

Problematizing Yertle the Turtle, the Lorax, and Horton through Critical Literacy, Global Issues and Freire's Tenets

by

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ABSTRACT

Through the use of children's literature, this thesis encourages educators and parents to expose children, from an early age to texts that promote critical thinking. In order to identify texts that do so, an evaluation tool was done to three Dr. Seuss books to identify if they portrayed McDaniel's characteristics of critical literacy, three of Freire's tenets, and Yakovchuk's global issues. After each of the elements were identified in the Dr. Seuss's books *Yertle the Turtle*, *The Lorax* and *Horton Hears a Who!*; the findings were critically analyzed using a holistic approach. As a result, these evaluations revealed that the three Dr. Seuss's books lend themselves to the use of critical pedagogy by presenting the characteristics of critical literacy, Freire's tenets, and global issues. Ultimately, this thesis motivates educators and parents to choose books which encourage children to think critically and become active agents in their world.

RESUMEN

Esta tesis provee a educadores y padres una herramienta de evaluación que puede ser utilizada para seleccionar textos que promuevan el pensamiento crítico. Dicha evaluación identifica once elementos en textos de niños: las características de alfabetización crítica establecidas por McDaniel, tres principios de Freire y los problemas globales presentados por Yakovchuk. Tres libros de Dr. Seuss fueron seleccionados para el análisis: *Yertle the Turtle*, *The Lorax* y *Horton Hears a Who!*; luego se analizaron cada uno de los hallazgos con un enfoque holístico. Como resultado, estas evaluaciones revelaron que los tres libros se prestan para la enseñanza de pedagogía crítica mediante la presentación de alfabetización crítica, los principios de Freire y problemas globales. Finalmente, esta tesis proporciona a los educadores y padres una herramienta de evaluación útil y accesible para seleccionar libros que inciten a los niños a pensar críticamente y se conviertan en agentes activos en su mundo.

DEDICATION

Because my victories are your victories, this is primarily for you My Lord and Savior.

To my supporting and loving husband Javier and my amazing baby boy, Ian.

To whom has been like a father to me...Nelson.

And to all those incredibly strong women whom I admire,
my wonderful mother Myriam, Leslie, Magda, and Catín.

...and to the memory of my loving father, Hector.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

According to the *English Program Content Standards and Grade-Level Expectations of Puerto Rico's Department of Education* (DEPR), since 1948-49 the Department has offered a curriculum focused on the teaching of English as a Second Language (13). This curriculum design follows a “balanced literacy” approach towards the teaching of language. Balanced literacy provides students literacy instruction where reading is the main focus thus allowing “the standards of listening, speaking, and writing to be taught in context” (13). In addition, this curriculum is designed to ensure students with a “path for literacy development from grade to grade in order to create independent, *life-long readers and learners*”(13). Moreover, not only does the program’s vision focus on the communicative skills, but its mission and vision state it seeks for students to “be critical and creative thinkers” and to “communicate in the English language in a creative, reflective and critical manner” (14).

It is here, where I began to question the genuineness of these statements as well as the goals listed in the official DEPR *Curriculum Framework*. Is clear what is intended to be accomplished when the word “critical” is used in such statements? Up to what point do teachers allow students to become critical in their education? According to the standards, it is not until ninth grade where students “progress from the reading of literature and literary discussions to thinking, comparing, and interpreting” (14). Note the word used is *thinking* not *critical thinking* and also when it refers to literacy it is only that and not *critical literacy*. Nevertheless, the purpose of this study is not to scrutinize the whole *Curriculum Framework* and point out its possible *short comings*, rather these statements serve as the main reasons on how and why topics such as critical thinking, the implementation of a critical pedagogy, and the teaching of critical

literature and literacy in the elementary classroom became main concerns in my teaching career as a critical educator.

As a teacher and having majored in English literature, I believe that when reading takes place, so does meaning, and when something becomes meaningful in one's life, we can also become empowered by it. This event can take place since early childhood and children do not necessarily have to wait until ninth grade to become empowered by the literature read. It is at this point, that critical intellectual development can begin much earlier than what is suggested by the DEPR's Curriculum Framework. Thus, by taking into consideration Freire's critical pedagogy, I am able to identify the importance of reading and of using literature to understand the world around us, hence, becoming more critical about it. This is an event which, based on my experience as a former student of the public system, did not take place in my education, and unfortunately, may not take place for future generations either.

A NEED FOR AN ALTERNATIVE PEDAGOGY

In a class discussion I had during the Fall Semester of 2010, there was a debate on whether education is political or not. Honestly, at that moment the statement was not clear to me and I could not really understand how education could be political. Then, I began to recall articles such as *Orientations in Language Planning* where Ruiz explained how language issues could be oriented as a problem, right, or resource. Ruiz stated that the way we view language or the orientation we may have towards language "delimit the ways we talk about language and language issues, they determine the basic questions we ask, the conclusions we draw from the data, and even the data themselves" (4). Therefore, as educators, it is crucial how we view language education, because, in the end, it is our orientation the one which will help us move (or not) from language as a problem orientation to language as a resource. Furthermore, education is

political because besides taking place solely in the classroom based on the assigned curriculum and/or standards, it is also based on the teacher's philosophy of education and the lens by which they view the world.

The understanding that teacher's own philosophy of education impacts their teaching triggered my curiosity further; I realized I needed to look for an alternative pedagogy. As a result, after reading Freire's book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, I began to make connections with the way I believed education should take place, i.e. using literature as the main resource in language education. I do not agree in having students memorize information which will further be regurgitated onto an exam just as it was delivered to them; this is Freire's rejection of the banking concept which will be explained in detail further on. The banking concept is frequently employed in the language classroom, particularly in the primary levels of language education; this is the place where it is mostly taking place. At the elementary level, very little space is allowed for students to become active members in their education; they are just being educated. What is the problem with this? I believe that in order to reject the banking concept, teachers should allow their students to "take on the role of the subject of the act" (Gadotti 11). In other words, students will not be the *object*, they will no longer be the target container to be filled with static information with the one true and only perspective of the *all knowing teacher*, but rather they will be able to participate in their education, not passively, but actively.

Another point is that when it comes to the implementation of literature in a language classroom, a lot is mentioned about the text being relevant to the student's environment and whether they can relate to what is being presented; I agree with this statement to a certain extent. In an article written by Jean Anyon titled, *Social Class and School Knowledge*, a study was conducted on elementary students from five different social classes, two were working class, one

was middle class, another was an affluent professional class, and the last the executive elite class. In the article, students from all social classes were at some point presented with the same question: what is knowledge? Most children's answers were it was something given to them, but not something they could create. The social classes where some students believed they could create knowledge were the affluent professionals and the elite; the rest would not even dare to believe they were capable of creating knowledge or even that they had some knowledge in them. The working class students' expectations of themselves were much less than those in the higher class; some of the answers they gave when they were asked what they wanted to be when they grew up was they were not "smart enough" (Anyon 11). Answers such as this only echo what teachers believed of their students. A second grade teacher was asked what would be important knowledge for her students and her reply was "Well, we keep them busy" (Anyon 7). This is only a small sample of what many children are confronting on a daily bases in their classrooms. Because of events as these, I believe not only should children be given the opportunity to be educated using texts that are relevant to the world around them, but also, in order for them to create better and higher expectations of themselves and of the world which surrounds them; they should be educated with texts which show them what is happening all over the world. This will equip them with the necessary cultural knowledge; it will contribute to what Bourdieu calls, to their "cultural capital."

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital was created "as attempt to explain the unequal social scholastic achievements of children from differing social classes by relating academic success to the distribution of cultural capital amongst and within classes, rather than inherent ability" (qtd in Carrington and Luke 102). In other words, a child's academic success does not solely rely on their abilities, but also in the distribution of this cultural capital among them.

Cultural capital is defined as “those forms of cultural knowledge, such as language, modes of social interaction, and meaning, [which] are valued hierarchically in society” (qtd in Cadiero-Kaplan and Smith 375). Therefore, those who obtain this cultural capital, this knowledge, can become active citizens in their society thus preventing them from becoming one more member of the marginalized social group.

According to Carrington and Luke, having cultural capital, an *objectified capital* such as text and materials physically transmissible to others, and *institutional capital* such as academic qualifications and awards, ultimately will be converted into money thus defining and placing a person in a specific social status (102). Nevertheless, thinking about literacy and this cultural capital exclusively as a means to acquire economic capital, defeats the whole purpose of educating for a social change. Although it is argued children from higher class acquire a better education than children from lower class, teachers still have the opportunity to provide a space for children to become empowered by the education they receive. Teachers should show students the wide range of possibilities they can achieve by pursuing an education which goes beyond a specific set of skills. If not, teachers would be “promoting a social hierarchy where select intellectuals, their professional colleagues and the economically privileged become the only individuals deemed fit to determine the culture’s sacred canon of knowledge, the elite assure their position and status” (Cadiero-Kaplan and Smith 376). Therefore, teachers, especially those working with students who are economically or socially disadvantaged students, should (and I would argue *have to*) guide students to understand what is happening around them at a larger scale. In other words, not only can the teacher discuss current topics which are affecting them and they can relate to, but also, the teacher can present what is happening around the world; as a

result this will help students understand their world a lot better and become active participants in their education (critical learners).

HOW AND WHY THIS TOPIC?

It all began in the Fall semester of 2010 while I was taking the *Models for Teaching Literature* course. During that class, Professor Dr. J. Irizarry spoke about Paulo Freire and his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*...I was fascinated! I had already taken many other courses with this professor during my bachelor's degree, and had always been impressed and surprised at the way he teaches his courses. But, it was not until that Fall Semester of 2010 when I realized the philosophies which guided this extraordinary professor... Paulo Freire. He had never before mentioned Freire in class, but there, in that graduate course, I made the connection between the Professor's way of teaching and Freire. Since then, I have been striving constantly to become that kind of educator, one who teaches along with the students and learns along with them too—an educator who believes in each students' potential so they can become aware of their valuable contributions to the classroom and accordingly to the world.

As a result, integrating critical pedagogy into what would become my thesis became a priority. Then, in a conversation with Dr. Rosa Román, I found the missing link to what would then develop in to this thesis. Dr. Román spoke to me all about a well-known children's book author, Dr. Seuss. She spoke to me about, not only the most popular and well known books, but also about those books which were banned and those which caused great controversy upon being published. The more I learned about Dr. Seuss, the more I was compelled to integrate his books to teaching children critical pedagogy; I want children to think... and to think critically. This is what this thesis stems from: my quest as an educator and as a parent because I believe in teaching children to think critically starting at an early age. In my both roles, I would like my son

to participate actively in his education, to be aware, conscious about issues which are affecting his world, and to honestly and tangibly believe he can be an active participant. Therefore, I humbly offer this thesis as helpful resource to educators and parents, who also wish to promote critical pedagogy and which can be implemented and readjusted as they see fit.

PAULO FREIRE

When most educators talk about critical pedagogy it is certain that the name Paulo Freire will come up. What educators know about critical pedagogy is thanks to Paulo Freire and his most recognized book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire was born in Brazil in 1921 and died in 1997 (Steinberg). While Freire was growing up he “learned about poverty and oppression through the life of the impoverished peasants around whom he lived” (Steinberg). Because of this childhood experience, Freire, as an adult, decided to teach peasants literacy skills in order for them to cease to be part of a marginalized group of people. Some examples of teaching experience with the peasants in Brazil are found in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *Reading Paulo Freire, His Life and His Works*, and *Literacy: Reading the Word & the World*. During those years of teaching in Brazil, Freire was considered by the wealthy landowners as “dangerous and subversive” and because of that, he was imprisoned and then deported; nevertheless, he continued to teach in Chile afterwards (Steinberg). Through his books, Freire seeks to open the eyes of educators so they can realize the transformative power critical education has. Therefore, education could not be limited to only transmitting information, but to educate for a purpose; and that purpose is for social change. Through Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire describes concepts such as *The Banking Concept*, *Praxis*, *Conscientization*, *Dialogue*, *Generative Themes*, and *False Generosity* among others, all of these concepts are directly related to the way Freire proposes education should take place. Freire also argued about *critical consciousness*, he believed learning

“is grounded in the learner’s own being, their interaction with the world, their concern, and their vision of what they can become” (Steinberg). Because of this Freire believed education had to be relevant to the individual and should not be focused only on the teachers, but grounded on students’ interest. Freire promoted literacy instruction and reading the word as a way of reading the world. In fact, Freire’s way of teaching literacy was “a way of like where one used reading and writing skills as tools to care for other people” (Steinberg). His teaching philosophy is not egotistic, therefore it is not teacher centered, rather centered on students’ needs. What is even more interesting and about Freire is that, as an educator, he does not present his ideas as a set of rules to be followed in order to have success as a critical educator, but they are a set of philosophies that each educator can personalize and adapt to their own teaching context.

ON BEYOND ZEBRA: INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT DR. SEUSS

Theodore Seuss Geisel, or Dr. Seuss, is mostly known by Puerto Rican’s for several of his books like *The Cat in the Hat* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, while others may know him only through film adaptations of his books *Horton Hears a Who!* and his most recent book which was adapted to the big screen: *The Lorax*. He may be also known to others because he has written and illustrated approximately 44 children’s books plus several other books which were not illustrated by him. But, there is more to Dr. Seuss than his books, and that is what this section is about.

