Journeying: Young Children's Responses to Picture Books of Traumatic and Sensitive Issues

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Warwick in accordance with the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Institute of Education.

University of Warwick

May, 2010

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Warwick. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Warwick.

The thesis has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

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Date: May, 2010

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a number of people without whom it would not have been possible to complete this study.

Firstly, I would like to thank the 35 students and the classroom teacher for sharing their time and amazing learning experience with me, and who graciously put up with my regular intrusion into their lives in that period of time. The study would not have been possible without their cooperation and spontaneous responses to the children's literature. It has been a privilege to work with the 35 students and the classroom teacher and I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent with them.

Secondly, I would like to thank Dr. Hilary Minns and Dr. Christine Wilkie for their academic support throughout the study. Their passion for young children's reading and children's literature constantly inspired and motivated me. It has been a pleasure to work with them both and I am most grateful for their encouragement and invaluable feedback and guidance on the production of my thesis as it evolved. I also want to thank Dr. Joe Winston for his continual support; his profitable comments greatly contributed to this research study.

Finally, my most sincere and special thanks go to my dear parents for their unfailing love and support to make my dreams come true. I am also grateful to

my dear auntie for her endless support. Thanks also to my friends: Boyun Choe, Peggy Chou, Paulo Diogo, RoseAnne Evelyn, Yoshitaka Fujiwara, Claire Lee, Yvonne Lee, Celine Lin, Amy Liu, Jane Spinola, Sherri Wei and Yue-Yun Wen without whose support, great association and knowledge of technology, this thesis would not have been completed. Moreover, I want to express my appreciation to all my other friends whose love and continual encouragement has inspired me on this long journey.

Abstract

This study investigates the response of a class of 35 seven and eight year old children to ten picture books with difficult, traumatic subject matter. Two of the stories deal with areas of emotional loss, including the death of a grandfather; five stories take the area of the Holocaust as their central theme, and three are stories of earthquakes, with the consequent loss of life and destruction. My research findings contribute to the study of children's literature in education by uniquely analysing and giving insight into especially *young* children's responses to this particular genre of children's literature. In this research programme, the children are invited to engage in **reading** and four designed activities emerged for response: the central importance of **spoken** language, the place of **writing** to capture meaning and significance, the value of **drawing** to enhance understanding and the place of **imaginative role play** as children worked on their impressions of events in the stories.

My central research questions are: What is young children's understanding of and response to texts and pictures in selected children's picture books of trauma? In what ways might young children's responses to these issues and their accompanying activities reshape their critical thinking? What have I, as the researcher, learnt about my role as a teacher through teaching traumatic issues?

The study was conducted in Taiwan using participatory action research methods. My evidence shows that these children are capable of understanding complex and disturbing situations that underpin the picture book narratives. They used their social, interactive, verbal, emotional and imaginative skills to respond to the texts in powerful ways. The significance of the teacher's role as a listener, questioner and learner was crucial in helping to motive and engage the children. The study's findings are that picture books that deal with disturbing human issues can be introduced as part of a planned programme of

Arts and Life education in Grades 1 to 6 of the primary school curriculum and that children as young as seven are capable of responding to them with maturity and sophistication.

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The storyteller is deep inside every one of us. The story-maker is always with us. Let us suppose our world is attacked by war, by the horrors that we all of us easily imagine. Let us suppose floods wash through our cities, the seas rise…but the storyteller will be there, for it is our imaginations which shape us, keep us, create us — for good and for ill. It is our stories that will recreate us, when we are torn, hurt, even destroyed. It is the storyteller, the dream-maker, the myth-maker, that is our phoenix, that represents us at our best, and at our most creative.

Doris Lessing (2007)

1. Chapter One

Introduction

This research has been designed to investigate young children's responses to children's literature of trauma through the teaching and exploration of ten selected picture books. The aim of this research has been to learn how young children respond to traumatic issues. I worked with a class of seven and eight-year-old children in my home country, Taiwan to explore the development of their critical and reflective thought processes, as they sought to understand and empathise with the characters and events in these stories, and confront some of the major problems that beset humanity. The first part of this chapter discusses my motivation for and my interest in carrying out this research. This is followed by an explanation of the context and background of the research conducted in Taiwan, with a focus on the following perspectives: culture, geography, literacy, pedagogy and the classroom situation. The outline for each chapter forms the third part of the introduction.

1.1 Motivation and Rationale

As a child reader, I learnt a great deal from stories that were read to me by adults or which I read on my own as I grew up. Listening to these same stories with other children in the classroom was a different experience altogether. We could talk about the books and share creative ideas, and so we developed an appreciation of the stories and a respect for the voice of the author and for each other's opinions. Most importantly, I can see now that with sensitive teaching, this interactive process between the reader and the text can broaden the experience of readers and help them to understand more about literary response, as well as giving them insights into the world they live in. My experience encouraged me to share stories with children when I was a teacher and I knew that it was my responsibility to move the children to a more

mature response. I began to experience the power of story as a medium through which children could begin to understand different genres, cultures and to use literary forms of language to express emotion as they responded to texts. Harding (1977:391) argues that: 'Response is a word that reminds the teacher that the experience of art is a thing of our making, an activity in which we are our own interpretative artist.' My work as a teacher of young children has shown me that they are capable of enjoying, and responding to, sophisticated works of fiction, and I wanted to investigate this exciting learning process in my thesis.

I was teaching in New York on September 11, 2001 and will always remember how terrified my colleagues and I were when the terrorists attacked the twin towers. I did not know how to respond to my kindergarteners' questions even though I knew they somehow sensed that everything was different and could see that the adults around them were shocked and distressed. How could I begin to explain or discuss these terrible events with children aged five, and how much should I tell them? It is understandable that adults want to protect children from the ugly side of reality, but I was left wondering whether I should explore the events of 9/11 with these young children or, as some adults suggested, try to ignore the trauma, and get on with teaching the normal curriculum. I wondered too whether it would even be appropriate to teach young children about other traumas they may face in their lives. I began to think that I could make links between the teaching of trauma and the complex and sometimes frightening events that are increasingly represented in children's picture books. This context would offer children the opportunity to explore picture books with compelling and sometimes troubling detail, while giving them room to interpret and reflect on both the literature itself and the problematic events in the world they live in, in ways that would develop their critical thinking, imagination and creativity. My own role as a teacher, listener and questioner was therefore going to be crucial.

This research has helped me to understand that, with careful teaching, we can consider 'affective education' and 'death education' as part of the teaching curriculum in school. I was interested to learn that Jones and Tannock (2000) had conducted two practitioner researches in order to understand more about children's perspectives on death and bereavement. Their aim was "to find out how children across the primary age range perceived death and to make comparisons between the responses of the various age groups" (2000:88). From their surveys in four schools, they discovered that children were affected by various levels of loss, ranging from moving house to the divorce of parents or the death of a grandparent. They argued that it is important for teachers and parents to develop approaches to help children who have experienced, or who might experience, loss, rather than waiting for the problems to occur, often leaving children feeling unsupported. My own research has not sought to replicate this work. Indeed, I knew I must not frighten the children or leave them in despair; instead I wanted to create a context, based around the teaching of ten selected picture books, that could help them to release their emotions, to express their feelings and to discuss their thoughts and memories in an open and secure environment, rather than being "thrown in at the deep end" (ibid). Jones and Tannock's optimism supported me as I designed my research; this was important, particularly since some colleagues advised me that teaching trauma to young children was an area that most teachers would not touch. I have also been influenced by the arguments of Crossley-Holland, a writer who does not shirk from presenting the dark side of reality to children in his stories:

> It is not much use pretending to children that there are no horrors in the world, when they know perfectly well that there are. They know it from television and radio; they know it from newspapers; and they know it from loose talk amongst adults. They know it every day (2000:21).

Inevitably, adults tend not to talk about sensitive and traumatic issues to young children, but it seems to me that even young children have the right to develop insights into traumatic issues in literature in order to understand how they react to these events both emotionally and cognitively and how they

might therefore perhaps cope with similar events in their own lives.

I chose to use children's picture books as the medium through which to explore how a class of Taiwanese children aged seven and eight might learn to come to terms with a range of difficult issues presented in the stories. I have a genuine enthusiasm for the ten books I selected. They are all beautifully written and illustrated, and though they deal with tragic circumstances involving loss, death and destruction, each one is a declaration of faith and hope, and of the triumph of human achievement over adversity. An underlying theme of each book is the celebration of life itself, the continuity between childhood and adulthood, and of the individual courage of characters in each story and I will analyse each one fully in **Chapter Two**. As the children read these narratives of tragedy and disaster, they had a chance to think more deeply and to become more reflective than might normally be expected of children of such a young age. Specifically, the picture books I selected took the events of death, war and natural disaster as their main themes. Within these three significant themes, the children and I explored the issues of loss and separation, the Holocaust and earthquakes. I was guided in my choice of books by experts such as Styles (1996:42), who argues: "I have never known a child to look closely at a book he or she finds disagreeable. Children are their own censors." In her experience, children engage intellectually with picture books and "have a great deal to teach adults about them" (ibid: 23).

Some of the books I have chosen deal with actual historical detail, but each one tells a story, and this was an important criterion for selection. Gregory (1977:394) argues:

> There is surely a deep biological reason for the importance of fiction: that it states and considers alternative possible realities – allowing escape from the prison of current fact. There is more to it than the pleasures of 'escapism': for it is only by considering what might be that we can change effectively what is, or predict what is likely to be. Fiction has the immense biological significance of allowing behaviour to follow plans removed from, though related in subtle ways to, worldly events. Fiction frees the nervous system from the tyranny of reflexes triggered by events, so that we respond not merely to what happens, but also to what might happen.

The interplay of text and illustration in the ten picture books has provided opportunities for the children to imagine and create possible scenarios as they made sense of the stories and filled 'the gap that exists between the image and the words, the gap that has to be filled by the child's imagination.' (Anthony Browne, cited in Bearne, 2000:149).

1.2 The Taiwanese Context

In the past decades, Taiwan has gradually been transformed from an authoritarian to a democratic country with a diverse society and culture. Taiwan took the American education system as its educational model and emphasised that "education is the foundation of a nation" (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2005). Nine years of education (age 7-15) has been compulsory in Taiwan since 1968 and is soon to be extended to twelve years of education. Early childhood education (age 3-6) is available in addition to the nine years of compulsory education. A wide range of other educational options are available to citizens of all ages.

1.2.1 The Context of Education in Taiwan

I need to discuss the process of educational reform in Taiwan from 1980s, in order to show the value that has been placed on the development of Life Education and Moral Education. These areas are highly relevant to my research in exploring children's responses to children's literature of trauma. The educational system in Taiwan has been moving from uniformity to diversity, from authoritarian centralisation to deregulation and pluralism, in order "to meet the needs of a greatly changing and emerging democratic society, as well as to make more manifest the intrinsic value of education" (Lee, 2004:578). The goals of educational reform since 1990s are: to set up a flexible school system; to lessen the pressure on academic achievement; to remove the burden of the joint university entrance examinations; to narrow the gap between rural and urban educational resources; to promote lifelong

learning; and to reinforce international culture and educational exchanges (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 1999).

This educational reform has made a huge impact on the curriculum of elementary and junior high schools since 1997. *The guidelines for a nine-year joint curricula plan of elementary and junior high schools* promulgated by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan in 1998 were fully implemented by August 2004 (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2003). The six important areas which schools were recommended to integrate within the *Grade1-9 Curriculum*, includes the teaching of Human Rights. In this research, the children were encouraged to explore the traumatic issues relevant to loss and separation, war and natural disasters through carefully selected picture books to develop their critical thinking, value systems and conceptual understanding of world views, differences, empathy, and their understanding of compassion towards another's situation and feelings. These aspects of my research reflected the significance of Life Education and Moral Education in *Grade1-9 Curriculum* in Taiwan. The guidelines and goals for teaching Life Education and Moral Education are implemented through interdisciplinary curricular areas and Life Education is regarded as an important part of helping students to cope with hardships in their lives and to reflect on their own beliefs and attitudes as well as to value other lives and the whole living environment (Huang, Lin and Zhang, 2003:181). The devastating 921 earthquake in Taiwan in 1999 caused death, injury and destruction. This tragedy made the Ministry of Education take Life Education more seriously and in 2000 they set up a Life Education Implementation Committee to promote the planning and delivery of Life Education from primary to higher education.

My research offers children an opportunity to share their concerns and therefore is particularly relevant to the goals of Life Education. It is also relevant to children's moral education. However, there was no place for Moral Education in the *Grade 1-9 Curriculum*, and so in 2004, the Taiwan Ministry of Education published a Moral and Character Education Improvement Programme. The goals of this programme, that are of most relevance to my

research, facilitate the development of students' moral thinking and their ability to select, reflect on, cherish and identify with core ethical values and codes of conduct (Ministry of Education 2006). My research emphasised these goals, and I invited the children to reflect on their moral beliefs and to respect the different voices of individuals as we explored the selected children's literature of trauma, and identified value systems that affect their feelings and behaviours. In this way, the children's appreciation of life, their empathy and their ability to communicate and cope with their emotions were developed and enhanced (Aspinall, 1996:346). To some extent, there are some overlapping areas between Moral Education and Life Education, especially in the research I conducted, which dealt with the universal human condition, and explored death and loss, tragedy, courage, kindness and compassion.

1.2.2 The Geographical context of Kaohsiung

This project was conducted in a primary school in a Taiwanese metropolitan city, Kaohsiung. Kaohsiung City is located on the south-western coast of Taiwan and it contains 11 districts, with 1.5 million inhabitants. Kaohsiung has been transformed from an undeveloped fishing village into a thriving industrial city in the past few decades, and is now a centre for manufacturing, refining and shipbuilding. The future intention is to develop the area into a S.H.E. (safe, healthy, ecological) city to enhance people's lives and to protect the environment (Kaohsiung City Government, 2008).

Kaohsiung City, just like many other Taiwanese cities and towns, is visited by natural disasters, such as typhoons and earthquakes, especially in summer and autumn. All citizens, including children, are aware of the dangers and the consequences of natural disasters. The 921 earthquake that I introduced as part of this project, caused severe damage in central Taiwan in 1999, though in Kaohsiung, citizens only felt minor shaking, nothing collapsed or was damaged and no one was injured. The children in this project did not directly experience this serious natural disaster and were therefore not traumatised by it; however, they have been exposed to media reports and to adults'

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conversations, and so they are aware of the 921 earthquake, even though they were not directly affected by this devastating traumatic experience.

1.2.3 The Development of Children's Literature in Taiwan

Children's literature in Taiwan has proliferated dramatically over the past twenty years. Many publishers are actively engaged in developing the book trade and the booming economy in Taiwan in the 1980s and 1990s has influenced the buying power of middle-class families (Desmet, 2005:219). The market in children's literature (especially children's picture books) in Taiwan can be divided into three areas: children's literature produced locally, children's literature translated from foreign works and folk tales adapted from Chinese culture and history. The number of local writers and illustrators who work on children's literature has increased and their work focuses on themes relevant to young children's experiences and daily life in Taiwan such as *媽媽, 外面有陽光* (*Mum, It's Sunny Outside*) (2008), *八歲，我一個人旅行*（*I Travel Alone at Eight*) (2003), *小魚散步* (*On My Way to Buy Eggs*) (2005) and *一個不能沒有禮物的日子* (*The Best Christmas Ever*) (2006). These local writers and illustrators are contributing to the development of Taiwanese culture because their work reflects and illuminates the lives of children in Taiwan and does not shy away from portraying social realism, such as *一直 看，就可以看到你* (*No Puedo Vivir Sin Ti*) (2009) that addresses how a father had negotiated and fought with complicated rules set by the government in order to protect his daughter from abandonment and the strong love between the father and his daughter. In this research, the children were given opportunities to develop their viewpoints to the reality in relation to the sensitive issues through the exploration of the stories, their experiences as they grow up and Taiwanese cultural background. Translations of well known children's books have played an important role in children's reading choices for decades and still influence the sales of children's literature in Taiwan (Desmet and Duh, 2004:1244). These books include the traditional fairy tale collections of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen and modern

picture story books by authors and illustrators that include Anthony Browne, Eric Carle, Quentin Blake, Maurice Sendak and Raymond Briggs. Therefore, for many generations, children growing up in Taiwan have been familiar with fairy tales like *Snow White* (白雪公主), *Cinderella* (灰姑娘), *The Three Little Pigs* (三隻小豬), *The Little Mermaid* (小美人魚) and *Little Red Riding Hood* (小紅帽). In today's generation, children have also enjoyed contemporary stories such as 野獸國（*Where the Wild Things Are*) (1987), 雪人（*The Snowman*) (1993), 好餓的毛毛蟲（*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*) (1990) and 猜猜我有多愛你（*Guess How Much I Love You*) (2000) (Wei, 2005:116). In addition, children read books adapted from Chinese culture and history, such as 年獸阿儺 (*The Nain Monster*) (2000), 十二生肖的故事（*The Twelve Animals of the Chinese Zodiac*) (2006), 老鼠娶新娘 (*The Mouse Bride*) (1992) and 元宵姑娘 (*The Lanterns Festival*) (1999).

As the government began to place increased emphasis on the importance of Life Education, more children's literature concerning sensitive issues was made available. Traumatic themes such as earthquakes, the Holocaust, sexual abuse and disability, which were previously regarded as taboo (because children *needed* to be protected from the ugly side of reality), were translated and imported into the children's literature market in Taiwan, especially after the serious 921 earthquake in 1999. Local writers and illustrators produced children's picture books about these sensitive issues, such as 希望的翅膀 (*The Wings of Hope*) (2000) which was one of my chosen books. Because of this it was not too difficult for me to choose translated or locally produced picture books that dealt with my selected topics.

Even though more and more local writers and illustrators are producing high quality children's literature, the current market of children's literature in Taiwan is still rather dependent on translations of foreign books. Desmet and Duh (2004:1245) state their concern that "foreign works often inflict cultural values on the receiving countries; cultural translation is usually compounded with hegemonic ideology." I am aware that texts are never neutral and that

they are sometimes perhaps "put together in particular ways by particular people hoping for particular effects," and that possibly the children's literature of trauma, especially concerning the issue of the Holocaust reflects this concern even more powerfully (Comber, 2001:182). I prepared myself to understand the history and the consequences of victims' personal stories in relation to the Holocaust as I selected the five picture books based on this aspect of history and the themes that the children might be able to relate to. Moreover, I bore in mind that my own perspective, my overall purpose and the way in which I represented the ten stories to the children might reshape the children's responses and beliefs (Apol, Sakuma, Reynolds and Rop, 2003:434).

1.2.4 The Pedagogic Context of The Project

As a reader and former teacher, I felt that stories provide the most appropriate way of introducing children to complex issues. Stories mirror what happens in daily lives and they reflect the complexities, the joy, the fear and sorrow (Gibson and Zaidman, 1991:232). Hickman, Cullinan and Help (1994:4) state that "Story is central to our thinking. We all tell stories about how the world works and our place in it." Nowadays, children walk into classrooms confronted with different challenges from each other and it is important for teachers to help them deal with their personal experiences, both happy and sad. The use of stories as a vehicle to help children reflect on their experiences, and to imagine possibilities helps them to understand their personal circumstances, to negotiate social relationships and to develop a critical voice as they think about significant social problems (Viruru, 2003:225-226). In this research, the children were invited to walk into the world of empathy, "the power to enter into the feeling and spirit of others" through children's literature of trauma (Gorrell, 2000:32). The purpose of this project is to take these children on a critical and reflective journey through the selected children's literature of trauma to increase their understanding of themselves and others, to appreciate life and respect differences and to be aware of the complexities of human behaviours and choices.

When I decided to research reader response to children's literature of trauma, I had to decide which traumatic topics I could include, and which could be developed and extended using available teaching materials. The issue of the Holocaust was selected because of my personal interest and I found quite a lot of relevant children's literature about it. I was also inspired by Fischl (1994), a Holocaust survivor who claims that "The most important thing is …I want to help people start to think and to educate themselves and to love each other." In conducting this project, I wanted the children to empathise with the experiences of others from another time and place and to observe how the stories might influence their responses, and their understanding of value systems and concepts of human behaviour and morality (Gorrell, 1997:50; Bosmajian, 1983:20). These Holocaust stories also allowed me to talk about concepts such as prejudice, hatred and stereotyping that are equally relevant today. I knew I would have to introduce this area sensitively, even though children as young as the target group (seven and eight) would have some personal experience of loss and separation. Indeed, the topic of loss and separation formed a sound basis for our initial discussions. In addition, it seemed appropriate to introduce the project with a topic the children knew (loss and separation) and to work towards the unknown (the Holocaust).

Huge natural disasters such as the tsunami and hurricane Katrina caused massive damage and loss of life. Earthquakes happen frequently in Japan and Taiwan and I managed to find picture books dealing with the experience of earthquakes written in both Mandarin and Japanese. In this project, the children were invited to learn about challenging universal issues through careful planning and teaching, while still meeting the National Curriculum requirements. In this voyage of exploration and discovery, the children were encouraged to learn and understand not only the contexts of the subject area and the texts, but also to enter "the realm of showing compassion and respect towards other people and cultures" (Reese, 2002:63).

1.2.5 The Context of The Classroom

The school has thirteen classes at each grade level (from First Grade to Sixth Grade), approximately three thousand students representing a wide range of socio-economic, multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic backgrounds and families. The target group of this research consisted of one class of Second Grade students in the primary school. The students had never discussed traumatic issues such as war (the Holocaust) and natural disaster (earthquakes) as part of their curriculum before, and their previous experience and understanding of traumatic issues was limited to dealing with loss and separation, including the death of a loved one. Their classroom teacher, Ms. W, took the chance to talk about the areas of death and suicide with the children occasionally when they were broadcast on the media and were the focus of public attention. There were also two picture books about the issue of death in the classroom library, donated by parents of the children.

Ms. W had only had time to read the children one of these picture books. It concerned a child who was trying to understand and accept his Grandpa's death, 爺爺有沒有穿西裝 *(Is Grandpa Wearing a Suit or Not?)* (1999) by Amelie Fried. From the questionnaire completed by the children before conducting this research, all of the children were familiar with picture books and fairy tales. Only 20% of the children began to read at age three and the remaining 80% before aged six. Early childhood education is not compulsory in Taiwan and parents are free to decide if they want to send their children to pre-school. All of the children in the target classroom began their literacy learning before they actually entered the primary school. From my understanding, Ms. W did not read to the children regularly because of the tight time-table and various activities, but she managed to do it when she had time. The children were encouraged to take books from the classroom library when they had spare time (ten minutes break-time four times a day, lunch hour and nap time were included). The collection in the classroom library mainly consisted of picture books covering fantasy, adventure, social and moral issues chosen by Ms. W. The children were encouraged to borrow books from the school library. From my observation, some of the children

visited the school library and borrowed books during their break-time. Based on the questionnaire I received from the children, 30% of them read daily and 20% of them read weekly; however, half of them did not read regularly. In addition, 80% of the children read at home (50% of them read both at home and school); however, the remaining 20% only read at school. It can be seen that the children did not have much free time and much chance to read at school and it was also reasonable that they wanted time to play with their friends while at school. It is also possible that the 20% of children who read only at school did not have many books available at home.

This project could not be divorced from the situation in which the data was collected and I therefore took advantage of the open and reflective learning environment established by Ms. W as I set out to establish my own ways of teaching, in terms of critical thinking and imaginative role play, through three pre-teaching sessions. Grumet (cited in O'Mara, 1999:105) claims that "Because every act of teaching and learning is saturated with the specificity of time and place, educational theorists, and researchers struggle to bring that specificity into their accounts." The specificity is to understand both the general context and to analyse how this general context has shaped classroom practice.

The reason for choosing this particular primary school was because I have had personal contact with some teachers there and this contact made my preparation for the field work easier. I discussed my purposes for conducting this research with these teachers in order to obtain their consent and to choose the most appropriate class of young children to work with. The target classroom was chosen because the classroom teacher, Ms. W was deeply interested in the topic. My relationship with Ms. W began with a sense of collegiality. I showed Ms. W the selected picture books and discussed about how each one would be presented after her class was chosen for this project (my rationale for selection can be found from 3.3.4 to 3.3.6). Ms. W then shared with me the general background and a brief profile of the children but did not go into much detail for she wanted me to "find it all out by myself"

without her personal subjectivity. I was very nervous about talking with her initially because I was uncertain about how she would respond to the idea of the project. She was concerned about the children's limited literacy learning and lack of imaginative role play experience and hoped this would not hinder my work and that the project would be a way of extending children's experience. From the discussion about her work, I had no doubt that Ms. W was a very fine teacher with passion, commitment and enthusiasm for teaching. She was also very keen on expanding her knowledge of imaginative role play activity and the teaching of traumatic issues, especially the Holocaust and loss and separation.

I was introduced to the class on the very first day of my non-participant observation. I shared my past teaching and learning experiences with the students and I was delighted to have the opportunity to work with and learn from them. The warm welcome by the students and Ms. W helped me to be less nervous. After the two weeks of being with this community of learners, I was more confident in my role as a teacher.

During the two week non-participant observation, I began to build up my friendship with the children through casual talks, interaction, answering their questions about me and sharing our thoughts and emotions. In these two weeks, I was not a teacher or a researcher in the class, but a friend. I was very much aware and concerned about my role in teaching young children about traumatic and sensitive issues and knew that it was essential to form a supportive and secure environment for the children so they could express their feelings and thoughts without hesitation or worry.

My relationship with Ms. W was in many ways enhanced by our mutual passion for teaching, learning and reading. We worked as supportive colleagues and shared feelings and feedback like friends. During the two weeks of non-participant observation, Ms. W was there for me whenever I had any questions about the children and she shared her ideas of classroom management with me. While conducting this project, I talked to Ms. W

regularly after every lesson and incorporated her suggestions into my planning for the next lesson. In addition, Ms. W's observation about how the children engaged with the stories and activities was also valuable for reminding me of what I perhaps did not see from my own observations. Ms. W had established an interactive and open learning environment where the children were encouraged to voice their ideas freely, and where the children were open to questioning and responding and were prepared to share their thoughts and feelings. I tried to build on their experience through my pre-teaching sessions by asking very challenging questions and therefore helping the children to deepen their thoughts and responses. The children were not afraid of being challenged with critical and emotional questions during the three pre-teaching sessions and that gave me great confidence in choosing and designing activities for the project. More information about the three pre-teaching sessions can be found in **Chapter Three**.

This research provided the opportunities for the children to build insights into their understanding of the complex world and to respond to sensitive issues within their learning community. In addition, in this learning community, the children scaffold their understanding from each other's responses and experiences to make more sense of the events and stories. I must argue that the learning community had a huge impact and support in helping the children's mature and in depth responses to the selected picture books and the traumatic issues.

1.3 Outline of Each Chapter

Chapter Two, the theoretical framework relevant to this research, covers four main areas: children's literature of trauma; children's literature in the classroom; death and disaster and reader response theory. This last area is a significant aspect of this research, since it focuses closely on children's response to the chosen books. Readers are not passive learners; instead, they engage imaginatively with the stories, often using their personal experience to make moral judgements that relate to the events and the characters. And, of course, each reader's response is unique; their individual interpretation, understanding, background, knowledge and personal experience, all have a bearing on their response. In this research, it will be seen that the young readers also respond powerfully to the illustrations in each picture book and that their responses to both text and illustration have been deepened through discussion, writing, imaginative role play and art work.

In **Chapter Three,** research methodology, the features of action research and case study and all the methods applied to collect data for the research are addressed and discussed. The data collected have been used to find evidence for my central research questions: What are young children's understandings of and responses to texts and pictures in selected children's picture books of trauma? In what ways may young children's responses to these issues and their accompanying activities reshape their critical thinking? What have I, as the researcher, learnt about my role as a teacher through teaching traumatic issues?

This research can be regarded as a participatory-action-research-based case study. Action research is an umbrella term which covers teacher-research, self-reflective research and participatory research. In this study, I am the researcher and also the teacher in the chosen primary school classroom in Taiwan, trying to understand how young children interact with, comprehend and interpret the selected picture books. This research has endeavoured to uncover children's responses to these books and has explored how young readers' responses to traumatic issues in the books can reshape their critical

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thinking and help them to refine their value systems.

Chapter Four lies at the heart of this study and contains my analysis of the children's responses to the stories. It uses evidence from the children to support my central argument that with careful teaching it is possible to introduce literature containing traumatic events to young children aged seven and eight, and to help them respond sensitively and intelligently to such events and issues. This chapter then discusses the role of the teacher in conducting this project. **Chapter Five** discusses the conclusions from the findings and explores the implications of this unique piece of research for the primary of spoken language and the value of story in the lives of children.

2. Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This research seeks to understand young readers' responses to traumatic stories. Different stories are told to young children around the world throughout their childhood. Questions or doubts may arise in parents' and teachers' minds when they are telling a story to children: Why tell children stories? What stories are appropriate to tell children at a certain age and why choose some particular stories for children but not others? Adults tend to protect children from stories concerning death and other traumatic events in life (Goldman, 2005:3). However, we neglect the fact that many children are already exposed to frightening and traumatic aspects of life through fairy tales, stories, songs, media programmes and even conversations. The purpose of telling young readers these challenging stories is partly to help them cope with powerful emotions, to be empathetic to others and to understand the world they live in. Moreover, there is an underlying expectation that these stories will develop positive and hopeful attitudes towards unpredictable life experiences. Chambers (1985:16) states that,

> … in literature we find the best expression of the human imagination, and the most useful means by which we come to grips with our ideas about ourselves and what we are.

This chapter focuses on four main areas. The first is **children's literature of trauma** in which I set out to define and discuss six interrelated themes pertaining to this research: children's literature, children's literature of trauma, trauma in contemporary children's literature, genres of children's literature of trauma, children as readers of children's literature and finally, the value of children's literature of trauma. The second main area focuses on **children's literature in the classroom**. Within this area I introduce ideas concerning the role of narrative, oral presentation of children's literature in the classroom, the

role of the teacher and the role of students as spectators, participants and percipients. The third central area is **death and disaster**, in which I discuss the difficult issues that emerge when exposing young children to these areas. I then discuss the value of teaching young children with picture books, the notion of introducing traumatic issues to young children through picture books and the question of closure. This is followed by the fourth main area: **reader response theory**, in which I discuss the relationship of reader response theory to the literature of trauma.

In this chapter, I firstly need to explain the role that trauma plays in literature generally, before focusing on children's literature of trauma specifically, and showing how traumatic aspects of life are presented through children's literature. I will also define the meaning of trauma and discuss early and contemporary stories where children encounter trauma. The value of children's literature of trauma will be discussed in the children's literature of trauma section of the chapter.

I will then move on to discuss children's literature in the classroom. The use of children's literature has been widely adopted in schools in recent decades. In this section, I will focus on its role in education as well as on the question of how children's literature is integrated and taught as part of other curriculum subjects (such as literacy, art, music, history, science) at school. Furthermore, the different approaches to telling stories in the classroom will lead me to reflect on how children develop emotional literacy and a sense of morality.

Thirdly, I will address the inter-relationship between trauma, young readers, picture books and imaginative role play. The key purposes for teaching young children about trauma will be discussed in depth in this section, concentrating on three main themes: death, the Holocaust and earthquake. I will also discuss the idea that children's literature of trauma resembles a mirror, which helps children to see themselves, face challenges and reflect upon their emotions, and that it offers them a window through which to see other worlds and ways of living. The notion of moral awareness will be discussed with reference to

the issues of trauma selected for this research.

Finally, I will discuss reader response theory and its place in this research. For many people, sharing stories with children is not simply about the telling of the tale but is also about trying to inspire or motivate them to think critically, creatively and imaginatively. In this section, I therefore focus on readers' interpretation and responses towards traumatic issues in children's literature, as informed by reader response theory. I will explore why and how to listen to children's true voices and explore how stories can help them to understand their experience. I will discuss the value of encouraging young readers' responses to traumatic experiences in the books they read, and discuss the implications of opening up areas of emotional response and empathy.

