



**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR
2002 PROJECT SUMMARY**

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Project Title A Box Office Disappointment: Why the Book is Always Better than the Movie	
Abstract Objectives/Goals Teachers are concerned about covering a large volume of curriculum in a short time. Since many students have trouble understanding what they read, some teachers and parents resort to showing videos. I believe that this practice may actually inhibit the higher level language development necessary to understand complex books. The problem I investigated is the relationship of text to dialogue in films. My project determines the reading level of various trade books and the movies based on them. Methods/Materials The first 100-150 words for both trade books and the videos based on the same titles were translated and typed into a computer program. Readability formulas were applied to evaluate the language complexity children are exposed to when reading and when watching movies. Results An analysis revealed that regardless of the reading level of a book, the language complexity of the video is similar to primary reading material. Conclusions/Discussion Movie dialogue consists of simple sentences and vocabulary even when a screenplay is based on a high school or college level book. Therefore, it is important that students be exposed to written text as much as possible. If they are unable to independently access the material, adults should read the books to the children. Watching videos introduces children to the general plot, but fails to build reading comprehension skills. Students must be taught new vocabulary and understanding of complex sentence structure that they do not hear in conversation or in videos. Providing students with simplified children's versions of difficult books exposes them to a higher level of language than a video.	
Summary Statement Complex language constructs are limited in movie dialogue thus, watching videos is a poor substitute to reading.	
Help Received My mother located the Readability Formulas and videos for the books that I chose to evaluate.	