good coder preparation: Train,
train, train” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 133). During the coder training, discussion about what specifically constituted one of the 10 values being examined took place. Neuendorf (2002) maintained that a crucial part of the coder training is these discussions.

The final issue to be addressed in content analysis was that of inter-coder reliability (Grbich, 2007). If the participant-coder training has been extensive, the inter-coder reliability should be strong. Inter-coder reliability was assessed twice; the first time was immediately following the coding of the books in the pilot study. The reliability results indicated at .763, the participant-coders had “good” reliability (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 292), and the research study continued. A second calculation of inter-coder reliability took place at the completion of the study.

Inter-coder reliability was also evaluated through the use of Cohen’s kappa. The pre-test conducted with the three sample selections from the “too good to be missed” (Schulman, 2005, p. xi) section of the anthology served as pilot tests for the coding system and as a preliminary indication of inter-coder reliability. This procedure was advised by Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken (2002), when they stated that researchers should “select a representative sample of units for a pilot test of inter-coder reliability” (para. 13). For Cohen’s kappa, a level of agreement at 0.6 is considered to be “good” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 292) agreement, and a level of 0.4 or greater is considered to be moderate agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Researcher’s Role

I have been an early childhood educator for 15 years, 8 of which have involved teaching first grade. Four years of teaching first grade were spent at the current school, which is in a high socioeconomic area, and 4 years of teaching first grade were spent
teaching in a former Title One school.

I have a strong belief that character education is as important as any other subjects taught in school. “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: Love your neighbor as yourself” Galatians 5:13-14 (NIV).

There are personal experiences, which one has when being asked to teach character education, and yet being given little with which to teach it. It was difficult to attempt to find books which contain certain character traits, respond to requests by other teachers for book recommendations, and scavenge through books to figure which ones could be used to offer lessons for a particular character trait.

The motivation for the study is the lack of information on children’s literature and specifically how it can be used in a classroom to teach character education according to the USDOE (2005) guidelines. The paradigm in this study is a formational one, with an emphasis on Biblical teachings. In a formational paradigm, Miller (1995) emphasized teachers have “the opportunity and responsibility, then, to demonstrate the viability of a Christian faith commitment by living that out before his or her students” (para. 5). The researcher strongly believes in Proverbs 22:6 (NIV): “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” Not only do teachers need to train children in the ways in which they should go, but the teachers must model the correct way in which people should treat one another.

The philosophical assumption is of axiology, since values and morals are being examined, and these values and morals can be explained by definitions in a codebook, through participant-coder training, and by testing the coder agreement with use of the
Cohen’s kappa. The values espoused by the staff of the USDOE (2005) as being particularly beneficial for children to learn were compared to the qualities contained in the 44 books of the anthology. The researcher has a bias in favor of teaching values and morals in the early childhood classroom.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Prior to data collection, approval was sought from the members of the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). A copy of the consent form was included in the application. In the consent form, it was clearly indicated that the participants would be audio taped during the discussion of the stories contained in the anthology, and the audio tapes would be transcribed. This was done by the researcher.

After approval was obtained from the members of the IRB and a consent form was signed by the participants, the first step of data collection was to identify the categories to be studied. According to Elo and Kyngas (2007), researchers who conduct qualitative content analysis must first select whether they will be do deductive analysis or inductive analysis. The participant-coders examined the books in the anthology for the 10 values identified in the USDOE (2005) program, the categories were established, and deductive analysis was used. Those categories are: (a) compassion, (b) honesty, (c) fairness, (d) good judgment, (e) respect for others, (f) self-respect, (g) courage, (h) responsibility, (i) citizenship, and (j) self-discipline.

**Use of a Codebook Document**

The categories were developed for use in the codebook, which was available for the participant-coders to rate the materials. To ensure that the categories were clear to the participant-coders, the codebook was defined. Elo and Kyngas (2008) noted:
A well-designed manual not only makes the coding task easier and the results more convincing but also ensures that the study is replicable. It is worthwhile to invest time and effort in the creation of a coding manual, pretesting it on a sample of text and revising it—multiple times if needed—to improve the coding categories or the clarity of the instructions, or both. (para. 41)

The participant-coders were trained with the codebook prior to completion of the sample coding for the three texts in the “too good to miss” (Schulman, 2005, p. xi) category of the anthology. Neuendorf (2002) stated that “the process of coder training is inextricably linked with the process of the codebook” (p. 134). Weber (1990) indicated that the best way to test the clarity of the definitions and categories is to “code a small sample of the text” (p. 23). This testing would reveal the need, if necessary, to re-train participant-coders, to further define terms, or to clear up confusion as to exactly what constitutes the occurrence of a value.

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), “The success of a content analysis depends greatly on the coding process” (p. 1285); thus, it was crucial that the participant-coders understand how the coding should be completed. In description of the qualitative content analysis, Mayring (2002) cautioned that nothing should be left to chance in codebook development:

The main idea here is to give explicit definitions, examples and coding rules for each deductive category, determining exactly under what circumstances a text passage can be coded with a category. Those category definitions are put together within a coding agenda. (para. 4.2)
During the training of the participant-coders to use the codebook, they discussed details of it and provided feedback to the researcher. As needed, revisions were made to the codebook until just before the actual coding began. This took place because the researcher wanted the clearest instructions and categories in order to make the book so “unambiguous so as to almost eliminate individual differences between coders” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 132).

Prior to rating any books, the researcher and the participant-coders discussed the 10 values identified in the USDOE (2005) program in detail. The discussion included reading the definitions of each of the 10 character traits, suggested by the USDOE, with the participant-coders and working through an interpretation of each definition.

Presented in the following table is an example of how one value, responsibility, was addressed for content analysis. Characters do what they are supposed to do without being nagged or reminded. These characters try their best to do what they are supposed to do. They are accountable for their choices. They consider the consequences of what they do before doing it. They keep promises made to others, and they complete tasks that they are obligated to fulfill.
Table 1

Chart to Evaluate the Character Trait of Responsibility as Demonstrated in a Specific Book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Not present or present to only a small extent:</th>
<th>To a moderate extent:</th>
<th>To a great extent:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(name of book)</td>
<td>None or only a few of the main characters show responsibility in any way</td>
<td>Several of the main characters show responsibility in some, but not many, of their actions</td>
<td>The main characters show responsibility in their actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or Responsibility is a not a central theme in this book.</td>
<td>One of the main characters shows some responsibility in terms of his/her actions</td>
<td>Responsibility is a central theme in this book. A teacher could use this book to teach the character trait of responsibility.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Narrative Notes from Participant-Coders

The codebooks contained narrative notes from each of the participant-coders on the 44 books contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005). These narrative accounts of the coders’ comments were examined. This narrative account included any information the coders wished to list or noted about the books they read.

Discussions with Participant-Coders

Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) noted that use of discussion groups can be an effective method to collect qualitative data. Eder (2010) observed that the use of group discussions can elicit forth many different messages, even though readers examine the same story. In her content analysis of values contained in books for older children, Bones (2010) indicated “an important part of the study was the readers’ dialogue concerning their assessment of themes and opportunities to explore values through classroom discussion of these novels” (p. 44). After the books in her study were coded, she sat down and had a discussion with her coders every week.

Neuendorf (2002) indicated that use of the coder debriefing process has proved to be a valuable tool for the long-term evolution of a coding scheme” (p. 134), and throughout the content analysis, participant-coders should discuss the “results of their independent practice coding” (p. 134). Finally, participant-coders need to discuss their results through “coder debriefing, which asks coders to analyze their experiences” (p. 134).

The discussions with these participant-coders occurred after the books from the anthology had been coded. The discussions were audio-taped and then transcribed to
ensure that the researcher did not miss any of the details of the conversations. Permission for taping and transcribing the discussions was obtained in the consent form. Also, this researcher took notes during the discussion, in case the audio-tape became unusable.

Some of the open-ended questions which the participant-coders were asked, were:

What are your impressions of (name of book) as an effective book to use in teaching character education based on the 10 values listed by the USDOE (2005)? What have you learned from reading (name of book) that will impact you as a teacher? What about (name of book) would you share with others who teach? These questions were different than the ones used during the preliminary examination of the sample books.

Data Analysis Procedures

In the data analysis process, the researcher examined and categorized all of the information from the data collection. Zhang and Wildemuth (n.d.) stated that, in “qualitative content analysis, you need to report your decisions and practices concerning the coding process, as well as the methods that you used to establish the trustworthiness of your study.” (p. 5)

Verifying Inter-Coder Reliability (Cohen’s kappa).

In order to ensure the reliability of the research, Cohen’s kappa was performed at several points during the research study. Grbich (2007) indicated that the primary reason for verification of inter-coder reliability is to “show that you have applied your coding frame in a consistent manner” (p. 191). The first time inter-coder reliability was evaluated was after the analysis of the three sample books: (a) Apples to Oregon (Hopkinson, 2004); (b) Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type (Cronin, 2000); and (c) Toot & Puddle (Hobie, 1997).
Cohen’s kappa for the trait most exemplified in the stories from the pilot study was found to be 1.0. The raters were in perfect agreement on which trait was most exemplified in the three stories in the pilot study. For all 10 traits evaluated in each of the three stories in the pilot study, the inter-rater reliability was found to be .763 ($p < 0.001$), 95% CI (0.502, 0.887). Neuendorf (2002) emphasized that reliability should be tested during the pilot phase, and then after the study is complete. That procedure was followed in this study.

**Analysis of Narrative Notes from Discussions**

Creswell (2007) noted that qualitative researchers want to obtain “thick descriptions” (p. 204) from the data. In addition, Kuper, Lingard, and Levinson (2008) stated, “by using a technique called thick description, qualitative studies often aim to include enough contextual information to provide readers with a sense of what it was like to have been in the research setting” (p. 687). After examining the transcripts from the discussions, several selected passages for each of the 44 books in the anthology were included in the dissertation so that those who read it would have a more complete understanding of how the anthology was analyzed.

**Analysis of Information from the Codebook**

Information from the codebook was interpreted to provide a description for early childhood educators who want to use *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005) to teach values in their classroom. In the codebook used for the research, not only did the participant-coders have a place to rate the books, but also they could provide reflections and notes on each book. For each of the 44 books in the anthology, narrative data from the codebook
were provided, including the presence or absence of any of the 10 character themes from the USDOE (2005) guidelines.

Johnson (n.d.) indicated that “developing a matrix is an excellent way to both find and show a relationship in your qualitative data” (p. 10). Zhang & Wildemuth (n.d.) specifically addressed qualitative content analysis when they reported that researchers “may want to incorporate other options for data display including matrices (and) graphs” (p. 5). There are 44 books in the anthology, each book was evaluated for the 10 values, and a matrix or table which displays the participant-coders' opinions of values contained or not contained in each work was included in the final analysis.

**Trustworthiness of Collected Data**

**Inter-Coder Reliability**

An analysis of inter-coder reliability was calculated with the use of Cohen’s kappa after the codebook was tested during the preliminary discussion stage. Bryman and Bell (2007) indicated that a score of 0.6 or higher is a “good” (p. 272) score of consistency for Cohen’s kappa, and Landis and Koch (1977) indicated that 0.4 or higher indicated moderate agreement. Adjustments were made, as necessary, to the codebook during the evaluation of the sample books to increase its accuracy as a tool for the two participants prior to the start of the evaluation of the anthology. Also, a score of Cohen’s kappa was calculated for the final results, as suggested by Neuendorf (2002), when she indicated Cohen’s kappa should be tested during the pilot phase and re-worked until it meets acceptable levels, and after the study is complete.
Triangulation through Member Checking

Descriptive triangulation of comments were obtained through member checking, which involves showing the findings and results to the participants. The use of descriptive triangulation “can increase the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings” (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p. 575). Both of the participant-coders were sent a draft copy of the results section, as well as a copy of the description of their backgrounds from the Participant section, and neither felt any changes were necessary.

Participant Notes

Each participant was required to write narrative notes on each of the 44 books contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005). Use of these notes increased the reliability of the study, since it is difficult to write about or participate in conversations concerning books one has not read.

Memoing

This researcher reflected upon the data through the use of memoing. By writing notes based on the discussions about the literature with the participants, more connections among the books or the character traits were found. According to Birks, Chapman, and Francis (2008), the use of “memoing serves to assist the researcher in making conceptual leaps from raw data to those abstractions that explain research phenomena in the context in which it is examined” (p. 68).

Ethical Considerations

The participant-coders were asked only to rate each book. Participation in this study posed no physical or mental risk. In addition, the participants were not identified
individually in the final report. Participant names were omitted from any individual narrative excerpts or book rating. All research methods and procedures were approved by the members of the IRB prior to the beginning of data collection. All participants signed an informed consent form prior to participation in the study. A copy of the consent form is located in Appendix C. All study information was located on a computer and contained on a database protected by facial recognition software. All narrative information written by participants was and will be kept in a locked file cabinet for a period of 3 years. All study information was approved by the IRB at Liberty University prior to commencement of data collection. No individual name or identifying information was associated with any participant within the body of the report.

**Meeting Schedule for Discussions of Stories in the Anthology**

The researcher and the participant-coders met once a week for a total of 9 weeks, usually on a Saturday in a meeting room at a branch of the Forsyth County Library. Each meeting lasted approximately 2.5-3 hours. The meetings with this researcher and the participant-coders were held on the following dates: (a) September 22, 2012; (b) September 29, 2012; (c) October 13, 2012; (d) October 19, 2012; (e) November 3, 2012; (f) November 10, 2012; (g) November 17, 2012; (h) December 1, 2012; and (i) December 8, 2012. Prior to the first meeting, the researcher met with each participant-coder separately in order to: (a) answer any questions about what the study would entail, (b) ask her to sign the consent form, and (c) talk about her background.

Before meeting to code the stories, the participant-coders read each story to be coded the upcoming Saturday. This gave the participant-coders some familiarity with the story prior to their attempt to code it. The coding took place at the meetings, and each
participant-coder worked independently (i.e., silently and by themselves), so as not to influence the other person. This procedure was based on the recommendation from Krippendorf (2013), who observed that, when coders generate data, they need to work independently of one another, and should not “confer among themselves as to why they do what they do” (p. 131). All meetings which were held to discuss the stories in the anthology, were held with the researcher and both participant-coders present. After the analysis was completed, both participant-coders took part in a discussion about the story being analyzed.

**Training the Participant-Coders**

Training for the participant-coders began with a discussion of the 10 character traits identified by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE; 2005). While a definition of each of the 10 traits was provided, approximately 2 hours of discussion was centered on whether each line within the definition paragraph belonged with a particular character trait or with a different one. One example is where the sentence “They ask themselves certain questions, such as: Does this follow the Golden Rule?” was moved from the character trait of Good Judgment to the character trait of Respect for Others. Several phrases were added in an effort to ensure the definitions were made even crisper, clearer, and less open to interpretation. In addition, approximately 1-2 hours was spent in discussion of the definitions of Small extent, Moderate amount, and Major theme of the story. After review and rework of the definitions of the 10 character traits provided by the USDOE, the meanings of each of these ratings were agreed upon, and an analysis of the pilot books was initiated.
Books in the Pilot Study

According to Weber (1990), the preferred method to test the clarity of the definitions and categories in a content analysis codebook is to “code a small sample of the text” (p. 23). Schreier (2012) recommended that this should take place prior to the content analysis with use of a set of documents not found in the documents to be studied. In the book, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud*, Schulman (2005) listed a set of books originally published at approximately the same time as the anthology. She identified these as “too good to miss” (p. xi). Three books were selected as pilot books for analysis prior to the actual start of the study. The three books selected were: (a) *Apples to Oregon* (Hopkinson, 2004); (b) *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type* (Cronin, 2000); and (c) *Toot & Puddle* (Hobbie, 1997).

Pilot Studies

After training the participant-coders, the research study began by coding of the three pilot stories. After the coding for pilot stories was completed, agreement, with use of Cohen’s kappa statistic, was calculated. This was in accord with the advice of Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken (2010), who indicated that researchers should “assess reliability formally in a pilot test” (para. 4). Cohen’s kappa for the trait most exemplified in the story was found to be 1.0. The raters were in perfect agreement on which trait was most exemplified in the three stories in the pilot study. For all 10 traits evaluated in each of the three stories in the pilot study, the inter-rater reliability was found to be .763 ($p < 0.001$), 95% CI (0.502, 0.887). Any number above .70 indicates substantial agreement between the raters (Brennan & Prediger, 1981). A few more
discussions of the precise definitions of the rating scale ensued, and the coding of the actual stories in the anthology began.

