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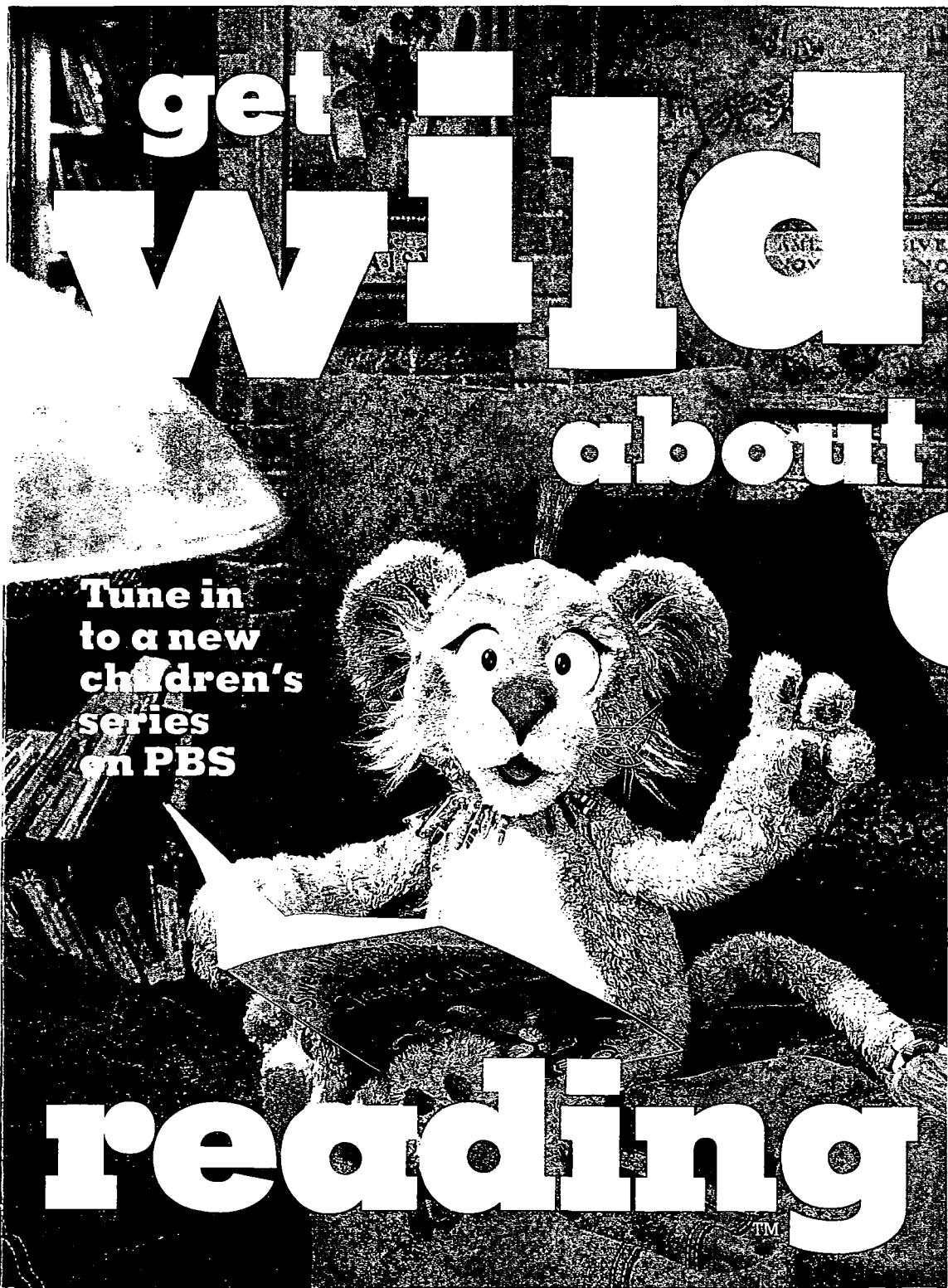
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Pamphlet, "Get Wild About Reading," 2 pages

get **wild** about

Tune in
to a new
children's
series
on PBS

A black and white photograph of a koala sitting in a tree and reading a book. The koala is looking up at the camera with a surprised expression. The background is a dense, textured tree trunk.

reading

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**STUDY FINDS TV CAN TEACH READING —
KIDS GAIN SKILLS BY WATCHING NEW PBS SHOW
*BETWEEN THE LIONS***

BOSTON, July 21, 2000 -- BETWEEN THE LIONS, a new PBS KIDS series produced by WGBH Boston and Sirius Thinking, has demonstrated that TV can teach kids basic reading skills. A newly released University of Kansas study finds that kindergarten students significantly improved key reading skills after watching only 8.5 hours of the program during a four-week period. In addition, children overwhelmingly liked the program as much or better than *Pokémon* and other favorite shows.

On a test that measures children's knowledge of letter-sound correspondence, a skill that is highly predictive of later reading ability, kindergartners who were tested before and after watching BETWEEN THE LIONS saw their scores rise by 64%—compared to only 25% gains for similar children who did not watch the show. In fact, their learning was so accelerated, these kindergartners exceeded the benchmark established for children in the winter of first grade. (An Executive Summary of key findings is attached. The full body of research is available upon request.)

According to Brigid Sullivan, vice president of children's programming at WGBH, "The nation's top reading experts and creative talent were gathered for BETWEEN THE LIONS, with a mission to develop a program and Web site that would help kids learn to read. The University of Kansas study shows that our curriculum-based content works and that kids love it!"

KEY FINDINGS

- In a standardized reading test, kindergarten children who were tested before and after watching the BETWEEN THE LIONS episodes saw their scores rise by 26%—compared to only 5% gains for similar children who did not watch the show.
- On tests rating proficiency in specific skills, kindergarten children who viewed the show saw their average performance improve by 50%—compared to only 13% for similar children who did not view the program. (The skills included letter-sound correspondence, phonemic awareness and concepts of print.)
- First-graders who watched the show had significantly faster rates of growth in phonemic awareness than those who did not watch.

more

- 95% of kindergartners and first-graders liked the show. One in six said it was their favorite show, besting the next most popular show, *Pokémon*. More than 8 in 10 said they liked it as much or better than their favorite show.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Research director Deborah L. Linebarger, Ph.D., of the Juniper Gardens Children's Project at the University of Kansas, conducted the research on kindergarten and first-grade students in the greater Kansas City region. Children watched 17 episodes of the half-hour program in their classrooms during a 3-4 week period before the program aired.

Teachers were instructed not to discuss the show or change instruction in any way. Researchers sought to determine the impact of the program on early reading skills that are highly predictive of reading success. These skills include letter-sound correspondence (the ability to match letters with sounds); phonemic awareness (the awareness that spoken words are made up of sound units); and concepts of print (the understanding that print is read from left to right and from top to bottom, that print differs from pictures, etc.)

ABOUT THE SHOW

BETWEEN THE LIONS, the culmination of more than three years of research, is the first television series to offer educationally valid reading instruction, combining the best of phonics and whole language. The program is the centerpiece of a multimedia literacy initiative that includes a Web site (www.pbskids.org/lions), books, videos, parent workshops, teacher guides, and other outreach materials.

BETWEEN THE LIONS is produced for PBS KIDS by the award-winning team of WGBH Boston and Sirius Thinking, Ltd., two experts in the creative union of educational goals with laugh-out-loud children's television. The **BETWEEN THE LIONS** production team is: executive producer, Judith Stoia; creative producer, Christopher Cerf; creative director, Michael K. Frith; and head writer, Norman Stiles. The production is overseen by WGBH's vice president of children's programming, Brigid Sullivan.

Set in an imaginary library run by a family of lions, **BETWEEN THE LIONS** offers an innovative mix of puppetry, animation, live action, and music. It debuted to widespread critical acclaim on PBS KIDS in April, 2000.

BETWEEN THE LIONS was funded in large part by a Ready to Learn grant from the U.S. Department of Education through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Additional major funders include the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Park Foundation, The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, the Charles H. Revson Foundation, and the Institute for Civil Society. National corporate sponsorship is provided by Cheerios and eToys.

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WGBH Boston is America's preeminent public broadcasting producer. More than one-third of PBS's prime-time lineup and companion Web content is produced by WGBH, which is also a pioneer in educational multi-media and access technologies for people with disabilities. Sirius Thinking, Ltd, a New York-based multi-media education and entertainment company, was founded by top talent from Sesame Street, Electric Company, Nickelodeon, and Jim Henson Productions.

February 2000

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NATIONAL SUPPORT BUILDS FOR NEW PBS KIDS SERIES *BETWEEN THE LIONS*

TEACHERS AND TELEVISION CRITICS ALIKE ENCOURAGE KIDS TO "TUNE-IN" AND "LOG-ON"

WASHINGTON, July 21, 2000 --- In a rare move, the National Education Association (NEA), representing 2.5 million educators, today officially endorsed the new PBS KIDS series *BETWEEN THE LIONS*, urging families across America to "tune-in and log-on".

This announcement comes on the heels of *BETWEEN THE LIONS* winning the Television Critics Association's prestigious "Best Children's Program" award on July 15, 2000 in Pasadena, CA. "We could not be more delighted with the level of support *BETWEEN THE LIONS* is garnering," offered Judy Stoia, executive producer. "Given that a new study by the University of Kansas demonstrates that the program significantly improves kids reading skills, we could only hope to add the kind of enthusiastic support and endorsement we have received from a broad base of groups," she added.

"The NEA doesn't often recommend that children watch television," said Bob Chase, NEA President. "But in tandem with classroom teachers, this extra-ordinary PBS series will help many beginning readers master key skills that are essential to learning to read. We strongly urge parents and caregivers to guide young children to *BETWEEN THE LIONS*, and invite teachers to take advantage of the program and Web site for top-notch lessons that extend learning," he added.

BETWEEN THE LIONS is the first television series to offer educationally valid reading instruction, combining the best of phonics and whole language. The program is the centerpiece of a multimedia literacy initiative that includes a Web site (www.pbskids.org/lions), books, videos, parent workshops, teacher guides, and other outreach materials.

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The Television Critics Association and NEA join an unprecedented number of organizations which have served as partners and supporters of the BETWEEN THE LIONS initiative, including the American Association of School Librarians; American Library Association; Association for Library Service to Children; Center for the Book, the Library of Congress; Family Education Network; First Book; Friends of Libraries, USA; Girl Scouts of the USA; International Reading Association; National Association of Elementary School Principals; National Association of State Title I Directors; National Coalition for Literacy; National Center for Family Literacy; National Center for Learning Disabilities; and Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.

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JUNIPER GARDENS CHILDREN'S PROJECT

A COOPERATIVE EFFORT OF
Northeast Community of Kansas City, Kansas and the
Schieffbusch Institute for Life-Span Studies,
Department of Human Development and Family Life,
and the Department of Special Education of the
University of Kansas

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Summative Evaluation of *Between the Lions*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Deborah L. Linebarger, Ph.D.
Juniper Gardens Children's Project
University of Kansas

Background and Purpose of Study

This report summarizes the key results from an experiment evaluating the effects of viewing approximately half of the first season of *Between the Lions* (BTL). The purpose was to determine the program's ability to effectively help children acquire essential skills associated with emergent literacy (i.e., concepts of print, phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondences) as well as assess the appeal of this program for young children. Specifically, did this program produce positive changes in the acquisition of emergent literacy skills for kindergarten and first grade children and did they like the program?

Method

- 164 kindergarten ($n = 79$, $M_{age} = 6.02$ years) and first grade children ($n = 85$, $M_{age} = 7.10$ years) in the greater Kansas City metro area participated in this study.
- Eighty-one percent were European American, 7% were Hispanic, 6% were African American, and 5% were from other backgrounds. Thirty-six percent of the families reported incomes below \$30,000, 28% reported incomes between \$30,000 and \$45,000, and 36% reported incomes above \$45,000.
- Assignment to control or experimental groups was completed using stratified sampling by classroom and grade. The experiment consisted of viewing 17 half-hour episodes of *BTL* from the end of February 2000 to the beginning of April 2000.
- Children in both groups were evaluated at three time points: prior to the viewing phase, after viewing 8 episodes, and after viewing all 17 episodes.
- Measures included:
 - questionnaires recording basic family demographic information and access to media
 - learning outcomes on tasks assessing children's knowledge of concepts of print, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound correspondences as it related to:
 - specific program content
 - transfer of this content to growth in key early literacy skills
 - normative growth on a general test of reading achievement
 - child interviews about the appeal of the program and the characters

Normative growth on a general test of reading achievement:

- Kindergarten children who watched *BTL* had significantly higher raw scores on a general measure of reading ability than classmates who did not watch *BTL*. Gains for those who viewed averaged 26% from pre-test to post-test while gains for those who did not view averaged only 5%.

Program and Character Appeal

- Ninety five percent of the children reported liking the show; 93% said they would watch it at home; 83% liked the print on screen; 75% reported learning new words while 31% could recall some of these words after a period of up to two weeks post-viewing.
- Cliff Hanger, Click, Gawain's Word, and Leona were the most liked characters while Busterfield was the least liked. Girls liked Dr. Ruth, Chicken Jane, Cleo and Leona more than boys. Boys liked Cliff Hanger more than girls.
- When asked what their favorite television show was, 17% of the children who viewed the show reported that *BTL* was their favorite. Of the remaining students, 70% reported liking *BTL* as much as their favorite show, 12% reported liking *BTL* more than their favorite show, and 18% reported liking *BTL* less than their favorite show. First grade boys (44%) were more likely to report liking the show less than their favorite show, while 93% of kindergarten girls and 96% of first grade girls reported liking *BTL* the same or more than their favorite show.
- Fifty six percent would change nothing about the show; 10% disliked the Vowelles; 5% disliked both Busterfield and Sam Spud
- Click was chosen most frequently to attend a birthday party and to talk to when sad. Boys most often chose Lionel to read them a story, while girls were more likely to pick Cleo.