2.2 Children's Literature of Trauma

This research, through the children's books selected, sets out to analyse young children's response to events and characters in the literature of trauma. In human beings' daily lives, we often encounter sad or difficult times; we try to find ways to get over the pain and look forward to the more joyous aspects of life. The central aim of this research is to analyse young readers' responses to traumatic issues through books chosen in this project and to see how these powerful stories might shape their attitudes and concerns about others and the world which they inhabit. In the following section of the chapter, I will define subtle distinctions between the literature of trauma, children's literature itself, and children's literature of trauma.

2.2.1 What is the Literature of Trauma?

Many experiences in life deal out a variety of challenges: birth and death, love and hatred, happiness and grief are being encountered all the time by adults and children around the world. Some of these universal traumas are painful and inevitable; others occur without warning. In this section, I will concentrate on those unexpected traumatic experiences which threaten people's daily lives suddenly and may bring unexpected death (Spiers, 2001:13). Trauma, the pain of loss and the grief of death may bring wounds of the mind (Garland, 2002:9).

Literature can be defined as written works that express and identify readers' thoughts, emotions, and experience and present the facts of human situations authentically and creatively (Goforth, 1998:3). Through an exploration of both characters and events, readers can get a clear vision of personal concerns as mirrored in the text and begin to understand scientific, historical, cultural and social information. This helps them to interact effectively with the world they live in (Huck, Hepler and Hickman, 1989:6). Written works which introduce loss, death and pain can be categorised as literature of trauma. Tal (1996:21) and Appelfeld (1988:86) claim that the literature of trauma is

specifically written from the need to tell and retell the story of the traumatic experience, so that it helps both the writers and the survivors to voice their experience and feelings; moreover, it speaks to both the victims and the community of readers as they wrestle with grief. However, writers of the literature of trauma are not always the victims of trauma but choose to express their experience in memory or imagination through the eyes of a particular character, such as John Burningham's *Granpa* (2003) and E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1972).

2.2.2 What is Children's Literature?

The term 'children's literature', broadly speaking, encompasses books and stories that are targeted children as primary audience. The term usually applies to books written by adult authors and determined as "appropriate" for children by such gatekeepers as teachers, parents and librarians (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1999:15-16). Children's literature covers many genres, formats, subjects and concepts. Hunt (1994:1) argues that children's literature also examines words and pictures; it overlaps into other modes –video, oral storytelling, music and drama. Children's literature incorporates both good and bad experiences of childhood, real or imaginary, and the events that can happen in the world. The setting for these children's books can be in the past, the present or in the future, such as having a fight with siblings or friends, being visited by the tooth fairy, getting or losing a pet, anticipating the first day at school and other common disturbing or exciting experiences for children. In this research, I focus on death-related traumatic stories, which I will describe later.

The main audience for children's literature is assumed to be young readers. However, some books written particularly for children are also enjoyed by any reader, even adults. For example, readers of all ages are much engaged with the Harry Potter series. In quality, children's literature is not better or worse but different from young adult literature or adult literature and its readers are children with less life experience and a limited understanding of

complex ideas. Children's literature needs to offer children accurate historical, social and multicultural information through less complex vocabulary and syntax to help young readers to understand and perhaps incorporate those experiences into their own lives (Goforth, 1998:4).

Because the particular audience for children's literature is children, its subject matter inevitably covers child-related or childhood issues and experiences. Within these day-to-day themes authors examine human universal conditions, concepts of self-esteem and self-identity, and issues of emotional, social, cultural understanding and development. This subject matter is represented in a less complex format and language use for young readers. Children's literature is not merely for fun, not always 'safe'. It offers a space for children to imagine worlds beyond their own, to develop their understanding of a dangerous reality, to help them cope with possible problems they may face in their future lives, and to enjoy taking on roles in imaginative worlds. Stories for children are often told in an enjoyable, positive, exciting and appropriate tone to create an illusion of make-believe that suggests a better future with a hopeful, loving and happy ending, even when the characters face cruel and difficult issues (Smith, 2005:116; Butler and Williamson, 1994:5-6).

2.2.3 What is Children's Literature of Trauma?

It is understandable that it is difficult to cope with fear and sorrow when encountering traumatic experiences such as death, violence, abuse, war and natural disaster. If dealing with these challenges is not easy for adults, then it is certainly much harder for children. The key reason for creating a happy ending in children's books, particularly for very young children, is to protect them from the violent, the hopeless and the negative side of life. Adults' and educators' first intention is to "protect" children from "encounters" with pain, loss and fearful themes addressed in children's literature (Trousdale, 1989:70; Oria-Iriarte, 2003:214). Nevertheless, Hope (2007: 290) argues that children need to understand what she calls "the reality of modern life" for example, difficult subject matter such as war, in order to meet difficulties in their own

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lives and those of others. Roni Natov (2002: 220) also points out that a book for children "must not leave the child-reader in despair. And although what evokes happiness varies from child to child…a poetics for children requires a delicate rendering of hope and honesty." However, it may be appropriate for children to realise that life is not always joyful and to help them to accept difficulties in life and to broaden their understanding of traumatic experiences. Like Bettelheim (1976), I believe that if adults share stories with negative aspects of life with young readers, it is important to support and help them to develop and maintain hope and love. Pullman (2005, Channel 5) argues that:

> A story should not leave children without any hope; it should not leave them bereft of every kind of consolation. In the words of Samuel Johnson: 'the true aim of writing is to enable the readers the better to enjoy life or to endure it.' So if a story ends sadly, then there must be some sort of strength in it which will help the child to cope with sadness or loss. A book that says to the child: "the universe is a filthy place and there is nothing to do about it but despair or kill yourself" is not very much help, is it? It is probably not very good as a children's book.

Children's literature of trauma may or may not have happy endings; however, it is important that these books end with meaningful and positive messages for young readers so they feel able to face difficulties. This research sets out to find out whether children's literature of trauma can be used to help children cope in a positive way with the negative effects of trauma. Nodelman and Reimer (1996:86) claim that:

> To deprive children of the opportunity to read about confusing or painful matters like those they might actually be experiencing will either make literature irrelevant to them or else leave them feeling they are alone in their thoughts or experience.

Stories are not merely for enjoyment but also offer readers opportunities to gain new insights, thoughts and feelings through different experiences expressed by the authors. Readers may feel they are not alone when they face similar experiences or encounter emotional reactions of characters. Wuthnow

(1991:179) cites W. H. Auden: "You cannot tell people what to do. You can only tell them parables." Worden (1983:4) also points out a similar idea that violence or death cannot be omitted from children's literature that deals honestly with these issues.

My research sets out to discover whether careful teaching using particular texts helps to reduce children's fear, give them a way of coping with their emotions and find solutions if they do encounter hardship. I intend to investigate whether in order to protect children from the sudden pain of traumatic and difficult experiences, it is helpful to introduce them to stories that offer scope for them to experience through their imagination what they have not experienced directly and to encourage them to express their feelings of universal empathy, love and hope (Robertson, 1999:3).

Many children read or listen to fairy tales in their childhood. These stories help children to become familiar with one kind of genre of children's literature as well as to understand the moral, emotional and realistic issues and problems implied within the fairy tales. These include difficult areas that children have to face when they are very young, such as poverty and death in *The Little Match Girl* (1987) by Hans Christian Andersen and fear and abandonment in *Hansel and Gretel* (2003) by The Brothers Grimm. Children become aware of cruelty and sadness through the stories they are told or read. Even if fairy tales are not discussed, opportunities to read about loss and sadness will make children aware of the negative aspects of life. Fairy tales, to some extent, offer young readers a sense of consolation, "for every individual lives in constant fear of the magical aggression of others and the general social atmosphere in the village is one of mutual suspicion, of latent danger and hidden hostility, which pervade every aspect of life" (Schoeck, 1969:51-52). Fairy tales possess a dimension of wonder or magic as well, whether that dimension is achieved through talking animals, magic helpers or evil witches (Trousdale, 1989:77). Some children may believe that difficult situations only happen in fairy tales and that the problems encountered in stories are resolved or end happily. Nevertheless, young readers are exposed to the cruel universal

human problems expressed in fairy tales, such as loss, death, brutality and abandonment. Since the features of fairy tales explore human struggles, it is perhaps not surprising that parents and educators have used them, perhaps unconsciously, as a secure and supportive framework for children who are learning how to deal with difficult areas of their lives (Tucker, 2006:202-203; Ballentine and Hill, 2000:12).

It is hard to protect children from having access to harsh aspects of life through all kinds of media (such as publications, audio and visual media) no matter how unwilling adults are for their children to know about difficult issues at a young age (Bettelheim, 1976:7; Singer, 2006: 310). However, through those media or perhaps from children's real experiences, they learn about difficult situations in families and societies, such as divorce, separation, difference, loss and death, abuse, both physical or sexual, poverty, starvation, natural disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and tsunamis, terrorism and war, such as World War I, World War II, the terrorist attacks of September 11 and the war in Iraq (Cullinan and Galda, 1998:230). Children try to make sense of this information and cope with the pain and grief they meet in real life and in books (Russell, 2000:209; Goforth, 1998:142, 149-151).

2.2.4 Traumatic Events in Contemporary Children's Literature

In the past decade, more and more traumatic, universal issues are appearing in contemporary children's literature. In my view, children in this rapidly changing society may not know how to tolerate fear, pain and hardship because of ignorance or protection from adults. They may also lack the ability to reflect and empathise if input from the media alters their perceptions of what is real. Whereas the media provides children with vast quantities of unfiltered information, children's literature guides their experiences into more contextualised understanding. Books take readers on journeys into different people's worlds where they learn from someone's experience. For example, *The Tunnel* (1997b) by Anthony Browne creates a mysterious and scary tunnel for Jack and Rose to explore. Rose fearfully follows her brother into the

tunnel, through a frightening wood, and finds that Jack has been turned to stone magically. But Rose's love and tears bring Jack back to life. Through the experience in the tunnel, Jack and Rose learn to be kind to each other. The role of contemporary children's literature in exposing children to trauma can be found in the following examples. *Granpa* (2003) by John Burningham is about the intimate relationship between a grandfather and his granddaughter. The little girl has to face her grandfather's final illness and death; however, the story ends with her pushing her doll's pram up the road with a smile on her face that implies that life must go on. *Charlotte's Web* (1952) by E.B White, does not end with the death of Charlotte, but in the birth of her babies. 祝你生日快樂 (*Happy Birthday to You*) (1996) by S. J. Fang is a Mandarin story about a little boy, Xiao-Ding, who meets up with a girl who has cancer and they play together till the girl returns to hospital. They promise to meet up again on the little girl's birthday one week later. That day, the girl does not arrive, but Xiao-Ding makes a wish for her. *The Bracelet* (1993) by Yoshiko Uchida concerns the life of Emi in a Japanese American internment camp during WW II and the sadness of being parted from her best friend. These stories are not trying to scare children but to help them explore the difficult problems that human beings face as they grow up, learn to overcome fear, to deal with challenges with courage and to empathise with others who have no choice in their lives (Adams, 1986:13; Lewis, 1966:31).

"Some children can read books and learn how to handle certain life situations before they even take place. Others may read to discover that it is possible to overcome some common developmental problem they are presently experiencing" (Grindler, Stratton and McKenna, 1997:12). Sharing stories with children can help them to reduce their fear of difficult emotions as well as helping them to develop empathic vision toward others (Bennett, 2005:23; Russell, 2000:33; Barclay and Whittington, 1992:149).

2.2.5 Genres in Children's Literature of Trauma

Children's literature can be presented in various ways to meet readers' needs and for their pleasure. Children travel on a personal, emotional and

imaginative journey through various types of children's literature as they grow up. In the early years, very young children begin to sing and act along with chants, rhymes and poetry whose language helps to develop their phonological awareness and enjoyment of words (Fox, 1993:49). Nursery aged children enjoy fairy tales. When children move to primary school, they are often introduced to different formats of picture books in the form of fiction and nonfiction texts, it is becoming evident that the line between fiction and nonfiction is not clear. I will discuss this blurring further in a later section. The genre I have chosen to use for this research is fiction because stories are represented through fictional characters' experiences using real events and encounters. Poems, plays and picture books all share something in common; they all tell stories. Children's fiction, more specifically, tends to be:

> simple, but not necessarily simplistic, action-oriented rather than character-oriented, all about children, presented from the viewpoint of innocence, optimistic and always with happy endings, repetitious in diction and structure and thematically concerned with opposing or balancing utopian and didactic concerns (Nodelman, 1992:190).

The Three Little Pigs (2007) is a good example of this definition enacted within a well-known folk tale. It contains a simple storyline, it is about childlike animals (young pigs), it is didactic (it teaches readers to look after each other), it has a repeating story structure and form, it has a happy ending and it concerns meanness and kindness to others. Moreover, this kind of fiction is not only written to entertain readers but also to offer them some information that might persuade them to reflect on issues and problems (Norton, 1999:458). Through fiction, children see the world through the character's vision of history and reality (Sawyer and Comer, 1991:86).

Fiction can be divided into different genres. In this section, I will focus on realistic fiction and historical fiction. Children may like the fiction of fantasy, magic and enchantment but many of them also appreciate, and some prefer, fiction about characters that seem more like themselves; familiar stories that relate to their daily life and activities (Russell, 2000:190, 195, 210-212).

Some children seek stories about ordinary life that may help them cope with problems and difficult emotions—sometimes happy, sometimes sad, sometimes soothing and calming and sometimes frustrating. Realistic fiction is a story that can happen in daily life and may be based on the author's own experience. Cormier explains his reason for writing realistic fiction:

> …I was trying to write realistically even though I knew it would upset some people. The fact is the good guys don't always win in real life…I also wanted to indict those who don't try to help, who remain indifferent in the face of evil or wrongdoing. They are as bad or probably worse than the villains themselves (cited in Hearne and Kaye, 1981:48).

Realistic fiction does not ask readers to believe in talking bears but allows them to understand that all people share similar human behaviours and emotions through engagement with fictional characters and scenes (Swayer and Comer, 1991:86). In realistic fiction, readers are able to find possible roles, both good and evil, and to understand and tolerate problems of the universal condition from a secure distance (Huck, Helper and Hickman, 1989:527-528). This "secure distance" is crucial. Britton (1970:104) states that the reader is taking the role of 'spectator': contemplating experiences, enjoying them, vividly reconstructing them perhaps—but not taking part in them. That is to say, as spectators listening to or reading realistic fiction, readers can share joys or sorrows, through the lens of events in stories, and at a safe distance.

Human beings' lives are sometimes sad and harsh and children's experience is no exception. Realistic fiction aims to depict the dismal aspects of the world as well as the positive situations of life as it engages with real people's actual experience (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 1996:140). Lewis (1961:57) maintains that realistic content could refer to events that usually occur (happy or sad emotions), situations concerning universal human events (separation and death) or things that may have happened once but are unlikely (attack and war). Young readers who read *The Lord of the Rings* series (1965) by J. R. R.

Tolkien know they are entering a fantasy world which contains events that do not happen in reality. However, young readers may read Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars* (1989) or Elie Wiesel's *Night* (1986) and believe that children can survive any hardship if they possess determination, courage and hope. Even though readers may gain similar insights from fantasy fiction, realistic fiction shows authentic characters encountering tangible problems in realistic settings. For example, *My Sister Is Different* (1995) by Betty Ren Wright deals with a child's difficult struggle with her feelings about whether to admit to having a mentally handicapped sister. This story might therefore help the reader to learn how to get along with others with disabilities and to respect differences between individuals.

Santayana (1954:82) cautioned, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Historical fiction could be regarded as realistic fiction because it brings history to life using an imaginary story based on an actual historical event, situation or character. Through historical fiction, children can discover that at all times, people have depended upon one another and that human beings have had similar needs (Norton, 1999:523). Historical stories offer young readers opportunities to enter into the characters' sufferings and joy and to experience their achievements, failures, victory and loss, as they explore the human side of history, and the past becomes truer and more unforgettable (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 1996:167-170).

Smith (2005:115) claims that "while many children's novelists struggle to place trauma securely in a historical space, most also hear the echoes of historical trauma in contemporary life." We cannot deny that history itself is a story, or a set of stories, and that these stories are ways of explaining the world and its people, events, cultures and activities across time. Historical fiction, to some extent, can be perceived as realistic fiction because it helps readers to understand the traditions, customs, morals and ways of living in the past, and to learn from these historical experiences. Immigration, civil war, world war, nuclear war, slavery and revolutionary war are possible topics of

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historical fiction (Cullinan and Galda, 1998:260-262). For example, *Grandfather's Journey* (1993) by Allen Say, is a story about immigration and acculturation. *Train to Somewhere* (2000) by Eva Bunting, is about the journey of an orphan to a new adoptive family and it explores feelings of fear, happiness, uncertainty and hope.

Historical fiction can also help young readers to understand particular historical periods and to cope with moral and social experiences from the point of view of historical characters. It motivates the readers to understand and judge historical mistakes more clearly (Russell, 2000:219-221). Some books, such as *Shin's Tricycle* (1995) by Tatsuharu Kodama, *The Wall* (1992) by Eva Bunting or *Star of Fear, Star of Hope* (1992) by Jo Hoestlandt stimulate children's sensibilities and help them understand human problems and human relationships. Young readers are encouraged by teachers and other adults to learn not to repeat the mistakes of the past. Historical fiction provides a connection for children to understand historical events and the personal struggles that have identified human circumstances across the centuries (Huck, Helper and Hickman, 1989:601).

Earlier, I referred to the blurred line between fiction and nonfiction. Some books may be categorised as nonfiction books because they present factual information; however, can these books still be considered as nonfiction if they offer information delivered in poetic or narrative writing? It may be more appropriate to re-classify these books as "docu-novels [fiction]" (Wilkie-Stibbs, 2008: 12). In this research, eight of the ten picture books I have selected can be categorised as either realistic or historical fiction. For the remaining two books (*The Number on My Grandfather's Arm* and *The Children We Remember*), however, it is hard to define whether they are fiction or nonfiction from their features and presentation. They both use real black and white photographs rather than illustrations and perhaps this adds to their sense of reality. In addition, they both offer information about the life and experiences of victims during World War II, either through personal experience or eye-witness accounts instead of through the eyes of a fictional

character. But they both are written as narratives. *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm* (1987) by David A. Alder is about a little girl who learns about her grandfather's experiences in Auschwitz concentration camp. *The Children We Remember* (1986) by Chana Byers Abells uses black and white photography to show how Jewish children lived their lives before and after the Nazi occupation. These two books not only help readers to understand factual information but they also give them resources for asking personal questions and exploring their own interests and problems through the lives of others. Moreover, through these two picture books, readers receive factual information and can digest it in order to understand other people's experiences.

Both realistic and historical fiction therefore has an important role to play in children's literature of trauma. Both genres help readers to gain information and insights from fictional characters' stories set in a real period of time or based on a real event. In addition, historical and realistic fiction helps readers to understand human universal challenges and cope with moral, social and cultural issues.

2.2.6 Children as Readers of Children's Literature

Reading is more than just an enjoyable pasttime. Words compose sentences and they both contain meanings that help to express one's feelings and thoughts. Stories can create an imaginative, historical, informational or realistic world in which readers interact with different characters and plots at different times and in different places, to understand themselves, other people and the world and to extend their ability to reflect.

In this research, I want to understand more about how young readers find ways to explore and respond to universal challenges and conflicts and to appreciate others and the world they live in through children's literature of trauma. Here, I need to make a connection between children's characteristics as learners and their pleasure in literature in order to argue that young readers are capable of being introduced to children's literature of trauma. Applebee

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(1978:36) shows that stories offer young children a place to escape disturbing experiences in their own lives. I personally agree with Applebee's point because stories accompanied me through all the lonely and hard times of my childhood. I regained my joy as stories ended happily, I felt sorrowful when I read sad stories and I found comfort in stories when I was alone—it seems to me that in story-land, everything unpleasant can be forgotten by walking into someone else's life.

Children like stories: no matter whether they are reading by themselves or listening to a story told by someone—their attention, their smiles and their calls of 'please read it again' show their pleasure in stories (Glazer, 1991:1). Nodelman (1992:12) argues that children are captivated by "the organised patterns of emotional involvement and detachment, the delays of suspense, the climaxes and resolutions, and the intricate patterns of chance and coincidence that make up a plot." Children like stories which engage their emotions and allow them to identify with story lines, characters, the problems encountered in stories and the possible endings to these stories. Nodelman (1992:12) also argues that part of the pleasure of storytelling or listening to a story lies in our consciousness of how a writer's emphasis on particular elements or their individual point of view shapes our response. For example, in *The Lily Cupboard* (1992) by Shulamith Levey Oppenheim, young readers' emotions and attention are engaged when Miriam has to pack and say farewell to her parents. Young readers may respond to this particular moment with a connection to their personal experience.

Children are inexperienced. It is all too easy to believe that young children are blissfully happy because they have not yet learned what adults know or suffer in the world which they inhabit. But unfortunately children do experience uncertainty, stress, fear and loss; sometimes we cannot prevent them from suffering and grieving (McNamee and Mercurio, 2006:1). Bishop (1992:43) points out that literature is a "mirror that reflects human life, [and]…all children who read or are read to need to see themselves reflected as part of humanity." My research will explore the ways in which children can begin to

understand or overcome real-life issues through literature that releases their emotions, boosts their self-esteem and builds positive attitudes towards life.

Children are imaginative: young children take pleasure in imagination and fantasy. Children's literature explores real life issues, but writers recognise the importance of encouraging young children's instinctive delight in imaginative play and fantastical creations (Moon, 2000:118-134*).* Combining imaginative stories with familiar, realistic situations encourages and motivates young children to understand the characters' feelings, thoughts and experiences (Harvey and Goudvis, 2000:21). Nodelman (1992:12) discusses the pleasure of the pictures and ideas that the worlds of texts evoke—the ways in which they allow us to visualise people and places we have never actually seen or to think about ideas we have not considered before. Before children are able to write, they draw pictures to express what they see and understand from stories they have heard. Wells (1986:151) states that both drawing and writing "involve the attempt to give symbolic representation to what has been understood." In other words, young children are able to use their imaginative powers to create their own story world based on the plots of stories they have read or heard. In addition, through their imagination, children can expand their understanding in order to realise how people live and think differently around the world. Nodelman (1992:12) argues that part of the pleasure of stories lies in the way we can step outside ourselves imaginatively in order to experience the lives and thoughts of different people. Through the journey of children's literature of trauma in this research, I hope to find a road that will take me and young children on a journey to open and truthful horizons, to imagine the hardships that characters suffer in stories, to reflect on their rich diversity, and to accept and respect differences (Rosen, 1991:29-37; Singer, 2006:305-312).

Children learn through making meaning. I have found from my teaching and personal experience that young children are able to generally understand what is being said to them by studying people's facial expressions, gestures, and actions. They are able to recognise what words and phrases possibly mean

even though they may not know the precise meaning of the words. Young children are learning the pleasure of structure—our consciousness of the words or pictures or events form cohesive and meaningful patterns (Nodelman, 1992:12). Thus young children are good at interpreting the sense or the meaning of situations (Moon, 2000:5). The ability to make meaning in learning enables young children to work out what is happening in situations, from evidence in pictures, stories, and conversations, and this enhances their confidence in understanding the words used. In this research, young children are encouraged to respond to stories through their understanding and interpretation, in order to develop their sense of others and the world. Nodelman (1992:11) claims that young readers enjoy the words themselves, through the patterns the sounds make and their ability to express revealing frightening or beautiful pictures or ideas. Young children learn to interpret both pictures and texts and to create their own imaginary setting. Tolkien (1964:67) states that "every hearer of the words will have his own picture, and it will be made out of all the hills and rivers and dales he has ever seen, but especially out of the hill, the river, the valley which were for him the first embodiment of the word." Doonan (1993:18) argues that "Picture-book art favours 'running stories' in addition to the main one, so we have to observe small pictorial details as well as what the words say in order to 'get the whole picture'." That is to say, the interaction of words and pictures helps young readers to create meaning.

The points above are a summary of the characteristic patterns of learning in young children as they explore stories and books and take pleasure from literature. We have established, then, children's appreciation of stories, their lack of experience, their use of imagination and their ability to make meaning from both text and illustration.

A good piece of literature introduces readers to a world where they can develop their critical thinking and respond to issues, problems, characters, emotions, history and reality expressed through a story. Through children's literature, readers can picture their own as well as other people's lives and

events in their lives, and begin to understand and identify with other cultures, languages and traditions (Booth and Barton, 2000:9-10). However, children not only see their own lives and experiences mirrored through stories; stories also open other windows through which to see the world. Young children find themselves inside the stories while they try to communicate their thoughts, interpret their inner and outer worlds and discover more about themselves and others (Wells, 1986:194-195).

2.2.7 The Value of Children's Literature of Trauma

Literature may not appear as attractive at first sight as video games and television programmes for some children; however, books do give children the space and time to reflect on stories, experiences and emotional ups and downs. Literature allows readers of all ages to reread again and again in depth, to think more deeply and understand better; furthermore, literature helps children to appreciate the joyful, fearful and confusing moments in their lives (Sawyer and Comer, 1991:2). Children, through various types of children's literature, begin to understand the world around them, make connections with each other and the world and reshape their views of the lives of others.

The most important criteria that a good book can offer to children is enjoyment. It is hard to forget how loud you laughed, as a child, while reading some funny stories. Readers may also read frightening stories with heart trembling excitement or traumatic stories that are so touching they cannot put them down. If a child begins to read at an early age, then he or she may turn these early experiences into a lifetime of reading enjoyment (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 1996:4).

In some traumatic stories, the characters are placed in situations that require them to make moral decisions. These stories help young readers to put themselves into the roles of the characters and consider what they may do in similar situations. Moreover, some moral dilemmas which young children may experience can be recaptured through children's books to help children

deal with these difficult areas and explore what is appropriate and what is not. Through a character's decisions and the repercussions of the choices that are made, young readers can begin to consider what they want to do and who they want to be in those stories (Bettelheim, 1976:10). Moral and life experiences that are met through children's books can help young readers formulate and remodel their own concepts of right and wrong, such as appropriate or inappropriate behaviour, kindness and cruelty, love and hatred and hope and loss (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 1996:4). Walking in someone else's shoes often helps children resolve problems differently and develop a greater capacity to empathise with others (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 1996:4; Barnet and Barnet, 1998:164). My research will analyse how young readers can deal with traumatic circumstances and how far they might go beyond empathy in order to think creatively about a problem.

Many adults want to build a better world for young people which is more positive, happier, enjoyable and more hopeful than the world they are living in at present. It is important for adults to help young children to build a positive attitude towards difficult issues while facing hardship in life. "Children need to develop positive self-esteem and to see themselves as competent human beings capable of caring and of being loved. They need to develop tolerance for others who may not share their beliefs or who may be different than themselves" (Sawyer and Comer, 1991:3). Wells (1986:206) points out that:

> As students of all ages encounter new ideas … it is helpful to illustrate these ideas with stories—with particular contextualized examples—and to support their inner storying by encouraging them to work through the story mode themselves on the way to the expression of a more abstract formulation.

Wells suggests that it is better to introduce new concepts or experiences to children in the form of stories to help them to engage with ideas more easily and thus understand them better. It is undeniable that some children's literature (such as stories that express readers' emotions and stories picturing everyday experience) helps young readers to picture themselves in the story. I am thinking particularly of the kind of book that challenges and inspires

readers to think critically about events and thus helps them to build their self-identity, and self-esteem and to gain new insights through their responses. *Guess How Much I Love You* (2001) by Sam McBratney for example, has a very positive love message for fathers and sons to help youngsters realise how important love is. Children find themselves in stories and see how others deal with similar problems. Some stories in particular can bring hope or comfort to young readers who are suffering or trying to make sense of certain situations or solve problems. Moreover, characters who share their emotions and thoughts with readers help them to cope with their feelings and understand universal emotions (Burke, 1986:210). However, not all children's literature has that particular function.

Various types of stories, including stories from multicultural backgrounds, help children learn about and make sense of their own world and the world around them. Some stories represent traumatic experiences in a multicultural context and those stories help to build readers' understanding of human conditions and difficulties and enhance their multicultural awareness. Diakiw (1990:297) states:

> Stories can be a powerful way to transport students to distant countries with cultures and traditions far removed from their own. Children need the bridge that stories provide in order to link their growing understanding of other cultures to their personal experience and background knowledge.

Thus, children bring their own knowledge and experience to bear, and learn to make meaning as they make sense of the story in the light of their own encounters. It is this kind of unique response that I will be exploring in my research. "The more children know about their world, the more they discover about themselves—who they are, what they value, and what they stand for" (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 1996:5). My experience has shown me that introducing young readers to the stories of trauma does not frighten them away from the book or make them sad, but helps them to engage with the story. Young readers, through stories of trauma, may learn to understand more about decision-making from a perspective of morality, to get to know how to

cope with themselves and others' emotions and in turn to build a positive and caring attitude as they face challenges in their own lives.

2.3 Children's Literature in the Classroom

Children's literature has its own particular place in the field of literature and art, and it is therefore not surprising that it also plays an important role in education, both in teaching and learning. In this section, I will focus on the use of children's literature in the classroom and discuss why we, as teachers, educators and researchers choose to use children's literature in our teaching and learning programmes.

In teaching children how to read, teachers and educators try to create opportunities for children to experience books in order to develop an understanding of literacy and literature and encourage a love of reading. The teaching of reading involves so much more than mere technical skill, as Meek (1982: vii) emphasises:

> Reading is far more than getting information from printed records. It is the active encounter of one mind and one imagination with another. Talk happens; words fly. Writing remains. We read at the pace we find congenial to our thinking. As reading is a kind of inner speech, it has a marked effect on the growth of the mind of the reader.

Through the use of literature, readers are helped to develop their love for and pleasure in reading, to understand texts, to connect events in stories with their personal experiences and to think critically and reflectively.

It is a central argument in my study that with sensitive teaching, with the use of challenging and interesting books, readers can develop their own independent understanding of particular issues and events, including traumatic events, in order to reflect on or to make changes in their own lives. I have been concerned with recording and observing readers' reflective and imaginative voices as they have read different stories critically and sensitively and created possibilities and changes for themselves, for others and for society. Hardy points out the importance of valuing the reader's voice.

There are three sets of human particulars in a teaching situation: the particularity of the work and the author, the particularity of the teacher, and the particularity of the student…Too often there is only one voice in the lecture and even the seminar and the tutorial—that of the teacher. More commonly there are two, the voice of the teacher and the voice of the author, but the teacher may…drown the author's voice (1973:27-28).

Hardy argues that the interaction between the reader and text tends to be ignored or forgotten. Presenting children's literature in a valuable way in classrooms can be regarded as a three-way interaction between the text (children's literature), the teacher (mediator and narrator) and the reader (spectator, participant and percipient in imaginative role play). The text, the teacher and the reader form a strong triangular relationship and this relationship makes the experience of reading literature different and far richer than phonic drills or memorisation of vocabulary and grammar.

Teachers can present a literary world to readers through the way they teach so that the children can imagine and experience all the possibilities created by the texts. This engagement with the text can stimulate their independent thinking and reflection on personal experiences or imagination, as my research will demonstrate. In the following section, I will focus on the appropriate pedagogic paradigm, particularly of this project, and the roles that readers, teachers and texts play in the literate classroom.

2.3.1 Pedagogic Paradigm for The Project

Marantz (1983:151) and Sipe (1998b:106) regard picture books as a unique form of visual art and argue that both visual and verbal texts construct meanings in picture books. Sipe also (2006:135) states that "—literally from cover to cover—the picture book is an art object, an aesthetic whole; that is, every one of its parts contributes to the total effect, and therefore every part is worthy of study and interpretation." That is, picture books should be celebrated as an art form that invites readers/viewers to respond to both words and images creatively and aesthetically. The central thrust of this project is to

encourage the children to respond to the traumatic issues through their exploration and understanding of the selected picture books and events. Therefore, this project can be considered as part of an arts education curriculum that involves itself with traumatic issues. A more detailed section about the development of traumatic issues raised in picture books will be explored in 2.4.3.

