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Literacy

Reading, Writing and Children's Literature

5th Edition

GORDON WINCH * ROSEMARY ROSS JOHNSTON
PAUL MARCH * LESLEY LJUNGDAHL
MARCELLE HOLLIDAY *

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GORDON WINCH AND MARCELLE HOLLIDAY

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Introduction: Literacy in the Modern World

WHAT IS LITERACY?

An effective definition of literacy is an important starting point for understanding what teaching programs should be implemented. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 2006) recognises that definitions of literacy have implications for the classroom:

> [L]iteracy as a concept has proved to be both complex and dynamic, continuing to be interpreted and defined in a multiplicity of ways. People's notions of what it means to be literate or illiterate are influenced by academic research, institutional agendas, national context, cultural values and personal experiences…[U]nderstandings in the international policy community have expanded too: from viewing literacy as a simple process of acquiring basic cognitive skills, to using these skills in ways that contribute to socio-economic development, to developing the capacity for social awareness and critical reflection as a basis for personal and social change.

WHAT CAN WE TAKE AS A SUITABLE DEFINITION OF LITERACY FOR THE MODERN WORLD?

The definition of literacy is not static. It changes and evolves to reflect the changing needs of society.

In the past, definitions of literacy focused on only the ability to read and write print texts, but these definitions are no longer enough for the modern world. As Snyder pointed out in *Silicon Literacies*:

> We need an expanded definition which recognises that reading and writing, considered as print-based and logocentric, are only part of what people have to learn to be literate. Now, for the first time in history, the written, oral and audiovisual modalities of communication are integrated into multimodal hypertext systems made accessible via the Internet and the World Wide Web. (2002, p. 3)

Whatever definition we choose, it must include those facets of literacy as we know it today: not only the basic view of literacy as the ability to read and write but also what are termed social literacy, critical literacy, mathematical literacy, cultural literacy and technological literacy. Essential to all aspects of literacy in Australia, nevertheless, is the ability to read and write in English.

Chapter 23

Literature, the Curriculum and 21st-century Literacy

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn:

- to define the place of literature in national curricula
- to understand the significance of expanded definitions of 'language', 'reading' and 'text'
- to see 'literature' and 'story' as an essential part of the development of 'knowing readers'
- to understand the idea of a literature continuum and the significance of literature for children within that continuum
- to understand the impact of digital literacy and recognise that language remains as the primary technology of communication
- that language has power and that the stories of literature are part of personal and national identity, being and growth.

KEY TERMS

children's literature
continuum
digital literacy
identity
knowing readers
narrative
story

VIGNETTE

Scene: A village in Africa

Characters: Muzi, a boy; Mama Nozincwadi, an older lady who has never had the opportunity of learning to read

Background: Muzi was sent home from school because his parents could not afford to buy him a required book. Later, as a thank you, Muzi reads to her.

Mama Nozincwadi sits very still, watching Muzi and listening in wonder. When he finishes reading she says to him: 'Child, do you want to tell me that these books are like wise old people who can take you by the hand and teach you many things about life?' Muzi answers that they are, and thanks her, saying that sometimes books make him feel that 'I can go with the eyes of my mind to the places in the book.'

(*Nozincwadi, Mother of Books*, by Gcina Mhlophe 2001, 'Stars of Africa' series, *Building a Nation of Readers*.)

What this story shows:

- Literature opens 'the eyes of the mind' and can take us to places all over the world—and out of it!
- Vicariously and elegantly, it brings minds and thoughts that may be profoundly separated by time, space and culture, by age and demographic, by life experience, into intimate propinquities.

What the 'Stars of Africa' series of children's books shows:

- Books help build community and shared imaginations, from school to nation, even to world.
- Governments and educators understand that books—literature and its stories—are an essential part not only of education and building nationhood, but of life.

Introduction

> Children's literature is a creative art. It is of course conceived creatively but it is just as importantly reconceived by an audience which is itself in a constant state of flux and re-creation. (R.R. Johnston 1998)

Literature is a core element of curricula across the world. It holds pride of place not only in schools but in universities. It plays a key role across the Curriculum: stories, both factual and fictional, help to bring history and geography and science alive, and enlarge understandings of time and place, cultural ideas and practices, as well as of people and events. Literature is a continuum and includes the diverse media and modes of 'children's literature', including picturebooks.

The Australian Curriculum supports the concept of a continuum and the idea that literature, and literature produced for children, is a dynamic and fertile resource for the expanding practices and experiences of language and literacy in the 21st century. While the term 'literacy' still expresses the basic idea of making meaning through and from text (whatever form that text takes, and whatever ways it is engaged with), the popularity of multiple 21st-century literacies demonstrates recognition of the burgeoning text modes that are available and accessible in classrooms and homes, and the varying skills they require. This is part of a growing global awareness of different ways of 'being literate' (as, for example, in a first language rather than the second language of a new national home,

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or as in the 'reading' of story in Indigenous visual art). Such awareness may problematise but also enhance ideas about the integral place of literature in teaching language and literacy in the Australian context.

The idea of the book has also evolved: from clay tablets, through papyrus scrolls, the codex, and printing and paper-and-ink technologies, to digital books comprising a library that can be accessed through a Kindle, a mobile phone or flat electronic tablets such as the iPad. However, through whatever digital means (and just as they have done over centuries), story and story arts are simply presenting in new forms, and language remains the primary technology of communication.

Literacy is a complex concept—as I wrote in previous editions of this book, it is 'multi-active, multi-purpose and multi-dimensional'. It is in literature, and in the multimodal production of literature for children, that the diversity and range of language (both verbal and visual, permanent and ephemeral) is arguably most interactive yet intimate, most purposeful yet playful, and most dimensional.

* * *

WHAT IS LITERATURE?

AUSTRALIA

Literature is at the core of the study of English in the new Australian Curriculum, one of three closely interrelated strands: Language ('knowing about the English language'), Literature ('understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature'), and Literacy ('expanding the repertoire of English usage').

The Australian National Curriculum states that 'literature' refers to:

Past and present texts across varied cultural contexts are valued in form and style, have 'enduring or artistic' value', are dynamic and evolving, have personal, social, cultural and aesthetic value, enrich lives and scopes of experience.

> … past and present texts across a range of cultural contexts that are valued for their form and style and are recognised as having enduring or artistic value. While the nature of what constitutes literary texts is dynamic and evolving, they are seen as having personal, social, cultural and aesthetic value and potential for enriching students' scope of experience. Literature includes a broad range of forms such as novels, poetry, short stories and plays; fiction for young adults and children, multimodal texts such as film, and a variety of non-fiction. (Australian Curriculum Version 6, 2014, p. 4).

The third paragraph of the opening rationale of the Australian Curriculum: English reads:

> The *Australian Curriculum: English* also helps students to engage imaginatively and critically with literature to expand the scope of their experience. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have contributed to Australian society and to its contemporary literature and its literary heritage through their distinctive ways of representing and communicating knowledge, traditions and experience. The *Australian Curriculum: English* values, respects and explores this contribution. It also emphasises Australia's links to Asia. (p. 3)

It notes the following as its aims, that students:

- learn to listen to, read, view, speak, write, create and reflect on increasingly complex and sophisticated spoken, written and multimodal texts across a growing range of contexts with accuracy, fluency and purpose
- appreciate, enjoy and use the English language in all its variations and develop a sense of its richness and power to evoke feelings, convey information, form ideas, facilitate interaction with others, entertain, persuade and argue
- understand how Standard Australian English works in its spoken and written forms and in combination with non-linguistic forms of communication to create meaning
- develop interest and skills in inquiring into the aesthetic aspects of texts, and develop an informed appreciation of literature. (p. 4)

THE UNITED KINGDOM

The new national curriculum in the UK has as one of its four key aims 'to ensure that all pupils … develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment', and 'appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage'. It notes in its Purpose of Study:

> Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development.
>
> <www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study>

FINLAND

The education system of Finland is widely respected, both nationally and internationally, and Finland is introducing a new national curriculum in August 2016. It is notable that Finland has a small population (around 5.5 million) but recognises as part of its core curriculum 11 specific syllabuses for the subject of 'Mother Tongue and Literature': including Finnish, Swedish, Sami, Romany and Finnish sign language as mother tongues. The syllabus documents note:

> In instruction in mother tongue and literature, the pupils learn concepts with which to approach the world and their own thoughts in linguistic terms; they acquire not simply means of analysing reality but also possibilities to break loose from reality, to construct new worlds and connect things in new contexts.
>
> Mother tongue and literature is an informational, artistic and skill subject that acquires its content from linguistics, the study of literature, and the communication sciences.
>
> <www.oph.fi/download/47675_POPS_net_new_2.pdf>

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

These definitions all reflect on what literature is and why it is so significant. The curricula of England and Finland have been noted here alongside that of Australia for particular reasons—English curricula have historically influenced Australia (and continue to do so), and Finland is a country that consistently achieves at or near the top of respected international educational performance scales.

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Language: knowing about the English language

Literature: understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature

Literacy: expanding the repertoire of English usage

Note that all these documents stress the intrinsic literary and artistic value of literature as well as its capacity to stretch identity, ideas and imaginations. Literature is a wonderful resource for teaching about language, but it must not be limited to that; most of all, and always, we need to teach about its qualities of 'being literature'—and acknowledge its enduring power to enrich and change lives.

Various Curriculum documents talk about the fact that literature 'matters'. It does.

IDEAS OF 'LANGUAGE', 'READING' AND 'TEXT'

To really understand literature in the 21st-century world, it is important to acknowledge evolving understandings of what is meant by the words 'language', 'reading' and 'text'.

There have been three minor but related revolutions. First, the word 'language' has burst through its conventional 20th-century usages to expand and include anything that is communicative: graphics and illustrations, images and moving images, in all sorts of combinations and including audio. Second, 'reading' now implies the idea of reading those images as well as words (all of course, except audio and script in braille, are actually visual). And third, the idea of 'text' has been expanded to include any communication involving language, which, as noted above, means anything that is communicative: graphics and illustrations, images and moving images. Indeed, there is now a school of thought that stresses the centrality of the image, rather than the centrality of writing, in the communication process.

Thus the idea of multiple 21st-century literacies has developed—visual literacy, cultural literacy, digital literacy, for example. These are not separate discrete strands but are aspects of literacy—they interconnect and interrelate.

So **children's literature** provides a very apt field for the study of literacy. This is a literature in which there is an emphasis on the visual through images as well as words, where pictures of culture abound (clothes, food, houses, transport, shopping and merchandise, school), and where youth and its concerns and uses of technology and mobile devices are often graphically portrayed in highly contemporary ways. The rapid growth of picturebooks beyond Foundation classrooms has switched viewing positions—and readers—in ways that jolt conventions. Indeed, the Children's Book Council of Australia in its Annual Awards now carries the following note for 'Picture Book of the Year':

> *Note*: Intended for an audience ranging from birth to 18 years. Some books may be for mature readers.
> See <http://cbca.org.au/winners2013.htm>.

In this rapidly shifting landscape, children's books play a significant role in language and literacy education as well as in the critical study of literature.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: Books, often with visual as well as verbal texts, designed to be read by, to and with children, from the very young until what is commonly referred to as Young Adult (YA) literature. Children's literature is 'literature' and is an important part of the literary continuum.

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

Check through your library and bookshops. Find one picturebook you would offer to very young children, and one you would use in older, even senior classes. What are the differences? Reflect on the 'why' of these differences.

As a second part of this reflection, consider what else the pictures may reveal (about clothes, food, school, for example).

CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES FOR THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE

The Literature strand of the Curriculum states that literature includes 'a broad range of forms such as novels, poetry, short stories and plays, fiction for young adults and children, multimodal texts such as film, and a variety of non fiction' (p. 5). The inclusion of literature as part of the triple focus of English, says the Curriculum, has dual 'literary purposes':

1. To encourage teachers at all year levels to use 'literary' texts
2. To engage students in examining, evaluating and discussing texts in increasingly 'informed and "literary" ways'. (p. 5)

The Australian Curriculum emphasises the importance of students learning:

- the different ways in which literature is significant in everyday life
- the close analysis of literary works and the key ideas and values on which they are based; for example, the detailed stylistic study of differing types of literature
- the comparisons of works of literature from different language, ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- the historical study of the origins, authorship, readership and reception of texts
- the exploration of the relationships between historical, cultural and literary traditions (pp. 8–9).

Literature represents a perfect integration of language and literacy. It is the practice of all aspects of literacy: reading and writing, speaking and listening in appropriate registers in different contexts, listening and communicating, accessing text in multimodes, choosing and using appropriate media, and, increasingly, reading images as well as words (see Chapter 30). Literature is *literacy given form and artistic shape through language and languages.*

LITERATURE, LANGUAGE AND STORY

The essence of literature is **story**, and forms of story surround us every day. The 'show and tell' of early primary years is introducing children not only to speaking in front of their peers, but to organising their ideas and thoughts into a form of narrative; it is the telling of story. We describe our lives in selected sequences of events that constitute story. Newspapers

'Literature will be a core element at every stage of the national English curriculum.' (ACARA 2009, 5.3.3)

STORY: *A story emerges out of the events that take place, the actions the characters engage in, and the time and place, or time-space.*

and journalists turn the events of 'news' into news stories. We read stories in books and we watch stories on film. Facebook and other social media encourage us all to be 'published' storytellers.

Very small children beg to be told stories and read stories. Stories are part of every country in the world, valued as part of national heritages. Traditionally, books are stories in a permanent form that can be passed around, read and reread, celebrated as culture, treasured as cultural capital. History shows how those trying to destroy a culture begin by burning the books. Before books, these stories were perpetuated in oral tales; in this electronic age they may be read on a variety of mobile devices. No matter what, the idea of story—the essence of literature—remains.

The Curriculum makes clear that, to live in this world of stories, we all need a critical understanding of how stories are told; the modes in which they are told; the styles in which they are told; the motives for their telling (to entertain, teach, argue or advertise); and the attitudes and ideas which have influenced that telling. We need critical discernment not only to describe these but to explain how and why. Teachers must give their students the language to express that understanding.

The Curriculum specifically requires teachers to develop 'distinctively literary approaches to texts'. These include considerations of the following:

- the historical, social and cultural context of texts
- formal, creative and aesthetic qualities
- the ways in which argument and viewpoint are presented and supported
- how a text's features reflect the perspectives from which it can be interpreted
- how different perspectives are associated with different uses of language.

<www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/Australian_Curriculum_-_English.pdf>

LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

Literature is a kind of virtual reality

Literature is applied language. It is language in action, working parts working, a model of what Gee (1997, p. 5) calls many 'language-ings'. It has enormous variety. It is a multisensory experience: we see, we hear, we touch the book and turn the pages (or scroll the screen), we say the words; we imagine, we enter in; our 'life-world' and the imaginative world of the text merge seamlessly if only for a moment. This does not imply mindless manipulation, or a necessary 'identification' with particular characters; part of literate practice is to resist such positioning and teach students to do so. But a creative negotiation between readers and the words of the text takes place and, as we read, some form of a merged world is uniquely ours. Literature itself is a kind of virtual reality.

Part 3 of this book describes theory and practices that trace and reflect the connectedness between these three strands—language, literature and literacy. They also demonstrate, in both practical and theoretical ways, that the robust study and teaching of literature, across disciplines (and reaching beyond the English syllabus), is educationally exciting and aesthetically rewarding. Literature is fundamental in the teaching and growing of both language

and literacy but, as the ethos of the Australian Curriculum emphasises, it is also life-enhancing. Children's books, from board books for preschoolers to sophisticated texts for young adults, are a vital part of a lifelong participation and life-enriching engagement in literature.

LITERATURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF 'KNOWING READERS': READERS 'IN THE KNOW'

Young people in secondary school, and even students in tertiary institutions, who are required to do close textual analysis of complex literary texts, need a picture—and a love—for what these texts look like whole. They don't need to see themselves in the text, but they do need to have a glimpse of what it will be like when they approach a text with fresh eyes, revisit it with a more knowledgeable appreciation, stand beside it alone, and share it in company. By the time they complete their primary school education, children should be **knowing readers** (Johnston 2001a)—readers who not only have all the literacy skills they need to read, but who also read with knowledge and expectation of how texts work, of how great the reading experience is, of its infinite capacity for variousness, of its personal rewards and continuing challenges, and of the deep sense of satisfaction that comes from persevering with texts that at first seem too difficult. They also need to have developed the motivation and skills to access all possible ways of exploring the text and its contexts.

KNOWING READERS: *Readers who not only have all the skills they need to read but also read with depth, knowing how texts work, how significant the rewards of the reading experience are, and the value of persevering with difficult texts.*

As well as the appropriate ability to use information and communication technologies, children need a memory bank of reading that includes large numbers of children's books to which they have been introduced in primary school, preschool and the home.

WRITING, SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Literature not only develops knowing readers, it also helps to create:

- *knowing writers*, by giving children access to a variety of purposeful models, in traditional and online digital formats
- *knowing speakers*, both because of the exposure to the speaking of others beyond their immediate world (i.e. in literary texts) and because of the classroom speaking that takes place in response to literature
- *knowing listeners*, listening with both 'inner' and 'outer' ears, not in a physical sense but in a personal one. Listening is more than hearing; it is possible to hear but not listen—consider background music in shopping centres, or a television on when one is doing something else. Listening is integral to the development of oral skills but it does not produce sound, as speaking does, or a physical product, as writing does. Listening, like literacy in all its forms, is complex, perhaps more private than public. It is attending to, and a directing of attention. Literature gives many opportunities for motivated listening.

NTINUUM:
ontinuous sequence
vhich adjacent
ments may not be
iceably different
n each other, but
ere the extremes
quite distinct. A lit-
ture continuum is a
tinuum of story–of
guage, characters,
events–that may
ge at one end from
er Rabbit breaking
rules and going
Mr McGregor's
den, to Macbeth
aking the rules and
rdering the King.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND THE LITERATURE CONTINUUM

A **continuum** is a continuous sequence in which adjacent elements are not perceptibly different from each other, but the extremes are quite distinct. The Australian Curriculum represents itself as a 'continuum' of teaching and learning.

Literature doesn't begin with adults. It begins with what adults read as children. Any list of 'most popular books' will always contain some children's books: common examples are *Seven Little Australians*, *Little Women*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Alice in Wonderland*. Literature is a continuum—a wavy, wiggly line of experiences with books that begins in infancy and early childhood. Children's literature is a vital part of a literary and artistic continuum.

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

Consider and discuss with peers: what books have influenced you? Why do you think this is? What effect did they have?

'CHILDHOOD' AND 'THE CHILD'

Childhood is a traditionally contested space: discussed as innocent or selfish, holy or unholy, often nostalgic. Different cultures have different ideas about children and their relationships to society. Children in stories have been diversely represented over time as small adults, as angels, and as little devils. Norman Lindsay, both as a topical cartoonist for the *Bulletin* (a weekly magazine published in Sydney 1880–2008) and as an artist, drew his small boys as 'greedy, lawless, graceless, profane'; Lindsay's biographer describes these depictions as 'little monsters, perhaps, but fearsomely authentic'. Hetherington says that these 'pleased Lindsay and pleased the *Bulletin*, but they did not please everybody'; there were 'letters of protest from sentimental adults who objected that little children were not like that' (1973, p. 67).

Michael Benton, writing on the representations of the child in painting and literature in the period 1700–1900, describes six images in three oppositional pairs: the polite/impolite child, the innocent/sinful child, the authentic/sanitised child. His seventh representation is that of the holy child, usually with the Virgin Mary, which he describes as 'that superordinate icon which influences all writers and painters in Western culture'. Benton noted that each age reinvents the child in its own image, and concludes: 'The image of childhood, in all its manifestations, was generally a construction by adults of the child they wanted to see' (1996, pp. 57, 58–9).

However, 21st-century adults have reinvented children not in their own image necessarily but as members of a state we have created for them—the digital state. In Western culture, most children of today are digital natives.

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

Gather an array of children's books and magazines containing images and/or advertisements using children. How are children represented? What idea of the child do you think these images present? What else can you discern from these images—for example, are there any clues about relationships to others or to parents, or about ideas of gender? What are these clues?

LITERATURE, AND LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN

Literature is a body of writing—fictional and factual—that includes novels, poetry, drama, biographies and autobiographies, and essays; it may also include other writings in fields such as philosophy, history and science (think of the books of Stephen Hawking and Paul Davies). Literature is usually read in a written form, but can be performed, and may be printed or broadcast electronically as e-literature. The narratives of electronic games are not literature, but they do share some literary elements—story, characters, setting, script, role-play. As such, and because of children's eagerness to play them, they can be used beneficially to develop literary awareness of these elements.

Literature is the expression of the human need to communicate, as readers and/or writers, as speakers and/or listeners, using or transgressing particular conventions and narrative modes. It is story shared, in a sustained form. The best of literature probably tells humankind's deepest stories and addresses its deepest concerns, in a way that is not only artistically and aesthetically satisfying but engages both senses and intellect. Literature, from books for young children to the works of Shakespeare and Tolstoy, represents story engagements in being human, story excursions into human predicaments that are other than our own. There is a humanity in telling stories that are meaningful about self and others. Noam Chomsky claims that it is likely that literature will always give a far deeper insight into 'the full human person' than any model of scientific enquiry could ever hope to do.

Chomsky: Literature gives deeper insights into 'the full human person' than any model of scientific enquiry could ever do

Children's literature is literature that is usually written *by* adults, *for* children and *to* children. If this literature is *for* children it tends to open up obvious questions about power, and about cultural and narrative ideologies and judgments: who makes the decision about the type of literature that is designed for children, and so on. The literature *of* children implies more agency on the part of the child, not as producer necessarily but as *owner*. The dilemma of children's literature is not only that so many people who are not children are involved in its processes, but that everyone has once had the experience of being a child, and therefore is a stakeholder—and an expert! Thus it can become a complex revelation of what societies are concerned about and how they see themselves. As an artistically mediated form of communication—a conversation—that a society has with its young, it is shaped by the concerns of the many stakeholders that are part of the 'world that creates the text'

Literature is shaped by and reveals 'the world that creates the text'

(Bakhtin 1981, p. 253): authors and illustrators, editors and publishers, educators and critics, as well as parents and children.

Stories intended to 'teach' children about life show confidence in children's receptivity and the power of story

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

Look at the books you and others have brought in for discussion. Can you discern from them any ideas about the concerns of the world that created the texts'? What concerns are they? What makes you think that? Do your peers agree?