**Coding the Anthology**

Coding the anthology began 1 week after preliminary discussions and inter-coder reliability was established for the pilot books. The procedure for coding each story in the anthology followed the procedure for the pilot studies. The stories were read by the participant-coders prior to meeting, and each story was re-examined at the meeting. Coding was undertaken silently and without collaboration, so each analysis would be considered independent. Discussions about each participant-coder’s coding along with the stories in the anthology continued to take place during the meetings.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter described the way in which I used qualitative content analysis to discover the extent to which an early childhood educator could use the anthology *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud*, Schulman (2005) to teach a lesson about character education according to USDOE (2005) guidelines. Chapter Four details the results of the study, including an analysis of the codebooks and participant-coder comments.
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this current research study was to discover to what extent the children’s literature contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), can be used by early childhood educators to teach the tenets of character education according to U.S. Department of Education (USDOE; 2005) guidelines in a pre-Kindergarten through second grade setting. Presented in Chapter Four are: (a) the ratings from the Cohen’s kappa and inter-rater reliability, and (b) the results.

**Cohen’s Kappa and Inter-Rater Reliability**

Cohen’s kappa for the one trait which was most exemplified in the 44 stories was found to be 0.754. This rating indicated that the raters had substantial agreement on which trait was most exemplified in the 44 stories contained in the anthology (Landis & Koch, 1977). For all 10 traits evaluated in each of the 44 stories in the anthology, the inter-rater reliability was found to be .737 ($p < 0.001$), 95% CI (0.682, 0.783). This was an indication of substantial agreement between the raters (Brennan & Prediger, 1981; Landis & Koch, 1977).

**Results**

In the following sections, each story in the anthology is addressed. Information is provided about the author, and a plot summary is also given. The results found by the participant-coders are also provided, along with some of their comments about each book.
**Madeline** (originally published in 1939)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Ludwig Bemelmans won a Caldecott Honor in 1940 for this book, and in 1954 won a Caldecott Award for the sequel book, *Madeline’s Rescue* (ALA, 2010). This book was the first in a series, which featured the popular character, Madeline. In it, a group of girls live in an old house in Paris. While it is not clear if the girls are at an orphanage or at a boarding school, it is implied that Miss Clavel, a nun, takes care of them. Madeline is the smallest of the group and is known for not being afraid of mice, ice, walking on high bridges, or tigers. One evening, however, she falls ill and is rushed to the hospital. The reaction of the girls in the boarding school comprises the second half of the book.

**Character education recommendations.** In the story, both participant-coders noted that all of the girls in the story showed some compassion for their friend Madeline, as they cried when she had to have surgery, and they brought her flowers in the hospital. It was also noted by both participant-coders that the girls in the story showed a sense of responsibility, as they performed their daily routine (e.g., brushing their teeth and getting ready for bed) without being nagged. Both participant-coders felt that, while this was a cute story where the trait of compassion was present to a moderate amount, and one that could be used to teach such skills as inferencing, rhyming words, and showing how friends care for each other, none of the 10 traits suggested by the USDOE (2005) were present to a major extent in the book. Participant-coder M.E. noted she would “not use this to teach one of these character traits.” Participant-coder S.A. agreed when she added that she “would not use this book to teach character ed.”
**Chicka Chicka Boom Boom** (Originally published in 1989)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** This book features letters and numbers, which are presented in a rhythmic pattern. The letters and numbers climb and descend a coconut tree. Some of the letters are uppercase, and others are lowercase. The uppercase letters are the parents and older relatives, and the lowercase letters are children. Eventually, the coconut tree gets too heavy because all of the lowercase letters have climbed it. As it tips over, the uppercase letters help the lowercase letters get up from the large pileup. The illustrations are large and appealing to young children.

**Character education recommendations.** Both participant-coders were familiar with this book and had read it previously. Participant-coder M.E., who is a Kindergarten teacher, actually had used this book in her classroom to teach and reinforce such skills as letter naming, letter order, and reading. However, she had never used it to teach any type of character education. Upon her review of the book again and examination of the 10 character traits recommended by the USDOE (2005), she concluded, simply, that there was no presence of any of those character traits in this book. Participant-coder S.A. agreed and added that, while she felt book could be used in the beginning of Kindergarten for reinforcement of such skills as capital letters and word choice, it could not be used to instruct character education.

**Swimmy** (Originally published in 1963)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Leo Lionni won the Caldecott Honor for this book in 1964 (ALA, 2010). This book features a fish who watches other fish get eaten by a tuna. He is the only survivor, and while he is terrified at the perils of the sea, he feels as if he cannot just stay hidden. He eventually meets a group of fish just
like him hidden in some rocks. Those fish are also terrified of the big fish (i.e., the tuna), and yet Swimmy ponders the situation and develops a plan to out-smart the tuna. He convinces the other small fish that his plan, swimming together to convince the tuna they are one big fish, will work. In this way, the small fish work together to defeat the bigger fish who wants to eat them.

**Character education recommendations.** Both participant-coders were familiar with this story; one noted “I love this book!” and the other called it a “super cute story!” In analysis of the codebook, both participant-coders provided examples of the following character traits in the story: (a) courage, when Swimmy faced his fears of being eaten; (b) compassion, because Swimmy felt badly for the other fish who were frightened, and he helped them face their fears; and (c) good judgment, as he had a plan and calculated how to carefully execute it so he and the other fish would not be eaten. Participant-coder M.E. indicated it could be used to teach problem solving, “thinking outside the box,” and to talk about courage. However, she felt the story could only be used to “re-enforce (but not teach)” about it.

*A Chair for My Mother (originally published in 1982)*

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author and illustrator Vera B. Williams won a Caldecott Honor Award for the illustrations in this book in 1983 (ALA, 2010). This book features a low-income family trying to make ends meet after a devastating fire. Their belongings are destroyed, and the child telling the story talks about buying a comfortable chair for her mother, who struggles to support the family while she works as a waitress. Williams indicated that the story is somewhat
autobiographical; she remembered how her family struggled to save money for a new chair, which her mother desperately wanted (Johnson, 2009).

**Character education recommendations.** The child’s compassion for her mother was woven throughout the story, as she tried to ensure that her mother’s hard work was not only appreciated but rewarded. Also, the idea of having enough self-discipline to work toward a goal was an important part of the story, as the author told how the family put every coin of the mother’s tip money into “the biggest jar that she could find” (Williams, 2005, p. 31) in order to save money for the chair.

Participant-coder M.E. noted the child in the story demonstrated responsibility. The child, who narrated the story, contributed even the meager amount of money she earned doing odd jobs to the glass jar. There were also many other examples of compassion, including how the child cared for her mother, and how the neighbors cared for them after the fire. M.E. noted that, although the suggested character traits (USDOE, 2005) of “compassion, responsibility, self-respect respect for others, and self-discipline” were all present in the story, the character trait of “self-discipline is interwoven throughout the story” and was present as a “major theme of the story.”

Participant-coder S.A. agreed with her on the theme of responsibility, having noted that “for her age, the child definitely makes choices outside of her age group.” She noted the family in this story was “working together for a common cause—rebuilding their lives after a fire destroys everything” and felt that the major theme was one of self-discipline, in that, “everyone in the family makes conscious choices” to accomplish a mutual goal. She added that there were many ways to use this story, not only for character education, but also beyond.
Goodnight Moon (Originally published in 1947)

Author biographical notes and plot summary. This book by Margaret Wise Brown is a staple in many households, where children say Goodnight to various items in a child’s bedroom. Taking a birds-eye view, readers see a child’s bedroom, which contains a bed, pictures of cows and bears, some kittens, and a lamp. At the end of the book, the narrator says Goodnight to all of the objects in the child’s bedroom. The limited text and soothing repetitiveness of the book acts to calm young children before bedtime.

Character education recommendations. Both participant-coders had read this book previous to examining it in the anthology. The book contains a high level of detail in both the words and pictures, and it could be used to teach a simple level of story sequencing on a pre-school level. Although they felt the book was a children’s classic, whose patterned and descriptive storyline made children feel comforted, both participant-coders agreed it did not allude to any type of character traits and could not be used to teach character education according to the USDOE (2005) character education guidelines.

Snowy Day (Originally published in 1962)

Author biographical notes and plot summary. This book won a Caldecott Award for author-illustrator Ezra Jack Keats in 1963 (ALA, 2010). It is about a child, Peter, who wanders around his neighborhood following a snowstorm. Peter is a young child, who lives in an urban setting, and he wanders around town amusing himself and looking at older children playing in the new-fallen snow. He puts a snowball in his pocket and is disappointed when it is no longer there when he goes to look at it at the end
of his day. His mother is shown caring for his chilly feet and helping him take a bath at the end of his long day. Overnight, he dreams the snow has melted, and he is overjoyed the next morning to find his dream was not a reality. In fact, more snow has fallen! As the story ends, he takes a friend with him to explore the city once again.

Character education recommendations. Both participant-coders noted that, in the era in which the story was originally published, children were freer to roam around the neighborhood than they are today. One participant-coder noted that, today, a child so young would not be allowed to wander around without his mom.

Participant-coder M.E., a Kindergarten teacher, noted that while she could use this story in her classroom to get her children to predict what will happen in the story, she did not feel it had any value for teaching character education according to the USDOE (2005) standards. S.A., the other participant-coder, noted the story could be used to teach cause and effect or the water cycle, but also agreed this story could not be used to teach any of the 10 traits of character education listed in the USDOE.


Author biographical notes and plot summary. Arnold Lobel won a Caldecott Honor for the book, *Frog and Toad Are Friends*, in 1971 (ALA, 2010). This book features conversations between two good friends who don’t always see eye-to-eye. Despite this, they care for each other deeply and are determined to do their best to maintain the friendship. In this story, which is one of the chapters contained in the book *Frog and Toad are Friends*, Toad is miserably waiting by his mailbox. His friend Frog asks him why he seems so sad, and Toad tells him not only does he feel he will he not get
a letter today, he has actually never, ever received so much as one letter in his life. Frog
sets out to surprise his friend by sending him his first-ever letter, one saying “Dear Toad,
I am glad that you are my best friend. Your best friend, Frog” (Lobel, 2005, p. 50).
Although the snail that Frog persuades to deliver the letter takes 4 days to arrive, Toad is
overjoyed to receive the missive from his best friend.

Character education recommendations. How could friends help others feel
better about themselves? This question was central to the storyline in The Letter.
Participant-coder S.A. noted how Frog’s love for his good friend made him work
“throughout the story to cheer him up.” Frog compassionately understood Toad’s
feelings and worked hard to send his friend a letter, which meant he wanted to show how
much he cared for his friend. Frog’s attempt to understand the feelings of his good friend
and his belief that Toad’s ideas and feelings were important were major themes of the
story, according to both participant-coders.

Participant-coder M.E. noted that, not only did Frog write his friend a letter, he
waited with Toad for 4 days until the letter was delivered. She noted this story was one
that showed children an example of the Golden Rule, which she stated consisted of
“having compassion regarding others’ feelings as well as respecting and treating others
the way that you want to be treated.”

Although Respect for others was a major theme of the story, both participant-
coders selected the value of Compassion as the one most strongly represented in this
story. Frog’s compassion for Toad’s sadness resonated with both participant-coders as an
example of true friendship and caring for the feelings of others.
Freight Train (originally published in 1978)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author-illustrator Donald Crews won two Caldecott Honors only 2 years apart for his illustrations in children’s stories. One of the Caldecott Honors was for this book. The book contains large pictures of freight cars, each of which is a different color and placed in a different sequence behind the engine. As the train moves and goes through tunnels, the colors and the cars all begin to blend together, and the train eventually leaves.

**Character education recommendations.** Participant-coder M.E. indicated she could have used this book to reinforce colors or in conjunction with a transportation unit in her Kindergarten class. She noted it demonstrates how trains work both during the day and at night. Participant-coder S.A. noted that the colors on the trains were beautiful. However, both participant-coders found no evidence of any values from the USDOE (2005) list present in this story.

Make Way for Ducklings (originally published in 1941)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** The Caldecott Award for illustration in children’s literature had only been given for 4 years when author-illustrator Robert McCloskey won in 1942. He won again in 1958, and was awarded a Caldecott Honor in 1949, 1953, and 1954. The story begins with Mr. and Mrs. Mallard (i.e., two ducks) looking for a place to raise their ducklings. Mrs. Mallard insisted on safety, with the new home having no foxes or turtles, since those could prove dangerous to her ducklings. Eventually, the Mallards, exhausted, find themselves in Boston and settle in the Public Garden. Mrs. Mallard feels this might be a good place to settle down, as there is a pond with no foxes or turtles, and park visitors “feed us peanuts” (McCloskey, 1941,
p. 57). When they are almost run over by a cyclist, the Mallards look just a bit further, where they find a more suitable island in the Charles River. They are fed peanuts by a kindly policeman, and Mrs. Mallard lays her eggs in a nearby nest. One day, with the ducklings still young and Mr. Mallard gone, she decides to attempt to cross the street with her children behind her. Police officer Michael helps them cross the road, and despite the impatience of the drivers being held, will not allow Mrs. Mallard or her ducklings to be frightened or run over by a vehicle. The ducks thank police officer Michael and the other officers who came to their aid as they continue to march on the sidewalk.

**Character education recommendations.** Both participant-coders enjoyed this book, with M.E. having called it “super cute!” and S.A. thinking that it was it a “beautiful classic story with great vocabulary.” S.A. noted there were multiple opportunities to use it to teach character education, according to the USDOE (2005) guidelines. She indicated Mrs. Mallard’s Perseverance ensured her ducklings had a safe and comfortable place to live. She continued to search and move until she arrived at a place she felt would be suitable. Her Responsibility toward her ducklings began even before she laid her eggs. Mrs. Mallard showed Good judgment in rejecting several potential sites and in not venturing out of the garden until the ducklings were old enough to do so. She made sure to wait for police officer Michael before she attempted to cross the street with her children.

Participant-coder M.E. agreed and noted this story could have been read to young children for many reasons. A teacher could use it to teach about hatching eggs and ducklings. She also felt several character education traits from the USDOE (2005) list
could be taught with use of this story. In terms of specifics, she indicated that “Mother duck had to be very responsible to find a good nesting place for her babies.” She added this did not just happen once, but continued throughout the story. The police officers were shown to have Compassion for the ducks, both feeding them and protecting them as they crossed the street. M.E. noted mother duck had to show Good judgment by considering the consequences of her choices on several occasions.

Both participants indicated the character trait of Responsibility was the one most exemplified in this story. Mrs. Mallard was accountable for her choices, and she carefully considered the consequences of what she was going to do before she did it.

_A Million Fish... More or Less (Originally published in 1992)_

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** While this book was not given a Caldecott Award, illustrator Patricia McKissack is a previous Newbery Honor awardee for her book, _The Dark- thirty: Southern Tales of the Supernatural_ and is also a Caldecott Honor winner for her book, _Mirandy and Brother Wind_. This book takes place on the Louisiana Bayou, with a young boy named Hugh Thomas, who is fishing in an attempt to catch dinner. His relatives, Papa-Daddy and Elder Abbajon, come floating down the river in a boat and tell him the story of how several years back they caught a turkey weighing nearly 500 pounds. Hugh-Thomas is impressed and yet hesitant to believe their story, especially after Elder tells him on the same trip they found a lantern left by Spanish Conquistadors in 1592. . . and the lamp was still burning! The men warn him to be careful, as strange things have been known to happen in the Louisiana Bayou.

Hugh Thomas caught three small fish the first half-hour he was fishing, and in the next half-hour, he caught close to a million more! He got tricked out of his fish by some
wily alligators, raccoons, and the neighbor girl’s cat. When he meets up with Papa-
Daddy and Elder Abbajon, they look at his three remaining fish and listen to the story
about how he lost a million fish. They remind him that strange things have been known
to happen in the Bayou.

**Character education recommendations.** Participant-coder M.E. started the
discussion by saying “I hated this book!” When pressed as to why, she indicated she
thought it was extremely difficult to follow, half of it did not make sense, and thus she
“would never read it again!” She said had to read it several times to figure out Papa-
Daddy was one person. The references to the Bayou did not click with her, and although
she said a teacher could use it to teach tall tales, there were tall tales less difficult to
decipher and that she enjoyed more. Thus, she would not use this one with her class and
did not feel the story espoused any of the 10 character traits provided by the USDOE
(2005).

Participant-coder S.A. had a slightly more positive feeling about the story, saying
it opened up new cultures to children, and it had a story narrative voice present. She
indicated Hugh Thomas did make some good choices in the story, mainly to save himself
when threatened by the alligators and the vicious raccoons. He had to consider the
consequences of what might happen if he chose to fight the animals, and that is why S.A.
felt the primary character trait of this story would be of Good Judgment.