After having read *The Seuss the Whole Seuss and Nothing but the Seuss*, I began to know the person behind the stories. One of the things which struck me the most was an experience Dr. Seuss went through at an early age. Dr. Seuss's grandfather was German, and although Seuss was born in the state of Massachusetts, due to the fact that World War I was taking place, some people "called him and his family hurtful names... [and] he never forgot how that felt" (Waxman 10). Because of these incidents Dr. Seuss learned at an early age “that those in power can cause

bad things to happen to people, seemingly at random, even to people who are working responsibly and trying to do the right thing” (Cohen 15). As a child, Dr. Seuss knew about injustice, intolerance, and rejection. As a result, Dr. Seuss presents these issues in his books, but not in a way to instill fear or helplessness (as most of the stories which had a moral), but as a way to instruct children and teach them how to deal with them. Cohen stated that even though he "rebelled against the morals of the stories themselves, the concept that a children's story should have an instructive role was one that Dr. Seuss adopted" (21). Dr. Seuss did want children to read and managed to grab their attention by amusing them with the illustrations he made (62)¹.

There seems to be much more to Dr. Seuss than a bunch of rhymes and wacky illustrations. He wanted to teach about the important issues of his days and became the first one to present these in children’s books, "so that children would grow up already knowing what it took him [Dr. Seuss] several decades to recognize" (Cohen 221). Dr. Seuss believed in children, in their ability to think critically about issues that are happening around them. According to Cohen, Dr. Seuss's success was because “he believed that children's abilities and their imaginations exceed[s] adult's expectations” (300). He believed in the ability children have, even with a book with invented words such as *On Beyond Zebra!* In this story a boy is told that the alphabet does not have to end in Z, and invents other letters to come up with more invented words. With stories such as this, Dr. Seuss seems to be encouraging children to go beyond what is presented to them as absolutes, so they can go above and beyond and discover new things. Dr. Seuss even did this with the amount and the type of words he used in his children’s books, he did not limit them to what is known as *High Frequency Words*, because he “felt that all these lists

¹ Dr. Seuss wrote and illustrated most of his books; nevertheless several books are under the pseudonymous of Theo Leseig, which are those books written by Dr. Seuss but illustrated by someone else.

did was limit children by placing lower expectations on them” (Cohen 300). Therefore, it is visibly noticeable that Dr. Seuss wanted children to think critically.

Through his stories, Dr. Seuss also encouraged children to respect differences. According to Cohen, the story *The Sneetches*, published in 1961, was Seuss’s “first real strike against bigotry” (309). This story aims at identifying issues of prejudice, rejection, and intolerance just as in *Horton Hears a Who!*—Issues which, as stated before, Dr. Seuss confronted at a very early age. Over and over again, Seuss wanted children to think critically about the text, the content, and even the images. He thought that through children’s imagination, children could be empowered, an empowerment which cannot be provided only through the memorization of a list or words. Dr. Seuss portrayed his disagreement towards this method through his book *The Tough Coughs as He Ploughs the Dough*, published in 1989, which displays the deficiency of memorizing the “sight words” from *Dolch’s* words list by presenting words which are written exactly the same, with completely different pronunciations. During Dr. Seuss’s time, this kind of thought was “downright radical.... [because he] had encouraged readers not to settle for the routine” (Cohen 316). His ideas "drastically changed the landscape of children's literature," but not everyone agreed to accept his work, nor the theories embedded in them. For that reason is that Dr. Seuss’s stories are perhaps ideal for those, who not only enjoy reading for pleasure, but also for those who dare to think *on beyond zebra...*

SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

Just as Dr. Seuss stated in his children’s book *Horton Hears a Who!*, “a person is a person no matter how small,” the main purpose of this research focuses on viewing children as active members in their society. The main goal of this thesis is to show the importance of utilizing children’s literature to teach critical literature and literacy in order to promote critical thinking

and social consciousness. After studying Freire and later on re-discovering Dr. Seuss's books, I found there were several points where their ideas meet. I believe they both promoted education for change; therefore, this research will seek to use three books by Theodore Geisel, best known as Dr. Seuss, to explore Freire's critical pedagogy. *Yertle the Turtle*, *The Lorax*, and *Horton Hears a Who!* were chosen with the intention to serve as examples of children's picture books which can be used to give children the opportunity to question, analyze, and understand the realities of their world, thus having a better understanding of their environment. It is important to mention that none of Dr. Seuss's books contain page number, therefore, that is the reason they are not provided when his books are quoted. For this thesis, an experimental research in the classroom will not be conducted; this thesis will seek to provide a number of reasons and evidence to support this alternative pedagogy and encourage teachers to implement it in their language classroom.

I hope to encourage teachers to dare and make a difference in their classrooms and begin an education for change by presenting theories such as Freire's critical pedagogy. This transformative education might consequently inspire students to motivate other students to take control and become empowered through their education. Hopefully it will move students and teachers to cease to be oppressors and oppressed and begin understanding and working towards spreading an education of freedom and transformation.

Therefore, this thesis analyzed three of Dr. Seuss's books, *Yertle the Turtle*, *The Lorax*, and *Horton Hears a Who!* to promote critical thinking. Each book will be first evaluated by identifying if they portray elements of critical literacy, Freire's tenets², and global issues (All the elements are detailed in Appendix A). Then, each one of the elements identified in the text will

² For purpose of this thesis, the word "tenet" will be used to refer to Freire's philosophies. Tenets is "any principle, belief, or doctrine, generally held to be true" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

be analyzed along with the illustrations. As a result, this thesis seeks to answer the question: How can three books by Dr. Seuss' lend themselves to the area of critical pedagogy to teach children global issues?

In order to explore this question, this research will incorporate several philosophies which are presented and discussed in detail in Chapter 2. These philosophies include Freire's Critical Pedagogy and three of his main tenets of critical pedagogy: *problem posing*, *dialogue*, and *praxis*. In addition, I will explore the concept of global issues as presented by Yakovchuk, and define critical literacy and critical literature. Also, since the texts are approached through a holistic approach, the concept of whole language is also explored and defined.

Chapter 3 displays a step by step explanation of the process of evaluation to select the books. It also presents how the chosen texts are going to be evaluated; which is by identifying characteristics of critical literacy, Freire's tenets, and global issues.

Chapter 4 presents all the data which was identified in the texts, i.e. any eleven elements from the characteristics of critical literacy, Freire's tenets, and Global issues.

Chapter 5 is an overall analysis of the data recollected. In this chapter, the data was analyzed based on the theories presented in chapter 2. An explanation of the summary of the findings, as well as a comparison of which elements were repeated in all of the three books, is presented along with an analysis of specific illustrations of all three books. This chapter also includes limitations encountered as well as suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following areas will provide the basis for this study: Critical Pedagogy; Critical Literature and Literacy; and Global Issues, all seen through a Holistic perspective of language teaching.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

According to Creighton, implementing critical pedagogy means to “bring to the classroom an awareness of the structure of cultural systems and positions of power therein, and of ways in which they can positively or negatively affect groups or individuals” (2). This mode of thinking is explained in detail in Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire presents a model for an educational teaching strategy which provides insight to social change and promotes a fight against oppression. As examples of Freire's critical pedagogy, I have focused on three of his tenants: *problem posing, dialogue, and praxis*.

Rejecting the Banking Concept...Implementing Problem Posing. For as long as I remember, my parents have explained to me that we go to school so we can be intelligent, so that the teacher can teach us what we need to know in order to become “someone” in the future. If other people have had this same experience, then parting from this premise, *that* might be one of the reason why so many students believe they have nothing to say or contribute in classroom discussions. In that search for becoming “someone” in the future, who are we now? What are students? No one? Therefore, this “no one” cannot possibly have the necessary knowledge to think about, question, analyze, nor contribute to what is being discussed in class. In the meantime, what we have done is just settle for what was being fed to us by teachers and accept everything as the only and utmost truth. By following this line of thinking, teachers, in turn, see their students as ‘containers,’ and ‘receptacles’ to be ‘filled’ by the teacher (Freire 72). Students , in that sense,

are objectified and become empty vessels waiting to be filled with information—information provided to them only by the teacher. This is what Freire calls *the banking concept* of teaching.

According to Freire, these teachers share the following attributes where the teacher:

- [a] ...teaches and the students are taught;
- [b] ...knows everything and the students know nothing;
- [c] ...thinks and the students are thought about;
- [d] ...talks and the students listen-meekly;
- [e] ...disciplines and the students are disciplined;
- [f] ...chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;
- [g] ...acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
- [h] ...chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;
- [i] ...confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;
- [j] ...is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects. (Freire 73)

As shown above, teachers who follow the banking concept, subject students who are not active participants in their education process, rather, students continue to be passive recipients of the unquestionable knowledge the teacher is giving them. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire explains that in the banking concept education is “a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (72). The banking concept does not allow space for inquiry, therefore in this environment “students are often forced to try to make sense of someone else’s thinking and connections” (Short 285). The banking concept does not promote students to become critical thinkers, here “the more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which

would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of the world” (Freire 73). Students only, listen to the teacher, accept everything without questioning, and simply follow directions. Teachers who continue this concept have the ability of, what Freire calls, a “narrative education,” where the sole task of teachers is to “‘fill’ students with the contents of their narration...” (71). As a result of this “narrative education,” students are amazed by “the sonority of words, not their transforming power” (71). Therefore, teachers’ words are just that, mindless words which inform students about a specific topic, but do not trigger students’ minds so they can analyze, question, and corroborate the information given to them. In Freire’s book *Pedagogy of Freedom*, the banking system is described as a system of “deformation for creativity of both learners and teachers” (32). This deformation may be caused by the boundaries set in classrooms; boundaries which go from the rules established to the intimidation students encounter when teachers paralyze their thoughts by limiting their answers to a specific set of alternatives and/or impose one correct answer.

What should teachers do in order to reject this concept and thus prevent this deformation from taking place? Primarily, teachers should not “present himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute” (Freire 72). Rather, teachers should instill creative power by creating education along with students instead of merely for students, by doing so education becomes “a practice of freedom-as opposed to education as the practice of domination” (81). Teachers need to understand they should not consider themselves as “an agent in the production of knowledge...to teach is not to *transfer knowledge* but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge” (“*Pedagogy of Freedom*”, Freire 30). Therefore, knowledge has to be produced and constructed by teachers and students together, and for that reason, it is necessary to acknowledge that in the teaching process “although the

teachers or the students are not the same, the person in charge of education is being formed or re-formed as he/she teaches, and the person who is being taught forms him/herself in this process” (*Pedagogy of Freedom*, Freire 30-31). As a result, the learning process for teachers and students evolves and merges with previous knowledge, the new knowledge acquired, and their own personal background knowledge, thus resulting in a new understanding (for each individual) of one same subject.

In the teaching of literature, the rejection of the banking concept consists of having students reading quality over quantity. That is, the teacher should not focus on the amount of books or works read during the semester, rather have students be able to study a book completely and carefully and make connections between the works and their knowledge, instead of just having them memorize selected parts of the text. The teacher should not do all the talking, thinking, all the acting, or all the teaching; if the teacher does so, there will be no space for students to express themselves freely. Rather, a teacher who wishes to reject that banking concept should “abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 79). These teachers have to abandon the notion that they are the all-knowing teachers and instead they have to place themselves along with the students, acknowledging that they are being “taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach” (80).

It is then, after rejecting the banking concept and recognizing that knowledge is not owned only by them, that “people teach each other, mediated by the world” (80). In other words, each person can learn something from the other person because the world becomes the common ground where students and teachers meet to explore and exchange ideas. When integrating problem posing education in the classroom, it “involves a constant unveiling of reality” (81).

This unveiled reality should be presented to them without being disguised under the teachers' point of view or ideologies, neither it should be given to them as "contents to be deposited, but as problems to be solved" (123). As a result, the more students are exposed to "problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, [they] will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge" (81). Through the realization and consciousness of the different problems that concern the world and *their* world, students will engage, through *dialogue*, in critical thinking.

Engaging in True Dialogue. Freire says dialogue is an "existential necessity," because "human existence cannot be silent..." (Freire 88). Through true dialogue "dialoguers engage in critical thinking" in order to transform the world (92). As teachers in a class discussion where true dialogue takes place, one should not try to impose one's view "but rather...dialogue with the people about their view and ours" (96). It is through this dialogue that students express their opinions about the text, question the text, and exchange ideas about the text without fearing being silenced for not having the "correct" answer. Having true dialogue is not merely to convey information in a linear process or one way direction; dialogue consists of a constant exchange of words which are transmitting ideas, feelings, and/or points of view. After the message is conveyed through dialogue, then praxis or action follows. If a word is said but it is not put into action, the word will become "an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action" (87). On the other hand, if only actions are emphasized, it will leave no space for dialogue (88). Therefore, it is in the balance, between reflection and action, where people can be transformed; not only the dialoguers, but also the world around them.

According to Freire, dialogue should be based upon three basic elements which are love, humility, and faith (91). First, "if I do not love the world--if I do not love life--if I do not love people--I cannot enter into dialogue" (90). This love is not to be confused with sentimentalism, rather this love moves the person to commit and thus influence others to do the same; it is an act of freedom and "must generate other acts of freedom; otherwise it is not love" (90). The second element establishes that dialogue should also be portrayed through humility; people (in this case, educators) recognize and perceive what they lack (their weaknesses). Doing so will result in a group of people "who are attempting to learn together, to learn more than they know" (90). Finally, the third element is faith, "faith in human kind, faith in the power to make and remake, to create and re-create...." (90). It would be impossible to engage into dialogue without faith. Faith in this concept has "the power to create and transform, even when thwarted in concrete situations...." (91). This dialogue is vital in a classroom; it is the only way in which teachers and students can embrace the learning process as a non-linear process, and help students and teachers become free from a practice of domination. Hence, this practice will promote students' and teachers' critical thinking not only in the classroom, but also outside the classroom in their social lives. Therefore, this dialogue is essential because "without communication there can be no true education" (93).