Parent and Teacher Reports

- Kindergarten children who watched *BTL* spent more time writing letters, notes, and stories (i.e., 3 to 4 times a week versus 1 to 2 times a week for the control group, a 10% gain from pre-test to post-test; the control group's frequency of writing declined by 6%) and made more frequent trips to the library and bookstore (i.e., about 2 – 3 days a month versus 1 day or less a month for the control group, a 19% gain from pre-test to post-test; the control group's frequency of trips declined by 4%) after the viewing phase ended when compared to kindergarten children who did not watch *BTL*.
- When asked to rate children's behavior in the classroom on a 3-point scale from never to often, teachers reported that first grade children who watched *BTL* spent more time writing during free time at school after the viewing phase when compared to first grade children who did not watch *BTL* (i.e., a mean of 2.6 for the viewing group versus a mean of 1.9 for the control group).

- parent-reported frequency of media activities in the home
 - teacher-reported frequency of media behaviors in the classroom.
- Statistical controls correcting for the child's initial ability and parent's education were included in all analyses. Control variables regularly account for many of the individual differences in the outcome measures. Therefore, these analyses represent a stringent test of the effects associated with viewing this program.

Key Findings

Learning Outcomes¹

Specific program content:

- Kindergarten children who watched *BTL* outperformed kindergarten children who did not watch *BTL* by nearly 4 to 1 on measures of specific program content. Skills measured included phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondences, and concepts of print. Average performance from pre-test to post-test improved 50% for those who viewed the program and only 13% for those who did not view the program.

Transfer of this content to growth in key early literacy skills:

- Letter identification: Kindergarten children who watched *BTL* had significantly higher mean scores for letter identification (i.e., scores were 1.5 times higher resulting in gains of 20% versus 13% for the control group) at the end of the viewing phase when compared to classmates who did not watch *BTL*.
- Phonemic awareness: Kindergarten children who watched *BTL* had significantly higher mean scores as well as significantly greater rates of growth on a phonemic awareness task (i.e., scores were 1.6 times higher resulting in gains of 64% versus 41% for the control group) at the end of the viewing phase when compared to classmates who did not watch *BTL*.
- Phonemic awareness: First grade children who watched *BTL* had significantly greater rates of growth on the phonemic awareness task (i.e., scores were 2.4 times higher resulting in gains of 33% versus 14% for the control group) when compared to classmates who did not watch *BTL*.
- Letter-sound correspondence: Kindergarten children who watched *BTL* had significantly higher mean scores and significantly greater rates of growth on a letter-sound correspondence task (i.e., scores were 2.6 times higher resulting in gains of 64% versus 25% for the control group) at the end of the viewing phase when compared to classmates who did not watch *BTL*. In addition, these kindergarten children who watched the program performed at first grade levels on the letter-sound correspondence task at the post-test (i.e., identifying 41 letter-sound correspondences versus 27 for the control group; 40 letter-sound correspondences is the level or benchmark that typically-developing children in the winter of first grade should achieve to be on track for later, fluent reading).

¹ All outcomes were evaluated using an observed significance level (i.e., alpha) of .05. It is the probability that statistical results as extreme as the ones we observed would occur even if there were no differences between the viewing group and the control group (i.e., 5% of the time we would get this result when there is no true difference). If the observed significance level is small enough, usually less than 0.05 or 0.01, we generally conclude that the two groups are truly different (Maxwell & Delaney, 1990).

Conclusion

The most prominent finding in this project was that kindergarten children who watched *Between the Lions* performed significantly better on almost all outcome measures of reading achievement when compared to kindergarten children who did not watch the program. More specifically, kindergarten children demonstrated significant growth on targeted skills featured in the program including concepts of print, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound correspondences. This growth was seen across each type of assessment: growth in the specific content featured in the different episodes; accelerated rates of growth in key emergent literacy skills; and normative growth on a generalized reading outcome.

Discovery of the alphabetic principle, or knowledge of letters, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound correspondence, is a necessary condition for full mastery of reading. Preliminary evidence suggests that *BTL* played a role in helping the kindergarteners in this project accelerate the acquisition of the alphabetic principle. Specifically, the kindergarten children who watched approximately half the first season of *BTL* were able to identify more letters and read more words than those kindergarteners who did not watch. In addition, their understanding of concepts of print was enhanced (both for program specific content and more generalized content). Finally, their phonemic awareness and letter-sound correspondence abilities, two skills highly predictive of later, fluent reading, were significantly accelerated over those children who did not watch the program. And, in the case of letter-sound correspondences, kindergarteners who watched the program performed at first grade levels at the end of the project.

For first grade children, the results were mixed and less dramatic. Many of the patterns were there, and some significant results were obtained (i.e., rate of growth in phonemic awareness). Lack of additional findings may be due to a ceiling effect, that is, these children generally performed at or near the tops of our scales at the pre-test. Therefore, there was little room to measure improvement. Another plausible reason, shared by the first grade teachers participating in the study, was that these children already had the skills featured in the show (e.g., blending, segmenting, letter-sound correspondences, word recognition of sight words, c-v-c words). Finally, this data was collected during the last part of the school year, after nearly a full year of instruction in reading. Results may have been different if the data were collected in the fall of first grade.

Taken as a whole, these results are promising, suggesting that this program does lead to positive changes or growth in essential emergent literacy skills predictive of later, fluent reading. In addition, the majority of the children who watched the program liked it and wanted to watch it at home. Given that this program airs on public television, a universally available, free technology with enormous potential to reach all children, *Between the Lions* can help to reinforce, motivate and extend early literacy instruction, both in the classroom and within the child's home.



By John E. Barrett. PBS

Roaring success: Leona the Lion, left, and father Theo are getting kids to read.

PBS 'Lions' scores with young students

The first official research findings on the effectiveness of *Between the Lions*, the PBS children's literacy show that began in April, are encouraging. The study, conducted by Deborah Linebarger of the University of Kansas, indicates that kindergartners who viewed 8.5 hours of the half-hour program over a four-week period significantly improved key reading skills. On a test measuring children's knowledge of word sounds, kindergartners who were tested before and after watching the show had scores that rose by 64%, compared with 25% gains for similar children who did not watch the show. Kids also seemed to like the show: One in six said it was the favorite TV program, beating the next-most-popular, *Pokémon*.

Los Angeles Times

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Can TV Teach Reading to Kids 4 to 7? Tune In and See

■ **PBS:** 'Between the Lions' takes up where Big Bird leaves off. Experts say show offers hope in a time of literacy crisis.

By PAUL LIEBERMAN
and RICHARD LEE COLVIN
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

NEW YORK—There is a notion out there that television—with its bag of fast-paced tricks making today's children virtual junkies for overstimulation—will be the death of reading, if it hasn't already done the deed.

But it's also been clear—for the last three decades, at least—that television's formidable powers can serve the cause of literacy as well.

So PBS stations nationwide today will launch a series that may be the medium's most ambitious effort ever to help children learn to read. Four years in the making and costing \$30 million, "Between the Li-

ons" will pick up where the 32-year-old "Sesame Street" leaves off: targeting slightly older kids—4 to 7—and taking them the crucial steps beyond the alphabet skills driven home by Cookie Monster, Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch.

Named for the marble lions that guard the famous 42nd Street library here—and for a family of lions that are the central characters—the 30-episode series is designed to immerse youngsters in such concepts as vowel sounds, verbal blending and prefixes, that whole genre known as phonics.

There are puppet animals and animated figures and even flesh-and-blood humans (would you believe Dr. Ruth Westheimer?), a

Please see **READING, A12**

READING: Ambitious PBS Series Offers Hope in Struggle for Literacy

Continued from A1

computer mouse named Click, a soul-singing Martha Reader and the Vowelles and Gawain's Word knights who crash together (with word fragments) Monty Python style; there are evil "Un" people, who attach themselves to the beginning of words, and rival "Re" people, who undo their damage.

There are stories and songs galore and fables, puns and one-liners. "She was cool as a cucumber," says Sam Spud, the vegetable detective. "As a matter of fact, she is a cucumber."

The people behind "Between the Lions" are veterans of "Sesame Street," the Children's Theater Workshop, "The Muppet Show" and National Lampoon.

Organizations such as the American Library Assn. and the National Assn. of Elementary School Principals have signed on as "founding partners." An advisory board of 11 leading reading experts was drawn from both camps in the

"The show has to be entertaining enough to get the kids to watch," agreed its creative producer, Christopher Cerf. The award-winning songwriter, author and humorist helped launch both National Lampoon magazine and the Children's Television Workshop's Products Group, whose merchandising has helped support "Sesame Street." For the new venture, he has written a song about the letter W.

Solid Credentials in Children's Shows

Cerf and three other alumni of "Sesame Street" and "The Muppet Show" in 1996 formed a New York-based children's educational entertainment company, Sirius Thinking Ltd., and proposed "Between the Lions" in partnership with WGBH-TV, Boston's PBS station. That same year, the venture got \$4.2 million in initial funding from the Corp. for Public Broadcasting.

The executive producer is Judith Stoia, a WGBH documentary and newsmagazine specialist who raised her own children on "Sesame Street" when it was "the only game in town." There wasn't the competition for children's attention that there is in this era of video games, the Internet and a growing number of cable channels—such as Nickelodeon and The Disney Channel—devoted to children's programming.

Her crews produced two 30-minute episodes to start, then tested them by having kids watch in a glass-walled room and by hiring an outside researcher to screen shows at six sites across the country.

Only after seeing what worked did they film the rest of the 30 shows, which will air daily for six weeks, then be repeated over the summer and in the fall. The plan is to churn out 25 more for next spring.

PBS affiliates can air the episodes when they want, 2 p.m. in the case of Los Angeles' KCET-TV, the only station in the area to now carry the series.

Even before "Between the Li-



JOHN E. BARRETT

"Between the Lions" uses puppets, animation and live action.

ons" aired, a University of Kansas study was underway to gauge its impact on the reading skills of youngsters in that area.

"Between the Lions" is being launched after a century that saw a lively—sometimes ugly—debate over what was most important in learning to read: acquiring adequate motivation or the right skills. Should the fun of reading be stressed? Or the effort?

Fun was the backbone of the whole-language approach, which peaked in California in the mid-1990s. It theorized that good stories and pictures would so engage children that they would spend enough time with books to absorb—almost naturally—the structure and sense of the language. Advocates feared that too much emphasis on words would get in the way of absorbing their meaning.

Phonics, in contrast, emphasizes skills, pushing drills on letters and their sounds, then gradually building them up into words, then stories. Its advocates said that whole language wasn't working, that poor kids, especially, were not picking up the basics of reading.

Today, the consensus is that aspects of both methods are essential. Whole-language programs are adding skills lessons and phonics programs are playing up entertainment as the spoonful of sugar to help phonics go down.

"Between the Lions" offers such a blend. From the opening seconds of the series, even before viewers meet the star family of lions or the unusual library they run, viewers are signaled that what's important in reading is . . . the words. And the letters within words. And the sounds of those letters.

■ **'BETWEEN THE LIONS' ROARS**
Reviewer places the new PBS basic reading series among "the best of the best." **F11**

so-called reading wars—phonics and whole language—to scrutinize the series.

Funding is from the U.S. Department of Education's Corp. for Public Broadcasting and charities such as the Carnegie Foundation, which has a project researching how early brain patterns are formed.

PBS' new bid to help kids learn to read comes at a time when 40% of America's fourth-graders can't do so at basic levels, 68% in schools serving poor children.

"This is not going to solve the nation's literacy crisis; it's a half-hour TV show," said Michael Levine, deputy director of the Carnegie Foundation's education division. "But, yes, you can build the skills of children with a half an hour a day. This is one of the most important efforts we've ever seen."

For "Between the Lions" to have a chance of raising reading scores, it will have to pass a test itself.

In the opening credits, when the narrator sings "Now!" the word is on the screen. That morphs into "Wow!" and finally into "How." The point is to show that changing the first letter changes not merely the sound but the whole word.

Later, "wet" becomes "pet" and then "pen." The short E sound, clearly, will be a star of this episode.

That's driven home when Martha Reader and the Vowelles appear. The disembodied set of candy-colored lips sings soulfully about vowels and their sounds, featuring one per program.

Using Stories to Teach

Whole-language enthusiasts may complain that such an exercise has nothing to do with real reading. But there's plenty of whole-language spirit as well, as the mother and father lion (Cleo and Theo) gather their son and daughter (Lionel and Leona) to read an imaginative story at the start of each show.

The first episode's "Pecos Bill Cleans Up the West" ensnares the family right in the story when its tornado comes to life in their library and Pecos Bill has to save the day. In the fifth episode, "Shooting Stars," Leona is convinced that a meteor shower is a *meat* shower, setting off a funky "meat shower" song with falling pork chops.

It is almost MTV-paced entertainment, aimed at children who have been watching television since they were toddlers. It tries to slip in enough cultural puns (Westheimer as Dr. Ruth Wordheimer, for instance) to amuse adults.

But while a number of television shows seek to impart a love of reading—like "Reading Rainbow," produced locally by KCET—"Between the Lions" clearly aims to help its viewers learn to read.

That's why an administrator in one suburban New York school district was eager recently to show a preview cassette of the first show to her kindergartners. Teachers had been debating how much reading instruction 5- and

6-year-olds can absorb; several were skeptical that they could manage phonics lessons, however packaged.

Wrong.

Six classes of 18 students each sat in an auditorium. The first laugh came in the credits when they saw Arty Smartypants, who hides words in his baggy trousers. The lead Vowelle got applause for her E song, and the boys liked the colliding knights. When one group squealed as the animated tornado went wild in the library, others shushed them; they wanted to hear the story.

By the end, many read along as the screen showed how *chest* could become *chess*, then *mess*.