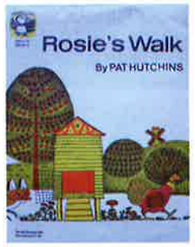
The history of children's literature clearly reveals pedagogical concerns that in themselves reflect *confidence in the receptivity of the young* and *confidence in the power of story*. Books for children were traditionally designed to 'teach' and 'socialise' and 'acculturate', in earlier times about religious and moral matters, in later times about general education. Children's books of our time continue the tradition: many seek to teach about the social issues that dominate contemporary political and social agendas, notably the environment, indigenous cultures, multiculturalism, the changing shape of families, and gender and gender roles.

Picturebooks are a unique adaptation of the novel

Children's literature texts are characteristically forms of prose narrative, although they may also include poetry, drama and factual writings. They have adapted the basic structure of the novel to meet the needs of their readers, and use plot, characterisation and motivation. The protagonist is generally a child, or a stand-in child, which may be an animal or toy.

Picturebooks are a unique adaptation of the novel form: commonly very short and using visual as well as verbal text for the carriage of story (see Chapter 30). The word picturebook/picture-book/picture book is spelt in a variety of ways. International researchers tend to make a distinction between 'picture book'—a book that has pictures—and 'picturebook', a book that relies on both words and pictures to create meaning (as *Rosie's Walk* does, for example). As most of the books discussed in this section tend to have significant visual texts, the spelling 'picturebook' will be used throughout.

Literature requires 'distinctively literary' approaches (Curriculum)



Children's literature is more than pedagogy and advocacy. *It is literature.* It is an essential part of an artistic continuum and requires approaches that in the words of the Australian Curriculum are 'distinctively literary'. It invites children into corporate story, and into participation in the ongoing search, which continues to confront and perplex adults, about what it is to be human. It offers the opportunity to dip into those 'deepest stories' of living: stories about change, frailty, failure, success, loss, growth, mortality and ideas of immortality, and the gamut of human emotions associated with these.

LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND BEING

Language articulates what it is *to be*. The ancient Hebrews represent one of many racial groups who believed that words produced reality. J.L. Austin (1962), in his theory of the performative, argues the integral relationship of *speech* to *act*: in a performative utterance the

word brings about the act which constitutes the reality, as, for example, in 'I now pronounce you man and wife'.

Language articulates thought and helps to create identity

Judith Butler (1990) extends this idea into a theory of performativity that she applies to the production of gender. Butler argues that gender and gender expectations are culturally encoded, and that they are meanings ascribed through words to a baby at the moment of birth. Thus 'It's a girl!' is an utterance that begins a process of 'girling'. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida notes that the essence of the performative is repetition and iteration—the words used about us, repeated over and over again, come to be what we are. Derrida calls this citational doubling (1991).

These theories have, as we shall see, particular implications for the words uttered by teachers in classrooms both to and about children (consider in this context the effect of 'You're always the last to finish!' or 'Can't you do anything right!' or 'Your Maths is getting better and better!').

Language gives shape and organisation to *thought*. The genesis and production of traditional books, and the increasing amount of literary experiences available through information and communication technologies, contribute to the reservoir of words and images—visual and verbal languages—that are used to formulate and communicate thought—*thinking*.

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

What words from a teacher at school stand out in your memory? Were they positive or negative? What effect did these words have? Why do you think you remember them?

Thinking is surely the most profound aspect of literacy. We need some sort of a language to think with, even when it involves what appears as 'wordless' appreciation or response. Western society has traditionally been much influenced by the proclamation of Descartes; in African traditional society the prevailing ethos is that of *ubuntu*, variously translated as 'I am with others, therefore I am' (Harries 2002, p. 140), and 'I am what I am because of who we all are' (www.ubuntu.com/about/about-ubuntu).

'I am with others, therefore I am' (Ubuntu)

'I think therefore I am' (Descartes)

The cognitive scientist Andy Clark writes:

> Language is in many ways the ultimate artifact: so ubiquitous it is almost invisible, so intimate it is not clear whether it is a kind of tool or a dimension of the user. Whatever the boundaries, we confront at the very least a tightly linked economy in which the biological brain is fantastically empowered by some of its strangest and most recent creations: words in the air, symbols on the printed page. (1997, p. 218)

Thoughts, T.S. Eliot writes in *Selected Essays* (1921), 'impact and subtly change the self who thinks them'. Narrative fictions—diverse and heterogeneous in story and mode of delivery, and open to all the means of response made available in an electronic age—promote 'the literacy of the imagination' (Johnston 2000b), which grows not only the capacity to think, but the capacity to make the imaginative leap into 'otherness'. It is this leap into the awareness of others as 'I's just as authentic in their needs and desires as one's own 'I'

that develops moral understandings. Imaginative literacy breeds a sense of human equity informed by subjunctive modes of thinking: 'Were this me, were this you, were this the situation—what if?' This involvement and work of the imagination is part of what will be described in Chapter 26.

LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, THINKING, COMMUNITY AND IMAGINATION

The relationship between language and being is complex, and is addressed as much by philosophers as by linguists. It is reflected in folktales and fairytales in which the power of the name—that is, the naming of our being, our **identity**—is of great significance; it is also reflected in the cultural customs of many countries.

IDENTITY: *The sense of self and subjectivity, of being a particular person or thing in a particular world at a particular time.*

Consider the words of the following writers:

- Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), Austrian philosopher: 'The boundaries of language are the boundaries of "life-world".'
- Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), German philosopher: 'I am what I say.'
- Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–80), French author and philosopher: 'Language is a form of life.'
- Michel Foucault (1926–84), French philosopher: 'Language is a structure of power.'
- Noam Chomsky (1928–), US linguist: 'Language grows in the mind-brain of the child.'

Consider also the power attributed to the word in, for example, some Aboriginal cultures: after a person dies, their name must not be mentioned because doing so may interfere with the journey to the next world.

Language creates. It is powerful and transforming, an infinity of arrangements, relationships and networks of meaning. Crafted into the story arts of literature, it is transformational, opening up other worlds, *self* to a world of *others*, and others to a world of self.

Reading books, as Brodkey notes, 'is an intimate act … because of the prolonged (or intense) exposure of one mind to another' (Booth 1988, p. 168). This is perhaps not so true in relation to books for young children, but in one way it is: books read in childhood are often carried through life and in some cases may help to shape life. That mysterious internal processing that happens between the eye taking in the marks on the page, and the making of meaning thereafter, is extremely personal, figured with private time and place and played out in individual theatres of consciousness.

LITERATURE AND DIGITAL LITERACY

The huge shift in understandings of literacy over the last few years now means that, in any discussion of literacy, digital literacy and e-literacies are taken as a given. **Digital literacy** in the 21st century is an integral part of literacy, as learning to use a pen rather than a quill once was, as typing on a typewriter once was, as writing in an exercise book rather than a slate once was, as learning to write and running-write still is. This is not to say that digital literacy is simply learning how to access a tool; like all the above it can and does radically change the way things have been done before.

DIGITAL LITERACY: *The ability to understand and create information using digital technologies. Now firmly embedded in literate practices, expanding the ways children interact with texts through access to multiple forms, devices and formats that can be used to engineer, integrate, synthesise, translate/transform/transpose, create, disseminate and evaluate.*

Technology is an amazing and wonderful resource and makes the previously impossible possible. In writing this book, I can access library archives for scholarly research papers and find classic texts by using Project Gutenberg, without moving from my desk. Like all these changes, digital literacy is a way of doing that involves and promotes new skills, new knowledge, new ways of thinking, and indeed new ways of being. Mobile devices were dreamed by creators such as Steve Jobs, and are marketed by huge global companies, as *extensions of self,* and indeed they are. Observe any group of people and their interaction not only with each other but with their phones, iPods and iPads.

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

Find an image of a digital device that implies relationship to identity and/or extension of identity. What makes you think this? What effect does this have?

Technology has changed our literacy habits. The internet and the ready communication of Facebook, blogs and Twitter, for example, have resurrected communicative writing practices as part of everyday life—creating their own discourses and giving contemporary shape to the quick note, the postcard, and the letter. In an age actively encouraging digital literacy learning not only as part of pedagogy but as part of everyday life, the opening up of self to others has become increasingly interactive, increasingly public. Never, possibly since the Victorian age of notes and diaries, have adolescents used so many written (texted) words to communicate with each other. Through email I write to more people as part of my everyday activity than I have done for years.

WILL BOOKS SURVIVE?

Books are objects, but their essence is not in their physical form. The value of books is in the mysterious alchemy of words and **narratives** that somehow flows up to meet readers, privately and personally, as they engage with those black marks of print on the page. Whatever shape or form 'books' may take in the future, *the book*—what it is within itself—will survive. In fact part of why it may survive is the very permanence of its current hard copy form, as opposed to the ephemerality of web-based material, and the propensity of children (and adults for that matter) to want to read and reread favourites. The Web is an infinitely growing resource, but unless there are developments in the future that we cannot even imagine, it won't wipe out the book, although its look, format, and even how it is read may change. Kindles, iPads and similar developments are leading the way to electronic devices that could contain every book ever written, but these advances just offer a different

NARRATIVE: *A story. In literary theory it includes both the story (what is narrated) and the discourse (how it is narrated).*

way of accessing 'books'. The exciting world of e-literature and of digital literacy resources is in fact opening up opportunities for children both at home and at school to time and space travel from books into exciting digital worlds, and to explore, chat and share across national and international boundaries. It is also teaching new skills as part of digital literacy—reading and manipulating images to determine meaning, navigating and following cyber-maps, assessing worth, judging potential for personal contributions, composing images, constructing game narratives, and generally creating new ways of telling story.

SNAPSHOT: THE STORY OF THE BOOK THUS FAR

Books first appeared as clay tablets in about 2500 BC (Kilgour 1998). Although there were some huge tablets (6 m^2) for important reference 'books' such as the Middle Assyrian Code of Laws, most early Mesopotamian tablets were usually approximately 7.6 cm^2 (sometimes oblong) pads of clay that fitted comfortably in the hand. 'A book consisted of several such tablets, kept perhaps in a leather pouch or box, so that a reader could pick up tablet after tablet in a predetermined order' (Manguel 1997, p. 125).

About five hundred years later came the new technology of the papyrus scroll. The look changed and the book was to remain in this form for over two thousand years. In AD 150 another new technology changed the look of the book. The codex—a sheaf of bound papers—was unsuitable for the old materials of clay and papyrus and so the new materials of parchment and vellum took over. Because it was convenient, this parchment codex became the common form of the book. It also changed the organisation of texts.

The scroll had possessed a limited surface—and, as Manguel notes, we are aware of this today, 'having returned to this ancient book-form on our computer screens, which reveal only a portion of text at a time as we 'scroll' upwards or downwards'. On the other hand, the codex allowed the reader to flip to other pages, and 'thereby retain the sense of the whole—a sense compounded by the fact that the entire text was usually held in the reader's hands throughout the reading' (Manguel 1997, pp. 126–7). The appearance of paper in Europe during the Crusades and the invention of the printing press in the mid-15th century revolutionised the crafting of books and made them increasingly accessible in the form that we know them today.

For the last decade if not longer, some have been sure that the book is doomed to disappear. It will certainly be able to be accessed in different ways (as audiobook has for years), and may look different. Its essence of telling and being story, however, will survive, and language of course remains as *the primary technology of communication*. Digital multimedia radically extends what we can do with books, how we can play with them, how we can be part of new iterations.

DIGITAL LITERACY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS AND PRACTICES

Such resources, for the children who are digital natives, have built up online communities that reach across classrooms and beyond schools (*Mathletics* is a great example). *Wikis* (from the Hawaiian meaning *quick*), blogs, Twitter, and their umpteen variations are collaborative and equitable online databases that can be edited quickly and easily by anyone. Desktop publishers and digital mobile technologies are a fact of daily life for young people in countries such as Australia, and are not necessarily constrained by sociocultural demographics, or by age; children younger than two are able to recognise and use icons to achieve their purposes. *Avatars* now have blockbuster status at the cinema. *E-games* have been transformed into the next generation of gaming by consoles such as the *Wii,* which use gamepads as motion sensor devices that detect and calculate the motion of the 'player'.

E-LITERATURE AND ONLINE LITERATURE RESOURCES

Len Unsworth describes three main categories of computer-based literary narratives:

ii. *electronically augmented* literary texts—literature published in book format only, but augmented with online resources that offer additional information and thus enhance story worlds;
iii. electronically *recontextualised* literary texts—literature republished as a CD ROM or online in a variety of forms;
iv. *digitally originated* literary texts—literature published in digital format only, usually on the Web in various forms. (2005, pp. 2–4)

STORY WORLDS AND PALACES

Digital technology has turned the story arts of literature into story worlds, elaborate literary theme parks, fan-type websites, synchronous and asynchronous chat rooms, and complex story palaces that are themed sites constructed visually rather than through text, built in cyberspace by a community of fans and enthusiasts who can also participate as avatars.

Virtual literary theme parks offer a new take on the narrative and language-rich activities of role-plays and drama activities that are triggered by storybooks. They offer rich opportunities to have fun with books, while developing skills in communication, design, digital literacy and imaginative play.

Access to palaces is through a web browser or through downloading free Palace User software at <www.palaceplanet.net>. The latter is worthwhile, and the free software is accompanied by clear directions.

One example of a popular palace site, suitable for children, is Middle Earth Palace, inspired by *The Lord of the Rings*, at <www.middleearthpalace.com>. Children visiting the palace can wander in and out of the beautifully decorated rooms at will, assisted by drop-down help menus and a map, and sometimes accompanied by sound bytes from the movies. Part of the fun is discovering the avatars of elves, hobbits and other characters hiding in unexpected corners.

These, among other things, provide access to online contexts where children, both in teaching/learning situations and in their own leisure and play time, are encouraged to explore behind the scenes of texts, to hear and watch the author speaking about the inspiration and genesis of their books and about decisions they made about characters and

plot; where children can read sample chapters (e.g. <www.morrisgleitzman.com>) and sometimes download free books (as above, and often at <http://pauljennings.com.au>), where they themselves can contribute to the discussion as fans, even write their own digital narratives, add chapters, create new characters and new twists in the plot.

Increasing numbers of websites support books with interesting and up-to-date resource material. Many are developed by publishing houses to provide support material for their own authors. Many authors also have their own sites in which they offer interesting background material to their books: Harry Potter fans can visit J.K. Rowling's site at <www.jkrowling.com>. Both primary and secondary students will find much to attract them at David Almond's site <www.davidalmond.com>. There are also numerous fan sites—these need to be checked, but sites such as Mugglenet, again for Potter fans <www.mugglenet.com>, provide playful and engaging opportunities to contribute and interact with others in a dynamic online community.

One example of a wonderful website that is well worth encouraging children to visit is that of the National Theatre in London. This site won two BAFTAs in 2005 and in November of that year was awarded the distinction of 'Best Website in the World', <www.stagework.org.uk>. It was the UK's nomination to a UN/UNESCO competition in which 168 countries took part (the award was presented by Kofi Anan). It includes filmed productions of children's books that have been dramatised, including an excellent presentation of Philip Pullman's trilogy *His Dark Materials*. The *Stagework* website is an online resource that allows users behind-the-scenes access to some of England's leading theatre productions, following the creative process from initial ideas to final performance. Using interactive video, the new content—called an 'interactive scene-builder'—engages users by enabling them to choose different scenes to 'build' their own mini-production of the play. It features lead actors discussing and rehearsing different ways of presenting a key scene from the production. Users can then choose which performance they prefer and create their own 'personalised' production.

There are endless opportunities and I think also philosophical benefits. Digital technologies, in bringing the rest of the developed world into touch with the individual, must surely bring moments—in play or otherwise—when students contemplate deeper issues—such as a sense of time that is relative rather than absolute (because when you are part of an online community with a partner school in another hemisphere, you soon learn that their night may be your day), and a sense of commitment to that larger world.

For this first chapter, adapt the 'Teaching in context' activities for use in the classroom. Consider levels and stages: what would you use for Foundation? How would you introduce the activity? What would you use for older classes?

ACTIVITY 1: VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF 'THE CHILD'

YEARS F–6 (ADAPT AS REQUIRED)

1. Choose five advertisements that feature children from as many different media as possible: television, magazines, newspapers, advertising.
2. In small groups, ask the children to tell each other about the features of the child—Clean? Dirty? Attractive? Good clothes? Shabby clothes? Naughty? Good? Lots of friends? Lonely? Siblings? Parents? House? Bedroom? Tidy? Untidy? Toys? School?
3. Make a group list. Discuss the reasons that the advertiser has chosen to depict the child in this way.
4. Each group reports back to the class.
5. The class compiles a list of representations of different images (in words or pictures) of the child and posts examples.

Summary

- National curricula across the world emphasise literature as a dynamic and fertile resource for the expanding practices and experiences of language and literacy in a digital age.
- Increasing access to digital texts has resulted in a shifting landscape of new ideas about image as text, about what language looks like, about reading and what constitutes literature.
- Story is at the heart of everyday life and children need to be encouraged to become discriminating and 'knowing' readers, speakers and listeners.
- Language is powerful and articulates who and what we are.
- The history of the book demonstrates that changes in its shape and form have taken place over the centuries. It is possible that the book may again change form (even radically), but it will survive.
- Literature is part of an artistic continuum and curricula and digital literacies expand that continuum in creative and exciting ways.

Extend your practice

1. The most important thing for you to do at this stage is to familiarise yourself with Curriculum documents, websites and resources. Develop the practice of checking regularly to gain maximum advantage from updates.
2. Although you may be teaching early childhood and/or primary education, and perhaps middle school, refer to your state education websites to check what is happening in the senior years of secondary school. The NSW Board of Studies website contains the 'prescriptions'—that is, the areas of study, electives and prescribed texts—for the Higher School Certificate 2015–20. <www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_hsc/pdf_doc/english-prescriptions-2015-20.pdf>
   This gives you an idea of where the continuum is going, and what your students will need to know. We are never teaching in a vacuum; we are teaching towards both presents and futures.
3. Remember, curricula are political, set by governments. Maintain awareness of current discussions concerning literacy and literature.
4. Read or reread either (or both) Philip Pullman's trilogy *His Dark Materials*, or any of the *Harry Potter* series.
   a. Read Chapters 3 and 4 of *E-Literature for children: Enhancing digital literacy learning* (Unsworth 2006).
   b. Go to the Pullman website sponsored by Random House: <www.randomhouse.com/features/pullman/index.html>.
   c. Go to the J.K. Rowling official website: <www.jkrowling.com>.
   d. Explore the sites thoroughly, noting what skills you need to do so.
   e. Reflect on ways in which you could introduce this material in the classroom. Consider how you will interface it with the reading of the book (or will you?), how you will manage the classroom. (Will you have all children doing the same thing at the same time, or will you stagger the activities? Will you have some group times and some full-class sharing times? What sorts of choices will you offer children? How are you going to ensure that all children have the computer skills they need? Which tools, e.g. VoiceThread, will you use?)
   f. How are you going to bring the learning experiences together—or do you need to?
   g. How does using this material develop different skills and open up different possibilities for the children? Or is this just transplanting traditional approaches to new media? If so, are there imaginative ways that you can enlarge classroom experience?
   h. See how many websites and story palaces you can find that would be suitable for using in your classrooms. Check available apps and e-books. Check age suitability and when you arrive in a school always check out the school's policy.

Further reading

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Zipes, J., L. Paul, L. Vallone, P. Hunt & G. Avery. 2005. *Norton Anthology of Children's Literature: The traditions in English.* W.W. Norton & Company, New York and London.

Useful websites

National English Curriculum: Framing Paper 2009. <www.acara.edu.au> Search 'framing paper'
University of Calgary, Canada: <www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown>
Kay Vandergrift at Rutgers State University, New Jersey: <www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/ChildrenLit/index.html>
International Board on Books for Young People: <www.ibby.org>
Children's Book Council of Australia: <www.cbc.org.au>
International Research Society for Children's Literature: check news of new publications and upcoming conferences: <www.irscl.ac.uk>

Other resources

Professional organisations such as the International Research Society for Children's Literature (IRSCL), the US-based Children's Literature Association (ChLA), and the Australasian Children's Literature Association for Research (ACLAR), provide forums for scholars from all over the world to share their expertise and research interests. Journals address, from a variety of perspectives, practical and theoretical approaches to historical and contemporary issues and ideas in the world of children's books.

Starting Out: Introducing the Book

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn:

- to understand the importance of having a language to introduce books in meaningful and stimulating ways
- to create positive preparation for the study of the more sophisticated texts of senior school and for beginning a lifelong engagement with literature
- to understand the interrelationships of theory and practice, and the need for a personal teaching repertoire that includes the application of concepts such as life-world, implied reader, subjectivity, focalisation and agency
- to understand the narrative pattern of the quest and the significance of intertextuality
- to describe time, space and the chronotope: the relationship between people and events on the one hand and time and place on the other
- to develop confidence and creativity in multiple ways of introducing books to children.

KEY TERMS

agency
chronotope
focalisation
implied reader
intertextuality
life-world
motif
subjectivity

VIGNETTE

Scene: A rabbit hole in Oxford, England, around 1864–65, during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837–1901)

Characters: Alice, a little girl of about ten

Background: Alice sees a white rabbit checking his watch, runs after it and falls down a rabbit hole. As she falls she thinks:

> 'I wonder if I shall fall right *through* the earth! How funny it'll seem to come out among the people that walk with their heads downward! The Antipathies, I think —' (she was rather glad there *was* no one listening, this time, as it didn't sound at all the right word) '— but I shall have to ask them what the name of the country is, you know. Please, Ma'am, is this New Zealand or Australia?'
>
> When she lands she follows the rabbit and comes to a tiny door. She drinks from a small bottle and shrinks but then can't reach the key which is on the table. She then eats a piece of cake and finds herself growing.
>
> 'Curiouser and curiouser!' cried Alice (she was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English); 'now I'm opening out like the largest telescope that ever was! Good-bye, feet!' (for when she looked down at her feet, they seemed to be almost out of sight, they were getting so far off). 'Oh, my poor little feet, I wonder who will put on your shoes and stockings for you now, dears? I'm sure *I* shan't be able! I shall be a great deal too far off to trouble myself about you: you must manage the best way you can; —but I must be kind to them,' thought Alice, 'or perhaps they won't walk the way I want to go! Let me see: I'll give them a new pair of boots every Christmas.'
>
> And she went on planning to herself how she would manage it. 'They must go by the carrier,' she thought; 'and how funny it'll seem, sending presents to one's own feet! And how odd the directions will look!
>
> ALICE'S RIGHT FOOT, ESQ.
> HEARTHRUG,
> NEAR THE FENDER,
> (WITH ALICE'S LOVE).
>
> Oh dear, what nonsense I'm talking!'