*A Boy, a Dog, and a Frog* (originally published in 1967)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** This book was one of the first
wordless books to be published, and it is 1 of about 100 children’s books published by
author Mercer Mayer. His most famous series features the character *Little Critter* (Schulman, 2005).

In this wordless story, a little boy is on a riverbank with his dog, trying to catch a frog. After making his way out onto a tree limb, he manages to fall into the water, and instead of catching the frog with his net, he catches his dog. While happy to have gotten away, the frog seems a bit sad to think the game is over. He follows the little boy home, and after seeing him taking a bath with the dog, jumps into the water with both of them.

**Character education recommendations.** Participant-coder S.A. noted that this wordless story would have been a great way to teach children how to read the picture cues to see what is going on in the story. Children would also have been able to see the changes in the frog’s personality from the beginning of the story to the end. She noted the frog did not give up when the boy left the river, and thus demonstrated self-discipline. She felt the story could be used as a moderate example of this character trait, which was recommended by the USDOE (2005).

Kindergarten teacher M.E. loved the illustrations of this story and called them “amazing” and felt she could use it as a story starter with her young students. She would also use it to teach sequencing, and to discuss plot, character, and setting. Her viewpoint was from that of the boy, where he continued to demonstrate a bit of perseverance necessary to reach his goal of catching the frog. She noted this did show Self-Discipline, she agreed with S.A. that the story demonstrated a moderate amount of this trait.

*Millions of Cats* (originally published in 1928)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author-illustrator Wanda Gag won a Newbery Honor for this book, and two Caldecott Awards for her re-telling of the
popular tale, *Snow White*, and for her 1941 book, *Nothing at All* (ALA, 2010). This book tells the story of an elderly couple who wish to have a cat. The man goes out to find one for his wife, and after walking for a “long, long time, he at last came to a hill which was quite covered with cats” (Gag, p. 76). There were literally millions of cats! The man, unable to choose which cat to bring home, decides to take all of them. When the cats begin eating too much for the couple to afford, the couple decides to keep only the prettiest cat, and lets the cats figure out which one they should keep. Fighting ensues until all of the cats are gone, whereas the old woman claims “they must have eaten each other all up!” (p. 78). Only one cat is left. The cat describes herself as homely, and says that, when the others began fighting over who was the prettiest, she knew it was not her, so she simply said nothing. Since she is the only cat left, the elderly couple decides to care for her. She becomes beautiful under their care, and the man claims that, even though he has seen millions of cats, she is the prettiest of all.

**Character education recommendations.** Participant-coder S.A. noted that, although the man had compassion for the fact that his wife wanted a cat, the violence in the story (i.e., when the cats fought and ate each other up) led her to make the decision to not use this story in a pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2 classroom. Participant-coder M.E. felt the story also had positive merit, because the man’s compassion for the cats, who needed homes, shone through in the story. In evaluating the major theme in the story, both participant-coders agreed the character trait of Compassion was in the story. However, other factors, notably the violence contained in the story, made them cautious about recommending it to early childhood educators.
**Guess How Much I Love You** (originally published in 1994)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** This story is a classic tale of Little Nut-brown Hare and his father. Little Nut-brown Hare tells his dad he loves him, while his father replies he loves him even more. The two attempt to top each other with their feelings of love. At the end of the story, Little Nut-brown Hare feels he loves his father so much that he loves him all the way to the moon. His father’s response, told to him tenderly after he is asleep, is that he loves him “to the moon—and back” (McBratney, 2005, p. 79).

**Character education recommendations.** Few stories in the anthology generated more discussion than this one. One of the participant-coders, M.E., felt it was a wonderful story about a father’s love and compassion for his baby throughout the story. She added that the two characters clearly respected and supported each other, and showed no matter what, a parent always loves his baby.

The other participant-coder, S.A., took a completely different view of the story. To her, no matter what Little Nut-brown Hare came up with (e.g., “I love you as high as I can hop,” McBratney, 2005, p. 83), the fact that Big Nut-brown Hare topped it did not sit right with her. She could not decide whether the father was simply saying he loved his child an unimaginable amount or whether he was simply trying to beat his child at a game. She examined the definition of Respect for others, and noted it indicated this character trait means respecting how others feel. Was Big Nut-brown Hare trying to prove a point about loving his child, or was he being unkind by not letting Little Nut-brown Hare win? She did agree with M.E. that Compassion was a major theme of this
story, because Big Nut-Brown Hare obviously loved and cared for Little Nut-Brown Hare.

*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (originally published in 1972)*

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author Judith Viorst has written three books about a boy named Alexander, who is going through some trials in his life. The book, *Alexander Who Used To Be Rich Last Sunday*, has been used to talk to young children about the importance of saving money. The story in this anthology is the first in the Alexander series, and tells the tale of Alexander, a young boy whose day goes from bad to worse. In their cereal boxes, his brothers find toys, while in Alexander’s cereal box, he finds only cereal. At school, his teacher told him while counting, he skipped the number 16. The store was out of the color of new shoes he wanted, he fell into mud, and his bath was too hot. The story concludes with Alexander telling everyone he is considering moving to Australia.

**Character education recommendations.** Both participants thought this story gave children plenty of examples of how, sometimes, life just is not fair. Participant-coder S.A. thought the storyline was relatable for young children, and it would have been a good story to read to young children to facilitate a discussion about how they could have reacted when negative things happened to them. Participant-coder M.E. noted that, while it was a humorous story, the central character did not in any way attempt to turn his day around, make the situation positive, or find good in any of the bad situations in which he found himself. While both participant-coders noted there were plenty of examples of
the antithesis of compassion and fairness, neither one felt this story represented any of the 10 character traits recommended by the USDOE (2005) in a positive way.

Curious George (originally published in 1941)

Author biographical notes and plot summary. Author H. A. Rey has created many books about Curious George, and this one was the first. It details how George came to live in the United States. He was in Africa when he was seen by a man in a yellow hat who said to himself, “What a nice little monkey,” and then added “I would like to take him home with me (Rey, 2005, p. 88). The man kidnapped George after tricking him with the yellow hat, and took him home on a ship. Onboard, George fell over the side of the boat and had to be rescued. Once they arrived in the U.S., George telephoned the fire department when there was no fire, ended up in prison as a result of his prank, and finally found himself in a zoo.

Character education recommendations. The two participant-coders were taken aback at the details in this story. One, S.A., indicated she did not remember Curious George had been kidnapped. She noted it was perhaps due to the fact she had read some of the other Curious George books by H. A. Rey, and was not familiar with this story, which was first in the series. Curious George demonstrated some self-respect and displayed a positive self-identity. The other participant-coder, M.E. also indicated she remembered Curious George was a naughty little monkey, who often got into trouble with the man in the yellow hat; she too did not remember the man in the yellow hat had actually kidnapped George from Africa. While the participant-coders agreed the character trait of Self-respect is present in a moderate amount in the story, the idea of kidnapping an animal did not sit well with them, and they were hesitant to recommend it.
**I Hear, I See, I Touch** *(originally published in 1985)*

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author Helen Oxenbury wanted some books which could not easily be damaged while young children read, and thus was one of the first author-illustrators of board books (Schulman, 2005). This book was a simple one, with three of the five senses invoked with what a small child could hear, see, or touch. The 18 items shown in the book (e.g., rain, butterfly, and flower) are illustrated with the word next to the item. There is no storyline or plot, and the entire book is comprised of 24 words used to label the accompanying illustrations.

**Character education recommendations.** While this book is suitable for babies or pre-school children, its simplicity meant it is not appropriate for children in a pre-Kindergarten through second grade setting. Both participant-coders agreed there were none of the 10 character traits recommended by the USDOE (2005) in this story.

**Miss Nelson is Missing!** *(originally published in 1977)*

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author Harry Allard’s first foray into the world of children’s literature began with this story about a teacher who suddenly disappears after her class, known as “the worst-behaved class in the whole school,” (pp.99-100) was rude during story hour, made faces at her as she tried to teach, and refused to do their lessons (Allard, 2005). Her place is taken the next morning by a woman named Miss Viola Swamp, who came to school in an ugly black dress. The woman commanded them to open their books, and the children, fearful that she meant business, obey. The woman continued to pile on the work, demanding they sit absolutely still, say nothing at all, and do tons of homework. The children now miss their old
teacher, Miss Nelson. When they inquire as to her whereabouts, they are told “never mind!”

After several days with Miss Viola Swamp, the children go to Miss Nelson’s house to see if they can find her and persuade her to come back. They do not find her, but they see Viola Swamp coming down the sidewalk and flee.

One day, Miss Nelson comes back. The children are overjoyed, and behave extremely well. At the end of the day, Miss Nelson goes home and hangs her clothes next to an ugly black dress. By examining the illustrations, a reader can figure out that Miss Nelson and Viola Swamp are one and the same person.

**Character education recommendations.** Both participant-coders loved the story, with M.E. saying there was value in allowing students to work their way through the conclusion that Miss Nelson is actually the heavy-handed substitute, Viola Swamp. S.A. indicated she would use this story to teach about inferencing and predicting, since the author never directly indicated that Viola Swamp was Miss Nelson. Although the children showed compassion at the end of the story, when they began to treat Miss Nelson very well, it was not necessarily out of a sense of exhibiting the value of compassion as it was self-preservation. They simply did not want Viola Swamp to return! Participant-coder S.A. indicated the children showed good judgment in doing what Viola Swamp told them to do, but it was not because they really listened to their conscience; rather they feared the actions of Viola Swamp.

This was one of the few stories in which the participant-coders disagreed on the final character trait which was best exemplified in the story. Participant-coder M.E. felt that, although she could have used this story to teach several literary skills, she did not
feel the story demonstrated any of the 10 values listed by the USDOE (2005) to such an extent she could have used this story to teach a value. Participant-coder S.A. said she could have seen using this story to teach Respect for others, since the children learned their lesson after having treated Miss Nelson so poorly. She felt the children in the story were remorseful, and now they would continue to treat Miss Nelson with kindness and respect.

*Titch (originally published in 1971)*

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author Pat Hutchins is known for writing and illustrating stories with a white background and the children in the foreground. The story, *Titch*, is the first of several books, which features this character, a young boy who has an older brother and sister (Schulman, 2005). She is also the author of a popular book called, *The Doorbell Rang*, which emphasizes sharing what you have with others.

In the story *Titch*, his older brother and sister participate in activities which Titch is too little to do. They ride bigger bikes, fly kites, play instruments, and use tools to build something. Titch participates with his brother and sister, but is also given the smallest items to hold or play with. His brother and sister use a spade and a flowerpot to plant, but since Titch is the one who is holding the tiny seed, it is his seed that grows taller than any of them.

**Character education recommendations.** This story seemed to end abruptly, with both participant-coders having turned the page, waiting for the story to continue. It was noted by both participant-coders that, although his older brother and sister let Titch participate with their activities, they did not assist him or work with him in any way. He
was more of a bystander, who just happened to be in the area where his siblings were playing. They were not disrespectful or argumentative with him or with each other, but they did not go out of their way to be helpful. Titch seemed to have some self-respect, which reflected a positive identity, and did not indicate in either words or the illustrations that he was frustrated either by being the smallest child in his family or by the way he was treated by his older siblings.

Participant-coder S.A. said this book reminded her of the story of Goldilocks, in that Titch was portrayed as “too small.” She indicated she might use the story to have her students write an ending, since the abrupt ending of the story did not seem authentic. M.E. indicated she could use the story to discuss inferencing. Both participant-coders did not feel the story exemplified any of the 10 character traits recommended by the USDOE (2005).

Where the Wild Things Are (originally published in 1963)

Author biographical notes and plot summary. Maurice Sendak is known by some as “the man widely considered to be the most important children’s author of the 20th century.” He “found his work censored and criticised in some quarters” (Hall, 2012, para. 1 & 8) due to the fact that he drew monsters and showed children talking back to an adult. Where the Wild Things Are is the story of Max, a young boy whose behavior is deemed so out of control by his mother, he is sent to his room without any supper. While there, his ceiling grows thick with vines, and an ocean appears through a forest of trees. Max climbed aboard the boat and sailed “in and out of weeks and almost over a year to where the wild things are” (Sendak, 2005, p. 109). The Wild Things are not-very-scary looking monsters, who seem to want to scare Max, until he yells at them and then
tames them. Max and the Wild Things begin to cause a huge rumpus, at which point Max threatens them with a tactic his mother used on him, to send them to bed without any supper. When they leave, Max smells something wonderful, and returns to his room, where he finds supper waiting for him, left by his understanding mother.

**Character education recommendations.** Both participant-coders had read this story previous to their analysis, and both ranked it as one of their favorites. M.E. indicated she loved this story because of its use of imagination. Although the monsters are showed in the illustrations, the monsters are not scary. Participant-coder S.A. listed this story as one of her all-time favorites, and enjoyed the fantasy-type sequences with Max. Despite their enjoyment of the story, and the belief that Max’s talent with using his imagination showed some form of self-respect, neither participant-coder felt this story strongly exemplified any of the 10 character traits from the USDOE (2005) to the extent an early childhood educator could use it to teach a lesson about character education.

"The Cat Club" from the book *Jenny and the Cat Club* (originally published in 1944)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author-illustrator Esther Averill based this book on her own little cat (Schulman, 2005). Despite the fact that only black, white, and red colors are used, the pen and ink drawings are done with a great deal of detail. This provides children with an easy to follow guide and allows them to see which cat is which simply by looking at the illustrations.

This is the story of a stray cat named Jenny adopted by an old sailor, Captain Tucker. He loves her very much, and encourages her to go out into the neighborhood to make friends. Although hesitant, she joins the other cats and is dismayed to find they
have talents she does not. Some of the cats sing, others play an instrument, and yet others can dance. While they encourage Jenny to join them, she feels inadequate in light of all their talents, and is hesitant to do so. Captain Tucker feels badly for her, and helps her by making a tiny set of four ice skates for her. Jenny, with Captain Tucker’s help, discovers her unusual talent for ice skating, which she uses to impress the other cats. Finally, she feels sure enough about her own skills to join the Cat Club.

**Character education recommendations.** The actions of the Captain built up the confidence of Jenny the cat. His willingness to help her made her feel good about herself and, therefore, she was able to break out of her shell and to go out and meet the other cats. Participant-coder M.E. noted at the beginning of the story, she was unsure of how it would end, never having read the story or any other story by this author. M.E. felt that, in addition to the Captain’s compassion for Jenny, the twin cats acted compassionately toward Jenny as well, inviting her several times to join the Cat Club. Other cats were also nice to her and encouraged her. Due to the Captain’s encouragement, and the way he helped Jenny by making her the tiny skates, she selected Respect for others as the USDOE (2005) character trait best exemplified in this story.

Participant-coder S.A. noted it was the Captain’s encouragement and assistance that really made Jenny feel as if she was worthy for the Cat Club. With his help, she overcame her fears of going out and meeting cats who were strangers to her. If it were not for the Captain’s encouragement, Jenny may not have had the confidence or self-respect to go and join the others. It was the Captain’s treatment of Jenny and the fact that the other cats were nice to her that motivated participant-coder S.A. to select Compassion
as the main trait exemplified in the story out of the 10 character traits listed by the USDOE (2005).

_Sylvester and the Magic Pebble (originally published in 1969)_

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** This book won the Caldecott Award in 1970 for author-illustrator William Steig (ALA, 2010). Steig also won a Caldecott Honor and two Newbery Honor for three other books, all written and illustrated by him after he retired from *The New Yorker*, at the age of 60 (Schulman, 2005). This book’s central character is a donkey named Sylvester, who loves to collect beautiful pebbles. One day, upon spying a lovely flaming red pebble, he holds it and wishes it would stop raining. When the rain stops immediately, Sylvester makes other wishes, and discovers he has found a magic pebble. For a wish to come true, all that had to happen was for him to hold the pebble while making the wish. As he started for home with the pebble, eager to show it to his loving mother and father, he comes upon a hungry lion, who is staring at him at close range. Frightened he is about to be eaten, Sylvester makes a hasty wish. “I wish I were a rock, he said, and he became a rock” (Steig, 2005, p. 127). Sylvester soon realizes he should have wished to disappear, or to be transported home, but alas, he is a rock, and as the pebble has fallen off him, he is no longer holding it and cannot make any wishes.

That night, his parents are frantic with worry. They search the neighborhood and speak with everyone, only to find no one has seen Sylvester. After a month during which Sylvester has not returned, they conclude that something terrible must have happened to him.
In the spring, Sylvester’s parents decide to go on a picnic. They sit on top of a large rock, who, in reality, is their beloved son. His father finds the beautiful pebble, picks it up, and thinks of his son who loved to collect rocks. While holding the pebble, the father wishes Sylvester were there, and Sylvester wishes the same. Instantly, Sylvester, the rock, is transported back to being a donkey. His overjoyed parents kiss and hug him, and they take the magic pebble and put it in their iron safe. Someday, they may want to use it, but they realized with the return of their son, they had everything they needed.