After the children returned to class, the administrator found some still singing the Pecos Bill song. Several kids easily went back through the E sounds.

Not that they got everything quite right. One tiny girl said, "I liked all that 'Lions in the Middle.'"

Despite such excitement, "You can't actually teach people to read through television," cautioned Marilyn J. Adams, a project consultant now at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. "But it's a wonderful way to get them to think."

In part because TV can't do the job alone, "Lions" has a Web site (<http://www.pbskids.org/lions>) and is developing Book Cub clubs and curriculum guides. There are negotiations for a textbook deal, Cerf said, and plans for merchandising.

As with "Sesame Street," he anticipates a need for funding if the time comes that "foundations don't find it as exciting." So, there should be a beanbag toy of Leona by fall and a doll version of Click the computer mouse.

"When you roll her around," he said, "she will sing the 'Ten Small Words Song.' The tiny Click comes with a little toy computer."

And when you stick a flashcard in the computer, showing a word on the screen?

"Click will actually read the word or use the word in context."



THE JUNGLE BOOKS: Making letters and words come alive for brand-new readers

A Pride of Literary Lions

How to get kids reading—and roaring with laughter

PBS'S *BETWEEN THE LIONS* WARNS viewers that it contains "extreme silliness that may not be appropriate for adult audiences." That's a little white lie on the part of this imaginative literacy series for kids ages 4 to 7 (weekdays; check local listings). In fact, well aware that parents are part of the kiddie TV audience whether they like it or not, PBS has created a welcome thing in the age of Tele-tubbies and Barney—a fun educational show for kids with enough sops for adults to avoid inspiring a wave of vasectomies and tubal ligations.

Lions does keep its earnest goal upfront, introducing kids to books through a fuzzy feline family that runs a library (this being civic-institution-loving PBS) and reads—and lives out—a different story every episode. But the real stars are the words that the program's *Sesame Street*-esque skits, songs and cartoons cleverly bring to life, teaching kids to read along and sound out words onscreen. A Motown group, Martha Reader and the Vowelles, sings new vowel sounds; Dr. Ruth Wordheimer (played by Dr. Ruth Westheimer) helps patients deal with "long-word freak-out"; and in "Gawain's Word," a spoof on *Wayne's World*, jousting knights representing phonemes (*sn* and *ooze* for example) collide to make words (*snooze* for example).

Will kids get all the references? It's doubtful, but they'll laugh anyway. And considering the media saturation they grow up with now, from Nickelodeon to Pokémon, they may as well pick up a little pop-culture irony with their ABCs. —By James Poniewozik

TV GUIDE

MAY 13-19

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THE family PAGE

BY JOANNE KAUFMAN



Theo with Cleo, Lionel, and Leona (clockwise from left)

with the "whole": the introduction of a fable ("Pandora's Box"), a piece of poetry ("Fuzzy Wuzzy") or a folk tale ("Pecos Bill"). These vignettes invariably trigger an adventure that threads through the show.

The Lions' Share A NEW PBS SHOW WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A FEW WORDS WITH YOUR KIDS

Those parents who don't want their kids to have an indecent amount of fun while learning to read must immediately hide the remote control and put a channel lock on PBS. The dazzling and very smart *Between the Lions* (check TV GUIDE listings) has recently roared onto the scene with one mission in mind: to make kids 4 to 7 wild about reading. Set in a library and hosted by a pair of lions, Theo and Cleo, and their offspring, Lionel and Leona, *Between the Lions* takes the "whole-part-whole" approach to literacy, a method endorsed by many reading specialists. Each episode concentrates on a particular vowel sound—the

Next is a series of deliciously antic segments—music videos, parodies and skits—designed to reinforce the vowel sound being taught. On "Gawain's Word," a take-off on "Wayne's World" set at a joust, two knights, one carrying an *h*, the other carrying a *ug*, charge at each other at high speed and make a word. "Blend on, dudes," says host Gawain.

The lions are assisted by guest performers such as actress Faith Prince, opera singer Denyce Graves and show creations such as Professor Nitwhite, who's always making not-so-brilliant discoveries. "Did you know," he tells his young assistant in typically ill-informed fashion, "that there are only two words, *mom* and *pop*, that read

the same forward and backward?" "Wow," gasps his acolyte, innocently blundering into another such palindrome. Wow is right. Tune in and read on, dudes.

Girl Power WITH THE PUFFS, CRIME TAKES A POWDER

Pint-size superheroes Buttercup, Bubbles and Blossom, the results of a goof-up in Professor Utonium's genetics lab, sound like the Rugrats, make like Charlie's Angels and are known familiarly as the Powerpuff Girls. Their main occupation: Trying to stay up past bedtime and battling the forces of evil. *The Powerpuff Girls* now airs Wednesday and Friday at 8 P.M./ET on the Cartoon Network, but beginning next month the animated show can be seen five nights a week. This is standard heroes-triumph-over-villains stuff, but it's refreshing to see a cartoon with female protagonists, particularly ones with attitude to spare.



Powerpuff girl (above)

Visit TVGUIDEFAMILY.COM for daily family-program highlights and links to other resources

NEW YORK

Running Time King of the Jungle Book

Graduates of *Sesame Street*, listen up. After years of struggling to find the right media mix to entice the 4-to-7-year-old crowd, PBS has struck gold. Babies may drool over their *Teletubbies* and the older kids can hip-hop with *Zoom*. But starting on April 3, early readers will have *Between the Lions*, a half-hour menagerie of zany characters who focus on phonics. The stars of the show, and the ones likely to end up on Christmas lists, are a bohemian pride made up of Theo the dad, a guitar-playing Nick Nolte type who sports beaded braids and a ponytail at the back of his mane; Cleo, the earring-spattered mom; and their two cubs, Lionel and Leona. The pacing of the show is not unlike *Sesame Street*'s, with a main theme established at the opener followed by quick, quirky vignettes that include animation, puppets, and people. Creators Christopher Cerf, Michael Frith, and Norman Stiles, all veterans of Elmo's world, knew they had a good formula with which to start. Transferring it to the next generation, however, took six years and the input of many nationally recognized educators. Be that as it may, a Manhattan public pre-K class was the real judge at a recent test drive. The kids, a culturally diverse group of both readers and non-readers, answered aloud for the characters and sounded out words taught throughout the show. In one particular segment, "Gawain's Word," two knights—Sir W and Sir E—charge one another to form the word *wet*. Another short

shows Cliff Hanger, an animated hunk who has to figure out a word before he plunges from a mountainside. Even Dr. Ruth Westheimer has a say. Her role, as Dr. Wordheimer, is to help characters pronounce the dreaded big words. Parents will appreciate the humorous lines and Motown-style music aimed at them. In the end, though, it's up to the kids. "Years ago, when we first saw Barney, we thought, 'Oh my God, this is awful, who would watch this?'" confesses Anne Gorfinkel, the deputy director of programming at WNET. "It's not a science, you know." SUSAN AVERY



'Lions' roars to life with imaginative skits

By Don Aucoin
GLOBE STAFF

With the incessant yelping of "Barney" and the noxious baby talk of "Teletubbies" chipping away at

Television Review

its reputation, the Public Broadcasting Service badly needs a top-notch new children's program.

As of today, it has one. "Between the Lions," an imaginative and high-spirited series that debuts at 8:30 a.m. on WGBH-TV (Channel 2), is the best addition to the PBS kids' schedule since "Arthur."

For all its innovations — and there are many — "Between the Lions" is a throwback show of sorts. Its spirit is that of the old, idealistic PBS, when a program's educational mission outweighed its marketing and merchandising possibilities.

Using stories, poems, and snappy original songs, "Between the Lions" focuses with refreshing directness on a goal that may never have been more challenging and more necessary: teaching youngsters to read, and, more, to love the act of reading. Obviously, that duty falls primarily to parents and teachers, but they will find this program (unlike much else on TV) an energizing ally.

"Lions," coproduced by Bos-

BETWEEN THE LIONS

Produced by: WGBH Boston and Sirius Thinking Ltd.

Executive producer: Judith Stoia

On: WGBH-TV, Channel 2

Time: Weekdays at 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

ton's WGBH, is set in a library presided over by Theo and Cleo, leonine puppets who like to read fables to their two cubs, Lionel and Leona. (This being a very 21st-century library, a computer mouse named Click is also on hand.) Through a mixture of animation and live action, the books come to life, pulling the lions into their story lines. The stories are interwoven with skits that impart lessons about spelling, vocabulary, phonics, and the sheer fun of wordplay.

The ambition of "Lions" is suggested by today's segment, "Pecos Bill Cleans Up the West." At first, it merely teaches sight reading during a bouncy animated sequence based on the folk tale about the cowboy who tamed a tornado. But it goes further when, in an eye-popping sequence, the storybook hero emerges from the pages of a book riding a twister that tears through the library. In terms children can understand, the segment explores the difference between fiction and reality.

As on "Sesame Street," the pro-

ducers have salted "Lions" with punningly named characters (Tammy Lionette, Tiger Words, Arty Smartypants) to keep the grown-ups diverted as they watch with their kids. The expressive lion puppets are joined by a supporting cast that includes Martha Reader and the Vowelles, who sing ditties about, for instance, the joys of the short "e" sound; the letter-bearing knights of "Gawain's Word," whose jousting collisions spell out words; and a cartoon hero called Cliff Hanger who utilizes literacy skills to escape disaster. Also in the picture is Dr. Ruth Wordheimer, a therapist who treats victims of "long-word freakout," played by, natch, Dr. Ruth Westheimer.

In short, "Lions" packs a lot into its fast-moving half-hour. There are times when it's overly busy, although in an era when so many TV shows settle for less, even too much of a good thing is a good thing. "Between the Lions" has the potential to be a landmark show.

But don't take my word for it, since I'm way outside the show's target demographic. The 4-year-old TV critic in my household, a discerning viewer, delivered this verdict midway through the episode of "Between the Lions" that airs today: "I love this!" Chances are that sentiment will be widespread.

APRIL child



Reading Is King

We haven't heard so much buzz about an educational television program since the premiere of *Sesame Street*. Incorporating a combination of clever wordplay and zany, fun-loving humor, *BETWEEN THE LIONS* shows children ages 4 to 7 that reading can be a roar. Premieres April 3 on PBS. (Check your local listings for airtimes.)

The Lion Thing

See the cat teach kids to read on new PBS series

By Paul Lieberman and Richard Lee Colvin
LOS ANGELES TIMES

THERE IS A NOTION out there that television — with its bag of fast-paced tricks making today's children virtual junkies for overstimulation — will be the death of reading, if it hasn't already done the deed.

But it's also been clear — for the past three decades, at least — that television's formidable powers can serve the cause of literacy as well.

So PBS stations nationwide this week launched a series that may be the medium's most ambitious effort ever to help children learn to read. Four years in the making and at a cost of \$30 million, "Between the Lions" (10:30 a.m., WNET/13) will pick up where the 32-year-old "Sesame Street" leaves off: targeting slightly older kids — 4 to 7 — and taking them the crucial steps beyond the alphabet skills driven home by Cookie Monster, Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch.

Named for the marble lions that guard the 42nd Street library in Manhattan — and for a family of lions that are the central characters — the 30-episode series is designed to immerse youngsters in such concepts as vowel sounds, verbal blending and prefixes — otherwise known as phonics.

There are puppet animals and animated figures and even flesh-and-blood humans (would you believe Dr. Ruth Westheimer?), a computer mouse named Click, a soul-singing Martha Reader and the Vowelles, and Gawain's World knights, who crash together (with word fragments), "Monty Python" style; there are evil "Un" people, who attach themselves to the beginnings of words, and rival "Re" people, who undo their damage.

There are stories and songs galore, and fables, puns and one-liners.

"She was cool as a cucumber," says Sam Spud, the vegetable detective. "As a matter of fact, she is a cucumber." The people behind "Between the Lions" are veterans of "Sesame Street," the Children's Theater Workshop, "The Muppet Show" and National Lampoon.

That hasn't stopped organizations such as the American Library Association and the National Association of Elementary School Librarians from signing on as "founding partners." The series' advisory board includes reading experts from the elementary to university levels. Some are phonics-oriented; others come from the whole-language camp.

Funding is from the U.S. Department of Education's Corporation for Public Broadcasting and charities such as the Carnegie Foundation, which has a project researching how early brain patterns are formed.

PBS' new bid to help kids learn to read comes at a time when 40 percent of America's fourth-graders can't do so at basic levels; that number is 68 percent in schools serving poor children.

"This is not going to solve the nation's literacy crisis; it's a half-hour TV show," said Michael Levine, deputy director of the Carnegie

Foundation's education division. "But, yes, you can build the skills of children with a half an hour a day. This is one of the most important efforts we've ever seen." For "Between the Lions" to have a chance of raising reading scores, it will have to pass a test itself.

"The show has to be entertaining enough to get the kids to watch," said its creative producer, Christopher Cerf. The award-winning songwriter, author and humorist helped launch both National Lampoon magazine and the Children's Television Workshop's Products Group, whose merchandising has helped support "Sesame Street." Cerf and three other alumni of "Sesame Street" and "The Muppet Show" in 1996 formed a New York-based children's educational entertainment company, Sirius Thinking Ltd., and proposed "Between the Lions" in partnership with WGBH-TV, Boston's PBS station. That same year, the venture received \$4.2 million in initial funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The executive producer is Judith Stoia, a WGBH documentary and newsmagazine specialist, who raised her own children on "Sesame Street" when it was "the only game in town." There wasn't the competition for children's attention that there is in this era of video games, the Internet and a growing number of cable channels devoted to children's programming.

Her crews produced two 30-minute episodes to start, then tested them by having kids watch in a glass-walled room and by hiring an outside researcher to screen shows at six sites around the country.

Only after seeing what worked did they film the rest of the 30 shows, which will air daily for six weeks, then be repeated over the summer and in the fall. The plan is to churn out 25 more for next spring.