I was inspired by art therapy, bibliotherapy, reader response theory as well as mirror and window theory while I designed and planned the pedagogy for helping ordinary children understand universal and painful challenges. Art therapy means using art and other creative visual media, such as dance, drama, music and painting to help people (clients) to express their feelings, experiences and thoughts (Dalley, 1984: xi-xiii; Jennings and Minde, 1993:37) Bibliotherapy is composed of two words: biblio and therapy—and it refers to a method of helping people heal and cope with their emotional problems, mental illness or change in their lives, through the medium of the printed text, such as the written form of picture books and novels or storytelling and plays (Jones, 2001:15; Pardeck, 1994:421). However, bibliotherapy can also be defined as the use of "printed materials that influence the way people think and feel and help them solve problems" which is much closer to the central area of this research (Rothlein and Meinbach, 1991:284). In addition, Crago (1999:171) states that bibliotherapy may have a greater influence if it is understood and applied as a way of affirming and extending an individual's understanding of his or her problems, doubts and emotions rather than as a way of healing. In this research, I was a teacher, not a therapist and therefore I offered the children an opportunity to think and respond to particular issues and human behaviours through the selected picture books. The principles behind both art therapy and bibliotherapy may be beneficial in a classroom context to help readers identify their problems and explore the emotions of characters or events in stories to develop empathy and insights and possibly to come up with solutions to traumatic issues in their lives. The basis of reader response theory lies in the essential relationship between the text and the reader and as Rosenblatt states "The text is merely an object of paper and ink

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until some reader responds to the marks on the page as verbal symbols" (1978:23). It is the readers who bring their personal knowledge, ideas, experiences and a wide range of socio-cultural contexts to the sense-making process and these interact with words and illustrations make them come alive and unique (Wollman-Bonila and Werchadlo, 1999:599 and Evans, 2009:102). A more detailed discussion about Reader Response Theory that involves both children's literature and traumatic issues will be presented in 2.5. Mirror and window theories act as powerful metaphors and emphasise that "children need literature that serves as a window into lives and experiences different from their own, *and* literature that serves as a mirror reflecting themselves and their cultural values, attitudes, and behaviours" (Bishop, 1994:xiv). In this research, it can be argued that the selected children's literature of trauma acts as a mirror, reflecting and validating familiar cultures and experiences for the children. At the same time, the literature can be a window, revealing the less familiar experiences and historical events to the readers (Cox and Galda, 1990:582). Children's literature of trauma in this research may only mirror the children's lives in partial reflection but I shall show that it has the potential and challenge to allow readers to see more deeply into their own world and the worlds of others. Children's literature illuminates the realities of people who live different lives from the readers, as if they are looking through a window. This stance may enable readers to develop insights and understandings into their own realities by taking a deeper look at themselves as if with a mirror (Yokota, 1993: 156 and Galda, 1998:6-9).

This research has been designed to use picture books that focus on traumatic issues to create for the children opportunities for open discussions and other forms of responses (writing, drawing and imaginative role play) to value difference, raise aspirations and expand their understanding of themselves and others. Moreover, through the process of learning, teaching and interacting with the text, I hope to open 'windows' into the lives of others for both myself and the children, and to offer 'mirrors' that reflect back into our own lives. I have integrated these four theories of knowledge—art therapy, bibliotherapy, reader response theory and mirror and window theories—in order to develop a

pedagogical paradigm for this project that it will be beneficial in a classroom context to help readers identify their concerns and explore the emotions of characters or events in stories to develop empathy, insight or solutions to traumatic issues in their lives.

I shall argue that it is not possible for children to understand how terrible disasters can be by merely telling them, since we "cannot adequately express the range of human experience of [disaster] or help us comprehend its scope" merely through the spoken word (Kiefer, 2008:10). However, watching films about World War II or reading stories about earthquakes such as the picture book, *Thank You, Kitty* chosen for this project, gives us an opportunity to deeply understand and intuitively feel how disasters have influenced human beings and morality. Furthermore, Arizpe and Styles (2003:22) claim that picture books are not merely "books with illustrations, but books in which the story depends on the interaction between written text and image and where both have been created with a conscious aesthetic intention." Therefore, in this project, the children have also been invited and encouraged to discuss and interpret the form, colours, shapes, and overall presentation in addition to the text through their exposure to the selected picture books. It can be recognised that picture books unify "art and language, for both forms exist one inside the other. One sees the art through the writing and the writing through the art" (Johnson, 1990:8). Therefore, in the world of picture books, respondents have a right to decide which form to respond to: text, images or both. The National Art Education Association of America (2007) argues that:

> Art is a language of visual images that everyone must learn to read … the individual who cannot understand, or read images is incompletely educated. Complete literacy includes the ability to understand, respond to, and talk about visual images. Therefore, to carry out its total mission, art education stimulates language—spoken and written—about visual images.

The notion of reading and responding to both the visual and verbal text has been at the centre of this project. I have explored the children's learning processes in order to investigate how their language and cognitive abilities

have developed when they have learned how to look carefully at art (illustrations), to talk about both the text and images, to respond to what they were considering through drawing and to reflect on the traumatic issues through their experiences in imaginative role play.

Books are one way to learn about one's own culture and the cultures of other people across the world. Botelho and Rudman (2009:xiii) argue that "literature can authentically mirror or reflect one's life; look through a window to view someone else's world; and open doors offering access both into and out of one's everyday condition." In this project, I have endeavoured to show how the children's intellectual and emotional growth was influenced by "how [they] perceive the world, how [they] get around the world, and how [they] relate to other people" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980:3) through the exploration and the processes of their understanding and interpretation of the stories and events.

In this research, the children's responses to the selected picture books through speaking, writing, imaginative role playing and drawing express their emerging understandings of how these responses have helped shape and adjust their worlds (Shreve, Danbom and Hanhan, 2002:100). Sipe (2000:260) comments that analysing a child's speech is an important way of understanding how they construct their meanings. The children in this project were invited to explore stories on their own terms through open and interactive discussion whilst reading aloud and storytelling "to reflect on the stories as a whole and to use inferential and critical thinking" (McGee, 1992:186). Furthermore, a large part of the children's spoken responses to the stories occurred in a classroom context and thus the children shared with and learnt from other readers and listeners within the interpretative community (Viruru, 2003:230-231). In this interpretative community, the children also shared their insights and ideas relevant to the stories with their peers and were able to extend each other's experience to reach a deeper level of understanding. Children need time and encouragement to respond to stories through a variety of ways other than speech, such as through writing, art and

dramatic activities. In this project, the children's spoken responses have informed their written responses and these in their turn have enhanced central ideas which connect back to their spoken responses. Similarly, the children's drawing responses were not merely illustrations of the stories but moved beyond the pages to deepen their understanding and to make connections with their interpretation of the rich world of visual and verbal interaction. I was fascinated with the children's creative ideas in response to the stories through their drawings and their way of expressing meaning through colours and shapes (see 4.3).

The reason for including imaginative role play in this research was to create opportunities for the children to 'try on' a stress experience (in this case, wars and earthquakes) as well as to get inside someone else's life and thoughts (Hersh, Paolitto and Reimer, 1979:165). I shall argue that the children were able to get deeply involved in the experience, far more even than through discussion because the imaginative role play gave the children a 'feeling' that is equal to moral reasoning as well as a sense of a 'being there' that helped them to discover personal and universal understanding and reflections on that experience (Cobly 1987:75). A more detailed discussion about each form of response will be shown in 2.5.1.

In this research, speaking, writing, drawing and imaginative role play are mediums for helping young children to express their feelings and thoughts and to develop their understanding and critical thinking towards the selected picture books. This research has demonstrated that the children's potential for making sense of complex traumatic issues and their affective, cognitive and conceptual awareness and growth have been developed through these different forms of responses to picture books.

2.3.2 The Role of Narrative

In this section, I will focus on the key aspects of narrative, showing how it can be used to widen children's experience, give them insights into their own lives

and the lives of others, encourage them to enter imaginary worlds, and extend their ways of seeing and making sense of the world. The exploration of moral and social issues, critical thinking and integration with other subjects will be discussed below.

It is not my particular intention in this research to focus on the mastery of early reading skills; nevertheless, no matter whether children are engaged in independent reading by themselves or whether teachers are reading aloud to them, both activities are developing their reading and listening skills and their understanding of the ideas in texts, through daily practice. Clay (1991:14) argues that "Reading acquisition involves learning to use all the redundant sources of information in texts to problem-solve the meanings." Children read for comprehension and good teaching offers the space for reflection and interaction. While reading, children need adults, teachers and parents with patience, knowledge and willingness to guide them; helping them to ask and answer questions and express their ideas about texts. "By listening to and reading excellent literature, children are exposed to rich vocabulary and excellent writing styles which serve as good models for their own speaking and writing voices" (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 1996:8). My research will demonstrate how readers can learn to interpret and reflect on issues and emotions in literature.

Wells' unique longitudinal research into the language and literacy development of 128 young children within their families shows that those who were successful in literacy learning at school could all be identified by one key factor: they had all had stories told or read to them before they went to school.

This finding led Wells to argue that:

> …stories have a role in education that goes far beyond their contribution to the acquisition of literacy. Constructing stories in the mind—or storying, as it has been called—is one of the most fundamental means of making meaning; as such, it is an activity that pervades all aspects of learning. Through the

exchange of stories, teachers and students can share their understandings of a topic and bring their mental models of the world into closer alignment. In this sense, stories and storying are relevant in all areas of the curriculum (1986:194).

My research seeks to demonstrate that by presenting literature to children, we offer an opportunity for them to tell their own stories, using their own experiences and that of others to express ideas and emotions in the narratives of their own lives. Moreover, children learn to make sense of different scenarios as well as making connections between similar or relevant experiences.

The use of a rich variety of children's literature with young readers can also enhance their understanding of the story world and help develop their independent critical thinking in a deeper way. Bruner (1968:155) states,

There is nothing more central to a discipline than its way of thinking. There is nothing more important in its teaching than to provide the child with the earliest opportunity to learn that way of thinking—the forms of connection, the attitudes, hopes, jokes and frustrations that go with it. In a word, the best introduction to a subject is the subject itself. At the very first breath, the young learner should, we think, be given the chance to solve problems, to conjecture, to quarrel, as these are done at the heart of the discipline.

Bruner's argument helps us to understand that reading is not a passive activity. As children read, they interpret the author's words and make meaning from the sentences they read. This is a complex psychological process. My work with children in the classroom will endeavour to help them to make critical connections and develop their cognitive and emotional response, as they anticipate and evaluate what they read, and reflect on what has taken place. Woodson (1999:12) points out, "The goal of good literature is to raise questions, not give answers." My research aims to show how the teaching of literature can help youngsters to find out their own answers to problems and to explore the possible impact and stimulation of stories. I have presented children with areas for speculation and given them the freedom to choose their own form of response when facing problems and dealing with

difficulties in a story.

When children read stories with meaning and understanding, they are capable of thinking deeply about what they are reading and interpreting what they see from the pictures. Danielson and LaBonty (1994:63) state that "The reader must interact with the text on an emotional level (as we do when a particular story touches us), on an intellectual level (as when we find out more about penguins or airplanes or predict what may happen in the next page), or on a physical level (as when we follow a recipe for chocolate cake or put together a model car)." Children who are invited to write in response to stories also experience time for reflection to express these thoughts in writing. Mathis (2001:155) points out, "stories are a means of response—a vehicle for interpreting the literature we read and a structure for sharing it with others." When children are invited to write their own version of a story, they are being given time to explore their imaginative, creative and empathic responses, which helps them to develop as critical readers and writers as they produce their own unique reflections on the events and characters in a story.

Most people love stories and children are definitely story-lovers, as my experiences as a teacher have shown me. Why are stories so attractive? In the world of stories, children can use their imagination and creative impulse to form their own wonderlands with the characters and plots. When they write their version of the story, or re-tell it, they are free to make any changes to meet their needs. In the world of stories, everything seems possible and may be better and happier than in reality. For example, Rosen (1991:36-37) recorded versions of stories written by students after listening to the story of *The Land Where No One Ever Dies*. One of the versions by a girl called Caroline began with "Once upon a time there was a boy called paul and he didn't want to dye so he said to his mum and dad one day 'i don't want to dye' so the boy went out to search for the place where you never dye…" Her version ended with "you can live for ever here as long as you put these shoes on Ive been trying to sell them for 100 years thank you can i come to live with you because i have not got a family because they have all dyed so paul put the

shoes on and they went back to his own land and they were married and lived happily ever after." To me, Caroline responds to the story uniquely with her own thinking, imagination and voice. As a teacher, I believe that for young readers there is no limit to their creativity and imagination. They are capable of understanding some difficult issues if they are given opportunities to explore and use their cognitive and imaginative abilities.

Apart from providing information and facts for children to understand in a safe form, children's literature also promises an opportunity for moral and social development to help children cope with change, and to learn to tolerate and embrace the differences and similarities between human beings in various social, cultural, geographical and political situations (Booth and Barton, 2000:22-23). In addition, Diakiw (1990:300) argues:

> A growing volume of children's literature about the developing world allows us to approach this world in a way that is meaningful for young people. It allows us to deal honestly and sensitively with the many complex issues that confront developing nations. It provides us with the opportunity to develop values-driven curricula through which we can cherish and celebrate our similarities and our differences.

One of the key purposes in using children's literature in the classroom is to encourage youngsters to experience and comprehend the condition of the world, and to inspire their own critical thinking as they begin to understand the experiences of other people. It is my intention to introduce young children to traumatic issues raised in children's story books and to give them ways of developing their moral and social consciousness, as they engage imaginatively with other people's lives and empathise with their plight. When I was a primary school student over a decade ago in Taiwan, the curriculum in my school was quite standardised and inflexible. At that time, story books were merely used as supplementary materials in teaching and learning. I never realised that they could be integrated with other subjects and used to support teaching and learning till later when I was a student teacher and then a teacher in the States in 2001. There, story books were used to introduce some science

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projects (such as floating and sinking), mathematics and arithmetical calculations (such as addition and subtraction), or were incorporated with musical or dramatic activities to motivate children's attention as well as increase their enjoyment in learning. Indeed, Wells points out that "Through the exchange of stories, teachers and students can share their understandings of a topic and bring their mental models of the world into closer alignment. In this sense, stories and storying are relevant in all areas of the curriculum" (1986:194). I have chosen to discuss this issue of integration because in my research, I teach children's literature of trauma through art and history, drama and geography, as well as through literature itself, in order to encourage young children's creative and critical learning, and to help them to reflect on their learning in various ways. The curriculum of many primary school classrooms includes a wide range of topics and activities, and these can contribute to children's passion for learning and exploration of the world. In addition, many experts believe that a variety of subject areas is very important and necessary for the total development of every child. Stevens (1993:3) states that:

> Worthwhile literature, whether nonfiction, fiction or poetry, is about life itself. It is embedded with universal themes that are common to the human condition …[themes] transcend subject areas by providing natural frameworks for unifying the curriculum. They [universal themes] can become windows of learning whereby students perceive connections among themselves, their education, and their world.

Rosen too (1986:16) argues that narrative crosses boundaries between subjects, "There are stories wherever we turn…Every chemical reaction is a story compressed into the straitjacket of an equation. Every car speeds down the road by virtue of that well-known engineer's yarn called the Otto cycle." He argues that we need narratives to process information, thoughts and explanations for seeing and making sense of scientific problems. Hence, good literature can be regarded as one of the subjects that must be introduced to children in their developmental years (Sawyer and Comer, 1991:149) because it not only supports young children's literacy learning, but it also offers a way

of understanding experience. Moreover, appropriate and relevant children's literature can be integrated within art, music, mathematics, science, social studies, drama, history and geography. (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 1996: 239). Popp (1996:387) supports this view:

> It is important for students to have the time and materials necessary to explore ideas and communicate what they are learning in a variety ways. In addition to reading, writing, listening and speaking, children need opportunities to expand their understanding of literature, mathematics, science and the social studies through the expressive arts of music, drawing, painting, sculpting, model-making, drama and movement.

Thus, narrative provides a way for children to comprehend, interact, elucidate and manage the particular knowledge required to learn different subjects, in order to enhance what they know, how they think and what they want to know. When children are learning about different subjects, they are also learning from literature in order to stimulate their creative, imaginative and exploratory inquiries. For example, a simple curriculum can be created around the book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (2002) by Eric Carle. Many different activities and subjects can be integrated within the story, such as the sequence of days, numbers, the life cycle of butterflies, healthy food and junk food, art, drama and music. In this research, I will show how I have integrated children's story books with art activities to encourage children to visually represent what they have learnt from stories. The art of drawing enables children to respond at a personal level, in their own unique way, if they are given time and space in which to explore ideas and shape reflectional images into visual meaning. Sloan (1991:34) claims that:

> [It is as] possible to educate the imagination systematically through literature as it is to train the reason through science and mathematics. It is as easy, if not easier, for children to grasp basic literary concepts like plot and rhyme as it is for them to understand sets and equivalent fractions.

Learning about subjects based on children's story books can help students to read the story with a deeper understanding. On the other hand, there is always

the danger that children will become, to use Rosenblatt's (1978) term, "efferent readers", reading a story for facts and comprehension, and sidestepping any emotional insights, reflections and critical thinking it may offer. I have kept Roseblatt's cautious warning in mind as I have conducted my own research, and taken steps, as I shall show, to ensure that children are not afraid or unwilling to engage with difficult emotional situations they meet in the literature.

2.3.3 Oral Presentation of Children's Literature in the Classroom: Some Theoretical Considerations

There are many ways of presenting stories to children in classrooms, perhaps for enjoyment, for understanding about the world, or for information about life in other times. In this section, I will concentrate on two forms of story presentation: reading aloud and storytelling. Each of them contains particular characteristics that stimulate students to reflect on the story and interpret it; moreover, each form introduces and creates relevant activities to help children explore their emotional response and empathise with characters and events (May, 1995: 172-173). In this study, these two techniques help children to learn to question, respond, reflect and empathise (Gunning, 2000:18).

Reading aloud is about sharing with students the meaningful and interesting reading materials which may be either within or beyond their reading ability, but well within their listening ability. It introduces children to new genres of literature, and new concepts or topics which each child can match or compare with their own life experiences (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 1996:268). In my research, I introduce traumatic issues relevant to students' personal experiences or to the moral and social problems they may encounter as they grow up. Reading aloud is a time to share literature with students in a pleasurable and meaningful way, introducing them to new ways of presenting stories, sophisticated and challenging vocabulary, and the kind of themes they might never discover on their own. During this period of time, students enter someone else's world in order to imagine, wonder and make sense of

experience (Wolf, 2004:96-97). Moreover, reading aloud helps students, as a community of listeners, to become aware of the enjoyment to be found in stories—a delight that they can later encounter through reading on their own. Meanwhile, reading aloud creates a 'listening community' in the classroom, validated by the teacher as mediator of the text and fostering a sense of togetherness.

Many people have had the chance of being read to in their childhood; equally, many have had the experience of reading aloud to others. Reading aloud is a common literacy activity; a teacher uses this method to offer students enjoyment and to stimulate their imagination. Calkins (2001:63) asks the teacher whose class she observed in New York City:

> How important is reading aloud? Critically important. 'Don't you ever want kids to just lie back and let the words flow over them…to just listen?' People sometimes ask about the read-aloud. But I have to admit that I don't really see the read-aloud in this dreamy, sleepy sort of way…I see the read-aloud as the heart of our reading instruction time, and I want kids' full attention to be on what we do together.

From my experience, I disagree with the idea of that children are always day-dreaming or wandering around inside their heads during the read-aloud time; read-aloud as Calkins argues, is more than a time to allow children to hear a story because it is also a time for children to get together and share their thoughts and emotions with their peers. It is important for teachers to create the atmosphere and setting for this particular sharing time. Furthermore, children's understanding is sometimes achieved through their unconscious attention to the words as they flow over them.

Most significantly, reading aloud creates a time and an opportunity for children and teachers to share emotional, joyful, imaginative, and stimulating moments in stories. Popp (1996:34) claims that "The activity of reading aloud is an intensely social activity. A unique relationship is formed between reader and listener that crosses age and gender differences to create a special bond

between them." Through reading aloud, children are motivated to think about difficult questions, predict possible story plots and compare characters' experiences with their own.

Storytelling is the oldest means of sharing stories. Many stories were passed on orally thousands years ago by storytellers long before they were written down and published. Storytelling helps students' concentration and fosters their ability to listen and predict. One way in which told stories differ from written stories is that students cannot go back and check the storylines for comprehension; therefore, they must concentrate on listening to the storyteller. As they do so, they hear the rhythms of spoken literary language and learn to understand the way that the story is structured. In classrooms, teachers and students can be storytellers as they share literature (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 1996:274). Storytellers have the power of enchantment and expression—they help their audience to explore through their imaginations, make them laugh, make them cry, make them think and reflect upon their lives (Sawyer and Comer, 1991:120). Cassady (1990:5) points out that "Stories are wondrous magic. They transport us to other worlds, into other lives, into situations we might never encounter ourselves. And yet they are universal." A storyteller creates communication and interaction with their audience through personal reflection, expression and interpretation. Storytelling is an oral art form that maintains, transfers and carries meanings, thoughts, images, motives, issues and feelings that are universal to listeners' lives and experiences (Cassady, 1990:6). Storytellers play an important role in telling a story without the assistance of a book—while listening to a story, the audience is not just listening to the words of the storyteller, but is also concentrating on the vocal and facial expressions of the storyteller while considering the emotions and events of the story. (Zipes, 1995:6-8; Cassady, 1990:8-9). Storytelling also offers listeners the opportunity to use their imagination to visualise the world of the storyteller as well as to make sense of or to shape experience. The Burmese storyteller Beula Candappa (cited in Lupton, 2005, Radio 4) argues that "The written word goes from the eye to the brain. The spoken word goes from the ear to the heart." Therefore, while

listening to a story, listeners also feel and think with their desire and passion. Goforth (1998:355) claims that,

> Storytelling enhances the interaction between the storyteller and the listener in a way that is often more intimate than when a book is used. Storytelling creates a direct, immediate personal relationship between the teller and the listeners.

In other words, storytellers hold the power of magic. Cassady (1990:13) agrees that there is a close bond between the teller and the listener: "You can't separate the teller from the audience. There would be no teller without an audience, there would be no communication. One affects the other." Maguire (1988:6) also advocates the value of storytelling:

> storytelling encompasses so much that it defies an easy label. The telling part of the term touches on its most manifest aspect; but it also includes listening, imagining, caring, judging, reading, adapting, creating, observing, remembering and planning.

He emphasises the value of intimate social interaction which builds up trust and binds the storyteller, the listener and the story characters together.

In order to understand a story, it helps if students can connect their personal experience with what occurs in the story. Some teachers encourage students to use imaginative play to revisit a story in order to imagine the events of the story as they would occur in their everyday lives (Booth and Barton, 2000:80-81). Acting out the story creates a dramatic world for children to understand the messages and meanings in the story through the narrative structure of drama. Children can be encouraged to use their critical thinking and responses to the story through different dramatic activities, such as role-play, decision-making, problem-solving and movement. In order to respond to a text dramatically, young children must have some understanding of the text and know who they want to be, where and when their story takes place, what they are going to do and how they will present their roles. Dramatic response is a learning and experiencing process, not a performance. It does not focus on

entertaining audiences but is concentrated instead on what the participants have interpreted, learned and developed from the texts through their talk, gesture and interaction in the play (McCaslin, 1990:201). Readers may respond to texts through dramatic activities in order to imagine being another person in another situation (Clipson-Boyles, 1999:134).

Through the world of imaginative role play everyone is capable of imagining and acting out their lives 'differently'—we visualise ourselves in a different time, place and role (Dickinson and Neelands, 2006:91). In addition, imaginative role play provides children with an opportunity to explore problems and issues at the safety of one remove. In imaginative role play, children may play roles as spectators. Harding argues that:

> Besides looking on at events in progress we can be spectators in memory or imagination of things past and things anticipated; further, we can release our imaginings from practical limitations and consider what might have been and what might be if the restrictions of reality were suspended (1977:61).

That is to say, imaginative role play can distance children from the problems and possibilities of the story. McGregor, Tate and Robinson (1977:23) argue that "it is a vicarious involvement by which [children] can feel sufficiently removed from the issues to reflect on them and get them in perspective, and sufficiently involved, in the 'as if' sense, to deepen their understanding." Harvey and Goudvis (2000:21) argue that "when students have had an experience similar to that of a character in a story, they are more likely to understand the character's motives, thoughts and feelings." Imaginative role play gives students the means by which they can have that experience so they can reshape and refine their ideas and respond to characters and situations, guided by new possibilities, and in a social context where contact with a difficult and traumatic encounter in a story, is cushioned by being part of a community of 'actors'.

Fox (1993:190) claims that through imaginative role play, children can visualise what they read from the story and thus, reflect on their learning and

experience.

> The kind of imaginative [role] play I am describing reflects learning which has already taken place, makes visible learning which is in the process of being grappled with and generates new learning – new operations which, perhaps with the help of a teacher, will be mastered in the future. Not only does it reflect all this, but it can also show us what children are like inside, how they make sense of their experiences, how they make things meaningful.

Some traumatic events in stories are not easy for children to understand or to relate to. Children have often never encountered a wide range of human behaviours and its consequences and therefore, it is difficult for them to fully comprehend certain complex issues. However, through imaginative role play based on story, children can be in the roles of characters in order to understand the characters' experiences and to make a personal connection to the story. Winston (2004:1) and Christie (1990:542) claim that drama is a good medium for inviting children to explore and extend their moral, social and emotional understanding through both an oral and physical dimension. Moreover, Zatzman (2001:263) argues: "[Drama activities] offer a form for shaping memory and memorial, by placing us in someone else's shoes and, in so doing, creating a landscape of knowledge and empathy." The purpose of presenting challenging issues to children is not to show them how negative or depressing life can be; on the contrary, imaginative role play can help children to interact positively with these issues and to search for solutions to tackle them. *Where the Wild Things Are* (1988) by Maurice Sendak is an example of a story for young children that engages them at a deeply psychological level, because it deals with emotions that affect all our lives—love, anger, loss, and guilt. Spencer (1976:20-21) believes that

> *Where the Wild Things Are* is a symbolic representation of the complicated childhood experience of guilt and restitution…It's from the lead-in given by the children's responses to the rightness of [Sendak's] image that we discover the rightness of his awareness of experience and the generative power of his symbols.

I remember my kindergarteners creating an imaginative role play after reading this story. Through that imaginative role play, they began to understand Max's feelings as he controlled the monsters, and to explore the feelings of Max's mother after Max had said hurtful and angry things to her, and how Max may have felt when he reached the island. More broadly, the kindergarteners began to experience what it feels like to be angry, to be mean to someone, and to feel homesick, through imaginative role play. After the imaginative role play, the kindergarteners shared their feelings of being Max, the monsters and Max's mother; moreover, they also thought of ways to solve the problems Max faced through open discussion after the imaginative role play. Kelin (2007:278) argues that "Using role-play to investigate the story from the characters' perspectives encourages students to experience the story emotionally and intellectually, making it more personal and immediate." In my research, one role play activity in particular was designed for children to act out the roles in stories in order for them to put themselves into the characters' positions and experience the hardship they had to face. Through that imaginative role play, as I shall discuss, the students were able to express their feelings of "being" these people, to reflect on the thoughts and feelings of the characters in stories and to discuss a wide range of views.

It is important for teachers to bear in mind that children's responses and their interpretations of stories become creative and unique because each child's experience is different. Moreover, teachers cannot legislate for responses to happen automatically, and sometimes the only response teachers may get is silence, because children are not yet able to give voice to their feelings. It is hard to tell what children are thinking while they are being read to, and this is something I have had to consider in my own research. Rosen and Rosen (1973:188) state,

> [it is] even more difficult for us to know exactly what happens to the child who reads a story, where it touches him deeply, what fantasies it sets in motion, what new perceptions it offers him, what fears it enables him to face, what delights it enables him to celebrate.

Furthermore, Rosen and Rosen (1973:189) argue that readers' responses cannot always be verbalised.

> Not all response to books can be written or even talked about. No set of writings or transcripts of talk can be an adequate representation of the silence which descends on a whole class when everyone has been affected and satisfied. But we should not forget that there are other means of expressing response.

Similarly, Bruner believes in the value of reflective silence in the classroom: "There is something antic about creating, although the enterprise be serious. And there is a matching antic spirit that goes with writing about it, for if ever there were a silent process it is the creative one. Antic and serious and silent" (1962:17).

As a young learner, I passively accepted and memorised whatever the textbooks and teachers taught me without any further personal thinking. It was only later when I found my own voice by reading literature, that I was inspired to think critically and imaginatively. I was motivated and learned from one literature course that it was essential to develop a personal response. It has always been one of my central aims as a teacher to share with children the joy of developing their independent voices and their own interpretation of children's literature through my careful teaching. Chambers (1983:30) argues that "Readers are made, not born", and my research sets out to show that it is possible to help young children to engage with texts, to develop their own voices as they respond to texts and to become independent and critical readers. The role of the teacher, I shall argue, lies in helping children to seek the meaning embedded within each piece of literature, so that children are encouraged to interpret their reading, to enrich their life experiences and to develop their own critical thinking towards literature, themselves, others and the world. Good teachers of literature help children to be reflective and to interact with each other and with the words on the page. In the next chapter, I shall discuss how I designed different tasks so that the children could get deeper inside the central theme of the stories.

In the following section, I will focus on the role of the teacher who is integrating children's literature into literacy teaching or using literature within other subject teaching. The teacher's different roles in the above-mentioned ways of story presentation will also be addressed.

2.3.4 The Role of the Teacher

My role as a teacher in this research is to encourage and motivate the children to explore and engage with the stories. I ask many relevant questions to inspire their critical thinking and response. Moreover, the children are welcomed to share their personal experience with the class. The most important thing is that I create a caring and supportive learning environment for their discussion and interaction.

Teachers may sometimes ignore or fail to tap into children's talk and thought processes simply because they think that children know nothing about the world or they do not understand the issues, or because they may decide that children's talk is irrelevant. However, time for reading aloud and discussion following the reading offers space where children feel their talk can be heard and respected. Children are not passive listeners but if they are encouraged, will actively engage with the story lines, to discuss, to reflect, and to act out relevant activities. In addition, interactive storytelling and reading of texts also shows that children, no matter how young they are and how naive they might be at interpreting the world, can be encouraged to be critical thinkers and readers. For example, I once had a conversation with my five-year old niece after I read her a story about witches.

J (Me): Why do you like witches so much?
A (My niece): Because the witches have magic and they make everything possible.
J: What kind of witch would you like to be?
A: A nice and kind witch.
J: Why?

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A: Then I can help people everywhere.

J: Who would you want to help first if you're the witch?

A: Mummy.

J: Why Mummy?

A: If I'm the witch, I can help her do everything and she can go to bed earlier.

This conversation shows how a young child uses her eyes and mind to see and feel the world and to take the story into her own life and experience. She wants her voice to be heard and valued—reading aloud and talking about the story make this possible. The role I played in the conversation above is exactly the way I teach in the classroom, asking relevant and open-ended questions to stimulate young children's responses. In this research, I hope to help children not merely to 'listen to' the stories but to use their eyes and imaginations to see beyond the words into the emotions of the characters. In this way, they can relax and enjoy the stories, and share their reflections and feelings with their peers or tell each other about their own similar personal experiences to make the text more relevant to them or to inspire ideas free from any constraints. Reading aloud builds an interactive community for children to calm down, giggle, shed tears or share persuasive ideas. "Laughing together is good medicine, and it also models a positive way for students to make themselves feel better in stressful situations" (Popp, 1996:44). In this research, the children may have felt depressed or sad while reading the stories; however, I will argue that they benefited by open discussion and interpretation. Donaldson (1978:88-89) suggests that through discussion in the classroom, students are not just enabled to talk, but to organise and decide what they want to say, not just to interpret but to value and expand possible interpretations. Wells (1986:158) highlights the value of this kind of adult-child discussion:

> …listening to stories and discussing them with adults in ways that lead children
> to explore through their imagination, the world created through the language of
> the text are probably the experiences that most help young children to discover
> and begin to gain control of what Sapir called 'the dynamo of language'.