**Character education recommendations.** Participant-coder M.E. loved this story and noted that the animals in the community showed compassion for Sylvester’s parents, as they helped Sylvester’s parents look for him. The townspeople also answered questions as to whether or not they had seen him. Participant-coder S.A. added that not only did the animals in the community show compassion, but the parents showed compassion for each other, being supportive despite this tragedy they had suffered. She added Sylvester used poor judgment when he encountered the lion, and should have quickly wished for something other than being turned into a rock. S.A. was proud of him for not wishing for money or worldly goods, and neither did his parents wish for material things when they got both the magic pebble and their son returned to them. Having read some other stories written by William Steig, S.A. noted his stories have been used for many activities in addition to character education.

Having examined the 10 character traits suggested for young children by the USDOE (2005), participant-coder S.A. felt Self-respect was the character trait best exemplified in the story. Sylvester and his parents did not need a lot of money or power
to feel good about themselves, and this was the basis for her selection. Participant-coder M.E. loved this story, felt it had many uses, from predicting to sequencing to leading a discussion about choices people make; however, she did not feel it strongly exemplified any of the 10 character traits listed by the USDOE (2005).

**Good Night, Gorilla (originally published in 1994)**

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** *Good Night Gorilla* was both written and illustrated by Peggy Rathmann, who 2 years later won the Caldecott Medal for her book, *Officer Buckle and Gloria.* *Good Night Gorilla* is a nearly wordless book, and depicts a zookeeper locking up his zoo for the night. Unbeknown to him, a naughty gorilla steals the keys from his back pocket and proceeds to unlock all of the cages in the zoo. All of the zoo animals follow the zookeeper home, and as he goes to sleep, his wife says “Goodnight, dear.” As the animals politely tell her good night, she realizes she and her husband are not alone, and gets up to walk all of the animals back to the zoo.

**Character education recommendations.** Participant-coder S.A. noted the story could win over even reluctant readers with its patterned storyline and its repeated sentences. She mentioned how the actions of the gorilla were the antithesis of honesty, but thought him admirable. He not only got himself out of the zoo, but he was thoughtful enough to include his friends in his scheme as well. Participant-coder M.E. thought the story was funny and felt she could use it in her Kindergarten classroom for teaching the skill of predicting. Neither participant-coder felt the story exemplified any of the 10 character traits listed by the USDOE (2005).
**Mike Mulligan and the Steam Shovel** (originally published in 1939)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Written in 1939, *Mike Mulligan and the Steam Shovel* showcases the pictures of author-illustrator Virginia Lee Burton. Described as “a true perfectionist who would redraw picture after picture until she got them just right” (Schulman, 2005, p. 299), her style is easily recognizable by those who have read her stories. Participant-coder S.A. immediately asked, “Is this the same illustrator who did *The Little House*?” (i.e., a Caldecott Award winner from 1943) and indeed it was. Burton won a Caldecott Award for *The Little House* in 1943 (ALA, 2010).

The story features a crane operator named Mike Mulligan and his beautiful red steam shovel he has named Mary Anne. Mike loved the steam shovel and “took such good care of Mary Anne that she never grew old” (Burton, 2005, p. 139). Together, they dug tunnels, smoothed the ground for highways and landing strips, and made canals for great big boats. Technology came along, and with the advent of electric, gasoline and diesel shovels, no one needed an old steam shovel to dig anymore. Mike was saddened by this development and did not feel as if he could sell Mary Anne for scrap, the way that other owners were doing to their steam shovels.

One day in the newspaper, Mike Mulligan read that the town of Popperville was building a new town hall. He told Mary Anne “We are going to dig the cellar of that town hall” (Burton, 2005, p. 141). They went to the town where Mike Mulligan told the mayor he and Mary Anne could dig the cellar in 1 day. The mayor doubted this, telling Mike it would take 100 men a week to do the job. Mike replied that, if Mary Anne cannot do the job in 1 day, then the town would not have to pay. The mayor agreed to give Mike and Mary Anne the job.
Mary Anne started digging, and as more people came to watch her, she dug a little faster for the audience. As the sun began to set, the job was only half done. Mary Anne worked faster and faster, and as the sun finally set, she finally completed the job, much to the dismay of the mayor, who thought that he would get a new cellar dug for free.

However, the issue of how to get Mary Anne out of the newly-dug cellar arose. The little boy, who was the first to watch Mary Anne start to dig, settled on a solution. He proposed that Mary Anne be left where she was, and that she serve as the furnace for the new town hall, and Mike Mulligan be hired as the town hall janitor. The town accepted the boy’s solution, and Mike and Mary Anne lived the rest of their days in the town hall basement.

**Character education recommendations.** Participant-coder S.A. saw several examples of positive character traits in this story. She noted that Mike Mulligan showed responsibility by making sure that Mary Anne was in tip-top shape, watching out for her, and not relinquishing her to the scrap pile even after many owners of other steam shovels did. She commented about Mike Mulligan’s honesty and sincerity. In examining the character trait of Self-respect, S.A. felt Mike Mulligan and Mary Anne were proud of themselves, but not in an unreasonable or boastful way. They knew their talents, and they felt good about what they had been able to accomplish through their hard work.

The illustrations in this story showed how cities and building have changed since the 1930s. Participant-coder M.E. did not feel the story exemplified any of the 10 character traits suggested by the USDOE (2005) strongly enough to use the story to teach a character trait. Participant-coder S.A. felt that the character trait of Self-respect lives on in this story, even though it has been 70 years since the story was originally published.
**Stevie** (originally published in 1969)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** The story *Stevie* is of a young African-American boy who went to live with a family who cared for him during the week while his mother worked. His primary source of influence, and the narrator of the story, was the older boy in the family with whom he stayed, a child named Robert. Robert and his family lived in the city, and Robert, used to hanging out with his friends and having all of his “stuff” to himself, now had to share his time, his home, and his mother with Stevie.

Although his friends laughed at him for being “Bobby the baby-sitter,” and he could “never go anywhere without my mother sayin’ ‘Take Stevie with you now’.” (Steptoe, 2005, p. 151), eventually, Robert warmed up to Stevie. The day came when Stevie’s parents found jobs in another city, and Robert discovered Stevie was moving away, never to return. Robert reminisced about all of the good times they had together, and finds he missed the kid who was kind of like a little brother to him, little Stevie.

Author-illustrator John Steptoe wrote the story *Stevie* when he was 19 years old (Schulman, 2005). He was one of the few African-Americans in the 1960s who made a living from art, and frequently centered his stories and illustration around children in the inner-city. He won the Caldecott Honor for two of his books, *The Story of Jumping Mouse* and *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters* (ALA, 2010). By the time he passed away at the age of 39, he had written or illustrated 17 children’s books (Schulman).

**Character education recommendations.** Participant-coder M.E. noted Robert’s thoughts about Stevie after his young friend’s departure reminded her of the lyrics that say “you don’t know what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone.” She indicated that Robert did try to
teach Stevie to write his name, and although he felt plagued by having to tote Stevie everywhere, he eventually came to appreciate Stevie. Stevie’s mother also showed responsibility by agreeing to take care of Stevie for an entire week while his parents were off working.

Participant-coder S.A. noted that it took his friend’s departure for Robert to feel compassion for Stevie and his situation. She looked at the illustrations, and remarked about it being difficult to tell in one illustration who Stevie was hugging. Was it Robert’s mother or Stevie’s own mom? It was unclear, and the author does not tell the readers in the story exactly which character is which. Perhaps he was hugging Robert’s mother, and this was one of the causes of Robert’s annoyance with Stevie.

Although both participant-coders felt the story had merit for teaching author’s voice and for talking about how some people live with relatives, neither participant-coder felt the story strongly exhibited any of the 10 character traits suggested by the USDOE (2005). Participant-coder S.A. indicated the storyline was so strong she wished “I could have found something,” so she could have used this story to assist in teaching in terms of character education.

*The Tub People* (originally published in 1989)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author Pam Conrad has written both historical fiction and stories for young readers (Schulman, 2005), and illustrator Richard Egielski won a Caldecott Award for his work in the 1987 book, *Hey, Al* (ALA, 2010).

The story takes place in the bathroom of a residence. There resides a small family of toy people, which consists of a mother, a father, a grandmother, a dog, a doctor, and a
policeman, and lastly, a little boy. They live on the side of a bathtub, where they play games while the family who owns the house is away. One day, the water started draining before all of the Tub People were out of the tub, and the little boy was sucked down the drain. The tub people knew where he was, but they could not save him.

One day, the water began to drain more and more slowly, and the people who owned the house called a plumber. The plumber comes, finds the tub boy blocking the drain, and removes him. The Tub People are eventually moved to a child’s bedroom, where they are reunited with the little boy. Overjoyed at being back together, they return to playing imaginary games with each other and being a family once more.

**Character education recommendations.** This story was new to both participant-coders. Participant-coder M.E. noted, “The only thing that came to mind was “weird. . . just weird!” She did not particularly enjoy the story, and felt it had no value for use in a classroom. Participant-coder S.A. was slightly more generous toward the story and felt it might be a good story starter for young children, since a teacher could ask students to predict what would happen at the end. She too felt there were no character traits recommended by the USDOE (2005) present in this story.

"In Which Pooh Goes Visiting and Gets into a Tight Place" from the book, *Winnie the Pooh* (originally published in 1926)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author A.A. Milne wrote several Winnie the Pooh books, the first of which includes the story featured in the anthology. He wrote the book with his son Christopher Robin and the stuffed animals he owned in mind.
The story begins with Pooh Bear taking a stroll around his neighborhood, humming to himself. He stops at the house of his old friend Rabbit. When he inquires as to whether or not anyone is home, he is told “No!” by a voice that sounds remarkably like Rabbit’s. He is told by the voice that Rabbit has gone to visit his friend Pooh, whereupon Pooh says “But this is Me!” (Milne, 2005, 161). Rabbit finally admits he has been the one who has been speaking, and invites Pooh in for both a visit and a snack.

Although not wanting to appear greedy, Pooh says he will have both honey and condensed milk with his bread, but upon further thought, tells Rabbit not to bother serving the bread. Pooh eats Rabbit out of house and home, and when Rabbit tells him there is no more food in the house, Pooh decides the visit has lasted long enough, and proceeds to make his way home. As Pooh goes to leave, he makes his way through the front door, only to discover he is completely stuck. He can go neither forward nor backward.

Christopher Robin comes to help, and upon examining the situation, tells Pooh he will need to stay where he is until he slims down enough to fit through the hole. Christopher Robin estimates this might take about 1 week. Pooh exclaims “but I can’t stay here for a week!” and then, with his focus on food, asks “What about meals?” (Milne, 2005, p. 163) He is told by Christopher Robin that eating is precisely what got him in to this predicament, and so there will be no meals. Christopher Robin does say he will be more than happy to read to Pooh, a fate which Pooh gloomily accepts.

At the end of the very long week, Pooh feels slimmer, and his friends decide it is time to try to get him out. Readers who look at the illustrations can see every character
familiar in the Winnie the Pooh stories pulling on Pooh’s paws to try to dislodge him. Finally, there is a loud “Pop!” and out comes Pooh, free at last!

After a word of thanks to his friends, Winnie the Pooh makes the trek home. Christopher Robin, whose patience was surely tried having to sit for a week and read to his friend, looks at him lovingly, and mutters “Silly old Bear!” (Milne, 2005, p. 164).

**Character education recommendations.** This story was familiar to both participant-coders. S.A. called the Pooh series “great, well-known stories that are always fun to read.” She noted the familiarity of children with Winnie the Pooh would keep them easily engaged in the story. M.E. noted Christopher Robin showed good problem-solving skills when he said “if we can’t pull you out, Pooh, we might push you back!” (Milne, 2005, p. 163).

Although Pooh lacked self-discipline when he gorged himself on Rabbit’s food, and did not show good judgment or consider the consequences of his actions in doing so, both participant-coders felt the story exhibited several positive character traits as listed by the USDOE (2005).

The character trait of Respect for others was found to a moderate extent in the story, and Christopher Robin treated Pooh with kindness and respect. He modeled the Golden Rule in treating Pooh as he himself would have liked to be treated if found in the same predicament. Even Rabbit behaved kindly toward Pooh, despite the fact that the front door to his house was blocked for an entire week.

The strongest character trait present in the USDOE (2005) list of traits suggested for teaching to young children was that of Compassion. Both participant-coders agreed on this point. S.A. noted Christopher Robin took care of Pooh throughout the story, and
M.E. added there were several examples of such. In addition, when it appeared Pooh was stuck, Rabbit went out to go and find help for him. No one laughed at Pooh or made fun of him, even though it would have been easy to do so.

*Bedtime for Frances (originally published in 1960)*

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author Russell Hoban wrote seven books featuring Frances, a young badger who gets into trouble because of her curiosity and worrisome nature. He was inspired by dealing with his own children (Schulman, 2005). One of the features of the Frances stories is, despite the fact that she is a badger, many of the stories have a ring of realism to them.

It is seven o’clock in the Badger household, which means it is time for Frances to go to bed. Frances has a well-worn system for delaying this, however, as she proceeds to ask for a glass of milk, a piggy back ride, a kiss goodnight, another kiss, and a request for the door to be left open. As she closes her eyes to try to sleep, she sings a little song, and then imagines a tiger is in her room. When she goes into the living room to tell her parents, they convince her that if there really is a tiger, he is a friendly tiger, and not to worry.

She returns to bed after another round of hugs and kisses only to fear there is a giant in her room. Surely her parents would want to know about a giant! They give her a piece of cake as they discuss the giant, and she returns to her room to discover that the giant is really only her robe and her chair.

As she tries to fall asleep, she stares at the ceiling only to see a little crack in it. Afraid that a large spider might come out of it, she runs to tell her father, who convinces
her to post her teddy bear as a guard. Frances returns to bed, and her parents go to bed as well.

Unfortunately, late in the night, Frances sees something is moving the curtains in her room. She wakes her father, who is sound asleep. He tells her it is the wind that is blowing the curtains, and blowing curtains is the wind’s job. He then explains to her about jobs everybody has: “If I do not go to the office, I will be out of a job. And if you do not go to sleep now, do you know what will happen to you?” Frances ponders this, and then decides “I will be out of a job?” Her Father tells her “No.” She guesses again. “I will get a spanking?” Her father tells her “Right!” After hearing this, Frances quickly closes the conversation with “Good Night!” (Hoban, 2005, p. 175).

Finally, tired as she is, she stills hears something fluttering against the window. She figures out it is a moth, and the moth is only doing its job. She lies in bed, does not get out, and finally goes to sleep.

**Character education recommendations.** This is a story that blended a parent’s wish to be sensitive to the needs of a child with the need for sleep. Participant-coder M.E. loved how mom and dad were so patient with Frances, and noted it was not until Frances had pushed and pushed that her father finally indicated a spanking would be next. Both participant-coders felt Frances’ parents showed a lot of respect for her fears as they helped her get to sleep, and they did not just easily dismiss her fears as others might have done. S.A. noted that, at the end of the story, Frances faced her fears of the moth, but perhaps only in order to avoid the spanking.

Both participant-coders said Frances’ parents showed a great deal of Compassion for her, and that it was only when he was woken from a sound sleep did the patience of
Frances’ father waiver. In that there were multiple examples of compassion being shown to Frances, both participant-coders believed this character trait from the USDOE list (2005) was the one best exemplified in this story.

“The Stinky Cheese Man” from the book *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (originally published in 1992)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** In this Caldecott Honor book, author Jon Scieszka takes known fairy tales and puts a new spin on them. *The Stinky Cheese Man*, one of the nine stories, is written in the style of the popular children’s book, *The Little Gingerbread Man*. The main difference is in this adaptation, the little man in this story smells so terrible that no one attempts to catch him. He runs away from a little old man and a little old woman, as well as a cow and a group of children. He smells so putrid that no one wants to chase him.

In the original story, the Gingerbread Man meets his demise when he is eaten by the fox. In Scieszka’s (2005) version of the story, the Stinky Cheese Man makes the fox cough, gag, and sneeze. While the fox’s original intent was to eat him, the Stinky Cheese Man smells so terrible that he flies off the fox’s back during one of the coughing fits. He lands in a river and meets his demise when he falls apart.

**Character education recommendations.** While both participant-coders thought the story could be used in the classroom, perhaps for reading in conjunction with the original Gingerbread Man story for a lesson in comparing and contrasting, neither thought the story contained any of the 10 character education traits listed in the 2005 USDOE program.
The Story of Babar (originally published in 1933)

Author biographical notes and plot summary. Author-illustrator Jean de Brunhoff wrote this story as the first of six Babar books. After his death in 1937, his son has carried on the story of Babar and his friends in newly released stories (Schulman, 2005).