"Between the Lions" is being launched after a century in which there was a lively — sometimes ugly — debate over what was most important in learning to read: acquiring adequate motivation or the right skills.

Should the fun of reading be stressed? Or the effort? Fun is the backbone of the whole-language approach. It theorizes that good stories and pictures so engage children that they spend enough time with books to absorb the structure and sense of the language.

Phonics, in contrast, emphasizes skills, pushing drills on letters and their sounds, then gradually building them up into words, then stories.

Today, the consensus is that aspects of both methods are essential. "Between the Lions" offers such a blend. The show is almost MTV-paced entertainment, aimed

at children who have been watching television since they were toddlers. It tries to slip in enough cultural wordplay (Westheimer, as Dr. Ruth Westheimer, for instance) to amuse adults. ■

Leona listens to her father, Leo, read to her on PBS' "Between the Lions."



Photo by John E. Barrett

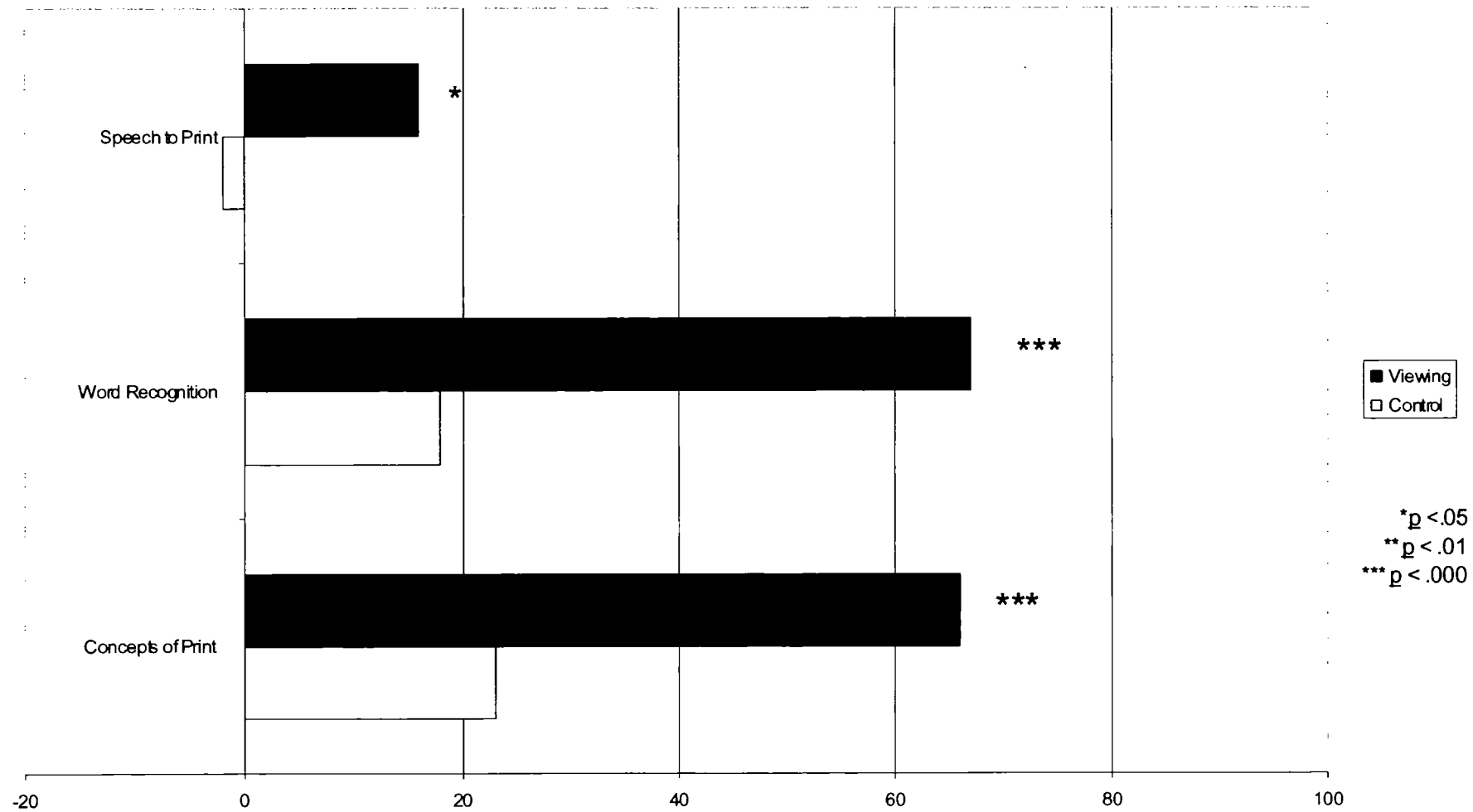


Figure 1. Percent Gain from Pre-test to Post-test for Specific Program Content—Kindergarten