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland 1865, by Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson). <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/carroll/lewis/alice/chapter2.html>

What this story shows:

- Curiosity, which is both responsive and active, and opens up perceptions
- The subjectivity of perception—big and small is focalised in relation to self.

Introduction

This chapter extends the idea of literature into that of an artistic multimodal continuum of story and story practice, text and image. It suggests ways of introducing books within these contexts. It extrapolates into teaching practices one of the four main Curriculum goals: to 'develop interest and skills in inquiring into the aesthetic aspects of texts, and develop an informed appreciation of literature' (Australian Curriculum Version 6, p. 4). Theory informs everything that we do and provides a literary toolkit that teachers can adapt and use across all years. This chapter provides the foundation

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for introducing and talking about books. Some of this theory won't be taught, but it will support and strengthen what is taught: teachers must know much more than they will ever use in the classroom.

* * *

THE LITERARY TOOLKIT: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW WHEN INTRODUCING BOOKS

Carroll's *Alice* is an example of literary nonsense, which is usually not meaning-*less* but rather meaning-*full:* that is, it carries several meanings which don't appear to make sense, but in some sort of a way, perhaps as satire or parody or metaphor, do. It could be argued that much of children's literature is nonsense; consider:

> Do you like green eggs and ham?
> I do not like them, Sam-I-am.
> I do not like green eggs and ham. (Dr Seuss—Theodor Seuss Geisel)

And:

> and he sailed off through the night and day and in and out of weeks and almost over a year to where the wild things are. (Maurice Sendak)

Meanings here may seem ridiculous but when considered in context clearly reflect exactly what is also seen in the *Alice* excerpt: 'Sam-I-am' stresses self, and the ability to like or dislike subjectively; and time is elongated into weeks and almost a year because of Max's subjective perceptions of it.

We need a toolkit that includes understandings of subjectivity as part of the preparation for introducing books. The following concepts emerge from literary theory, which provides a rich repertoire to stimulate ideas.

GOALS: STARTING OFF ON THE ARTISTIC CONTINUUM

Most of all, we want to encourage children into becoming readers for life—through whatever media they choose. But also remember that these first steps on the literature continuum will eventually lead children to the later years of school, and that important final examination, currently in New South Wales the Higher School Certificate. English is a compulsory Stage 6 subject. There are of course various levels, but a quick scan of the texts to be studied 2015–20 reveals the following as some of the many options and requirements:

English (Standard) course: *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* (Ray Lawler), *The Shoe-Horn Sonata* (John Misto), *The Merchant of Venice* (Shakespeare), selected poems (A.B. Paterson, Henry Lawson, Douglas Stewart, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Wilfred Owen), selected prose fiction and non-fiction, selected speeches, films and short stories.

The Advanced course includes, among similar others: *Richard III, Hamlet, Julius Caesar, King Henry IV Part 1* (Shakespeare), *The Crucible* (Arthur Miller), *Mrs Dalloway* (Virginia Woolf), *Pride and Prejudice* (Jane Austen), poetry (Lord Tennyson, John Donne, Seamus Heaney, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, T.S Eliot, W.H. Auden, Judith Wright), films, fiction and non-fiction.

In Foundation and all through Infants and Primary years, teachers will want to create a receptive and knowledgeable environment for later encounters with the complexities of novels, poetry and plays such as these.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THEORY

Theory is often considered as abstract, remote from the real world, but the reality is that everything we do is based on some sort of theory. Nowhere is this more true than when we are operating in a relationship of *teacher* with others who are *learners.*

Two types of theory are relevant here: critical theory (i.e. theory about the narrative, shape and expression of literary ideas); and pedagogical theory (i.e. theory about the actual practice of teaching).

Teachers will enrich their own understandings and those of their students if they pursue understandings of theoretical concepts such as the following and test them in their own practice.

THE CONCEPT OF 'LIFE-WORLD'

Philosophers talk about the idea of '**life-world**'—the world in which we see ourselves as living. Life-world is fluid, changing; it is what we perceive. The life-world of children, and adults as well, is in a continuous state of what Montaigne called *becoming.* It is never complete; it is always growing, shifting, transforming.

LIFE-WORLD: *The world in which we see ourselves as living, or the fictional world that is created as part of a text.*

Jürgen Habermas, a European philosopher, argues that life-world is 'the horizon-forming context of processes of reaching understanding' (1981, p. 135). This is an important idea for teachers—what are the contextual horizons of the children in our classrooms? Come to that, what are our own horizons (background knowledges with which we understand the world; the boundaries within which we think)?

Our task as teachers is to push out horizons, to push out boundaries, to open up possibilities of new facets and new dimensions in the child's process of becoming.

Understandings are enhanced when we think about the theory of 'life-world' as a state of *becomingness*—as an 'horizon-forming context'.

VYGOTSKY: LEARNING IS DIALOGIC, LIKE A CONVERSATION

Lev Semionovich Vygotsky (1896–1934) was a Russian psychologist who was interested in the symbolic processes of language, and how word meanings change from emotive to concrete to abstract. He believed that higher cognitive processes are socially developed and that learning is dialogic, like a conversation. There is 'social speech' (speaking with others) and 'inner speech' (speaking within self); and there is 'talk-thinking' (talking what you think to others) and 'thought-thinking' (talking what you think to self).

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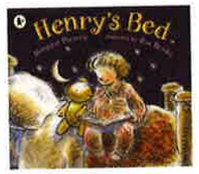
Consider the picturebook *Henry's Bed*, by Margaret Perversi and Ron Brooks (1997), which tells the story of a little boy called Henry who is or has been (depending on your reading) scared to go to bed alone. Those words, however, are never actually said; readers pick them up in the interaction between words and pictures and in the way that interaction implies inner and outer voices, talk-thinking and thought-thinking.



Henry is going to sleep in his own bed tonight.

Oh yes!

Whose voice is this? It could be the parent's voice, or the parents' voices. It could be the narrator's voice. It could be two voices, a speaker and a respondent ('Oh yes!')—parent and parent, or parent and Henry, or narrator and parent, or Henry and parent. Or, as one of my students said, it could be Henry's voice, claiming growth and independence. And it could be, as another student said, a deeply ironic conversation.

Whoever's voice it is, it is clear that underneath the speaking (or behind it or above it) runs a whole dialogue of other voices and preceding conversations: the conversation recorded in this text has happened before. Reading between the lines, listening to the talk-thinking and the thought-thinking, helps us to hear the 'inner speech' of both Henry and his parents.

So, even by just touching on the theoretical ideas of Vygotsky, we suddenly have a new way of seeing *Henry's Bed* and a new way of talking about it. And that gives an added dimension to teaching. Not that we are going to teach children about Vygotsky, any more than we teach them about Piaget. But we can use these enhanced theoretical understandings to inform what we actually do in the classroom, in our daily practices. As Professor Snape tells Harry Potter in the fifth book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), 'The mind is a complex and many-layered thing' (p. 469).

Literature theory helps us to *teach* as well as helping us to teach literature, and promotes creative ways of encouraging children into literate practices. Knowing more about golf and how the various types of clubs work helps a player choose the best club to play the stroke. Fans who follow the lives of movie stars or are interested in the art of the cinema appreciate films more because of what they know goes on behind the scenes. An understanding of postmodern shifts in time and space (past and present mixed up together) help us better to understand the phantasmic Baz Luhrmann movie extravaganza of *Moulin Rouge*.

The best children's books have many layers. In *Henry's Bed*, for example, there is a layer of:

- simple narrative (telling the story)
- parent frustration (the story behind the monologue or dialogue)
- childhood fears (implicit as what Vygotsky calls 'inner speech')
- independence and growth.

When the layers are peeled back further there is a rich seam expressing the human fear of change and loneliness; peel them back again, and there, beneath everything, is a gentle context that helps to put it all into perspective—the world of nature where everyone has a special place. We could even peel it back again and find a deep layer representing the cycle of life—day following night, season following season, even arguably death following birth.

The best children's books have many layers

So, in the simple narrative of this picturebook, *Henry's Bed*, we can recognise:

- Dialogic conversation: narrating voice
- responding voices
- implicit voices
- inner voices.

Books are mini-worlds, microcosms of larger cultures glimpsed around the edges. They implicitly and explicitly reflect a great deal about the world in which they are written and they are responded to out of the world in which they are read. They reveal:

- the fictive world of the text (the world of the book)
- the fictive world that the text 'projects beyond itself' (Ricoeur 1985, p. 100) and allows readers to glimpse on the horizon of the text—the world implied beyond the text
- the world of the author (customs, values and attitudes, ideologies and agendas, beliefs and disbeliefs, innocences, knowledges)
- the reader's own life-world as it intersects in whatever way (e.g. identification, resistance, interrogation, rejection) with the text.

ROBINSON CRUSOE AND REFLECTION OF LIFE-WORLD

Note that fictive life-world is always culturally encoded, and will similarly be decoded according to sociocultural context. A telling example of this is *Robinson Crusoe*. When Defoe wrote this text in 1719, it reflected, implicitly and explicitly, the ideas of his life-world. It was a time of empire, of colonisation, of the desire to 'civilise' native peoples. When Crusoe names the native who has saved his life according to the day on which he found him, and teaches him 'to say Master, and then let him know that was to be my name', he is expressing the ideals and cultural assumptions of his time. When we read these words today, however, we read them within the cultural values of our own life-world, and they jar us with their autocratic imperialism.

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS AND LIFE-WORLD

The Wind in the Willows (1908) by Kenneth Grahame is another example. It has been criticised for its treatment of women, although the women who are there do have some agency. More interesting is the uprising in the last chapters against Toad of Toad Hall. Again, when this was written in 1908 it reflected the social attitudes of its time. When we read it today, from the point of view of our own social attitudes, we are aware of feeling that Toad was a dreadful landlord, that Badger was very class-conscious, and that the stoats and weasels had a strong case.

THE IMPLIED READER

In children's literature, ideas of life-world, time and space all relate to the fact that children's books are written for children or, in Wall's (1991, p. 9) words, *to* children. Children's literature

is not here defined in terms of its borders, or in relation to or opposition to the corpus of 'adult' literature (see e.g. Saxby 1997, pp. 18–22; Stoodt et al. 1996, pp. 4–5), because the philosophical conceptualisation in which Part 3 of this book is grounded is that this literature is part of an artistic continuum.

Nonetheless, children's literature writers compose their texts with an implicit understanding that the person reading it will be a child. This child for whom the text is written is called the **implied reader**.

IMPLIED READER: *The person for whom a text appears to be written. Writers of children's literature compose their texts with the implicit knowledge that the person reading it will be a child.*

The 'implied reader' is a term coined by Wolfgang Iser (1926–) and is used by literary theorists to describe the reader implied by the text. There will always be a tension between the real reader—real child, adult, critic, teacher, parent—and the position of reader set up within the narrative structure by the author.

Umberto Eco (1932–) uses the term 'model reader' to describe the reader implied by the text.

Sometimes texts have a 'narratee', someone within the text to whom the story is being told. *Winnie the Pooh* is a good example of this—the story is being told to Christopher Robin, who is the narratee.

Texts make it clear who their implied reader is, in children's books usually by the interior and exterior formats and by the level of language. The implied reader relates back to ideas about the construct of the child and of childhood, because authors will consciously or unconsciously (or both) write for the child their culture has constructed.

SUBJECTIVITY AND THE DEVELOPING SENSE OF SELF

Small children live in a world that is essentially solipsistic—centred on 'me'. Children's books tell stories about others but they also help to articulate a developing sense of self in relation to others, of the self as the intimate place of consciousness and meaning. As well as this, they allow opportunities to test other selves and other ways of being.

SUBJECTIVITY: *Originally a psychoanalytical term: the developing knowledge of a sense of self.*

Subjectivity pertains to a sense of 'I'ness in a world of others who are also 'I's

In literary theory the sense of self as a 'site of consciousness and meaning' (Webster 1990, p. 80) is called **subjectivity**. This site of consciousness is distinct and separate from the surrounding life-world. It is formed in relationship to the others in that life-world (i.e. in intersubjective relationships). It is constructed out of what the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin calls 'dialogic' encounters with those others. Bakhtin's term is specific but it is being used here in the general sense of a dialogue, a conversation, an intersubjective expression of relationship between a self and an other, or others.

Subjectivity is a psychoanalytical term that draws attention to the significance of this sense of self, of being an 'I' who is separate and individual from all the other 'I's in the world. As teachers, we have the opportunity to encourage children to read books offering a diversity of other, fictional subjectivities.

Literature gives privileged access to what its characters are feeling and thinking and how they define themselves as different from others. The representation of subjectivity—the sense of identity and individual being—is a powerful dynamic. In children's literature

the representation of subjectivity is part of deep structure. *Where the Wild Things Are* is about Max and the clash between his inner and outer life-worlds.

The subjectivity of child readers, their sense of identity and sense of self, are in a continual state of becoming. Awareness of individual identity is formed in relationships with others, with sociocultural ideologies and with cultural ideas and attitudes. These relationships and interactions include what is read, what is talked about, what is watched on television, what happens around the family dinner table.

Subjectivity is the construction of the self as someone in relation to other someones; it is a composition of the 'I' in a world of other 'I's, and a performativity of identity, community and belonging. Space becomes part of that 'internalisation of external processes' which Graeme Turner notes as constructing the view of individual self theorised as 'subjectivity' (1986, p. 88).

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

To see different representations of subjectivity, and to demonstrate this to older students, read the first pages of a chapter of *David Copperfield* (1849–50) by Charles Dickens and then read the early chapters of *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) by J.D. Salinger. Think about the different implied readers and the different representations of subjectivity.

Go to the 'Book of the Year' section of the website of the Children's Book Council of Australia <http://cbca.org.au/awards.htm>.

Check out the award winners and the Picturebook shortlist (remembering that the latter may contain books for older readers). These books will be readily available in libraries and bookshops.

Consider their representation of subjectivity. How is this shown?

FOCALISATION AND AGENCY

How is subjectivity represented? If we consider both *Alice* and *Where the Wild Things Are*, it is clear that it is represented through focalisation and the idea of agency.

FOCALISATION: *The positioning of readers and viewers to see and hear the events of the narrative and the thoughts and ideas of the characters.*

Focalisation pertains to the way we see things and the way we hear things. The author chooses to write from the perspectives and ideas of a particular character, or sometimes from the more removed position of omniscient (all-knowing) narrator. The illustrator shows us how things appear from a particular angle.

Where the Wild Things Are is focalised through Max—we see what he sees, what his rich imagination conceives. It is a type of unreal 'real'. At beginning and end there is a different, external focalisation.

Understanding focalisation helps us to be aware of where the verbal text is positioning its reader. Understanding how images are focalised (and read) is part of visual literacy. Such understandings give readers **agency**; that is, the knowledge and power to accept, resist or reject such positioning. The key questions to ask about focalisation are:

- Whose eyes are we being encouraged to see with?
- Whose ears are we being encouraged to hear with?

AGENCY: *Reader agency refers to the capacity of readers to recognise where and how a verbal or visual text is positioning them (to see, hear, feel or think), and to accept, question, resist or reject such positioning.*

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Focalisation alerts us to the significance of point of view and perspective. Perspective relates to frameworks of seeing. Point of view has come to mean attitudes and opinions, but it can also mean literally the point from which something is seen or viewed. Where we stand is likely to influence what and how we see.

Focalisation gives us a tool to interpret literary narrative in an objective way. *All Those Secrets of the World* (Yolan & Baker 1991) is overtly about literal perspective: 'When you are far away, everything is smaller'). But it is the implicit focalisation that is much more revealing. This text purports to be the focalisation of a child: 'I was four when my father went off to war.' The scene of her father's departure is overtly seen through her eyes: 'But everyone had a good time, except Mama, who cried all the way home…'

Covertly, this is a retrospective, a real-life adult focalisation of a significant time and a significant learning experience of childhood. The dedications in the peritext (the writing around the actual pages of story—explanations, publishers' blurbs, etc.) make it clear that 'Janie' is Jane, the writer. We are really not seeing through little Janie's eyes; we are seeing through the eyes of the grown woman, who is nostalgic, sad, and knowing. It is precisely this focalisation, and the clever illustrations that capture this remembered childhood so well, that give this book its charm. The focalisation of the illustrations—what we see—is always from a grown perspective; the grown-up is looking back at the child and the childtime. The only moment when we look in any way through the child's eyes is the mirror scene. The rest of the time we view at a distance—and of course it is just this sense of distance that situates the text in its clearly delineated time-space.

The differing focalisations in *The Great Bear* (Gleeson & Greder) are strongly evocative of well-known paintings by famous artists. The faces in the crowd (focalised by the bear) remind us of the works of the Flemish painter Pieter Bruegel; the opening illustrations of distant landscapes evoke van Gogh's *Black Crows over Wheat Field*. (This particular association becomes more complex when we note that it was to these wheat fields, in Auvers near Paris, that on 27 July 1890 van Gogh took a borrowed revolver and shot himself, dying two days later.)

Teachers may like to show these pictures to their class and ask students to comment on similarities and differences. What effect does knowledge of these artistic relationships have on our reading of the book?

THE PATTERN OF NARRATIVE: THE IDEA OF THE QUEST AND THE HOME-AWAY-HOME STORY, AND INTERTEXTUALITY

The archetypal story of all literature is the story of the quest, of the odyssey, of the voyage out and the coming back in, with equilibrium usually restored, and with growth—physical, emotional, spiritual—having taken place. This is the home-away-home pattern so familiar in children's books.

Quests can be external, like Peter Rabbit venturing into Mr McGregor's garden, or they can be internal, like *You and Me, Murrawee* (Hashmi & Marshall), which among other things is a quest for identity, for understanding of others, for reconciling shared space, and perhaps for a sense of nationality.

INTERTEXTUALITY

Intertextuality refers to intercourse between texts. The traditional meaning of 'intercourse' is conversation and interaction—but the common sexual meaning that most of you will read there is not unhelpful.

INTERTEXTUALITY: *Meaningful relationships and connections, overt and covert, that reach across, between and beyond texts.*

Intertextual relationships, overt or covert, are intimate relationships that reach across, between and beyond texts. Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park* overtly reaches across to his earlier text, *A Walk in the Park*, setting up connections that influence our reading of the later text. Hill and Barrett's *Beware, Beware* reaches overtly into the mixed spaces between fairytales and cautionary tales, and covertly into the spaces between fairytales and adolescent 'wild side' literature. Shaun Tan's illustration of the tree in Gary Crew's *Memorial* reaches *beyond* this book into the art world, to the famous lithograph *The Cry* by the Norwegian artist Edward Munch. It also taps into, as part of textual understory, Munch's view of human beings as tormented, isolated, without agency.

When one text simply refers to another text, or even talks about it, it is making *allusions* or *references* to that text—which as we have seen does not have to be a literary text but can be, for example, a media text or a painting. This is not necessarily intertextuality, any more than saying someone's name necessarily means a close relationship. In a reference and allusion, the text being referred or alluded to remains more or less untouched, and all the meaning clearly stays in the text being read.

Intertextuality goes further than this. It touches. It excites and provokes. It gives new significance to reader relationships with the old text and old significances to reader relationships with the new text. These relationships make a sort of collided meaning that impacts on both. For instance, Perrault's *Cinderella* assumes a greater significance when we note the countless intertextual encounters it has had (particularly in feminist retellings); it gathers to a new meaning beyond that of its original and beyond the bare bones of the new retelling. The animated film *Robots* (2005) depends for a large part of its impact on its precocious claims of relationship with *The Wizard of Oz*.

Intertextuality pertains to the idea of prior knowledge, to cultural literacy and to narrative literacy

Intertextuality is also significant to educators for how it interacts with learning theory. Learning theorists know that *prior knowledge*—knowing something beforehand about what is going to be taught—contributes significantly to the success of the subsequent teaching or learning experience. Intertextuality depends on and accesses prior knowledge. There is a sense of delight in recognition that encourages receptivity. Intertextuality is a narrative structure that feeds on this delight of recognition. This is not to say that it always simply corroborates prior knowledge; rather, it uses prior knowledge as a springboard to a new idea or application—extending, interrogating or even resisting the old.

In another way, then, principles of intertextuality intersect with learning theory. Intertextuality provokes reinterpretations; it engages with ideas of altered understandings—what Saljo described as comprehending the world by reinterpreting existing knowledge (quoted in Marton et al. 1979). Feminist retellings of fairytales have changed our understandings of the representation of gender roles and gender-specific behaviours and caused us to reinterpret and question the fairytale as a cultural paradigm.

Another example of intertextuality can be seen in Pat Torres's *Jalygurr: Aussie Animal Rhymes* (1988). Consider this short poem, 'Gumbun, The Mangrove Man':

Gumbun, Gumbun,
Look out, look out,
It's the Gumbun man,
Run, run as fast as you can.

The well-known refrain of the nursery story 'The Gingerbread Man' is an obvious intertext, and Torres has told me that she deliberately sought a familiar pattern so that it would make the rhyme more accessible to non-Aboriginal children. This is a powerful intertext for another reason, however. It interacts with other aspects of the Gingerbread Man story—his cheekiness, his cockiness and his ultimate disaster—and inflates the Gumbun with something of the same meaning. In other words, Gumbun looks scary but it's a fun scariness—don't worry too much, he won't get you. Not only that, but when children then revisit the Gingerbread Man story, they will see a little bit of Gumbun the Mangrove Man there as well.

Intertextuality can pertain to story and narrative patterns, to events and incidents, to character and character relationships. It can consist of a single deep connection at one point of a text or of a string of **motifs** and *leitmotifs* that configure the whole text.

MOTIF: *A subtle symbol or idea (verbal or visual) threading its way through a text, and showing here and there*

- Motif: repeated image or images in a text. Imagine a gold thread running through a jumper, only showing in parts here and there but clearly visible in certain places and contributing to the overall design.
- Leitmotif: a strongly recurring motif (originally used in Wagner's operas).

There are many, many texts that are wholly constructed around intertextual relationships: *The Frog Prince Continued* (Scieszka & Johnson 1991) (you'll never read *The Frog Prince* again in the same way!), *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (Scieszka & Smith 1992), *Yours Truly Goldilocks* (Ada & Tryon 1998), *Where's Mum?* (Gleeson & Smith 1992), *Each Peach Pear Plum* (Ahlberg 1978) and so on. However, it is a more subtle text that reveals this very clearly.