The story of Babar begins when he is a baby elephant in a forest. On the very first page, Babar’s mother is killed by an elephant. Babar, fearing for his own life, flees the forest and goes to live in the big city. Upon his arrival in the city, he sees two finely dressed gentlemen and wishes he could be dressed as well as they are.

Luckily for him, he meets a rich lady who loves elephants, and who buys him a suit. He feels good about his appearance, and after dinner, stays at her house. He soon is living with her and entertains her friends with stories about the forest.

Several years pass, and one day he sees two elephants walking down the street. They are his cousins, who are thrilled to see him. He introduces them to the old lady, who feeds them. Babar decides to return to the forest with his cousins, much to the dismay of the old lady, who wonders if she will ever see him again.

The day of their return, the oldest elephant in the forest has just died from eating a poisonous mushroom. As Babar and his cousins arrive, the elephants decide they are so nicely dressed and have learned so much living in the big city, surely Babar must be chosen as King. Babar explains while traveling in the car, that he and his cousin Celeste have become engaged. The elephants greet this news joyously, and Babar and Celeste get married and become the new King and Queen.
Character education recommendations. Having begun the discussion of this story, participant-coder S.A. said “This is not the story that I remember! I must’ve read one of the later books.” She clearly remembered reading Babar stories as a child, but did not remember Babar mother’s being killed, the King of the Elephants dying from a poisonous mushroom, or Babar marrying his cousin. Participant-coder M.E. concurred, when she said “I thought that it was weird that he became engaged to his cousin! I think that the kids would find that weird, too.” She also felt this story had a lot of vocabulary words, which would need to be introduced prior to reading it to a group of children. Words such as automobile, pupil, derby, longing, marabou, and calamity are not words with which pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2 children would be familiar.

In discussing particular character traits contained in the story, both participant-coders agreed that the value of Compassion was exemplified to a moderate extent in the book. Much of the discussion centered on the motives of the elderly lady who helped Babar. Was she truly concerned for his welfare, and thus motivated to help him due to altruistic reasons? Conversely, did she feel a need to control him so she could show him off to her friends, and was that the reason she bought him clothing, fed him, and provided for his every need? Whichever the reason, the participant-coders gave her the benefit of the doubt, and selected the character trait of Compassion as the one best exemplified in the story.

The Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree (originally published in 1978)

Author biographical notes and plot summary. Having sold over 240 million books, the Berenstains are considered to be two of the most prolific authors of children’s books (Teitman, 2003). Of the 250 books on the Publishers’ Weekly list of all-time best-
selling children’s books, 35 of them are books written by the Berenstains (Mariska, 2000). In many of the stories written by Jan and Stan Berenstain, the authors explore morals and values, and show children in the family attempting to make good decisions based on what they have been taught by their parents (Schulman, 2005). The Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree is not one of those types of stories. In it, three bear cubs go to explore a spooky old tree near their house, armed with only a light, a stick and a rope. They venture into the tree, only to find an old rickety staircase, an alligator, a giant key, a moving wall, an axe, and a sleeping bear. Along the way, they manage to lose all of their equipment, and leave the house “running fast. Home again. Safe at last” (Berenstain, 2005, p. 197).

Character education recommendations. The discussion for this story centered on the many children’s books Jan and Stan Berenstain have written, and why editor Janet Schulman (2005) might have chosen this particular story for the anthology. Participant-coder M.E. indicated the selection of this story for the anthology surprised her, because most of the Berenstain Bear stories with which she is familiar did have a storyline where positive character traits could have been easily identified.

Participant-coder S.A. concurred, and indicated she was disappointed that, of all of the many Berenstain Bear books containing lessons on morals and values, editor Schulman (2005) chose this particular story for the anthology. Schulman indicated that she specifically selected for the anthology one of the Berenstain Bear stories which did not contain any positive character traits, and both participant-coders were mystified as to why she would have done this.
The story was examined for specific character traits, and any show of courage by the bears was judged to be more a matter of self-preservation than of true courage, and instances where the bears used of good judgment followed examples of using extremely poor judgment. The participant-coders deemed those examples to be more of the Bears getting themselves out of a bad situation than that of considering options and considering what was right or wrong. In analyzing the story for positive character traits given by the USDOE (2005), neither participant-coder could find any of the 10 traits suggested in the story.

“The Elves in the Shelves” from the book *A Necklace of Rainbows* (originally published in 1968)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** The beautifully illustrated story was written by Joan Aiken, who included it as one of the chapters of the book, *A Necklace of Rainbows*. It is the story of Janet, a young girl who is celebrating her birthday. Unfortunately, Janet’s family is not there to celebrate it with her. Mother has gone to visit a sick granny, and Father has to go and drive the train that night. He tells Janet “Shut your eyes and go to sleep, and in no time at all it will be tomorrow, and I shall be home for breakfast” (Aiken, 2005, p. 198).

Janet is a bit frightened, as she does not like being home alone. She tries to close her eyes and go to sleep, but all of a sudden hears a queer noise. She gets up to investigate, and finds all of her brand-new books have opened themselves, and the creatures in them are coming to life. She saw “elves in the shelves, mermaids in the bathtub, penguins in the ice-box, rabbits in the coal-bin, peacocks on the table and seals
in the sink” (Aiken, 2005, p. 198). She gets up and plays with all of the toys, only to hear a plaintive wail from a tiger in the corner. No one is playing with him.

Janet begins to play with him, only to find he plays very roughly with the other creatures. He chases the mermaids and the rabbits and the peacocks, much to Janet’s chagrin. She tells him he is playing much too roughly, and he must be more gentle with her friends. She wants him to return to his book, and asks him to do so. He tells her he feels the need to run. If he can run around, he says, he will be much calmer and will not feel the need to chase anyone.

Janet agrees to let him run outside, and says she must keep an eye on him. While they are outside, the tiger runs “faster than the wind, faster than the weather, (and) faster than the fastest clouds” (Aiken, 2005, p. 201). He does this to help a man whose hat has blown off, a woman who belonged in tomorrow, and a boy who needed to be saved from an angry zoo animal.

Finally, Janet realizes she has been out all night, and her father will be home soon from work. She implores the tiger to hurry home so she can get all of the characters back in their books where they belong. They run home together, and Janet goes to sleep. She wakes up to see her father making her breakfast, with him having no idea what he has missed while he was at work.

**Character education recommendations.** Participant-coder M.E. felt this story was an imaginative one, and she had never read a story similar to it. She did not enjoy the story, as she found it too bizarre. Although the tiger showed some self-discipline when he went outside and stopped playing roughly with others, she did not feel this merited the story being credited as one that could be used to teach Self-discipline. While
the tiger did show compassion for the people he assisted, he wanted something in return, that is, the opportunity to run outside and not return to the house. Participant-coder S.A. said when he was helping these people, she felt the tiger was not doing it out of compassion for them, but mostly because he wanted to show off. Both participant-coders agreed the book characters’ coming to life helped Janet’s loneliness, but did they do so to help her or because they wanted to play? Their motives were unclear, and as such, the character trait of Compassion was found to be slightly present in this story, however, the nine remaining character traits listed by the USDOE (2005) were not found in it.

_Ten, Nine, Eight (originally published in 1983)_

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author-illustrator Molly Bang specifically drew the illustrations in this story featuring a child of color as a tribute to her internationally adopted daughter (Schulman, 2005). The book was named as a 1984 Caldecott Honor book. Bang also won a 2000 Caldecott Honor for her book, *When Sophie gets Angry—Really, Really Angry* and a 1981 Caldecott Honor for *The Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher* (ALA, 2010).

This book shows a child preparing to go to bed. Her stuffed animals are ready, her shoes are lined up neatly, her father is sitting with her, her eyes are droopy, and finally, she has her fuzzy bear with her and is ready to go to sleep. The story is told with gentleness and a minimum of words.

**Character education recommendations.** Participant-coder M.E. felt this book, rather than being targeted to pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2 students, would be better for pre-school children. She read this story to her 2 and 3 year old year old nieces, who loved it. Participant-coder S.A. also felt the story was geared to the very young.
Although the story was a sweet one, none of the USDOE (2005) 10 character traits were found to be present in it.

_Stellaluna (originally published in 1993)_

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author-illustrator Janell Cannon wrote this story “in hopes of debunking negative myths about bats” (Schulman, 2005, p. 299). It tells the tale of a young fruit bat named Stellaluna, who loses her mother when they are attacked by an owl, and is raised by a family of birds. Try as she may, she doesn’t quite fit in. She does not like eating bugs, she insists on hanging upside down, and she is able to fly at night. When the mother bird tells Stellaluna she is setting a poor example for her baby birds, Stellaluna promises to obey Mama Bird and to act more like a bird. A chance encounter with another bat forces Stellaluna to realize what she has been doing was “wrong for a bird, maybe, but not for a bat” (Cannon, 2005, p. 211). As she and her new bat friend are talking, a group of bats flies up to meet them. One of the bats is Stellaluna’s mother, who is shocked to find Stellaluna was not killed in the owl attack. Stellaluna brings her baby bird friends to meet her mother, and in doing so, tries to have them fly at night. When the baby birds nearly perish from attempting to fly in the darkness, Stellaluna saves them. She returns to her bat family, and yet feels close to her bird family. While musing on their similarities and differences, she declares them to be life-long friends.

**Character education recommendations.** This story was familiar to both participant-coders, both of whom listed this as one of their favorite books in the anthology. Participant-coder M.E. used this story with her Kindergarten class several weeks ago, when they discussed facts about bats. Participant-coder S.A. used this when
she taught first grade students to do a comparison of fictional and non-fictional books about bats. Neither, however, had ever used it to teach character education.

They examined the book for positive character traits listed by the USDOE (2005), and both participant-coders found Stellaluna exhibited a moderate amount of Responsibility. She promised Mama Bird she would try to act more like a bird and less like a bat. When she was out in the forest, she carefully considered her promises, and asked herself if her actions went against her parents’ wishes or her conscience (Lickona, 2004). After considering her choices, she fulfilled her promises, even when Mama Bird was not around to check on her.

In addition, Stellaluna was sensitive to the needs of others, and she went out of her way to be helpful to the baby birds when they could not see in the dark. She did this because they were her friends and not because she was expected anything in return. This was part of the definition of Compassion (Knowles & Smith, 2006). Stellaluna was not the only animal who showed compassion. Mama Bird agreed to take Stellaluna in to her nest and care for her, even though Stellaluna was not a member of her family.

The primary character trait present in the book, as agreed upon by both participant-coders, was Respect for others. In all circumstances, Stellaluna respected the differences of the bird family with whom she lived. She did not think it strange or odd that they ate bugs and hung right side up instead of upside down. The birds never made fun of Stellaluna for trying to hang upside down. Mama Bird asked her not to do so, but only out of concern for Stellaluna’s safety and the safety of her children. Stellaluna and the baby birds forged a friendship in spite of their differences. She declared no matter how different they were, “we’re friends. And that’s a fact” (Cannon, 2005, p. 213).
D.W. The Picky Eater (originally published in 1995)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author-Illustrator Marc Brown has written many books in which Arthur the Aardvark and his family are featured. D.W. is Arthur’s younger sister. The story begins when D.W. refuses to eat many of the good foods her mother serves. If a food is healthy, is a vegetable (i.e., especially if it is spinach), or is served with a sauce, D.W. does not want anything to do with it. The only food she enjoys is plain spaghetti. After she throws a tantrum at a restaurant, her parents finally decide taking her out to eat is more trouble than it is worth and leave her home with a babysitter while the family goes out to a restaurant.

Her curiosity is piqued when her brother Arthur comes home with a little parasol from some food that he was served at a fancy restaurant. The family announces they will be visiting a different fancy restaurant for Grandma’s birthday. D.W. tells her family she wishes to go. Her parents warn her that she must eat whatever the restaurant serves, with no complaining allowed.

At the restaurant, D.W. is crestfallen to discover that the restaurant has neither little parasols nor plain spaghetti. She orders Little Bo Peep Pot Pie, and surprisingly, enjoys it. When her mother asks the waiter how to make the dish, all are surprised when the waiter says the dish’s primary ingredient is one D.W. usually hates, spinach!

**Character education recommendations.** Participant-coder S.A. found this to be a cute story and felt it was easily relatable to young children. She felt this would be a good story to encourage children to at least try a new food. Participant-coder M.E. was very familiar with the works of Marc Brown and had previously been exposed to the
characters in the story. She noted he always included examples of behavior that children find relatable in stories of his that she has read.

After examining the 10 character traits recommended by the USDOE (2005), both participant-coders agreed that there were only 2 traits, Honesty and Good judgment, which were present in the book. Both participants noted D.W. was not dishonest (e.g., she fed her dinner to the dog, but did not lie about it), but she was not exactly forthcoming about it either. The biggest discussion centered on D.W.’s decision to attend Grandma’s birthday party. Was it a case of her showing good judgment? Did her action meet the definition of the character trait, by showing she listened to her conscience rather than to the crowd? After examining her motives, both participant-coders agreed her desire to go to Grandma’s birthday was centered on two ideas: first, she had seen her brother get a parasol from a restaurant, and she wanted one, and second, her family seemed to be having lots of fun without her. D.W. felt she was missing out on something, and it was this reason, and not necessarily good judgment, that changed her mind.

**Petunia (originally published in 1950)**

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author-illustrator Roger Duvoisin wrote over 40 children’s books and illustrated over 140 more, including the Caldecott Medal winner, *White Snow, Bright Snow* (Schulman, 2005). The book, *Petunia*, is the first in a series of books about Petunia the goose.

Petunia is a goose that lacks self-confidence. One day, she finds a book. Knowing that people who can read are smart, Petunia pretends she knows the words in the book and can read it. She feels that if she takes the book “and love it, I will be wise
too. And no one will ever call me a silly goose again” (Duvoisin, 2005, p. 219). She sleeps with the book and walks around with it. She is so very proud of her book that it affects her temperament. She becomes proud, so proud, that her neck grows longer and longer. Her friends, who also cannot read, trust her when she tells them facts, all of which are incorrect. She tells a Mother hen the number six is lots more than the number nine. She tells a poor horse she must go in and pull all of his teeth (i.e., she fancies herself a dentist) and because of what Petunia told him, he suffers in silence, and never speaks of his toothache again. The results of her advice are generally not good, and they become disastrous when she convinces a group of her friend that a box contains candies. In reality, it contains dynamite. When the animals open the box, and eat the “candies,” they are blown all over the barnyard. Many of them are gravely injured.

Petunia feels terrible about her vanity and her fakery. Although none say it, her friends now realize she cannot read, and Petunia is downhearted. In the explosion, the book has opened. She had never realized it contained words inside. She realizes it is not enough to possess a book. To have true wisdom, one must know how to read it and apply the knowledge in it.

**Character education recommendations.** This was a wonderful book that showed what happens when characters pretend to be something they are not. Participant-coder S.A. said this book was effective for several lessons on life. The first lesson was others might have told you something that was not true. The second lesson she noted was that children should be confident in who they are, and not worry about having the latest and greatest hot ticket item. Petunia had heard about books, and had been told about how wonderful books could be, but she had never learned to read and did not know what a
book could do. Participant-coder M.E. indicated that the story teaches children the importance of knowing how to read.

Both participant-coders noted that Petunia seemed rather full of herself. The mere fact that she possessed a book seemed to make her think she was wise. It was questioned as to whether Petunia’s offer to help the other animals (e.g., her offer of assistance to the donkey with a toothache) was an example of the character trait of Compassion. Was she truly compassionate, or was she just showing off? Children in first and second grade could have debated this. With regard to the character trait of Honesty, S.A. noted the animals trusted Petunia to be honest, and they should not have done so. She was dishonest, and the animals were injured as a result. Participant-coder M.E. indicated she loved this example in the book of how the choices one makes affect others.

*First Tomato (originally published in 1992)*

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author Rosemary Wells has written many books for young children, most notably the popular, *Max and Ruby* collection. This book, while written for the same age group as *Max and Ruby*, does not feature those characters.

A little bunny named Claire has had a terrible day at school. Everything has gone wrong: her shoes fill with snow on the way to school, math lasts for more than 2 hours, and lunch was her least favorite thing of all, baloney sandwiches. She fantasizes about what might happen if she were at home instead of in class. In her dream, she visits Bunny Planet, where it is summer, and she hears her mother calling to her. Her mother tells her to go into the garden and pick a ripe tomato. She arrives in the garden to find
that only one of the tomatoes is ripe. She desperately wants to eat it, but instead saves it for her mother, who makes her some yummy tomato soup.