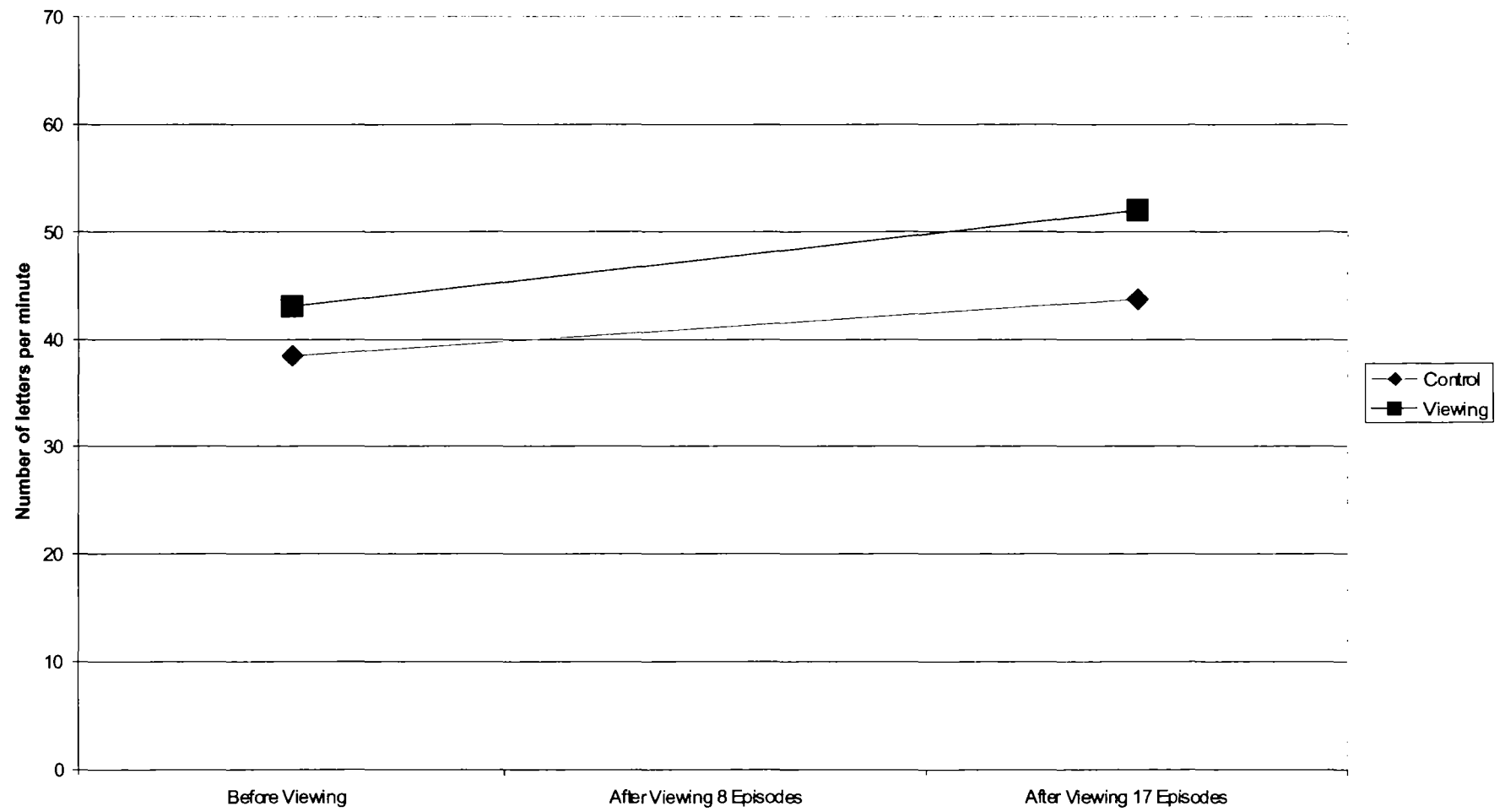


Figure 2. Growth in Letter Identification—Kindergarten

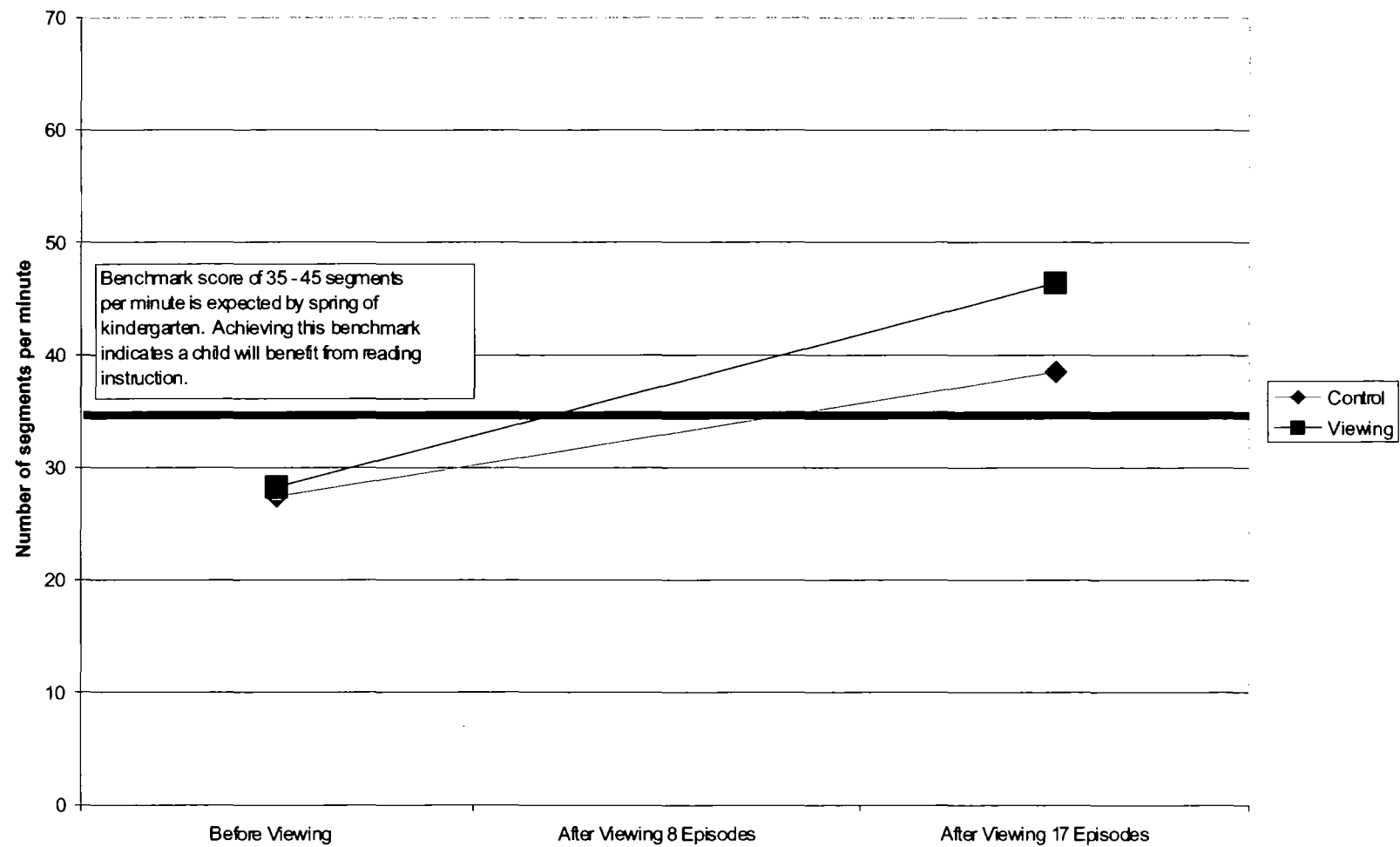


Figure 3. Growth in Phonemic Awareness—Kindergarten

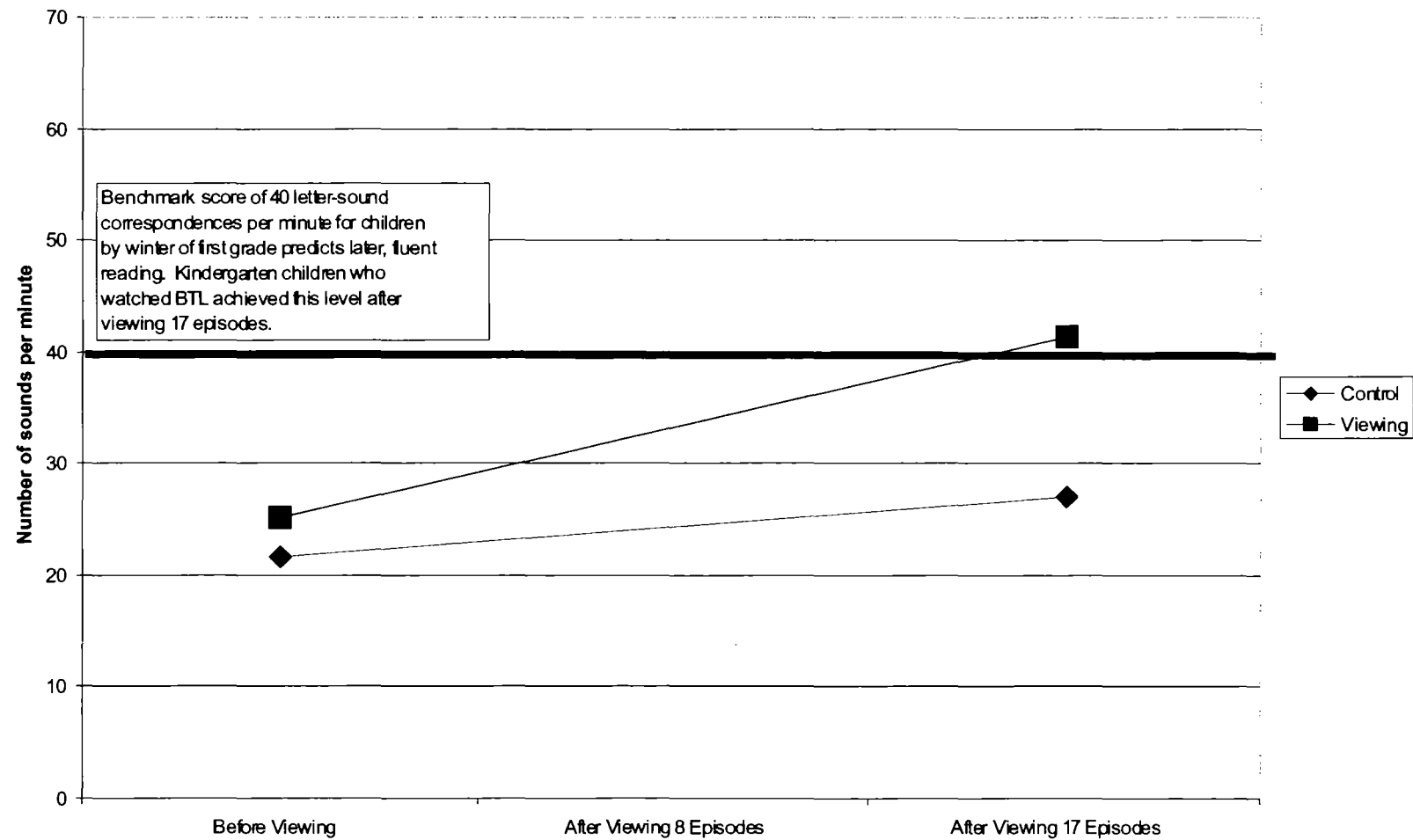


Figure 4. Growth in Letter-Sound Correspondences—Kindergarten

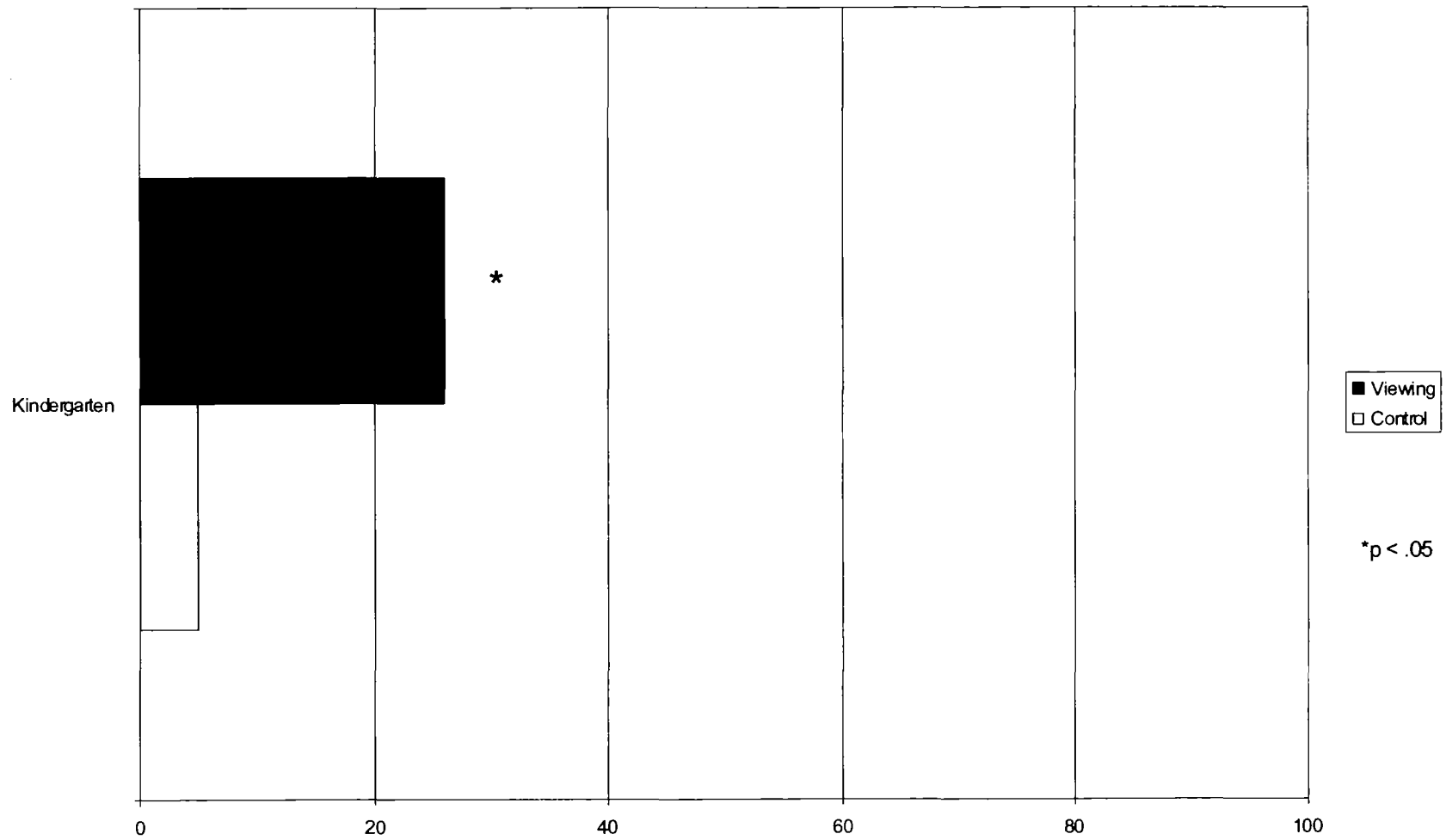


Figure 5. Percent Gain in TERA-2 Raw Scores from Pre-test to Post-test

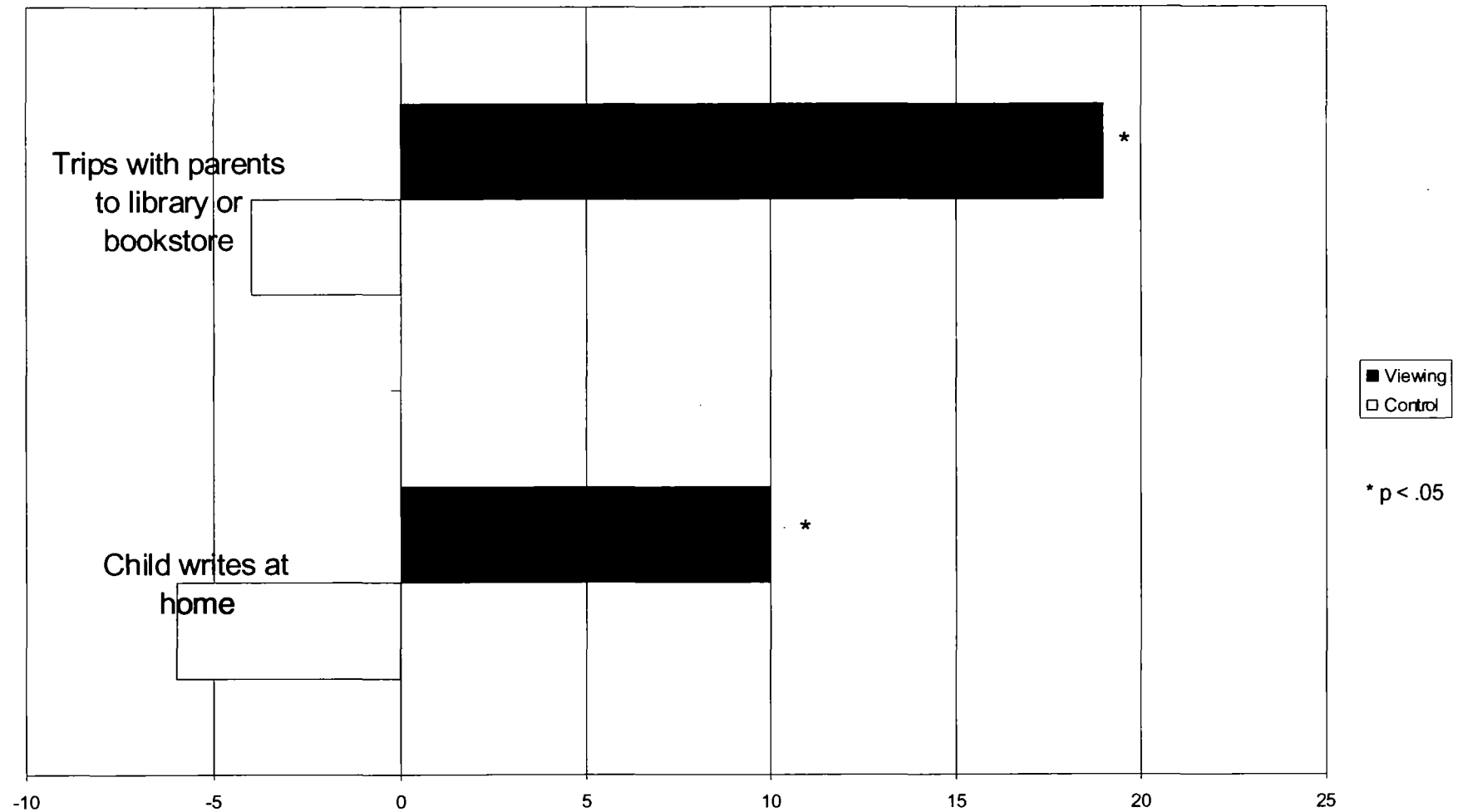


Figure 6. Parent Reported Frequency of Print Activities: Percent Change in Frequency from Pre-test to Post-test--Kindergarten

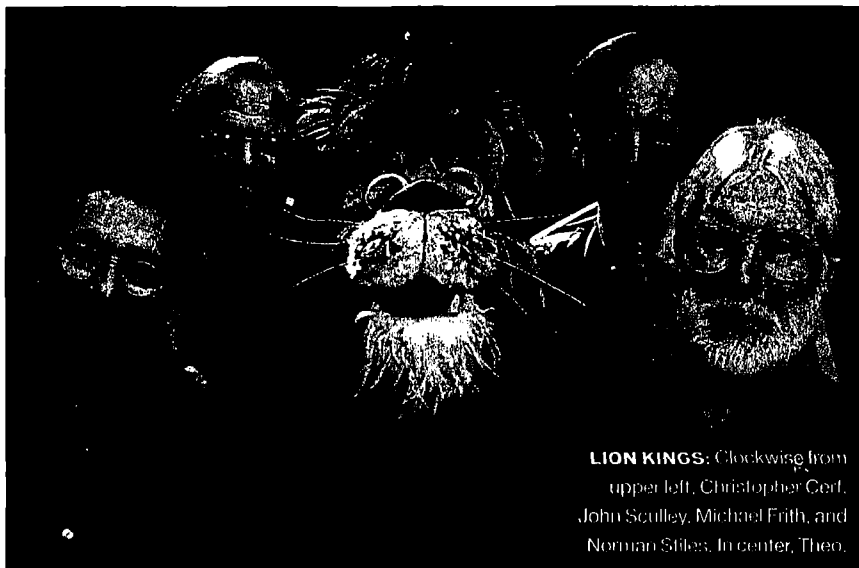
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CHRISTOPHER CERF AND COMPANY ARE WORKING WITH WGBH ON A NEW CHILDREN'S SHOW, AND IT MAY JUST BE THE BIGGEST THING TO HIT PUBLIC TV SINCE THEIR FIRST SMASH, *SESAME STREET*.



LION KINGS: Clockwise from upper left, Christopher Cerf, John Sculley, Michael Frith, and Norman Stiles. In center, Theo.

Behind THE LIONS

W

EARING AN IMPECCABLE NAVY suit and a comfortably loosened tie, Christopher Cerf takes a table in Café Louis on a mild and balmy summer day. Now 56, the

son of Random House cofounder Bennett Cerf has long since come out of his father's shadow to carve out a formidable reputation for himself as a major figure in the world of children's educational entertainment. Author, editor, composer, and lyricist, Cerf has won Grammys and Emmys for his work on *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*; and as a key figure in the Children's Television Workshop, he has done more for children's "edu-tainment" than just about anyone. But now that *Sesame Street*—which is watched by 10.8 million households in the United States each week—safely enjoys the status of a cultural institution that has helped shape the minds of children for two generations, Cerf has had to face the problem of what to do for an encore.

The reason he is in Boston today is that at last he may have found the answer—*Between the Lions*, a \$30 million televised literacy project scheduled to air on WGBH in the late spring or early fall of 1999. Created in response to America's literacy crisis (a 1993 U.S. Department of Education study found that fewer than one out of three U.S. third graders were profi-

cient in reading, and 47 percent of adults could not read or write at the high school level), *Between the Lions* will target children in the four-to-seven-year-old age range—the crucial years for the mastery of basic reading skills. "I've always liked doing a variety of things that only I think go together," says Cerf. "I love to brainstorm about insane ways of teaching something to children. I love writing music that highlights a lesson but sounds like a contemporary record. Everything I've done in my life has relevance to this project."