False Generosity and Praxis. According to Freire, "false charity constraints the fearful and subdued, the 'rejects of life,' to extend their trembling hand;" a sad and even shameful act many teachers practice by allowing students to learn up to a limited extent...a glass ceiling (45). False generosity is an act of oppression and dehumanization which devaluates students' capacity to become active participants in their learning process. There are teachers who enjoy showing their students how much they know. They allow students to give their opinion, only to expose their

“lack of” understanding or knowledge and make them believe they *need* the *all-knowing teacher* to guide them. These teachers allow students to look for "the 'correct' answers and interpretations of a text, as defined by the teacher or curriculum guide, instilling in children a habit of privileging institutional beliefs and devaluating their own reactions" (qtd in McDaniel 473). Nevertheless, there is a way to reject false generosity and that is by showing *true generosity*, which can only be practiced by those who have overcome their position as oppressed and are not fighting along with those who are still oppressed (80). Unlike false generosity, true generosity “lies in striving so that these hands---whether of individuals or entire peoples---need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work, and, working, transform the world” (Freire 45).

Therefore, instead of instilling false generosity, teachers and students need to break free from the relationship of oppressor and oppressed, but “they will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it” (45). Once the person (student or teacher) decides to liberate themselves, and thus, work to transform the world and their world, this is where praxis takes place. Praxis is a practice which entails “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (51). Freire affirms humans are beings of praxis, therefore, we are the only ones who can “understand it [the world] and transform it with their labor” (125). By encouraging praxis in the classroom, students' actions will include "a critical reflection which increasingly organizes their thinking and thus leads them to move from a purely naive knowledge of reality to a higher level, one which enables them to perceive the *causes* of reality" (131). And once these causes are perceived, students will become aware about what is happening in their world, how it came to be, and how to act toward and transformation of it.

Global Issues. Nadezhda Yakovchuk, a language teacher trainer at the Belarusian State Pedagogical University, conducted research to learn about teacher's perspectives towards the teaching of global values in their classrooms. According to Yakovchuk, global values can be defined as "goal or standard vital for living the independent world" (Yakovchuk 33). These global values include "justice, freedom, peace, dignity, equality, rights, democracy, social responsibility, tolerance, independence, environmentalism, multiculturalism, anti-consumerism, and so on" (Yakovchuk 33). But in order to integrate these global values, it is necessary for students to identify global issues.

For the purpose of this study, I will take into consideration three of the seven divisions Yakovchuk states as examples of global issues. The seven divisions are the following:

Environmental issues: pollution, deforestation, endangered animals, global warming, recycling, natural disasters, etc.

Peace education issues: wars, nuclear arms race, refugees, etc.

Human rights issues: racism, gender issues, children's rights, etc.

Intercultural communication issues: cultural issues, global citizenship vs. national identity, multiculturalism, etc.

Socio-economic issues: poverty, wealth, consumer society, advertising, etc.

Health concerns: drugs, AIDS, etc.

Linguistic imperialism. (Yakovchuk 32)

The three main issues I will apply to Dr. Seuss's books are *Environmental issues*, *Human rights issues*, and *Socio-economic issues* (See Chapter 3).

For many language teachers, integrating these topics in the classroom is equal to “frighten[ing] children or introduce[ing] them to realities they don’t or shouldn’t know about” (Wollman-Bonilla 290). But, according to a keynote speaker invited at TESOL’s 1989 International Convention in Texas, integrating global issues to language teaching is essential because if not, “[w]hat good is it to teach students to write if they use their knowledge to write racist graffiti?” (Cates). We all know the right tools in the wrong hands can be a threatening idea. That is why, Cates, a Language teacher and global educator at the University of Tottori in Japan, affirms that as teachers, we have to realize and acknowledge that education is not “successful if our students, however fluent, are ignorant of world problems, have no social conscience or use their communication skills for international crime, exploitation, oppression or environmental destruction” (Cates). The idea encouraged here is that language education should be embedded with knowledge of global issues, that way students’ education will not be limited to specific skills, but through language teaching become conscious of issues concerning the world.

These issues, even if they may seem to some as “controversial topics,” must be discussed from early childhood onward. Children everywhere deal with global issues such as the ones mentioned above and by ignoring these issues, we will not be making their world better. On the contrary, as Wollman-Bonilla suggest, “the more we do ignore them we do a disservice to children” (292). Children need to talk and dialogue about these issues, not only issues which may concern them at a local scale, but also understand issues that are happening at a larger scale. This will enable them to view and analyze the influence of one over the other and become aware of the realities of the world they are part of and decide to become an active agent in the process of transforming, not anymore “only the world,” now *their world*. I refer to the world as their world because they are no longer indifferent towards issues which are not directly affecting them;

rather they will begin to have a feeling of belonging. By having an understanding of these global problems, they will feel relevancy and therefore the responsibility to do something about them, even when these issues may or may not be affecting them directly.

Critical Literacy. If teachers are supporters of critical pedagogy, therefore their way of teaching literacy should also be critical. To many educators, literacy is to acquire reading, writing, listening, speaking, thinking, and any other skill which leads students to become literate, and thus, functional in a society. However, “since the 1700’s, schooled literacy ideologies have fueled educational and political debates about what it means to be[come] a ‘literate’ person in school and society” (Cadiero-Kaplan and Smith 373). It is important to note, as stated by Giroux, that schools are institutions which “represent a terrain of complex struggle regarding what it means to be literate and empowered in ways that would allow teachers and students to think and act in a manner commensurate with the imperatives and reality of a radical democracy” (qtd in Freire and Macedo 14). Therefore, in these schools or institutions, it is essential for teachers to empower themselves and their students to take on the role of transformers and thus promoters of a critical education.

Cadiero-Kaplan and Smith argue that “any ideological constructions of literacy can position literacy for either two purposes” (373). The first purpose places literacy instruction as one which values “individual empowerment and personal voice, basic morality and skill” (qtd in Cadiero-Kaplan and Smith 373). By implementing this literacy in a classroom, Cadiero-Kaplan and Smith suggest that “a critical whole language approach toward reading instruction reflects this ideology when students learn to read by reading literature and other authentic materials drawn and related to their personal experiences” (373). On the other hand, the second purpose for literacy instruction is focused on “rudimentary functional job skills’ with a need to educate

literate citizens able to compete in the labor market" (qtd. in Cadiero-Kaplan and Smith 373). Here individuals focus only on learning "sounds, symbols, and direct comprehension of the text through skill and drill processes that focus on understanding rules..." (qtd. in Cadiero-Kaplan and Smith 373). Nevertheless, according to the authors, both of the ideological constructions presented above are reflected in the curriculum of language arts in most elementary schools (373).

Critical literacy goes a step further; it help students how to "critically analyze texts and illustrations for an author's point of view, intended audience, and elements of inclusion or bias" (Creighton 2). Critical literacy can be defined as "a literacy of social transformation in which the ideological foundations of knowledge, culture, schooling, and identity-making are recognized as unavoidably political, marked by vested interest and hidden agendas" (qtd. in Cadiero-Kaplan and Smith 377). These hidden agendas are usually embedded in curricular frameworks and/or the teaching standards and grade level expectations. Therefore it is also important to bear with teachers, understand that for some teachers, the teaching environment is/has to be allied to the policies which are made from the top down, from those in power and imposed over those with less authority. As a result, teaching and thus promoting this critical literacy turns into an act of bravery. These teachers recognize "that knowledge is not merely produced in the heads of experts, curriculum specialists, school administrators, and teachers," (qtd in Freire and Macedo 19).

According to Freire and Macedo, "literacy cannot be reduced to the treatment of letters and words as purely mechanical domain" (viii). Critical literacy has students reading not only the word but the world, their understanding does not only occur at the text level, but beyond (Creighton 15). Students will be strongly influenced by the texts, but also, they will learn how to

act upon the texts and use them for their benefit in understanding the world around them and “‘reading’ their world through a critical stance...leads to empowerment” as they act upon the world (McDaniel 473). The conventional notion of reading and writing is broken when the learner moves towards the transformation of the self and their world as a result of critical literacy (McDaniel 474). In order to promote critical literacy, teachers should choose texts which also promote critical literacy; students have to be critical readers by evaluating the texts regardless of their own personal views and ideologies. Appreciating different perspectives in classroom discussions will allow them to see how these “other” perspectives might affect society, and we can make informed, thoughtful decisions about text selection” (Wollman-Bonilla 293). Therefore, it is not until we bring these texts which promote critical literacy and thus critical thinking, that we will not be able to make genuine statements whether the selected text is or is not adequate for children. And until then, “we are assuming too much. If we are to know how books actually affect children, we need to hear children’s voices and understand *their* experience before, during and after reading” (Wollman-Bonilla 293). By not promoting this critical pedagogy, the teacher will limit them because “children are potential to become thoughtful, active citizens in a democracy, who can work towards transformation” (McDaniel 480).

Critical Literature. Literature contains fundamental issues with regards to the human condition that when connected to the student’s background knowledge, is relevant to their lives and it can become permanent knowledge, rather than something learned momentarily then forgotten. For example, Yenika-Agbaw, explores the benefits of reading literature for pleasure and social change. She explains that when literature is only looked at for its aesthetics will not “help readers identify issues raised in books, question the ideologies informing the stories, or inform how these affect readers’ daily lives” (1). Further she suggests that in order to better prepare children in the

study of literary texts, the teacher should “propagate social change-readings that enable readers to ask questions about situations and ideas they encounter within texts” (2). Therefore, children should be given texts which aside from being analyzed through its aesthetics, read for pleasure, or create a special connection with the reader; should be texts which can transform and move students to question and analyze what they are given. I believe this sort of literature will help trigger students’ analysis and thoughtful reading, instead of oppressing ideas and/or ideals by imposing ones’ concepts. As a result, students will have ownership over their knowledge; they will realize much more is expected from them than to come into a classroom and answer specifically rote memorization questions. Students will come to know they are capable of much more than memorizing specific information concerning the readings, but also of producing important and valuable information as well.

This process will allow students to make connections with other literary texts and with personal experiences; here is where students begin to make connections “between the new and the known” (Short 284). When this experience takes place, children will be able to “read, write, question, and think critically, they can write their world, as they understand it to mean, for others to read and question” (Yenika-Agbaw 7). But an important part for this to take place relies on teachers; they should work along with students in their learning process. Teachers are the ones who decide what type of reading will take place in the classroom—here I not only refer to the kind of texts, but how the reading itself will take place. Are students going to skim, read, or critically read a text? Is the teacher going to allow critical thinking to take place or “the teacher (or teacher’s manual) does the critical thinking about meaning[?]” (Short 285). Short clarifies this statement by indicating that some teachers do all the critical thinking about meaning by forcing students to understand their own conclusions about the given texts” (Short 285).

According to Freire and Macedo, the “teachers’ insistence that students read innumerable books in one semester derives from a misunderstanding we sometimes have about reading” (33). This common misunderstanding is happening when quantity is more important than quality.

Therefore, as teachers, it is important to understand what is implied when a student *reads* a text than to simply devour it. Gadotti, in *Reading Paulo Freire His Life and His Roots*, explains *The Act of Studying*. He emphasizes upon the difficulty of studying and states that “...it demands a critical and systematic position. It demands an intellectual discipline which can only be gained in practice” (10). Therefore, students should be able to practice on a daily bases what it is to study a text, not only to read, but to study it. When a student studies a text (along with the teacher), “together they spend time exploring comparisons and connections across their books and lives” (Short 285).

As a result, this kind of learning, as described in Freire (1973), will not take place “from the top down, but only from the inside out” (48). During a classroom book discussion, in an environment where students feel free to express their thoughts and opinions, class discussion will become critical, “helping students develop a broader range of ideas to be considered by the group and to find the issues that most interested them for in-depth discussion” (Short 290). Students will study the text by, analyzing the text, uncovering the text, and discovering all it has to offer. They will “enjoy participating in another’s vision of the world” (Short 290); here students develop a critical vision of the text.

Again, it is important to point out that this can take place only if the teacher allows this to happen; it is “the teacher’s responsibility to show children how reading the word can affect how students read the world” (Yenika-Agbaw 7). Reading the word and the world implies that besides having a discussion of issues students can relate to, they can also discover issues and

topics from all over the world; they will be able to “understand the challenges and possibilities that exist in their society” (Yenika-Agbaw 7). By understanding these possibilities, children will then be able to “read for social change and justice,” they will be able to use the knowledge they have made their own (Yenika-Agbaw 7).

WHOLE LANGUAGE

In order for the different philosophies of Critical Pedagogy to be incorporated in the classroom, it is necessary to teach literature through a critical perspective and through the *Whole Language*, or *Holistic* approach. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), Whole Language was created in 1980 with the purpose of teaching language as the word itself states, *as a whole* (108). As stated by Purcell-Gates, McIntyre, and Freppon, for whole language teachers “reading and writing are meaning-based language processes learned through in-depth, functional, and enjoyable experiences” (665). These experiences can be promoted by reading along with the students, accepting, and encouraging their responses when discussing whole texts. The Whole Language theory "was developed to help young children learn to read, and has also been extended to middle and secondary levels to the teaching of ESL" (Richards and Rodgers 108).

Usually, in early childhood education, the information provided to children is separated into bits of information that they later put together. Whole Language rejects this approach towards the teaching of language and believes that “if language isn’t kept whole, it isn’t language anymore” (qtd in Richards and Rodgers 108). Moreover, what began only as an approach "has become a movement for change, key aspects of which are respect for each student as a member of a culture and as a creator of knowledge..." (108). Very similar to Freire's pedagogy, this holistic approach promotes an education which views students as individuals who can contribute and actively participate in the learning process. Whole Language is also "designed to help

children and adults learn a second language in the same way that children learn their first language" (108). This is another reason why Whole Language is an excellent approach for the teaching of the literature to be used for this thesis; it does not limit this teaching to native speakers only, but allows a wider group of students which be targeted.