Calkins (2001) observes that children are often "fiddling" and "dreaming" while stories are told; implying perhaps, that they are not giving their full attention to a story. But I wish to show that young readers can become independent and reflective thinkers while they respond to stories or to the feelings of characters in those stories. In the best literacy lessons, students are encouraged to share the emotional moment, to interact with story characters and to exchange viewpoints with their peers and teachers. Reading aloud is not merely a listening activity but is also an activity for book talk, that fosters a sense of community as children share reading experiences through discussion. Meek (1982b:289) observes that,

> Left to comment on their own, without the stimulus of a question, children often choose to talk about quite other aspects of a tale than those that preoccupy their elders…They create a tissue of collaborative understandings for each other in a way that no single question from an adult makes possible.

When teachers encourage book talk with children, we tend to ask them several questions to guide their responses. However, as Meek argues, it may at times be advantageous to leave more freedom for children to respond freely to the stories using their own perspective and views. In this research, the children engage in small-group talk and are encouraged to draw or write down their reflections or responses in their own way, and at their own pace rather than being asked to give formal responses.

Furthermore, it is important to leave some time for children to wonder through the possibilities, to empathise and engage with characters in stories, and then, to express their thoughts and generate a new story using their personal experiences (Amour, 2003:47). Atwell (1987:165) observes that "I suspected kids' written responses to books would go deeper than their talk; that writing would give them time to consider their thinking and that thoughts captured would spark new insights." In this research, students are encouraged to respond to stories in various forms, including written response, in order to explore their thoughts and feelings. These forms of responses will be explained in detail in section 2.5.

2.3.5 The Roles of Children as Spectators, Participants and Percipients in Imaginative Role Play

It is important to consider the role of the child in classroom teaching and learning. Children take on the role of the spectator as they listen to stories, but I shall argue that they also take another role as participants when they engage in imaginative role play. Harding (1977:62) states that imaginative role play allows children "to look on at [them]selves, [them]selves as participants in the imagined events." It seems likely that by taking part in imaginative role play activity, children, while still spectators, are to some extent participants in the fiction, and that this dual role helps them to become more deeply involved in the possibilities and problems within the story. O'Neill (1989:24) discusses Bolton's notion that children take on yet another role as percipients in imaginative role play. She explains that "[they are] actively engaged in what they are observing and often responsible for creating the scene or depiction in the first place." That is to say, children both make decisions about how to act out their roles and also about how to interact with other roles while participating in an imaginative role play. I shall demonstrate my evidence for this role in my analysis.

Imaginative play is a natural and familiar activity for most children when they play 'let's pretend' at home or at school. Harvey and Goudvis (2000:49) argue that, "all kids bring a wealth of experience that we can build on to enhance understanding, even though much of that prior knowledge may lie outside the realm of books." For example, children may act out the role-play of doctors and nurses if they have observed hospital routines; however, they may also insert their own predicament (such as whether or not to take a flu shot) into the play. "When children delve into dramatic play, they cross the line between reality and fantasy. Yet, they are still aware of reality. This allows children to become astronauts, dinosaur hunters, parents, pigs and airplanes" (Sawyer and Comer, 1991:139). Children can move from one role to another easily because they know it is just "let's pretend." Even so, they share the emotions and problems of the characters through their understanding and interpretation of the story.

Booth (1994:19) considers that

> Through such externalised representations as drama, children's perceptions are altered and expanded. As children grow in dramatic ability, they improve their communication skills - grappling with experiences, playing out problems and learning to use the conventions of the medium.

Through role play, the children in my research get involved with difficult issues which may have been hard for them to understand or engage with simply by listening to the stories I present to them. I shall argue that imaginative role play creates a context in which children can act out roles in stories in order to solve problems or conflicts, to stimulate their moral and social awareness and to reflect on their reading. Edmiston and Wilhelm (1998:31) state that "Students are nearly always asked to interpret readings they have not been helped to experience. And without participation, the reader has no experience and no learning to reflect upon." For example, after listening to *Caps for Sale* (1968) by Esphyr Slobodkina, children are able to perform the roles of both the pedlar and the monkeys and understand the events from the point of view of both sets of characters. Role play enables them to understand the life of a pedlar and how a pedlar feels when the monkeys do such naughty things to him. Moreover, imaginative role play also helps children create stories based on their personal experience and to understand how they may handle a situation differently.

In this research, reading aloud and storytelling are two main techniques to represent stories to children; however, discussion and imaginative role play are associated with even deeper understanding of stories and difficult experiences addressed in the stories. The most important point about these two techniques is that they encourage and motivate children to respond to stories, to mirror themselves in stories, to think critically and to expand their viewpoints and vision in an environment that offers space for individual responses. Booth and Barton (2000:57) argue that "we may begin with a concept—set out art supplies, divide the class into discussion groups, organise an interview—but the children will direct the meaning making, and we as

teachers will have to be sensitive to their wants and needs." Teachers and educators plan ways of introducing the world to children and helping them understand social and cultural experience; however, children are the ones using their minds and brains to make sense of the world. Furthermore, with good teaching, they learn how to embrace difference, to be open-minded, and to accept change through their questions, reflections, comprehension and interaction with stories through their imaginative role play.

2.4 Death and Disaster: Teaching Young Children about Trauma

As noted above in 2.2, many parents and teachers choose books that show young children a safe, happy and blissful world. Indeed, Bettelheim (1976:7) acknowledges that many adults "believe that only conscious reality or pleasant and wish-fulfilling images should be presented to the child—that he should be exposed only to the sunny side of things." But Bettelheim then argues that: "such one-sided fare nourishes the mind only in a one-sided way, and real life is not all sunny." Do we really create a beautiful and happy illusion of reality for young children by keeping all the unhappy and traumatic issues away from them? We all encounter traumatic experiences in our lives, by losing someone we love or losing track of our daily life. These universal experiences disturb our lives and change us at any stage of our life, including in our childhood, radically or unexpectedly (Alat, 2002:2). Jones and Borgers' study of parents' perceptions of their fifth-grade children's fear showed that children are actually very concerned about these difficult issues even though parents may not expect them to think about them. "Children expressed more fears than parents thought they would. The three items with the greatest difference were being hurt in an accident, nuclear war, and having a loved one die" (1988:13). It seems that such traumas are particularly significant for young children and affect their emotional development (Cairns, 2002:43). Death, wars, terrorism, disasters and other major violent events happen constantly somewhere in the world and many adults wonder, "Should we talk about traumatic issues to our children?" or "How do we talk to our young children about these ugly realities?" Kozol (1975:59) discusses this difficult issue:

> Teachers often respond to me with words like these. 'Isn't it too much of an interruption to bring these agonising, and enormously disturbing, matters to the lives of children?' I hear their words. I look into their eyes. It is as if they were to speak about another planet, or a world they dream of, or a world that they recall within a passage of Vivaldi or a painting of Renoir. They tell us that we must not "bring in" rage and pain. I ask them then: What shall we do when rage

walks in the door?

There are perhaps two groups of children to consider in relation to Kozol's question: firstly, those who have actually experienced a trauma and secondly, those who have not, but who nevertheless think about it and who might benefit from learning about how to deal with the problems and issues related to it. It can be imagined that some young children are either too shocked or scared by witnessing cruelty and sudden pain to understand the consequent change in their lives. However, these children have to live with the consequences and it is possible that certain narratives can help them to do this.

I contend that teachers can share traumatic experiences or talk about the ugly side of life with young children in a caring and supportive classroom environment through stories, both those in books and stories of personal experiences, to help children understand those events within their own unique experience of life. My research aims to explore young children's responses to traumatic stories. As a teacher, I hope, though this is not my main concern, that the children in Taiwan, can learn to understand and value the concepts of peacemaking and empathy, and will be able to look forward to a future where their actions will make a difference.

2.4.1 Teaching About Death to Young Children

Even though both death and disaster share similar traumatic features, they are nevertheless different in some respects, and so I will refer to these two issues separately. The topics of the picture books I selected also fall into two quite distinct categories, and therefore there is a practical reason for discussing these two traumas individually.

Although most adults might argue that death is not an appropriate topic for children, almost every child has experienced or will experience the death of a significant other— a pet, friend, or relative (Linn, 1980:13). Childhood is regarded as a time to avoid difficult challenges; and therefore, talking to

children about death seems to contradict this. Indeed, the psychologist Elkind states: "… [the] major stress of [realistic] literature of young children [aims] at making them aware of the problems in the world about them before they have a chance to master the problems of childhood" (1981:84). However, "children younger than age five do have some understanding of death, particularly when they have had personal death-related experiences" (Essa and Murray, 1994:74). Wells (1988:2) explains that:

> Parents and teachers are expected to teach children the facts of life, yet few even consider teaching them the facts of death. Due to inexperience, ignorance or fear, such an idea is dismissed as morbid, depressing or unnecessary.

I shall argue that it is appropriate for young children to develop their responses to difficult issues through open discussion in a caring and secure environment so they are not left unsupported. In this research, even though children might experience strong emotional reactions such as guilt, anxiety, fear, shame and depression, they are introduced to these selected traumatic stories in a secure, supportive and caring way (Black, 1998:28-31). Furthermore, Rudolph (1978:287) claims "When death in some way touches their world, […] children have 'a powerful desire to know what happened'." My research will demonstrate that it is a good idea to use fiction to help children to move outwards from their own experience. Essa, Murray and Everts (1995:132) and Wells (1988:2) emphasise that children are far better prepared for a serious loss when adults share gloomy issues with them in a caring, warm and supportive environment where they know that their questions will be answered truthfully and where illness or separation are clearly explained. Leaman (1995:13) believes that these difficult areas "should be taken up and form part of a discussion with the child in order to show him or her how death may be faced." Sharing difficult experiences with children in fiction can thus help them to increase their self-awareness and to put some distance between themselves and their feelings, in order to "inspect" them. I mentioned in 2.3.4 that readers play a role as spectators and this helps them to understand these traumas in a secure way, at a distance.

In this study, I shall explain how I have invited children to resolve their conflicts and confusion about death and to cope with their fear and grief (Gibson and Zaidman, 1991:233). Most adults insist on protecting children from conflict and despair. I shall argue that one of the most important techniques in helping young children to understand about death is to share their insights and experiences, to listen to their questions and invite them to respond through discussion, imaginative role play, writing and creative art work.

2.4.2 Teaching Disaster to Young Children

Disasters are both man-made and the result of natural catastrophe. The Holocaust is perhaps the most notorious man-made disaster; an earthquake is an example of natural disaster. Here, I discuss the teaching of both.

Should teachers and parents talk about the Holocaust to young children? Indeed, can the Holocaust be taught and can it be taught to young children? And at what age? These are questions I asked myself many times before I eventually decided to carry out this research.

Rubin (2000:1) claims that:

> As an educator, you are faced with the daunting task of helping young people comprehend how and why such destruction on such an unprecedented scale took place. This is important work, for education is the key to insuring that such hatred and systematic murder can never happen again.

Helping children to learn from the experience of the past in order to help future generations is a belief held by many educators. Spinwall (1999:5) states her purposes in teaching young children (aged five to nine) about the Holocaust:

> Young children need to learn the importance of tolerance and respect for others who are different. They need to acquire and practise skills for resolving

conflicts peacefully and for living together in a spirit of mutual cooperation and appreciation for the contributions of others.

On the other hand, Totten (1999:38) would not teach young children (aged five to nine) about the Holocaust, arguing that it is far too complex for them to understand, and that it is also inappropriate to immerse them in such horror when they are too young to understand why and how the Holocaust happened. Kimmel (1977:84) has similar concerns: "This terrible weight hangs especially heavy over the juvenile writer, who is torn between his duty toward his subject and his responsibility toward his craft: not to be too violent, too accusing, too depressing." But, while recognising that children may not understand everything about the Holocaust, (which of us do?) they are able to understand it at an age-appropriate level and I believe we can use literature to increase young children's awareness of how things were, and how they might otherwise be, so that they learn to empathise, and reach out into the experiences of other people, and begin to understand more about prejudice, discrimination and antipathy.

I shall argue that fiction's greatest value lies in helping young children to increase their imaginative engagement with the world and to help them build positive attitudes towards life and people in other circumstances. Russell (1997:267) also claims that children of ten or twelve "are fully capable of dealing with the fundamental issues of the Holocaust." I shall argue that children as young as seven can begin to understand the events of the Holocaust and are able to make their own judgements and responses even they are not able to fully comprehend the wider philosophical and psychological issues involved (Walter and March,1993:40). Indeed, Yolen explains that her purpose in writing stories about the Holocaust, is not to frighten her readers, but to help them to understand, to empathise and to remember:

> …within that hideous arena there existed not only hate but love, not only carelessness but caring, not only hopelessness, but hope, and an abiding truth within the careful catalogues of lies. I wanted my readers to remember as if

they had been there, without having to come back to the 1980s with the long numbers scorched into their arms. I wanted them to remember. To witness (1989:249).

Yolen believes it is important to tell young children about the history of the Holocaust. But perhaps it is equally important for young children to learn how it is possible to forgive the horror, and to understand how people can reshape their behaviour. Rosenthal (1994:A3) argues that people need help in order to "understand the potential evil of prejudice and hatred" and that events such as the Holocaust should "serve as a springboard to teach the lessons of all racial, religious and ethnic tolerance, and promote the notion that one person can make a difference." In my research, the children will encounter and, hopefully, begin to understand a wide range of emotions by entering imaginatively into the lives of others. As a result, they are likely to understand more about themselves.

In this research, I use stories and literature-based activities to teach young children about the Holocaust. I agree with Norton's (1999:556) assertion that "stories about the Holocaust help children sense the bewilderment and terror of a time when innocent people were the subject of irrational hatred and persecution." I shall discuss how such stories can be used to help young children to understand and experience what happened to millions of people at that particular point in history and how they dealt with their suffering and problems. I shall argue that stories allow a representation of this experience, inviting children to stand outside their everyday lives, as they engage imaginatively with people who suffered, and with those whose ways of thinking are different from their own. Derevensky (1987-1988:54) suggests that "child[ren] will require multiple exposures, books with concrete referents, numerous pictures and much discussion" to help them comprehend the issues of the Holocaust, and my choice of texts and teaching methods reflects this advice.

Unlike wars that are begun by human beings, an earthquake is unpredictable and unavoidable. But the damage and distress caused by earthquakes and

other natural disasters have something in common with the war and the Holocaust—people are injured and die and people's lives are disrupted. Teaching young children about the trauma of natural disasters is not only about helping them to understand more about the grievous experiences of people who have suffered; it is also about extending young children's awareness of unselfishness and compassion.

On 21st September, 1999, a devastating earthquake struck Taiwan and took many lives. Both adults and children were scared and shocked by the sudden loss and destruction. Some of the children had difficulties accepting the truth, coping with their emotions and returning to their former life. Adults and teachers asked themselves what they could do to help children who experienced the earthquake, so they could begin to face the future with courage and determination. McMath (1997:82) suggests that after such a disaster we need to let young children know that they are safe and that we will care for them. I am interested in learning about the role of story in establishing this position of safety and security. Booth and Barton (2000:19) argue that not "all stories should end happily, but they need to offer hope…" Teaching young children about the earthquake can help them to reflect, question and evaluate and to live on with love and hope. Moreover, fiction offers young children an opportunity to be caring, and to express their concern and empathy for others (Morris, Taylor and Wilson, 2000:44).

A lot of children were displaced to different educational host settings in other states or districts after the damage of Hurricane Katrina in August, 2005. These children may be different socially, culturally, emotionally and physically from their peers and teachers at the new school. Hence, the authors of *An Open Letter to Our Friends and Supporters* write: "[Hurricane] Katrina transformed prejudice and tolerance into real moral choices. A generation of children in the Deep South witness first-hand the capacity of humans to either help or harm one another" (Southern Institute for Education and Research, 2006). I shall argue that teaching young children about natural disaster "shows the capacity of humans to accept others and to suspend prejudices

through moral judgement and a sense of responsibility" (Moore, 2007:28). My research will set out to show that by discussing earthquakes or other disasters with young children, teachers can turn a tragic situation into a process of learning and healing, and that the insights gained from stories can help young children to release their anxiety and to feel empowered to help others.

Young children's feelings of curiosity, fear and uncertainty about death, war, natural disasters and other traumatic issues are just as intense as those of adults. My work with Taiwanese children has set out to help them to engage imaginatively with people living through other traumatic circumstances and to develop their awareness of other social, historical or political situations. The following section will discuss the use of picture storybooks with these children.

2.4.3 Teaching Traumatic Issues to Young Children with Picture Books

In this section, I will first discuss the definition of picture books, and the relationship between text and picture, and then focus on how traumatic issues have become available in picture books for young children. The way young children respond to picture books will be explained in 2.5 in the section on reader response. Bader (1976:1) defines a picture book as:

> …text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial
> product; a social, cultural, historical document; and foremost an experience for
> a child. As an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words,
> on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the
> turning page. On its own terms its possibilities are limitless.

Text and illustration both play a very important role in carrying the meaning in a picture book. The illustrations in a picture book are not merely visual reflections of the texts but are a visual exploration of interpretation and reflection. Ahlberg (cited in Moss, 1990:21) puts it this way: "The big truth about picture books…is that they are an interweaving of word and picture.

You don't have to tell the story in the words. You can come out of the words and into the pictures and you get this nice kind of antiphonal fugue effect." In addition, picture books are a "great unifier in mixed ability classes" (Moss, 1981:8-9). The combination of narrative and visual representations permits readers of different abilities or stages to enter stories in their own way and at their own pace, so that both text and pictures possess the magic power for readers to create different versions of possibilities.

Reading a picture book involves far more than just decoding words. The pictures need to be 'read' and 'viewed' with close, careful detailed observation and these observations have to be reshaped in order to compose individual young readers' meanings (Michaels and Walsh, 1990:3; Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 1996:69). Meek (1982a: 66) also claims that "The pictures help the reader to understand the story, that the story has a shape and the author has a voice." *The Snowman* (1978) by Raymond Briggs is an example of a book that provides a wordless wonder for children. This wordless tour tells of a winter adventure shared by a little boy and a snowman who has magically sprung to life. It tells of a little boy's dream or fantasy with his imaginary friend—the snowman, and they express their joy as they experience each other's lives. However, tears and sorrow follow, and we see the little boy's helplessness and sense of loss as he loses his friend (Graham, 1990:32). This wordless picture book encourages readers to make up a wider range of possible versions of the story to help them cope with individual emotions as well as developing their stance towards the lives of others. Words carry obvious and direct meanings in picture books; however, pictures carry some hidden and implied messages and meanings that are "part of a narrative sequence" (Benton and Fox, 1985:71). Similarly, Nodelman (1988:176) states that:

> We perceive new experiences in terms of the experiences preceding them…each picture in a picture book establishes a context for the picture that follows—it becomes a schema that determines how we will perceive the next picture.

Words and pictures play interactive and cooperative roles and the stories only make a whole when both words and pictures are read as one. "In enhancing interaction, pictures amplify more fully the meaning of the words, or the words expand the picture so that different information in the two modes of communication produces a more complex dynamic" (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2000:225). Picture books have the potential for inviting readers to bring their own experiences to the book, for example, two books chosen for this project: *I'll Always Love You* (1988) and *Granpa* (1995) that allow readers to recall memories of their pets, grandparents or long-lost family members and perhaps also to reflect on their experience of loss. Sendak explains that artists fulfill children's fantasies by broadening their world and helping them to gain insights into their own lives through the story and the power of the image on the page:

> Children…will tolerate ambiguities, peculiarities, and things illogical; will take them into their unconscious and deal with them as best they can…The artist has to be a little bit bewildering and a little bit wild and a little bit disorderly…Artists run into difficulty because they're dealing with our upright, uptight business, which is the industry called childhood (1989:192).

Picture books are read and enjoyed both in classrooms and at home across the world, including the United Kingdom, United States and Taiwan. Indeed, the Far East, such as China, Japan and Taiwan, have exciting visual traditions. Increasingly, challenging issues are represented in children's picture books, such as sibling jealousy, birth and death, love and care, being different, coping with emotions like anger and sadness, war and other traumatic issues. Nowadays, it is common to find picture books with these difficult, realistic and traumatic plots and pictures in bookshops. Issues such as death, loss, violence and killing, which have for some years been available for older children in the style of a novel or diary (for example, *The Diary of A Young Girl* (1997) by Anne Frank or *Charlotte's Web* (1952) by E.B. White), are now dealt with in the form of picture books for both younger and older readers. Young children are capable of making sense of pictures while reading picture books. In the wonderland of pictures, young children can be encouraged to

imagine and share their own individual and unique thinking and feeling with regard to the pictures they 'read'. Anthony Browne (cited in Evans, 1998:195) claims, "I deliberately make my books so that they are open to different interpretations, most of which I never hear about (probably just as well). Once a book is finished I have to let it go, like a child. What happens next is out of my control."

In the following section, I will consider the three traumatic issues I selected for the project: death (loss and separation), war (the Holocaust) and natural disasters (earthquakes) which are introduced to children through picture books, a new realistic genre.

Death: Loss and Separation

I have no doubt that death is always one of the most fearful and bewildering experiences that children have to confront. The representation of death in children's literature has changed in the past centuries from being a dreadful threat or punishment to something less morbid and sentimental (Danielson, 1985:3-4). Nevertheless, death in children's literature was regarded as a taboo subject before the 1970s as adults wanted to "protect and insulate [children] from this fact of life, which is typically associated with anxiety and pain" (Silverman, 2000:2). In the past two decades, an increasing number of children's picture books that deal with death in a realistic manner have become available (Walker and Jones, 1986:16). It is perhaps because children are capable of observing the world around them from their daily experiences that they sense that death is a forbidden subject that should not be talked about but they are actually exposed to death through their personal experiences, others' experiences and TV programmes. Teaching or talking to children about death need not frighten them; instead it can offer them an opportunity to understand it as a fact of life, to learn to cope with their emotions or any other reactions that come along with it. Therefore, it could be more appropriate to introduce death to children through stories than being silent or ignoring it. Danielson (1985:12-13) also comments that using children's picture books as a medium can "help children become more aware

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of a real life situation and can give them examples of children like themselves who are able to cope with death and live their lives fully." The children's spoken responses to loss and separation relevant to their personal experiences are shown in 4.2.5.

Glazer (1991:204) states that "children between five and nine are in a period of realising that death, the ultimate separation, is permanent." Even at this young age, children begin to understand and perhaps begin to be afraid of complex issues. From my personal experience, even a young child aged five can understand the story of Hans Wilhelm's *I'll Always Love You* (1988), and express their feelings about friendship and loss. Young children may feel sad, and may cry over the painful, but real, sense of loss in that story; they ask questions and they find a way to feel better again once they realise that there is life beyond Elfie's death. In this project, I shall argue that introducing loss and separation to the children through the selected picture books has helped them to express their inner feelings and to explore their emotions. It seems to be easier and safer for children to express their personal feelings and thoughts through experiences and situations they meet in stories, and where they could raise their doubts and concerns from the characters' perspectives in order to empathise, judge and shape their own understanding and insights on both the particular situation in the story and on their own lives (Nodelman, 1992:64).

War: The Holocaust
In today's visual and fast-media world, it is impossible for us not to receive a great deal of what actually happens around the world through TV and the internet. It seems harder for adults to protect children from trauma, such as violence, suffering, death, war and conflict, with non-stop broadcasting. I think that is part of the reason why more and more picture books "touch on social, moral, political, and environmental issues," nevertheless, another possible reason is that "children can be introduced to difficult, sometimes sensitive subjects through this genre" (Evans, 2007:236). Kidd (2005:120) specifically comments on the development of the Holocaust issue in children's literature:

Since the early 1990s, children's books about trauma, especially the trauma(s) of the Holocaust, have proliferated, … Despite the difficulties of representing the Holocaust, or perhaps because of them, there seems to be consensus now that children's literature is the most rather than the least appropriate literary forum for trauma work. Subjects previously thought too upsetting for children are now deemed appropriate and even necessary.

The problem of how to aesthetically reconceptualise the complex issue of the Holocaust, when the audience is children, was initially difficult. The format of the picture book made me fear that the Holocaust might be too intense for children as young as seven and eight (Connolly, 2008:288). However, violence and bullying can happen in playground fights or around the corner of classrooms and this may involve injury, insecurity and emotional hurt (Burns, 2009:421). This may explain why young children are often not completely unfamiliar with traumatic and realistic issues while reading picture books. For example, Zack (1991:43) presents two fifth-graders' responses after reading Yolen's book, *The Devil's Arithmetic*, a story about the Holocaust:

Sara: I don't want to even look at *The Devil's Arithmetic*, because *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 1989), it just describes, like Anne Frank's diary, it describes what happens before you get to the concentration camp…It doesn't tell you what's actually happening in the concentration camp.

Irene: … people think 'oh, children shouldn't know about this,'…it'll scare them or something, but you should know. It's it's –if you don't want to know, that's different problem, but…they should have books…like Jane Yolen's…

So children aged ten do recognise these difficult issues and can talk about them; and they at least get a chance to know about these issues before they decide how far and how deeply they want to move forward. However, the children I work with are younger (aged seven to eight) than the children whose responses are quoted above. My research shows that introducing traumatic picture books to young children need not bring fear and horror or cause nightmares or other psychological distress to them but rather, it can prepare them to understand these sensitive issues and perhaps help them face

similar hardships in their later lives. The children's responses after the designed imaginative role play will be discussed in 4.5 to demonstrate their reflection and emotions when encountering similar imaginative experiences.

In my view, I believe that young children have the right to know the troubling side of reality to provide them with appropriate and supportive information to help them face future hardships or to reshape their value system and world view. As Marc Bloch (cited in Bloch, 2005:131) claims "When all is said and done, a single word, 'understanding', is the beacon light of our studies." In this project, teaching the Holocaust to young children invites them to, through the selected picture books, to explore the value and importance of humanity and to develop empathy to understand one self, others and the world (Commeyras, 2001:521). Moreover, the children "can come to some kind of understanding of the historical period, what led up to it, what happened during it, and what some of the implications are for those of us born in the post-Holocaust generation" through their engagement with the carefully selected picture books (Kokkola, 2003:167). It is also a cross-curricular implication integrating history, literature, moral education and life education that invites young children to make sense of particular events and history.

'Remembrance' and 'Never Again' are two main concerns of Holocaust literature, education and memorial museums; however, I must argue that it is not easy for children to build these two concerns into their world view through reading and indeed this is not the intention of this research. I merely hoped that through the exploration of the selected picture books and the journey with the characters the children would have "an accessible way to learn about the past" and to "liv[e] through" the experience empathically and reflectively (Broderick, 1996:13). Reading stories about the Holocaust is slightly different from reading about the loss and separation that the children may have experienced, and indeed the war stories begin from a 'safe' distance—the Holocaust happened seventy years ago. Through reading the stories of the Holocaust, they are encouraged to question the beliefs and attitudes in the stories and to question and reshape their values and viewpoints critically. McLaughlin and Devoogd (2004:150) claim that "[reading critically]

is not a teaching method but a way of thinking and a way of being that challenges texts and life as we know it." Through this research, I hope to inspire the children to think and interact with their introspections in relation to what happens in the wider world in a critical manner.

Natural Disaster: Earthquakes

Other than man-made disasters, natural disasters are also widely reported by media around the world when they happen. Children are exposed to the chaos through the explicit videos on TV and it is much harder to hide the information, especially if the natural disaster happens in their homeland. Once natural disaster strikes, it can take away a lot of lives and break up thousands of families and the sudden and unexpected loss may affect both the adults and the children's daily lives. I pointed out in the introduction that the government in Taiwan began to place a high value on Life Education after the 921 earthquake and children's literature (picture books included) translated from the Japanese (for Japan had a similar experience in 1995) or produced by local writers and illustrators were available from then on. This kind of children's literature may help the healing process for children who were traumatised; however, for children who have had no direct experience, it may create opportunities for their imagination, awareness and empathy to be enlarged (Leland and Harste, 2000:6).

Traumatic and sensitive issues in picture books, nevertheless, break the "protective walls of children's innocence," in order to help them to explore the experiences and lives of characters and to mirror the chaos and uncertainties in reality (Kiefer, 2008:19).

2.4.4 Modality in the selected picture books

In this section, I would like to discuss modality in the selected picture books and how it concerns different forms of narrative in the following perspective: photographs, text, illustrations, use of colour, interaction between the images and the text and how all these mediate the message to readers. In addition, I

will also discuss how these modalities are used specifically by authors and illustrators in particular books used in this research, in order to enhance and explore the traumatic areas that are covered in this project.

Kryczka (1992-1993:16) argues, "disturbing pictures and stories of a poisoned world and uncertain future lead to feelings of fear and powerlessness," but nevertheless, I have decided to use picture books, a genre that young children are familiar with, to introduce the traumatic issues in this research to reduce young children's horror, unfamiliarity and insecurity regarding fearsome situations and experiences. Through discussion and the reading of carefully selected picture books, I intend to show that a young child's fear can fade away little by little once they understand unknown issues.

Modality in picture books concerns the texts and images readers understand to be reliable and this enables them to interpret and decide on the degree of factualness in both the verbal and visual texts we receive (Lewis, 2001:162). Scholars like Jane Doonan and John Stephens consider how much sense of reality the illustrations convey in picture books, for example, they indicate that photographs have "higher modality" as they are closer to the truth (Kokkola, 2003:64; Lewis, 2001:163). Moreover, it is important to access historical accuracy in a historical picture book through photographs and true-to-life images because they help readers to understand that what they read about truly happened. Two books in this project: *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm* (1987) and *The Children We Remember* (1983) are considered as high modality for using black-and-white photographs to depict the story about the Holocaust. In *The Children We Remember* (Figure 2.1), the story is largely told from the photographs with simple text that is relevant to the historical events; however, it is possible for readers to read it without the text because the photographs are interpretative and can therefore hold readers' emotions steady by looking at them.

Figure 2.1: Illustration from *The Children We Remember*

played with their friends,

Nevertheless, it is not easy to separate the interactive nature of words and pictures in picture books. For example, even though photographs are used in *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm* (Figure 2.2), readers need the texts to help them interpret the photographs and the emotions of the characters in the story. The children's responses and interpretations of the photographs in these two books will be further discussed in **Chapter Four**.

Figure 2.2: Illustration from *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm*

After we sat there for a long while,
I put my hand on Grandpa's and told him,
"You shouldn't be ashamed
to let people see your number.
You didn't do anything wrong.
It's the Nazis who should be ashamed."
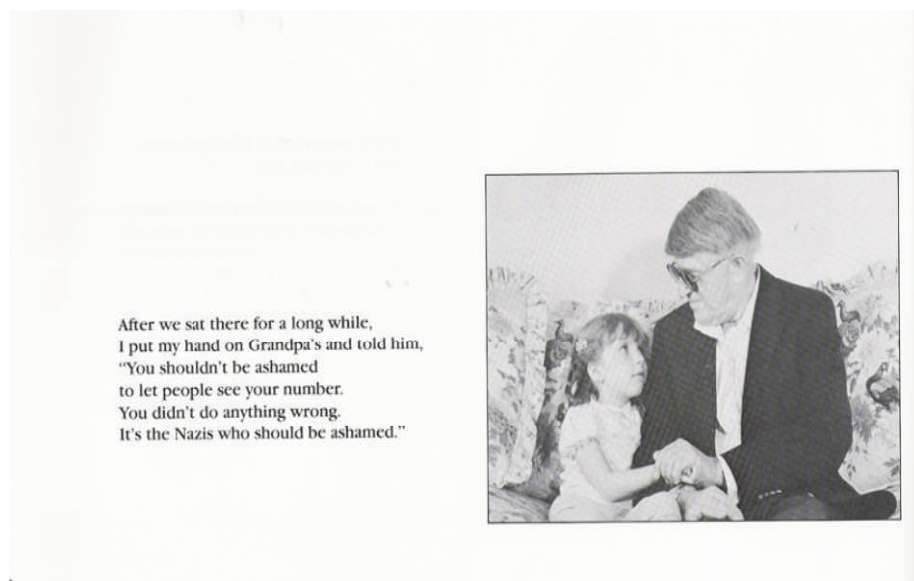
O'Sullivan (2005:154-155) points out that this particular illustration (Figure 2.3) in *Rose Blanche* (1985) shows "the boy in the Warsaw Ghetto, hands held above his head, … integrated into Innocenti's fictional picture" and it is also considered as high modality.