Beware, Beware (Hill & Barrett 1993) is an intense, intriguing picturebook. It begins with a kitchen scene that contains all the familiar elements of cosiness and security: a warm kitchen with a bright fire, spicy smells and the sound of a kettle singing on the hearth. All of these things are comfortable symbols of home and belonging: kitchen, warmth, cooking, kettle, fire. The illustrations at first are equally comfortable. It is the human figures that are disconcerting, and that continue to disconcert; they are very separate from each other (except on the cover). However, it is the intertextuality that is of great interest here: the child venturing out by herself despite warnings (Peter Rabbit, etc.), being lost, at first without fear and then with an ever-increasing sense of terror as the text crowds with intertextual associations of fairytales and stories about all the bad things that can happen in woods.

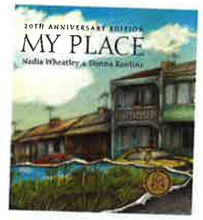
Beware, Beware accumulates layers of meaning and suspense through intertextual associations:

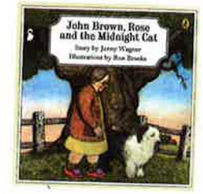
Trolls Goblins
Elves Sprites
Mysterious lights
Fingers beckon
Eyes stare

The list continues. Placing these together has a cumulative effect that strengthens each of the individual intertexts and makes the 'woods' subsequently more potent. So the 'meaning' has moved from within each separate intertext to somewhere between, across and beyond them all. Separate stories are linked and at each point of connection narrative and thematic significance is stimulated and accumulated.

PLACE AS PART OF IDENTITY

Place is part of identity





Perceptions of place also tend to function, to adapt an idea of John Shotter, as 'extensions of ourselves'. Shotter points out the 'complex relation between people's identities and their "hook-up" to their surroundings' (1993, pp. 21, 35).

This is particularly true of the world of children's literature. Think of *Anne of Green Gables*, for example. Place—often a secret place, as in *The Secret Garden* or *Bridge to Terabithia*—becomes a part of growth and psychological development. *My Place* (Wheatley & Rawlins 1987) is an obvious example. The place may be a house, a neighbourhood, a room, a special hiding place, even a bed.

John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat (Wagner & Brooks 1977) is a story about place, as is *The Fisherman and the Theefyspray* (Jennings & Tanner 1994), and *Window* (Baker 1991). *You and Me, Murrawee* (Hashmi & Marshall 1998) is a story of intersecting times—two little girls who live 200 years apart share a common space.

PLACE AS SUBJECTIVE SPACE

'Place' tends to be a more concrete and passive term; 'space' is active and abstract, and opens up more readily to metaphor. Space is place perceived—made subjective, part of the inner as well as the outer world. Think about the common contemporary expression 'having my own space'. *Do Not Go Around the Edges* (Utemorrah & Torres 1990) is about place, but it is much more accurately described as being about space—*perceptions* of place, perceptions of belonging and belongingness. Space is a richer term.

Many of the spaces in children's books are the spaces of the mind—think of *Come Away from the Water, Shirley* (Burningham 1977) and *Drac and the Gremlin* (Baillie & Tanner 1991). *The Great Bear* (Gleeson & Greder 1999) is about space—it is a folktale, a sort of nowhere/

everywhere space, nowhere/everywhere time. In this book, space opens up into cosmic space. Douglas Wood's *A Quiet Place* (2002) plays with imaginative spaces and overtly celebrates inner space:

> You could discover the very best quiet place of all—
> the one that's always there, no matter
> where you go or where you stay—
> the one inside you.

A film that (controversially) represents intensely subjective space within a horrific historical chronotope (a Jewish experience in Italy during World War II) is the 1999 Oscar-winner *Life is Beautiful*. Consider this in relation to the exterior presentation of war in *Rose Blanche* (Gallaz & Innocenti 1985), by the illustrator Roberto Innocenti.

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

1. Choose three children's books. Consider the implied reader of each, giving your reasons.
2. Choose one picturebook. Reflect on all the things that you learn about the world of the text—the fictive world. Which ones do you learn 'accidentally'? Which ones do you think you were supposed to learn?

TIME AND SPACE: THE IDEA OF THE CHRONOTOPE

CHRONOTOPE: *'Time-place'. A concept used in literary theory to describe how time and space are represented in relation to people and events.*

Life-world doesn't just happen in a place, it happens in a particular place at a particular time. The **chronotope**, a term introduced into literature by Bakhtin (*chronos*, time—as in 'chronicle', 'chronometer', 'chronological'; *topos*, place—see 'topography'), refers to the relationship between people and events on the one hand, and time and space on the other. In Bakhtin's words, the chronotope is 'the organising centre for the fundamental narrative events of the novel' (1981, p. 250).

Time and space are not separate but linked

The chronotope shifts critical discussion beyond traditional ideas of 'setting' and 'place' and 'location' in three main ways:

a. It expands understandings of the centrality of time and place in the organisation of narrative.

b. It reformulates the notion of objective place into subjective space; that is, place and time perceived, experienced or described from a particular point of view, or from multiple points of view.

c. It explicitly recognises that the representation of such perceptions, being subjective, are ideological and value-laden, reflecting personal and sociocultural ideas, attitudes and experiences.

Some texts, such as *My Place* (Wheatley & Rawlins 1987), overtly use their chronotope as a structural principle.

It is important to note that the chronotope does not necessarily present time and space in 'equal' quantities; they may be combined with many differing emphases. J.K. Rowling has chosen to organise her *Harry Potter* books with the *space* element (representations of suburbs, attitudes and language of an ironically stereotypical English social class) clearly defined from the first few lines but with the *time* element vague.

THE VISUAL CHRONOTOPE

Developing the concept of a *visual chronotope* (see Johnston 2001a, pp. 400–13; also Johnston 2001b, 2002a) expands on Bakhtin's ideas to refer to the representation of time-space in picturebook illustration. It describes the visual depiction of the relationship of people and events to time and space. This is a particularly helpful way of considering the interaction between verbal and visual text in picturebooks.

Visual markers used to illustrate the relationship of people and events to time and space are easily identified and clearly reflect cultural attitudes. For example, a fishing basket represents the *space* of a fisherman; an empty basket may represent a specific *time* of failure, but in *The Fisherman and the Theefyspray* (Jennings & Tanner) it is clearly intended to represent a specific time of success and a particular social attitude to the environment.

Verbal chronotopes may match *visual* chronotopes and express a similar organisation of time and space in a text, but they may also be quite different, as in Burningham's *Come Away from the Water, Shirley*, and Baillie and Tanner's *Drac and the Gremlin*. The last illustration of Jeannie Baker's *Where the Forest Meets the Sea* projects a visual dimension of *future* into the *present* moment of verbal text, creating a chronotopical emphasis on what a different *time* may bring to the *spaces* of a threatened environment.

Clocks represent time in a close, specific sense, and the natural cycle of the day represents time in a more general, distanced sense. We could argue that representations of time-spaces in urban life tend to be hectic and hassled (think of Gleeson and Smith's *Where's Mum?*), whereas those of rural life tend to be rhythmic and gentle (think of Wagner and Brooks' *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat*, which uses both a clock and the natural cycle of the day as time markers).

The chronotope is a particularly useful term because it emphasises the connectedness of time and place, and gives a way of understanding how words and pictures may be in synch or may be deliberately out of synch with each other, which of course influences meaning.

YOUR STUDENTS' JOURNEY

BEFORE YOU START

The most important thing for you as a teacher before any teaching and learning activity is to determine what your desired outcomes are. Every short-term goal should feed into a long-term goal. This is why you really need to know the Curriculum.

Literature does not belong only in the English class. Nor is literature in the classroom designed purely for endless analysis of its parts, or repetitive questions on each chapter or act or verse. That is not what the Curriculum means about 'distinctively literary approaches'. When we admire and respect something, finding out how it works can be an edifying and exciting exercise. But before pulling something apart, an appreciation is required of what it actually looks like whole, otherwise the coherence of its essential form may be lost, or the original wholeness may not be recognised or enjoyed.

A GUIDE TO INTRODUCING BOOKS IN PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

Particularly in early childhood, it is important to know that every class is different, and there will be (at first) a bewildering range of knowledge, awareness and skills. Some children will have had the experience of books at home; others will never have handled one, and may have no idea that print contains meaning.

Great sensitivity is needed as the aim is to encourage interest and participation. Make sure that very early on you have time with each child, to gauge their needs and abilities and to provide them with a sense of safety.

The ideas listed here can be adapted to work on a personal level for a teacher working with one child individually or with a small group, or on a whole-class level as part of a Shared Reading experience.

Reading together in creative ways helps create a class consciousness that is supportive and enriching

The aim is to inspire and develop interest, create attention and a sense of anticipation, and develop the capacities and self-perceptions of children so that they will become *knowing readers.* This whole-class activity should feel like an informal discussion and collaborative sharing of ideas, as a lead-up to the fun, enquiry and thought provocation of the story.

PREPARATION

There will be some young children who have had little or no experience of books. They may not understand what letters and words are. Make sure you spend some time with each of those children individually before the first communal class story. Let them handle books. Show them the Western practice of reading from front to back, left to right. If they are used to a different practice, acknowledge that and perhaps show them a book such as Jeannie Baker's *Mirror*, which cleverly uses both systems. Talk *with* them not *to* them—'that's a funny hat, isn't it?' or "I like those flowers there', or 'I wonder what is going to happen.' Don't seek answers, just let them respond as they are comfortable.

On the other hand, some children will be very familiar with books. Give them the run of the class library, or if you haven't got one, collect a bundle of books from the school library while you are working with those less familiar. Encourage reading groups and buddies. Encourage chat.

Try to create the idea of choice and choose books together.

Note that you won't use all of these suggestions in any one session. These are just prompts to stimulate your own ideas. Note also that any one of these could lead to many interesting follow-up activities.

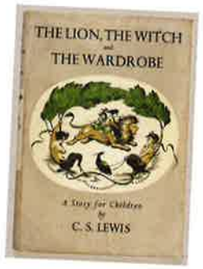
COVER

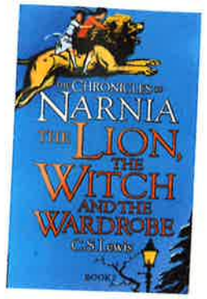
Hold the book up—or if you're sitting on the floor with a small enough group, lay it down so that all can see. Consider the book cover with the children. With very young children point to the words as you say the name. Find the name of the author and illustrator—*ponder aloud* the role of each one.

Encourage comments appropriate to age: Seek answers to the following questions but not in an interrogative way: rather, keep it informal and as if you are chatting. Provoke responses rather than ask for them. Tell me what you notice. What do the covers of the books lead us to expect? What do the size and shape of the book tell you? I wonder who the book is written for? What makes us think that?

For older classes, can you guess what type of book, what genre? Think about words (title and name of author and illustrator), fonts, shape of book, colours, size of letters, use of space, artwork (see Chapter 30).

Why do some books have different covers? Talk about editions—what they mean (the book was/is popular) and how they can reflect different times. A web search of covers of *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe,* for example, since first publication in 1950, gives pictures of difference (clothes, ideas of children, focus on different events or characters). This could be followed up later with computer searches of other books and covers, and if applicable, film posters.





Look at the endpapers. Name them but don't necessarily 'teach' them. Are they the same front and back? If not, why not? What story do the endpapers tell? (Check out *The Great Bear,* by Greder and Gleeson).

Consider the dedication if any and publishing information. Sometimes the latter is designed in such a way as to add to the design of the story. If so, why and how? (Think about how the publishing information has been designed in *Fox*, by Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks.)

Note that in literary theory all the non-story parts of the book are known as what Genette (1980) calls the *peritext*: title page, dedications, printing advice, publisher's blurb, websites and so on. You probably won't teach this but it helps you to be able to give it a name.

Are there any author notes? If so, what is their purpose? Is the language of these notes at the same level as the language of the story? To whom are they addressed? What does this tell you about who the book might be for? For example, in books such as *Where the Forest Meets the Sea* and *The Story of Rosy Dock*, Jeannie Baker writes a special afterword, describing how she created her artwork and explaining the reality of the environmental problem at the heart of her story. These notes are written in small print and often in a more scientific descriptive language than the language of the story; they are clearly designed to give authenticity to her creative work and her themes. Such notes may also be a justification

for the author's work and concerns, and/or offer more detailed information to teacher and parent readership.

Can or can't you judge a book by its cover? Why, or why not? Consider other examples.

TITLE

What do the words reveal about what sort of book this might be? (For older groups, discuss the idea of genre). Do you know any books with similar titles? Which words are similar? Does it use *alliteration* (repetition of the beginning letter of each word, as in *Each Peach Pear Plum*—Ahlberg 1989—or *Summery Saturday Morning*—Mahy 1999)? What effect does this have? Does it use *assonance* (repetition of the vowel sound, as in Browne's *Willy's Pictures* or Herrick's *The Simple Gift* or Moriarty's *Feeling Sorry for Celia* or Spence's *Lillypilly Hill*? How does this contribute to the sound of the title?)

After reading the book, you may like to toss around ideas for other titles that could have been used.

AUTHOR AND/OR ILLUSTRATOR

In children's literature, the author is alive and well. Children love to meet authors and illustrators.

Is his or her name familiar? Do you know any other books written or illustrated by them? Which ones? Do you think this one may be the same? Why or why not? Does it remind you of any other book? Why?

Where do you think this story is set? How can you tell? Is place important or could the story happen anywhere?

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

REFLECTION ON THE IDEA OF 'THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR'

Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes, in announcing the 'death of the author', were signalling the idea of the poststructuralists that the author was not the centre and principal organiser of the meaning of the text.

Poststructuralism is a theory of literature that seeks to interrogate any idea of absolute 'meanings' or 'truth' within a text, claiming that all underlying assumptions, ideas and concepts in a literary text are open to valid questioning. In a nutshell, the poststructuralists believe that no text can mean what it seems to say, and that there are gaps and inconsistencies in all texts.

Reader response theory has grown out of poststructuralist thought. It proposes the idea that these gaps allow readers of the text to negotiate and create their own meanings (see Johnston 2011).

Children need the skills that will allow them to become autonomous readers and resist being manipulated into a particular reader position. Sometimes understanding the author's background helps to achieve this. And despite theories of the 'death of the author', the author is definitely not dead in relation to children and children's books. Children are interested in authors: books seem to become more meaningful for them when they talk with their creators and discover; for example, that the Henry of *Henry's Bed* is a real-life boy, the son of the writer and illustrator (Perversi & Brooks 1997). This is

when it is helpful to remember that literature is of both reading and writing. The author does not have to be 'dead' nor do critically astute readers have to be without agency.

THE STORY

This is the heart of the matter. If you are reading aloud, read it with everything you've got!

With younger classes, do voices, do actions. Be careful not to interrupt the flow of the story with too many (if any) questions. Rather, make comments, ask yourself questions as you turn the page, murmur comments and *ponder* (but audibly of course!).

You may like to explain a difficult word briefly but not as a big production—try to make it clear almost in passing. Give clues by the way you say it, or act it. Give cues for the children to do their own discoveries, their own working out of meanings. Give space for their own imaginative capacities to fill in the gaps.

Take your time and give them time: don't rush. If it is a picturebook, turn pages gently, slowly. Make sure everyone can see the illustrations.

Don't underestimate the power of reading aloud to classes who may be independent readers. And don't be afraid to be creative, and even, if it feels necessary, take liberties with the text. I once had to teach an only slightly abridged *Kidnapped* to a class for whom it was definitely not a suitable text. I read some of it with them in my version of a Scottish accent and then worked with them to create radio play scripts with the chapters that had the most action. Those in charge of sound effects had to read through and work out what sounds were important and how they would make them, and script them. Those in charge of music had to choose Scottish songs with appropriate words, and read the words to the class and discuss which verses they would use and why. And of course we had great fun making treasure maps and staining them with tea to make them look old.

I don't like the practice of sharing reading aloud around a class—children reading page by page or whatever. It is off-putting to the poorer readers and boring for the better ones. It inhibits the magic of the story and doesn't let language do what it is meant to do—enchant into a different place and into a reality that is not our own. If you want the children to read aloud, turn a suitable part of the book into a dramatic choral script and do it communally. Don't make them sit—let them move. That way the children who are most challenged are able to read beforehand, hear the words as others talk about them, and read along with other voices.

Don't underestimate the power of reading aloud to very proficient readers. Listening well is a literate and imaginative practice.

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

All the Activities in Part 3 suggest diverse ways of learning about how books work: their story and narrative structures; their representation of characters; their themes; their construction of setting and place (time-space); their relationships to other books; their worldviews.

ROSEMARY ROSS JOHNSTON

So, in discussing narratives, we can think about such questions as:

- At what point in the narrative does the story start? In the beginning of the action (*Zoo*), in the middle of the action (*Hello Baby*), before the action ('Once upon a time there was a little girl who lived in a forest…'), after the action (*Memorial*)? What effect does this have? How does this affect language?
- Who tells the story? An 'outside' narrator, or a person involved in the action? If the latter, is it a main character or a minor character? What effect does this have? What are the benefits of telling a story this way? What are the limitations? How does this affect the work the reader has to do?
- What are the most significant events in the narrative? What is the most important event? Is this the climax? How does the story finish (resolution and denouement)?
- Is the ending happy or sad? Why or why not? Is it ambiguous? Does it depend on whose point of view you take? Why? Whose point of view do *you* take?
- How do you know where and when the story takes place? What clues do the writers/illustrators give to setting? Do time and place matter in this story? Why or why not?
- Who are the most important characters in the story? Why are they important? (Because of who they are? Because of what they do? Because of what they say?) Who do you think is the main character (protagonist)? Why? (Think about *Zoo*—Browne 1992.)
- How does the author let us find out about the characters? Through what the characters say? Through what the characters do? Through what others say about them? Through what the author tells us? If so, do you agree with what the author tells us? In the case of a first person narrator, do you agree with what the character says (their focalisation)? Do you think the author means us to agree or disagree? (Again, consider *Zoo*.)
- How do characters and events and time and place come together?
- Do you think this story has more than one layer? What are some of the other layers? How do they relate to the story? How are you able to discern these layers? (Through the events of the narrative, through a character or characters, through the time and/or place of the action, through intertextual associations?) Do these layers add to the impact of the story; if so, how and why?
- Does this story connect in some way to others you have read? In what way is it similar? In what way is it different?
- If you had to design a multimedia presentation for this story, what would it be? Remember, books not only inspire toys and games and films and DVDs, but they may have associated block sets, CDs, playset boxes, audio, costumes, t-shirts, pop-up paper craft and engineering, story palaces, posters and props.

These are only suggestions and there are many more questions and comments that can provoke ideas. Create a collaborative classroom where ideas are freely shared.

ACTIVITY 2: INTEGRATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

Theory is about understanding—it 'stands under' what we do. It gives us the language to explain what is happening in texts and gives us the tools to teach effectively.

YEARS F–2

1. Read *Come Away from the Water, Shirley* to the class. Perhaps you could set the scene by having a beach ball and a picture of a pirate ship. Ask the children how these two things could be connected.
2. Bring the children up close so they can see the pictures. Don't talk about the pictures until you have read the book.
3. Discuss with the class what the pictures represent. Are they a different world? Or are they pictures in Shirley's mind?
4. Ensure that children understand the unique capacity humans have for imagining.

YEARS 3–4

Add the following, as appropriate:

1. What are the points of connection between the two worlds? In groups, make a list of these connectors.
2. Discuss: how do the worlds affect each other. Do they change anything? If so, how? Write a story about a time when you imagined something different from what was actually happening.

YEARS 5–6

Choose as much as you would like to do from the above, but add:

1. In roundtable groups, write a script for what happens in the pictures.
2. How are the characters of Shirley and her parents revealed? Describe the parents. Describe Shirley. How has the author/illustrator conveyed these ideas about character?
3. Devise creative ways of acting out the two worlds of story. Children may choose to do parallel stories, or consecutive stories. They may want to run the stories together as one.
4. Groups present their play to the class.
5. Discuss the way in which imagination can be used to transform situations.

FURTHER READING SUGGESTIONS

Girls in your classes may enjoy you reading L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* with them as an example of using imagination in everyday life. Years 1–4 (and you) will enjoy the imaginative and humorous adventure of Anne Fine's *Bill's New Frock* (1989). Other good stories include Libby Gleeson's *Eleanor, Elizabeth* (1984), Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977), and Morris Gleitzman's *Boy Overboard* (2002).

ACTIVITY 3: PLACE AND SPACE IN NARRATIVE

YEARS F–2

Read *Peepo* (Ahlberg 1981). Encourage children to join in the Peepos!

How many rooms do we see in the house?

What times do we see (morning etc.)?

Can you make up another verse for this story?

YEARS 3–4

1. Discuss the idea of time-place (a bite of place and time together).

   How many time-places can you find in *My Place* (Wheatley & Rawlins 1987)?

   How many time-places can you find in *Peepo?*
2. How is the idea of time-place used as part of story in these books? (In *My Place* it gives the frame of the story and ties in with the history of Australia. In *Peepo* it shows the cycle of the day.)

YEARS 5–6

1. Depending on and as appropriate for your class, talk about the idea of time (when things happen) and place (where they happen). Note how time and place come together as space for story.
2. Build on earlier discussions about the imagination.
3. Read *Let the Celebrations Begin*, by Margaret Wild and Julie Vivas (1991). Set it in its historical context, explaining that this is a story of a particular time-place.
4. Discuss the ways in which the women and children in the concentration camp used their imaginations.
5. Do you think this book makes a very terrible time in human history too trivial? (Your class may like to know that, in the USA and Europe, publishers refused to give the book its Australian title, and called it *A Time for Toys*.) Or do you think it shows something strong about the human spirit?
6. Compare the story of war in this book to that in other books: *Gallipoli* by Kerry Greenwood and Anne White (2014); *I Was Only Nineteen,* by John Schumann and Craig Smith (2014); and the 'Children in War Quartet' by author/illustrator Mark Wilson: *My Mother's Eyes—The Story of a Boy Soldier* (2010), *Angel of Kokoda* (2012) *Vietnam Diary* (2013) and *The Afghanistan Pup* (2014).

ACTIVITY 4: TIME AND SPACE

YEARS 3–4

1. Organise the class into small groups. Look at the first opening of *You and Me, Murrawee*.

   'Tell me': What can you tell about the place of the story? Each group should list its clues.

