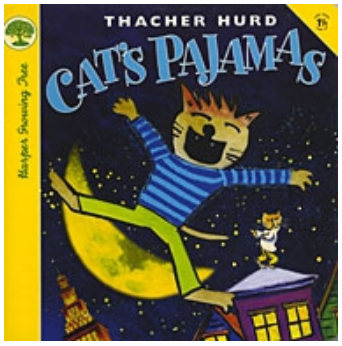
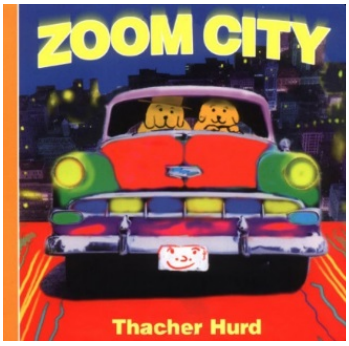
Research Spotlight

The iPad Game

Literacy skills are closely linked to a child's earliest experiences with books and stories and, with the increasing use of electronic books accessible through computers, apps, and tablets, researchers investigating whether the addition of interactive features in an e-book can support children's understanding of the story. In collaboration with Dr. Erik Thiessen, Psychology 1st year graduate student Cassie Eng is studying the impact of animations triggered by children's story relevant vocalizations during digital story reading.

In **The iPad Game**, a researcher reads each child two stories on an iPad, *Cat's Pajamas* (Hurd, 2000) and *Zoom City* (Hurd, 1998). One iPad story is static like traditional electronic books (e-books), and the other iPad story is interactive, i.e., the pictures animate whenever the child vocalizes a word that is in the story. The researchers hypothesize that children will be better able to answer comprehension questions for the animated story than the traditional one. Their results have the potential to inform the design of digital books designed for novice readers.





The Matching Game

As a follow up study to **The iPad Game**, the same research team is testing children's development of sight word vocabulary in **The Matching Game**. The researcher shows each child four pictures, like the ones to the right, and asks the child to point to the picture that best matches a spoken word. This assessment is the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and will enable the researchers to correlate the children's performance on The iPad Game with their vocabulary level to determine whether the animations are especially useful for children with particular levels of vocabulary skill. So far, Cassie is not finding enough variance in the Children's School data to test her hypothesis, however, because most of the children are scoring in the 99th percentile for vocabulary knowledge, which is well above their age level! With a group that has a broader vocabulary range, the researchers theorize that having animations in the interactive iPad book that are congruent with the text (e.g., if a child says "cars" only the cars animate; if a child says "moon" only the moon in the sky animates) will foster children's ability to connect words to relevant representations.