Figure 2.3: Illustration from *Rose Blanche*

The first page of *Rose Blanche* has the Nazi flag and the German language: Bäckerei Heinrich helps readers to identify the time and place of the particular historical event and proves that "Works of Holocaust literature require a sense of both time and space [place] in order to be historically accurate" (Kokkola, 2001:67).

Figure 2.4: Illustration from *Rose Blanche*

Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott, however, have another approach to exploring the modality in picture books, stating that they "seek to examine the dynamic relation that happens between the picture and the text" (Kokkola, 2003:65). Nikolajeva and Scott (2001:174) comment on the complex process of picture-text interaction:

> Complex modality can be achieved through the interaction of words and images. ... While the verbal story is often told from a child's point of view presenting the events as true, the details in pictures may suggest that the story only takes place in the child's imagination. The pictures thus subvert the verbal narrative's intended objectivity.

Unlike photographs in a picture book, illustrated pictures alone in a picture book allow only limited communication. Without text, readers who have no prior knowledge find it hard to tell whether what they see is true or a figment of their imagination. In *The Lily Cupboard* (1992), readers may tell where the story takes place but not the time period of the setting and what happened merely from the illustrations. However, the opening text on the first double spread presents the factual information about the historical event and the story

for readers (Figure 2.5):

On May 10, 1940, shortly after the beginning of World War II, Holland was invaded by Germany. For five years the Dutch people endured German occupation. Jews in particular were sent to concentration camps, where many died a hideous death. But even in these dark times there were many heroes.

Figure 2.5: Illustration from *The Lily Cupboard*

Without the text, the illustrations in *The Lily Cupboard* do not reveal much about the brutal historical background; however, the story focuses on something that young children can handle: separation from parents, which is challenging and "is also historically accurate" because many children were sent away from their parents for safety during World War II (Kokkola, 2003:67). However, the text and the pictures in *The Lily Cupboard* are equally protective to spare young readers from fear and horror and the supportive interaction between the words and pictures is strong. For example, Figure 2.6 shows readers the three familiar faces of Nello's family, the door opening and the light flooding in which creates a safe conclusion before they see or hear the text. However, the text that expresses Miriam's feelings while waiting inside the Lily Cupboard tries to hold the reader's emotions steady and help them escape from panic: "I wait. I hear heavy footsteps past my wall. ... I hear

the voices of the soldiers harsh and loud ... but suddenly, we hear the three soft knocks ... and my lily cupboard opens to the light."

Figure 2.6: Illustration from *The Lily Cupboard*.

I don't know how long we've been waiting, Hendrik and I, but suddenly we hear the three soft knocks...and my lily cupboard opens to the light.
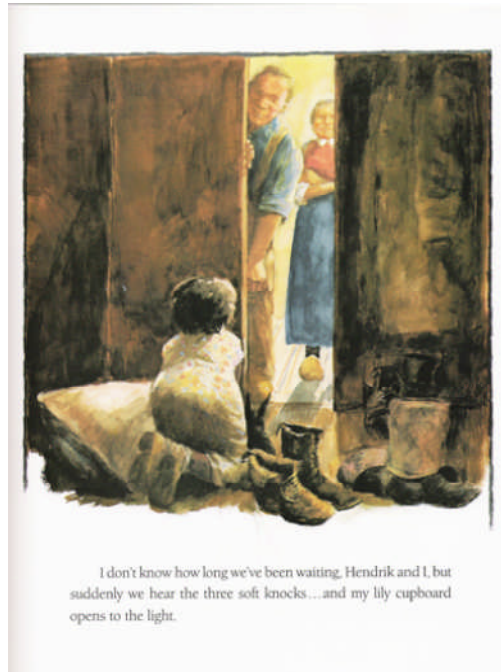
In order to explore the balance between the weight of presenting modality in the issues of the Holocaust and earthquakes, I would like to discuss a similar modality showing how text and illustrations interact in *Thank You, Kitty* (1995), a story about Midori being trapped by an earthquake here. Readers are given the information about time and about what happened to Midori from the illustrations (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7: Illustration from *Thank You, Kitty*

Nodelman (1988:222) claims that the relationship between verbal and visual text is always an ironic one; that "the words tell us what the pictures do not show, and the pictures show us what the words do not tell us." In this picture book, readers have to fill in the gaps between the text and images in order to read and understand Midori's experience, for the illustrations present her emotional suffering while the text tells what she really thinks in words and what truly happened around her (Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8: Illustration from *Thank You, Kitty*

Colour is another key marker of modality in picture books. For example, in *Erika's Story* (2003), readers begin to map the story using available information about time and historical background (Figure 2.9):

> From 1933 to 1945, six million of my people were killed. Many were starved. Many were burned in ovens or gassed in chambers. I was not. I was born in 1944. I do not know my birthdate. I do not know my birth name. I do not know in what city or country I was born. I do not know if I had brothers or sisters. What I do know is that when I was just a few months old, I was saved from the Holocaust.

Figure 2.9: Illustration from *Erika's Story*
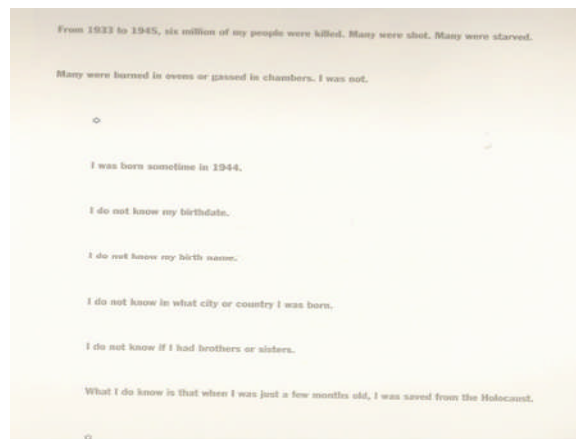
It still keeps high modality with historical accuracy even though readers need to read further to understand why information about where the story took place is missing. In this picture book, only the last double spread page is illustrated in colour and the rest of the pictures are illustrated in black-and-white. Within these black-and-white illustrations, only two objects are printed in saturated colour: yellow stars and the baby girl. Serafini (2009:19) states that "Calling one's attention to particular elements of an image is the first step in making sense of what one sees." The big yellow star on the cover of the book catches the reader's eye and it is not difficult for readers to identify it immediately when they see a highly saturated 'yellow star' in the black-and-white illustration all the way through the whole picture book (Figure 2.10).

Moreover, the 'yellow star' in this story, represents the Jewish victims. It is historically accurate and it reflects the message in the text on the final page: "My star still shines" implies a message of survival and moving on with life.

Figure 2.10: Illustration from *Erika's Story*

I wonder how they felt when they were herded to the railway station with hundreds of other Jews. Crammed into a cattle car. Standing room only. Did they panic when they heard the doors barred shut?

The train must have travelled from one village to another through pastoral landscapes
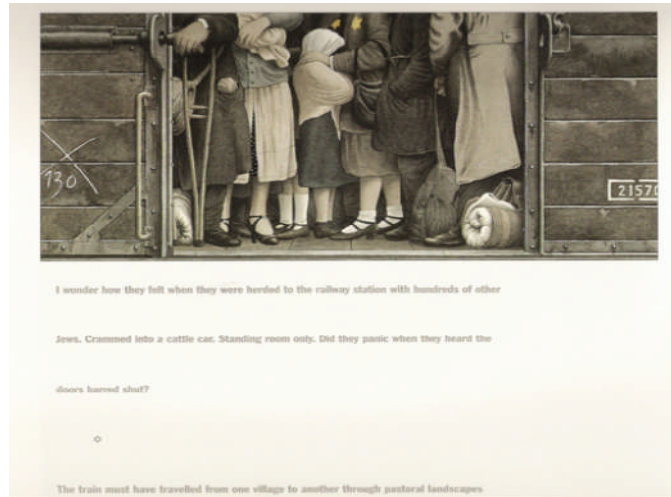
Other than the yellow star, the baby wrapped in a pink shawl in Figure 2.11 also draws a reader's attention "to a character's importance in an image or his or her circumstances in the story" (Serafini, 2009:20). In addition, in this picture, the baby girl is relatively small in comparison with the train, thereby making readers aware of her isolation. From both Figure 2.10 and 2.11 readers interpret the characters and objects through the size, focus and colours of the illustrations. The target group's interpretation will be presented together with a very close analysis in **Chapter Four**.

Figure 2.11: Illustration from *Erika's Story*

Similarly, in the books about earthquakes, colours also play an important role. For example, in *Yuzi's Dream* (1995), the whole book is illustrated with warm and bright hues (such as green, sky blue, white and yellow) except for two illustrations: one uses highly saturated red to represent the whole burning street caused by the serious earthquake which offers readers a realistic sense of the earthquake and provides them with the maximum visual impact (Figure 2.12).

Figure 2.12: Illustration from *Yuzi's Dream*

Another illustration uses a mid-saturated deep blue sky with shiny stars to show readers how much Tachi misses Yuzi and to create for the reader a calm and restful atmosphere to smooth the pain of Yuzi's loss (Figure 2.13).

Figure 2.13: Illustration from *Yuzi's Dream*

The whole story also uses the metaphor of Yuzi's magic balloons which are shown in warm hues to create a sense of healing and a dream that reminds readers of their strength in helping them face the reality of loss and separation (Figure 2.14).

Figure 2.14: Illustration from *Yuzi's Dream*

The final double-page spread is illustrated with mid-saturated colourful balloons flying high in the sky to say hello and goodbye to Yuzi. This distances readers from their feelings of sorrow and comforts them with Yuzi's laughter that they hear in their hearts (Figure 2.15).

Figure 2.15: Illustration from *Yuzi's Dream*

I have discussed five books in which the words and pictures are integrated tightly to help readers develop their understanding and interpretation and to comment on the selected issues or human conditions. The story of *Granpa* (1984) is an example of the interaction of both the visual and verbal texts which interweave strongly and it requires a reader's full attention to fill in the gaps and make sense of the story (Nikolajeeva and Scott, 2001:112). Both the words and pictures in *Granpa* represent the complex dialogue between a grandfather and his granddaughter using different tenses (past and present)

and memories, and cross-generational communication. Michaels and Walsh (1990:17-18) point out: "The dialogue does not comprise a connected whole without the pictures. These not only provide a setting for the dialogue, but also give some clues about the preceding actions or words which do not appear in the verbal text." For example, the meaning of the following words (Figure 2.16)—'*When we get to the beach can we stay there for ever*? Yes, but we must go back for our tea at four o'clock'—depends on the reading of the same page, as well as the picture on the following page.

Figure 2.16: Illustration from *Granpa*
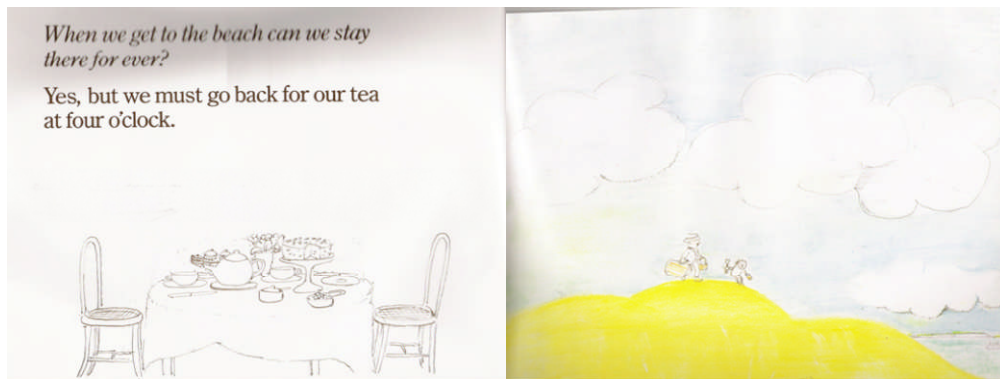
Furthermore, the image of the little girl looking at the empty chair (Figure 2.17) at the end of *Granpa* leaves readers room to make their own interpretation and thus creates an "alternating ambiguity" modality as Nikolajeva and Scott state (2001:203). Readers are left to imagine alternative possibilities to end the story and to interpret the little girl's facial expression, gesture and her feelings. The target children's interpretations of this particular illustration will be further analysed and discussed in 4.2.3.

Figure 2.17: Illustration from *Granpa*
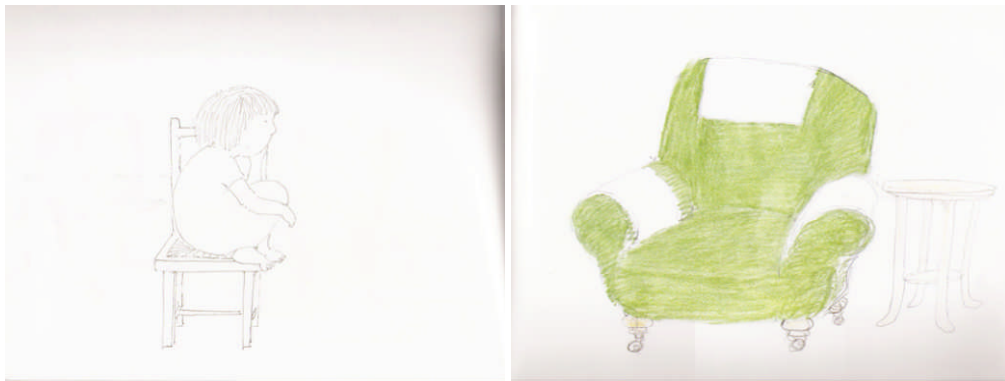
The beginning of the story implies Tian-Yu's dream of having a pair of wings in *The Wings of Hope* (2000). The text and illustrations also connect tightly with each other to provide readers with accurate information about when and what actually happened. However, readers need to gain some information on cultural diversity in order to interpret or understand the imagistic and symbolic metaphor of the bull that represents earthquakes in Taiwanese culture in Figure 2.18. Readers who are not familiar with the cultural context need the words to support their understanding and to construct a cultural landscape (Michaels and Walsh, 1990:12).

Figure 2.18: Illustration from *The Wings of Hope*
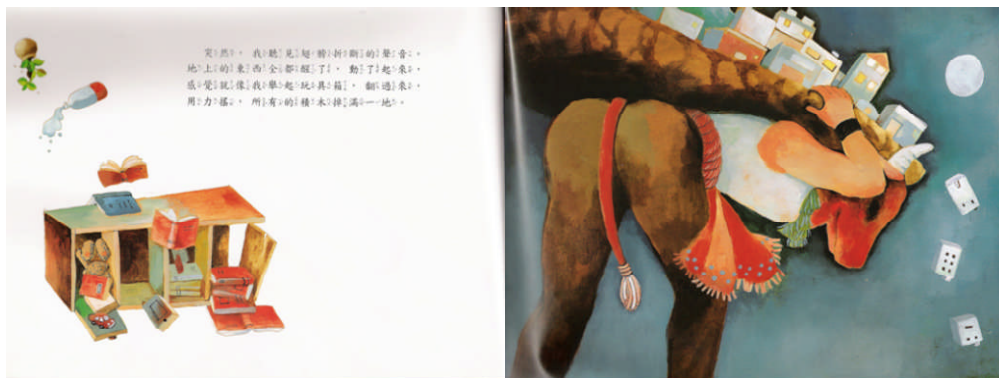
The story shows Tian-Yu and his family's experience of suffering an earthquake in the middle of the night. From the illustration in the final double spread pages (Figure 2.19), both Tian-Yu and his puppy get a pair of wings and fly high in the sky, referring to loss. However, that image creates a

metaphor of Tian-Yu's dream coming true and echoes with the text at the beginning as he wanted to have a pair of wings so much. This, to some extent, also helps to distance readers from the sorrow of the loss of Tian-Yu. Moreover, the image of Tian-Yu's sister's long kite flying all the way from the ground so that it nearly reaches Tian-Yu in the sky, leaves room for hope and imagination to spare readers from the painful reality as well as creating a passage for sending love and caring.

Figure 2.19: Illustration from *The Wings of Hope*

The modality in the selected picture books invites readers to pay careful attention to the illustrations and creates a tension between the requirement of moving back and forth to interrelate the words and pictures (Goldstone, 2004:201). Moreover, these picture books take readers into the sensitive stories, but at the same time they invite readers to keep one foot grounded in reality and a reader's daily life experience. In the next section, I would like to discuss how the ending of these traumatic stories may still leave readers room for hope and comfort.

2.4.5 The Question of Closure

Sharing picture books about trauma with young children is not only about offering them the chance to understand difficult issues but also about helping them to cherish what they have and inspiring them to understand that there are

still many beautiful and wonderful things about life, so that in spite of difficulties and problems, there is always a time for love, hope and dreams. Trauma stories, however, cannot always have happy endings, and perhaps this does not matter as long as the stories end on a note of personal satisfaction. As Kokkola (2003:154-155) argues about "closure":

> Traditionally, children's literature ends with closure: a closed ending which leaves no questions open. We may further distinguish between structural closure and psychological closure. Structural closure brings the plot to a satisfactory conclusion, whereas psychological closure brings the protagonist's personal conflicts into balance.

To me, the "happy ending" does not exist in a traumatic story for by the nature of the subject matter, there must be something or someone who is sad at the end of the story. However, I do believe that it is crucial for a traumatic story to bring young readers some psychological comfort or hope (Totten and Feinberg, 2001:141). Some traumatic stories, such as *Granpa* or *Charlotte's Web*, end with a situation that is positive and hopeful. Many stories of the Holocaust end with the liberation of the concentration camp or tell of a time of war that has passed and show that life continues. Structural closure can be found in *Erika's story* (2004) by Ruth Vander Zee, where Erika survives the concentration camp because her mother throws her out of the train, and a kind lady saves Erika's life and brings her up. The war ends and Erika has a new family of her own in the end of the story.

In 希望的翅膀 (*The Wings of Hope*) (2000) by 郝廣才 (Hao, G. T.), the little boy, Tian-Yu, is buried underground after a serious earthquake in Taiwan. His parents and little sister survived but Tian-Yu did not. But he is happy to be in heaven where he can watch his sister grow up and where he feels he can still love and protect his friends and family even though he is not with them. The final illustration of the picture book (Figure 2.19) shows Tian-Yu smiling and wearing his angel's wings (Tian-Yu always wanted a pair of angel's wings). The finality of his death may upset readers but also offer some hope to move on no matter what difficulties they may face in reality. The ending also leaves

room for readers to imagine other interpretations, so even though the story ends with Tian-Yu's death, the metaphor of the guardian angel achieves psychological closure. There is strength in his smile.

Figure 2.20: Illustration from *The Wings of Hope* (希望的翅膀)

Some traumatic stories may end with an aperture that allows readers' multiple interpretations. This aperture leaves room for readers to complete stories with possibilities of their own choosing. Raphael and Au (1998:47), who summarise Marilyn Smith's study of reading aloud to young children, point out that "'text-to-life' connections (in which children use their knowledge of a story to understand something in their own lives)" can be regarded as a window. For children from a different background, experience and culture, a book may also work as a window, introducing them to people from another culture, or background and to new experiences. For example, ありがとうニャアニャ (*Thank you, Kitty*) (1995) by Naoko Takahama is a story about Midori, who is trapped in a room after an earthquake. She waits for rescue and tries every way she can think of to make noises so she can be heard. A kitten runs to her and brings her warmth, courage and hope when she has nearly given up. The story ends with the kitten leaving when she realises that someone will rescue Midori. The closure of this story allows for readers' imaginative interpretation of many possibilities.

These stories encourage readers to think more deeply and to find a way to meet their own psychological, moral or emotional satisfactions. Coles notes:

> The whole point of stories is not 'solutions' or 'resolutions' but a broadening and even a heightening of our struggles—with new protagonists and antagonists introduced, with new sources of concern or apprehension or hope, as one's mental life accommodates itself to a series of arrivals: guests who have a way of staying, but not necessarily staying put (1989:129).

My research will demonstrate that picture books that focus on traumatic issues give children the opportunity to ask fascinating questions about what the world is like, who they want to be become when they grow up, why human beings sometimes behave so irresponsibly, how people are going to survive adverse situations and what is going to happen at the end of a story (Styles, 1996:44). I will argue that children are capable of understanding the negative side of reality and will find their own ways of coping with their emotions and problems if adults are supportive, considerate and open-minded to their questions. Young children learn to decode and interpret the verbal and visual signs in these kinds of picture books to make sense of distressing events in the world. My research will examine how sharing realistic and traumatic stories with young children can help them to have a better tolerance of fear and pain and to consider possible solutions (Wolfelt, 1983:6-7).

2.5 Reader Response Theory

If a song cannot sing in the listeners' minds, cannot move them, bring similar experiences to mind or influence their thinking, then it perhaps cannot be thought of as a good song. And, of course, listeners' own unique experiences may lead them to have different responses to the same song. This process is echoed in our response to literature. While reading, readers are not passively accepting all the information the story is offering, but engaging with their own thinking and emotions, as they respond to the story.

Reiss, quotes from Cervantes to point out that readers interact and communicate with the piece of literature and the author, at the same time.

> Fictions have to match the minds of their readers, and to be written in such a way that, by tempering the impossibilities, moderating excesses, and keeping judgement in the balance, they may so astonish, hold, excite, and entertain, that wonder and pleasure go hand in hand (Cervantes, cited in Reiss, 1992:32).

This feature of interaction and communication between the literature and the reader applies equally to young children when they are reading children's literature. While listening to stories; they are actually trying to understand them by using their imagination, creativity and empathy to interpret and respond to the story and bring their experience to bear on their interpretation.

The world of literature enables young readers to visit, vicariously, all corners of the universe in their minds (Freeman and Leham, 2001:12), and so children's literature not only opens a window to the world for readers but also gives them a mirror with which to understand themselves better. In this section, different forms of young readers' responses to children's literature will be explored. These responses are all within the context of children's literature of trauma, and therefore, notions of empathy and emotional support will form an important part of my discussion.

2.5.1 Reader Response to Children's Literature

What really happens between texts and readers is a complex question and my study will add to our knowledge of this area. Theories about how readers understand texts are drawn from psychology, education, linguistics, aesthetics and from literature itself. Some of these theories emphasise what is read, what authors intend to convey; others focus on the readers themselves. Reader response takes into account what readers understand in stories, what and how they feel while reading, and what they bring to the story from their own experience, reflection and interpretation (Rogers, 1999:138-139). "If books could have more, give more, be more, show more, they would still need readers, who bring to them sound and smell and light and all the rest that can't be in books. The book needs you" (Paulsen, 1989:3). Therefore, it follows that literature invites readers to do more than merely read a story; it develops their imaginative response and insights. Readers can begin to identify their own problems, behaviour and emotions through the reading process, and hence, some stories may offer satisfaction as readers face problems in their daily lives.

> Responding to literature is a complex process involving readers, texts, and contexts. Responding to literature has to do with what we make of a text as we read, how it becomes alive and personal for us, the pleasure and satisfaction we feel, and the way in which we display these feelings. Our responses to the books we read are influenced by many factors and come in many forms (Galda, 1988:92).

Galda reminds us that reader response is determined by factors present in both the text and the reader. Readers' beliefs, expectations, personal experiences, cultural and literary backgrounds, and their cognitive and emotional development, may all affect their understanding and response to children's literature (Martinez and Roser, 1991:644). In addition, I would argue that the meaning that resides in the story is not only a reflection of the author's expectations but reflects the readers' literary and personal experiences and their interaction with others and the world they live in.

Readers tend to use their previous reading experiences to understand or to accommodate new topics or new reading. In this research, for example, the children are invited to share their previous understanding about the story of *The Three Little Pigs* as a pre-task activity before I introduce them the new topic of earthquake; they are being asked relevant questions to link their personal experiences to this story in ways that would support their interpretation and understanding of the earthquake texts (the particular character of big bad wolf in *The Three Little Pigs* is replaced with unpredictable earthquake in this pre-task activity). In this research, readers are always encouraged to respond to traumatic stories by using their previous personal experiences or knowledge of similar encounters.

The relationship between reader and text is tightly connected—a text does not come alive until reader and text are joined. In my research, I am always alert to the fact that a reader's response can be affected by those around him or her. Readers are in the context of the classroom when they share their responses, interpretations, interests, emotional and personal experiences of reading within the classroom community. The shared environment of the classroom helps to form an "interpretive community" (Fish, 1980:171), in which all readers can share their experience and interpretation with each other. In addition, teachers can help a group of readers to understand how an individual reader engages with a story; similarly, other members' responses to texts may reshape an individual reader's response to the same text. Members of the same community may interpret or decode the same text based on similar understanding, literacy history, personal experience or interests; on the other hand, members from different communities may interpret or decode texts differently and from different perspectives, reading experience or motivation. Fish states that readers obtain the "point of view or way of organising experience" through membership of an "interpretative community" and that is how we share or discuss "distinctions, categories of understanding, relevance and irrelevance" (1989:141). Through the discussion and interpretation that exists between interpretative communities in the context of the classroom, some readers may reshape, evolve or adapt their understanding and beliefs

and these might be challenged and revised under certain circumstances (Fish, 1989:146). Some influence or change may come from outside the community, but the interrelated information within the community allows change and reinterpretation to take place. The classroom community supports readers as they engage in exploration and meaning-making with many others (Lindfors, 1999:18-19) and I have been aware of this when designing and carrying out my own research.

Rosenblatt (1995:24) states that: "The literary work exists in the live circuit set up between reader and text: the reader infuses intellectual and emotional meanings into the pattern of verbal symbols, and those symbols channel his thoughts and feelings." In my view, the teacher's role in the classroom or in a discussion is not only to be an information provider but also to help readers make connections with what they know, to help them explore consequence and to construct their thinking, interpretation and feeling, "but the [meaning-making] and decisions must come from the reader" (Paley, 1981:214). Iser (1978:10) points out that in a text-reader interaction, "meaning is no longer an object to be defined, but is an effect to be experienced" by the reader. Individual response towards a particular character, situation or event in a story is therefore unique. Reader response theory holds that there is not just one possible meaning to be drawn from a text because each individual reader is influenced by their own life experiences, their previous reading, their imagination and emotional engagement. Sarland (1991:79) claims that "the meeting between text and reader is a unique interaction" and that readers begin their communication with the author by questioning, reasoning and interacting with the text (Rosenblatt, 1978:76). Similarly, Culler argues that:

> Thinking about readers and the way they make sense of literature has led to what has been called 'reader-response criticism', which claims that the meaning of the text is the experience of the reader (an experience that includes hesitations, conjectures, and self-corrections). If a literary work is conceived as a succession of actions upon the understanding of a reader, then an interpretation of the work can be a story of that encounter, with its ups and downs: various conventions or expectations are brought into play, connections are posited, and expectations defeated or confirmed. To interpret a work is to

tell a story of reading. (1997:63)

My research will show how readers develop their own response towards a text as they gain new insights into various problems, issues and situations, both in the text and in their own lives, and how they use their previous knowledge and experience to understand new information offered in the texts and to fill in the conceptual and affective gaps in the text (Iser, 1978:168). These "gaps" or narrative leaps are offered in both text and illustration. For example, when children read *Changes* (1997a) by Anthony Browne, they are encouraged to use their imagination and creativity to interpret the unusual visual images in Joseph's home as he explores changes in his life following the birth of his baby sister (Figure 2.21).

Figure 2.21: Illustration from *Changes*
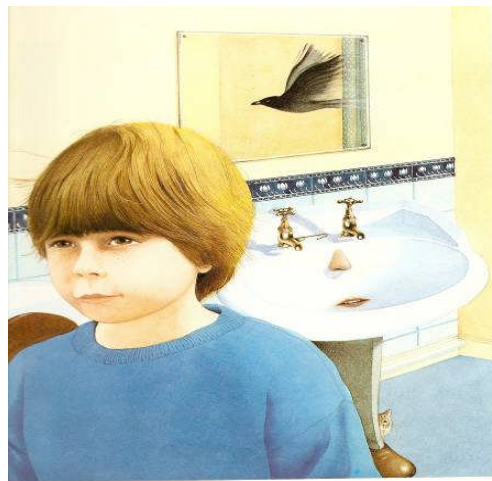
Sipe (1998a: 43) states "In [picture books], text and illustrations help to fill in each other's gaps." In this research, as I have already stated, I have investigated young children's responses specifically to picture books. These texts require the child to integrate visual and verbal signs in order to make meaning and develop responses. Michaels and Walsh comment on this key process:

Readers can be led through a 'shared book' approach—whether on a teacher-class level or peer-group level—to enjoy the story, to feel with the characters,

to respond to and evaluate the ideas, and to develop critical perceptions about the implied author in the picture book. The use of certain pictures can not only be applicable to particular stages but can help to move readers to other stages of [reader] response (Michaels and Walsh, 1990:42).

When teachers ask readers what they see in a picture book, we not only ask them what they "see" but also what they "know" from the pictures (Moebius, 1990:138-139). Readers interpret and interact with images and obtain meaning in picture books through their visual knowledge, exploration and representation (Sinatra, 1986:5). Just as readers learn to decode terms, clauses and sentences in order to understand or respond to texts, it may be argued that readers learn to decode line, colour, shape, size, position and dimension to interpret and respond to images. However, Raney (1998:39) considers that:

> our relationship to the visual world [can be viewed] in terms of empowerment, choice, habit, passion or delight. … The driving force is prior expectations of meaning [which are] set up by the social fields in which an object is encountered…whether it is the frame of 'art', inclinations of gender, class identity or generation, or personal experience and associations.

The experience of reading images in books is different from that of seeing the visual world in general, and I would argue that there is less room for imaginative response in the visual world than in images in books. There is no right way of reading images in books; instead, they offer various opportunities for readers to interpret and understand them with their own meanings, imagination and experiences.

I shall argue that reading is more than just decoding of either words or images. In Freire's view, (cited in Roberts, 1996:152) reading "is not walking on words; it's grasping the soul of them." Through the reading process, readers try to uncover deeper and deeper layers of meaning of the word and the world. We always read for meaning and we also read for pleasure, for reflection, for imagination, for critical thinking, for self identity and for understanding of differences.

Raney also states that:

> it [visual literacy] is the history of thinking about what images and objects mean, how they are put together, how we respond to or interpret them, how they might function as modes of thought, and how they are seated within the societies which gave rise to them (1998:38).

In reading picture books, it is important to value how readers comment on illustrations and stories and how they are connected, and to help them to bring their personal experience to the text and to make sense of the world. Kiefer (1993:271) claims that children's response to picture books is "useful for helping to understand how children learn to mean in the world of the picture book." In this research, young children are encouraged to find out more information from the hints in images in picture books they are introduced to, in order to inspire them to think more and to make sense of the word and the world. Young readers may respond to picture books based on their observation of illustrations and the story lines, and their understanding of how problems are solved. We can encourage them to use their imagination to enter the life of others and to evaluate the illustrations and story plots, as they learn to express their insights into characters, themselves and others (Arizpe and Styles, 2003:47). In the classroom community in which I carry out this research, I need to bear in mind that I must create a secure and caring atmosphere for readers to explore stories and then leave them some time to look at and talk about the pictures to make them think more and to think more deeply.

Through this research, I intend to discover more about readers' response towards traumatic issues in selected texts through shared reading of both text and illustration and through discussion. A proverb says: 'a picture is worth a thousand words.' Some pictures leave such a strong impression in readers' minds that they respond to the pictures powerfully. In addition, pictures in picture books may allow readers "to infer meaning from the pictures which was not always contained in the text" (Baddeley and Eddershaw, 1998:60). For example, readers are invited to pay much attention to the colours of particular illustrations in the picture book *Erika's Story* (2003); they question

the possible information carried by the baby wrapped in a pink shawl in the centre of the picture while the rest of the picture remains in black and white (Figure 2.21). Through the medium of pictures, it is possible to encourage readers to speculate on new meanings, to deepen their responses and to reshape their interpretation and understanding of the book itself (Fremantle, 1993:12).