THE GENESIS OF *Between the Lions* dates back nearly 40 years to Cerf's time at Deerfield Academy, where he became friends with classmate Michael Frith. After working on the *Harvard Lampoon* with Cerf in college, Frith went on to become editor in chief of Beginner Books, a children's book publisher that had been cofounded by Cerf's mother. Later, Frith became creative director for Jim Henson Productions, of Muppets fame.

Meanwhile, Cerf had landed at *Sesame Street* in October 1970, at the end of the show's first season, and had become friends with one of the show's top writers, Norman Stiles. A fixture at *Sesame Street* for more than 20 years, Stiles won 11 Emmys there, but he and Cerf had long discussed doing projects together outside the show. "We'd do small things, but nothing that pulled us away for too long," says Stiles. "Finally, with some prodding from friends, we began to think about a program that would go beyond *Sesame Street*. We thought that focusing on older children and literacy through a public TV show was something we'd like to do."

Even though they didn't know what form that show might take, Cerf and Stiles tried to persuade Frith to join them. "Michael we dragged kicking and screaming from the Muppets," says Cerf. "He was interested in the project, but didn't know when he could make the jump." When the time came, however, Frith decided that the prospect of working together with his friends was "too good to pass up."

The threesome still had only vague ideas about the format of the show. It would have a "home base," much like the "street" of *Sesame Street*, and there would be recurring and immediately recognizable characters. It would be closely associated with books and hardware, and it would be

Burson-Marsteller

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: October 2, 2000

TO: Bethany Little

FROM: Julie Anbender for PBS & WGBH

RE: Between the Lions Background Materials

CC:

Per your discussion with Pam Hughes, attached please find background materials on BETWEEN THE LIONS for your review -- as you consider a White House announcement of the Ready to Learn grant.

Pam may have told you that I've discussed this with Jake Siewart, Sarah Gegenheimer and Alex Wohl at the Department of Education. We're really hoping that this can come together, ideally in the next two weeks.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me anytime at (202) 530-4591. Thank you.

Regards,
Julie Anbender



DRAFT

PBS Ready To Learn (pbskids.org/rtl)

Teaching Parents and Caregivers How to Build Preschoolers' Learning Skills

PBS's Ready To Learn (RTL) service combines PBS's award-winning children's television programming with a variety of community outreach efforts to help build children's learning skills. An \$80 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, awarded in September 2000, will significantly expand the program over the next five years.

Ready To Learn is PBS's ongoing contribution to the fulfillment of our nation's foremost educational goal — making sure all children begin school ready to learn.

RTL seeks to help America's children — especially those from low-income families — by providing free community workshops and resources for their parents, teachers and day care providers. These workshops are designed to train adults to teach children the basic skills that will help them enter school ready to learn and succeed throughout life.

RTL encourages adults to:

- Watch television with children;
- Limit the amount of television children watch;
- Be more selective in their choices of television programming for children; and
- Seek out books and activities to reinforce the educational information provided in PBS children's series and other television programs.

Who Benefits from RTL?

- More than 2.3 million children and adults were helped by RTL outreach programs in 1998. [update?]
- Since 1994 RTL coordinators have conducted more than 8500 workshops, trained more than 180,000 parents, 140,000 childcare professionals, and have reached more than 5 million children. [Ask Jinny about number inclusion]

How RTL Supports Communities

A majority of PBS member stations (130 located throughout the country) participate in RTL by providing a range of services to children and their parents and caregivers. All RTL programs are tailored to meet the specific needs of individual communities.

Participating PBS member stations:

- Air 6 1/2 hours of children's programming each weekday;
- Conduct training workshops for parents and childcare providers on how to integrate television programming with reading and other educational activities;
- Distribute free books to children — nearly two million so far;
- Distribute English and Spanish versions of the PBS Families publication and other free resource materials that provide tips on fun and instructional ways to encourage children to read and learn; and

- more -

- Work in partnership with local Head Start programs, Evenstart programs, 21st century learning centers, libraries, and other educational organizations.

Program Expansion 2000 - 2005

As a result of a new \$80 million cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, RTL will be significantly expanded over the next five years, with:

- **MORE SHOWS:** PBS will spend approximately \$30 million over five years to continue and to develop educational children's TV series. At least two new shows will be created, one of which will target families whose home language is other than English.
- **MORE WORKSHOPS:** PBS will double the funding for local stations who offer parent and caregiver training in family literacy and conflict resolution.
- **NEW WEBSITES:** PBS will create a new Parents Supersite to reach a diverse audience of adults, including those who care for children with physical and/or learning disabilities. The expansion of PBS KIDS Online will include children for whom English is not their primary language.
- **EFFORTS TO CLOSE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE:** PBS will establish 10 pilot projects [confirm #] in rural communities to link local libraries and public television stations and bridge the literacy and digital divide through family literacy models.
- **MORE AFTER-SCHOOL CHOICES:** PBS will form partnerships to extend outreach of services to the millions of children in after-school programs.

Independent Study Validates RTL's Impact on Families

A 1998 study, performed by the University of Alabama's Institute for Communication Research, found that RTL workshops had a lasting impact on parents' and children's behavior. The study found that workshop attendance led to:

- Families reading books together more often — about 46 more minutes each week;
- Children watching 40 percent less TV, and choosing more educational programs; and
- Parents and children spending 76 percent more time watching TV together.



Press Release

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**KIDS' READING TIME JUMPS AND TV USE DROPS AFTER PARENTS
ATTEND PBS WORKSHOP, SAYS UNIV. OF ALABAMA STUDY**

WASHINGTON, May 20, 1999 -- Parents who attend a free PBS workshop on the effective use of television read to their preschool children 35 percent more often and 20 percent longer than other parents, and their kids watch 40 percent less television, according to a University of Alabama study released today by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

The study, commissioned by PBS, examined community workshops conducted by public television stations as part of the PBS Ready to Learn Service (RTL). The survey showed that workshop parents read more educational materials to their children, make more trips to a library or bookstore with their youngsters, and increase by 76 percent the amount of time they watch television with their children.

"Parent education can have a significant impact on a family's television and reading habits," said Dr. Jennings Bryant, director of the Institute for Communication Research (ICR) at the University of Alabama, who authored the study. "Our research concludes that parents are using television more effectively to provide their children with critical learning skills."

The study also found:

While the children of workshop parents spend 40 percent less time watching television, what they do watch is more educational. Their parents report that 25 percent more of the programs they watch prepare them for school, 18 percent more encourage reading, 18 percent more help develop character and 15 percent more teach practical skills.

After attending an RTL workshop, parents discuss programs with their children 50 percent more frequently.

Eighteen percent more parents set rules about the hours when viewing is allowed, and 20 percent more require that certain chores and tasks be done before viewing is permitted.

"At a time when so much attention is being devoted to the negative impact of television, this study is proof positive that wise and sensitive use of television can lead to very important gains in reading, language and other key skills for America's children," said Jean Chase, director of the PBS Ready to Learn Service.

RTL, launched in 1994 to help young children prepare for success in school, combines PBS's award-winning educational children's programs with local seminars, mailings of resource materials and other efforts to help parents make better use of their family's television viewing. RTL involves 129 PBS member stations and reaches 94 percent of the country, including 37 million children. Last week, Senators Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) introduced the Digital Education Act, which would expand the Ready to Learn Service and enable more families to use its services.

The study's findings are similar to those of a 1998 Roper Youth Survey, which reported that young viewers of PBS's children's programs are more likely to read and take part in family activities than children who don't watch PBS.

ICR conducted the study among 935 viewers of nine PBS stations (KCET Los Angeles, KCPT Kansas City, Missouri, KLRU Austin, Texas, WLRN Miami, WNET New York, WPSX University Park, Pennsylvania and WQPT Moline, Illinois) and two statewide public television networks (Alabama and Idaho). Stations were selected to ensure geographic and demographic diversity. Participants were surveyed before attending an RTL workshop, one month later and six months after the workshop.

-PBS-



Series Release

WARNING: This TV program contains talking animals, magical books, and extreme silliness that may not be appropriate for adult audiences!

As every parent knows, it's a jungle out there if you don't know how to read. Literacy is a serious issue, but a new PBS children's series, *BETWEEN THE LIONS*, makes learning to read a laughing matter with a menagerie of colorful characters and a zany mix of songs, stories, skits, puppets, animation and live action. The series premieres Monday, April 3, 2000, on PBS (check local listings) with thirty new, half-hour programs.

BETWEEN THE LIONS is named for a family of lions—Theo, Cleo, Lionel, and Leona—who run a library like no other on earth. The doors "between the lions" swing open to reveal a magical place where characters pop off the pages of books, vowels sing, and words take on a life of their own. This daily series uses a variety-show format to give young viewers fun and creative opportunities to learn about language, phonics, vocabulary, and sentence structure. The backbone of the series is a comprehensive literacy curriculum geared to beginning readers ages four to seven. Developed with reading and literacy experts from across the country, the curriculum emphasizes both the pleasures and the value of reading, as well as the skills needed for learning how to read.

"We know that kids learn from what they see on TV and that high-quality, educational television like *BETWEEN THE LIONS* expands children's vocabulary, increases visits to the library, teaches letters and sounds, and inspires its viewers to read more," observes Judith Stoia, the

and entertaining. "The segments are woven together, Monty Python style, with an irreverently comic yet warm sensibility, producing a cardigan-like variety show that is silly yet cozy, and that doesn't shrink from the use of ridiculous metaphors or strong detergents," says Stiles.

BETWEEN THE LIONS is more than just a television show. The companion Web site (pbskids.org/lions), scheduled to launch along with the broadcast premiere on April 3, 2000, is a critical companion to this cutting-edge literacy series. Young Web surfers can subscribe to *The Paw Print*, a free e-mail newsletter, play interactive games, download print materials, read and write stories, hear song clips and view video segments from the show, and get suggestions for great books to check out of their own libraries. Updated weekly, the site also includes special sections of resources for parents and educators.

The series and the Web site are supported by an extensive national educational outreach campaign designed to rally families, teachers, librarians, literacy organizations and community leaders around the goal of helping kids learn to read. Fifteen national organizations that helped shape the BETWEEN THE LIONS outreach initiative will play a vital role in carrying out project activities. These Founding Partners include:

- American Association of School Librarians
- American Library Association
- Association for Library Service to Children
- Center for the Book, Library of Congress
- FamilyEducation Network
- First Book
- Friends of Libraries U.S.A.
- Girls Scouts of the U.S.A.
- International Reading Association
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of State Title I Directors
- National Coalition for Literacy
- National Center for Family Literacy
- National Center for Learning Disabilities
- Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.

BETWEEN THE LIONS outreach activities include the Designated Reader Campaign, which reinforces the message that children should be read to every day; a Guide to Early Literacy; a video for parents; Book Cubs, a project with Reading Is Fundamental to create reading clubs, and

community workshops offered in partnership with the American Library Association for parents and caregivers to increase literacy and library use.

The BETWEEN THE LIONS team is committed to making quality television available to all children. Each episode is accessible to blind and visually impaired viewers through WGBH Boston's innovative, Emmy Award-winning Descriptive Video Service® (DVS). The series also is closed captioned by The Caption Center at WGBH for viewers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

BETWEEN THE LIONS is produced for PBS by the award-winning team of WGBH Boston and Sirius Thinking, Ltd., two experts in the creative union of educational goals with laugh-out-loud children's television. Sirius Thinking, Ltd. is an educational entertainment company. Cofounders of Sirius Thinking, Ltd. include John Sculley, former CEO of Apple Computer and PepsiCo; Christopher Cerf, founding director and editor-in-chief of the Children's Television Workshop's Educational Books, Records, Games and Toys Division, as well as a Grammy and Emmy Award-winner for his musical contributions to *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*; Michael Frith, former executive vice-president and creative director for Jim Henson Productions and former editor of Dr. Seuss's Beginner Books at Random House; and Norman Stiles, eleven-time Emmy Award-winning head writer of *Sesame Street*.

WGBH Boston is the source of one-third of all prime-time programs on PBS. The children's programming team includes vice president Brigid Sullivan, responsible for developing some of PBS's most successful children's series, including *Arthur*™; *ZOOM*™, *Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?*; and *Long Ago and Far Away*, and Emmy Award-winning executive producer Judith Stoia whose credits include an array of documentary, drama, comedy and public affairs specials for PBS, including *The AIDS Quarterly with Peter Jennings*, *The World According to Us* (three women's comedy programs) for Lifetime, and *After School Specials* for ABC.

The BETWEEN THE LIONS production team includes veteran WGBH executive producer Judith Stoia, creative producer Chris Cerf, creative director Michael Frith, head writer Norman Stiles and series producer Sonia Rosario.

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series' executive producer. "But kids will just say BETWEEN THE LIONS is a lot of fun. And they're right!"

BETWEEN THE LIONS introduces viewers to the many places they are likely to encounter the written word: in stories, letters, notes, articles, poetry, reference materials, computers, signs, recipes and songs. An unusual cast of characters—Theo and Cleo, the lion librarians with a ravenous appetite for literature; their mischievous and amusing cubs, Lionel and Leona; a hyper-logical computer mouse named Click; a curmudgeonly, talking bust of the library's founder, Mr. Barnaby B. "Don't Call Me Buster" Busterfield III; a pair of dissident pigeons named Walter and Clay; a world-renowned therapist specializing in the treatment of "long-word freakout" and other literary disorders, Dr. Ruth Wordheimer; soulful singing sensations, Martha Reader and the Vowelles; and a synonym-spouting dinosaur named Heath the Thesaurus—helps transform the sometimes confusing process of learning to read into an entertaining adventure for young children and their families.