   What can you tell about the characters in the story?

   What do you guess about the time of the story? (Stress that right and wrong does not matter—we are still looking for clues.)

Then:

1. Let the children get comfortable but keep them in their groups. Read them the story. If they all have a copy on their roundtables, let one person turn the pages as you read.
2. Make a list of all the things that are the same for both girls—note how many times the word 'same' is used.

3. Make a list of the things that are different.
4. Choose a scribe at each roundtable. Each group will write two or three sentences explaining the last opening. Give plenty of time for discussion.

YEARS 5–6

Add the following:

1. Share sentences and ideas as a class. Talk about the idea of time and space coming together. If the class level is appropriate, discuss different concepts of time—time machines, Aboriginal concepts of cyclical rather than linear time, films like *Back to the Future*. Take a few weeks to read *Playing Beatie Bow* by Ruth Park (1980), which is a mixture of historical novel and time-shift fantasy.
2. Individual writing task. Write a story about time-space. It can be science fiction, or fantasy, or realistic, or about imaginary meeting places in the mind.

ACTIVITY 5: THE KNOWLEDGE YOU NEED

Consider what you have to know before you can fully understand books: for example, in *Where's Mum?* (Gleeson & Smith 1992) you would have to know what a kindergarten is. This helps us to determine the person the author has seen as implied reader of the text

YEARS F–2

Look at one book. Ask children to brainstorm a list of all the things that readers of this book must know and be able to do if they are to understand it. Model a number of examples such as *Edward's First Day at School* (Wells 1996), or *First Day* (Andrew Daddo & Jonathan Bentley 2013).

YEARS 5–6 (COULD BE MODIFIED FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL)

Arrange the children in small groups (no more than four). Give out, or allow children to choose, a number of picturebooks.

1. Brainstorm a list of all the things that readers of a particular book must know and be able to do if they are to understand it.

   They must understand how books work—turning the pages, beginning at the front (in Western culture), knowing what a title page is, reading the left side before the right side of an opening.

   They must be able to read.

   They must know what a school is.

   They must know what a teacher does.
2. Ask children to describe the picture that the text gives to the person reading the book. You do not need to use the term 'implied reader', although you may choose to do so. What you are doing is showing children that the writer has constructed a story for a particular reader with a particular sort of cultural knowledge and knowledge about the world.
3. Ask children in groups to make a list of all the background things that happen in the book. What sort of world do they show?

ACTIVITY 6: FOCALISATION

Read *The Great Bear* by Libby Gleeson and Armin Greder (1999).

YEARS 3–4

1. Organise into small roundtable groups.
2. Ask children to discuss: 'Whose eyes are we seeing with?' in relation to the illustrations. Does this change? If so, when?
3. Why do you think it changes? What do you think the illustrator is trying to do?
4. Describe how the illustrator has drawn the people's faces. Why?

YEARS 5–6

Add the following:

1. Now look at the words of the text. We see with the eyes of a narrator, but in the last opening with verbal text we see with the eyes of the bear. What effect does this have?
2. Choose something that you feel strongly about. Write a short composition in any mode using any medium, looking through the eyes of the person or thing that is being treated badly. (You may prefer to write a short play, or a poem.) Experiment with using different fonts and text to represent different perspectives.

ACTIVITY 7: INTERTEXTUALITY

Read *Where's Mum?* by Libby Gleeson and Craig Smith (1992).

Watch the DVD *Shrek* (DreamWorks LLC 2001, based upon the book by William Steig). Have the book *Shrek* in class. Or watch the DVD *Tangled.* (2010, Walt Disney Animation Studios)), or *Frozen* (2013, Walt Disney Animation Studios).

YEARS F–2

1. Discuss all the other fairy stories that are a part of the story of this book and/or this DVD.
2. What makes this funny?

YEARS 3–4

1. Organise the class into roundtable groups.
2. Ask each group to make a list of the fairytales and nursery rhymes that become a part of this story. Talk to students about how this fills the story with characters.
3. Each group chooses one intertext. Give the students a short time to prepare a creative telling of that rhyme or fairytale to the rest of the class. They can get costumes from the prop box if you like, and act it out. They may like to mime or sing or dance.
4. Performance time.

YEARS 5–6

1. Writing task: children make up a short story where you meet some characters from books. Perhaps these could at some point be read to the class and a big poster could be made up of all the intertexts that have been used.

2. Or, as a class, construct a storyboard. Organise the class into writing groups and divide the story into parts. Each group is to write their part of the story, using a well-known intertext of their choice as a model. For example, the intertext could be *Rosie's Walk* (Hutchins 1968); their story could be 'Bluey's Run', or 'Blackie's Stroll'.
3. Introduce the idea and text-type of *parody* (a humorous, sometimes ridiculous, imitation of something well known).
4. As a class, research the making of the film and list as many intertexts as can be found. Explore the movie site <www.shrek.com>. How is place represented? How is character graphically delineated? What words would you need to describe the graphic representation?
5. Discuss the idea of the book as one mode of telling the story, and the film as another. What advantages or disadvantages does each mode have? What sorts of things do you need to know to be able to read the book? What sorts of things do you need to know to access the film? What physical resources does each mode require?
6. Choose an online site for children to explore. Before this, discuss scriptwriting offline and online, and note the different conventions. Look at a children's play—perhaps *Skellig: The play*, by David Almond, or *Peter Pan*, by J.M. Barrie. Note that the print convention of script in these books is to have the character's name, followed by what they say, with any stage directions in brackets. Conventional script is also generally written individually. Online script is a collaborative role-play, which encourages cooperation and socialisation. In the story palace dialogue is subsumed in description of everything the character is doing as well as feeling.

MIDDLE SCHOOL/SECONDARY

Consider the film *Groundhog Day* (1993), and discuss it in terms of a frozen time-space and how it builds on itself as an intertext.

Consider *March* (2005) by Geraldine Brooks, winner of the Pulitzer Fiction prize, which gives voice to the absent father of four famous 'little women'.

Summary

- An appropriate literary toolkit is essential in order to introduce books in a way that engages the students' imagination and interest.
- The goal of teaching literature is to encourage children to become readers for life.
- Theoretical analysis helps to set the foundation for the study of more complex texts in later school life. Theory and practice operate in creative and stimulating tensions.
- Narratives are often founded on archetypes like the quest. They refer to each other by a play of allusion or reference.
- The notion of the chronotope links people's life-worlds and the narrative events with time and place. A visual chronotope is the representation of time-space in picturebook illustration.

- The chronotope (the relationship of people and events to time and space) helps explain the way texts are organised.
- There are many creative ways to introduce books in the classroom. Keep finding more. Don't become repetitive. Consider every medium and mode available to encourage participation.

Extend your practice

Read *Rules of Summer* by Shaun Tan (2013). Then read John Purcell's review below: <www.booktopia.com.au/rules-of-summer-shaun-tan/prod9780734410672.html>.

> How do you review a Shaun Tan book? Each time I open *Rules of Summer* I find a different book. I remember my excitement on being offered a sneak peek a few months ago. I was left feeling a little bewildered. Did I like it? I don't think I did on that first look. Then a few months later I was given an advance copy. I flicked through the pages and found a completely new book. Or so I thought. But no, the preview was exactly the same as the finished copy. Had I changed? I read through it time and time again. The book bewitched me. I then stood it on my desk in the office so that I could look at it during the day.
>
> *Rules of Summer* is dark comedy. Or tragedy. It is a self-help book. It is a graphic novel. A child's picturebook. A nightmare. A warning. A guide. A fun way to pass half an hour. Ten minutes. A minute. It is art. It is entertainment. What the hell is it? It's a bizarre thing. I love it. Shaun Tan's *Rules of Summer* is something you must own.

Consider your responses to this book. Search out other reviews. What do you think?

Further reading

Frank, A. 1963. *Anne Frank: The diary of a young girl*. Washington Square Press, USA.

Johnston, R.R. 2002. Childhood: A narrative chronotope. In R. Sell (ed.), *Children's Literature as Communication*, Benjamins, The Netherlands, 137–57. Reprinted in P. Hunt. (ed.). 2006, *Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*. Routledge, London.

Tan, S. 2013. *Rules of Summer*. Lothian, Melbourne.

Seuss, Dr. 2003 [1960]. *Green Eggs and Ham*. HarperCollins, UK.

Useful website

<http://cbca.org.au>

Chapter 25

Early Childhood Literature and Engaged Play

'... the different ways in which literature is significant in everyday life.'

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn:

- to understand the importance of early exposure to books
- to reflect on the idea of books as spaces for the virtual
- to extend the idea of the literature continuum into an artistic multimodal continuum that 'matters'
- to note the importance of unlimited free-range reading
- to develop ways of making literature relevant to young children
- to implement the ideas of engaged play.

KEY TERMS

Bildungsroman
canon
continuum
engaged play
'good' literature
hypertext
map
outcomes

VIGNETTE

Background: Matilda is four and lives in a house where there is only one book (*Easy Cooking*).

Characters: Matilda aged 4, her parents, and the librarian, Mrs Phelps.

> By the time she was three, Matilda had taught herself to read by studying newspapers and magazines that lay around the house. At the age of four, she could read fast and well and she naturally began hankering after books …
>
> 'Daddy,' she said, 'do you think you could buy me a book?'
>
> 'A book?' he said. 'What do you want a flaming book for?'
>
> 'To read, Daddy.'
>
> 'What's wrong with the telly, for heaven's sake? We've got a lovely telly with a twelve inch screen and now you come asking for a book! You're getting spoiled, my girl!'
>
> ….
>
> On the afternoon of the day when her father had refused to buy her a book, Matilda set off all by herself to the public library in the village. …

[She introduces herself to the Librarian Mrs Phelps and proceeds to read all the children's books in the Library].

> 'I thought some were very poor,' Matilda said, 'but others were lovely. I liked *The Secret Garden* best of all. It was full of mystery. The mystery of the room behind the closed door and the mystery of the garden behind the big wall.' …

[Mrs Phelps gives Matilda *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. Matilda finishes it in a week and then goes on to read other books by Dickens, Bronte, Austen, Hardy, Kipling, Wells, Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck, Priestley and Orwell. Mrs Phelps is astonished.]

> 'Mr Hemingway says a lot of things I don't understand,' Matilda said to her. 'Especially about men and women. But I loved it all the same. The way he tells it I feel I am right there on the spot watching it all happen.'
>
> 'A fine writer will always make you feel like that,' Mrs Phelps said. 'And don't worry about the bits you can't understand. Sit back and allow the words to wash around you, like music.'

Matilda, by Roald Dahl (1988), Jonathan Cape Ltd London, pp. 11–19.

Introduction

This chapter notes the importance of introducing books to children from an early age. It reiterates that literature matters, and that with courteous translation children can be exposed to books beyond their immediate needs. It describes the idea of engaged play.

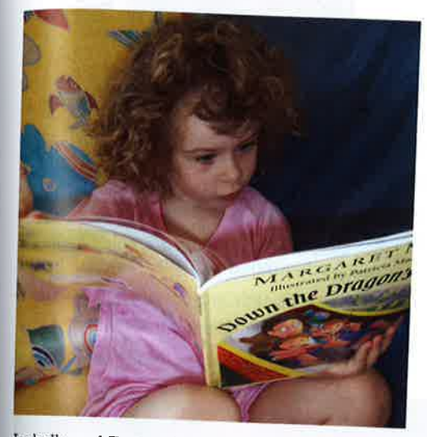
* * *

'BABIES NEED BOOKS'

As both the *Alice* excerpt at the beginning of the previous chapter, and the *Matilda* excerpt above indicate, the quite complex idea of the simple or the silly carrying a richer meaning is a particular feature of children's books. This is why they are such an important step to later multimodal and multimedia encounters with story. For a young child the book is a tangible object—cloth, board, paper, able to be held, crawled towards and grabbed, felt, and manipulated at will.

Dorothy Butler's classic *Babies Need Books* remains true in a digital age, perhaps even more so because of the individual nature of personal devices:

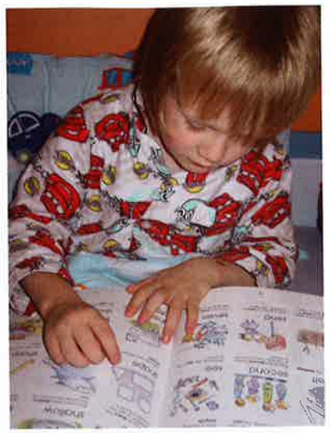
> Babies need people: talking, laughing, warm-hearted people, constantly drawing them into their lives, and offering them the world as playground. Let's give the books to parallel this experience, books where language and illustration activate the senses, so that meaning slips in smoothly, in the wake of feeling' (1980, p. 19).



Isabella and Evelyn, both aged 2, enjoy Margaret Mahy and Tim Winton.

Samuel, aged 1, enters into the world of books.

Passing it on: Isabella, now 7, shares the fun with Toby, aged 2.



Caleb, aged 3, points out words and images in the *Macquarie Children's Dictionary*.

Luke, aged 4, and Toby, aged 2, enjoy *Puffling* together.

Luke introduces books to Anna, aged 7 weeks.

BOOKS AS 'VIRTUAL SPACE'

What are the children in these photographs doing? They are entering a virtual space: a space both generated by the books and generative of their responses.

As the child grows, the book becomes an object that carries encounters in what could really be argued as the first 'virtual space', human imagination. Books carry their own virtual space: think about the vivacity and excitement of characters and events and places and times that tumble out of books with no pictures at all (for example, *Harry Potter, A Tale of Two Cities, Les Miserables, Kidnapped, Cloudstreet*).

The power of black marks on a white page

Indeed, consider the Harry Potter example. When the phenomenally popular first book was made into a film, much was made about the author's and director's insistence on artistic veracity and fidelity. The film, they proclaimed, would be true to the book.

So, the film features rich, opulent English landscapes, an aristocratic cast of Britain's finest, and brilliant special effects, some by Jim Henson's Creative Shop. The amazing Quidditch game, with Harry winning by catching the Golden Snitch in his mouth, cost a fortune to reproduce cinematically.

It is very interesting that so many resources were needed in order to create as a *film* a highly successful book that *consisted of no more than black marks on a white page*.

'Meaning slips in smoothly ...'

If we confined ourselves in our communication with babies to what they already know, we would not speak to them at all. But of course we *do* speak, and that is how they learn. It never ceases to amaze me how babies can understand complex ideas and use complicated grammar in such a short time.

The 'courteous translation'

As Butler says, meaning slips in smoothly. The enlightened librarian Mrs Phelps makes a similar comment to Matilda: 'Sit back and allow the words to wash around you, like music.'

Children would never learn if we taught them what they know. They learn by watching, experiencing, feeling, hearing, innately matching spoken words to moments and events, matching what is heard to what is seen, and most of all, developing imaginative capacity. Spot becomes a real dog, the Very Hungry Caterpillar can be heard munching, dolls and animals talk. This capacity to visualise, to interpret, to create, to adapt, to transpose, is at the essence of the 'literacy of the imagination' (Johnston 2000b) and at the heart of what educators across the world are calling 21st-century learning skills.

The idea of a **continuum**, as noted in the Curriculum, means that children need a diet that is not wholly made up of 'children's books'. Continual opportunities must be made for all children to be exposed to a wide range of texts from a continuum that is continuously being supplemented and enriched with digital and other literary resources.

CONTINUUM: *A continuous sequence in which adjacent elements may not be noticeably different from each other, but where the extremes are quite distinct. It may range at one end from Peter Rabbit breaking the rules and going into Mr McGregor's garden, to Macbeth breaking the rules and murdering the King.*

Sometimes teachers tend to overestimate level of difficulty and underestimate the abilities of the child. Jane Doonan notes Jerome Bruner's remarks that 'any subject could be taught to any child in an intellectually honest form at any stage of her development: it was simply a matter of finding a "courteous translation"' (1993, p. 49).

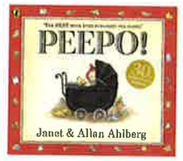
This does *not* mean lengthy descriptions and tedious explanations. It means giving clues and cues—through voice, through facial expression and gesture, through response—as a sort of informal scaffolding.

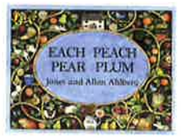
'Exposure beyond immediate needs'

We need to develop a similar philosophy and set about finding ways of introducing our students, courteously, to all sorts of material from across the literature continuum. This also fits in with the idea, first articulated in the context of literacy by Don Holdaway, of continually exposing children to books beyond their immediate needs—and, I would add, capacities (1979, p. 40).

Small children who are read a bedtime story (or a bathtime story, or a holiday story, or an anytime story), who are captivated into the magic world and the language cadences of rhythm and rhyme in the Ahlbergs' *Peepo* or *Each Peach Pear Plum*; who sitting on the floor of a classroom are enticed by the teacher's voice into Margaret Mahy's *Summery Saturday Morning*, even though it may be wet and cold outside; who can't wait to read the next book in their favourite series—these children are being well placed to explore how story happens, how character has been developed, how language has been subtly (or not) used to set up a particular point of view, how literature not only represents life but creates life.

Reading the gaps





These books expose children to language, world and self. Pictures (visual language) help very young readers become familiar with words (verbal language). Further, they learn to 'read' the sophisticated subtleties of propinquity: that 'third space' somehow between word and image, generating properties that can be found in neither of the 'input spaces' (Johnston 1998, p. 34; Turner 1996). They learn to read the gaps. They learn to *imagine*.

Consider this *verbal* image by Noel Sanders, which he uses to describe *visual* images (an interesting dichotomy to think about), in the following passage:

> Images are texts…in the very primary sense of a 'weave'…Anything woven is a fabric not only of presences (the fibres) but of the spaces between. With lace, for example, the fabric is far more absence than presence, and any cloth is likewise going to be a combination of openness and closedness. Carrying the metaphor further, it is possible to take a written text as a combination of black, written elements and the white empty spaces of the page. The closedness of newspaper text is to, say, nylon, as the openness of poetry (with its wide expanses of white paper) is to the open weave of lace… (quoted in Kress 1988, p. 141)

Children learn not only the 'presences' but 'the spaces between'—the most beautiful of fabrics, lace, is as much absence of fibre (gap) as it is presence of fibre. Sanders is also talking about how culture and attitudes and beliefs code images, setting them up to be read in a certain way. Text may be dense, or, as Genette said of poetry, may announce itself by its spaces. Images may inflate meaning, add new meaning, and may stimulate an inner imaginative process that is in itself another type of 'language-ing'.

Books are entry portals into the great world of art and ideas

Books open into the great world of art and ideas at multiple, user-friendly points of entry. Readers are exposed, sometimes without realising it, to a mass of complex themes that, like icebergs, may show only as tiny tips. But these tips are indicators of great depths and they act as subtle and implicit guides in the development of knowing readers.

Exposure to pictures of outsiderness (or *outside-ness*) in books such as *Way Home* (Libby Hathorn and Greg Rogers) prepares the way for deeper understandings of ideas relating to the social environment, or to prejudice, injustice and exploitation—ideas that may later be encountered in such diverse texts as Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, the contemporary novels of Toni Morrison such as *Beloved*, or the music of Bob Dylan or Midnight Oil, or even Picasso's *Guernica*.

There has always been debate about ideas of 'good' literature—in the past this has focused on an idea of quality that is 'high' (for the select) and 'low' (for the general population). There has even been a belief in some quarters that if a text is 'popular' (almost a dirty word!) it isn't 'literature'.

In a lovely introduction to an edition of L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, novelist Margaret Atwood (1991) writes, of *Anne*, 'If it's that popular, you feel, it can't possibly be good, or good for you.' Yet Atwood goes on to place *Anne* in the orphan-heroine tradition of *Jane Eyre*, *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations* and *The Secret Garden*, the fairytale tradition of *The Ugly Duckling*, and the fable tradition of the magic child who 'appears, as it seems from nowhere—like King Arthur—and proves to have qualities far superior to anyone around her'.

AN UNINHIBITED MULTIMODAL CONTINUUM THAT MATTERS

When reading aloud to children, be bold and adventurous in the choice of texts and in your expectations of children's interactions with them. Interrogate by practice conventional ideas about the difficulty of certain texts. For example, the rhythms and rhymes of *Each Peach Pear Plum* by the Ahlbergs (1978) are not so very different from 'Ariel's Song' in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Think about the language:

Introducing books across the continuum to young children

Each peach pear plum
I spy Tom Thumb.
Tom Thumb in the cupboard
I spy Mother Hubbard.
Mother Hubbard down the cellar
I spy Cinderella.

(*Each Peach Pear Plum*)

Where the bee sucks, there suck I:
In a cowslip's bell I lie:
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily shall I live now
Under the blossoms that hang on the bough.

(*The Tempest*)

Nor are they very different from Robert Frost's evocative lines:

> The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
> And I have promises to keep.
> And miles to go before I sleep,
> And miles to go before I sleep.
>
> ('Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening')

Literature is sound, rhythm, mood and 'feeling' as well as 'meaning'

Allusions to the characters of nursery song and story are often no 'easier' or more readily 'known' than allusions to characters and things in poems and stories that are commonly categorised as 'literature'. These nursery characters, many of them arguably increasingly less appropriate to 21st-century children who are being encouraged to consider themselves as members of an international community, become a part of childhood knowledge achronologically (out of order, so to speak), just as the language of the Shakespeare and the Frost poems do.

LITERATURE: *'Literature includes a broad range of forms such as novels, poetry, short stories and plays; fiction for young adults and children, multimodal texts such as film, and a variety of non-fiction.' (Australian Curriculum Version 6, 2014, p. 4). Past and present texts valued in form and style have enduring artistic value and enrich scopes of experience.*

In fact, in *Each Peach Pear Plum* the words 'cellar', 'ditch' and 'den' are problematical in the sense that they are unlikely to be part of the average Australian small child's language. They may well be as far removed from that child's experience as the 'cowslip' of Ariel's song, and Frost's 'woods' (Australians know about the bush and the forest but 'woods' is not a term in common use).

Further, the reality is that many children will come from language backgrounds other than English, with a different set of cultural stories. If they are the first person in the family to attend an Australian school they are likely to come from a home where English is not spoken. Seek out stories in translation that come from the countries represented in the classroom. This is addressed more in Chapter 31.

In pedagogical practice, we have placed a lot of store on 'meaning' (contested at the best of times). But literature—like music, art, dance—is more than meaning (see Johnston 1997a). **Literature**—words, poetry, drama—is an aesthetic experience that engages emotions and feelings in all sorts of ways.

