The research undertaken includes both an analysis of original Indian children's stories written in English by Indian authors and a study of the contribution of a reading programme to increased proficiency in reading. The books mostly written since 1970 were chosen for the study-analysis. The research had two aims namely (a) An analytical study of the quality of the books and (b) An investigation into the extent to which children who participated in the reading programme gained in reading speed and reading comprehension.

To the researcher's best knowledge, an analytical study of original Indian juvenile fiction written in recent years has not been carried out so far. The researcher had to examine 160 books according to subject matter as: (1) Animal Stories (2) Domestic Themes (3) Mystery, Adventure and Crime Stories (4) Stories of Fancy and Imagination and (5) Realistic Fiction.

Again, the books had to be classified according to their suitability for the 3 age groups namely (1) 5-8 years (2) 9-12 years (3) 13-15 years. In order to get an idea about the suitability of particular books, they were given to children of different classes and ages for reading and their choice and preferences were studied. Of course all the books could not be distributed as the analyses also had to be
done simultaneously and children kept the books for long intervals. The youngest group mostly chose animal stories, the middle read animal stories as well as domestic themes and even stories of fancy and imagination and the oldest liked mystery, adventure and crime stories.

The format of the books also helped in the categorisation. Books of larger size and print with more illustrations were obviously meant for the youngest group and those of medium size and print were for the middle group and books of smaller size and print and with a larger number of pages were for the oldest age group.

As the sources of reference were very limited the researcher had to devise a key of analysis on her own though the ideas are derived from writers on children's fiction. (Ref: Bibliography). This was done to avoid the danger of the analysis becoming subjective and impressionistic. An attempt was also made to gather children's opinions regarding plots, themes, characters etc. But children had varying opinions about the same book on different occasions and most of them did not read the books attentively to form definite opinions about plot, theme etc. Hence this method did not yield any result.

The researcher read every book several times and wrote the analysis 3 times separately each time. Mostly the assessments tallied. This was done to make the analysis as objective as possible.
A 25-point assessment scheme was prepared with 7 marks for the plot, 8 marks for the characterisation, 3 for theme, 5 for setting and background and 2 for format and illustration. One hundred and forty nine books were analysed using this key.

According to the marks given, books were categorised as (1) Excellent (22½-25 marks), (2) Very Good (19½-22 marks), (3) Good (16½-19 marks), (4) Fairly Good (13½-16 marks), (5) Average - (10½-13 marks), (6) Below Average (7½-10 marks) and (7) Poor (Less than 7 marks).

The analysis of the 149 books led to the final result which is given below:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Range of Marks</th>
<th>Assessment Remarks</th>
<th>Total number of Books assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>22½-25</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>19½-22</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>16½-19</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>13½-16</td>
<td>Fairly Good</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10½-13</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7½-10</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Less than 7</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the assessment analysis it is clear that the animal stories and domestic themes are well written whereas in the stories of fancy and imagination a lot more is desired.
The first part of the analysis led to the conclusion that the original children's books written in English by Indian authors are quite good though there is a lot of scope for betterment.

The second part of the research programme was to gauge the contribution of the Indian children's fiction to increased proficiency in reading comprehension. For this, originally an in-depth study programme in reading speed and reading comprehension was planned with the students of Dakshina Vidyalaya, Nargol in South Gujarat. But the researcher left the place in 1962 and joined Sanjeevan Vidyalaya at Panchgani. Another change of place followed in 1964 and the researcher came to Bhilad. The reading programme experiment was carried out among the students of 3 schools with different social set-ups and backgrounds. What was lost in terms of a longitudinal study was compensated for by the opportunity to make a study over a wider range and replicate the experiment.

Before the books were given out for reading, tests in reading speed and comprehension were given. Then the reading speeds were periodically noted. When the reading was finished, after a definite span of time another comprehension test of the same level of difficulty was given.

The difference between the first and last tests showed the improvement or the deterioration as the case may be.
There were regular readers as well as non-readers in each school. The regular readers showed a steady improvement whereas the non-readers did not show much improvement in reading speed and reading comprehension.

The results of the reading programme experiment are very encouraging. In one school (Navasarjan Vidyalaya, Bhilad) the improvement in reading clarity also was noted.

The researcher found that if reading was taught with the correct pronunciation and speed the comprehension improved systematically. With improved comprehension the students fared better in their examinations.

Experiments in reading and comprehension have been conducted in the past by many scholars but to the researcher's knowledge, a reading programme experiment to gauge the contribution of original children's fiction in English written by Indian authors has been carried out for the first time.

During the research it was discovered that once children were initiated into reading good books, they continued with the habit. Once the pleasures of reading were discovered, children would never stop reading. But the parents also had to encourage their children in this.

The teachers, the librarians and the parents have to help young growing children in the right choice of books. And our indigenous collection is quite vast and good enough. It
is worthwhile to quote Anupa Lal in this context. She says in the eminently readable essay captioned 'How to Choose Books for Your Children' published in the Readers' Digest:

Enid Blyton is still popular but so are Shankar, Satyajit Ray, Tara Ali Baig, Ruskin Bond and so many Indian writers in whose stories our children can discover the fun, the adventure and the values of their lives. ¹

The reading programme experiment leads to the conclusion that the original children's books written in English by Indian authors definitely contribute to increased proficiency in reading.