Each thirty-minute episode of BETWEEN THE LIONS features regular appearances by a lineup of animated characters, too. There's a brave chicken named Jane, who scratches warnings like "scram" and "run" into the dirt just in the nick of time to save her friends from impending peril while helping them hone their reading skills. The evil Un people go around adding "un" to the beginnings of words just to start trouble, while their noble counterparts, the Re people use their more constructive prefix to put things right again. Cliff Hanger, the unlucky comic book hero, uses quick thinking, his trusty survival manual, and, yes, literacy skills, to narrowly escape danger, only to end up back where he began, precariously hanging from a cliff.

The format of the programs is based on a "whole-part-whole" teaching approach, which many reading experts recommend as a way to combine the most effective whole language and phonics-based reading strategies. Each episode opens in the library and introduces the "whole"—original stories, familiar fables and folktales, poetry or some other source of engaging text read aloud by the lions—which triggers an adventure (or misadventure!) for the characters.

The "whole" then leads into a variety of playful "parts" segments featuring original songs (showcasing top talents like B. B. the King of Beasts and Tammy Lionette), music videos, limericks, tongue twisters, slapstick, parodies, and celebrity cameos that introduce phonics skills critical for beginning readers. Ultimately the library characters pull all the pieces together in a retelling of the opening story with a new twist, giving viewers a chance to revisit the key words and sounds in a meaningful context.

BETWEEN THE LIONS' head writer, Norman Stiles, has his own unique way of describing the process of combining so many parts to create a complete kid's show that's both educational



Fact Sheet

Series title	BETWEEN THE LIONS
Series premiere	Monday, April 3, 2000 (check local listings)
Broadcast schedule	Thirty half-hour programs airing daily on PBS

Description

BETWEEN THE LIONS, a new PBS children's series, is named for a family of lions—Theo, Cleo, Lionel, and Leona—who run a library like no other on earth. The doors “between the lions” swing open to reveal a magical place where characters pop off the pages of books, vowels sing, and words take on a life of their own. The series combines innovative puppetry, animation, live action, and music to achieve its educational mission of helping young children learn to read. The backbone of the series is a comprehensive literacy curriculum geared to beginning readers ages four to seven. Developed with reading and literacy experts from across the country, the curriculum emphasizes both the pleasures and the value of reading, as well as the skills needed for learning how to read.

Series mission	To help children learn to read
Produced for PBS by	WGBH Boston and Sirius Thinking, Ltd.
Executive producer	Judith Stoia
Creative producer	Christopher Cerf
Creative director	Michael Frith
Head writer	Norman Stiles
Series producer	Sonia Rosario

Educational Outreach

BETWEEN THE LIONS is accompanied by an extensive national educational outreach campaign designed to rally families, teachers, librarians, literacy organizations, and community leaders around the goal of helping kids learn to read. Fifteen national organizations have partnered with the series' producers to shape the outreach initiative and help implement project activities, including the Designated Reader Campaign, aimed at reinforcing the message that children should be read to every day:

- American Association of School Librarians
- American Library Association
- Association for Library Service to Children
- Center for the Book, Library of Congress

- Family Education Network
- First Book
- Friends of Libraries U.S.A.
- Girls Scouts of the U.S.A.
- International Reading Association
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of State Title I Directors
- National Coalition for Literacy
- National Center for Family Literacy
- National Center for Learning Disabilities
- Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.

Web site

pbskids.org/lions

The BETWEEN THE LIONS Web site, launching April 2000, is the first of its kind to offer a curriculum of original, educator-approved, reading activities. Developed by the award-winning team that created sites for *ZOOM*TM and *Arthur*TM, it will feature original literacy activities for kids and their families.

Funding

BETWEEN THE LIONS is funded in part by a Ready to Learn grant from the United States Department of Education through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Major support is also provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Park Foundation, The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, the Charles H. Revson Foundation, and the Institute for Civil Society. National corporate sponsorship is provided by Cheerios®.

Closed captioning

BETWEEN THE LIONS is closed captioned for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers by The Caption Center at WGBH.

Descriptive Video

The series is accessible to blind and visually impaired audiences through Descriptive Video Service® (DVS®), a national service of WGBH Boston that adds narrative descriptions of key visual elements.

Available on request

- Additional black-and-white photos
- Color slides
- Preview cassettes
- Interviews with production principals

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Program Descriptions

#101 Pecos Bill Cleans Up the West

A storybook tornado blows into the library and makes a terrible mess.

Featured text: fable

Key word: box

Target vowel: short *o*

#102 The Lost Rock

A rock rolls out of his book and then can't remember which book he belongs in.

Featured text: dictionary

Key word: rock

Target vowel: short *o*

#103 Little Big Mouse

Click's feelings are hurt when Lionel and Leona start a fan club for a heroic storybook mouse.

Featured text: fable

Key word: little

Target vowel: short *i*

#104 Farmer Ken's Puzzle

Lionel won't let Leona play a computer game for ages seven and up because she's four and down.

Featured texts: song and CD-ROM game

Key word: hen

Target vowel: short *e*

#105 Shooting Stars

The very sleepy Lion family tries to stay up very late at night, so they won't miss the most spectacular meteor shower of the year.

Featured text: poem

Key word: star

Target vowel: r-controlled *a*

#106 The Hopping Hen

Everyone in the library goes crazy after Lionel puts up signs about new rules.

Featured text: signs

Key word: hen

Target vowel: short *e*

#107 Touching the Moon

Leona keeps the whole family awake because she wants a queen to touch the moon.

Featured text: folktale

Key word: moon

Target vowel: short *i*

#108 The Boy Who Cried Wolf

Lionel and Leona show a shepherd boy from a storybook how to cry Wolf! when his sheep are threatened, and then he doesn't stop!

Featured text: fable

Key word: big

Target vowel: short *i*

#109 Fuzzy Wuzzy, Wuzzy?

Everyone except Lionel is thrilled when Fuzzy Wuzzy comes out of the *Fuzzy, Fuzzy Wuzzy Book* to form a conga line with his fans in the library.

Featured text: rhyme

Key word: fuzzy

Target vowel: short *u*

#110 Lionel's Antlers

Just like the girl in the book *Imogene's Antlers*, Lionel wakes up with antlers on his head.

Featured text: story

Key word: antlers

Target vowel: short *a*

#111 To the Ship! To the Ship!

Lionel and Walter Pigeon think all pirates were men, so they won't let Leona and Clay Pigeon join their pirate game.

Featured text: story

Key word: ship

Target vowel: short *i*

#112 The Chap with Caps

The Lion family helps a writer fix a story about a chap, a cap, and lots of chattering monkeys.

Featured text: folktale

Key word: cap

Target vowel: short *a*

#113 Pandora's Box

Should Lionel and Leona open a mysterious box that has a Do Not Open! sign on it?

Featured text: myth

Key word: box

Target vowel: short *o*

#114 Lionel's Great Escape Trick

Lionel ties himself up with ropes and tries to escape without magic words.

Featured text: Web site

Key word: trick

Target vowel: short *i*

#115 There's a Fly in My Soup

Everyone reads jokes to Click the Mouse to try to make her laugh.

Featured text: jokes

Key word: fly

Target vowel: *y* (long *i* sound)

#116 The Popcorn Popper

Lionel and Leona persuade Click to take a magic popcorn popper out of a book and then can't make it stop popping!

Featured texts: folktale and instructions

Key word: pop

Target vowel: short *o*

#117 Something Fishy

When Lionel reads the latest *Cliff Hanger* book to Leona, it gives her an idea about how to make one of her biggest dreams come true.

Featured text: story

Key word: fish

Target vowel: short *i*

#118 Hug, Hug, Hug!

Leona helps a sculptor who falls in love with his statue.

Featured text: myth

Key word: hug

Target vowel: short *u*

#119 The Ram in the Pepper Patch

A rambunctious ram leaves his book, butts everyone and everything in the library, and won't go back!

Featured text: folktale

Key word: ram

Target vowel: short *a*

#120 A Peck of Peppers

Lionel thinks he is the king of tongue twisters and nobody can write one that he can't say.

Featured text: tongue twisters

Key word: peppers

Target vowel: short *e*

#121 Sausage Nose

Theo, Cleo, Lionel, and Leona watch a video about a husband and wife, three wishes, a sausage, and a nose.

Featured text: video subtitles

Key word: wish

Target vowel: short *i*

#122 Red Hat, Green Hat

Leona's new hat stirs up trouble in the library.

Featured text: folktale

Key word: red

Target vowel: short *a*

#123 The Lucky Duck

Lionel tries to help a very cute duck from a very cute book stop being so cute.

Featured text: story

Key word: duck

Target vowel: short *u*

#124 The Old Man

Writer Babs Caplan visits the library to write the world's scariest story.

Featured text: story in progress

Key word: man

Target vowel: short *a*

#125 A King and His Hawk

Leona thinks a book Lionel reads to her is too sad, so she tries to make sure nobody else can read it.

Featured text: folktale

Key word: king

Target vowel: short *i*

#126 The Roar That Makes Them Run

Leona and Lionel try to get their dad to roar a mighty roar.

Featured text: CD-ROM

Key word: run

Target vowel: short *u*

#127 Piggyback, Piggyback

Leona decides to ride piggyback on her dad's back forever and ever.

Featured text: folktale

Key word: west

Target vowel: short *e*

#128 The Fox and the Crow

Walter and Clay Pigeon want *The Fox and the Crow* banned from the library because they think the book makes birds look like birdbrains.

Featured text: fable

Key word: drop

Target vowels: short *o*, double *o*

#129 Giants and Cubs

Leona thinks scary giants are coming into the library to clobber lion cubs.

Featured text: newspaper article

Key word: cub

Target vowel: short and long *u*

#130 Be Bop

When cool, jazzy shoes come out of a book and dance all over the library, everybody gets in the groove.

Featured text: story

Key word: bop

Target vowel: short *o*

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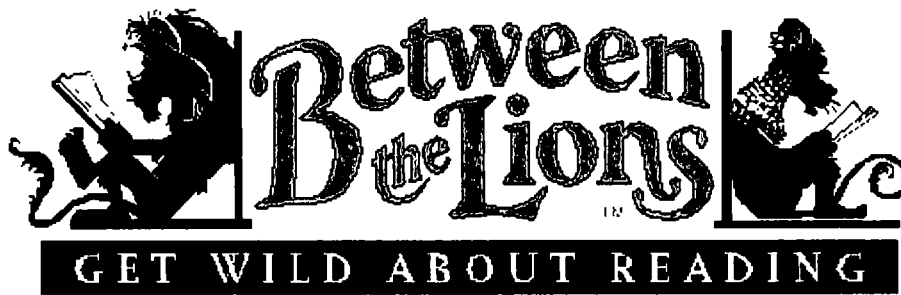
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Web Release

Get Wild about Reading at a Brand New Web Site

To coincide with the April 3, 2000, broadcast premiere of BETWEEN THE LIONS, Webby Award-winning PBS Online is launching pbskids.org/lions as a groundbreaking literacy Web site for kids and parents.

BETWEEN THE LIONS, the new PBS daily kids' show (check local listings for air times), set in a world of lions, libraries, and laughter, is designed to help kids four to seven learn to read. The companion BETWEEN THE LIONS Web site is the very first to offer an expert-approved curriculum of interactive stories and games—over 200, in fact—for kids learning to read and write. Every one of the thirty BETWEEN THE LIONS episodes on television has its very own Web site with a read-along story and related games. Each site extends the educator-approved lessons from the series curriculum, so kids really will get the most from each episode, in both whole language and phonics.

Let's be honest. We know kids won't rush to a site that offers to teach them "phonemic awareness." That's why our ever-changing inventory of interactive games includes "Pick a Pigeon" (reading comprehension quizzes with our pigeons, Walter and Clay); "Waiter, There's a Fly in My Alphabet Soup" (anagram noodle humor); "Arty Smartypants" (find the small words hiding in the big trousers); "Gawain's Word" (our medieval knights blend words, "joust" for fun); and "Tiger Words" (grab a pen, hit the links, and make the shot to complete the word in our game, starring our eponymous writing phenom). And more. Oh, yes, there's more.

These original games give kids hands-on experience with reading, writing, listening, correcting errors, story starters, alphabet awareness, imaginative play, spelling, and a whole lot more. And every step of the way, our very own Cliff Hanger character is there with Cliff's Notes to help parents along.

In fact, the BETWEEN THE LIONS Web site is so chock full of content, it's almost too much to mention. Other Web innovations include "Cub Reporter;" "Watson's Word Wall;" "Sam Spud" (par-boiled potato detective); "Fuzzy Lion Ears;" "Lionel's Talking Gizmo;" "A. B. Cow;" "Destination: Library!;" and "Word Worms." And when the library pipes burst, kids can help sort books back onto the right shelves in "Flood!"

However, parents know that computer time is just one part of a modern kid's day. So when we think about games, we don't only mean online games; we feature seventy "Anywhere Games," engaging literacy activities that can be played anywhere with your kids.

Our Parents Survival Manual gives even the busiest parents all they need to help their children learn to read. It offers a lot of very useful how to's: how to use your library, how to make a book, how to teach warning labels, how to read to your kids, and much, much more. These custom-made Top Ten Tips lists help you turn everyday situations into great opportunities to develop family literacy. The Parents' Survival Manual also includes links to the wonderful resources offered by our Founding Partners literacy organizations, a correspondence area, and a sign-up for our cool weekly email newsletter, *The Paw Print*.

The BETWEEN THE LIONS site also has original songs by series musical artists Sloppy Pop, B. B. The King of Beasts, Tammy Lionette, Martha Reader and the Vowelles—great for sing-along surfing. And have we mentioned the extensive recommended books area? Or the literacy links? Or the fabulous illustrated glossary? Or the interactive guided tour?

By now you should know we've created enough fun to fill a library. And like a library, it's all free. Pounce over to pbskids.org/lions to find BETWEEN THE LIONS Online.

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Curriculum Backgrounder

BETWEEN THE LIONS Attacks Illiteracy at the Elementary Level

Imagine not being able to read this sentence. Or a prescription bottle. Or the newspaper. Or a birthday card from your child.