Figure 2.22: Illustration from *Erika's Story*

Reader response is a term that "has to be associated with the work of critics who use the words reader, reading process and response to mark out an area for investigation" (Tompkins, 1980: ix). The reading process involves both motivation and background knowledge before reading; making connections, engaging and exploring texts; and using other skills, such as writing and role-playing, to explore meaning (Martin; Lovat; Purnell, 2004:14-16). The most important stage of the reading process is the engagement of a reader with a powerful text and how he or she responds to it and makes connections between the text and personal experience. As I have previously discussed, Rosenblatt argues that there are two "stances" which determine what kind of experience the reader will have. The efferent stance—which is to do with reading for meaning and comprehension, while the aesthetic stance affects and modifies readers' emotions, thoughts, attitudes, reflection and everyday life (Rosenblatt, 1978:24-25; Sipe, 1999:123). Readers read or listen to stories

with their brains and minds to immerse themselves in the storylines and emotions, and they are encouraged by teachers in a classroom context to make connections between themselves, the text and the wider world.

This research focuses on an analysis of young children's responses to the traumatic issues mentioned above, and will add to our knowledge of reader response in this context. This is important, because we cannot know what exactly happens when a child reads; the very act of expressing a response can change what a child feels and thinks. Crago claims that we can only study what children choose to show us of their response, and that "the act of articulating one's inner responses changes that experience" (1990:121). With this in mind, I have represented and integrated the process of reader response into four areas for this project; they are: oral response, written response, artistic response, and dramatic response (Russell, 2000:75-87). Each of these areas will be addressed more fully under methodology, and their theoretical underpinnings are analysed below.

Oral response can be delivered through book talk and discussion in the classroom and by teachers' open-ended questions that invite children to think and comment on the texts, their experiences and emotions. Everyone talks and makes sense of what they hear from others. Talking in a classroom offers students opportunities to communicate and interact with each other and with teachers to solve problems, to explain someone's opinions and to understand each other. When an understanding of literature involves talking, the teacher is helping the reader to focus on a story to draw their attention to aspects and to open ideas up for common inspection (Rosen and Rosen, 1973:45). Readers are encouraged to ask questions and answer them critically rather than merely saying yes or no. That is to say, through the thinking process, readers are able to express their ideas, experiences and understanding in a wider range of contexts in stories and to respond to them (Howe, 1992:6).

Written responses can take various forms: for example; a reading log, reflective writing or a letter to a character. Writing is frequently used as a

follow-up activity after reading in classrooms, and children are often invited to write following discussion. Many teachers would argue that this approach helps young readers to think deeply about the text and to find the language to express their opinions. Calkins (1986:9) states her views about the importance of writing:

> [i]t is essential that children are deeply involved in writing, that they share their texts with others, and that they perceive themselves as authors. I believe these three things are interconnected. A sense of authorship comes from the struggle to put something big and vital into print, and from seeing one's own printed words reach the hearts and minds of readers.

Writing is not merely writing down what has already been discussed; instead it holds ideas steady and gives children more time to think critically about events or characters. The writing process involves thinking, discussing and planning before children start to write, putting thoughts into meaningful and creative words and sentences, before revising and editing (Bunting, 1998:7-8). When readers are asked to respond to texts orally, they know they have their audience (peers and the teacher) present, and therefore, they know whether they are being understood and whether they are making sense of the context. However, writing is a solitary task and writers need to have their imaginary readers in mind to construct and express their thoughts in a form that can be understood and appreciated (Martin; Lovat and Purnell, 2004:178). Most of the time, the classroom teacher and myself are the audience for children's writing; I inform them in advance when their writing is going to be shared in the class, and their peers then also form part of their audience. It is essential to write for a known audience because this helps us to make decisions about choices of language, form and context (Collins, 1998:44). In this research, readers are asked to write down their ideas, understandings and reflections on stories to a fictional character (e.g. write a letter to Rose Blanche, see 4.4) or someone in their mind (e.g. their grandfathers, see 4.4). Other than this independent writing, students are asked to do a shared writing task at the end of the project to create a poem together with the support of a pre-writing activity (listening to music to brainstorm ideas), and then drafting, editing and

publishing their poem. It may help young writers to be more responsive and more explicit when they write about stories they have read rather than engaging in free writing because they already have a clear purpose and context for their writing. Writers also learn from their reading experience which demonstrates the elements of setting, plot, character and narrative; moreover, this experience of writing helps to develop writers' communication of meaning and the interaction between the writer and the audience (Barrs and Cork, 2001:43). Crucially, writing is not a process of recording, but a process of developing new ideas or stories and making sense of experiences and information.

Readers may not be able to express their emotional response easily in the classroom; however, they may be able to present their feelings through writing if teachers leave time for them. Barrs and Cork (2001:215) observed from their literary research with Y5 children that:

> Texts with…emotionally powerful themes communicated immediately with children in the classes we visited. They moved children and led to valuable discussions of the human situations they dealt with….Although it is not so easy to measure or track the effect of this kind of experience on children's writing, it is likely that emotionally powerful texts of this kind helped children to adopt other points of view, and to explore the inner state of characters, more readily.

Artistic response means that readers respond to the texts in the form of art, such as through drawing or craft work. This involves "the use of different art and graphic design and display techniques to organise, deepen, and bring closure to students' experiences with literature" (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 1996:289). Most young children enjoy drawing and craftwork. Sometimes, it may be easier for young readers to respond to a piece of literature through drawing and craft work rather than through talking and writing, for they may be inexperienced writers, and have limitations in putting their thoughts into words. Sedgwick and Sedgwick (1993:29) state that "However it works, drawing is thinking aloud, a powerful route into knowledge." Young children can tell their own stories through their drawing or modelling; Dewey

(1978:73-74) claims that:

> Thinking directly in terms of colours, tones, images, is a different operation technically from thinking in words…because the meaning of paintings and symphonies cannot be translated into words. …There are values and meanings that can be expressed only by immediate visible and audible qualities, and to ask what they mean in the sense of something that can be put into words is to deny their distinctive existence.

Most children have experience of using drawings to make sense of the world around them long before they learn to write. Vygotsky (1978:107) points out that:

> A child who has to depict running begins by depicting the motion with her fingers, and she regards the resultant marks and dots on paper as a representation of running….In general, we are inclined to view children's first drawings and scribbles rather as gestures than as drawing in the true sense of the word.

From my personal teaching experience, I have noticed that young children can always describe their drawing in more detail than adults actually see in their drawing. Children draw the pictures using their own choice of colour, size of image, line and storyline. In other words, children's drawings enable them to communicate with others, express their emotions, experience and ideas and visualise their imagination (Johnson, 1998:166-167). In this research, readers respond to traumatic stories through drawing to deepen their understanding of the issues and to help them to extend their thoughts and ideas (Baddeley and Eddershaw, 1994:21). In addition, readers are encouraged to illustrate their personal narratives as a way of reflecting on emotions and exploring their thinking and understanding through both words and pictures.

Dramatic response can refer to physical movement, imaginative role play and creative drama and theatre (Burke, 1986:252). Through dramatic response, readers are not spectators but participants actively engaging with the texts, using their imagination, thoughts, emotions and gestures. Imaginative role

play also provides an opportunity to place readers in the roles of characters in the texts to experience and hear their reflective response (Elbow, 1994:10). Readers may be able to express deeper personal feelings and responses either orally or in written form after experiencing imaginative role play, and therefore I have included this activity in my lessons as a way of supporting and extending the children's response.

Sometimes we can only respond to a story that moves us by silently "feeling" it through emotional expression. Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown observe that: "The peals of laughter and the moans of sorrow during the actual reading of the story are sometimes response enough" (1996:279). Emotions cannot be taught but we can help children release their emotions and attempt to understand them.

Watson (1993:20) describes one child's emotional response after re-reading John Burningham's *Granpa*. The child did not feel so upset when he first read it, but when he had personally experienced death and grief, it "made him feel like crying" and made a new connection between his personal life and the book. Through his response, Watson states that "this young reader had a new and sensitive readiness for recognition, a new potential for engaged responsiveness" (1993:20). With emotionally powerful texts, teachers have to help readers understand the sensitive issues in the texts with an awareness of their own understanding and invite them to express their response in a variety of ways.

Encouraging each young reader to respond personally to a text, validates what is in the reader's head. Benton argues that it is far more worthwhile to focus on each individual interpretation than to be prescriptive about what a story can offer (1979:72). Purves, Rogers and Soter (1990:47) identify the aims of reader response theory as being "to encourage individual readers to feel comfortable with their own responses to a literary work, to seek out the reasons for their responses and thereby come to understand themselves better and in the response of others to recognise the differences and similarities

among people and to respect those differences." Teachers who encourage individual response offer opportunities for readers to voice their ideas, critical thinking, emotions, interpretations and self-identities. Moreover, as they make connections between the world of the book and the real world and learn to think and read critically, they begin to understand themselves and others.

2.5.2 Reader Response Theory and Its Relationship to the Literature of Trauma

Some children in the world today may live in a culture of violence, fear and change, directly or indirectly. For some, acute trauma can be encountered physically, socially and emotionally and may influence their attitudes, moral values, emotional expression, behavioural patterns, parental or social relationships (Oria-Iriarte, 2003:215; Sullivan and Strang, 2002:74). It is therefore important for teachers to help children to explore situations or experiences that they may encounter in their lives to help them cope with their feelings, and resolve their problems. Some adults find it hard to talk to children about traumatic or difficult issues, for the changes they bring to their lives are not always happy. Some adults seek out more oblique ways of introducing children to these traumatic issues. McMath suggests that the most appropriate way to help children face tragedy is through books: "reading aloud to children provides an essential ingredient that television may lack: the presence and warmth of a caring adult" (1997:82). Similarly, Alat (2002:5) and Rycik (2006:145) state that with the help of books, children can learn how others face anxiety, disappointment and hope. In this research, I have examined how picture books can help young children make sense of sensitive issues, develop their emotional intelligence and encourage positive attitudes towards life.

Young children may have difficulty in expressing their emotions, but I shall argue that stories provide "an avenue for the release of pent-up emotions" (Gladding and Gladding, 1991:11) and a path for personal growth and interactive response. It is possible, of course, that using books to introduce

hardships that readers may encounter may not help them solve personal problems, yet indirectly a particular story might help them to understand and release their emotions, to gain new viewpoints or find solutions to similar situations and to develop their interactive responses to texts, characters and events. In this research, my selected activities do not have a therapeutic function of curing or healing students' illness or pain but rather I shall suggest that they offer readers possible opportunities to express their voices, questions and beliefs, to understand their emotions, to deepen their insight into different issues, and to think of any possible solutions or reactions when they or others encounter similar situations.

For example, some children may have experienced the loss of pets or family members. Sharing books that reflect similar experiences could help them emotionally. On the other hand, children who have not experienced a similar trauma might be able to learn to help others handle these situations in a supportive manner and the story can help them learn to cope with their own emotions when they encounter a similar situation. Cornet and Cornet argue that readers may experience a personal change in emotional response, or in the way they interact socially. They cite the novelist James Baldwin:

> You think your pain and your heartache are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or had ever been alive (Cornet and Cornet, 1980:12).

Through literature concerning the traumatic issues selected for this research, readers are encouraged to express their emotional response towards similar personal experience. The literature and the activities the children undertake in response to their reading might help them to develop the concept of morality and to empathise with others. My observation of this process will be a key feature of this research. Ashley claims that:

> One of the many delights—and sustaining challenges—in working with children is that each and every child is unique: a true minority of one with a

truly personal set of hopes and fears, aspirations and talents. And every child who reads is capable of obtaining from print an awareness of life's problems and possibilities such that will both heighten his own uniqueness and provide an inkling of understanding that other [personal experiences and emotions] exist (1987:209).

Graham, Johnson, Sattler, Templeton and Wan (2001:4) point out that:

[Using books in the classroom context] is the process by which teachers, as informed decision-makers, select appropriate reading materials … and assist [students] in the development of self-awareness, problem-solving skills, perspective-taking and understanding of problems.

In this research, I will do more than merely select appropriate texts; I also design appropriate activities and discussions for engaging readers with texts in order to motivate and inspire their reflective and critical responses.

I used to read *I'll Always Love You* (1988) to my kindergarteners, a book about the death of a pet. One of the kindergarteners told the class with teary eyes that she was really sad when her kitten died. She hoped that she had told her kitten she loved her before it passed away. In this example, the story offered an emotional outlet to a child who identified with the unhappiness experienced by a character in the text (Coleman and Ganong, 1990:327). After readers' identification of human problems or universal emotions, they may release their emotions as they experience the feelings of the characters they read about (Doll and Doll, 1997:8). Kramer and Smith (1998:91) show that by reading or listening to stories about disturbing topics such as death, children can learn to cope with distressing situations, release their emotions and face up to the unique challenges they bring. After readers are able to understand and empathise with characters' emotions and situations, they may develop their responses and insight based on their own interpretation and experience. This final process—insight—may help readers to solve their own similar problems in the future and develop their knowledge of themselves, others and the world (Heath, Sheen, Leavy, Young and Money, 2005:568).

In this research, children are encouraged to discuss openly the traumatic issues presented in the books. Davis and Wilson (1992:4) claim that discussion helps young children to "explore and reflect upon the character's ability to survive turmoil, loss, or crisis from a safe distance." The main focus of this research is to explore how young children respond to traumatic issues, and therefore I emphasise their feelings, reactions and reflections to children's literature of trauma as well as their comprehension of stories. Landsberg reminds us that:

> Books let us see how other people grow towards conclusions and solve dilemmas. More than that they make us feel every step of the way; it is as though we could live a dozen lives simultaneously and draw on the wealth of all of them to help shape our own selves (1987:127).

In this research, I am not a counsellor or a therapist but a teacher. I use books as a medium to encourage children to talk about themselves and others, to develop their own response to human conditions and universal issues and to discover how they reshape their picture of the world.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have explained what children's literature of trauma is and discussed the special role of children's literature in education. The objective of this research is to explore traumatic issues with young children, and I have discussed the inter-relationships between young children, trauma and picture books. Furthermore, since reader response is central to this research, I have also addressed the interpretation of readers' voices, reflections and emotions towards children's literature of trauma through selected picture books and issues. Readers build up their concepts of others and the world as they meet themselves on the pages of the book.

Hardy (1968:5) claims that "[W]e dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative." That is to say, we grow up with narrative, which we shape into stories of our everyday life. Stories help readers to understand human nature and take whatever they gain from it to adjust their own experiences so they can move on. Davin (1976: 155) points out that "stories don't make anyone feel alarmed and inadequate: they invite interest, they are easy to remember and perhaps to pass on; they are common property, everyone's right."

The following chapter addresses the detailed research methodology for my study, where the aims of my research, the central research questions, research design and organisation, and data collection and discussion are described and discussed in detail.

3. Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The central research questions for this study are: What are young readers'
understandings and responses to texts and pictures in selected children's
picture books of trauma? In what ways may young readers' responses to these
issues and their designed activities reshape their critical thinking and
responses? What have I (the researcher) learnt about my role as a teacher
through teaching traumatic issues?

In this study, the research approach used is that of participant-researcher. The
methodologies employed are clearly described at a later stage in this chapter,
which comprises two main sections. The first focuses on the research
methodologies themselves and the design of the study. I begin the first section
by situating the methodology within the traditions of participatory action
research and case study. Before moving on to detail my data collection
methods, I describe how I gathered appropriate teaching materials. A short
summary of each picture book chosen for use in this study is presented in
Appendix I. The criteria for the selection of the picture books are discussed
and the process of translating the texts is described.

The second part of this chapter focuses on the data collection methods:
observation, discussion/research conversations, and the use of questionnaire
and documentary evidence: comprising researcher's field notes and children's
writing and art work. The way in which the data has been analysed and
interpreted will be outlined and critically considered. Finally, in order to
clarify intentions and considerations as a teacher-researcher, a section on
ethical issues is included.

3.2 Discussion of Research Methodologies

In view of the characteristics of this study's design, the central research method is based on participatory action research. The overall research design is qualitative because of its descriptive, explanatory and general nature (Anderson, 1990:120-123). Participants in a qualitative research programme are in a subjective world, where their understanding and knowledge are constructed and developed in an interactive context and in a particular community. Researchers try to understand how participants understand the world by getting to know and making sense of their actions, thoughts and feelings, none of which can be measured or assessed by numbers, but which instead need a more qualitative and interpretive description of data (Greig and Taylor,1999:37; Erickson, 1986:119). Hatch (1995:122) explains that qualitative research is looking for "a contextualised holistic examination of participants' perspectives, instead of measuring, correlating and predicting."

The main characteristic of this type of research is that "it is research WITH, rather than research ON" (McNiff, 1988:4). This research is investigating participants' understanding and responses towards the selected children's literature of trauma through interaction, discussion and written reflection in the classroom setting. During the time when the classroom-based research took place, the researcher (I) and the participants (the children) were learning and growing together as our involvement in the processes of the project developed and our interpersonal relationships and personal reflections became enriched. The theory of qualitative research is grounded in data collected from observations, whole-class discussions, small-group discussion, research conversations, written responses and participants' interpretation and reflection on the texts (Greig and Taylor, 1999:43). The goal of qualitative research is to understand the meaning created by participants through their daily interaction and behaviour. This is exactly what I try to do in my research. However, qualitative research seeks not only to describe what participants are doing but to analyse how they are making sense of information, and how they interpret areas of learning in their interactions with other participants, activities and materials (Wertsch, 1985:212).

In applying this framework to qualitative research with young children, Graue and Walsh suggest:

> ….To get a sense of motives, it is important to watch children's interactions closely, to listen to children's explanations of their actions, and to be respectful of their voices. It requires the basic methods of interpretive research, plus attention to the connections between the local context and the broader culture and history (1998:43).

In this research, young children's experiences, personal development and background and the way that adults and the wider society frame their lives, all influence not only their reading choices, but also their responses to their reading. Bruner (1990:13) states that the child is "a participant in a larger public process in which public meanings are negotiated." In this qualitative research, children are invited and encouraged to respond, to interact, to question and to make sense of the texts introduced and to share their insights with other children through whole-class and small-group discussion and the processes of story-reading, storytelling and creative expression. All these activities take place in the familiar setting of the classroom. This is important because participants feel more comfortable if they can engage with ideas in the natural setting they are familiar with.

It is important to examine the use of action research and case study methodologies further since action research prioritises reflective teacher-research and case study methodology focuses on a small number of participants. These two approaches are discussed in depth in the following sections.

3.2.1 Participatory Action Research

The first approach which will be examined is participatory action research. This section will define action research, and consider the strengths and weaknesses of the approach and its relevance and contribution to this study. Action research is an umbrella term which covers teacher-research, self-

reflective research and participatory research. It refers to the research carried out through classroom practices investigated by actual teachers rather than by outside researchers or observers. Perhaps because of this, the research approach is growing in popularity in the educational field, particularly among serving primary and secondary school teachers. "It is insider research, which means that the researcher is inside the situation and will inevitably influence what is happening" (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 2003:12). In other words, action research in classroom teaching is to identify outcomes of the intentions that the teacher-researcher hopes the participants can achieve using suitable resources. Bassey (1986:18) points out that "Academics are watchers of the world: teachers are actors in it. Teachers make decisions and search for 'right' decisions. Sometimes research enquiries may help in the search for 'right' decisions." Therefore, other than the teacher-researcher's intention, and the use of resources and strategies, the methods of data collection may also help to answer my central questions. Zuber-Skerritt (1996:83) states that action research can bring about practical development, innovation, and change as the researcher begins to understand their practice, seek resolutions and adjust their teaching approaches and materials to improve students' learning. In this research, I aim to investigate young readers' understanding of and responses to children's literature of trauma in order to encourage reflection on their personal experiences or beliefs, and to gain insights into teaching and learning.

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988:10) state that "to do action research is to plan, act, observe and reflect more carefully, more systematically and more rigorously than one usually does in everyday life." An action research cycle contains four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, a sequence that appears to be straightforward and sequential as shown in this diagram (Figure 3.1). A single loop derived from Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) is shown below.

Figure 3.1: A typical action research cycle (a single loop)
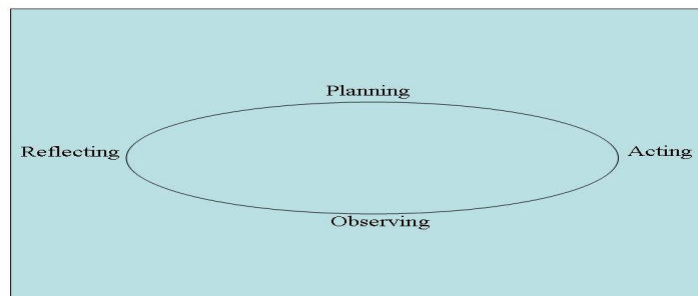
The overall structure of this research can be extended and developed based on this single loop action research cycle, as shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: The single loop of the overall action research cycle for the research

Investigating:
- Current perspectives in teaching sensitive and traumatic issues at primary school
- Choosing which sensitive and traumatic issues to teach for the project
- Reading related literature for the project
- Finding a Taiwanese primary school for the project

Planning:
- Meeting with the classroom teacher and the headteacher
- Choosing appropriate picture books for the projects
- Planning lessons for the ten teaching sessions and other relevant discussions and activities
- Planning data collection methods

Reflecting:
- Evaluating emergent situations from observation or collected data
- Adjusting the teaching method for the next session from the classroom teacher's observation and the participants' responses
- Developing a new curriculum by giving accountable explanations
- Identifying possible future directions

Acting:
- Teaching children's literature of trauma to the 2nd graders
- Exploring ideas
- Collecting data

Observing:
- Observing lessons and the participants' responses
- Reviewing collected data
- Paying attention to particular situations that emerged during the action
- Discussing with the classroom teacher

The cycle of this action research began with an investigation using relevant literature, researching and examining the perspectives of teaching traumatic and sensitive issues in primary schools. The process of searching for a primary school in Taiwan to host this research was also part of this investigative stage. The second stage involved planning the lessons and relevant activities and follow-up discussions, as well as the collection of data, and holding meetings with the classroom teacher and the headteacher of the

school to assist me in making plans for teaching and learning. The following stage involved observing the events that emerged during the action. The final stage was reflection when I critically reviewed and examined the entire project.

Through this action research, I was not only the teacher, but also a researcher and a listener. I gained insights from the children's reflections on traumatic issues and developed my own reflections on teaching and learning. In this study, the action research is a form of 'self-reflective inquiry' by the children and myself, undertaken in order to improve comprehension and interpretation with a view to better understanding the reality and emotions generated by the stories (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:171-173). Using the texts, characters and the personal backgrounds and experiences of the children and myself, a comprehensive picture of response to traumatic and sensitive issues was drawn and a deeper understanding of ourselves through interacting with others was achieved (Rowland, 1986:25-29).

The participatory, action-orientated and critical functions of action research are embedded in this study. Carr and Kemmis (1993:237) summarise the importance of knowing each child individually in an action research process: "personal knowledge [understanding and reflection] is the source of the ideas and interpretive categories used by teachers to articulate their experience and bring it under self-conscious control through the action research process." This action research calls for an understanding of each participant's unique responses, and their personal knowledge and judgement about children's literature of trauma. I achieved this by exploring their responses in reading, writing, discussion and role-play activities, and analysing their gradual enlightenment and reflection (Habermas, 1974:15-19). Kefyalew (1996:210) argues that young children can be encouraged, through participatory action research, to take an active role and to express their thoughts and needs in ways that are creative and appropriate to their age and experience. With this in mind, I have introduced the notion of trauma through picture story books, and incorporated other familiar and creative activities, namely, art, craft and

imaginative role play.

Even though action research has been considered as one of the most appropriate research methodologies in the educational field, it still draws criticism. One of its major flaws is that action research, by its very nature, has a general tendency to be small-scale and subjective. In addition, the lack of research variables means that it cannot make a contribution to causal theories of learning and teaching. In spite of these weaknesses, the benefits of action research may still outweigh its disadvantages especially for those who intend to carry out their research in an interpretative, interactive or practical way. Indeed, Freeman argues that the subjectivity of action research empowers teachers (1998:7), in that it enables them to apply their knowledge and experience to issues in their own familiar educational setting, and thus explore their chosen small group in depth. I make no excuse for the subjective nature of this account with its emphasis on narrative reporting. Miles and Huberman (1994:1) state:

> Words, especially organised into incidents or stories have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavour that often proves far more convincing to a reader—another researcher, a policymaker, a practitioner—than pages of summarised numbers.

It is my intention here to give as accurate account as I can of one class's involvement with children's literature of trauma.

I have been constantly aware that action research may lack rigorous outcomes and could therefore contribute little to the research community (Cohen and Manion, 1994:193). In order to increase the rigour of this action research, the use of multiple methods of collecting data has been adopted to ensure "triangulation" (Winter, 1996:16). "Triangulation enables researchers to capture, to some extent, the shifting realities of their participants" (Greig and Taylor, 1999:75) and is applied to research which is driven by the interpretation of participants' perspectives. Luria (1979:177) also argues that viewpoints "from as many perspectives as possible" enable more accurate research to be undertaken. In this research, the use of observation,

questionnaires, written responses and whole-class/small-group discussion are all taken into account, and are discussed in section 3.3 of this chapter.

3.2.2 Case Study Methodology

The second approach which will be examined is the case study approach. In this section, the case study will be defined, and the strengths and limitations of the approach will be considered. The relevance and contribution of case study to this research will then be identified.

In case study, the case is the situation, individual, group, organisation or whatever it is that we are interested in" (Robson, 2002:177). The subject of this study is one primary school class in Taiwan. According to Nunan (1992:77), "the case study researcher typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit." In this case, the individual unit refers to both the whole class and also to some individual young children I worked with informally. Working with the whole class, I focused on the children's understanding of and reflection on the selected traumatic issues in children's literature. Working with individual children, I was able to explore their individual emotional response and understanding in greater depth, because they were able to discuss their personal experiences more fully. Bissex (1980:135) points out the value of individual case studies: "Case studies widen the parameters within which we view learning (to read). … As learning processes exist in their wholeness only in individuals, only through studying individuals may we see these processes at work." Fry (1985:1) also believes the value of each case study lies in the 'peculiarity' of individuals, rather than searching for generalisations. The data collected from the individuals has helped me to express their personal stories and "any universal truths" that can be drawn from these in-depth responses and exploration (Minns, 1990: xx). Nisbet and Watt define a case study as "a systematic investigation of a specific instance" (1980:4). This research was conducted in an actual classroom setting and my aim was an in-depth exploration of young children's responses to and interpretation of the selected stories by "a number of elements within [the

case], which make up a total picture or a vignette which 'says it all' " (Greig and Taylor, 1999:103). In this research, systematic investigation involved obtaining evidence employing five techniques: observation, questionnaires, records of the participants (young children's writing and art work), in-depth discussion/conversation and the researcher's reflection and field notes. Similarly, Yin (2003:97-99) also notes that case study applies multiple sources of evidence in order to explore the generalisations and limitations of what has happened in the real-life context—in this case, the classroom.

Case studies have particular strengths that make them attractive for qualitative researchers. Case study is a down-to-earth (practical) research approach that focuses on one case or a small number of cases at a single point in time, which allows opportunity for an in-depth analysis and attempts to show the whole picture for that particular group. In addition, examining small-scale cases allows the researcher to be flexible and to take account of different insights from participants and to follow-up unexpected results or responses with deeper exploration, interpretation and explanation. Bell (1993:8) points out that,

> The great strength of the case study method is that it allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance or situation and to identify, or attempt to identify, the various interactive processes at work. These processes may remain hidden in a large-scale survey but may be crucial to the success or failure of systems or organisations

No research is perfect. No matter what methodology is used, something will inevitably be missed. Therefore, the crucial processes that Bell identifies, can be used to examine and evaluate any limitation of the study and any unanticipated finding, in order to restructure future research practice.

There are some weaknesses identified with the case study approach. The most frequently cited criticism is that case study may not be generalisable and therefore the value of the case study is limited (Nisbet and Watt, 1984). However, Cohen and Manion (1994:123) argue that the purpose of case study

is "to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which that unit belongs" (1994:107). My case study will endeavour to establish generalisations about young children's response to children's literature of trauma "by concentrating on depth rather than breadth" (Winston, 2006:41). This is because case study invites "thick description" (Geertz, 1973:6) as it concentrates on participants' personal experiences, critical thinking and reflection, and this evidence provides a bedrock for deepening our understanding of phenomena on a larger scale.

In addition to significant depth of study, flexibility and generalisation, Nisbet and Watt state two further strengths of the case study approach. Firstly, they consider that case study results are more easily understood by readers outside the professional field and "have a three dimensional reality, like a good documentary" (1980:7). This makes it more likely that the case study will be accessed by a wider readership. Secondly, they argue that the case study may "provide suggestions for intelligent interpretation of other similar cases" (ibid.). To some extent, I agree with Nisbet and Watt that findings from similar research can help to reshape other individual researchers' arguments, even though it would be dangerous to generalise that 'this case' is identical to 'that case', and that findings automatically apply to both.

Indeed, it is possible to argue that the unique nature of each child's response to traumatic issues makes it impossible to generalise about children's responses to traumatic issues because every child and every trauma experience is unique (Wynnejones, 1985:88), and I am certainly not trying to generalise based on the young children's responses and experiences in this study. However, it is possible to generalise about the appropriateness of introducing young children to traumatic issues through the processes of teaching and learning. Bassey believes that to some extent, it is worthwhile to study one single case because researchers can relate their decision-making to case studies that have been conducted in similar situations. He argues that if case studies:

are carried out systematically and critically, if they are aimed at the improvement of education, if they are relatable, and if by publication of the findings they extend the boundaries of existing knowledge, then they are valid forms of educational research (1981:86).

In this case study, I may be able to generalise about the application of children's literature of trauma to future classroom studies in order to support young children's emotional literacy and critical thinking. Even though I may not be able to apply all my findings about young children's responses to other situations, I can nevertheless learn from the responses of individual participants, and where appropriate, I can form hypotheses and speculate about the ways in which young children, in general, deal with trauma in children's literature.

Elliot (1990:59) states that the value of case studies lies in their "usefulness as models for others in exploring their own unique situations." That is to say, even though the findings of a case study may not be directly applicable to other situations, researchers can nevertheless make their own decisions about the relevance of the data to their own work.

Another criticism that has been laid against case study is that it tends to be biased, personal and subjective. Researchers can decide what data will be included and what data will be excluded. In order to avoid this difficulty, Nisbet and Watt (1980:5) argue that data should be represented in a form that allows "the reader to see how the conclusions are reached and also to allow him to develop alternative interpretations." In addition, they argue that researchers should "achieve a degree of objectivity by bringing bias out into the open" (Nisbet and Watt, 1984:74) and recognise their own bias in the area of study, both in their initial views and in their interpretation of the data. This helps both researcher and reader to be aware of the researcher's personal opinions and to inspect the findings with these in mind.

In summary, the limitations of case study are based on the issues of generalisability and researcher bias, while its most valuable feature is that each study is unique and leads to in-depth analysis. Stake argues:

> The real business of case study is particularisation, not generalisation. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself (1995:8).

The uniqueness of my case study lies in the examination of young children's responses to the selected children's literature of trauma. To my knowledge this kind of study has never been attempted before with young children, especially the issue of the Holocaust, and it will therefore add to our knowledge of the teaching and understanding of traumatic and sensitive issues to young children through children's picture books, open discussions and designed imaginative role play and creative activities.

3.3 Design of the Study

This section introduces the processes of preparation for conducting this research. First of all, I discuss the purpose for the research, and introduce the target group and the selected primary school. Then, the classroom environment, the setting for this study, and the criteria for primary text selection will be discussed. In addition, my role as a teacher-researcher in this research will be identified. The framework for this research will then be outlined.

3.3.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore young children's views about and experiences of trauma through selected children's literature of trauma. As I emphasised in previous chapters, introducing children's literature of trauma is not meant to frighten children but rather to provide an opportunity for them to develop emotional intelligence as they confront trauma in a range of contexts. This experience can lead to preventive approaches and attitudes rather than waiting for problems to occur (Hornby, 1995:73) as Jones and Tannock's project showed. In one primary school in Jones and Tannock's (2000) project about life and death, 19 children had suffered the pain of loss and bereavement and many more had experienced the death of their grandparents. Jones and Tannock both argue that,

> …it became apparent that responding after the event [death] was no easy task for teachers, educational psychologists, parents or children. We suspected that somehow things would have been slightly less traumatic if talking about death had already been part of the teaching and learning experience (2000:88).