On the other hand, Wendy Hopkins in *Whole Language or Phonics?* presents various characteristics of both the whole language and the phonics approach. The article, while eventually advising its readers to not abandon the phonics approach for whole language, it offers me a number of reasons why not to abandon the whole language approach. First of all, phonics instruction is oppressive if it's the sole manner in which literacy is taught. Based on the descriptions stated in the article *Whole Language or Phonics?*, it seems a very rigid systematic and teacher-centered approach where students have little action over their learning process since they have to follow a series of instructions in order to be successful. In order to describe the steps a teacher must follow when incorporating phonemic awareness in their classroom, words such as teach and show are the only ones used to describe each step of this process. No space is given for students to explore, explain, question or to analyze; therefore, "the phonetic approach to teaching reading is quite different, is direct, explicit, systematic instruction" (Hopkins 2). The only texts which can be used in the classroom are classified as *decodable text*. These are "composed of words that use the sound-spelling correspondences the children have learned to that point and a limited number of sight word that have been systematically taught" (Hopkins 3). As a result, students learn only by practicing skills, identifying a letter and then turning it into a sound. This process continues and after the letters, students need to identify a series of words called *Dolch's sight words* or *high frequency words*, which have already been allocated by grade so students learn no more or less that than the corresponding ones.

By approaching the teaching of literature and critical pedagogy through a holistic perspective, students, from an early age, will be active agents in their learning process. While reading, students will not only develop the necessary skills to acquire language, but also, by having pleasurable readings that will provide insight for social change, we will be creating life-long readers and learners. Whole Language approach is based on humanistic and constructivist schools, therefore "knowledge is socially constructed, rather than received or discovered," it is a collaborative learning process between teachers and students (Richard and Rodgers 109).

Those teachers who implement a holistic approach in their classroom "view learners as strong, capable, and eager to learn....it is a child centered education"; an education that will empower students (Goodman 9). In addition, students will acquire critical literacy and also from an early age, students will be able not only to decode the text, but also to understand and interpret the text by making connections to their lives. By being critical about a text, not only does the teacher focus on the story itself, but also the teacher can start a discussion by "reading the titles and other information on the title pages" (Purcell-Gates, McIntyre, & Penny 666). Purcell-Gates et. al. show that "children in whole language classroom grew to a greater degree in their knowledge of written narrative linguistic features" thus demonstrating that by listening and talking about books during the early school years "is beneficial and allows them to maintain growth and language development" (679). This statement reassures the benefits of using children's literature to promote critical literacy and literacy with a holistic approach. For teachers who follow this approach, their focus is not to " 'cover the curriculum[,] ' but rather learning focuses on the learners' experience, needs, interest, and aspirations" (Richard and Rodgers 110). Teachers are facilitators, they are "active participant[s] in the learning community rather than an expert passing on knowledge" (110). This statement is very similar to Freire's

statements about the role of teachers who promote critical pedagogy. In addition, this approach allows teachers to implement their teachings according to the needs of each class, again focusing on students rather than on the teacher; it is a student-centered education rather than teacher-centered one (113).

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter contains the literature read, which became the basis for this study. Here, critical Pedagogy is explained according to some of Freire's tenets found in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Among these tenets are *The Banking Concept*, *Praxis*, *Dialogue*, *False Generosity*, and *Problem Posing*. In addition, this section describes what it involves to teach critical literacy and literature. Besides, it also proposes the integration of global issues in the teaching of critical pedagogy. Ultimately, this section describes the *Whole Language* as an approach and as a means to incorporate the teaching of literature in the language classroom.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The nature of this study was based on a qualitative research analysis of three books by Dr. Seuss. This qualitative research was grounded on the philosophical theories of critical pedagogy. The analysis was conducted in three parts by identifying each of the following: critical literacy, three of Freire's key tenets, and global issues with the use of Dr. Seuss' books. It is important to note that the elements to be identified in each one of the three books are only those which can be pointed out through direct text citations. The purpose in doing so is to do my best effort at offering an unbiased analysis of the findings.

SELECTING THE TEXTS

In order to decide which books I would use for this qualitative research, I read approximately fifty books by Dr. Seuss (Appendix B), including his beginner's books, books by Theo LeSieg and other books which are not categorized as children's books such as *The Seven Lady Godivas* and *Your're Only Old Once!* (Dr. Seuss used the pseudonymous Theo LeSeig in books which he wrote but did not illustrate). In addition, in order to understand his purpose behind some of his stories, I also read about his life and work from various biographical books, including *The Seuss*, *The Whole Seuss*, and *Nothing but the Seuss* by Charles D. Cohen, which is considered one of the most complete books about Dr. Seuss. After reading all of this information and in order to limit the scope of this study, I began a sifting process until I had only three books. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this analysis can be done with as many books as the researcher intends, allowing it to expand into a larger study. At this moment, the scope is limited to three books by one author and the elimination process is explained below.

THE PROCESS OF ELIMINATION

In order to select three books by Dr. Seuss for this thesis, I decided to remove all of the beginner's books because most of their focus is to teach basic skills such as counting, identifying colors, learning about hygiene, recognizing the alphabet, practicing writing, reading words with basic phonetic sounds, among others. However, I found these books provided little to no space to engage students in a class discussion of critical thinking and make connections to real life issues. After this, approximately 25 books remained. Of these 25, I took out *The Seven Lady Godivas* and *You're Only Old Once*, since they are tailored more towards adults and they are not cataloged as children's books. After reviewing each one of the remaining 23 books, I decided to select some based on their popularity, in other words, well-known books which to my understanding seemed attractive and others which provided a variety of topics to engage in a critical class discussion. These books were the following:

1. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*
2. *Horton Hears a Who!*
3. *On Beyond Zebra*
4. *Oh the Places You'll Go!*
5. *The Butter Battle Book*
6. *The Lorax*
7. *The Sneetches*
8. *Yertle the Turtle*

After reviewing the key tenets of Freire's critical pedagogy and global issues such as oppression, environmental problems, power dynamics, injustice, identity issues, among others, I finally decided to select the following books for this study: *Horton Hears a Who!*, *Yertle the Turtle*, and

The Lorax. The first book examined, *Yertle the Turtle*, is about the greediness of King Yertle who wanted a bigger and bigger kingdom, but who was never happy with what had and always wanted more. His greed leads him to end with even less than what he had at the beginning of the story. The second book examined, *The Lorax*, is a story which presents the adverse and damaging result of exploiting nature's resources. The Lorax is the character who speaks for the trees and for the animals while the Once-ler is the character which invades the land of the Lorax by polluting and exploiting all the natural resources. The third book examined is *Horton Hears a Who!* This story narrates the experience of an elephant named Horton who confronted numerous difficulties in order to save the people of *Who*-ville who lived on a little speck. Throughout the whole story Horton struggles with all the jungle animals to prove people live on the speck he is holding and which he protects from being destroyed by those who did not know, nor believe they existed.

PROCEDURE

Once the three books were chosen, each book went through three evaluations in order to verify if they may be considered for critical literature. In order to verify this, they were evaluated to identify if they:

1. portray characteristics of critical literacy
2. incorporate key tenets of Freire's critical pedagogy
3. present global issues

First, each one of the books was evaluated by the characteristics presented by Cynthia McDaniel. McDaniel suggests that in order to select books which support critical literacy, they should portray the following five characteristics:

- They don't make difference invisible, but rather explore what differences make a difference.
- They enrich our understanding of history and life by giving voice to those who traditionally have been marginalized—those we call the “indignant ones.”
- They show how people can begin to take actions on important social issues.
- They explore dominant systems of meaning that operate in our society to position people and groups of people---helping us question why certain groups are positioned as “others.”
- They don't provide “happily ever after” endings for complex social problems.

(qtd in McDaniel 477)

I identified if each book portrayed characteristics presented by McDaniel with the use of Table 1 (Appendix C). If the answer is yes, an explanation will follow where in the literature it is portrayed.

The next evaluation consists of identifying three of Freire's most recognized tenets: *Problem Posing*, *Dialogue*, and *Praxis*. I identify examples where these tenets are in the text after completing each table (Appendix D).

Finally, the third evaluation consists of determining which and how many global issues are portrayed in each one of Freire's books. In order to do this, I take into consideration three of the seven categories Yakovchuk's states as examples of how global issues can be divided into. These seven divisions are the following:

Environmental issues: pollution, deforestation, endangered animals, global warming, recycling, natural disasters, etc.

Peace education issues: wars, nuclear arms race, refugees, etc.

Human rights issues: racism, gender issues, children's rights, etc.

Intercultural communication issues: cultural issues, global citizenship vs. national identity, multiculturalism, etc.

Socio-economic issues: poverty, wealth, consumer society, advertising, etc.

Health concerns: drugs, AIDS, etc.

Linguistic imperialism (Yakovchuk 32)

The three categories to be used in this evaluation are *Environmental issues*, *Human rights issues*, and *Socio-economic issues*. Due to the fact that each category ends with *etc.*, allows incorporating other issues which might also fall under that category, that is, if they are identified in the text (Appendix E). Just as in the first evaluation, examples where these issues are portrayed in Dr. Seuss's books are provided at the end of each table.

After all three books are examined and their portrayal of critical literacy, Freire's tenets, and global issues are identified, they are listed in a third table which illustrates up to what extent all three books portray all of the elements (Appendix F). In addition, each text is also analyzed based on the elements identified and one final analysis will be done taking into consideration the book's illustrations.

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter presents the process of selecting the three texts used for this thesis which are *Yertle the Turtle*, *The Lorax*, and *Horton Hears a Who!* Also, it explains the three modes of evaluation each one of the books went through in order to identify if the book allows for a rich classroom discussion about global issues, thus allowing critical pedagogy to take place. The three evaluations consisted in identifying *Elements which Promote Critical Literacy*, *Freire's Tenets*, and *Global Issues*.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The following data present the elements of critical literacy, Freire’s tenets, and global issues identified in Dr. Seuss’s books *Horton Hears a Who!*, *The Lorax*, and *Yertle the Turtle*. The elements in each one of the evaluations are presented as they appear in the text.

CRITICAL LITERACY

Table 1: Characteristics which Support Critical Literacy in *Yertle the Turtle*.

Book Title: Yertle the Turtle			
	Characteristics	Yes	No
1.	They don’t make difference invisible, but rather explore what differences make a difference.	X	
2.	They enrich our understanding of history and life by giving voice to those who traditionally have been silenced or marginalized-those we call the “indignant ones.”	X	
3.	They show how people can begin to take action on important social issues.	X	
4.	They explore dominant systems of meaning that operate in our society to position people and groups of people—helping us question why certain groups are positioned as “others.”	X	
5.	They don’t provide “happily ever after” endings for complex social problems.		X

One of the characteristics of critical literacy portrayed in *Yertle the Turtle* is characteristic #2. In the story, a turtle named Mack is described as “this plain little turtle,” a turtle that throughout the whole story was positioned at the bottom in the high tower of turtles. The first moment when this turtle dared to speak to the king and complain about the injustice that was

taking place, the king's reply was "I'm king, and you're only a turtle named Mack, You stay in your place while I sit here and rule." Again, the king's words and actions aimed at diminishing Mack and all the turtles that were literally and symbolically placed below him. Nevertheless, suddenly, this turtle who had "no right to talk to the world's highest turtle" (again, according to the king), dares to speak up his mind. By doing so, this event in the story offers children the opportunity to recognize and make connections with life's "realities" by depicting the existent and even harsh treatment, of those who are usually marginalized due to economic power and social status, considered by many as the *indignant ones*.

Other characteristics portrayed are characteristics #3 and #1 accordingly. Through the character of Mack, the turtle, the story shows how what may seem to many as small insignificant actions, may lead to big and life changing results. While other turtles were silent and only obeyed without questioning, Mack made a difference by questioning, in more than one occasion the King's actions.

... And this plain little turtle

Looked up and he said, "Beg your pardon, King Yertle.

I've pains in my back and my shoulders and knees.

How long should we stand here, Your Majesty, please?"

"Your Majesty, please...I don't like to complain,

But down here below, we are feeling great pain.

I know, up on top you are seeing great sights,

But down her at the bottom we, too should have rights.

We turtles can't stand it. Our shells will all crack!

Besides, we need food, we are starving!" groaned Mack.

The situation stated above is the first time Mack, the turtle, complains about being positioned at the bottom of the stack of turtles. As consequence, after Mack had presented, more than once, reasonable complaints about their situation, Mack decided he had enough. Mack made a decision which made a difference; he decided to take action.

That plain little turtle whose name was just Mack,

Decided he'd taken enough. And he had.

And that plain little lad got a bit mad.

And that plain little Mack did a plain little thing.

He burped!

And his burp shook the throne of the king!

It is through an unavoidable biological necessity how Dr. Seuss portrays an action which literally shakes the whole kingdom, an action which resulted in the liberation of all of the turtles of Sala-ma-Sond. "And the turtles, of course...all turtles are free. As turtles and, maybe, all creatures should be."

The last action of liberation of the turtles connects with characteristic #4. In addition to portraying how one can take action in social issues, it also *explores dominant systems of meaning that operate in our society to position people and groups of people*. Throughout the entire story, all of the turtles of Sala-ma-Sond were located beneath the king Yertle. Why? Simply because Yertle just did as he pleased because he wanted to be king of everything he could see; the more he saw, a wider and bigger kingdom he had. In addition, this story may also encourage children to *question why certain groups are positioned as "others."* An answer can be found in the story when stated "And the turtles 'way down in the pond were afraid. They trembled. They shook.

But they came. They obeyed.” This last statement allows children to explore and question which dominant systems exist in society.