Illiteracy is a tragic reality for too many Americans, and the problem begins early. Forty percent of the nation's fourth graders fail to reach even a basic level of reading proficiency. Kids who can't read are quickly banished to the fringes of the classroom, and eventually the fringes of society. Until a person learns to read, it's difficult, if not impossible, to master other important subjects, which explains the well-documented link between illiteracy and other social ills. Seventy-five percent of people on welfare, eighty-five percent of unwed mothers, and sixty percent of the nation's prisoners are functionally illiterate.

With the help of some of the nation's leading literacy experts, BETWEEN THE LIONS is taking on this tough issue. Using a mix of music, stories, animation, live-action, and puppetry, the daily series creates a viewing experience that not only motivates kids to read and write, but gives them the skills to do so. BETWEEN THE LIONS creates a literacy culture by helping children see the rewards of reading and writing, the many different forms and functions of print, and the value of the library.

Literacy experts from across the country have joined forces with series producers to identify and integrate the following educational goals into the BETWEEN THE LIONS curriculum:

- Model reading, writing, listening and speaking skills—all vital elements of literacy.
- Motivate children to read and write by demonstrating that both behaviors are a source of real pleasure and a steppingstone to every other kind of learning experience.
- Provide viewers with explicit, comprehensive skills instruction.
- Acquaint children with a wide variety of text, including stories, letters, newspapers and magazine articles, poetry, plays, songs, non-fiction, Web content, reference materials, and more.

The format of the programs is based on a “whole–part–whole” teaching approach, which many reading experts recommend as a way to combine the most effective whole language and phonics-based reading strategies. Each episode opens in the library and introduces the “whole”—original stories, familiar fables and folktales, poetry or some other source of engaging text. Viewers can read along as the words on the featured pages are read aloud by our characters.

This leads into the library story line, where our family of lions and other characters get involved in an adventure (or misadventure!) triggered by the opening story. The lions try to learn more, solve a problem, help a character or write a new version of the story. The “whole” then gives way to a variety of “parts” that put words and sounds at center stage and impart the knowledge and phonics skills that are critical for beginning readers.

For each program, these parts are organized around a “key word” that is derived from that episode’s “whole” text. For example, in “The Ram in the Pepper Patch,” the key word is—surprise!—*ram*. Targeting *ram* allows us to present the short *a* vowel, the consonants *r* and *m*, and the *-am* word family (*ham*, *jam*, *Sam*). We can also have fun with words containing *ram* (*ramble*, *scram*, *rambunctious*) and other words with the *-am* sounds (*slam*, *family*, *ambulance*). This type of word play will help viewers understand how basic spelling patterns are the building blocks of written English (well, at least most of it!).

The playful “parts” segments feature original songs (showcasing top talents like B. B. the King of Beasts and Tammy Lionette), music videos, limericks, tongue twisters, slapstick, parodies, and celebrity cameos. The parts ultimately lead back to our library characters and the final “whole” sequence, which puts all the pieces together in a retelling of the opening story with a new twist, giving viewers a chance to revisit the words and sounds in a meaningful context.

BETWEEN THE LIONS literacy advisors have worked closely with the show’s producers to ensure that the “whole-parts-whole” and “key word” methods have been utilized in each episode and that the following additional goals are incorporated throughout the series:

- Illustrate the many benefits of access to the world of print.
- Show that learning to read and spell can sometimes be a struggle, but it’s worth it!
- Present worthwhile reasons for writing.
- Introduce new vocabulary words and their meanings.
- Demonstrate how words work (primarily by focusing on the individual phonemic elements that make up that episode’s key word).
- Use key words and related words in meaningful contexts.
- Showcase high-frequency sight words.

The BETWEEN THE LIONS team is committed to making quality television available to all children. Each episode is accessible to blind and visually impaired viewers through WGBH Boston's innovative, Emmy Award-winning Descriptive Video Service® (DVS). The series also is closed captioned by The Caption Center at WGBH for viewers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

BETWEEN THE LIONS is produced for PBS by the award-winning team of WGBH Boston and Sirius Thinking, Ltd., two experts in the creative union of educational goals with laugh-out-loud children's television.

Sirius Thinking, Ltd. is an educational entertainment company. Cofounders of Sirius Thinking Ltd. include John Sculley, former CEO of Apple Computer and PepsiCo; Christopher Cerf, founding director and editor-in-chief of the Children's Television Workshop's Educational Books, Records, Games and Toys Division, as well as a Grammy and Emmy Award-winner for his musical contributions to *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*; Michael Frith, former executive vice-president and creative director for Jim Henson Productions and former editor of Dr. Seuss's Beginner Books at Random House; and Norman Stiles, eleven-time Emmy Award-winning head writer of *Sesame Street*.

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Biographies

PRODUCTION PRINCIPALS

Judith Stoia, Executive Producer

Judith Stoia is an Emmy Award-winning, Boston media veteran who began work at WGBH in 1972 as a reporter for its FM station, then moved to the television side as a reporter and managing editor of nightly news broadcasts and producer of public affairs specials. From 1979 to 1980, she was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University.

In 1981, Stoia joined Boston's ABC affiliate, WCVB, where she spent a decade producing after-school specials and serving as managing editor and executive producer of *Chronicle*, the station's nightly public affairs magazine. She returned to WGBH in 1989 to produce an array of documentary, drama, public affairs and comedy specials including *The AIDS Quarterly with Peter Jennings* for PBS, *In the Shadow of Love: A Teen AIDS Story*, a drama on PBS and ABC, PBS documentaries on abortion and homelessness, and *The World According to Us*, three hour-long women's comedy programs produced by WGBH for Lifetime.

Stoia also served as executive producer for local programming at WGBH. In this capacity, she oversaw a tremendous diversity of projects, ranging from long-form documentaries such as *The Jews of Boston* and *When a Kid Is Gay* to the public affairs magazine series *Greater Boston*. Stoia is author of *The Hardest Lesson: Personal Accounts of School Desegregation*, which won the Christopher Medal for non-fiction.

Christopher Cerf, Creative Producer

Christopher Cerf is—among other things—an author; record and television producer; editor; composer/lyricist; humorist/satirist; educational consultant; computer software designer; president of his own company, Christopher Cerf Associates, Inc.; and co-founder of the educational television production company, Sirius Thinking, Ltd.

As the founding editor in chief of the Children's Television Workshop's Products Group, Cerf played a pivotal role in the ongoing funding of the *Sesame Street* television series, through the creation, licensing and production of educational records, toys and books. In addition to his editing duties (which continued until 1977 when he resigned his full-time CTW position to start his own company), Cerf has for more than twenty-five years been a regular contributor of music and lyrics to Children's Television Workshop productions. In the process, he has collected two Grammy Awards, and, more recently, back-to-back Emmy Awards for songwriting.

Before joining CTW, Cerf spent eight years as a juvenile and adult senior editor at Random House. There he edited books by such diverse authors as George Plimpton, Andy Warhol, Ray Bradbury and the late Abbie Hoffman, and helped to create a supplementary literacy education program based on the famous Beginner Book series, edited by Dr. Seuss. In 1993, Cerf renewed his ties to Random House when he assumed the role of Chairman of the Modern Library.

For all his success in television, publishing and music, Christopher Cerf is perhaps best known to the general public for his work as a humorist. In 1970, he helped launch one of the most influential of recent humor magazines, the *National Lampoon*. Not the *New York Times*, the parody he conceived and co-edited in 1978, established a tradition of journalistic spoofs, and *The Experts Speak*, a "compendium of authoritative misinformation" which Cerf co-authored with Victor Navasky, was a major critical success when it first appear in 1984.

For the past decade, Cerf has played a major role in the advance of digital technology as a tool for educating young children, earning critical acclaim for developing software and other products designed to promote learning.

Cerf is currently a member of the board of directors of Reading Is Fundamental, a director of First Book, an advisory editor of *The Paris Review*, and a member of the advisory board of the George Lucas Educational Foundation. Cerf also recently completed a term as a national trustee of NARAS (the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences).

Michael K. Frith, Creative Director

Michael K. Frith conceived and/or designed scores of television's most popular puppets, from those on *Sesame Street* to *The Muppet Show*, *Saturday Night Live*, and numerous Jim Henson productions. A key member of the creative teams that developed two of Henson's most successful children's series, he was credited as conceptual designer of the International Emmy Award- and Ace Award-winning *Fraggle Rock*, and creative consultant and executive producer on the four-time Outstanding Animated Children's Series Emmy Award-winner, *Muppet Babies*. In 1978 and 1986, Henson invited him to share in the company's two George Foster Peabody Awards.

Michael Frith joined Jim Henson Productions in 1975 as art director and was named vice president in 1978 and executive vice president and director of creative services in 1985. His credits include creative and design consultant on *The Muppet Show*, design consultant on five Muppet movies, creative producer on *Little Muppet Monsters* and Muppet segment producer on the Emmy Award-winning special, *Free to be...A Family*. He was executive producer on the Gemini-winning Fox Children's Network series *Jim Henson's Dog City* and the 1995 Nabisco Family Classics special for CBS, *Mr. Willowby's Christmas Tree*. Frith also served as executive producer for the Henson/Nickelodeon series, *The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss*, for which he twice received Prime Time Emmy Award nominations.

In 1996, Frith left Henson Productions to become, with John Sculley, Christopher Cerf and Norman Stiles, a founding partner in Sirius Thinking, Ltd., a multiple-media company dedicated to the creation of educational entertainment for children.

Frith began his career at Random House, where he became editor in chief of the groundbreaking Beginner Books series, collaborating closely with series

co-founder and president Theodor Geisel (Dr. Seuss). Author and/or illustrator of a number of books for children and adults, he was also editor/art director for Random's *Sesame Street* book series.

Frith graduated from Harvard, where he was president of *The Harvard Lampoon* and co-author (with Christopher Cerf) of a number of parody bestsellers.

A native Bermudan, he began drawing professionally at age eleven, and before college worked variously as a magician's assistant, disc jockey, and host of a children's television show.

Norman Stiles, Head Writer

Norman Stiles graduated from Hunter College in New York City, in 1964, with an amusing BA degree in Zoology and Chemistry which gave him the basic foundation for a career in comedy.

In late 1964, he began working for the New York City Department of Welfare as a caseworker and then became a supervisor in 1966. While at the Welfare Department he began writing freelance stand-up comedy for comedians who are no longer in the business.

In 1968 he got his first full-time comedy writing job on the staff of Merv Griffin's *Late Night* talk show, on CBS. In 1970, he started writing for *Sesame Street* and became head writer in 1973. Stiles left *Sesame Street* in 1975 and went to Hollywood to work with Mel Brooks as co-creator and co-executive script consultant of the ABC sit-com, *When Things Were Rotten*, a parody of the Robin Hood legend.

In late 1975, *When Things Were Rotten* was cancelled and Stiles' dream of fame and fortune was crushed. He remained in Hollywood for the next five years, during which time he co-wrote episodes for various situation comedies, and was: co-head writer on *The Captain and Tennille* (ABC); co-head writer on *The Frankie Avalon Summer Show* (CBS); co-executive script consultant on Norman Lear's syndicated television satirical, talk show parodies, *Fernwood 2-night*, and *America 2-night*, (for which he received an Emmy nomination); co-producer of *The Bad News Bears* (ABC); co-creator/co-producer of *Fort Leo*, a sitcom pilot (NBC); co-producer of *Brothers*, a sitcom pilot (MTM/CBS), and co-writer of pilot scripts

and feature film scripts that were not produced but for which he was paid a pretty penny nonetheless.

In 1980, Stiles returned to New York, where he resumed his work on *Sesame Street* and regained his sanity. As head writer he has supervised the *Sesame Street* writing staff of fifteen to twenty writers, guiding the writing of more than 2,000 scripts. During his career on *Sesame Street* he has conceived, co-conceived, or supervised the development of characters such as: Count Von Count, Forgetful Jones, Sonny Friendly, H. Ross Parrot, Placido Flamingo, Elmo, Telly Monster, The Amazing Mumford, Zoë and, Rosita, among others. He has written more than 100 scripts for *Sesame Street*, winning eleven Emmy Awards and fifteen Emmy nominations for his work on that PBS series.

Stiles has consulted on *Sesame Street* international co-productions in Israel, Portugal, and Mexico, helping to develop their writing teams and to create characters and formats unique to their cultures. He has authored and co-authored eight *Sesame Street* books.

He wrote *Put Down the Duckie*, a one-hour *Sesame Street* special for PBS, and two *Sesame Street Live* productions, *Sleeping Birdie* and *Silly Dancing*. He also was lyricist and/or co-lyricist on many *Sesame Street* songs.

In addition to his work on *Sesame Street*, Stiles has been co-writer of television specials for ABC and PBS and co-author or contributor to a number of trade books.

Stiles is co-founder, with Christopher Cerf, Michael Frith and John Sculley, of Sirius Thinking, Ltd., a children's educational entertainment company.

**Dr. Dorothy S. Strickland, State of New Jersey Professor of Reading,
Rutgers University Graduate School of Education**

Dr. Strickland is the State of New Jersey Professor of Reading at Rutgers University. A former president of the International Reading Association (IRA), she is a frequent speaker at conferences and a member of several committees engaged in literacy policy-making. She began as a classroom teacher and continues to serve public schools as an active consultant and advocate for child-centered teaching practices. Strickland is well known for her numerous publications in the field of reading and language arts.

**Dr. Junko Yokota, Associate Professor, National College of Education,
National-Louis University, Chicago, Illinois**

Dr. Yokota, Associate Professor in the Reading and Language Department at National-Louis University, is a former classroom teacher and school librarian with a particular interest in children's books and multicultural literature. Born and raised in Japan, she currently teaches courses on children's literature and reading/language arts development. She has served on the IRA's Board of Directors and has been a member of the American Library Association's Caldecott Award Committee.

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