In this research, all the children were invited to express their emotions freely and openly. It was emphasised to them that there were no right or wrong answers to questions raised by the issues discussed. "Listening does not simply mean we hear other voices when they speak but that we also learn to listen to the voice of our own hearts as well as inner voices" (Hooks,

2000:157). For this reason, the participants in this research were encouraged to listen to each other, to develop their own responses, and to respect those of others, and in doing so, to be critical and to learn from them.

3.3.2 The Target Group and the School Context

This study took place in one primary school classroom, which is located at Kaohsiung in Taiwan. The reason for choosing this particular primary school was because I have had personal contact with some teachers there and this contact made my preparation for the field work easier. I discussed my purpose for conducting this research with these teachers in order to obtain their consent and to choose the most appropriate class of young children to work with. The target class was chosen because the classroom teacher was deeply interested in the topic. There were 35 children aged between seven and eight in the class, 17 girls and 18 boys. 33 of the children spoke Mandarin as their first language. Of the other two, one child's mother was from the Philippines and this child's first language was English; the other child was Aboriginal and her first language was one tribe of Aboriginal languages. However, both of these children spoke Mandarin as an additional language and therefore I was able to conduct this research in Mandarin. I ensured that no student's cultural, familial or language background was connected with the issues of the Holocaust because I did not want to make them feel uncomfortable when we worked in this area of trauma.

The reason for choosing the target group of students aged between seven and eight was because they had the maturity to comprehend stories and express their personal concerns, ideas and feelings about them, while at the same time gaining considerable imaginative enjoyment from picture story books. Young children of this age are at the point of understanding more about how the world works and are curious about many subjects, as Moreno argues:

> Children, aged seven and eight come to school with experience in and
> knowledge about the world. They are capable of logical, critical thinking and

have the capacity for higher level thought. They are already problem-solvers and observers, and approach the world with sophistication that may not be expected from children of this age. They need (a) validation for these problem solving abilities and (b) recognition that their observations have value, thus empowering them to build on their skills (1990:143).

Leach (1994:146-147) takes up this point:

All over the world, it is at about seven years of age that children become increasingly aware of a wider society surrounding the family. They want to acquire its knowledge and skills; they need to learn its history; they strive to understand its concerns and aspirations. And because children are, above all, social animals, they do all that learning within a context of social value systems and come to behave as others in their social group behave.

3.3.3 The Classroom Environment

I always intended to carry out this research in the "normal" classroom setting. An important consideration in planning a research project of this nature is the atmosphere of the learning environment and the relationship between the teacher-researcher and the children within it. As Jones and Tannock remind us, it is important "to explore within the classroom ways of creating a culture which would uphold children's rights to express feelings and opinions on sensitive topics" (2000:88).

Ideally, both the school as a whole and the classroom should offer children an environment in which they can discuss their own histories and backgrounds, voice their own ideas and share their own various personal and literary experiences with the community of learners and with their teacher in an effort to explore different perspectives of knowledge. "Getting [young] children to engage in literacy activities is partly a matter of providing an appealing environment" (Gunning, 2000:27). In other words, children who are taught in an open, trusting democratic classroom will be more motivated and engaged with learning and critical thinking and will be more able to explore problems and emotions that exist both within and beyond their personal experience.

Therefore, in this study, I organised the learning environment in such a way that the children were invited to explain, to convince, to empathise, to wonder, to teach, to discover and to reflect.

The atmosphere in this classroom was lively and interactive. The children were divided into six groups based on their literacy experience, their friendship patterns and behaviour and it was clear that the teacher had established a harmonious and cooperative setting and a communicative and creative learning environment and that the children were used to discussing relevant matters concerning their curriculum and personal experiences. I was concerned to build upon this atmosphere of trust and familiarity and I encouraged the children to think critically during the two weeks' observation and three pre-teaching sessions I undertook before conducting my actual research.

Planning for the research

Before I carried out this project in the primary school, I spent two weeks (five hours per day and extra three hours on Thursdays) doing non-participant observation in the classroom. During the two weeks, I took time to learn every child's name and where they were seated, I observed their learning attitude and behaviours at different subjects and with different teachers and I also paid a lot of attention to their literacy lessons with Ms. W, the classroom teacher to bear in mind how the lessons were designed and what relevant questions were raised and how the children interact with other peers and Ms. W. I noted down my concerns and awareness in my field notes to remind myself or to help me re-modify my future teaching about traumatic issues. In addition, I tried to build a trustful and supportive relationship with the children I work with for creating a caring and secure learning and sharing environment for them and I to open up to the traumatic and sensitive issues.

After two weeks non-participant observation, I decided to carry on three pre-teaching sessions that were irrelevant to traumatic issues but I hoped to help the children get used to the way I taught, the way I asked questions and also

give them the opportunity to experience imaginative role play which they did not have much chances before due to being time-consuming, restriction of daily curriculum and time table (from conservation with Ms. W). In this project, I designed three imaginative role play activities for the children to walk into an imaginative world as the characters they read about to experience the sensitive and difficult situations illustrated in the stories in order to challenge their critical thinking, reflective and empathic responses. Barton and Booth (1990:14) point out that "When children enter into story, they are transported to other worlds, joining in the adventure and the excitement, freed of their own time and place—and somehow changed by the experience. They learn about the lives of others and in doing so develop a better understanding of their own lives."

The three pre-teaching sessions, however, were designed and presented in both reading aloud and storytelling ways to the children, exactly the ways I would present the traumatic issues to them later. The three stories chosen for the pre-teaching were 菲菲生氣了: 非常、非常的生氣 (*When Sophie Gets Angry, Really, Really Angry*) (2001) by Molly Bang, 賣帽子 (*Caps for Sale*) (1993) by Esphyr Slobodkina and 三件寶貝 (*The Three Treasures*) (1992) by Hsuan-Yi, Wang. The three stories were presented to the children in Mandarin and with projector for them to see the illustrations clearly. I read aloud the stories of *When Sophie Get Angry* and *Caps for Sale* and story-tell the story of 三件寶貝 (*The Three Treasures*). Imaginative role play activities were designed for the children to participate in the roles of the monkeys and the peddlers in the story of *Caps for Sale* and to act as the mean and greedy hotel master, the old poor couple, and three treasures (donkey with gold coins, wood ruler with clothes and broom with fortune) in the story of *The Three Treasur*es. In carrying out the three pre-teaching sessions, the children were encouraged to answer the relevant questions about the stories, the characters and the situations, they were motivated to ask their own questions and express their feelings and reflections. In addition, the children were able to experience the characters' experiences through designed imaginative role play activities to foster their empathy and deepest thoughts.

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I took full advantage of this democratic classroom community where the children's thoughts were never dictated by the teacher or the researcher. Lloyd-Smith and Tarr (2000:67) claim that "In order to ensure [participation within the community], the voice of the young person needs to be listened and responded to, but initially children must be encouraged to speak." I wanted my teaching methods to extend the children's ability to reflect and interpret the texts more deeply through discussion and interaction with myself as their teacher and with each other during the period of the study.

Thus, one of the most important aspects of this research has been the connection and interaction between the teacher-researcher and the children. All research participants must develop a strong sense of trust and a sense of security and understanding with each other in order to be able to share personal experiences. "When we are willing to abandon our self-protective professional autonomy and make ourselves as dependent on our students as they are on us, we move closer to the independence that the community of trust requires" (Palmer, 1998:140). It was therefore essential for me to bear in mind the importance of creating a learning and sharing environment through understanding, interaction, security and trust, and to make time for participants' responses that were disturbing, incoherent and fragmented. Every participant's response had to be taken seriously, and I had to pay attention to each child's questions and responses so they always felt their opinions were respected. This secure and warm environment was aimed at instilling confidence in all participants and showing them that their responses were vitally important to the research and to their own development as people.

3.3.4 Criteria for Primary Text Selection

After carefully reading and reviewing many children's picture books I chose the primary texts for use in this study based on six criteria.

First, I needed to select stories that related to traumatic issues in children's picture books and that provided young children with some understanding of

these issues. Secondly, it was very important to choose primary texts that young children could identify with or relate to, and so I selected books whose contents were relevant to children's real life circumstances, such as a pet's death. Thus, the stories cover situations involving loss, meanness, isolation, justice, respect, affiliation, love and hope of transformation and remembrance. Thirdly, in order not to frighten the target group of the study, children aged seven and eight, I chose books that portrayed events without the use of violence. I also took the ending of each book into account and each story ends on an element of hope, despite the contents. Fourthly, the quality of the illustrations and photographs were considered in order to leave young children room to use their imagination, and to ensure that violence was not pictured. Fifthly, in order to make the texts understandable to young children aged seven and eight, the use of language was considered. The language usage and vocabulary were not harder than fourth grade level in Taiwan and the meaning could therefore be interpreted within young children's own experiences in the chosen ten books. Finally, I considered the author's ability to tell a good sensitive story for young readers. Seven out of the ten books told the stories from the main character's perspective – in each case, a child, and all these use the first-person narrator. Of the remaining three, two books (*The Children We Remember* and *Rose Blanche*) use the omniscient narrator and the final book, *Granpa* is told from the point of view of both Granpa and his granddaughter, through a series of utterances and occasional conversations which leave young children the room for personal judgement and critical thinking. These selected ten books express traumatic issues in an indirect manner but also in a conciliatory way, allowing young children to come to terms with sensitive issues almost without realising it.

3.3.5 A Note on Translation

I bore in mind Cassady's warning that "language cannot be far removed from that which is familiar to the audience, or else the storytelling event will be of little consequence" (1990:12). Accordingly, this study was carried out in the students' first language, Mandarin.

As Figure 3.3 shows, seven out of the ten picture books used in the study were originally written in English; two are written in Japanese and one is written in Mandarin. I obtained published Mandarin translations for four of the seven picture books originally written in English and one published Mandarin translation for one of the two Japanese picture books. Four books needed to be translated from their original language into Mandarin. I undertook the translation of these books myself because I had confidence in my language proficiency in English, Mandarin and Japanese. My first language is Mandarin while English is my second language, and I have been learning Japanese since I was an undergraduate student. I remained mindful of the words of Grugeon and Gardner as I undertook these translations (2000:116), "the incorrect translation of a single word can change the context and meaning for the child." Hence, in order to double check that my translations were accurate, the texts were discussed with native speakers of the language concerned to ensure the translations were comprehensible and that there were no grammatical errors. In this research, the children's first language, Mandarin, was always used to tell or read the stories; and the children used Mandarin to manage and discuss new experiences and ideas. In order to help the children comprehend and engage with the four books which I translated myself, I either told the stories to the children (showing the pictures through a projector) or designed relevant activities such as imaginative role play, to present these four books to the class. I presented the *Lily Cupboard* and *Thank You, Kitty* as spoken stories. Telling these two stories also enabled me to pause, and insert other relevant activities during the storytelling. The remaining eight books were read to the children directly from the text.

The ten selected books and their themes are introduced and described in the following section and summaries of each can be seen in Appendix I.

Figure 3.3: Showing all ten picture books and how each was translated

Book title	Original language published	Published Mandarin translation obtained	Translated into Mandarin by me
I'll Always Love You	English	我永遠愛你	
Granpa	English		外公
The Number on My Grandfather's Arm	English		爺爺手臂上的號碼
The Children We Remember	English	不要忘記那些孩子	
The Lily Cupboard	English		百合花櫃
Rose Blanche	English	鐵絲網上的小花	
Erika's Story	English	大衛之星	
希望的翅膀 (The Wings of Hope)	Mandarin		
ありがとう ニャアニャア (Thank You, Kitty)	Japanese		謝謝喵喵
ゆずちゃん (Yuzi's Dream)	Japanese	阿讓的氣球	

3.3.6 The Ten Picture Books

(A summary of the stories can be found in Appendix I)

The ten selected primary texts are all children's picture books of trauma published in either America, Britain, Japan or Taiwan. The primary texts can be categorised under three main areas: **death** (separation and loss), **war** (the Holocaust), and **natural disaster** (earthquake). Each of these main areas is introduced through a theme that is relevant to the story. For example, the pet's death that features in one book is under the topic of separation and loss. Under the topic of war, students learn about the Holocaust through the following four underlying themes: otherness and prejudice; concealment and courage; confidence in individuality; and survival. The themes of optimism and hope underlie the topic of earthquake.

The titles and authors of the ten picture books of trauma chosen for this study are listed below in the order in which they were presented to the children. The children's oral responses, discussion, research conversations and reflective writing were translated from Mandarin to English accurately for analysis and presentation.

Topic One: Death: Loss and separation
Underlying theme one: Pet's death
I'll always love you 我永遠愛你 by Hans Wilhelm, illustrated by Hans Wilhelm

Underlying theme two: Life must go on
Granpa written and illustrated by John Burningham

Topic Two: War (The Holocaust)
Underlying theme three: Otherness and prejudice
The Number on My Grandfather's Arm by David A. Adler. Photographs by Rose Erichenbaum

The Children We Remember 請不要忘記那些孩子 by Chana Byers Abells with photographs from the Archives of Yad Vasherm, The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, Jerusalem, Israel.

Underlying theme four: Concealment and courage
The Lily Cupboard, A Story of the Holocaust by Shulamith Levey Oppenheim, illustrated by Ronald Himler

Underlying theme five: Confidence in individuality
Rose Blanche 鐵絲網上的小花 written and illustrated by Roberto Innocenti and Ian McEwan

Underlying theme six: Survival
Erika's story 大衛之星 by Ruth Vander Zee, illustrated by Roberto Innocenti

Topic Three: Natural Disaster (Earthquake)
Underlying theme seven: Optimism and Hope
ありがとう　ニャアニャア (Thank you, Kitty) by Naoko Takahama, illustrated by Yoshiko Hata
希望的翅膀 (The Wings of Hope) by Guang-Cai, Hao, illustrated by Ying-Fen, Chen
ゆずちゃん阿讓的氣球 (Yuzi's Dream) by Miyoko Hida, illustrated by Kinji Ishikura.

3.3.7 My Role in This Research

In this study, I was the researcher and I also the teacher in the primary school classroom, exploring how young children comprehended and interpreted the traumatic issues in the selected children's picture books. It was appropriate for me to conduct the teaching process myself since I took on the main role of collecting information and also had personal experience of issues that are the focus of the study; for example, I have visited museums and other relevant

venues; I am familiar with sensitive issues such as death. I have knowledge of the Holocaust and an awareness of historical incidences of earthquakes. Also, as a former teacher and teacher trainer, I know how to handle students' questions and reactions. My previous teaching experiences and training have helped me to develop young children's critical thinking, imagination and reflection through open discussion and wide exploration of texts and experiences in a democratic and positive classroom community. Therefore, in this study, I aimed to motivate, encourage and invite young children to voice their responses and feelings towards the selected picture books. My role as teacher was to tell or to read the stories to the children and to question them about what they were learning, thinking and feeling about these sensitive issues through discussion and by organising a range of activities.

My role as a participant and teacher-researcher, involved not only teaching but also being critical and aware of what was being taught. The role thus required self-critical awareness and reflection to facilitate a process of change and development in my practice. Indeed, participatory action research encourages teachers to become reflective and critical in their thinking and teaching, to develop theories and curricula for their practices, and to present well thought-out explanations and results to the wider academic and teaching community (McNiff, 1988:50-51).

It was also very important for me to listen to participants' responses, to internalise their attitudes and beliefs, and to give my whole attention to their discussion without interruption and impatience. "What does it mean to listen to a voice before it is spoken? It means entering empathetically into the student's world so that he or she perceives you as someone who has the promise of being able to hear another person's truth" (Palmer, 1998:46). It was not easy to remain silent when there was an idea I wished to convey; however, I understood that the key purpose of this research was to elicit students' responses and ideas as they sought to make sense of the traumatic issues, and to interpret or take up the participants' responses in order to push their thinking forward and to stimulate their imagination throughout the

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discussion.

3.3.8 Conducting the Participatory Action Research

In this section, I will discuss how I conducted this participatory action research. First of all, the preparation before the actual teaching and a timeline of my field will be outlined. Then, the processes and purposes of activities, discussion and my reflection on the participatory action research will be explained.

This study was completed in 25 hours of actual class teaching time in the selected primary school in Taiwan, and I also spent a further 20 hours working with individual students to help them complete their work and offer extra support.

During the teaching period, the chosen picture books were introduced into the daily curriculum by myself as the story-reader and storyteller. Students were able to see the pictures in each book by means of a projector and I held the book open as I told each story, walking around the classroom with it and pointing to the pictures. By so doing, students were able to view the pictures clearly. Students were invited to reflect on the texts and pictures in the books orally, and in written and art forms. In addition, students were invited to participate in imaginative role play activities based on the books. The picture books were also available for individual student browsing or revisiting after each teaching session.

The timeline of the field work carried out in Taiwan is shown below. The date, story titles, activities chosen and feedback during teaching and the duration time are all listed in the timeline.

Figure 3.4: Timeline of field work in Taiwan

Date	Story	Activity and Feedback	Duration
10-April-2006	I'll Always Love You （我永遠愛你）	Discussion and art and craft work (making a picture frame of someone/something you love)	1.5 hours
14-April-2006	Granpa （外公）	Discussion and reflective writing	1.5 hours
21-April-2006	War Introduction I	Discussion	1.5 hours
24-April-2006	War Introduction II	Discussion	1 hour
24-April-2006	The Number on My Grandfather's Arm （爺爺手臂上的號碼）	Discussion and role-play activity	1.5 hours
27-April-2006	The Children We Remember （不要忘記那些孩子）	Discussion and drawing pictures	1.5 hours
1-May-2006	The Lily Cupboard （百合花櫃）	Discussion and imaginative role play activity	2.5 hours
8-May-2006	Rose Blanche （鐵絲網上的小花）	Discussion, imaginative role play and letter writing	2 hours
12-May-2006	Erika's Story （大衛之星）	Discussion and drawing pictures	2 hours
15-May-2006	Aim and purposes of the project discussion	Discussion	1.5 hours
16-May-2006	The Wings of Hope （希望的翅膀）	Discussion and reflective writing	1.5 hours
18-May-2006	Thank You, Kitty （謝謝喵喵）	Discussion, imaginative role play activity and reflective writing	2.5 hours
24-May-2006	Yuzi's Dream （阿讓的氣球）	Discussion, writing and art and craft work	2 hours
25-May-2006	Conclusion to the project	Sharing, discussion and writing	2.5 hours
			Total hours: 25 hours

(Examples of lesson plans are described in more detail later in Appendix II.)

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In order to obtain young children's responses to the sensitive issues and stories presented to them, different activities were designed to complement the stories: imaginative role play, art work, discussion and reflective writing. Whole-class discussion can deepen students' understanding of the texts and facilitate their reflection on traumatic issues. The participants were seated in groups of six around tables. I asked a range of questions to deepen and assess their understanding, to guide the discussion and to develop students' skills in critical thinking and problem-solving, both during and after story-reading and story-telling. After group discussions, the children were invited to share their understanding and reflections with the whole class for an open discussion. Most questions addressed to the young children were open-ended to avoid leading and subjective answers. The questions I asked are discussed more fully in section 3.3.2.1. The children were encouraged to identify with the characters and situations in a story, to change the plot as if they were the author, or to put themselves or someone they know into the stories. The whole teaching process and the children's reflections were recorded through naturalistic participant observation as well as being videotaped. Data was then transcribed and analysed.

I set up opportunities for students to discuss and share their reflections and experiences through imaginative role play activities that involve critical thinking (McKernan, 1991:24-27). There are certain sensitive issues which are not easy for young children to understand or even to experience. However, through imaginative role play, young children can become an "insider", experiencing, empathising and even re-directing what happens in stories in order to explore their own thoughts and feelings. This creative process is discussed by Freire, who argues: "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (1970:72). The children were invited to talk about their feelings and reflections after each imaginative role play to ascertain to what extent they had internalised the imaginative experiences. McGregor et al argue that: "By putting children in other people's positions, they can learn to become more

aware of the complexities of human situations and possibly even start questioning certain preconceptions and prejudices" (McGregor, Tate and Robinson, 1977:31). The children's responses enabled me to understand whether they had gained a better understanding of the traumatic and sensitive issues explored in the books.

Young children may not be able to express their ideas and feelings immediately and clearly when they are asked to respond to a situation or question in class, and for this reason, I introduced reflective writing and art work activities to enable them to engage with their thoughts and emotions freely and creatively and in a more measured way. Sinatra explores this imaginative journey: "As a reader processes text and converts chunks of print to imagery, the reader can see in his/her 'mind's eyes' the author's meaning. Likewise a writer can visualise past experience or generate sensory images to create a flavourful text" (1986:21). Through the exploration of picture story books in this study, young children were invited and encouraged to express their responses in depth through writing, to picture their images in their mind and to make creative pictures and other artefacts in art and craft to help them reflect on what they had been reading and learning throughout this study period. Grumet (1983:31) explains the power of art:

> the work of art simultaneously draws the viewer to it, engaging expectations, memories, recognition, and then interrupts the viewer's customary response, contradicting expectations with new possibilities, violating memories, displacing recognition with estrangement.

My own reflection on the lessons, activities, responses and interaction helped me to get to know how the children interpreted each traumatic issue. I learnt, as a result of the children's critical response, to modify and re-design or rearrange my teaching methods so as to more accurately reflect the world as seen through their eyes. My experience as a student and then as a teacher has helped me to reflect on how I learned and how my students learn. I realised that a teacher must try to understand young children's concerns and doubts, as well as their first hesitant attempts to put their half-formed thoughts into

language. I agree with Palmer's (1998:75) statement that "Learning does not happen when students are unable to express their ideas, emotions, confusion, ignorance and prejudices. In fact, only when people can speak their minds does education have a chance to develop."

It has not been easy to be the researcher as well as a participant in participatory action research; however, it was valuable and necessary to spend time with the children and hear their reflections on issues of relevance or concern to themselves as well as in the wider world. Through this process, I will argue that all participants learnt something from each other, from the texts and from the issues raised in the ten books. As Harwayne reminds us:

> We work alone but we also work with and for others, and it is expressed by two words: one is 'solitarily,' in which we create out of what is in us, from our innermost feelings, ideas, emotions, knowledge—all of this combined in other elements; we also create from 'solidarity,' which is what we have gotten from our solidarity with other people (Harwayne, 1999:90-91).

3.4 Data Collection Methods

This research, as I have outlined at the beginning of this chapter, investigates in what ways traumatic issues can be taught to young children. Specifically, it explores young readers' responses to and interpretation of traumatic issues, specifically death and disaster. I have discussed in the previous sections the methodological approach adopted in this study: namely, a case study using participatory action research. The research questions identified for this study will be investigated by examining young children's responses to the selected books, both as a whole class and as individuals. In this section, the following data collection methods will be discussed; observation procedures, discussions/research conversations, use of questionnaires, analysis of young children's written and art work and the researcher's reflection and field notes. These have been identified as the most appropriate methods of data collection for this study. Bassey (1999:81) states that, "There are three major methods of collecting research data: asking questions (and listening intently to the answers), observing events (and noting carefully what happens) and reading documents." These suggested three methods of data collection are used in my research to gather together young children's voices. Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1980:48-49) justify the multiple methods used in case study research as a way of minimising bias in data collection and analysis:

> Case study methodology is eclectic, although techniques and procedures in common use include observation (participant and non-participant), interview (conducted, with varying degrees of structure), audio-visual recording, field-note taking, document collection, and the negotiation of products (for example discussing the accuracy of an account with those observed).

Issues and considerations concerning the collection of data from young children will be highlighted and the way in which I set out to obtain rich qualitative data from the young children themselves will be addressed. The specific data collection activities will then be discussed. Cohen and Manion (1994:192) state that participatory action research relies heavily on data from observations which is collected, recorded, discussed and evaluated over the

period of the study. In this research, multiple methods of data collection have been used and young children's responses from discussions/research conversations have been checked against their written responses. Nisbet and Watt argue that,

> …direct observation may be more reliable than what people say. Interviews reveal how people perceive what happens, not what actually happens. Both the actual events and the perceptions are important data and so usually you have to combine interview and observation (1980:17).

Young children's perspectives on emotions—their own, and those of characters in the books, and their engagement with texts can be explored through questionnaires (Hill, Laybourn and Borland, 1996: 141-142). Moreover, data collected from questionnaires can be measured or explained numerically in order to triangulate findings. Questionnaires are employed for a small scale quantitative analysis in this largely qualitative study. They have enabled me to develop charts and figures based on closed questions for a comprehensive understanding and interpretation of the data (Bryman, 2008:91). Thus, the use of combined qualitative and quantitative methods has increased the reliability of this research. Furthermore, there were unexpected findings generated by qualitative and quantitative data that can be explained with reference to the other.

Having identified observation, discussion/research conversations, use of documentary evidence (of young children's written and art work and the researcher's field notes and reflections) and questionnaires as appropriate data collection methods, the application of each of these to this study will be discussed in the following sections, and the reliability and validity of each method will be explored.

3.4.1 Observation

The purpose of this research is to explore, to understand and to analyse young children's responses to and perceptions of children's literature of trauma, and

this knowledge starts with observation (Greig and Taylor, 1999:83; Walker, 1971:83). It is essential that in this research, ideas and insights are based on young children's own interpretation and responses. I have collected this data by observing their responses to particular events or situations.

I needed to decide whether the observation would be participant or non-participant. Cohen, Manion and Morrison define the former as being when "observers engage in the very activities they set out to observe" (2005:186) and the latter as being when "observers stand aloof from the group activities they are investigating and eschew group membership" (2005:187). This study fitted the former category as I am not only an observer but also a participant as a teacher involved in the teaching process in the classroom. Lacey (1976:65) states that participant observation is "the transfer of the whole person into an imaginative and emotional experience in which the fieldworker learn(s) to live in and understand the new world." As both participant and observer, I was involved in the learning process and engaged with the children in order to understand their learning. A close relationship developed as we shared emotional reactions to the stories in the classroom. Even so, I was aware that the children may have been aware of being "watched", and this raises ethical considerations for researchers; they need to know that it is never appropriate to observe participants without their knowledge and consent; moreover, their presence may affect the participants' learning or behavioural outcomes. Issues involved in conducting participant observation with young children, will be discussed in detail later.

The key reason for conducting this study using the participant observation approach is because it allows the researcher to obtain first-hand data from live situations as they happen (Robson, 2002:309-310; Patton, 1990:203-5). However, Nisbet warns that,

> Observation … is not a 'natural' gift but a highly skilled activity for which an extensive background knowledge and understanding is required, and also a capacity for original thinking and the ability to spot significant events (1977:15).

My previous experience as both teacher and researcher has given me a good understanding of the use of observation techniques to record the participants' emotional responses and expressions that may be ignored unconsciously, to investigate responses or reactions that participants may not show in formal interview situations and to access participants' personal knowledge and experiences.

When carrying out observations, researchers need to keep in mind that their presence may affect the situation and to some extent, therefore, the validity and reliability of the data may be reduced because the presence of the observer could influence the response of the participants (Smith, 2004:121).

The participant-observation in this study was carried out in two ways: by on-site observation and by audio-visual observation. Both methods were employed to ascertain young children's interaction with the teacher, the texts and with other children, and data was collected by watching, listening, responding to and engaging with the children in discussion and conversation (Mayall, 2000:121). Through participant observation and audio-visual observation, I investigated the following areas:

- on a spectrum, the children's negative and positive responses to the sensitive and traumatic stories;
- their reflection on their emotional response after exploration of the stories;
- their responses to the illustrations in the books;
- their responses through drawing and art work;
- their relevant personal experience of sensitive and traumatic issues;
- their insights into or awareness of the value of human experience;
- their viewpoints in coping with difficulties and feelings in everyday life;
- their responses after exploring events in imaginative role play;
- any major and relevant incidents that occurred during the project.

Since I was both teacher and researcher, I was not able to record my observations as I taught, and therefore I wrote my field notes up while the children were working on their own or immediately after every teaching session. A discussion of how I kept field notes can be found in 3.3.5, and an example of my field notes can be seen in Appendix IV.

Audio-visual observation is valuable in conducting research because it makes it possible to capture and replay some aspects of classroom action, participants' non-verbal behaviours and authentic spoken language that may otherwise have been missed; this creates enormous potential for unexpected data (Walker, 1993:188 and Aubrey, David, Godfrey and Thompson, 2002:120). Shaffer (1993:19) argues that "[audio-visual recording] is particularly effective at minimising the influence of an observer if the taping is done from a concealed location", as young children are less likely to 'perform' or change their behaviour in any significant way. In this study, the camera was placed in a concealed corner of the classroom where every participant could be seen. They were informed about this and the purpose of the camera setting was explained to them. Both whole-class and group discussion were audio-visually recorded and the research conversations were tape-recorded. In order to audio-visually record and tape-record the discussion and research conversations, I obtained the consent of the participants, and I began using the camera in my pilot teaching sessions to help them get used to it. Johnson (2002:62) argues that the video camera can be "an obtrusive instrument, and thus it creates a non real teaching environment." In order to avoid this, all the participants in my research were invited to touch and see the camera before the first lesson started. In spite of this, the use of audio-visual technology may create disadvantages and I cannot prove that it did not change the children's behaviour. It is time-consuming to view and transcribe evidence, and irrelevant data is inevitably collected (Milroy, 1980:12; Opie, 2004:121). But despite these concerns, it nevertheless gives the researcher an opportunity to explore classroom interaction in detail.

Audio-visually recorded data shows evidence of the 'live' action in the study and therefore allows the researcher to review and reflect on discussions, research conversations and any particular incidents that occurred in the classroom, and these can be re-played again and again, in full, as often as needed. In addition, the recordings allowed me to accurately transcribe the participants' voices. This is significant because in my analysis I can confidently use the children's reflective responses to the books and show how/what they talk about their ideas and experiences. Most importantly, these recordings allowed me to maintain eye contact with the participants and to use my body language to interact with them without the barrier of a note book. I also used the recordings to help me interpret the children's non-verbal expressions as they discussed issues arising from the stories, and noted facial expressions that may reveal their feelings and gestures that may indicate a range of emotions, such as concern, anger or distaste (Neill, 1991:13-17).

Further, the video evidence provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my teaching style and to change my teaching methods as necessary. I reviewed the children's learning processes and their discussion and responses to the texts from the audio-visual data immediately after each lesson and then again for what I might have missed in my field notes to ensure that I recorded accurate responses from the children. My audio-visual observation notes were always open to anything fresh in order to help me to tell a true story of how the children responded to the issues highlighted in the study. Each child's response and relevant personal experience was respected in this study and I have described their voices rather than standing in judgement over them, since my aim is to explore their learning processes, reflection and responses to the books (Crozier and Tracey, 2000:174; Goodson and Walker, 1995:186).

3.4.1.1 The Classroom Teacher as Participant-Observer

In order for this study to be objective as well as valid, it was important to include other adult participants, and so I asked the classroom teacher to take on the role of participant as validator, since she participated in and observed the day-to-day activities in the classroom. Her observations would help to

avoid bias and subjectivity, and I elicited her views, concerns and suggestions regarding the study. I also asked her to keep informal observation notes which we discussed immediately after each lesson in order to review the processes, and problems and any particular points she had observed and to discover whether she had any suggestions to make about future lessons. I wrote down the key points that emerged during these discussions and used her suggestions to adjust my next teaching session. The classroom teacher's observations of the teaching and learning processes and my own on-site observations have helped to generate a clear picture of how the children responded to the issues raised in each lesson.

3.4.2 Discussion/Research Conversations

To ensure that young children's voices are heard, their oral responses have been elicited in three contexts: whole-class discussion, small group discussion, and spontaneous one-to-one conversation. In addition, the conversations I conducted with the classroom teacher will be included in this section. The discussions and research conversations have all taken place in the young children's natural environment, the classroom, with their familiar classroom teacher and other children around them. This ensured that they were more relaxed and spontaneous and increased the reliability of their responses and their behaviour. Labov emphasises the importance of the social setting and the adult-child relationship on children's talk based on his investigation with children in ghetto areas in New York. He argues "…that the social situation is the most powerful determinant of verbal behaviour and that an adult must enter into the right social relation with a child if he wants to find out what a child can do" (1972:202).