Table 2: Characteristics which Support Critical Literacy in *The Lorax*

Book Title: The Lorax			
Characteristics:	Yes	Not	
1. They don't make difference invisible, but rather explore what differences make a difference.			X
2. They enrich our understanding of history and life by giving voice to those who traditionally have been silenced or marginalized-those we call the “indignant ones.”			X
3. They show how people can begin to take action on important social issues.	X		
4. They explore dominant systems of meaning that operate in our society to position people and groups of people—helping us question why certain groups are positioned as “others.”	X		
5. They don't provide “happily ever after” endings for complex social problems.		X	

The first portrayal of critical literacy shown in *The Lorax* is described in characteristic #3, promoting people, or in this case, children, to take action on important issues when the Once-ler says to the young boy at the end of the story,

UNLESS someone like you
 Cares a whole awful lot
 Nothing is going to get better.
 It's not.

In this story, after all of the land where the Lorax dwelled, as the protector and voice of the trees, was destroyed by the Once-ler, he relies on a young little boy to do something about the sad situation that remained. The Once-ler passes this responsibility to the young boy by handing the last seed of truffulla trees to him.

In addition, the story *explores dominant systems of meaning that operate in our society*, by doing so it positions people in hierarchical ranks thus allowing the ones at the bottom be labeled as “others,” as the ones opposed to what the mass is doing.

BUT...

Business is business!

And business must grow

Regardless of crummies in tummies, you know.

I meant no harm, I must truly did not.

But I had to grow bigger. So bigger I got.

I intend to go on doing just what I do!

And, for your information, you Lorax, I'm figgering

On biggering

And BIGGERING

And BIGGERING

And BIGGERING,

After the Lorax complains to the Once-Ler about some animals going through hunger, the Once-ler, tired of listening to the Lorax complaints, exclaims that he will continue no matter what and no matter whom. As a result, this quote reveals how those positioned in the highest

hierarchical status are the ones who make decisions and money, more money, and fast while the ‘other’ are overlooked and disregarded; even at the expense of their biological necessities.

Finally, this story does not present a happy ending by solving all the problems and restoring the devastated land of the Lorax.

It’s the last one of all!

You’re in charge of the last of the Truffula Seeds.

And Truffula Trees are what everyone needs.

Plant a new Truffula. Treat it with care.

Give it clean water. And feed it fresh air.

Grow a forest. Protect it from axes that hack.

Then the Lorax

and all of his friends

may come back.

Instead, the Once-Ler, who was the one who caused all the disaster in the first place, relies on the young boy (to whom he is telling the story), to go ahead and take care of the last seed of Truffula Trees. This last action connects with characteristic #3 as well, encouraging the reader to take action on environmental issues.

Table 3: Characteristics which Support Critical Literacy in *Horton Hears a Who!*

Book Title: Horton Hears a Who!			
Characteristics	Yes	Not	
1. They don’t make difference invisible, but rather explore what differences	X		

make a difference.	
2. They enrich our understanding of history and life by giving voice to those who traditionally have been silenced or marginalized—those we call the “indignant ones.”	X
3. They show how people can begin to take action on important social issues.	X
4. They explore dominant systems of meaning that operate in our society to position people and groups of people—helping us question why certain groups are positioned as “others.”	X
5. They don’t provide “happily ever after” endings for complex social problems.	X

In *Horton Hears a Who!* characteristic #1 can be identified when Horton acted differently from everyone else in the jungle; Horton believed there was life in a little speck; he trusted his senses by affirming he heard a voice coming from the speck and regardless to what everyone said of him, he did not doubt. “He talks to a dust speck! He’s out of his head! Just look at him walk with that speck on that flower!” Not only did he believe people lived in the speck, but he decided that he was going to protect them as well. “Of course I will stick. I’ll stick by you small folks through thin and through thick!” More than once, Horton defended and protected the *Who* people, resulting Horton in the one who saved the people of *Who*-ville by encouraging them to speak up to be heard by others.

Characteristic #2 is also portrayed in this story. The way the little people of *Who*-ville were going to be affected, if they did not unite, can promote a class discussion about speaking up to be heard when people’s lives depend on it.

“Mr. Mayor! Mr. Mayor!” Horton called, “Mr. Mayor!

SO call a big meeting. Get everyone out.
Make every *Who* holler! Make every *Who* shout!
Make every *Who* scream If you don't, every *Who*
Is going to end up in a Beezle-Nut stew!"

Because Horton believed that the *Who* people lived in that small speck, the rest of the jungle animals had gathered to take the speck from Horton and destroy it. That way they would end with Horton's insistence that people lived in the speck.

Characteristic #3 is represented through Horton's perseverance of believing and protecting the people of *Who*-ville and it showed the importance of taking action on an important social issue, in this case, the annihilation of the people of *Who*-ville.

You're going to be roped! And you're going to be caged!
And, as for you dust speck...hah! That we shall boil
In a hot steaming kettle of Beezle-Nut oil!"

[.....]

"Mr. Mayor! Mr. Mayor!" Horton called, "Mr. Mayor!
You've for to prove now that you really are there!

Lastly, characteristic #4 is shown when Horton is confronted by the kangaroo because he believed people lived on a small speck.

"Humpf!" humped the voice. "Twas a sour kangaroo.
And the young Kangaroo in her pouch said 'Humpf' too.
'Why, that speck is as small as the head of a pin.
A person on that?...Why, there never has been!'
'I know,' called the voice, 'I'm too small to be seen

But I'm mayor of a town that is friendly and clean.

This incident may help children question *why certain groups of people are positioned as "the others."* Teachers may ask children if the indifference towards the *Who* people is because the kangaroo has never known about people living on specks or for no genuine reason, only because as the same way the young kangaroo repeats everything the mom says. The mom's beliefs may come from what she was taught; her ideologies remained unquestioned.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Table 4: Freire's Tenets portrayed in *Yertle the Turtle*

Book Title: Yertle the Turtle	Found in the Text	
	Yes	No
1. Problem Posing	X	
2. Dialogue		X
3. Praxis	X	

The first tenet, Problem Posing, is present in the opening lines of *Yertle the Turtle*.

During these first few lines the reader is presented with the word *until*.

On the far-away island of Sala-ma-Sond,

Yertle the turtle was king of the pond.

A nice little pond. It was clean. It was neat.

The water was warm. There was plenty to eat.

The turtle had everything turtles might need.

And they were all happy. Quite happy indeed.

They were... **until** Yertle, the king of them all,

Decided the Kingdom he ruled was too small.

The word *until* indicates to readers that life in Sala-ma-Sond is no longer as stated, rather something had happened which disrupted their happiness. Nothing is clean, nothing is neat, no food, no warm water, and no happiness, therefore the main problem is presented. Another issue is the oppression of Yertle the king. His ruling of Sala-ma-Sond becomes a problem when it interfered with the basic biological necessities of the rest of the turtles.

“Your Majesty, please... I don’t like to complain,
But down here below, we are feeling great pain.
I know, up on top you are seeing great sights,
But down here at the bottom we, too, should have rights.
We turtles can’t stand it. Our shells will all crack!
Besides, we need food. We are starving!” groaned Mack.

“You hush up your mouth!” howled the mighty King Yertle.

“You’ve no rights to talk to the world’s highest turtle.”

The more Mack complained about his situation, the more aggressive Yertle the king answered back to him. Mack’s complaints were authentic and referred to the situation all of the turtles were going through, he claimed for his rights and instead was hushed because he had no right to talk to the king—who was higher than him (both literally and symbolically).

The second tenet portrayed is Tenet #2, Praxis. Praxis is identified in the action Mack decided to carry out.

And that plain little turtle whose name was just Mack,
Decided he’s taken enough. And he had.
And that plain little turtle got a bit mad.
And that plain little Mack did a plain little thing.

He burped.

Since the way the turtles were being oppressed was by not being allowed to attend their biological necessities, Mack's complaint was expressed through the manifestation of one of his bodily functions.

Table 5: Freire's Tenets Portrayed in *The Lorax*.

Book Title: The Lorax	Found in the Text	
	Yes	No
Tenets		
1. Problem Posing	X	
2. Dialogue		X
3. Praxis		X

Tenet #1, Problem Posing is present throughout the whole story of *The Lorax*. One by one the results of the Once-Ler's actions are presented, and still towards the ending of the story, those issues are not solved. Some of the issues include pollution, deforestation, injustice, oppression by those in power, among others.

So, in no time, my uncles and aunts, every one,
all waved me good-bye. They jumped into my cars
and drove away under the smoke-smuggered stars.

From outside in the fields came a sickening smack
Of an axe on a tree. Then we heard the tree fall.

The very last Truffula Tree of them all!

The story presents various problems which can be identified throughout the reading of the whole story, moreover, the problem is emphasized until the very end because the story concludes and

the Lorax has not returned to the land, the land is destroyed and contaminated, and the only thing left is a seed in the hands of a young boy. What was left is definitively a big chaos!

Table 6: Freire's Tenets Portrayed in *Horton Hears a Who!*

Book Title: Horton Hears a Who!	Found in the Text	
	Tenets	Yes No
1. Problem Posing	X	
2. Dialogue		X
3. Praxis	X	

Freire's tenet #1 is seen through the multiple difficulties Horton encounters. The main issue in this story is that no one, except for Horton, believed people could live on a speck. The animals of the jungle were concerned of the fact that Horton could not prove the folks existence; therefore, they assumed the little folks did not exist and Horton was inventing the whole story.

“All I hear,” snapped the big kangaroo, “was the breeze,

And the faint sound of wind through far-distant tree.

I heard no small voices. And you didn't either.”

And the young kangaroo in her pouch said, “Me neither.”

“Grab him!” they shouted. “And cage the big dope!

Lasso his stomach with ten miles of rope!

Tie knots tight so he'll *never* shake loose!

Then dunk that dumb speck in the Beezle-Nut juice!”

In the event stated above, a kangaroo (who's represented as the leader of the jungle animals), had asked Horton to prove folks existed on the speck he was protecting by asking him to tell the *Who* people to speak so they could all listen. But, since the rest of the animals ears were not as keen as

Horton's, they could not hear a thing; and because of that, the speck was going to be destroyed. Among the problems represented in the quote above is the result of intolerance towards those who believe in something different than the majority. Horton represents a minority-he is the only one who believes and is going against the majority who argue something differently; therefore, Horton had to be punished and his belief had to be destroyed through the speck.

Another of Freire's tenets portrayed is Praxis. Praxis is examined through the many actions of Horton because he knew the *Who* people existed, therefore, he never surrendered in taking care of the *Who* people and of encouraging them to make sure they could not be hurt by the rest of the animals in the jungle.

While Horton chased after, with groans, over stones
That tattered his toenails and battered his bones,
And begged, "please don't harm all my little folks, who
Have as much right to live as us bigger folks do!"

I SHALL find my friends on my small speck of dust!
And clover, by clover, by clover with care
He picked up and searcher them, and called, "Are you there?"
"Of course," Horton answered. "Of course I will stick.

I'll stick by you small folks through thin and through thick!

Horton, as described above, had to endure many difficult and painful situations in order to rescue the *Who* people. Horton had a belief and in his pursuit to prove to others the truth of his belief he had to act, regardless the difficult circumstances, he had to act accordingly to what he believed.

GLOBAL ISSUES

Various elements of global issues were identified in each one of the categories. Quotes which represent an issue will be stated below it and for those quotes more complicated, a brief explanation will be given at the end.

Table 7: Global Issues Portrayed in *Yertle the Turtle*

Book Title: Yertle The Turtle			
Global Issues	Yes	No	
1. Environmental issues:			
• pollution,		X	
• deforestation,		X	
• endangered animals,		X	
• global warming,		X	
• recycling,		X	
• natural disasters,		X	
• others:		X	
2. Human rights issues:			
• racism,		X	
• gender issues,		X	
• children's right,		X	
• others : <i>rights in general/classism</i>	X		
3. Socio-economic issues:			
• poverty,			X
• wealth,	X		X
• consumer society,	X		X
• advertising,			X
• others: <i>injustice/power dynamics</i>	X		

According to the findings shown in the table above, global issues portrayed in *Yertle the Turtle* include elements in all of the three categories. These issues are the following:

- Human Rights Issues

Rights in General/classism

I know, up on top you are seeing great sights,

But down here at the bottom we, too, should have rights.

- Socio-Economic Issues

Wealth

This throne that I sit on is to, too low down.

It ought to be higher! He said with a frown.

“If I could sit high, how much greater I’d be!

What a king! I’d be ruler of all that I see!”

Consumer Society

My throne shall be higher! His royal voice thundered,

“So pile up more turtles! I wan’t but two hundred!”

Power Dynamics/Injustice

‘SILENCE!’ the king of the Turtles barked back.

‘I’m king, and you’re only a turtle named Mack.’

‘You stay in your place while I sit here and rule.

‘You hush up your mouth!’ howled the mighty King Yertle.

‘You’ve no right to talk to the world’s highest turtle.

I rule from the clouds! Over land! Over sea!

There’s nothing, no, NOTHING, that’s higher than me!’

And the turtles ‘way down in the pond were afraid.

They trembled. They shook. But they came. They obeyed.

From all over the pond, they came swimming by dozens.

Whole families of turtles, with uncles and cousins.

We turtles can't stand it. Our shells will all crack!

Besides, we need food. We are starving! groaned Mack.

Power dynamics is seen through the way Yertle, because he was the king, did not allow Mack to speak and treated the rest of the turtles, including Mack, badly. Likewise, injustice is shown by the turtle not being allowed to eat and being obligated to form the stack so the king could stand up high.

Table 8: Global Issues Portrayed in *The Lorax*

Book Title: The Lorax		
Global Issues	Yes	No

1. Environmental issues:		
• pollution,	X	
• deforestation,	X	
• endangered animals,	X	
• global warming,	X	
• recycling,		X
• natural disasters,		X
• others: <i>health issues, biodiversity</i>	X	
2. Human rights issues:		
• racism,		X
• gender issues,		X
• children's right,	X	
• others : <i>oppression</i>	X	
3. Socio-economic issues:		
• poverty,	X	
• wealth,	X	
• consumer society,	X	
• advertising,	X	
• others: <i>power dynamics/injustice</i>	X	

- Environmental Issues

Pollution

They may have to fly for a month...or a year...