**Character education recommendations.** When she saw that the author was Rosemary Wells, participant-coder S.A. was expecting one of Wells’ famous *Max and Ruby* books. She was surprised to find this character was quite different from any other Wells authored books that she had read. Participant-coder M.E. had never read this story or any of Wells’ works, and initially thought this was going to be a story for very young (i.e., pre-school and younger) children. She found this was not the case.

In viewing the character education traits in *First Tomato*, both participant-coders began with comments about how no matter what Little Bunny really wanted to do, she did the right thing by bringing her mother the only tomato in the garden. The dialogue included thoughts of her dreaming of eating it, but she did not. Although it was the only example of Responsibility in the story, it was a strong one, mostly in that we could see her thoughts on the page. Little Bunny was also Honest. Participant-coder M.E. noted that on page 230, the bottom illustration showed her eating baloney sandwiches, which Little Bunny indicated was her least favorite lunch, but she ate them anyway, without complaint. She did not throw the sandwiches away or lie about having eaten them. Even though she did not like her lunch, she did go ahead and eat it.

In examining the story for the character trait of Good judgment, S.A. noted how the entire second half of the story centered on the tomato, which Little Bunny had found. Would she eat it or would she not? While the story went back and forth as to what her decision would be, S.A. indicated she enjoyed the inner dialogue of Little Bunny, having noted that young children often have had that same type of inner dialogue. Since Little
Bunny decided to do the right thing and gave the tomato to her mother. S.A. felt she could use this story to teach Good judgment, and this character trait was a major theme of the story. Participant-coder M.E. felt since there was only one, albeit strong, example, she would have classified it as a moderate theme of the story. M.E. felt the stronger theme in *First Tomato* was that of Respect for others. M.E. noted she “really had to dig into the illustrations” to complete the story. She said the illustration at the bottom of page 230 showed Little Bunny not disturbing others and respecting the other children in her class. M.E. felt Good Judgment was the major theme of the story, in that there were many places where Little Bunny could have made a poor decision, and she thought about what she was supposed to do, and decided to do the right thing.

*Amelia Bedelia* (originally published in 1963)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author Peggy Parrish wrote many stories featuring the character, Amelia Bedelia, a housekeeper who takes instructions very literally and just cannot seem to get things right. When directed to “change the towels,” she gets some scissors and cuts them to shreds, wondering if she has changed them enough. When asked to draw the drapes in the parlor, she gets out a sketchbook and tries her best to illustrate them. The final straw comes when the butcher delivers meat, and her written directions are to dress the chicken. Amelia Bedelia dresses him in a little outfit, much to the horror of Mrs. Rogers, the lady of the house.

Just as she is getting ready to be fired, Amelia serves Mr. Rogers some lemon meringue pie that she made to surprise the family. The pie is delicious, and Mrs. Rogers decides to let Amelia Bedelia keep her job. She learns to be very specific in her directions to Amelia, knowing that Amelia takes instructions very literally.
Character education recommendations. After an examination of the story for character traits, the first part of the discussion centered on the whether or not Amelia Bedelia could be said to be Responsible. Participant-coder S.A. argued that yes, Amelia Bedelia showed high levels of responsibility since she did 100% of everything she was assigned to do by Mrs. Rogers. The Rogers family was away for the day, and despite the fact that there was no one at home to help her or remind her, Amelia did every single task on the list. Even though she misinterpreted the directions, she did all she had been asked to do to the best of her ability. Therefore, S.A. felt Amelia Bedelia could indeed have been held as a model of the character trait, Responsibility.

Participant-coder M.E. said “I looked at it the completely opposite way.” It was true that Amelia Bedelia did not need to be nagged or reminded to do the chores assigned to her. However, she should have known that Mrs. Rogers did not want the chicken dressed in an outfit or the towels cut up into pieces. M.E. felt the better choice for the character trait exhibited by the central character was Self-respect. Amelia Bedelia worked very hard to try to perform her tasks and to please the Rogers family. She went above and beyond what they had asked her to do by making them a lemon meringue pie. In the story, she is heard telling herself, “I do make good pies” (Parish, 2005, p. 235).

The secondary discussion involved the sophisticated humor of the book. S.A. felt that only first graders with an elevated vocabulary would understand this book, and that children would have to have a fairly developed sense of humor for the book to make sense. M.E. agreed, saying this story is not the best for pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2 students, unless a teacher takes a great deal of time before reading the story to explain all of the literal terms in it. Would a young child understand the dual meanings of “trim
the steak” (e.g., Amelia trimmed it with lace and bows) or “put out the lights” (e.g., Amelia Bedelia hung them outside on the clothesline)? Both participant-coders felt young children would not understand these references, and therefore, despite the fact that it contained examples of Responsibility and Self-respect, it would not be the best book for this age group.

I Am a Bunny (originally published in 1963)

Author biographical notes and plot summary. Author Ole Risom was a “picture book art director who was responsible for many of the best mass-market books published in the United States after World War II” (Schulman, 2005, p. 303). He collaborated with illustrator Richard Scarry on this and other books.

This story centers around Nicholas, a little bunny who lives in a hallow tree. In beautiful, detailed illustration, he details his experiences of watching the seasons pass. In the spring, he picks flowers, and plays with butterflies. In the summer, he lies in the sun and watches birds and frogs. In the fall, he watches leaves tumble to the ground and sees animals getting ready for winter. In winter, he watches snow falling and curls up in his hollow tree where he dreams of spring.

Character education recommendations. Both participant-coders commented on the beautiful illustrations, and the detail with which Scarry drew the frogs, trees, birds, and butterflies in the story. Participant-coder M.E. felt this simple book would have been better geared toward the very young, perhaps preschool aged children. Participant-coder S.A. felt the book could have been used to show the passing of seasons for children in pre-Kindergarten. Neither participant-coder felt the book contained any of the character traits found in the USDOE (2005) guidelines.
Harry the Dirty Dog (originally published in 1956)

Author biographical notes and plot summary. Author Gene Zion and his wife, illustrator Margaret Bloy Graham, collaborated on this book (Schulman, 2005). Together, they wrote and illustrated several books featuring Harry, a black and white spotted dog who loves adventure. Harry lives with a family, who loves him and cares for him, and the only thing that he does not like about his family is that they insist he take baths.

One day, as he sees the children in the family get out the scrubbing brush and hears the water running, he decides to run away to avoid a bath. He heads down the street, runs around a construction zone, trots through a railroad area, and then plays in a coal chute and gets filthy. After having all of this fun, he becomes tired and hungry, and decides to return home. He crawls through a hole in the fence and sits at the back door waiting to be noticed. The family does eventually notice him, but they think that he is a stray dog, and then someone asks “By the way, has anyone seen Harry?” (Zion, 2005, p. 252). Upon hearing this, Harry tries very hard to convince them that he is in fact, Harry. However, he is so filthy, and looks so different that the family does not recognize him.

Finally, he gives up. He grabs the scrub brush, and begs for a bath. The children oblige, and soon discover that the little black dog with the white spots is, in fact, a little white dog with black spots. They are overjoyed when they realize that it is Harry. He feels so wonderful to be home that he falls asleep on a pillow, having hidden the scrub brush below it.

Character education recommendations. This was, along with the sequels, a classic children’s story. Children in Kindergarten and first grade adored the character of
Harry and were eager to read the sequels. When I have taken out a set of Harry books for a reading group, there were always cheers from the children who would read it that day.

Participant-coder S.A. had read this story to young children. They enjoyed reading about the lovable dog and found the story line easy to follow. For her, the primary character trait demonstrated in the story was that of Compassion. The family looked for Harry and worried about him when he was gone; they gave a bath to what they thought was a stray dog.

Participant-coder M.E. agreed that the family showed Compassion in looking for Harry, but she thought that once he returned to the house, the parents would have recognized the stray dog as Harry, even though the children did not. It was only when M.E. reached the very end of the story that she realized the parents had not, in fact, recognized him at all. They were truly being compassionate to a dog that they did not know. She, however, felt that the major turn of events occurred when Harry decided to return home, even though he knew that he would end up facing the dreaded bathtub. Even though it was only one example of Good judgment, it came at a turning point in the story, and she felt that this was the story’s strongest character trait.

*Whose Mouse Are You?* (originally published in 1970)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author Robert Kraus was a cartoonist for the *New Yorker*, and yet, he ironically only wrote and did not illustrate his works of children’s literature (Schulman, 2005). His story of a mouse is written in a dialogue format, with the reader providing the questions. It is the story of a solitary mouse who cannot find his family.
The reader asks about the mouse’s mother, only to be told that a cat has eaten her. His father has been caught in a mousetrap, and his sister is climbing a mountain, far from home. He despondently tells the reader that he has no brother, while trying to figure out how to rescue his family.

He finally decides to take action. He will shake his mother out of the cat, and the illustration shows the cat being shaken and the mother escaping. He will free his father from the trap, and the illustration shows him rigging up an ingenious jack-in-the-box to do so. He will use a hot air balloon to go and get his sister off of the mountaintop. As far having a brother, all he can do is wish for one, “as I have none” (Kraus, 2005, p. 262). The end of the story shows him getting a banquet from his mother, racing in a tiny car with his father, looking at a mural painted by his sister, and surprisingly, playing with a tiny mouse, who he tells us is his brand-new, wished for little brother!

**Character education recommendations.** The stark and simple drawings caught the eye of both participant-coders, and the heroic efforts of the mouse were also noticed. Participant-coder S.A. indicated that, due to the limited amount of text in the story, she really had to dig in to the illustrations. After examining them, S.A. concluded that the mouse was not only Compassionate in helping his family, but noted that rescuing them took a great amount of bravery. After all, this mouse not only went near a cat, he actually touched it to get it to release his family member. As she discussed, “If you’re a mouse, it is a big deal to free your mom from a cat and your dad from a mousetrap.”

Participant-coder M.E. had never read this book, thought it to be very different from many other of the stories in the anthology, and initially thought that, due to the limited text, it might be a book for very young children. She then mentioned that the
book was “actually a lot deeper than I thought.” She felt that this would be a good story to teach sequencing to Kindergarten students, and that the mouse’s Courage could also be used as an example for them.

Both participant-coders wrestled with which of the 10 character traits recommended by the USDOE (2005) they felt that this book best exemplified. The mouse was clearly courageous for rescuing his entire family, and his compassion for his family members caught by cats and traps is clear. However, both participant-coders felt that the trait of Self-respect was the trait most strongly represented in the book. They both referenced the part of that definition that said “they do not need money or power to feel good about themselves” (USDOE, 2005, p.12), and felt that this accurately described the mouse. He tried to reach his goal of getting back his family by making good choices and working hard, which was also part of the definition of self-respect. Both participant-coders agreed that this trait was the one best exemplified in this story.

Owen (originally published in 1993)

Author biographical notes and plot summary. Author-illustrator Kevin Henkes is well known for his many books featuring mice characters with human-like feelings and traits. He has written and illustrated such books as Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse, Chrysanthemum, and Julius, the Baby of the World. Many of his books feature young characters in a school setting, which make them perfect for children in pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2. Owen is a Caldecott Honor book (ALA, 2010).

In Owen, the little mouse in the story has a yellow fuzzy blanket, which he has had since he was a tiny baby. He loves the blanket, which he has named Fuzzy, more than anything, and takes it everywhere he goes. One day, the elderly neighbor tells his
parents that Owen is “getting a little old to be carrying that thing around” (Henke, 2005, p. 267), and tells them about how a Blanket Fairy can come in the middle of the night and replace the blanket with a toy. Owen, hearing of the plan, stuffs the blanket into his pajamas. The Blanket Fairy does not come, and the blanket continues to trail Owen everywhere he goes. The neighbor informs them that if they put vinegar on the blanket, Owen will not like the smell, and he will get rid of it. The parents try this trick, only to have Owen bury the blanket in the sandbox, dig it up again, and pronounce it “good as new” (p. 272). His parents are getting desperate, as they know that school is going to start soon, and he cannot take the blanket with him. Finally, his mother, after seeing the neighbor with her handkerchief, has the idea to cut Fuzzy into handkerchief sized pieces so that Fuzzy can accompany Owen in a socially acceptable way everywhere that he goes.

**Character education recommendations.** Participant-coder M.E. had never read this story and thought that it was a “super-cute story that I will now read at the beginning of the year to my Kindergarten students. I’ve seen kids go into their backpacks and touch something that they have in there at the beginning of the year.” Participant-coder S.A. agreed with M.E.’s assessment, noting that she loved Kevin Henkes’ books because they related to children in a way that did not talk down to them and was not preachy.

In examining the story for character traits suggested by the USDOE (2005), both participant-coders found several USDOE (2005) character traits present in the story. Participant-coder S.A. felt that Owen’s parents showed Good judgment. She noted that rather than just pulling the blanket away from him or throwing it away, they tried to come to a decision that they could all agree upon. She also felt that the character trait of Self-
respect was present in the story, in that, Owen was able to be creative when he made his
own fun with Fuzzy. He did not care about what others thought of the fact that he carried
a blanket everywhere that he went.

Participant-coder M.E. also felt that the character trait of showing Respect for
others was a major theme in this story. She noted that Owen’s parents were so very
patient with him and that they did not give up, even when none of the advice from the
neighbor worked to rid Owen of the blanket. M.E. also felt that the character trait of
Fairness was present to a moderate extent in the story. Owen’s parents tried to treat
Owen the way that they themselves would have wanted to be treated.

Both participant-coders agreed that, despite the other character traits present in the
story, the character trait that was present to the greatest extent was that of Compassion.
Knowles and Smith (2006) indicated that compassionate people are sensitive to the needs
of others. Findlay (2001) indicated that compassionate people try to understand the
feelings of others and go out of their way to be helpful. Owen’s parents were extremely
sensitive to the fact that he did not want to rid himself of the blanket. Owen regarded it
as his favorite toy. As such, it was not just a blanket, and his parents realized that.

Participant-coder S.A. looked at the story holistically, noting that not only did his
parents leave Owen with the blanket, but they had conversations with him regarding the
fact that he would not be able to take it to school. Participant-coder M.E. noted that there
were multiple examples of his parents showing Owen Compassion. She said “As a mom,
while reading this story, I felt myself saying ‘tell him NO,’ but his parents didn’t do that.
They worked with him. Even though they might have wanted to, they didn’t give up!”
It is clear that the story of Owen contained several of the character traits found in USDOE (2005) guidelines. This story could have been used to teach Self-respect, Fairness, or Compassion. Children have had favorite items that they have slept or played with. They would not only enjoy the story, but would hear about how compassionate people solve a problem.

*The Story of Ferdinand (originally published in 1936)*

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Author Munro Leaf wrote over 40 books for children, but his most popular is this story about a bull who loved to sniff flowers. *The Story of Ferdinand* was actually labeled as “subversive” (Schulman, 2005, p. 301), banned in Spain and Nazi Germany, and called pro-Communist in the U.S. The editor of the anthology, Janet Schulman, (2005) called *The Story of Ferdinand* the first book she remembers owning and reading, and the book is still featured on bookshelves at bookstores and libraries today.

Ferdinand is a different sort of bull. While most bulls in Spain dream of fighting in the bullring, Ferdinand just wanted to sit in the sunshine and enjoy nature. He did not want to play with other bulls, and his mother would worry about him. She would tell him to go out and run and butt his head, but he refused, telling her “I like it better here where I can sit just quietly and smell the flowers” (Leaf, 2005, p. 277). His mother saw that he was happy when he was quietly enjoying the outdoors, and so she let him be.

One day, a group of men from the bullfighting ring came to Ferdinand’s village. They were trying to find the most ferocious bull. All of the other bulls tried to look fierce and angry, so that the men would pick them, but Ferdinand did not wish to be selected, so
he simply sat under the cork tree to enjoy himself. Unfortunately, he did not see that where he was prepared to sit, there was a large bumblebee.

When he sat down, the bee stung him on his hind quarters. Ferdinand jumped up in the air. He ran around the field huffing, puffing, and snorting. He was head butting and pawing the ground.

The men sent to pick a bull were overjoyed! They thought that they had found themselves the most ferocious bull in Spain. They called him Ferdinand the Fierce, and took him to the bull ring to fight the proud matador, who was prancing around the ring in a red cape and bowing to the ladies.

Unfortunately for them, the bee sting was no longer bothering Ferdinand, so when introduced, he simply came out and sat down in the ring. He could smell the flowers in the ladies’ hair, and he was not at all interested in fighting. The men who chose him were angry, and the matador was angrier still, but Ferdinand did not care. He just sat in the middle of the ring, smelling flowers, until they took him home, where he still lives today, under the cork tree.