Literature is creative response as much as it is intellectual apprehension.

BOOKS ARE MAPS

MAP: *A representation showing important features: books offer multiple maps to the territory not only of childhood but of adulthood.*

Books are **maps** to the terrain of childhood—they offer ideas for being and going and playing. They are subjective, so especially for young children the choices should be diverse.

Literature activates many responses: creative, aesthetic, emotional, intellectual.

However, there are always similarities in difference: *Shutting the Chooks In* by Libby Gleeson and Ann James (2003), for example, while a description of rural Australia, evokes other images rough in both its text and its charcoal and oil pastel illustrations:

> Night has come.
> Time to run
> and run
> and run.

Graeme Base has reimagined his classic *Animalia* (1986) into a version for young children, *My First Animalia* (2013). This may be too young for some children but just right for

others, and both versions should be available, as should Bronwyn Bancroft's various alphabet books and *Possum and Wattle* (2008).

WHAT BOOKS 'MATTER'? (WHICH ONES SHOULD WE CHOOSE?)

The Australian Curriculum talks about texts that 'matter'. Some works are distinctive, and persist in 'mattering' to individuals and cultures. They may have an aesthetic impact. Their meaning hits deep. They stay with the reader, offer themselves for rereading.

Literature has emerged from strong oral traditions, but since Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1440 (and notwithstanding earlier efforts in using movable type in Korea, China and Japan) the West has held to the concept of literature not only as something made permanent—in its presentation as an artefact, in book form—but as something accorded power and respect.

The late Palestinian professor of comparative literature at Columbia University in New York, Edward Said, attributed part of the ascendancy of the British Empire to the rise of the great English novel that occurred in the mid- to late 19th century. Said believed that by the 1840s the novel had 'achieved eminence' as both aesthetic form and 'major intellectual voice' (1993–94, p. 85). He points to novels—literature—as a major contributing factor not only in constructing the power of the Empire but in constructing what were to become stereotypical ideas about the 'Orient', about 'natives', and about power. It was, he said, in the 'great cultural archive' that intellectual ideas and 'aesthetics in overseas dominion are made' (p. xxiv).

These are words we need to heed, as teachers of children from countries across the world. Be aware of the implicit coding in texts about culture, about 'others' (this is discussed more fully in the following chapter).

We also need to heed Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, p. 20) argument, in a different context, that common belief in the superiority of the written word has not only tended to denigrate 'oral culture' but has similarly denigrated those cultures that, because they had no written language and communicated through visual signs, have been branded 'illiterate'.

THE LITERARY CANON

Said's idea about the 'great cultural archive' raises the question of the **canon**: that is, that collections/selections of books that for whatever reason survive. The late-20th-century distrust of canons, however, has resulted in more permeable boundaries. The term 'literature' has expanded to include all sorts of reading material, as ideas about 'high' and 'low' culture texts across society have become increasingly slippery. Poetry, playground rhymes, drama, skipping songs, how-to-do books, books about surfing and sport, alphabet and concept books, wordless picturebooks, ebooks, and even comic books and magazines are all part of the collective literature of a print-based, print-rich society.

CANON: *The body of books ascribed lasting aesthetic value and significance and given status of influence by a particular culture.*

HYPERTEXT: *A set of semantic associations. An area of text on a web page that acts as a link to a hyperlink.*

And it is important to note that the Web itself is a print-based medium—words are *written* and words are *read*. The Web in fact helps to shake off any ideas of a fixed set of rules; it helps us to think in an egalitarian **hypertext** and challenges us to continually relocate our centre. In a diverse, technological postmodern world of many cultures, ideas of literature are expansive and exciting.

So the real test of value is probably *longevity* and *impact*: how long and how deeply does this piece of writing stay with us? How many times can we return to it, finding something a little more, a little different, each time? How complex is the map of being that it gives us? How strong was the jolt of recognition—perhaps of self, perhaps of others, perhaps of circumstance, perhaps of predicament? How much of it do we carry to readings of other books? How much of it, if any, do we write into our own lives?

SO, WHAT BOOKS DO WE CHOOSE?

Many children's books survive, are endlessly reprinted, and re-illustrated (for example, Australian artist Robert Ingpen has recently illustrated a new edition of *Alice in Wonderland*). They speak to generations way beyond that of their author. These are labelled classics, but we need to recognise that sometimes their worldviews are limited.

And there are just so many diverse texts, with so many different visual and written images of the world in which we live, that they present not an exclusive picture but an increasingly inclusive one.

It is really hard to make selections for a text such as this; the books need to be in print, and recognised, and this can change very quickly. For that reason I tend to refer to the books that have survived and thus are likely to be known and used.

And that brings me to books celebrating Australian place by authors and illustrators such as Jeannie Baker, and a book such as *My Place* (1987) by Nadia Wheatley and Donna Rawlins. Baker's books are ideal for young children and can stimulate all sorts of talk and ideas; her *Mirror* (2010) will become an Australian classic. *My Place* is already part of an Australian children's literature canon, and can be read on many levels, including as a powerful implicit plea for Indigenous land rights.

In an early-stage classroom, *My Place* can be used as a sort of map for children to write/draw/tell/ compose their own story. Decade by decade, every child character—girl or boy, Aboriginal or Greek or Irish or German or English or American—is given their own space and their own voice: 'My name's Johanna and this is my place.' 'My name's Bridie and this is my place.'

MAKING IT RELEVANT FOR VERY YOUNG READERS

As noted in the previous chapter, the pre- and early-stage classroom in particular is likely to have children with a wide and divergent range of skills and abilities and interests. Some

children won't know how to hold a book or even that the letters have meaning; others, like Matilda, may already be 'reading'.

Check out excellent resources on various websites: Foundations for Learning: Relationships between the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum. <www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/pdf/ECA_ACARA_Foundations_Paper/ECA_ACARA_Foundations_Paper_FINAL.pdf>.

Again, as a teacher always keep in mind what you want your **outcomes** to be. It probably is not just to 'know' this particular book—or it shouldn't be. Consider ideas such as imaginative engagement that may pertain just to one word, or one tiny thing that triggers a surge of curiosity and thinking. Reading in an early-stage classroom is not a test. Let children be, as the words flow into them and/or over them. Don't worry if they don't look engaged—don't let them disturb others but let them sit freely.

OUTCOMES: *Specific statements of the results intended by a syllabus; goal statements of student achievements.*

Some suggestions:

a. The most important thing you can do for your class is to observe and get to really know the children. Try to be on hand to speak with parents and family and community whenever possible. Make opportunities if you possibly can. Let the child see that there are bridges between home and school—that they are connected. Build bridges through class events.

b. Prepare children according to their individual needs: have a class library where there is browsing time. Observe carefully: which children obviously are not used to books? Who are showing interest, who are not? Facilitate times when they can watch others. Be alongside, not in charge. Be very sensitive to language and cultural needs. Watch what seems to generate interest—have some non-fiction books as well. One of my sons never wanted to read story books; he wanted to read encyclopedias.

c. Choose books carefully and always have a range of options on hand. Search as many books as you can about different cultures, practices, lands. Cater for a range of experiences and abilities. Ask children to help you with selections.

d. Try to relate—but informally and in a fun way—something in the book to something that has happened in class recently, or some external event such as a sports day or a celebration day.

e. Relate books to other activities: making a map or writing a story or creating an art installation.

f. Value these. Contribute your own stories.

'ENGAGED PLAY'

Children's books have a long tradition of encouraging **engaged play**—consider the paper engineering on some of those beautiful Victorian texts, and the imaginary games they stimulated. I drew plans of all the houses in my favourite books (scouring the pages for any

ENGAGED PLAY: *The play that is inspired and stimulated by books and their fictional worlds but is enriched by children's own subsequent inventions and preoccupations, e.g. building a tree house after reading The Swiss Family Robinson.*

detail that would help), compiled time-lines and genealogies, even wrote my own sequels (or occasionally alternative endings). These days I would no doubt be using sophisticated software to assist.

Children, through their imaginative engagement with the fictional worlds of books, play out their stories in all sorts of ways: taking on character roles, attributing roles to others—'You be Red Riding Hood'—enriching the story with their own inventions and preoccupations, with the insertion of new plots, and new characters and settings.

A research study once asked a number of people to name the book that was their childhood favourite. Enid Blyton's *The Magic Faraway Tree* emerged as the most popular, but the interesting point was that when asked to name their favourite magic land from the book (such as the Roundabout Land, the Rocking Land), a significant proportion named a land that Blyton hadn't actually written. That is, at some point, as part of their imaginative engagement and play, they had added that land to the story, so cleanly and nimbly that it became for them part of the text.

In a comprehensive study of literacies across media, Canadian Margaret Mackey proposes the significance of play. She concludes: 'there is, after all, a common word that will make room for a variety of activities, with multifaceted and multimedia connotations. That word is play' (2002, p. 182). She goes on to discuss the idea of 'playing the text' in the following ways:

- playing as *pretending and imagining* (the step into make-believe, or, as I would put it, the step into the virtual)
- playing as *performing* (the performance of pretending, the connection between body and text, and the fascinating and engrossing way that the mind works, even when having what Papert calls 'hard fun' (see C. Johnston 1999, p. 12)
- playing as *engaging with the rules of the game* (accepting the rules and conventions of the text, and, I would add, of the means available to engage with the text)
- playing as *strategising* (how to make progress through a set of alternatives)
- playing as *orchestrating* (learning to manage attention and automatic behaviours: 'so much of what we do when we read or watch a movie or play a computer game is unrecognised most of the time'
- playing as *interpreting* (and Mackey notes that 'the individual's own private agenda may set up the warp of an interpretation…')
- playing as *fooling around* (exploring options without commitment: 'The capacity to experiment with texts, to fail sometimes, to try again without recrimination or penalty, and/or to abandon them, is an important part of mastering new media. This is as true for small children learning to decode print as it is for computer experts tackling a new piece of software.')
- playing as *not working*: 'In play, we can try things out, work through our feelings about an idea in an arena where the results are often unimportant. Naturally, this opens a zone where we can contemplate very important ideas indeed, because the risk is lowered.' (Mackey 2002, pp. 182–8)

'ENGAGED PLAY' WITH BOOKS

Some of these points also have a general relevance to teaching and learning in any context: a classroom where curiosity is encouraged and where risks can be taken without penalty is likely to be an environment conducive to excellence.

The concept of 'engaged play' highlights the fact that books don't just 'capture' the imagination—they arm it, strengthen it, exercise it and make it more supple, they engage it in possibilities and transport it to new contexts, they open it up to the virtual worlds we noted earlier.

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

Read *Edward's First Day at School* by Rosemary Wells (1996).

- What does this story reveal about family?
- What picture of the preschool and teacher does it convey?
- What attitudes to child development does it represent?
- What attitudes to the rights of the individual does it represent?
- Relate this book to 20th-century constructs of the child.
- Relate this story to the **Bildungsroman** (see below page 532).
- Select other picturebooks that reveal aspects of growth and development as the frame of their narrative.

BILDUNGSROMAN: *A German term, commonly applied to novels that show their protagonist in the process of development and growing up.*

There is something special about reading books together. A clever teacher can turn the reading experience into an almost theatrical event, and transform 'the class' into a keen and interactive audience. A shared story is communal; it is protective to those who are most struggling, who are learning about words, how they sound and what they do; they are helped by hearing others say them. It helps to bring about a shared class consciousness, a shared memory that enriches and motivates. Reading a shared story every day is one of the most rewarding teaching experiences and one with highly productive outcomes.

Reading together in creative ways helps create a class consciousness that is supportive and enriching

THEORY INTO PRACTICE: PREPARING FOR THE CLASSROOM

These activities are designed to be used and adapted as appropriate for Preschool and Foundation, primary and secondary classrooms, and/or for tertiary students training to be teachers. Some critical thinking exercises are obviously more suitable for tertiary students but most can be adapted and modified for classroom use. The activities often refer to specific books, but most can be used as models for use with other texts.

All the activities have been designed to address the requirements of the Australian Curriculum. They are conceptualised as both theory and practice: thus they are for pre-service teachers (tertiary students) for their own reflection, which underpins and arms them for adapting and using the specific related activities for whatever level they are teaching.

Some of the activities throughout will be modelled on the 'Tell Me' approach of Aidan Chambers. Teachers initiate discussion through a 'tell me' invitation rather than the common 'why?' question. This approach stresses speaking and listening, anticipating, in Chambers' words, 'conversational dialogue rather than an interrogation' (1993, p. 49), while the open-endedness of the approach tends to be non-threatening and allows for diverse levels of response.

ACTIVITY 8: BOOKS SHOW AND TELL WORLDS

Read *Edward's First Day at School* by Rosemary Wells (1996).

- What does this story reveal about family?
- What picture of the preschool and teacher does it convey?
- What attitudes to child development does it represent?
- What attitudes to the rights of the individual does it represent?
- Relate this book to 20th-century constructs of the child.
- Select other picturebooks that reveal aspects of growth and development as the frame of their narrative.

1. Ask the children, as a class, to discuss ways of growing: physical, mental, emotional, being able to do something they couldn't before, learning new things about people, understanding things in a different way, learning new things about themselves. Find as many stories as you can that describe an aspect of growing. In small groups, sort them into categories: learning to do something you couldn't do before, adjusting to a new situation, moving to a new place, overcoming some difficulty, changing attitudes about something.
2. Read *Cherry Pie* by Gretel Killeen, Francesca Partridge and Franck Dubuc (1998). In what way does the person telling the story grow? Discuss in small groups and report to the class.
3. Read *Leaves for Mr Walter* by Janeen Brian and David Cox (1998). Who does the growing in this story? Does more than one person grow? In what way?
4. Who are the champions in *Champions* by Jonathan Harlen and Emma Quay (1998)? What message does this book give us?
5. Set up a class table of books on growing. Perhaps you could place other growing things on it as well—seeds, sprouts, an artwork someone is working on over a longer period than usual.
6. In groups of about six, choose a favourite piece of music and compose a dance or growing tableau. Write out your growing themes on a poster or an overhead. Set aside practice and performance times.
7. Read *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat* (Wagner & Brooks 1977). What sort of growing takes place in this book? Who do you think grows? Why?
8. Find as many poems as you can about growing. Write a poem about a time of growing.

YEARS F–2

1. Read any of the *Edward* books by Rosemary Wells. Discuss ideas of being ready and growing. Draw a picture and write a sentence about a time when you grew.
2. Tell the class a story about something you have seen grow.

ACTIVITY 9: FINDING AND IDENTIFYING PLACE

YEARS F–2

1. Using whatever devices are available, show one of the maps from Wheatley and Rawlins' *My Place* (choose a suitable opening).
2. Talk about the idea of maps. Ask children to discuss features of their home and neighbourhood.
3. Introduce ideas of the school as a place, a 'my place'. Ask the class to draw a map of the school, labelling as they choose.
4. Ask the children to tell you about their maps. Note that everyone sees the same place in a slightly different way, and that certain features are more important to some than to the others (the gate you come in by or leave by, for example).
5. If the class level is appropriate, you may like to draw a large composite map of the school. Divide into sections and give each group a section, then join the sections. Put up the map in class.

YEARS 3–4

1. Talk about the idea of books giving a map.
2. Look at *My Place*. Note the importance of the map. (It gives obvious coherence to the text and is part of the narrative structure.)
3. Ask the children to draw a map of their own place, with labels and notes, after the one in *My Place*. They can choose to do this using electronic resources.
4. Publish the maps around the classroom.

YEARS 5–6/SECONDARY

As above, but add:

1. Encourage children to draw a map of all the spaces they inhabit: school, home, sport, church, family, friends, neighbourhood. Discuss.
2. Discuss ideas of ownership and of the land. You may want to relate this to other areas of the Curriculum.
3. Discuss ideas of belonging to two lands: perhaps a country of birth and a new country (Australia). Share stories of different cultural backgrounds. Make a world map showing the represented countries.

Choose an episode in the book (each chapter tends to be an episode in a series of memories) and turn it into a playscript for either a stage or radio play. Choose appropriate accompanying music. Perform the play.

Summary

- Exposure to children's books from a very young age helps prepare students for the study of more complex texts.
- Books access a type of virtual space and black marks on a white page exude astonishing power (consider what has to happen to turn a book into a film).
- Literature is an unlimited continuum that, while it should be courteously 'translated', should not be inhibited by ideas that 'it is too hard for them'. It can be extended by being multimodal.
- Careful preparation is required in choosing and introducing books in early-stage classrooms, but many books should be available for browsing.
- The easiest way of thinking about a literary canon for children is that it relates to texts that 'matter' because they are relevant to children's lives.
- Children engage with fictional books by playing out their stories.

Extend your practice

Children's books commonly describe important aspects of development—the first day at school, the birth of a sibling, a significant adventure, the death of a grandparent, an epiphanal moment. Although children's books don't usually lead to adulthood, many books for young adults do describe this rite of passage. In this sense, and with these limitations, they can be meaningfully related to the *Bildungsroman*; that is, the 'education novel' of development, of growing up. You may like to know that the *Bildungsroman* generally includes related genres: the Entwicklungsroman, a story of general growth rather than self-culture; the Erziehungsroman, which focuses on training and formal education; and the Kunstlerroman, about the development of an artist. Everything in the *Bildungsroman*, according to Paul Ricoeur, 'seems to turn on the self-awakening of the central character' (1985, pp. 9–10).

Reflect on how children's books tell snippets of the growing up story. For example, *Each Peach Pear Plum* is a simple story, written in the first person, through the focalisation of the small child's seeing eye. The child looks around its world—the world of its books—and makes connections, first to what it knows (the fictional characters in their own 'rhyme'), then by creating new connections between them and itself; i.e. the child begins to write its own story. The conclusion is a triumph—everyone is now in the picture, in their place in the child's world. A moment of growing, of becoming more conscious of self in a world of others, has taken place.

Also consider what happens in *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat, and* Tim Winton's *The Deep* (1998).

Further reading

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Literary Literacies: Digital, Cultural, Narrative, Critical and Deep Literacies

'Literacy', writes Margaret Meek, 'has two beginnings: one, in the world, the other in each person who learns to read and write' (1991, p. 13).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn:

- that digital literacy is embedded in 21st-century literate practices
- to recognise and understand the significance of cultural literacy as knowledge of the world, and the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of diverse ways of being
- to understand the importance of narrative literacy
- how critical literacy can identify a book's implicit and explicit attitudes, beliefs and values
- the significance of deep literacy and its distinction from critical literacy.

KEY TERMS

contexts for text
critical literacy
cultural schema
deep literacy
digital literacy
discourse
focalisation
narrative
register
understory

VIGNETTE

Background: Bill and Bunyip have fled a courtroom which had been hearing the case against two puddin' thieves who had stolen Albert, their magic puddin'.

Characters: Bill Barnacle, a sailor, Bunyip Bluegum, a koala, and Albert, the puddin'.

'And now,' said Bill, when they had run a mile or two beyond the town, 'and now for some brilliant plan, swiftly conceived, which will put a stop to this Puddin'-snatchin' business for ever. For the point is,' continued Bill, lowering his voice, 'here we are pretty close up to the end of the book, and something will have to be done in a Tremendous Hurry, or else we'll be cut off short by the cover.'

'The solution is perfectly simple,' said Bunyip. 'We have merely to stop wandering along the road, and the story will stop wandering through the book. This, too, will baffle the pudding-thieves, for while we wander along the road, our Puddin' is exposed to the covetous glances of every passing puddin'-snatcher. Let us, then, remove to some safe, secluded spot and settle down to a life of gaiety, dance, and song, where no puddin'-thief will dare to show a sacrilegious head. Let us, in fact, build a house in a tree. For, mark the advantages of such a habitation—'

.....

'We will, we will,' shouted the Puddin'-owners; but the Puddin' said sourly: 'This is all very well, all this high falutin'. But what about the dreadful news of me being poisoned at ten-thirty this morning?'

'You ain't poisoned, Albert,' said Bill. 'That was only a mere *ruse de guerre*, as they say in the noosepapers.'

'A what?' demanded the Puddin', suspiciously.

'Let words be sufficient, without explanation,' said Bill, severely. 'And as we haven't time to waste talkin' philosophy to a Puddin', why, into the bag he goes, or we'll never get the story finished.'

Norman Lindsay 1995 [1918] *The Magic Pudding*. Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

Introduction

Multimedia skills are now part of everyday literate communicative, goal-seeking activity. They have defined the need for further understandings of cultural, narrative, critical and deep literacy, all of which are outlined here (visual literacy is addressed in Chapter 30). This chapter describes ways to interpret how books work, for example story and discourse, and how language and structure position readers and listeners in particular ways: how it is making them feel, what it is making them feel, what it is trying to make them do and why. It also outlines deep literacy—literacy that is born of immersion in story and story arts, that emerges from complex literate skills but transcends them, that sets up inner connections and grows minds, and that generates imaginative understandings of relationships to others and relationships to difference that will profoundly influence personal and communal behaviours.

* * *

ROSEMARY ROSS JOHNSTON

Ability to manipulate, navigate and effectively use appropriate digital technologies, software and hardware, to achieve desired communicative, creative or adaptive purposes

DIGITAL LITERACY: *The ability to understand and create information using digital technologies. Now firmly embedded in literate practices, expanding the ways children interact with texts through access to multiple forms, devices and formats that can be used to engineer, integrate, synthesise, translate/transform/transpose, create, disseminate and evaluate.*

CONTEXTS FOR TEXT: *This relates to multimodes of textual communication and the multiliteracies that these different types of text require. Each context for text has its own modes of literate behaviours, its own language, its own 'register'.*

DIGITAL LITERACY

Digital literacy is now embedded in literate practices. The digital age has expanded ways in which children can themselves interact with text and story worlds, through augmentation of books, which, among other things, provide access to online contexts. Here they can explore behind the scenes of texts, hear and watch the author speaking about the inspiration and genesis of their books and decisions they made about characters and plot. They can read sample chapters (e.g. <www.morrisgleitzman.com>) and sometimes download free books (as above, and often at <http://pauljennings.com.au>), where they can themselves contribute to the discussion as fans, even write their own digital narratives, add chapters, create new characters and new twists in the plot.

Digital literacy is an extension of self and practice. It has been in no small part responsible for the growth of the concept of *visual literacy*, which now finds a specific place in most school curricula. **Digital literacy** accesses multiple forms, devices and formats to engineer, integrate, synthesise, translate/transform/transpose, create, disseminate and evaluate.