To escape from the smog you've smogged up around here.

So, in no time, my uncles and aunts, every one,

all waved me good-bye. They jumped into my cars
and drove away under the smoke-smuggered stars.
Now all that was left ‘neath the bad smelling-sky
was a big empty factory...

Your machine chugs on, day and night without stop
Making Gluppity-Glupp. Also Schloppity-Schopp.
And what do you do with this leftover goo?..
I’ll show you. You dirty old Once-ler man, you!
“You’re glumping the pond where the Humming-Fish hummed!”

Deforestation

In no time at all, I had built a small shop.
Then I chopped down a Truffula Tree with one chop.
Now, chopping one tree
At a time
was too slow.
So I quickly invented my Super-Axe-Hacker
which whacked off four Truffula Trees at one smacker.
From outside in the fields came a sickening smack
Of an axe on a tree. Then we heard the tree fall.
The very last Truffula Tree of them all!

Endangered Animals

“NOW... thanks to your hacking my trees to the ground,
There’s not enough Truffula Fruit to go ‘round.

And my poor Bar-ba-loots are all getting the crummies
Because they have gas, and no food, in their tummies!

They may have to fly for a moth...or a year...

To escape from the smog you've smogged up around here.

No more can they hum, for their gills are all gummed.

So I'm sending them off. Oh, their future is dreary.

Global Warming

All the issues mentioned above, along with the quotes, will allow a discussion of global warming to take place in the classroom.

Health Issues

"I am the Lorax," he coughed and he whiffed.

He sneezed and he snuffled. He snarggled. He sniffed.

"Once-ler!" he cried with a cruffulous croak.

"Once-ler! You're making such a smogulous smoke!

No one can sing who has smog in his throat.

"And so", said the Lorax,

"-please pardon my cough

Biodiversity

"They loved living here. But I can't let them stay.

They'll have to find food. And I hope that they may.

Good luck, boys," he cried. And he sent them away.

I, the old Once-ler, felt sad

As I watched them all go.

No one can sing who has smog in his throat.

“And so”, said the Lorax,

“-please pardon my cough”

They cannot live here.

So I’m sending them off.

Because the animals were leaving the land, in a real eco-system this disrupts the balance of nature, resulting in multiple problems, leading to extinction.

Human Rights Issues

Children’s Rights

“It’s a Truffula Seed.

It’s the last one of all!

You’re in charge of the last of the Truffula Seeds...”

In this part of the story, a kid, not an adult, is asked to solve the problem in the land of the Lorax. Here, children can identify their right to be in charge of important decisions and actions regarding their community, their society, and their world.

- **SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES**

Wealth (which leads to greed)

He’ll tell you, perhaps...

If you’re willing to pay.

The Once-ler, regardless of all the damage he had caused in the land of the Lorax because of his greediness, still, was not willing to share the story of what had happened in the land if the young boy was not willing to pay to hear it.

The Lorax said,
“Sir! You are crazy with greed..”

I called all my brothers and uncles and aunts
And I said, “Listen here! Here’s a wonderful chance
For the whole Once-ler Family to get mighty rich!”

Consumer Society

For, just at that minute, a chap came along,
and he thought the Thneed I had knitted was great.
He happily bought it for three ninety-eight.
I biggered my factory. I biggered my roads.
I biggered my wagons. I biggered the loads
Of the Thneeds I shipped out. I was shipping them forth
To the south! To the east! To the West! To the North!
turning more Truffula trees into Thneeds
Which everyone, EVERYONE, *EVERYONE* needs!
I went right on biggering... selling more Thneeds.
And I biggered my money, which everyone needs.

The factory of the Once-ler was getting bigger and bigger because what he was selling was not something people wanted, but rather, it was promoted as something people *needed*, therefore people continued buying and buying.

Power Dynamics/Injustice

Issues of power dynamics and injustice can be discussed by analyzing what the Once-ler did to nature by cutting down all the trees and by polluting the waters which caused all the

animals to abandon the land of the Lorax and all because Once-ler had the power (economically speaking) to do so.

Table 9: Global Issues Portrayed in *Horton Hears a Who!*

Book Title: Horton Hears a Who!			
Global Issues	Yes	No	
1. Environmental Issues:			
1. pollution,			X
2. deforestation,			X
3. endangered animals,			X

4. global warming,		X
5. recycling,		X
6. natural disasters,		X
7. others: <i>biodiversity</i>	X	
2. Human Rights Issues:		
1. racism,		X
2. gender issues,		X
3. children's right,	X	
4. others : <i>oppression</i>	X	
3. Socio-economic Issues:		
1. poverty,		X
2. wealth,		X
3. consumer society,		X
4. advertising,		X
5. others: <i>power dynamics/injustice</i>	X	

- Environmental Issues/ Human Rights Issues

Biodiversity

Through the perspective of biodiversity, where each inhabitant (in this case, of the jungle), should be equally important. It will allow students to discuss how each member plays an important role in order to maintain a balance in the ecosystem.

“I’ll just have to save him. Because, after all,

A person’s a person, no matter how small.”

In addition, the quote clarifies that there should be no distinction between some people being more important or less important than others because they are smaller or bigger.

- Human Rights Issues

Children's Rights

While Horton chased after, with groans, over stones
That tattered his toenails and battered his bones,
And begged, "Please don't harm all my little folks, who
Have as much right to live as us bigger folks do!"
"...A person's a person, no matter how small!
And you very small persons will *not* have to die
If you make yourselves heard! *So come on now and TRY!*"
They've proved they ARE persons, no matter how small.
And their whole world was saved by the Smallest of All!

Oppression

"I think you're a fool!" Laughed the sour kangaroo
And, before the poor elephant even could speak,
That eagle flew off with the flower in his beak.
"Find THAT!" sneered the bird. "But I think you will fail."
Horton fought back with great vigor and vim
But the Wickersham gang was too many for him.
They beat him! They mailed him! They started to haul
Him into the cage! ...

Not only were the animals being mean with Horton, they were oppressing him by not allowing him to speak, but also, they were beating him and putting him in a cage for no good reason.

- Socio-Economic Issues

Power Dynamics/Injustice

With the help of the Wickersham Brothers and dozens
Of Wickersham Uncles and Wickersham cousins
And Wickersham In-Laws, whole help I've engaged,
You're going to be roped! And you're going to be caged!
And, as for you dust peck...hah! That we shall boil
In a hot steaming kettle of Beezle-Nut oil!

Those in power, in this case the Kangaroo, are able to move everyone else to act towards their belief, even if it results in an unfair action where innocent people pay the harsh consequences without deserving it.

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter presents the *Elements of Critical Literacy*, *Freire's Tenets*, and *Global issues* identified in Dr. Seuss's books *Yertle the Turtle*, *The Lorax*, and *Horton Hears a Who!*. Each one of the books was evaluated by each one of the categories stated above and below each one of the evaluation tables, text citations from the respective texts were provided.

CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

In this chapter, I will provide an analysis of the data recollected when evaluating Dr. Seuss's books *Yertle the Turtle*, *The Lorax*, and *Horton Hears a Who!* I took a look at each book and summarize the findings for Critical Literacy, Freire's tenets, and Global Issues. The analysis of the findings is grounded on Critical Pedagogy with a holistic approach towards the text; therefore some of the illustrations described will be compared, and analyzed as well.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

After evaluating the first book, the evident points of critical literacy shown in *Yertle the Turtle* are the first four out of the five characteristics.

Characteristic 1: *They don't make difference invisible, but rather explore what differences make a difference.*

Characteristic 2: *They enrich our understanding of history and life by giving voice to those who traditionally have been silenced or marginalized-those we call the "indignant ones."*

Characteristic 3: *They show how people can begin to take action on important social issues.*

Characteristic 4: *They explore dominant systems of meaning that operate in our society to position people and groups of people-helping us question why certain groups are positioned as "others."*

In addition to identifying critical literacy, two out three of Freire's tenets were identified in the text; these tenets are *Problem Posing* and *Praxis*. The last evaluation consisted in identifying global issues. In *Yertle the Turtle* global issues were presented in two of the three categories evaluated. The issues identified under each category were: under *Human rights issues*,

rights in general/classism, under *Socio-economic issues*, injustice and oppression/power dynamics.

In the second book, *The Lorax*, three out of the five items of Critical Literacy were presented in the text. These are:

Characteristic 3: *They show how people can begin to take action on important social issues.*

Characteristic 4: *They explore dominant systems of meaning that operate in our society to position people and groups of people-helping us question why certain groups are positioned as “others.”*

Characteristic 5: *They don’t provide a “happily ever after” endings for complex social problems.*

In addition, the story presented one out of three of Freire’s tenets: *Praxis*. And lastly, global issues were identified in the three categories. The issues identified under each category were: under *Environmental Issues*, pollution, deforestation, endangered animals, global warming, and health issues; under *Human rights issues*, children’s rights and oppression; and under *Socio-economic issues*, wealth, consumer society, advertising, and injustice/power dynamics

In the third book *Horton Hears a Who!*, characteristics of critical literacy portrayed in this story were the first four. These are:

Characteristic 1: *They don’t make difference invisible, but rather explore what differences make a difference.*

Characteristic 2: *They enrich our understanding of history and life by giving voice to those who traditionally have been silenced or marginalized-those we call the “indignant ones.”*

Characteristic 3: *They show how people can begin to take action on important social issues.*

Characteristic 4: *They explore dominant systems of meaning that operate in our society to position people and groups of people-helping us question why certain groups are positioned as “others.”*

In addition, the story presented two out of three of Freire’s tenets: *Problem Posing* and *Praxis*. Finally, the story presented global issues in all three categories, under *Environmental issues*, biodiversity; under *Human rights issues*, racism and children’s right; under *Socio-economic issues*, power dynamics/injustice.

Teaching of Critical Literacy. Critical Literacy is rooted in Freire’s critical pedagogy; Freire believed in a “radical pedagogical change [and] advocated for a sweeping transformation in ways of thinking rather than specific teaching strategies or techniques” (McDaniel 474). This *radical pedagogy* may be confused by some educators and or parents, as a rebellious pedagogy, one which may negatively influence children. Therefore, it is important to mention that the origins of the word *radical* is “of or having roots...meaning going to the origin; essential” (“radical”). Therefore, the purpose of believing in a *radical pedagogical change* relies on transforming, from the roots, the established beliefs, opinions, and philosophies towards education and educational strategies. Freire, in his pedagogy, wanted educators to transform their view of education, but he knew the only way it was possible to transform an idea which was already deeply planted, was by working from the roots. This is why it is important to highlight that Freire’s pedagogy is *not* a set of skills one could learn, but of a set of philosophies that “would need to be reinvented for each person’s or group’s particular context” (McDaniel 474).

Therefore, in this quest for reinventing what many of us as educators have learned about critical literacy, Cynthia McDaniel's characteristics on selecting books which support critical literacy becomes a suitable and an easily accessible instrument for both educators and parents. In the summary of findings stated above, all three books portrayed at least three of the five characteristics a book should have in order to promote critical literacy. Therefore, I concluded that all three books, *Yertle the Turtle*, *The Lorax*, and *Horton Hears a Who!* are books which can be used to promote critical literacy in the classroom. The method used, which was to evaluate each book by the five characteristics and then identify those quotes in the text to support the findings, may serve as an example of a method a critical educator can emulate in order to select books which contain elements of critical literacy.

Dr. Seuss's Books but... Underlined are Freire's Philosophies. Throughout the second evaluation, I took a closer look at the similarities found among Dr. Seuss's books and Freire's tenets of *Problem Posing*, *Dialogue*, and *Praxis*. After identifying the text citations which contained Freire's tenets, I discovered all three books portrayed at least one of the three of Freire's tenets; below is the explanation for each book.

In the first book, *Yertle the Turtle*, I identified the first few lines of the story as the ones posing the problem soon to occur in Sala-ma-Sond. The word *until* indicates that everything good that was happening in Sala-ma-son would soon end, and it ended the day King Yertle decided "the kingdom he ruled was too small." After this statement, subsequent problems arose because of the king's decision to make his kingdom bigger. Another problem posed in the story, is that of the role of oppressor and the oppressed; Yertle is the oppressor and Mack and the rest of the turtles are the oppressed. Yertle believed he was superior because he was the king, therefore when he decided he wanted to be higher so he could see more and have a larger

kingdom, he did not consider any of the other turtles. What Yertle did here is an example of what Freire states when he describes that “the oppressor elaborates his theory of action without the people” (183). On the other hand, regarding the rest of the turtles, the more they (as the oppressed) “remain unaware of the causes of their condition; they fatalistically ‘accept’ their exploitation” (64). Throughout the whole text, no turtle dared to complain about their situation “they were afraid. They trembled. They shook. But they came. They obeyed.” This statement reveals that the king oppressed the other turtles by instilling fear in them.

The second tenet portrayed is *Praxis*. The need to break out of the position of oppressed moved Mack, first to verbalize his concern to the king about his condition, as well as his fellow turtle’s condition but he was scolded and humiliated for it. Therefore, he decided to act. This praxis, which had a reflection and then an action, revealed Mack did not believe himself to be better than the rest, nor did he only worry for his own benefit, rather he “commit[ed] himself . . . to fight at their side” (Freire 39). Mack had already verbalized his concern, but in order to carry out praxis, he had to act. If not, if Mack believed they had to be free but did “nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality, is a farce” (Freire 50). As a result of his praxis, his world changed for him and all turtles, and at the end all of them “are free. As turtles, and, maybe, all creatures should be.”