**Character education recommendations.** Both participant-coders and I were stunned to read that this book was banned in several countries and was considered by some governments to be subversive. Discussion centered about the reason. Perhaps it was because Ferdinand could have been called a pacifist. Perhaps it was because he did not want to join the crowd and do what the other bulls did. It surprised us that a book about a bull who likes nature could have provoked such uproar.

In terms of character traits recommended by the USDOE (2005), Ferdinand showed Good judgment. He did what he felt was right instead of doing what others
encouraged him to do. He also showed Courage, in that, he did not do what was popular and what his acquaintances wanted him to do. He did not behave in a normal way for a bull, and he did not seem to care.

While Good judgment and Courage were both presented in a moderate extent in the book, both participant-coders agree that the character trait of Self-respect was the trait most strongly represented in the book. According to the USDOE (2005), people who demonstrate self-respect have a positive identity that focuses on their personal integrity and talents. Ferdinand clearly had this. He felt good about himself even though he was not like other bulls. He made choices that he felt were right for him and did not let the fact that the vast majority of his friends made other choices bother him. He was confident in who he was, even though he went against the norm.

Discussion also centered on the fact that the counselor at S.A.’s school used this book with children in Grades 3-5. Even though these children were older than the recommended age for the anthology, S.A. said that she understood how such a story could help children focus on their strengths and talents, and how Ferdinand could teach children to just be themselves.


**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** Theodore Seuss Geisel wrote over 40 children’s books, including two Caldecott Honor books. In 1980, he was awarded the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award, given for his entire body of work in children’s literature (Schulman, 2005). He is one of the best-known authors of children’s literature in the United States.
The Sneetches are mystical creatures that somewhat resemble a kangaroo. There are two types of Sneetches: ones that have a large star on their bellies, and ones that do not. The star-bellied Sneetches feel that they are superior to the plain-bellied Sneetches, simply by virtue of their star. They brag about having a star and refuse to even speak with a plain-bellied Sneetch. The plain-bellied children were not allowed to play with a star-bellied Sneetch and were not even allowed to come near a Sneetch with a star. “That’s how they treated them year after year” (Seuss, 2005, p. 283).

One day, an entrepreneur named Mr. McBean makes his way to the village, where he demonstrates a new machine. Guaranteeing low prices and quick service, he offers to put a plain-bellied Sneetch into his new machine and out will pop a star onto that plain-bellied Sneetch’s stomach. One Sneetch tries it, and the machine works. Out he pops with a star on his belly. He is now a prestigious star-bellied Sneetch.

The illustrations show what happens next. Every plain-bellied Sneetch in town puts down dollar bills and enters the machine. The Sneetches who exit the machine have looks of pure bliss on their faces, realizing that they are now part of the elite star-bellied set. To the star-bellied Sneetches, they yell “We’re exactly like you! You can’t tell us apart. We’re all just the same, now you snooty old smarties! And now we can go to your frankfurter parties” (Seuss, 2005, p. 289).

The star-bellied Sneetches are in a panic. The plain-bellied Sneetches are right! If everyone has stars on their bellies, how will they be able to tell themselves apart from their former enemies?

Not to worry, Mr. McBean tells them. Now that everyone has stars on their bellies, stars are no longer the trendy thing to have. He offers them a trip through his
“star off” machine: a machine guaranteed to remove a star from anyone’s belly. The star-bellied Sneetches take him up on his offer and take a trip through the new machine. When they come out without stars on their bellies, they brag about it to their enemies. Not to be outdone, their enemies also enter the machine, so now no one in town has a star on their bellies.

The former star-bellied Sneetches enter the star machine and so do the plain bellied Sneetches. They go around and around between both machines, until Mr. McBean has collected all of the money in the town. When he leaves town with a huge pile of money, he tells himself laughingly that they will never learn, because you cannot teach a Sneetch anything.

Mr. McBean was not correct. After having spent all of their money on getting stars or removing them, the Sneetches decide that a Sneetch is a Sneetch, and that it does not matter whether there is a star on their belly or not. Sneetches with and without stars resolved to bury the hatchet and to become friends.

**Character education recommendations.** Both participant-coders noted that the story contained no compassion, in that, the star-bellied Sneetches clearly felt and acted superior to the plain-bellied Sneetches. Not only did the characters demonstrate little compassion in the story, but they also did not use good judgment. They paid Mr. McBean over and over again; first to have a star put on their bellies, then to have the stars taken off:

The end of the story, where all of the Sneetches realized the futility of putting stars on and then paying to have them taken off, did demonstrate Self-respect. It was at the very end, where Mr. McBean had driven off with a sack full of money that the
Sneetches decided to ignore their differences and to get along with each other. Although the USDOE (2005) described someone, who “does not need lots of money or power to feel good about themselves” (p. 12), as having Self-respect, in this case, the Sneetches were not concerned with money or power. They decided that one did not need a star on a stomach to be a true Sneetch.

*The Story of Little Babaji* (originally published in 1899, re-written in 1996)

**Author biographical notes and plot summary.** This story was re-written from the original publication called, *The Story of Little Black Sambo*. The editor of the anthology, Janet Schulman (2005), felt that *The Story of Little Black Sambo* would have been offensive to include in the anthology, but enjoyed Fred Marcinello’s new version of it, written in 1996.

It is the story of Little Babaji, who lives in India with his mother and father. His father went to the bazaar and bought Little Babaji a green umbrella and a pair of purple shoes. His mother made him a lovely red coat and a cute pair of blue pants. With all of his new clothes, he looked so grand!

He went for a walk in the jungle, where he met a tiger, who told him “I’m going to eat you up!” (Marcinello, 2005, p. 294). Little Babaji begs the tiger for his life, telling him that he will part with his lovely red coat if Tiger will spare his life. The tiger agrees, and goes off into the jungle with Little Babaji’s red coat.

Upon the jungle path, Little Babaji meets other tigers, who also threaten to eat him. He begs these tigers for his life and agrees to part with his green umbrella, his purple shoes, and his beautiful blue pair of pants. He is left with nothing but his underwear, and as he is walking home, he sees a curious sight. All of the tigers are
arguing over which one of them is the grandest. They were fighting and arguing so much that they began to chase each other, where they whirled so fast that they melted away into a big pool of “ghi” (i.e., melted butter).

Little Babaji’s father is walking through the jungle, and he comes upon the pool of melted ghi. He is elated to find it, as he knows that he can gather it and bring it home. He does so, and Mama is so pleased that she decides to make pancakes with it. Little Babaji eats 169 of them and gets back at the tigers who wanted to eat him by eating them.

**Character education recommendations.** Participant-coder S.A. was familiar with the story, *The Little Black Sambo*, as her father had read it to her as a child, and it had been read to him when he was a child. S.A. thought that this was an interesting take on an old story, and that it would be a good story to share with young children at her school.

Participant-coder M.E. had never read *The Story of Little Black Sambo*, and thus did not know the connection between that story and this one. She felt that the story was hard to follow, and that the illustrations helped a young reader follow the nuances of it. Both participant-coders examined the story for character traits recommended by the USDOE (2005) and did not find that *The Story of Little Babaji* contained any of those character traits.

**Chapter Summary**

The analysis in Chapter Four provided detailed information as to the thoughts of the participant-coders as they reviewed each story. In Chapter Five, the findings are summarized, and specific information is provided on the absence or presence of each character trait within every book in the anthology.
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

The purpose of this qualitative content analysis was to discover to what extent, if any, the 44 children’s books contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), could be used by early childhood educators to blend language arts instruction with the tenets of character education according to USDOE (2005) guidelines in grades pre-K through Grade 2. Included in Chapter Five are: (a) the summary of the findings as well as the answers to the research questions, (b) implications as a result of the study findings, (c) limitations to the study, (d) recommendations for educators and administrators, and (e) recommendations for future research in the area of character education linked with children’s literature.

Summary of the Findings

In Research Question 1, it was asked: What, if any, themes relating to values and morals do participant-coders identify as being present in books contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005)? Nine of the 10 character traits from the recommended list in the USDOE (2005) program were found in the 44 stories in the anthology. Only 1 of the 10 values, the character trait of citizenship, was not found in any of the 44 stories in the anthology. Displayed in Table 2 are the number of stories in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud*, that contained each of the 10 character traits recommended by the USDOE.
Only 2 of the traits, Compassion and Respect for Others, were found in 10 or more of the anthology stories (Schulman, 2005). The character trait of compassion was found more frequently, it was present in 16 of the 44 stories. Having compassion for others is a Biblical mandate given to us in 1 Peter 3:8: “Finally, be all of one mind, having compassion one with another, love as brethren, be tender hearted, be courteous” (KJV). Psalm 103:13 also shows how Jesus has compassion for his followers: “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him” (NIV).

The character trait of Respect for Others was found in 10 of the 44 stories. Showing respect for others is also a Biblical mandate. Romans 12:10 tells us to “Be devoted to each other with mutual affection. Excel at showing respect for each other” (ISV). Colossians 4:5 tells believers to treat even non-believers with respect. “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity” (NIV). Also, listed in Table 2 are the percentages for the frequency of character traits recommended by the USDOE (2005) and found in the stories.
Table 2

*Percentages of Character Traits Found in the Stories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Trait</th>
<th>Number and Percent of Stories in which Character Trait Was Found</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>found in 16 of the 44 stories (36.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for others</td>
<td>found in 10 of the 44 stories (22.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Respect</td>
<td>found in 9 of the 44 stories (20.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Discipline</td>
<td>found in 7 of the 44 stories (15.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Judgment</td>
<td>found in 6 of the 44 stories (13.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>found in 4 of the 44 stories (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>found in 4 of the 44 stories (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>found in 4 of the 44 stories (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>found in 3 of the 44 stories (6.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>found in 2 of the 44 stories (4.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>found in none of the 44 stories (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The focus of Research Question 2 was: To what extent are the books contained in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), appropriate or suited for use by an early childhood educator who wishes to link language arts instruction and character education, as defined by U.S. Department of Education (USDOE; 2005) guidelines? Through the use of content analysis of the 44 four books in the anthology, it was found that 26 of them (59%) were contained at least 1 of the character traits suggested by the USDOE.

Cohen’s kappa for the trait which was most frequently exemplified in the 44 stories, was 0.754. This rating indicated that the raters had substantial agreement on
which trait was most exemplified in the 44 stories contained in the anthology (Landis & Koch, 1977). For all 10 traits evaluated in each of the 44 stories in the anthology, the inter-rater reliability was found to be .737 ($p < 0.001$), 95% CI (0.682, 0.783). This was also an indication of substantial agreement between the raters (Brennan & Prediger, 1981; Landis & Koch, 1977).

Those 26 stories which contained 1 or more of the 10 character traits suggested by the USDOE (2005) were: (a) *Madeline*, (b) *A Chair for My Mother*, (c) “The Letter” from *Frog and Toad are Friends*, (d) *Make Way for Ducklings*, (e) *A Million Fish* . . . *More or Less*, (f) *A Boy, A Dog, and A Frog*, (g) *Millions of Cats*, (h) *Guess How Much I Love You*, (i) *Curious George*, (j) *Miss Nelson Is Missing!* (k) *Where the Wild Things Are*, (l) “The Cat Club” from *Jenny and the Cat Club*, (m) *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*, (n) *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*, (o) “In Which Pooh Goes Visiting and Gets into a Tight Place” from *Winnie-the-Pooh*, (p) *Bedtime for Frances*, (q) *The Story of Babar*, (r) “The Elves in the Shelves” from *A Necklace of Raindrops*, (s) *Stellaluna*, (t) *Petunia*, (u) *First Tomato*, (v) *Amelia Bedelia*, (w) *Harry the Dirty Dog*, (x) *Whose Mouse Are You?* (y) *Owen* and (z) *The Story of Ferdinand*.

Many of the 18 stories, which were not found to contain any of the 10 character traits recommended by the USDOE (2005), were deemed to have at least some worth for young children. The participant-coders found many of those 18 stories to be: (a) creative, (b) imaginative, (c) geared toward children who were younger than those in pre-Kindergarten, or (d) useful for teaching grammar, story structure or another area of academics. The strengths of these 18 stories were simply not in ways that early childhood educators could use for character education according to USDOE guidelines.
In that, early childhood educators may wish to use the stories in the anthology to teach a particular character trait, listed in Table 3 are each of the character traits, with the titles of those books which present positive depiction of those character traits.
Table 3

*Character Traits and the Stories in which They Can Be Found*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character trait</th>
<th>Title of book carrying positive depiction</th>
<th>Number of examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td><em>A Chair for My Mother</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Make Way for Ducklings</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Stellaluna</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Amelia Bedelia</em></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>“The Letter” from <em>Frog and Toad are Friends</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Owen</em>&lt;br&gt;“In Which Pooh Goes Visiting and Gets Into a Tight Place” from <em>Winnie the Pooh Guess How Much I Love you?</em>&lt;br&gt;“The Cat Club” from <em>Jenny and the Cat Club Millions of Cats</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Sylvester and the Magic Pebble</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Stellaluna</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>The Story of Babar</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Madeline</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>A Chair for My Mother</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Make Way for Ducklings</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Bedtime for Frances</em>&lt;br&gt;“The Elves in the Shelves” from <em>A Necklace of Raindrops</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Petunia</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Harry the Dirty Dog</em></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td><em>Mike Mulligan and the Steam Shovel</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>First Tomato</em></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Judgment</td>
<td><em>First Tomato</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Stellaluna</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Owen</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>A Chair for My Mother</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Make Way for Ducklings</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>A Million Fish . . . More or Less</em></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character trait</td>
<td>Title of book carrying positive depiction</td>
<td>Number of examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Respect for Others | “The Letter” from *Frog and Toad are Friends*  
 |                    | *Stellaluna*  
 |                    | *First Tomato*  
 |                    | *A Chair for my Mother*  
 |                    | "In Which Pooh Goes Visiting and Gets into a Tight Place" from *Winnie the Pooh*  
 |                    | *Owen*  
 |                    | *Guess How Much I love You?*  
 |                    | *Miss Nelson is Missing!*  
 |                    | *Bedtime for Frances*  
 |                    | *The Story of Babar* | 10 |
| Courage            | *A Chair for My Mother*  
 |                    | *Whose Mouse Are You?*  
 |                    | “The Cat Club” from *Jenny and the Cat Club*  
 |                    | *Stellaluna* | 4 |
| Citizenship        | none                                                                                                          | 0 |
| Self-Respect       | *The Story of Ferdinand*  
 |                    | *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*  
 |                    | *Mike Mulligan and the Steam Shovel*  
 |                    | *Whose Mouse Are You?*  
 |                    | *A Chair for My Mother*  
 |                    | *Curious George*  
 |                    | *Where the Wild Things Are*  
 |                    | *Amelia Bedelia*  
 |                    | *Owen* | 9 |
| Fairness           | *Owen*  
 |                    | “The Cat Club” from *Jenny and the Cat Club*  
 |                    | *Stellaluna* | 3 |
In Research Question 3, it was asked: How do the 44 books in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), compare and contrast in terms of opportunities to explore the 10 character education traits presented in the U.S Department of Education (2005) guidelines? While 26 of the stories in the anthology were found to contain at least 1 character trait recommended by the USDOE, seven of the stories contained 3 or more of those character traits. Two of the stories, *Stellaluna* and *A Chair for My Mother* contained 7 character traits each. Listed in Table 4 is each book in the anthology which was found to contain 3 or more character traits recommended by the USDOE. This would prove helpful to an early childhood educator, who wishes to use a story to teach or focus on a particular character trait.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Type of Character Traits Contained Within</th>
<th>Number of Character Traits Contained Within</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stellaluna</td>
<td>Responsibility, Compassion, Good Judgment, Respect For Others, Courage, Fairness, Self-Discipline</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A Chair for My Mother</em></td>
<td>Responsibility, Compassion, Good Judgment, Respect For Others, Courage, Self-Respect, Self-Discipline</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owen</td>
<td>Compassion, Good Judgment, Respect For Others, Self-Respect, Fairness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>First Tomato</em></td>
<td>Honesty, Good Judgment, Respect For Others, Self-Discipline</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Make Way for Ducklings</em></td>
<td>Responsibility, Compassion, Good Judgment, Self-Discipline</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Letter” from Frog and Toad are Friends</td>
<td>Compassion, Respect For Others, Self-Discipline</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Cat Club” from Jenny and the Cat Club</td>
<td>Compassion, Courage, Fairness</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implications of the Findings

This research was shaped by a Biblical worldview with a formational paradigm. As educational leaders in the classroom, teachers who hold a formational paradigm believe they not only need to teach academic subjects to children, but they also need to “challenge the wayward and give comfort to the hurting” (Miller, 1995, para. 6). The implications of this research are that teachers, who want to incorporate character education in their pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2 classrooms, can indeed use some of the stories from The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud (Schulman, 2005) as a foundation for these lessons.