Social networking sites and other online story experiences demonstrate that there are now many **contexts for text**: search engines and the Web, emails, creative compositions, factual research exercises, mobile text messages, tweets, media grabs and Facebook. Such different contexts represent multimedia **multimodes** and unloose new 'literate' behaviours, languages and '**registers**': that is, the variety of language used in different social situations (contexts) and the need to choose language appropriate to audience, purpose, time and place.

CULTURAL LITERACY

Cultural literacy is an intriguing concept. It is both knowledge of one's own world (needed to understand texts, needed to make meaning) and knowledge about a world that is not one's own. Knowledge of the world is sometimes referred to as **cultural schema** and relates to all the bits of knowledge that we piece together in order to make sense of language and the social structures within which we live. Cultural schema is an important concept in second language learning (see Chapter 12) because it is another way of thinking about cultural context, which is just as important as language context in helping us to make sense of words in a sentence (is it 'fare' or 'fair', 'holey' or 'holy', 'right' or 'write'?). *Idioms* are an important part of cultural literacy. A teacher who says 'Cut it out' or 'Break it down' to a child who has not got the cultural literacy to understand those idioms may provoke a very different response to the one intended.

The second aspect of cultural literacy is just as important. Deep understandings of our own world should lead to respect for the world of others, which of course is a world we all share. Cultural literacy is a knowledge and appreciation of this world of others, and values its differences. 'Other' is an inherently subjective and loaded concept, so I prefer the idea of 'diverse ways of being'.

This knowledge, understanding and appreciation of diverse ways of being doesn't mean just 'tolerance.' It doesn't mean simply including pictures of people from different races as part of a background group, or talking about different foods, clothes and houses. It means different ways of living, dressing, eating, thinking, relating to families, relating to peers, interpreting the past and anticipating futures. It is about 'us' as much as about 'them'. It means becoming aware with integrity of the enclosures of our own thinking. *It means being open to and experimenting with different ways of doing things, different sorts of formats, different ideas about beginnings and endings, different ideas even about what language should be, and different ideas about literacy.*

Literature presents a wide range of opportunities to develop the inclusive understandings that are of increasing significance in a multicultural, technological and increasingly global society. Real cultural literacy gives space for these diverse ways of being, and appreciates without question the fact that 'many worlds are possible' (Bruner 1993, p. 149).

Part of cultural literacy is respect for the past, and for the lived pasts of others. Literature, as the practice and engagement of all aspects of literacy, overcomes separations of time and space to give generational and historical equity and access to those who go before and those who live in other places, and allowing us the ability to make ourselves and our generation known to those who come after us.

MULTIMODES: *In a multimedia digital climate, there are many possible contexts for text, many possible shapes for texts, and many possible ways of producing texts.*

REGISTER: *Language appropriate for its audience, context and purpose, e.g. colloquial, scholarly, legal. In sociolinguistics, the variety of language used in different social situations.*

Knowledge of the world, and the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of diverse ways of being.

CULTURAL SCHEMA: *A term sometimes used to describe the familiar knowledge of one's own culture that is needed to make sense of the language and social structures within which we live.*

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

Understanding how culture defines social practice presents other complex challenges: for example, what should literacy be to an Aboriginal or migrant child, and how much, or how little, should such children be pressured to conform to traditional notions of literacy standards?

CHILDREN'S BOOKS AS SNIPPETS OF CULTURE

Books are snippets of living and lived culture, part of *cultural memory*. Literature, and particularly children's literature, is of the moment; its focus is inherently present. Even historical books, locating action in an obvious past, are reproduced within a sense of the ideas and ideologies of the present out of which they are written (see Chapter 32). For example, *My Place*, by Wheatley and Rawlins, reconstructs a series of historical moments but does so from the perspectives of its present: Australia on the edge of the 1988 Bicentennial. It shapes its 200 years of history around 1988 ideologies and the growing moral awareness of Indigenous relationships to land.

Literature is socioculturally indented. Each book is a mini-world, a microcosm of the culture that is its context. Culture is not just what things are—clothes and houses and food, for example; it is also *attitudes*: attitudes to children, to people from other races, to the roles of parents, to the shapes of families, to what little girls are and what little boys are, to grandparents, to the environment.

ROSEMARY ROSS JOHNSTON

Books consciously and unconsciously reflect cultural attitudes and ideas

Children's literature, with its late-20th-century proliferation of sophisticated picturebooks, represents an up-to-date, of-the-moment, highly contemporary sociocultural document. In words and pictures it shows by implication and by explication not only what life looks like, but also local and cultural ideas and attitudes about what it *should* look like and, particularly, what it should look like to children.

Janet and Allan Ahlberg's books for young children are successful not only because of the way they are crafted but also because of the way they cleverly represent anticipation and extension of *knowledge of the world* and, most significantly, *overtly focus on the child's worldview.* It is the child's viewing eye reading an expanding world that is at the centre of both *Each Peach Pear Plum* (1978) and *Peepo* (1981). In the former it is an 'I Spy' game:

> Each Peach Pear Plum
> I spy Tom Thumb

In *Peepo* a small cutout, a porthole both limiting and focusing attention, opening up and indicating a route (resembling a portal of the new media), deliberately represents what the child views and 'reads' as world knowledge, and how worldview and knowledge expand into context on turning the page. This is a literary representation of a highly reflexive process; the act of reading expands worldview, which expands the act of reading, which expands worldview. Response depends on context, worldview and knowledge: the adult reader, seeing beyond the text, may glimpse beneath the gentle illustrations of this book a rich understory of war, of impending departure and the possibility of loss and grief, similar to that expressed by the young war poet Wilfred Owen:

> What candles may be held to speed them all?
> Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
> Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.

Exposure to a rich landscape of sites of multiple meaning raises the threshold of tolerance and receptivity to difference.

NARRATIVE LITERACY

Perry Nodelman describes what he calls *narrative literacy* as knowledge that allows a reader or viewer to place the story in a literary and, as Nodelman (2002) also argues, art world that provides contexts of understanding and recognition. Part of such narrative literacy is knowledge of the books that are part of national culture.

Literacy is of the world, and it is also of us, of the individual worlds that each of us inhabits.

Narrative literacy also helps readers to identify story patterns and genre. The pattern of moving away from the safety of home and into the wild place (the place of the 'other'), then back home with fresh and enlarged world-understandings and maturity, represents what has been a fundamental narrative pattern in children's literature, although, as Nikolajeva (1996b) and others have pointed out, the pattern no longer necessarily includes the resolution associated with a closed ending.

Prescriptive language symbols are processed not only communally by sociohistorical consensus but also privately by the individual. When Max leaves the wild things and

comes back 'into the night of his very own room where he found his supper waiting for him' (Sendak 1992), 'supper' and 'very own room' connote much more than a meal or a place of habitation, but just what precisely they connote will depend to some degree on the individual reader.

CRITICAL LITERACY

Critical literacy is

- reading with a knowledge of language and how it can be used
- reading with a growing appreciation of how argument and viewpoint are presented and supported
- reading with an understanding of context for texts and of how different perspectives are associated with different uses of language
- reading with an awareness of where the text positions the reader
- reading with discernment the personal, social, cultural and aesthetic values of texts
- reading with a perception of the ideas and values and attitudes (and motives) that constitute the implicit framework of the text and out of which texts are generated.

CRITICAL LITERACY: *An approach to literacy that advocates a 'critical' perspective towards texts. It aims at revealing the hidden power relationships and ideological assumptions that underlie texts.*

Critical literacy is a type of forensic science applied to literary text. Because 'text' has come to mean any communicative graphical form from which meaning is derived, critical literacy can also apply to visual texts, such as the illustrations of picturebooks, and to moving image, such as film.

All texts express a point of view, a worldview. Critical literacy examines texts for signs and clues about author intentions and attitudes that the author may not even be aware of holding. These can include:

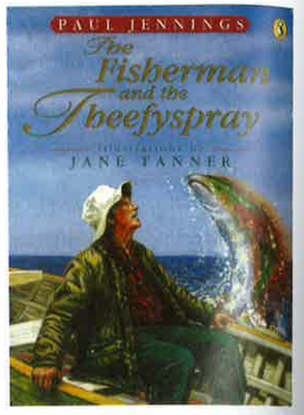
- choice of words
- choice of personal pronouns, especially those such as 'we', 'them', us', 'our'
- description of place: what the apparent 'here' of the text denotes: where the author is, where the protagonists are. Is this place inclusive or exclusive?
- if the text makes us want to do something: have a particular belief, like or dislike a certain group of people, even drive a particular car or wear a particular brand of T-shirt.

We can also examine any text through a lens that helps us to understand how *we* are reading it, what attitudes we are bringing to our own reading, and how this may influence our reaction to characters and story. *Reader response theory* (Iser 1978; Fish 1980) highlights the significance of readers—who they are, the ideas they have, the culture they belong to, how they see their place in the world—and emphasises the role they play in 'writing' what they read and how they read it. Readers are part of the meaning-making process.

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

Consider *The Fisherman and the Theefyspray* (Paul Jennings & Jane Tanner 1994). The unusual syntax and slightly heroic feel of 'There was not one other like her now' is compounded by the alliterative description of the other fish:

> Starfish swarmed. Garfish gathered.
> There were twos. And threes.
> And thousands.



The illustrations in the text operate as a system of signs. The several pictures with the shadow of the boat above the mother and her hungry baby signify (are signs of) an imminent danger, which the reader can readily perceive.

More subtle is the beautiful illustration on the last double opening: this is a picture of two worlds portrayed as a section—on the top the surface world, and the fisherman going home with his empty basket, but beneath him a vibrant world of colour and life. We read this picture as the artist intended us to—as a testimony to the marine environment and to the generous spirit of the fisherman.

Visual and critical literacy skills help us as readers to interpret the basket (we know it is without the fish, which has been returned to the ocean), a key symbol in this text, not as a sign of failure or defeat but as a sign of triumph. It is the emptiness of the basket that has contributed to the continuing vitality of the world beneath the surface. 'Truth' and 'meaning' depend on perspectives: the basket, symbol of the fishing trip, 'means' success, or lack of success, depending on your point of view. Which description is 'true' is equally problematical.

HOW TEXTS WORK

All books have several different levels:

- the level of story
- the level of the telling of the story
- the level of themes and significance (understory).

THE LEVEL OF STORY

The story is what is narrated. It emerges out of the events that take place, the actions its characters engage in, and the time and place of the setting.

The irony of story, however, is that although it is what is seen at a glance, it is not actually what appears in the black marks on the surface of the page. For example, the story of *Theefyspray* could be told in one sentence:

> The last theefyspray had a baby who was hungry and was caught by a fisherman who put it back in the water because he had seen the mother's beautiful colours.

Or the story of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak 1963) could be something like this:

> A little boy was naughty and was sent to his room but he had a fantastic (probably imaginary) adventure with some wild animals and when he came back his hot supper was waiting for him.

Or the story of Mahy's *A Summery Saturday Morning* could be:

> One Saturday morning, a mother takes her children and dogs for a walk to the beach.

THE TELLING OF THE STORY (THE TELLING OF THE TEXT)

Jennings, Sendak and Mahy have, however, not chosen to tell their stories in this way. So 'story' is a curiously insufficient term and only a superficial way of describing what happens in a text. It does not adequately describe the process of the telling of the story, how it tells the story it tells.

This *telling of the story* refers to all those choices that the author has made about the words used:

- the arrangement of the words (syntax)
- the meanings of the words (semantics)
- the sound and look of the words (graphophonics).

It refers to what is actually on the page, the order in which events and characters appear, the *mode* or *register* of the narrative, and the point of view and **focalisation** of events, characters and setting.

FOCALISATION: *The positioning of readers and viewers to see and hear the events of the narrative and the thoughts and ideas of the characters.*

For example, Jennings describes the birth of the baby fish with the words 'a pain grew and flowered, deep inside her'. The unusual use of 'flowered' in relation to 'pain' jolts readers into a new awareness of the nature of pain and into a new emphasis on pain's outcome (it is an example of what Shklovsky calls the 'roughened' language of poetry).

So there is a paradox—what we see at a glance, the story, is not what actually appears on the surface, although readers usually think it is.

DISCOURSE

This distinction between the story and the telling of the story, the *process of the telling*, is given different names by different theorists (see e.g. Martin 1986, pp. 107–8), but one of the most common terms, used by Gerard Genette (1980), Seymour Chatman (1978), Perry Nodelman (1992, pp. 61–3) and John Stephens (1992, pp. 17–18), is **discourse**.

DISCOURSE: *Communication of thought in speech or writing. In literature it refers to the process of telling the story, how the story is told on the surface of the text.*

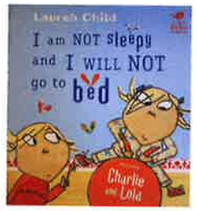
Discourse is a term with various applications, but it commonly refers to the process of narrating, how story is told on the surface of the text. Narrative includes both the story (what is narrated) and the discourse (how it is narrated).

Readers make, create, negotiate, construct, interpret story from how they read the discourse. Discourse is the language of the text, the actual words on the page. Story appears to fly free from the page, but in reality of course it is very much dependent on it.

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

Consider Patricia Mullins' *V for Vanishing* (1993), particularly the powerful opening 'Xx eXtinct'. The discourse—what actually appears on the page—is a very simple statement (not technically accurate anyway: 'extinct' begins with *e* not *x*) and some short scientific labels. This is a book without a conventional 'narrative'—no traditional verbal linkages—but ordered in a recognisable generic structure, the alphabet book.

However, story and theme emerge loud and clear and reach beyond the brevity of its discourse (scientific labels). The *story*, told through the poignancy of its illustrations, is about animals and how the animals it names are becoming extinct; the *theme* is about a world environment under threat. The powerful advocacies of this book (its themes and significance) come from the taste, smell and feel of the layers and layers of visual and verbal understory that still cling to what appears on the surface, that flavour that surface, and that provide textual and intertextual connections (see also Chapter 28), contrast and cohesion. Contemporary cultural ideas about the sanctity of the environment (cultural ideologies and societal agendas) are a significant part of that understory.



If we examine Lauren Child's picturebook *I am NOT Sleepy and I will NOT Go to Bed* (2007), the story could read:

> A young boy has to try to get his little sister to go to bed but she invents all sorts of reasons why she can't.

The discourse of this book plays, verbally and visually, with all the activities and stories that Lola, the little sister, uses to distract and procrastinate, using assonance in present participles: 'scribbling and sticking and wriggling' (repetition of the /i/ sound gives a sort of internal rhyme), and dialogue and repartee. The understory of this book relates to the power of the little girl's imagination to manipulate her brother into her imaginary world: 'So I take Lola and three tigers pink milk.' There is a deeper understory of patience, tolerance and love, but also perhaps brotherly frustration: '"Oh, don't tell me," I say. "I bet I can guess, there's a huge hippopotamus in your bed."'

UNDERSTORY OR THEMES

Underneath the discourse is a rich pool of personal and collective resources that is the reservoir out of which the author has made his or her selections in the telling of the story. Each word on the surface—the discourse—still smells and tastes of where it has come from and where it has been, and it is this that helps to give narrative its significance and express its themes.

UNDERSTORY: *A term relating to the layers of themes and significance in children's literature texts. It gives narrative and thematic cohesion as well as points of connection to other texts.*

The simple term **understory** relates to this underlayer of themes and significance. It helps to explain narrative and thematic cohesion, as well as the points of connection to other texts. *Narrative cohesion* refers to how the elements of story (characters, actions and events, time and place) are stuck together and ordered in such a way as to make some sort of whole. *Thematic cohesion* is like an undercurrent, pulling together words, concepts and pictures into a coherent and significant idea or theme that goes beyond story.

Some books for older readers tease out rich understories by framing their narratives against or within historical events that reproduce their protagonists' fears and dilemmas on a global scale, as Ursula Dubosarsky does in *The Red Shoe*; as Michael Morpurgo does in

Private Peaceful (2003), a story of growing up set during the First World War; and as David Almond does in *The Fire-Eaters* (2003), which tells the story of an adolescent boy who has a sick father, against the background of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

Understanding how discourse, story and understory work helps understandings of how authors use language to position and in a sense construct their readers (or *addressees*—the persons to whom the text is implicitly and explicitly addressed), as a short analysis of the first *Harry Potter* book (Rowling 1997) demonstrates.

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S/SORCERER'S STONE

The most significant identifying characteristic of children's literature is that it is overtly designed for children, in story, language, typography and physical format.

One of the main reasons for the phenomenal success of the *Harry Potter* books is the way the author addresses, positions and treats her child readers, trusting them with existential (life and death) issues, as well as with some sophisticated language and ironic social commentary. From the very first paragraph, J.K. Rowling enfolds readers into a privileged position of knowing:

> Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you'd expect to be involved in anything strange and mysterious, because they just didn't hold with such nonsense.

The use of the second person—'they were the last people you'd expect...'—immediately constructs a reader who is being taken under the wing (or cloak) of a knowledgeable narrator: 'When Mr and Mrs Dursley woke up on the dull, grey Tuesday our story starts...' (p. 7). This establishes a secure spot for a reader in the know, who already resists the Dursley point of view and, indeed, expects it to be wrong.

This reader is an imaginative 'you' who becomes an 'us'—'A fine thing it would be if...the Muggles found out about us all,' says Professor McGonagall (p. 13). Rowling's book implies an addressee who is clever, perceptive, imaginative and 'unmuggley'. She does not rely on a wiser adult to interpret the story (as C.S. Lewis sometimes does) and does not address that adult; her child reader is what Bakhtin referred to in his concept of the 'higher' superaddressee who is part of the organising structure of any text.

This higher superaddressee is 'a constitutive aspect of the whole utterance', whose 'absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed' (Bakhtin 1986, p. 126; see also Johnston 2002a). The superaddressee of *Harry Potter* is the child/reader who will understand Harry, intimately share his adventures, and resist Muggledom.

There are also of course other reasons why these books attract readers: they are a clever generic hybrid—school story, Blyton adventure, a C.S. Lewis-type magic entrance (wardrobe/Platform Nine and Three Quarters), Tolkienesque struggle between light and dark forces, fantasy, detective novel, social commentary (especially about parenting and a consumerist society), Indiana Jones-type quest, odyssey/search for personal identity, and, most of all, fairy story (Harry is Cinderella, Dudley is the ugly sister/ugly cousin, the Dursley parents are the archetypal wicked stepmother/father/carer

figures, Hagrid is the fairy godmother/helper—as well as the older, flawed hero, the Hogwarts Express is another version of the golden coach, which is the means of transporting Harry from the Muggle world where he is of little import—cinders/spidery cupboard under the stairs—to the world of school where he is very important indeed).

IDEOLOGY

The term 'ideology' originally referred to the science of ideas, but because of its contemporary associations with political ideas (such as Marxism or democracy) it has come to be understood more generally as a framework or system of thinking. In literature it can be defined in relation, first, to the personal framework of ideas that constitute and shape the author's worldview and opinions, and second, to the wider framework of ideas that is part of that author's culture and thus likely to influence him or her, either consciously or unconsciously.

Hollindale (1988), discussing the notion of ideology in children's literature, noted three levels which he applied across all main reading approaches to text: author-centred, reader-centred, text-centred, worldview-centred. These levels were:

1. the actual message of the text
2. the unexamined beliefs implicit in the text
3. the beliefs and attitudes and ideas that seep into the text as part of the author's world.

Part of learning about texts is identifying the author's overt purposes and the explicit and implicit cultural influences that have helped to shape what has been written. Literature not only contains *themes* that are ideologically constructed—they emerge out of the writer's assumptions and beliefs about the world the author inhabits, or out of that specific society's implicit beliefs about itself that spill over into the background world of the text, sometimes without the writer even knowing—but it also constructs its **narrative** in ways that are influenced by ideology. John Stephens argues a theory of narrative that among other things sees narrative structure as an 'ideologically powerful component of texts' (1992, p. 6). The decisions made by the author as to what is included and how it is represented can encourage and coerce readers into responding in particular ways.

NARRATIVE: *A story. In literary theory it includes both the story (what is narrated) and the discourse (how it is narrated).*

Every text is culturally and ideologically encoded in both what it says and how it says it. In Barthes's words, 'No text is innocent'. Even so, and indeed because of this, texts are living artefacts, anthropological and archaeological remains of the *past*—of what it was *to be* in that past and of what its culture *thought* it was to be—and sociological documents of the *present*.

Texts, like maps, are subjective and culturally coded. But it goes further than the intentions of the writer and/or illustrator. In composing the shapes and pictures of their texts, every writer and illustrator unconsciously reflects ideas and attitudes that are a part of the society and culture in which they live and out of which they are writing. When Mary Grant Bruce wrote the Billabong books in the first half of the 20th century, she did not mean to be racist or classist but she unconsciously reflected the prevailing implicit cultural and national

ideas of her time. Thus the book becomes ideologically marked, a representation of much more than the author ever intended. It is interesting that it is in fact the ideology that has dated such books as Billabong, Biggles and Enid Blyton's works—and that this is what has had to be expunged in the republished 'sanitised' versions.

LITERARY CRITICISM

Literary criticism is the field of study that provides different ways to help understandings of what literature is, what it does, and how it does it. Over the years there have been varying critical approaches. The Russian-born linguist Roman Jacobson (1896–1982) wrote: 'The object of literary study is not literature but "literariness", that is, what makes a given work a literary work' (Rivkin & Ryan 1998, p. 8). Jacobson was influenced by Russian formalism, a school in literary theory that defines literature in terms of the formal structures of the text only. The group of critics known as the *Formalists* saw the essence of poetry as not what it means but what it sounds like, its euphony: its language and rhythm and cadence (Eichenbaum 1998).

The *Symbolists*, on the other hand, stressed the importance of symbol and image. Symbolism refers to a late-19th-century movement in French poetry that privileged symbolic over actual meanings. There was a similar movement in French art. It is interesting to read children's books, especially picturebooks, with a view to considering visual and verbal symbols. Think about, for example, the idea of symbols of 'home' (as in Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, or any of the Ahlberg books).

Roland Barthes (1915–80) was a French literary critic who was particularly interested in *semiotics*, the science of signs and symbols. In *Mythologies* (1957) he looks at signs in everyday life, including those he saw in toys, advertisements and wrestling. In *The Pleasure of the Text* (1970) he analyses literary text from a structuralist perspective that was to become increasingly unorthodox. The *Structuralists* believed that texts should be analysed in terms of their structures and systems of relations, and were inspired by the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913).