In the second book, *The Lorax, Problem Posing* is seen throughout the whole text. After reading book reviews in popular online book stores, those who criticized *The Lorax* pointed out that it focuses too much on the problem and does not offer a solution; these critics suggested not to read this book to children. Claims such as this one, shelter the idea that educators and parents, have to protect children from the harsh realities of this world. But, the question is, how are these children going to act when they confront *these* situations during their teenage years or in their

adulthood? Are they going to notice the true *harsh realities* of the world or are they going to believe that since it is not part of *their* world, that it is not important? When confronted with problems such as pollution, racism, injustice, oppression, and so on, are they going to know what to do? Therefore, because of questions like these, *Problem Posing* in children's literature should be important to all educators who promote critical literacy.

Through problem posing teachers are “empowering children to recognize, question, and act against social inequality and injustice” (qtd in Wollman-Bonilla). *The Lorax* presents the “unveiled reality” of a land conquered by consumerism, greed, individualism, and selfishness, a land where nobody, at the moment, cared about the consequences of deforestation and massive pollution, where no one valued what they had because they had it in abundance. By presenting all of these issues to children, they will “develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (Freire 83). Just as the reality of the people in the story changed, because they did not act on time, children may feel the responsibility to act upon their reality as well, knowing they can contribute in changing (positively or negatively) their reality.

In the third book, *Horton Hears a Who!*, problem posing brings to the classroom a space for children to reflect upon their own reality and on concepts such as tolerance and respect by listening to what others have to say. The constant problem throughout the story was that nobody believed the *Who folks* existed, simply because they did not believe folks could live on specks and because they had never heard of them. Therefore, since the jungle animals did not believe the *Who* folk existed, they were going to annihilate them. If students identify these two problems in the story, they could begin to state possible solutions for them. Children could talk about the

importance of listening to what others have to say before reaching conclusions, regarding tolerance to other different points of view (even when these may seem silly or illogic), and they could even see themselves reflected in the text. By identifying themselves with the text (or characters in the text) children will “negotiate personal meaning from texts based on their knowledge of the world and past experience” (Yenika-Agbaw 447). Children could identify themselves with the *Who* folks considering the moments when those who are bigger ignore they exist. As a result the teacher can encourage children to unite their voices, because they too are important people, they too have important things to say, and they can be heard. Likewise, taking this to a political level such as Freire would do, students can take it to the next level by identifying a group, community, sector, or country, which has been oppressed by any dominant system or almost obliterated.

In addition, *Praxis* is shown in this story through the character of Horton. This elephant not only believed the *Who* folks existed, but he had made a commitment to protect them against everything. These words were put into practice every time the speck was taken away from Horton. The first time this happened, he decided to look for the folks, which was a very difficult task and in the search Horton was “more dead than alive.” But he managed to find them, and again stated he was going to protect them. The second time, he could not protect them with actions, but he did, he worked and worked along with the *Who* folks by encouraging them to be heard and save their lives; Horton never gave up. The result of this praxis moved by the love Horton had for the *Who* people resulted in “an act of bravery, [because] love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation. It must generate other acts of freedom; otherwise, it is not love” (Freire 90). At the end, the proof that Horton’s praxis was an honest act moved by love was it generated other acts of freedom. In the

end, the kangaroo, (the character which represented the leader of the group who wanted to destroy the *Who* people) decided to change and protect the *Who* folks also.

“...From now on, I’m going to protect them with you!”

And the young kangaroo in her pouch said,...

“...ME TOO!...”

And not only did the mother kangaroo change, but she also proved her actions were honest because the little kangaroo in her pouch (her son) decided to change in order to imitate his mother, ie. Praxis change ideologies.

Dr. Seuss’s Stories, but... Is this My World? After reading *Yertle the Turtle*, *The Lorax*, and *Horton Hears a Who!*, I identified almost 13 different issues which can be discussed with the use of these texts in classroom discussions. By presenting these issues, or better yet, allowing students to identify these issues, together teachers and students can move forward and search for possible solutions or engage in class discussion about global values. This strategy goes hand in hand with Freire’s problem posing theory. By incorporating texts which include a wide variety of global issues, students can make connections from the word to the world. Taking a text, and as I mentioned earlier in this paper, uncovering it, will help students discover all the ways one can learn from it. The purpose of incorporating these global issues is to raise students’ awareness and by doing so, students will achieve, what Freire states as, a “‘real consciousness’ of the world” (Freire 115). They will no longer see the reality of these issues as far realities, rather “they come to perceive reality differently; by broadening the horizon of their perception...” (115). While engaged in dialogue, students may listen to the realities of other students and of the teacher, and as a result, what seemed a far reality may be as close as an issue happening to a classmate and their teacher. That gained knowledge, will enable students to have a better understanding of *their*

responsibility in this world and they can apprehend that they are “in the world and with the world as transforming rather than adaptive beings” (Freire 121). Therefore, with the knowledge students gain along with praxis, they can present real solutions to these global issues.

COMPARING AND CONTRASTING ALL THREE BOOKS

After identifying the characteristics which support critical literacy in all three books, item #3 was the only item repeated in all three texts: *They show how people can begin to take action on important social issues*. These characteristics reveals something significant about Dr. Seuss and of his main purpose in creating these stories, first, show children to identify social issues and second, to show how one can take action. Even though, each social issue presented is not the same, they all reveal or allow discussion of global issues, i.e. that the text should have relevancy in any social context or, at least, in most. Critical educators would benefit from the use of these books, due to the fact that they will be able to incorporate these global issues to their own teaching of social context.

Going back to characteristic #3, in all three stories each character took action on what was important at *that* moment because it was affecting their social lives and thus became an important social issue. In *Yertle the Turtle*, what was affecting all of the turtles was that their basic biological needs were not attended and thus were literally being suppressed by the king. Although one may look at the story and consider it to carry out an unimportant or irrelevant issue because all the action Mack did that managed to shake the kings’ throne was that *he burped*. Well, let’s look at *that burp* through a critical lens. First, Mack begins to take action by speaking up; he notified the issues that were affecting him. Mack mentions that *his* back hurts, that *his* shoulders hurt, and *his* knees. The second time he complains about the situation, Mack’s discourse shifts from *me* to *we*. Therefore, the situation became an important social issue because

it is no longer a personal problem only affecting Mack, but, a social concern affecting every turtle in Sala-ma-Sond.

For that reason, when Mack *burped*, he did not *just burp*; this action came as a result of a suppressed and important biological need everyone in Sala-ma-Sond had; they all needed to eat. His *burp* revealed that he, and every turtle, could no longer stay at the bottom of the tower, but that sooner or later, someone had to take action. So his action was that he would no longer contain his bodily needs. In this case, Mack burped, turning it to humorous way to approach a serious topic. Nevertheless, there are serious underlying social issues, such as hunger and oppression that can result in sickness and even death, to be explored from the simple action of that *plain little turtle* called Mack.

In *The Lorax*, characteristic #3 is identified when the action is placed upon the shoulders of a young boy. Some people may argue this story does not present a solution to the problem and therefore openly reject the book. Since this book does not directly state a solution to the problem, it does not mean the literature does not promote a solution in any way. If the absence of a solution provokes questions in the minds of teachers and in class discussion, then what needs to be done is seek for answers through multiple points of view of why it is not portrayed. The importance of this task is that “as children search for answers to their questions about texts and their society, they claim ownership of this new knowledge” (qtd in Yenika-Agbaw).

While seeking for answers, students may discover the story does propose an action towards change. In the story, the Once-ler realizes and tells a young boy (and perhaps the reader also) that “unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot nothing is going to get better.” After this statement, a seed is given to the young boy, encouraging him to do something in order to restore the land and the trees where once the Lorax dwelled.

Finally, characteristic #3 is portrayed in *Horton Hears a Who!* through Horton's actions of protecting and encouraging the *Who* folks. This is an important element when taking part on important social issues. In critical literacy, according to Creighton, one way of seeing the reading process is the notion of voice. The notion of voice in the reading process suggests "...that students have at their disposal to make themselves 'heard' and to define themselves as active participants in the world" (Creighton). This notion exemplifies exactly what is being encouraged in this story. For Horton, who had heard the *Who* folks, once he became aware of their existence he took on the responsibility of protecting them, because he realized they were small and anyone could easily harm them. But, regardless of Horton's struggle at protecting the people of *Who*-ville, the rest of the jungle animals did not believe *Who*'s existed and wanted to destroy the environment where they lived. Then, Horton could no longer speak for the people of *Who*-ville, but now he could only encourage them to be heard. These actions show children another way of taking part in social change is speaking up for those who don't have a voice and encourage them to unite and fight for their cause. Children can speak of topics such as animal rights, protecting nature, and even oppressed people. They can even see themselves portrayed in the story when others don't hear what "little people" have to say. This experience will help children understand the importance of taking action on issues regarding themselves and others.

Another item common in all three books was the absence of Freire's tenet of Dialogue. Something I discovered while analyzing the texts along with Freire's explanation of dialogue, is that dialogue is not as simple as to present a conversation in a text, therefore, for me, it was impossible to identify it *in* the text. Nevertheless, I do believe that all three texts allow dialogue to take place, that is, with the proper facilitator because it will not happen automatically. Having said that, all three books present global issues, and that all three books show how to take action

on social issues, then, all three books should allow students to engage in critical thinking through dialogue. It may not present dialogue in the text, but it does become a useful tool to engage in dialogue in the classroom. This dialogue cannot be done by the text alone, the teacher has to understand what it means to have real dialogue. Dialogue is not simply to talk at the students, but with the students. It should not be taken lightly, and it “should never be viewed as a mere tactic to involve students in a particular task” (Freire 17). Dialogue is “an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing” (17). Both, teachers and students know and can contribute to the class discussion, but equally important is that both learn in the process. Having said that, Dr. Seuss’s book, and as well as books which also present social and global issues in a problem posing manner, should be considered as excellent resources in the classroom to promote critical thinking and true dialogue.

ON BEYOND THE TEXT!

The analysis of global issues should not be limited to the text alone. A truly holistic approach towards a text will go beyond; images can become the object of a class discussion therefore in the following section I analyze some images which portray Freire’s ideas along with global and social issues. Since all of Dr. Seuss’s books have no page number, for this section, a page number was assigned. Page one begins right after the cover page.

Yertle the Turtle. The first image analyzed from *Yertle the Turtle* is found in page 10. This image shows a stack of turtles with nine turtles bellow King Yertle. Mack, who is the last turtle in the stack is looking up to the King Yurtle, while he and the rest of the turtles under him are looking down. This image is an example of oppression. By focusing on Yertle’s facial expressions, students can point out the way Yertle (the turtle on the top) is looking down in a

demeaning way at Mack. Students can also describe the turtles' body language, how they don't dare to look up towards the king as if they were scared. Their heads are lower than their bodies.

Another image analyzed is found on page 17. Here the stack of turtles is shown again, but this time, the appearance on the turtle's faces have changed. Still their heads are lower than their bodies, but now their eyes are different. Some of the turtles eyes are closed, others are sad and tired, and others have an X, indicating that these turtles are really ill. Health issues can be discussed with this image. Students can explore how turtles look and compare their appearance to other images from the beginning of the story. Here, the turtle's appearance have changed and their faces now look even more tired and sicker.

Two other images which were also analyzed are found in pages 1-2 and 27-28. Images on pages 1-2 show the turtles swimming happily in the pond before King Yertle decided his kingdom was too small. In this image, at one side of the pond, Yertle is sitting on a rock and pride can be seen on his facial expression. On the other hand, in the image found on pages 27-28 King Yertle is in the pond all covered in mud because he fell from the stack of turtles he had made. Now, the turtles are swimming happily towards Mack who curiously is now on top of the rock and has a smile on his face while looking at Yertle. When looking at page 27-28, it seemed particularly interesting because at first I only focused on how happy turtles were once they were free. Then, looking back at all the images shown in the book, I noticed a difference between pages 1-2 and pages 27-28. On pages 1-2 all the turtles were happy, but Yertle was in charge, therefore he was positioned on top of the rock. On pages 27-28, although the text states that turtles are free, Mack now occupies the position of Yertle on top of the rock. This situation can be related to Freire's philosophy when he declares that the oppressed can become the oppressor. There is a lot to think about here and it opens up for rich dialogue.

The Lorax. Images analyzed in Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax* are found on pages 36-37, 40-41, and 46-47. All these images represent the results of the contamination and deforestation. Pages 36-37 shows the Lorax pointing the way out of the land to the Bar-ba-loots. In these images the animals look sad because they have to leave due to the fact that there is no more food for them. Pages 40-41 it shows the Lorax on the staircase of the Once-ler's house followed by the birds. These images are beginning to look different because the pollution can be noticed through the fog in the air. Similar to the image found on pages 36-37, the image on pages 46-47 shows animals leaving because of contamination and emigration. Images on pages 46-47 look darker, as if it were night time and more fog can be seen. The illustrations show fish jumping out of the pond because the water is being contaminated by the disposals of the Once-ler's factory. Other topics related in all three images are animal extinction as a result of being obligated to leave their natural habitat.

The Lorax also present emigration in the image on pages 52-53. This image depicts what "big companies" leave behind after they have exploited all the resources in a land. The image presents the Once-ler big empty factory and the cars leaving the land and factory behind. While the cars are leaving the illustrations show the gas coming out of the car is thicker and darker. We are able to see deforestation and pollution; their waving hands saying goodbye, evidence they are leaving behind all the mess. Also, if we take a closer look at the label the cars' have, "You Need a Thneed." Through this image topics such as consumerism and advertisement can be discussed.