While Kilpatrick, Wolfe, and Wolfe (1994) noted that it can be difficult for teachers to find books that contain both virtues and an interesting story line; many of the stories contained in the anthology did indeed fit this description. The editor, Janet Schulman, collected 44 stories, 26 of which contain at least one of the virtues suggested by the USDOE (2005). The anthology is readily available to teachers (Brozio-Andrews, 2012; KatieB, 2010) and is even in the collection of local libraries, so teachers could obtain it at low or no charge. Teachers whose schools do not give them a formal character education program to use and who find themselves unable to afford one due to the cost (Yandles, 2008), will be able to use 1 of these 26 stories from the anthology and teach character education in combination with the use of the no-cost USDOE character education program.

Limitations of the Study

This researcher examined only the stories contained in Schulman’s (2005) anthology, The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and
Stories to Read Aloud. No other stories or anthologies were researched. In addition, the two participant-coders read and examined each story only for the 10 character traits from the USDOE character education program *Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen* (2005). A focus on the anthology for a broader or more limited set of character traits might have led to different results. In addition, although both participant-coders had widely varying amounts of education and teaching experience, other participant-coders, whose life experiences or background is dissimilar from theirs might have interpreted the stories differently.

**Recommendations for Educators and Administrators**

Educators who wish to teach character education and who are not given guidance by their schools, can use the findings to select books linked to a particular character trait. Educators, who want high-quality, read aloud books for their students, will find 13 award-winning examples of such in this anthology. If they are asked to focus on a particular character trait during a certain month, they can use the results from this study to determine which book in the anthology might best fit the requirement.

Administrators whose schools are on a limited budget, would be able to purchase the low-cost anthology for use in their school, knowing that the stories in it contain character traits. If these administrators are in a school without a formal character education program, the anthology combined with the USDOE (2005) guidelines can help to start one. The fact that the USDOE (2005) booklet is in the public domain means that these administrators will not have to pay for a formal character education program.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Several recommendations come to mind for those who wish to study either character education or children’s literature. Schulman’s (2005) collection of 44 stories is
impressive (Snelson, 2012). However, research, which involves other anthologies or collections, might be useful for early childhood educators who wish to read stories with a positive emphasis on character traits.

One suggestion given by the participant-coders was to analyze the works of one author or a set of authors, such as the Berenstains or Marc Brown. In addition, examining a set of children’s books with one commonality might also lead to opportunities to explore character education. It is possible that a study of Caldecott Award or Caldecott Honor books could prove valuable. An examination of literature which has won the Charlotte Zolotow Award (i.e., given for best text in a children’s book) might be useful. Research which involves books that have won the Coretta Scott King Award, which is “given annually to outstanding African-American authors and illustrators of books for children” (ALA, 2013, para. 1) might also offer an additional insight as to what early childhood educators could use.

Another recommendation would be to examine children’s literature for the antithesis of positive character traits, and to see how examples of these negatively portrayed traits could be used to teach character education to young children. As an example, in the anthology’s story Petunia, the lead character told a lie with such conviction that her friends believed her without question (Duvoisin, 2005). This simple act of dishonesty on Petunia’s part led to the serious injury of her friends. A researcher might want to examine how stories such as this one could be used with children in pre-Kindergarten through grade two to emphasis the trait of honesty or other positive character traits.
Lastly, researchers wishing to further study the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud* (Schulman, 2005), might use different criteria or character education program on which to judge it. There are a variety of methods and lenses through which it might be examined. An open coding system could be used, or using an *a priori* system denoting character traits suggested by an alternative character education system might also prove useful.

**Conclusion**

In these days of budget cuts and mandates from local school boards, state agencies, and developers of the national Common Core Standards, teachers are being asked to do more with little time and even less money. It would be tempting for them to skip the state, federal, and Biblical mandates to teach our children about character, and to stick to instructing only academics, but it would be doing them a disservice, and it would be doing a disservice to the future of our country as well. Hal Urban, author of *Life’s Greatest Lessons: 20 Things that Matter*, stated in regard to character education in 2012: “The widespread belief among politicians and pundits is that high test scores are everything. I disagree. What matters most is character. Working hard, treating others with respect and honesty--those are the keys to success” (p. 59). For our children to be successful, we must not only teach them the 3 Rs, we must also teach them respect, responsibility, and the other character traits they will need in order to be productive members of society.
References


Sami, J. (2012, April 8). Forsyth keeping up with growth. Forsyth County News, pp. 1A, 4A.


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Codebook

Story: *Madeline*  
Pages: 1–14

1. Responsibility

Characters do what they are supposed to do without being nagged or reminded. These characters try their best to do what they are supposed to do. They are accountable for their choices. They consider the consequences of what they do before doing it. They keep promises made to others, and they complete tasks that they are obligated to fulfill.

*none or small extent*  
*moderate amount*  
*major theme of story*

*notes:*

2. Compassion

They have empathy for others who are weaker or who are in a negative situation. They are sensitive to the needs of other people and animals (Knowles & Smith, 2006). They try to understand the feelings of other people or animals and they go out of their way to be helpful (Findlay, 2001). They are willingly generous with their time and supplies, and they make themselves of service to others. They do this without expecting anything in return for their actions.

*none or small extent*  
*moderate amount*  
*major theme of story*

*notes:*

3. Honesty

Book characters who demonstrate honesty do more than just tell the simple truth. These characters demonstrate honesty in either their words or their actions. They admit mistakes, do not exaggerate to impress people, and never take credit for the words or ideas of others (Findlay, 2001). They try to be sincere and truthful. They commit honest acts even if no one is watching or keeping track of what they are doing. They earn the trust of others through their actions.

*none or small extent*  
*moderate amount*  
*major theme of story*

*notes:*

198
4. Good Judgment

Book characters who demonstrate good judgment think about situations that they find themselves in, consider what is right or wrong, and make the appropriate choice at a turning point in the plot for that situation (USDOE, 2005). They consider the consequences of different reactions that they might make in these situations. These characters listen to their conscience rather than to the crowd (Findlay, 2001). They ask themselves “Does this go against my parents’ wishes, my religion, or my conscience?” before acting (Lickona, 2004). They consider the consequences or what they might do, and then make a decision.

5. Respect for Others

Book characters who demonstrate respect for others care about how others feel. These characters demonstrate this respect for others by believing that the ideas, thoughts and feelings of others are important (Lewis, 2005). They treat others with kindness and respect. They ask themselves certain questions, such as “Does this follow the Golden Rule?” They show respect for others in the way that they speak and in the way that they behave (Bartier & Young, 2009). They accept the differences of others, even if those differences are mental, physical, or cultural.

6. Courage

Book characters who demonstrate courage face their fears and do what they believe is correct, even when others are doing something else (Bartier & Young, 2009). They defend those who are not able to defend themselves. They try to develop an internal sense of toughness to do the right thing, not only for themselves, but on behalf of others.

notes:
7. Citizenship

Book characters who demonstrate citizenship demonstrate pride in their community in either their words or their actions. They make the effort to get along with those in the community, and they encourage those in the community to get along with each other. They obey laws or rules and respect authority even when no one is watching (Findlay, 2001). They encourage adults to vote, and they are patriotic and respectful of national symbols.

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{none or small extent} & \text{moderate amount} & \text{major theme of story} \\
\end{array}
\]

notes:

8. Self-respect

Book characters who demonstrate self-respect have a positive identity that focuses on their integrity and talents (USDOE, 2005). They try to reach their goals through hard work and the choices that they make. “They do not need lots of money or power to feel good about themselves” (USDOE, 2005, p. 12).

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{none or small extent} & \text{moderate amount} & \text{major theme of story} \\
\end{array}
\]

notes:

9. Fairness

These characters demonstrate this fairness in either their words or their actions. They try to give everyone the rights and opportunities that they themselves have (Lewis, 2005). They willingly share and they take turns when participating in an activity.

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{none or small extent} & \text{moderate amount} & \text{major theme of story} \\
\end{array}
\]

notes:
10. Self-Discipline

Book characters who demonstrate self-discipline control their conduct and desires (Hall, 2000). These characters demonstrate this self-discipline in either their words or their actions. They regulate their actions so that they can accomplish tasks or improve their behavior. “One of the main characteristics of self-discipline is the ability to forgo instant and immediate gratification and pleasure, in favor of some greater gain or more satisfying results, even if this requires effort and time” (Sasson, 2010, para. 2).

none or small extent moderate amount major theme of story

notes:

______________________________________________

Notes for the story Madeline

Narrative notes for Madeline: ________________________________________________

Which, if any, of the 10 character traits listed above are best exemplified in this story?
Appendix B

IRB Approval

September 13, 2012

Suzy Francine Besson-Martilotta
IRB Application 1411: More Than Just A Good Book: Employing U.S. Department of Education Guidelines to Teach Character Education Using Literature

Dear Suzy,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application.

Your study does not classify as human subjects research because it does not involve obtaining information about living individuals. Your coders are functioning as research assistants by facilitating your analysis of the collection of literature.

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by submitting a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Application number.

If you have any questions about this determination, or need assistance in identifying whether possible changes to your protocol would change your application’s status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054

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Appendix C

IRB Consent Form

More than Just a Good Book:
Employing U.S. Department of Education Guidelines
to Teach Character Education Using Literature

Suzy F. Besson-Martilotta
Liberty University
College of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of character education and children’s literature. You were selected as a possible participant because you have experience teaching children in grades pre-Kindergarten through grade two. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by:
Suzy Besson-Martilotta, Liberty University, College of Education

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to discover how children’s literature can be used to teach the tenets of character education according to U.S. Department of Education guidelines in a pre-Kindergarten through second grade setting.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, the researcher would ask you to do the following things: You would be asked to read an anthology of children’s literature, and then to rate each of the stories according to the morals and values contained in it. There will have a discussion about the ratings, and these discussions will be audio-taped, and the audio tapes will be transcribed.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has minimal risks. You will be reading books and rating them.

The benefits to participation are that depending on the results of the study, teachers of young children (those in grades pre-Kindergarten through grade two) may be able to use the anthology to teach character education.

Compensation:

You will not receive any payment for your participation.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report the researcher might publish, she will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records
will be stored securely and only the researchers will have access to the records. The computer used for this study is password protected via face recognition software, and any written information or audio files will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or with the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:**

You may withdraw from the study by notifying the researcher in person, by phone, or via e-mail.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Suzy F. Besson-Martilotta. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at (770) (omitted) or at sfbessonmartilotta@liberty.edu. The advisor for this study is Dr. Rick Bragg, and he can be reached at (404) (omitted) or at rbragg2@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to having the discussions regarding the stories in the anthology audio-taped and transcribed. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: ____________________________________________ Date: ________________

Signature of Investigator: ___________________________ Date: ________________

**IRB Code Numbers:** 1411

**IRB Expiration Date:** September 13, 2013
Appendix D

Questions and Procedures for Working with Participant-Coders
In The Pilot Phase

A. Preliminary background questions to be used when the participant-coder and the researcher first meet

1. How long have you taught school?

2. Out of all of your years of teaching, how many of those years were teaching pre-Kindergarten through grade two?

3. Have you ever taught character education using a formal program or specified content? If so, which program or content did you use?

4. In what subjects do you use (or did you use) children’s literature to assist in your teaching?

5. Are there any particular books written by certain authors or series of children’s literature that you use to help you teach pre-Kindergarten through grade two? If so, who are those authors or what are those series? Why did you pick those particular authors or series?

6. Are there any books in children’s literature that you can think of that are particularly essential to a subject that you teach? What are those books and what do you use them to do?

B. Questions concerning using children’s books for character education
(These will only be used the first time the researcher and participant meet.)

1. What is your familiarity with the U.S. Department of Education (2005) character education program?
2. We will look at the 10 character traits that the U.S Department of Education (2005) feels are crucial for children. With each of the character traits given, please write a one or two sentence response for what you feel that trait encompasses in a pre-Kindergarten through grade two classrooms.

a. Compassion

b. Honesty

c. Fairness

d. Good judgment

e. Respect for others

f. Self-respect

g. Courage

h. Responsibility

i. Citizenship

j. Self-discipline

3. The participant-coders and I will discuss each character trait, and a formal definition of each trait listed the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE; 2005) program will be given

a. Preliminary sample research will be done on the book, *Apples to Oregon*, by Deborah Hopkinson. This book will be used in that while it is recommended by Schulman (2005) in the anthology, *The 20th Century Children's Book Treasury: Celebrated Picture Books and Stories to Read Aloud*, the book was published too late to be included in it. Thus, it can be analyzed freely without fear of prejudicing the
participants. After a preliminary discussion as to what each character trait encompasses, the participants will score this book separately on a chart for each of the 10 character traits contained in the U.S. Department of Education (2005) guidelines.

b. Preliminary research will continue on the book, *Apples to Oregon*, with the participants writing a narrative summary as to how this book encompasses or does not encompass each of the 10 values as defined in the U.S. Department of Education (2005) program.

c. Following independent analysis of the book, *Apples to Oregon* (Hopkinson, 2004), the participant(s) and I will meet to discuss their findings. Stephens (2006) indicated that a discussion following content analysis will help participants “understand the process and [to] increase inter-rater reliability” (p. 148).

d. Following this discussion, the participant(s) and I will analyze the second and third books in the “too good to miss” category from the anthology. These books are titled, *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type* (Cromin, 2000) and *Toot and Puddle* (Hobbie, 1997). The participants will score these books separately for each of the 10 character traits suggested by the USDOE (2005).

e. Preliminary research will continue on *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* (Cromin, 2000) and *Toot and Puddle* (Hobbie, 1997) with the participants giving a narrative summary as to how these books
encompass or do not encompass each of the 10 values as defined in the 2005 U.S. Department of Education program.

f. Following independent analysis of *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Talk* (Cromin, 2000) and *Toot and Puddle* (Hobbie, 1997), the participant-coders (s) and I will meet to discuss their findings.

g. Cohen’s kappa will be calculated after the pilot study on the three sample books. Any areas not demonstrating inter-coder reliability will be discussed, and definitions will be adjusted to ensure that all participants are clear with what each character trait means.

h. After calculating Cohen’s kappa, a discussion of any areas of disparity between participant-coders will occur, and the researcher will “refine the instrument and coding instructions until the informal assessment suggests an adequate level of agreement” (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002, p. 600).

i. After examining, rating, evaluating, and discussing the three sample books, the participants will then analyze the first seven books contained in the anthology. The analysis will consist of ratings of the 10 character traits as listed on a chart, as well as a narrative description of the character traits in each of the books.

j. Following an analysis of the first 7 books, the participants and I will gather to discuss the findings. The remainder of the books in the anthology, 44 of them, will be coded and then discussed approximately
every 2 weeks. No more than 7-9 of these short stories will be done at one time to guard against participant-coder fatigue (Neuendorf, 2002).
Appendix E

Codebook Directions

1. The first time that you look at the story, read it in its entirety to get a feel for it. Do not code anything, but make a mental note of who the main character(s) are and what the theme of the story is.

2. After reading it for the first time, think about the story. What was the author trying to convey to young children?

3. The second time that you read it, use yellow sticky notes to mark areas where you feel that the character traits listed below occur. View each story as a whole. Do not note small instances of a character trait. For example, if a character in a story is seen in an illustration with an American flag in the background, one could say that the story shows citizenship. However, it is possible that this may not be a major theme in the story.

4. If you do not feel that any character traits below are exemplified in a story, feel free to not mark any of the pages. If you see any character traits that are not given in the list of 10, please ignore those.

5. Then, if any character traits did occur in the story, mark the codebook with the page number where the character traits occur, adding a comment to each area where a character trait is shown in the story.

6. Add any final comments that you have in the “notes” section. If necessary, use the back of the page or more paper.
Appendix F

Sample Codebook Page

Story: *A Chair for My Mother*  
Pages: 27-31

10. **Self-Discipline**

Book characters who demonstrate self-discipline control their conduct and desires (Hall, 2000). These characters demonstrate this self-discipline in either their words or their actions. They regulate their actions so that they can accomplish tasks or improve their behavior. “One of the main characteristics of self-discipline is the ability to forgo instant and immediate gratification and pleasure, in favor of some greater gain or more satisfying results, even if this requires effort and time” (Sasson, 2010, para. 2).

*Notes for the story A Chair for My Mother*

Narrative notes for *A Chair for My Mother*  
The family in this story is definitely working together for a common goal - re-building their lives after a fire destroys everything. Lots of options for using this story (character ed + beyond...)

Which, if any, of the ten character traits listed above are best exemplified in this story?  
Self discipline.