Barthes talks about the *jouissance*, the joy of the text, the pleasure of the text. He makes the point that it is in persevering with texts that are difficult to understand that mere *plaisir* becomes *jouissance*, a term that is connected to orgasmic ecstasy!

The point is that books 'mean' different things to different people. This is precisely the reason children need to be exposed to a wide and diverse range. It is not only part of the development of cultural literacy; it is part of the deep literacy (see below) that is likely to influence thinking lives.

It is obvious that the experiences and the purposes of author and illustrator will inevitably influence their depiction of what this everyday world looks like. But literature in general and picturebooks in particular (because of the amount of visual detail used to depict these 'seen but unnoticed' aspects of everyday life) may unwittingly disclose more deeply rooted societal ideologies, attitudes and cultural assumptions.

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

EDWARD'S FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL BY ROSEMARY WELLS (1996)

This is a late-20th-century moral tale. Both text and illustrations overtly depict an everyday world where fathers and mothers play an equal role in caring for children (the father dresses Edward, the mother feeds him his porridge, 'together they put him in the car'); where parents are supportive (at school both parents have discussions with the teacher); where children are allowed to be different ('not everyone is ready…'); and where teachers are wise.

More covertly, however, it encodes an ideological shift in societal notions of power. The 20th-century construct of the individual-centred universe is at the heart of this text. There are only two double-page illustrations: the first is of Edward being driven by his parents to playschool and the second is of him being driven away from it. The first shows the car against an unpeopled backdrop of houses, and only the top half of Edward's face. The second shows the car decisively turned away from the group at the school gate and pointing in the opposite direction. The car here is more whole and therefore stronger—it is drawn three-quarters on rather than side on (as in the earlier picture). In the *thisness* of this moment, Edward is also more whole, his eyes are less apprehensive, and we see part of his mouth, which looks satisfied if not triumphant. The thrust of this second picture is a celebratory *going away from* the cluster at the gate that represents society. The individual, who doesn't 'want' to paint, or slide, or conform, withdraws from the 'everybody' who cheerfully support his right to do so (Johnston 1998).

DEEP LITERACY

DEEP LITERACY: *The complex meta-literacy that grows from engaging with the stories of others, both like and not-like, and develops creative thought through a generosity of spirit that is respectful of other 'I's.*

Literature emerges out of literacy skills in reading and writing, but rich exposure and immersion in the stories it tells and the ideas and themes and characters it creates help to develop what can be called '**deep literacy**'. The Australian Curriculum describes the Literature strand as 'Understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature: an enjoyment in, and informed appreciation of, how English language can convey information and emotion, create imaginary worlds and aesthetic and other significant experiences' (ACARA 2009, p. 6).

This dynamic provocation of emotion and experience that is the magic of literary texts implies that they spill into and infill the thinking places of readers' inner worlds. Thus sustained literary narratives help to develop a literacy that deepens—thickens, widens, expands—thoughts and thinking; that elasticises the reading and writing of the words and images of story to stretch imaginations and inspire dreams. This deep literacy 'reads' and 'writes' stories that are part of the construction of identity. It grows out of skills but goes beyond them, stirring up engagement and creativity.

Deep literacy crosses disciplines, encourages speculative and conceptual thinking, and most of all encourages the generosity of spirit that is subjunctively oriented and respectful of other 'I's. It helps children to recognise and negotiate differences. It continues to develop

them as knowing readers, readers who expect the best from the reading experience, and who carry their reading with them. It is change-making.

Deep literacy nurtures the imaginations and minds that generate civil societies.

DEEP LITERACY AND TRACERIES OF THEMES

A wide 'repertoire' (Nodelman 1996, p. 141) of exposure to literature from a young age gives young people understandings and expectations about what a book is and what it does, its codes and conventions, narrative patterns and thematic structures, its construction of character, its word-pictures of narrative time and place. It sows the seeds of understanding for big ideas and complex thoughts.

Thematic continuum: Wuthering Heights, The Wolf, John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat, Fox

The mood, confusions, jealousy and passion of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, and an understanding of the representation of these in narrative, are more readily perceived in the context of a panorama of reading that has included diverse articulations of similar ideas in picturebooks such as *The Wolf* (Barbalet & Tanner 1994) and perhaps *The Werewolf Knight* (Wagner & Roennfeldt 1995), and that has seen jealousy, possessiveness and fear at work in *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat* (Wagner & Brooks 1977) and *Fox* (Wild & Brooks 2000).

An apparently simple wordless picturebook such as Istvan Banyai's *Zoom* (1995), in a continual challenge to reader complacency, prepares young children for thematic ideas about expectations and judgments that may in fact be proved incorrect, and about perspectives and ideas that may later help them to understand better the position of the various voices in Brontë's masterpiece.

The complexities of Shakespeare's plays need to be read not as isolated fragments for intensive study that suddenly appear in the latter years of secondary school, but rather as part of the experience of artistic, literary texts that includes hundreds and hundreds of children's books—humorous, sad, realistic, fantastic. In this way, books as diverse as *Leaves for*

Mr Walter (Brian & Cox 1998), *The Selfish Giant* (Wilde 1888), *Playing Beatie Bow* (Park 1980) and Gleeson's *Skating on Sand* (1994) series will foreground later encounters with themes of foolishness and blindness (as in *King Lear*) and of the complexities of family relationships (as in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*).

Books for young children may look simple but they help to prepare an intellectual, aesthetic receptivity for abstract ideas and complex concepts. For example, let's follow through the notion of themes noted above and consider the idea of 'outsiderness'—marginality, inclusiveness versus exclusiveness, otherness. Books can help children develop innate awareness of what it means to be an outsider, of how it feels to be on the margins, and of how such positioning is constructed within narrative.

King Lear Hamlet Macbeth The Selfish Giant

Consider the illustration below by Greg Rogers of the street boy looking through the window at the fat cat in Hathorn and Roger's text *Way Home* (1994), and then read Thomas Hardy's depiction of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) as an outsider:

> She was not an existence, an experience, a structure of sensations, to anyone but herself. To all humankind, Tess was only a passing thought. (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, ch. 14)

From the same two texts, there is something of the verbal picture of Tess and Sorrow, the young outcast mother holding the outcast baby, in the darkly shadowed visual picture of the homeless boy holding the kitten in the folds of his jacket. Taro Yashima's *Crow Boy* (1983) tells another story of marginality, classroom outsiderness and difference, as does *Luke's Way of Looking* (Wheatley & Ottley 1999). Nathaniel Lachenmeyer's *Broken Beaks* (2003), beautifully illustrated by Robert Ingpen, is a moving moral representation of responses to difference:

> The other sparrows did not help their friend. Some of them were frightened by the young sparrow's broken beak. Some believed—since his beak had broken and theirs had not—that he was somehow to blame. The rest assumed that someone else would help him.

Critical literacy is the doing with the text; deep literacy is the doing away from the text

Critical literacy helps us to understand and describe how the language of *The Fisherman and the Theefyspray* (Jennings & Tanner 1994) is used in such a way as to encourage the reader into sympathy for the little fish, who is 'deep' in 'cold shadow', in a 'lonely lair'. It is 'cold', it is 'lonely' and it is 'little'.

Deep literacy translates this into personal engagement and intellectual and emotional growth. It prods a love or at least an understanding of the natural world, a sympathy for the little fish and its mother, and an intuitive idea of how the fisherman feels and why he lets the fish go back into the water. It stimulates attitudes towards the environment that influence how we treat it, how we might recycle waste or work to protect endangered species. It helps us to recognise how and why the natural world has played such an enormous role in all literatures in all cultures.

Consider Armin Greder's *The Island* (2007). Critical literacy provides the tools for analysis, the way to discern and describe language choice and usage and narrative point of view, and understand how we have been positioned as viewers and readers (through the viewing points established by the author and illustrator), and the impact of verbal and visual imageries. Deep literacy helps us read this alongside other knowledge (of modern history,

for example), to understand the story in a broader context, and to take away from the text a personal determination, for example not to fear difference, not to act out of unmitigated self-interest, not to be one of a mob, not to have an unwelcoming spirit.

ACTIVITY 10: DEEP LITERACY

Read *The Fisherman and the Theefyspray* by Paul Jennings and Jane Tanner.

YEARS F–2

- Find all the signs of the fisherman in the story (the boat, the line, the basket).
- What is the underwater world like? Ask children to think of as many words as they can to describe it (bright, colourful, full of life, active, etc.).
- Tell me: would you have put the theefyspray back?
- Draw a picture and write a sentence telling a story about saving something.

YEARS 3–4

Organise the class into small groups. Ask them to discuss the following, sharing the recording of their responses:

- Tell the story in one sentence.
- Why didn't Jennings tell the story as simply as that?
- What words make you feel sorry for the theefyspray?
- What sort of words are most of these? (adjectives) What work do these words do? (describe)
- What do these words mean?

  ...a pain grew and flowered,

  deep inside her.
- Why do you think Jennings chose the word 'flowered'? What other words could he have used? Have you ever heard that word used in relation to pain before? What does it make the reader feel?

YEARS 5–6

Add the following:

- *Alliteration* is the name for when several words near each other start with the same letter, thus giving a similar sound, e.g. 'shrill shriek'. Find as many examples as you can.
- *Assonance* is the name for when several words near each other have the same vowel sound but don't actually rhyme, e.g. 'deep', 'theefyspray', 'green'. Can you find any other examples of assonance?
- The class reports its findings. Discuss the poetic nature of the language and the idea that the language of poetry tries to make you see ordinary things in a new way (see also 'Picturebooks and poetry' in Chapter 30).
- Individual task: write a short poem about something you have seen today or know you will see today. Try to describe it in such a way as to make your readers see the thing in a new way. The

class may like to use the computer to help them set out text in innovative ways. (Show some examples of poems that do this.)

- If you were told that the fisherman was very poor and had a hungry family at home waiting for him to provide food for them, would you see the story in a different light? Discuss.

Another deceptively 'simple' text that can be considered in this way is *Diary of a Wombat* (Jackie French and Bruce Whatley 2002). This is layered to encode questioning ideas about territory, perspectives, learning about difference, tolerating difference, and sharing and getting on with others—with a 'them' that is not 'me' or 'us.' (See further discussion in Chapter 34.)

ACTIVITY 11: PERSPECTIVES AND POINT OF VIEW

YEAR 3–4

1. Read as a class *Way Home* by Libby Hathorn and Greg Rogers (1994). If you can, darken the classroom.
2. Bring the thirteenth opening up on screen. After you have finished the story, let the class reflect on it for a few minutes.
3. Discuss the idea of visual perspective or point of view:
   - From what other perspectives could the artist have drawn this picture?
   - Why has he chosen this perspective?
   - Where are we looking from?
4. Now look at the words on this page. You might like to introduce children to the idea of the telling of the story.
   - Whose eyes are we seeing through?
   - What is the advantage of direct speech as part of the telling of a text?
   - What is the effect of the three lines in third person? (You may need to explain these terms to your class. If so, reinforce them as often as possible in subsequent discussions.)
   - What ideas and attitudes in our society does a story like this show (concern about homeless children, the division between rich and poor, waste of resources, etc.)?

YEARS 5–6

Add the following:

1. Look at the pictures again. What signs in the pictures are about society?
2. Some of the above tasks can be open class discussion, or you may prefer them to be done in small groups. Divide the class into small groups now, if you have not already done so. Ask each group to think about how the story of this page could be told by a different person with a different point of view. Encourage them to give the person a name and explain their reasons for thinking the way they do. Each group creates a short script of what their person says. Then each group presents their script to the class, with one person in the group briefly explaining who the person is, another setting the scene, another presenting the script, and another describing how a point of view changes how you see things.

3. Give the class time to reflect and to take some notes.

This type of exercise can be adapted using many books. It may also be a helpful way to introduce secondary students to the literary analysis of such texts as Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (compare the different perspectives of Prospero, Caliban, Ariel) and Winton's *Cloudstreet*.

ACTIVITY 12: DIFFERENT WAYS OF TELLING A STORY

Adapt as required for upper primary, middle school, junior secondary, and tertiary students.

1. Plan a series of lessons around the novel *Feeling Sorry for Celia* by Jaclyn Moriarty (2001). This is set in the tradition of the *epistolary novel:* a novel in which the story is told in an exchange of letters between characters.

   Introduce the novel by a discussion of the many ways—multimodes—of communication. Discuss the idea of register and contexts for text (see Chapter 23) and explore the ways in which language varies according to purpose and context.

   Read the novel, and list the different modes of communication (not all are conventional letters—there are journal entries and notes pinned on the refrigerator) and their characteristics. How does the story emerge?
2. Discuss how character is revealed in this novel (through speech—written and reported, first-person thoughts, actions, interactions with others, sometimes the words of others as reported by the narrator). How is this different to some other books you have read?
3. Find examples of books in which character is revealed in different ways. For example, sometimes the author describes the characters and tells us what they are thinking and feeling and why. Sometimes authors tell readers what is right and/or wrong about what characters may or may not be doing. When characters are described as 'he' or 'she' or 'they', they are described as being in the third person.
4. Authors who describe, rather than letting their characters speak (or write) for themselves, as Moriarty does, are sometimes called 'omniscient narrators.' *Omnis* is Latin for 'all', and *scire* is Latin for 'to know.' Why do you think such narrators are called omniscient? Find examples of books that have an omniscient narrator. Can you think of any other words that have related derivations?
5. Refer to the earlier discussion of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Rowling addresses her reader as 'you', which is second person. 'You' can be singular or plural. Do you think Rowling is using it in the singular or plural sense here? Why?

Exercise: write a short story employing as many different epistolary modes as you can (e.g. mobile phone text, email, tweets, letter to editor, MSN Messenger, reports, notes and post-its, formal letter to the principal, greeting cards, etc.). List the skills you need for each one. How are they the same? How are they different? Refer also to *The Day the Crayons Quit*, by Drew Daywalt and Oliver Jeffers (2013).

ACTIVITY 13: DIFFERENT WAYS OF GROWING

YEARS F–2

1. Read any of the *Edward* books by Rosemary Wells. Discuss ideas of being ready and growing. Draw a picture and write a sentence about a time when you grew.
2. Tell the class a story about something you have seen grow.

YEARS 3–4

1. Read *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat*. What sort of growing takes place in this book? Who do you think grows? Why?
2. Write a poem about a time of growing.

YEARS 5–6

1. Ask the children, as a class, to discuss ways of growing: physical, mental, emotional, being able to do something they couldn't before, learning new things about people, understanding things in a different way, learning new things about themselves. Find as many stories as you can that describe an aspect of growing. In small groups, sort them into categories: learning to do something you couldn't do before, adjusting to a new situation, moving to a new place, overcoming some difficulty, changing attitudes about something.
2. Read *Cherry Pie* by Gretel Killeen, Francesca Partridge and Franck Dubuc (1998). In what way does the person telling the story grow? Discuss in small groups and report to the class.
3. Read *Leaves for Mr Walter* by Janeen Brian and David Cox (1998). Who does the growing in this story? Does more than one person grow? In what way?
4. Who are the champions in *Champions* by Jonathan Harlen and Emma Quay (1998)? What message does this book give to us?
5. Set up a class table of growing books. Perhaps you could place other growing things on it as well—seeds, sprouts, an artwork someone is working on over a longer period than usual.
6. In groups of about six, choose a favourite piece of music and compose a dance or growing tableau. Write out your growing themes on a poster or an overhead. Set aside practice and performance times.

ACTIVITY 14: A SUBJECTIVE AUSTRALIA

YEARS 5–6, MIDDLE SCHOOL: SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

1. Look through as many Australian picturebooks as you can.
2. List and briefly describe the different 'subjective Australias' that you find represented:

The bush	The suburbs
The city	The country
Schools	Play places
The beach	Holiday places
The house	Family and people

3. Note that what is part of the depiction of the everyday (background rather than foreground) is likely to be most revealing.
4. Think about and discuss the notion of your own 'subjective Australia'.

This task could be adapted to apply to the picturebooks of any country.

EXPANSION ACTIVITY

YEAR 6, SECONDARY

An excellent book, set in France and recently republished by Young Picador, and which is also semi-autobiographical, is *The Greengage Summer* by Rumer Godden (2004, first published 1958). This is a moving coming-of-age novel that is suitable for secondary students

Summary

- The digital age means that readers can interact with texts and story worlds. Digital literacy is now embedded in all literate practices
- Cultural literacy has two significant aspects: knowledge of one's own world and the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the diverse worlds of others.
- Each context for text requires its own modes of literate behaviours, its own particular use of language. This relates to the idea of *register*: the variety of language used in different social situations (contexts); the need to choose language appropriate to audience, purpose, time and place.
- Texts consist of story (what happens), discourse (the telling of the story) and understory (layers of theme and significance in texts). Understory includes the resources out of which textual and intertextual connections are made and which help to give cohesion.
- Critical literacy pertains to texts and to discerning how they are constructed and how they influence. It seeks *clues* about the author's intentions, and *cues* about how the author is positioning readers and viewers to react.
- Deep literacy refers to how wide exposure to literature and its stories, in a variety of multimodal forms and genres, can influence thinking, dreams and behaviour. It nurtures the imaginations and minds that generate civil societies.

Extend your practice

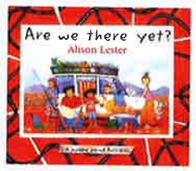
Consider:

1. Critical literacy alerts us to the assumptions and attitudes often hiding in places where we don't expect them. Consider *The Wind in the Willows* (Kenneth Grahame), and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Roald Dahl).

2. Reflect on how these books—and others you may know—may reflect an imperialist worldview:
   cultural assumptions that indigenous people need to be 'civilised'
   cultural assumptions that the wilderness needs to be tamed and the frontiers of civilisation extended
   the historical context of patriotic conquest
   the importance of power and empire
   class structure.
3. Then read some or all of the following: *Window* (Baker 1991), *Island in My Garden* (Howes & Harvey 1998), *The Paddock* (Norman 1992), *The Story of Rosy Dock* (Baker 1995), *The Hidden Forest* (Baker 2000), *As I Grew Older* (Abdullah 1992), *Enora and the Black Crane* (Meeks 1991), *The Burnt Stick* (Hill 1994).
4. Discuss these texts in relation to a 21st-century environmental worldview:
   cultural assumptions that the wilderness must be protected against the creep of civilisation
   the significance of the natural environment in sustainable futures
   equal rights of indigenous peoples to maintain their culture.

Example of application: How literary criticism helps

Alison Lester *Are We There Yet? A Journey Around Australia* (2004)



In Lester's *Are We There Yet?* an analysis of time and its intersection with people and events reveals that the time of the story is located in the past: time has lapsed, and 'we' are home, and perhaps have been home for quite a period. An analysis of time and its intersection with place reveals two senses of place: one of the country being visited as timeless and ancient compared with the transience of the family's visit, and one in terms of a human lifeline, a sense of time past, perhaps even of the transience of childhood. Note that encoded in the title of this book is a complex idea of time as at once past, present and future.

This book tells the story of a family travelling in an old camper trailer around Australia. The dedication implies that this experience is based on a real-life adventure of the author.

Narrative literacy relates this story to a travel tale; it describes landscape and provides factual information as well as personal information about the places visited, and indeed is a celebration of the diversity of the Australian continent. It is organised in a type of chapter arrangement based on the familiar structure of the journey: home, away, home, with enlarged understandings of the world. It is written in the first person, but the story is told through different narrative modes that include maps and illustrations, script and labels.

Looking for clues about the world portrayed in a literary text

Critical literacy allows us to read the following attitudes and values in the web of the text:

1. The 'us-ness' of family:
   Dad: 'I liked it better when it was just us and the whales'
   the value of family, beyond the nuclear: Nan and Poppa ('I miss our cuddles') stay to look after the animals, the adventurers stay with Uncle Pete in Sydney
   the value of doing things together as a family
   the value of home.

2. The assumption that it is good to take children to see their country, and the more implicit assumption that this is an educational experience, and that it is quite all right to miss school for 'the whole winter term'.
3. The value of the bush, of the environment and of solitude.
4. Warm relationships of parents and children, warm relationships with the extended family of grandparents (who may live in the same house), the idea of the teenager as someone a bit separate to the two younger children.
5. Mum's lack of fear on the bungee ride at Surfers' Paradise, and Dad's fear, which deliberately interrogates gender codes.
6. Implicit in the whole book is an attitude of anti-materialism: the camper trailer 'had everything we needed'.

Cultural literacy allows us to understand the following: the depiction of how people travel in cars on long journeys (carefully belted), and what camping grounds and their shared bathrooms are like; the informal portrayal of the mother; the cat called Tigger (after A.A. Milne's *The House at Pooh Corner*); the *intertextual* association to the Coorong and pelicans (Thiele's *Storm Boy*); the subtle connections between whale songs and sea sirens; indigenous art traditions and ideas of the Dreamtime in the chapter titled 'The Outback'.

It also enhances understandings of phrases such as 'on the road' as a Western idiom for getting started, the notion of cowgirl and flying doctor (could be a doctor with wings!), the play on words in 'bight' and 'bite' (and the multimodal representation of this pun), the idea of mateship and multiculturalism implicit in the episodes with the football team and the local boys and 'Luke's barramundi barbecue', and the evocation of the Australian Aboriginal flag in the watching the sunset scene.

The inculcation of social mores and morals includes the careful use of seatbelts in the visual illustrations, going to the gallery in Canberra, and wearing hats and sunscreen.

Examples of *imaginative literacy* include the use of metaphors and similes; the delightful possibility of 'creepy things in the water'.

This text will also be discussed in terms of *visual literacy* in Chapter 31.

Further reading

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Useful websites

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<www.wisegeek.org/what-is-reader-response-criticism.htm>
<www.questia.com/library/literature/literary-themes-and-topics/reader-response-criticism>
<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/virtualit/poetry/critical_define/crit_reader.html>

Children's Literature in the Australian Context

'... past and present texts across a range of cultural contexts that are valued for their form and style and are recognised as having enduring or artistic value.'

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter you will learn:

- to develop knowledge about Australian children's books as part of historical and geographic contexts
- to develop understandings of changing representations of Australia in children's books
- to understand the contribution of Australian picturebooks both nationally and internationally
- to recognise the significant place of Indigenous literature and of Indigenous life-writing through children's books
- to note the need to explore the literatures of the Australian Pacific and Asian neighbours.

KEY TERMS

aetiological
fable
genre
landscape
life-writing
literate practices
motif
picturebooks
registers
realism
surrealism