Horton Hears a Who! In this story, most images portray the demeaning and oppressive attitude the jungle animals have towards Horton. On pages 46-47 the illustration shows Horton tied up with ropes and being pushed by monkeys into a large cage. On the upper right side of the illustration, the mother kangaroo with her baby kangaroo in her pouch is giving the order to imprison Horton and throw the speck into the *Beezle-Nut* juice. The baby kangaroo is imitating the

exact same gestures as the mother kangaroo; ideologies depicted here since the child takes for granted his mother's ideas. These illustrations show the physical oppression Horton undergoes while trying to be imprisoned, only because he persisted in believing the *Who* folks existed. The following image shows that Horton's position, in comparison to the Kangaroo's, is a lower one. This lower position is seen in how inferior Horton is treated throughout the story and more evidently seen in the illustration. Although he is higher in size, those in charge although smaller are more powerful.

Again, on the illustrations on pages 36-37, we see the kangaroo's attitude towards Horton. In these images, Horton face look sad and even confused, his knees are bent and he is looking up towards the kangaroo who, in turn, positions her face very high and is not even looking at Horton. As explained in the previous illustration before, the baby kangaroo the mother's pouch is doing exactly the same. Even though Horton is a larger animal, he is positioned lower than the kangaroo. This illustration helps to examine power dynamics and the results of oppression. Also, this illustration can help explore the importance of parents as role models for children, how everything they do, and even how they think, can be imitated by their children.

Looking at the illustrations along with the narration provides a holistic approach towards the text. Part of critically analyzing a text is to take into consideration all of the images. This holistic approach is ideal for young children because it allows this sort of literature to be introduced, even if they can't read. For children who do not know how to read texts yet, they can read the images and engage in productive fruitful class discussions.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The first limitation I encountered was due to the nature of my study. Because I had to limit my research to a thesis length paper, I had to also limit the amount of books selected. I believe there are many other Dr. Seuss's books with powerful underlying messages that can be used to promote critical thinking. The second limitation I encountered was that even though my intention was to present an unbiased evaluation method and selection of texts, inevitably my bias influenced upon my decisions due to my experiences, beliefs, and education.

Likewise my decision to use only three of the seven categories of Yakovchuk's division of global issues and focus only on three of Freire's tenets, if someone decides to conduct a similar study, they can change the global issues and the tenets used. Also they can use the same elements and evaluate different children's book by other authors.

However, considering the amount of books Dr. Seuss has written, I believe this same research can be done with three other books by him focus on their political nature. For example *The Sneetches*, *The Butter Battle Book*, and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* are among Dr. Seuss most controversial books and they all have powerful messages which can also be explored using the evaluation method presented in this thesis or an adoption of it.

Another suggestion would be to incorporate different types of children's books such as picture books which only contain illustrations and take it through the same method or adopted version of evaluation used in this thesis to determine if the picture book can promote critical pedagogy and engage children in critical thinking compared to books which also contain words.

Lastly, in order to expand this study and so teachers can fully benefit from it, another level would be to create examples on how these books can be implemented in the classroom through a series of ideas for lessons or unit plans.

FINAL THOUGHTS...

“As teachers carry out the work of selecting texts for classroom use, many seem to lack the courage to present non-mainstream perspectives, and they lack faith in children’s ability to recognize and handle difficult issues” (Wollman-Bonilla 287).

After going through the process of evaluating each book, identifying critical literacy, Freire’s tenets, global issues, and evaluating the illustrations, it is *now* that I honestly realize the hardships of wanting to expose children to critical literature. First, as stated above, as teachers we need the courage to present these non-mainstream issues in the classroom. For us, education is not an easy task, it is “difficult because it demands constant vigilance over ourselves as to avoid being simplistic...” (Freire “Pedagogy of Freedom” 51). The evaluation presented in this thesis represents examples of what teachers may look for in a book, in order to promote a critical pedagogy. Through these examples, it becomes clear to me as an educator and/or parent that children’s literature cannot be taken lightly. Although we may want to protect or shield our children from confronting the harsh realities of this world, the best we can do is to help them view their world through a critical stance and decide, from an early age, if we want them to become active agents in the transformation of their world.

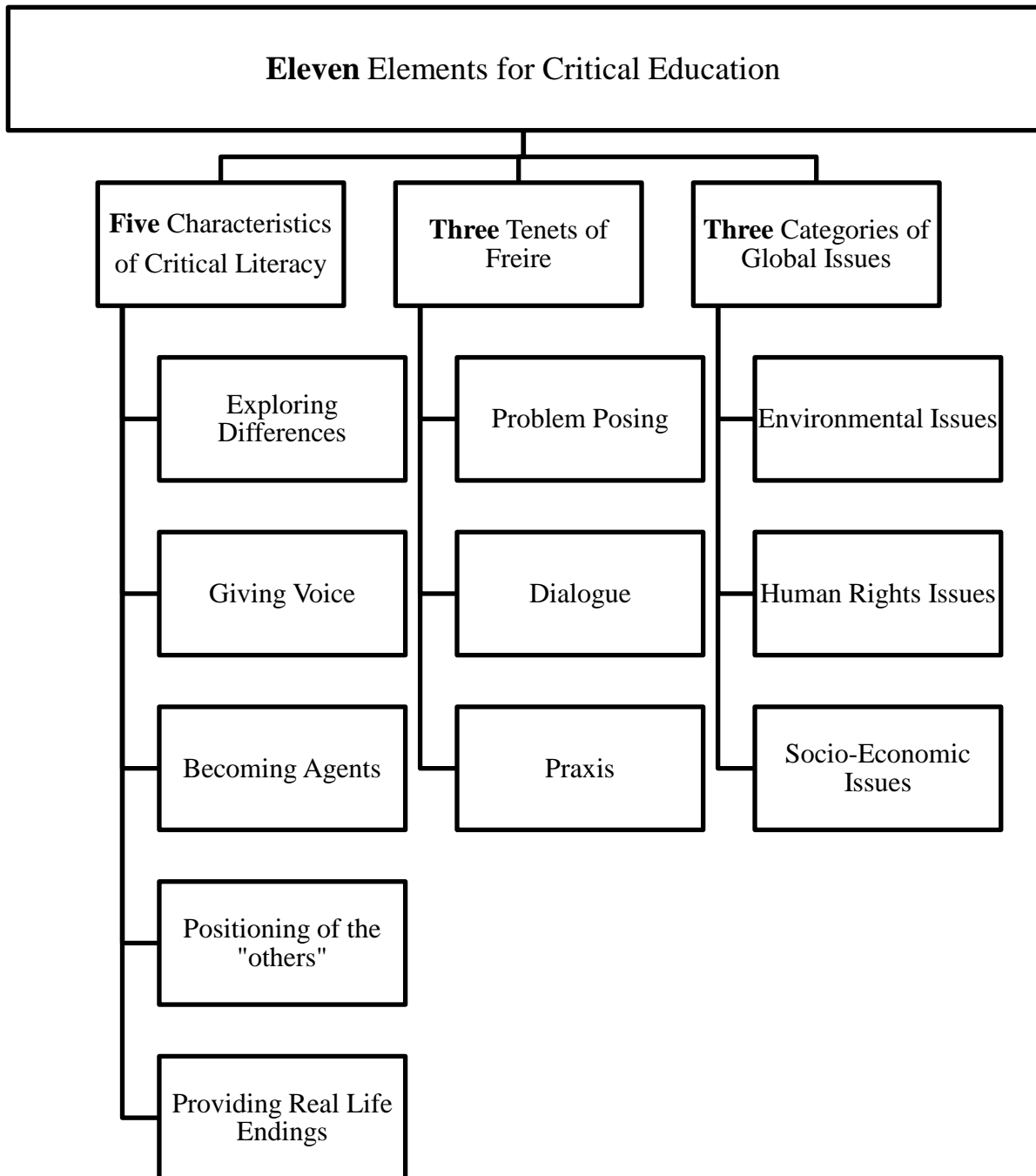
It resides upon us, parents and educators, to believe in the capacity children have to deal with social issues. Presenting texts which challenge them will allow them to realize that “unless readers are able to read for social change and justice, they will find themselves confirming existing meanings determined by others’ ideologies” (qtd in Yenika-Agbaw). For that reason, through critical readings children should be allowed to engage in dialogue, exchange ideas, and present their conclusion in an environment of tolerance and respect. That way, they will not fear

to speak and see the result of acting towards a transformation in their education and in their world.

Children can do what the little turtle named Mack did: he did not fear to speak and stand up for himself and others in the same condition as him. That turtle “Decided he’d taken enough. And he had,” and the results of his actions gave freedom to all turtles. They can also do as that big elephant named Horton, who unselfishly worried about other folks and fought by their side believing that “A person’s a person, no matter how small!” Therefore, by presenting these issues to children, and showing them that *they can* make a difference, they will feel the responsibility that unless *they* care a “whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not” And along with that responsibility, they will realize that they *are* an important element in the transformation of this world, that even though they may not change the whole world immediately, they can transform their surroundings and encourage other people to do the same.

APPENDIX A

Elements to Consider when Selecting Books which Promote Critical Education



APPENDIX B

List of Dr. Seuss's Books Read

Books by Dr. Seuss and Illustrated by Dr. Seuss

1. *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, 1937
2. *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins*, 1938
3. *The King's Stilts*, 1939
4. *The Seven Lady Godivas*, 1939
5. *Horton Hatches and Egg*, 1940
6. *Thidwick the Big-Hearted Moose*, 1948
7. *If I Ran the Zoo*, 1950
8. *Horton Hears a Who!*, 1954
9. *On Beyond Zebra*, 1955
10. *If I Ran the Circus*, 1956
11. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*, 1957
12. *The Cat in the Hat*, 1957
13. *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back*, 1958
14. *Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories*, 1958
15. *Happy Birthday to You!*, 1959
16. *Green Eggs and Ham*, 1960
17. *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish*, 1960
18. *The Sneetches and Other Stories*, 1961
19. *The Zax*, 1961
20. *Too Many Daves*, 1961

21. *What was I Scared of?* 1961
22. *Dr. Seuss's Sleep Book*, 1962
23. *Dr. Seuss' ABC*, 1953
24. *Fox in Socks*, 1965
25. *I Had Trouble Calling to Solla Sollew*, 1965
26. *Book About Me, By Me Myself*, 1969
27. *I Can Draw it Myself*, 1970
28. *Mr. Brown can Moo Can you?*, 1970
29. *The Lorax*, 1971
30. *Marvin K. Mooney Will You Please Go Now!*, 1972
31. *The Shape of Me and Other Stuff*, 1973
32. *There's a Wocket in My Pocket!*, 1974
33. *Oh the Things You Can Think!*, 1975
34. *The Cat's Quizzer*, 1976
35. *I can Read with My Eyes Shut!*, 1978
36. *Oh Say Can You Say?*, 1979
37. *The Butter Battle Book*, 1984
38. *You're Only Old Once!*, 1986
39. *Oh, the Place You'll Go!*, 1990

Books by Dr. Seuss as Theo. LeSeig Illustrated by Other Artists

40. *I Am Not Going to Get Up Today!* 1897,
41. *Gerald McBoing Boing*, 1950
42. *Ten Apples Up On top!*, 1961

43. *The Eye Book*, 1968
44. *Can Write!*, 1971
45. *In a People House*, 1972
46. *Wacky Wednesday*, 1974
47. *Great day for Up*, 1974
48. *Maybe You Should Fly a Jet! Maybe You Should be a Vet!*, 1980
49. *The Tooth Book*, 1981
50. *Daisy—Head Mayzie*, 1995 (posthumously)

APPENDIX C

Table 1: Characteristics which Support Critical Literacy

Book Title:		
Characteristics:	Yes	No
1. They don't make difference invisible, but rather explore what differences make a difference.		
2. They enrich our understanding of history and life by giving voice to those who traditionally have been silenced or marginalized-those we call the "indignant ones."		
3. They show how people can begin to take action on important social issues.		
4. They explore dominant systems of meaning that operate in our society to position people and groups of people—helping us question why certain groups are positioned as "others."		
5. They don't provide "happily ever after" endings for complex social problems.		

APPENDIX D

Table 2: Freire's Tenets Portrayed

Book Title:	Found in the	
	Text	
Tenets	Yes	No
1. Problem Posing		
2. Dialogue		
3. Praxis		

APPENDIX E

Table 3: Global Issues Portrayed

Book Title:		
Global Issues	Yes	No
1. Environmental Issues:		
1. pollution,		
2. deforestation,		
3. endangered animals,		
4. global warming,		
5. recycling,		
6. natural disaster,		
7. others: <i>biodiversity</i>		
2. Human Rights Issues:		
1. racism,		
2. gender issues,		
3. children's right,		
4. others : <i>oppression</i>		
3. Socio-economic Issues:		
1. poverty,		
2. wealth,		
3. consumer society,		
4. advertising,		
5. others: <i>power dynamics/injustice</i>		

Appendix F

Summary of the Findings

Elements		Books		
Portrayed in Each Book		Yertle the Turtle	The Lorax	Horton Hears a Who!
Characteristics of Critical Literacy	Exploring Differences	X		X
	Giving Voice	X		X
	Becoming Agents	X	X	X
	Positioning of the “others”	X	X	
	Providing <i>real life</i> endings		X	
Freire’s Tenets	Problem Posing	X	X	X
	Dialogue			
	Praxis	X		X
Global Issues	Environmental Issues		X	X
	Human Rights Issues	X	X	X
	Socio-Economic Issues	X	X	X

APPENDIX G

Resources for Teachers

- The Lorax Project
www.theloraxproject.com
- Global Issues: Social, Political, Economic and Environmental Issues That Affect Us All
www.globalissues.org
- Teaching Children Philosophy
http://www.teachingchildrenphilosophy.org/wiki/Main_Page
- The Freire Project: The Paulo and Nita Freire International Project for Critical Pedagogy
<http://www.freireproject.org/content/foundation-children>
- Media Education Foundation
<http://www.mediaed.org>
- Story of Stuff Project
<http://www.storyofstuff.org>

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