Nisbet and Watt (1980:14) criticise the case study interview as being too loosely structured. But I shall argue that this apparent informality enables interviewees to respond in a unique way, by offering insights into personal response. Even so I have had to remember that the interviewer cannot be completely neutral because of the need to indicate the areas they want the

interviewee to cover. Since this research aims to investigate young children's responses to children's literature of trauma, I have been constantly aware of Scott's advice that, "the best people to provide information on the child's perspective, action and attitudes are children themselves" (2000:99). Nevertheless, the balance between informality and structure in conducting the interview is not easy to achieve. Fry (1985), in a multiple case study where he talked to children about reading and books, explained his use of the conversation rather than the interview. He states:

> Although it is possible for an interview to be informal, conversation seems to leave more possibilities open for unexpected insights and changes in direction. It also creates a different relationship between the participants……The young readers in this study all make valuable statements about reading which I feel would not have been said in any other context but conversation (1985:2).

Fry therefore distinguishes between interviews and conversations and he believes that conversations allow wider room for unexpected insights and changes and for more flexible possibilities in young children's responses and interpretation. In this research, I adopt the use of conversations rather than interviews to elicit young children's response and reflection. I do, however, work within a loose framework, and have some guided questions that are designed around each picture book. The open-ended questions vary from book to book and many more questions are created from young children's responses. These questions are designed to invite young children to express their responses and personal experiences towards the books. It is hard to get the right balance between openness and structure in a conversation but it has been important for me to encourage openness in order to help the children to develop empathy, emotional intelligence and critical awareness.

3.4.2.1 Whole-Class Discussion

Whole-class discussion took place both during and at the end of each storytelling session, story reading, and imaginative role play activity to invite young children to reflect on how the story and activity might have affected

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them. Questions were asked during storytelling or story reading to the young children in order to encourage them to think about the issues as the story progressed, and to discuss a particular picture or point that was raised. Other questions were then asked at the end of each imaginative role play to invite the children to reflect on the activities and to explore relevant personal experiences.

I believe that whole-class discussion invites unpredictable responses to different questions, and that it is important to ask young children complex questions in order to develop their critical thinking and provoke imaginative response, and to understand what is in their minds. In this research, the following questions were used to guide the discussion, with slight alterations made according to each book being discussed:

- Did this book make you think about anything that has happened in your own life?
- How does the main character feel in this book? Why might the character feel this way?
- Have you ever felt that way? When?
- What would you like to say to the characters in this book if you could meet them in the future?
- How would you help the characters in this book understand their situation better so that they could handle it differently if it ever happened to them again?
- Did this book make you think about any situations or events in the outside world?
- Is there anything you do not understand?
- What did you notice from the pictures that the words did not tell you?
- Is there anything in the book that affects you emotionally? What? Why do you think it affected you as it did?
- Is there anything you would like to share with others about this book?

These questions were designed to invite young children to take part in a discussion that involved cognitive dimensions of reading and required the children to be aesthetically and affectively sensitive to the ideas raised by the selected stories (Barrett, cited in Robinson, 1968:22-23). However, it is important to remember that these questions were merely a guide and that while they provided a framework for the discussion they did not exclude other questions or comments that developed. They were intended to kick-start the whole-class discussion to allow young children to share their opinions, to interpret texts, to interact with the characters and plots and to reflect on their own experiences. It was my intention that the whole-class discussion should help the children clarify their understanding of the texts, gain access to more ideas, create deeper meaning, thoughts and feelings, reinforce their understanding, and appreciate and respect different viewpoints (Horner, 1989:17; Gilles, Dickinson, McBride and Vandover, 1994:499-500; NOP, 1991:13). This discussion often involved children retelling their own personal stories. Indeed, Wells argues that responding through story, allows young children to broaden their experiences and develop a richer reflective model of the world (1986:194-195). Mathis also reminds us that:

> …stories are a means of response—a vehicle for interpreting the literature we read and a structure for sharing it with others. That response is deepened by discussions in which the audience hears our stories and we hear the stories of others, understanding each layer of meaning as it is exposed (2001:155).

The young children in the class I researched were already quite experienced in interacting with texts in their classroom in Taiwan. However, my selection of texts of trauma was new to them, and I hoped they would not find it too difficult to talk about their thoughts and feelings with regard to the stories we read together. Every student was encouraged to participate in the discussion; I tried to give each one an opportunity of replying to the guiding questions.

Whole-class discussion may provide an opportunity for sharing and interaction between young children; however, it can be dominated by certain students who are more willing to express their ideas than others (Dockrell,

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Lewis and Lindsay, 2000:52). Not every student was willing to voice their ideas and thoughts in front of the whole class and I noted the 'quiet' student and often worked with them individually or in small groups, where they felt more comfortable. I also made time for as many young children as possible to raise their hands and I invited those children who never raised their hands to share their thoughts. Below is an example showing how some children participated in the whole-class discussion. In this discussion, I tried to encourage the children to predict possible places for hiding Miriam in the story.

Example (The story of *The Lily Cupboard,* the discussion is audio-visually recorded):

I: Where do you think The Nello family would help Miriam to hide when the soldiers came? (prediction)

Student A: In the river.

Student B: Somewhere in the forest.

Student C: At the back of their house.

Student D: In a big rubbish bin.

As can be seen from the responses quoted above, every participant's prediction is varied, and this is what makes the discussion more interesting and engaging for everyone who is listening to the stories and the experiences of others.

3.4.2.2 Small Group Discussion

Group discussion offers young children the chance to interact with other group members in order to negotiate a response and to learn to value "the contribution of others (which) may generate a greater range of responses" (Lewis, 1992:413). I set up six groups of six children and each group discussed the themes, negotiated with each other and sometimes asked further questions to report back to the class during the allotted time (usually three to five minutes). In order to avoid one or two particular young children dominating the group discussion, they were asked to set up the rules for

discussion; for example, to raise hands before they talked, to respect others' talk and to ensure that everyone got a turn to talk.

3.4.2.3 Spontaneous One-to-One Conversation

I also planned for individual conversations when I conducted my storytelling and story reading sessions, in order to help individual children who needed extra support in completing the tasks. For example, if these particular children raised their hands to ask me some questions regarding their writing, I asked them to retell the stories we had just read or to tell me about experiences or ideas relevant to the issues and stories to help them move on. The information from the individual conversation enabled me to interpret responses and gave me valuable data with which to analyse their level of engagement with the sensitive and traumatic issues discussed in the lesson. The individual conversations were not tape-recorded or audio-visually recorded so I noted down the relevant information immediately to ensure I had a record of the encounter and could note the impressions, the feeling and the interpretation. I had a varied number of conversations with individual children during each lesson but on average, five to six individual conversations were held in each lesson.

3.4.2.4 Conversations with the Classroom Teacher

These conversations took place in the classroom after the children were dismissed. Their purpose was twofold: to evaluate the whole project in progress and to consider the appropriateness of including sensitive and traumatic issues in the school curriculum. The length of each conversation varied according to the need to discuss particular situations or problems that occurred during the teaching session. At the end of the whole project, we held a tape-recorded conversation lasting about one hour to share our experiences of the teaching and learning processes. The comments from the classroom teacher after each lesson were taken into account before the next teaching session and adjustments made to the teaching methods. I noted down the key points of each conversation, and have included these in my analysis.

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3.4.3 Questionnaires

I used two questionnaires to obtain information about the children's responses to the literature we were studying; the first was specifically designed for the parents of the participants and the second was completed by the children themselves. A copy of both questionnaires can be found in Appendix III and Appendix IV. Questionnaire is an efficient way of collecting data: it can be completed by many people in a short time and the analysis of answers to closed questions is straightforward, helping the researcher to see patterns of response (Opie, 2004:95; Gillham, 2000:5-8). However, there are five significant disadvantages in using questionnaires: the quality of the data can be variable; the return rate might be low; respondents might have literacy problems that lead to incorrect interpretation of the questions, questions that have been misinterpreted cannot be corrected. Fifthly, and perhaps most significantly, Bell (1999:14) argues that the most important limitation of the questionnaire is that it is always difficult to know the reasons behind the answers of respondents, and yet it is the reasons themselves that are of greater interest to the researcher. Open-ended questions yield more data, but are difficult to analyse. These weaknesses are taken into account in my questionnaire design and in my interpretation of the findings.

For the children's questionnaire (please see Appendix III), I had to select vocabulary and terminology very carefully to suit the children's literacy ability and experience. For this reason, I used some familiar symbols, such as a happy face, and a sad face, as options for answering some questions. Closed questions in the children's questionnaire are followed by an invitation to give the reasons for answering in a particular way. The return rate for the children's questionnaire was 94%, the attendance rate for that day (33 copies out of 35 were received). This children's questionnaire was completed in class by participants with my help to avoid misunderstanding of questions. I read out each question with the children to help them complete the questionnaire.

For the parental questionnaire (please see Appendix IV), the language used is jargon free and can be understood by adults. The parental questionnaire was

taken home by the young children and I asked for it to be returned in five days; 100% were received (35 copies out of 35). This questionnaire was designed for parents of the participants to evaluate the teaching and learning process in relation to two topics (Separation and Loss, and War), to make suggestions for further teaching on the topic of Earthquake, to understand parents' viewpoints about teaching sensitive and traumatic issues to young children through picture books, and to help me understand how the children were responding to this project through interaction with other family members at home.

The reasons for using the children's questionnaire in this study were to evaluate the teaching materials and methods employed and to give the children an opportunity for self-assessment. In this research, it is the children who are at the heart of the whole project and it is they who can provide a far more complete account of their learning and reflection on it than I or anyone else (Scott, 2000:107). The 24 questions in the questionnaire consisted of personal reading background questions and questions relating to the sensitive and traumatic issues in the texts.

The children's questionnaire was designed in Mandarin and since it was designed for young children, the phoneme for each Mandarin character was displayed alongside the particular character in order to help the children to spell out the characters themselves. The questionnaire both comprised a mixture of open ended questions (such as: Which activities you enjoy the most? Please explain.) and closed questions (such as: How much did you enjoy the activities we did?). To the former, respondents were asked to respond in words, phrases or extended comments. Open ended questions allow "respondents unlimited choices... [and] provides a more accurate sense of what respondents are actually thinking" (Johnson, 2002: 67). Closed questions offered multiple choice options and respondents had to tick the appropriate box(es) provided.

There were seven questions in the children's questionnaire: six were open-

ended questions and one was a closed question. These seven questions asked parents about their child's experience of the stories and topics introduced in class, their own perspectives on teaching these sensitive issues and whether they had noticed any behavioural change in their child since the topics and stories were introduced.

Oppenheim (1992:47) emphasises the importance of piloting questionnaires. He claims that,

> Questionnaires do not emerge fully-fledged; they have to be created or adapted, fashioned and developed to maturity… Piloting can help not only with the wording of questions but also with procedural matters such as the design of the letter of introduction, the ordering of question sequences and the reduction of non-response rates.

Both the parental questionnaire and the children's questionnaire were piloted before they were actually used. Initially, the parental questionnaire was piloted by primary school teachers in Taiwan (N=2). The questionnaire was piloted before it was actually used by a group of Mandarin-speaking students from Taiwan (N=3) who were studying in the English Language Teaching Department at the University of Warwick. These students were already primary school teachers in Taiwan and their background knowledge made them a most suitable group for piloting the questionnaire. However, though their feedback was valuable, Sapsford and Jupp (1996:103) remind us that pilot questionnaires need to represent to the main sample or population to be studied,

> For it to work effectively the pilot sample must be representative of the variety of individuals which the main study is intended to cover. Pilot investigations do not need to represent, in the statistical sense, the correct proportions of different types of individuals in the population because the purpose is not to estimate the true proportions of such types but to cover the entire range of replies which might be given to any of the possible questions in the first draft of the questionnaire.

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For this reason, I then piloted the children's questionnaire with a group of young Taiwanese children (N=4) aged seven and eight to ensure that the questions were relevant, the wording clear, and the meaning unambiguous. The parental questionnaire was piloted by a group of parents (N=3) in Taiwan, with an educational background from secondary school to postgraduate school to ensure that the questions were clear. Changes to the questionnaire were made after the second pilot.

In the children's questionnaire, all twenty-four pilot questions were completed and answered by the aforementioned groups. Feedback from the piloted questionnaire suggested the following:

Only one question needed rewording, since there was no need for the explanation of mother tongue.

Q2. (Before piloting): 你的母語(最早在家用來聽、說的語言)是什麼?
(What is your mother tongue? (The language you first used when listening and speaking at home)

Q2. (After): 你的母語是什麼?
(What is your mother tongue?)

For the parental questionnaire, all seven pilot questions were answered by the two groups mentioned above. The term of 'child' (小朋友) in the questionnaire was changed to 'baby' (寶貝) in Mandarin after piloting because the classroom teacher used the word 'baby' with parents. Other feedback from the piloted questionnaire suggested the following changes:

Three questions on the parental questionnaire needed rewording, two of them to use more informal terms and the other to simplify response:

Q 2. (Before piloting): 以您的論點而言,請問您覺得小朋友對這些故事有興趣嗎?

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(From your point of view, may I ask if you think your child is interested in these stories?)

Q 2. (After piloting): 以您的論點而言，您覺得寶貝對這些故事有興趣嗎？
(From your point of view, do you think your baby is interested in these stories?)

Q 4. (Before piloting): 請問您們會覺得跟小朋友談論這些議題合不合適？請試說明之。(May I ask if you think it is appropriate to discuss these issues with children? Please explain the reason.)

Q 4. (After piloting): 以您的論點而言，跟寶貝談論這些議題合不合適？
(From your point of view, is it appropriate to discuss these issues with babies?)

Q 6. (Before piloting): 活動結束之際，您們對整個活動設計的滿意度？ (Now that your child has completed two-thirds of the project, are you satisfied with what has happened so far?)

Q 6. (After piloting): 活動結束之際，請勾選您對整個活動設計滿意度. (Now that your child has completed two-thirds of the project, please tick you satisfaction with what has happened so far?)

I modified the final version of the questionnaire after I got feedback from both pilot groups. The final version of children's questionnaire (see Appendix III) was given to the participants, who completed part A and part B (questions 1-9) to elicit their personal background details and reading experiences at the beginning of this project. The children were then asked to complete part C and part D (questions 10-24) to reveal their reading interests and in particular the way they interacted with picture books. They were also asked to evaluate the whole teaching project at the end of my time in school. The parental questionnaire was taken home for parents of participants to complete before the third topic (Earthquake) was taught.

3.4.4 Documentary Evidence

The final data collection method that was used was documentary analysis. Duffy (1999:106) points out that documentary analysis can be used in educational projects to supplement information obtained by other methods or it can be the central method for collecting data. In this research, documentary analysis is used to gather crucial information to deepen my understanding of the children's responses. It is divided into two parts: young children's writing and art work and the researcher's field notes and reflection journal. The former was used as part of a central method of data collection for enabling me to understand how young children expressed their responses through writing and art. The latter was used to supplement information obtained from observation, and discussion and from the research conversations.

In this research, the children were invited and encouraged to work on their reflective writing, drawing and creative craft work to express their responses, based on the follow-up activities designed by me according to each story. The children were invited to write five reflective pieces, to make two creative craft designs and to draw a picture to illustrate their reflective writing three times. The whole class was invited to create one shared poem at the end of the whole project. The detailed timeline can be found in 3.2.8.

The reflective writing was designed to help the children to express more in-depth reflective responses, insights, experiences and feelings after whole-class discussion (France, Bendelow and Williams, 2000:153). In Jones and Tannock's research (2000), one of the teachers used young children's writing as a means of obtaining data rather than asking them questions. In her diary, she explains why:

> I planned to gather the data as part of the normal classroom situation without the extraneous paraphernalia of a tape recorder or the structure of a questionnaire. Also, it would have been difficult to find time to talk to the children individually in any depth. Writing 'en masse' avoided the problem of children influencing each other's responses, such as may be the case in group or individual interviews over a period of time…asking them to write seemed a

logical and natural way forward as writing is one of the main features of children's primary school experience (2000:89).

In this study, children were invited to work on their first thoughts through writing in order to express their thinking, reflection and understanding of the selected issues and texts. Their writing was not judged, graded or assessed but simply there to be read in order to understand their interpretation of experience and imagination, responses and viewpoints on the particular issues and other relevant experiences. Britton (1982:20) argues that "By using words the child orders his responses to the world, arranges them, and in doing so reaps the benefit of grasping more of their meaning." What is valued in children's reflective and expressive writing is the sense they make of each sensitive issue. In working on their reflective writing, children were in the role of spectator as they "generate(d) and refine(d)" information, understanding and feelings, and brought their own knowledge, experiences, judgement and morality to the issues and stories shared (ibid, 51). I analysed the children's reflective writing, to understand their response, to explore how they coped with similar experiences and to analyse the key points and attitudes relating to human experiences that were reflected in their writing.

Young children's drawings may reveal what is hidden in their minds and it may be easier for them to present their experiences and thinking through drawing (Greig and Taylor, 1999:79; Nieuwenhuys, 1996:54-55). Similarly, Sapkota and Sharma (1996:61) state in their own research that drawing or art work allowed young children "the freedom to express views, imagination, and interpretation of the surrounding world in their own terms." They also maintained that "the adult-child power imbalance was relatively reduced by giving full control to the child; this in turn enhanced their confidence." I have encouraged the children in this study to express themselves through drawing, writing and imaginative role play rather than by 'just talking' (Steiner, 1993:64). According to Gay (1996:249), "descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects of the study." My own "descriptive research" has included evidence from children's writing, drawing and creative craft

work. My criteria for analysis of this creative response can be found in 3.4 below.

Additional documentary evidence has been drawn from the researcher's field notes and reflection journal. I made field notes on class proceedings whilst each lesson was in progress or immediately afterwards. These field notes comprised my on-site observation of the children's responses and emotions, their interaction with the stories and any particular situations or events that were relevant to the research questions. An example of my field notes can be found in Appendix IV.

I made detailed notes in my reflection journal after every lesson to assist the analysis of my teaching practice in order to improve my teaching or create a more interesting dialogue for the next lesson. My feelings, impressions, questions and thoughts about the children's learning and responses were also included in the reflection journal. The disadvantage of note-taking after each lesson is that the status of the data noted might be inaccurate, for my notes might be fragmentary or else I could not remember the details of events, and my own subjective bias might have influenced my selection of data. However, I used audio-visual recording to refresh my memory and to double check what I had noted down. An example of notes from my reflection journal can be found in Appendix V.

3.4.5 Ethical Considerations

(See Appendix VIII).

There were important ethical considerations that I needed to take into account when carrying out this research. Initially, I obtained permission from the headteacher, the classroom teacher and the parents of the children to conduct this study in the school. Copies of the letter I wrote to the headteacher and parents are shown in Appendix VI and Appendix VII. In addition, I obtained my Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) disclosure which indicated that I had no

criminal record. I was given permission from the headteacher to proceed and received support from the parents of the children. I made sure that the children understood that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time if they felt uncomfortable with the activities or stories, and that they could rejoin the class at any time later on if they so wished. An University of Warwick ethical approval form was completed and submitted to the Institute of Education and approved.

Because of the traumatic and sensitive issues nature of this project, it was essential to obtain consent from the target group and their parents, the classroom teacher and the headteacher. Therefore, a letter with the purpose of the project and what activities and participations would be considered was sent home for both the headteacher and parents of the target group for consent before conducting the project (see Appendix VII and VIII). The permission of carrying out the project was approved by the headteacher and all the parents of the target group. In addition to the consent from parents and the headteacher, I also had discussions to explain the purpose and whole process in order to conduct this project with Ms. W's class. The information about how the target classroom was selected and the relationship between the classroom teacher, Ms. W and the researcher (I) will be detailed in the section of classroom context. While conducting this project with the target group, the children were encouraged to respond to the stories questions, moreover, they were told to stop the particpation and read at another concer of the classroom when they felt uncomfortable. Both Ms. W and I concerned about the children's safety very much and we both always kept out eyes on the children and Ms. W was always there to take care of the children's emotional reaction (if any) while I was taking the responsibility of teaching as we agreed and arranged.

For the children's safety, all the activities related to this study were carried out in the school setting: the classroom, gym and assembly hall. The classroom teacher always remained with me in the classroom, both to participate in the teaching and to maintain discipline. The names of the school and the children

have been changed to ensure anonymity.

3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The majority of the data derived from this qualitative study was analysed using a form of content analysis; the data from the questionnaires was analysed using a form of quantitative analysis. Qualitative data are in the form of words, accurately transcribed from observation, discussion/research conversations, responses from open-ended questions of questionnaires and documentary evidence (the children's written work and my own field notes and reflection journal). Miles and Huberman suggest that, in order to prepare for data analysis, the data from observations and the researcher's field notes and reflection journal need to be converted into 'write-ups' and the discussion/research conversations must be transcribed so that the texts are clear and ready for interpretation: "So we are focusing on words as the basic medium and are assuming that the words involved have been refined from raw notes or tape recordings into a text that is clear to the reader or analyst" (1994:51). In addition, I collected data from children's art and craft work and imaginative role play. The answers received to the closed questions of questionnaires were analysed in the form of numbers to help readers to get a clear pattern of the children's perspectives on the whole project.

A huge amount of data was amassed over the duration of the twelve-week project and I began by placing it in chronological order. Johnson states that:

> Action researchers…observe messy, real-world events in which humans are mucking about. These humans are inherently…unpredictable and not at all inclined to exist in hermetically sealed worlds. Thus, each time we search and research we expect to see different things. The closest we come to repetition is noticing recurring items, themes, or patterns that emerge from our data…Therefore, action research findings are not generalised broadly, instead they are used to help understand particular situations as well as inform similar situations (2002: 73).

In the process of data analysis, I have re-visited all the collected data several times, taken notes, made comments and established connections. Macintyre advises researchers to "pull meaning from the different records of evidence to identify constructs such as themes, incidence, patterns and trends" (Macintyre, 2000: 91). Data analysis and its interpretation is therefore a matter of establishing relationships within the data and making connections between data derived from different situations, in order to develop multiple standpoints (Graue and Walsh, 1998:160).

In the first stage of the analysis process all the data was coded and categorised. Miles and Huberman (1994:56) claim that: "*Codes* are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are usually attached to 'chunks' of varying size—words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs." In this research, significant categories were identified and coded as follows. Some of these overlap with the areas to investigate through participant observation which I have discussed in 3.3.1.

Figure 3.5: Categories and codes for analysing data.

Code	What to investigate and analyse
Preferences	Preferences for particular stories and activities.
Visual cues	Use of pictures to support understanding.
	Response to pictures in the selected picture books.
	Response through drawing and art work
Response	On a spectrum, negative and positive responses to sensitive and traumatic stories in this study
	Response after exploratory and imaginative role play
	Response to emotional reflections after exploration of the stories.
Experience	Personal experience of sensitive and traumatic issues.
	Insights into or awareness of the value of human experience.
Adults' perspectives	Classroom teacher's attitudes towards the processes of teaching and learning.
Other	Any major and relevant unexpected events that occurred during the project.

Four figures (from Figure 4.44 to Figure 4.47) have been used to present the information from the closed question analysis I derived from the questionnaires.

The processes of coding, categorising, interpreting and linking the data help the researcher to move beyond the descriptive to an analytical level of understanding in order to fully investigate what has been learnt from the data and what it can contribute to the future research agenda. I have drawn on evidence from all the data in order to understand the meaning behind a particular response, to make links within the findings and to discuss the results and conclusions.

Each participant's responses are equally valuable in this research and I examined the responses of every child in order to generate some sub-categories for each category listed above. Similar patterns are grouped into these sub-categories and represented with the most relevant or powerful utterances and are discussed in **Chapter Four**. Since the children's responses were collected in different ways, it was clear to me that they might respond differently. For example, some children's artistic responses could be more comprehensive or meaningful than their written responses; therefore, their responses might be cross-analysed. The children's drawings and art work (see Figure 4.31 to 4.38) have been considered as part of the data and are discussed as part of my analysis of the children's understanding of the stories and their reflection on personal experiences (Arizpe and Styles, 2003:118). In particular, I have discussed their choice of colours and subjects, as well as the general impression I gained from their drawing and art work (Lewis and Greene, 1983:29-30). I am not an artist, nor an art critic, and so I have been guided in my response by the work of Doonan, Graham and Arizpe and Styles, which I discussed in **Chapter Two**.

The final part of the analytic process is the writing up of the study. I use the process of analysis described above to identify areas for examination and interpretation. Each area will be discussed using data from all the participants and will include the presentation of a valuable amount of primary data, especially the children's responses, writing and art work, when writing up the findings.

I have discussed in the previous sections how this research focuses on investigating young children's responses to sensitive and traumatic issues. There will therefore be no standardised or uniform answers to be found in their voices. Instead, their comprehension, the richness of their responses and their meaningful interpretation and reflection have all been taken into account when evaluating their learning. It is not my intention to compare the children's responses with each other but to analyse their response in order to explore the research questions, and seek out any patterns that might emerge.

The key reason for interpreting young children's oral and written responses in this research is to help me to understand what they have learnt and how they have responded to the selected texts and issues. Even though interpretation is applied to their oral and written responses, I must reconfirm that every individual's voice is valued and respected in this research.

3.6 Conclusion

The methodological decisions, descriptions and explanations of essential elements in conducting qualitative research as well as small scale quantitative research have been presented in this chapter. The reasons for and process of translating the narrative texts and the criteria for selecting particular teaching materials have also been discussed. In addition, the methods I used to collect the data and the ethical considerations have been explained. In this study, the aim is not to look for facts but to illuminate young children's responses to children's literature of trauma.

Participatory action research and case study are the most appropriate approaches for examining the following research questions: What are young readers' understandings of and responses to texts and pictures in selected children's picture books of trauma? In what ways may young readers' responses to the selected traumatic issues and designed activities reshape their critical thinking or reactions? What have I (the researcher) learnt from the viewpoints of second grade children that may be applicable to any future teaching of traumatic issues? Participatory action research is about providing an understanding of real-life problems and case study requires the phenomenon to be studied in a real-life setting.

The methods of data collection have been discussed in this chapter. The data collected from observation, discussion/research conversations, open-ended questions in questionnaires and documentary evidence are qualitative rather than quantitative. It is my belief that the uniqueness and value of each reader's response and the complexities of each reader's thoughts and emotions cannot be easily quantified or measured. However, small scale data from the closed questions of the questionnaires is presented in figures and charts to indicate patterns of response.

Some difficulties were encountered in the course of carrying out this research with young children. Some children aged seven and eight are less experienced while engaging in certain activities, such as imaginative role play or small-group discussion, and therefore more time had to be allotted to these children in order to complete the teaching process. As in all classrooms, the children's attendance varied from day to day so I could not always collect every example of their reflective writing, art work and questionnaires.

Having discussed how the data was collected and analysed, this study will now present the findings and an interpretation of those findings, in order to address the questions posed above.

4. Chapter Four

Journeying: Young Children's Responses to Children's Literature of Trauma

4.1 Introduction: Mapping the Journey

In **Chapter Three**, the following research questions were posed: What is young children's understanding of and response to texts and pictures in selected children's picture books of trauma? In what ways may young children's responses to these issues reshape their critical thinking or reactions? What have I (the researcher) learnt about my role as a teacher through teaching traumatic issues? This chapter lies at the heart of the study; for it presents the evidence from the 35 children themselves as they worked with me to uncover their understanding of and responses to the ten books. Crucially, the children have not been afraid of or unwilling to engage with the difficult emotional situations they met in the books. It is my task here to represent and interpret what they have learnt, felt and experienced from the stories.

The central features of reading and response that I discussed in **Chapter Two**, form the basis of the discussion in this chapter: namely, the crucial importance of narrative as a tool for learning, as memories are remembered and related; the use of imagination to support understanding and to develop critical thought; the ability to read with empathy and intelligence, as we tell our own stories, reflect on personal experience and gain insights into our own lives, those of others and the world around us. The analysis of both the text and illustrations in the selected books, and the children's individual drawings, and writing will be explored. The use of imaginative role play in this study has, I shall argue, enhanced the children's understanding and I have analysed their insertion into imaginative role play, where they take on all three dramatic roles: those of the spectator, the participant and the percipient. The children's

intense responses during imaginative role play based on certain stories have helped them to re-enact and improvise on their experience, and to make connections with the characters in the stories.

My analysis will demonstrate that reading is not a passive activity, but rather a complex psychological process that involves the reader in a reconstruction of the events in each book. I shall argue that through the process of reading and critical thinking, these children have thought deeply about what they have read and developed a moral and social consciousness in relation to the sensitive events in the books. These traumatic events, some fictional and others based on real historical events, have thus begun to foster meaningful values and to shape the children's representation of the world.

Throughout, I have been aware of my role as a teacher, with a responsibility both to the children and to the texts and their authors. This role will form part of my analysis. I have brought these young readers together with books they might not have discovered on their own, some from different cultures and different historical times. My role has been to establish a safe and secure environment as I introduced the children to disturbing factual and historical events, and to be listener, recorder and questioner. In this study, I have endeavoured to help the children to discover the meanings of the books and to put their half-formed thoughts and ideas into words and images. This has meant giving the children the freedom to respond in their individual ways, to ask their own questions, but also to remain silent in contemplation as they inspected their feelings. I have been conscious of the way the children became a community of listeners as I read or told the stories to them, and of the central importance of reading aloud to this social group of children and of telling them spoken stories.

As I analysed the children's responses, four key areas emerged for discussionand and form the basis on which this chapter is structured: the central importance of spoken language, the place of writing to capture meaning and significance, the value of drawing to enhance understanding and

interpretation and the place of imaginative role play as children worked on their impressions of events in the stories.

By far the biggest proportion of time in each lesson has been given over to class and small group discussion of the traumatic events in the stories. I have identified seven ways in which the children have used their *spoken* language to develop their critical thinking and understanding of themselves, others and the world they live in, both cognitively and emotionally. They have used their talk (1) to express and explore their feelings, (2) to make sense of the stories by answering and asking questions, (3) to consider the evidence from both texts and illustrations, (4) to respond or interpret to illustrations, (5) to tell their own stories, (6) to accommodate new information and (7) to develop a value system. In each story, the most relevant and important responses will be selected and presented to demonstrate the areas listed above. A detail set of categories and rationales for analysing the children's spoken responses to the selected picture books is shown in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1: Categories and rationales for spoken responses

Categories (Variables) for analysing spoken responses	Rationales
Making sense of the story by answering and asking questions	To analyse different levels of the children's understanding of the stories and events and their concerns
Considering the evidence from the text/illustration	To discuss how the children fill in gaps between the texts and illustrations
Responding to illustration	To learn how the children interpret the illustrations through closer look at the pictures
Expressing and exploring their feelings	To analyse how the children cope with and release their emotions
Telling their own stories	To draw on and build on the

	children's previous experience and knowledge to make sense of the events in the stories and connect with their own personal life
Accommodating new information	To discover and analyse how children accommodate new information to shape and adjust their world view as they learnt to understand and use abstract concepts of hatred, prejudice and loss
Developing a value system	To analyse how and what the children develop their moral awareness and responsibility and what this entails

In addition, according to the activities designed specifically for each story, the children's response in *writing*, *drawing* and *imaginative role play* will be presented at significant points. The children's writing helped them to find their own voice as they contemplated their individual thoughts and feelings and addressed their understanding and attitudes to events and characters in the stories. The children's knowledge of visual literacy is discussed not only to demonstrate their understanding of illustrations but also to show how they have represented their understanding of the world through their own drawings.

In this research, the story itself has always been regarded as a tool through which to develop children's learning and for coming to terms with difficult and traumatic ideas. It will be seen that the children became time travellers as they interwove the past, the present and the future, their own experiences and that of the characters in the books.

The analysis of the children's responses to the selected books will be centred on these areas, supported by the theoretical arguments which form the basis of **Chapter Two**. I spent a lot of time thinking about the most appropriate way of

covering all the material from the lessons; of necessity, I have had to be selective, though I feel some sense of loss for the responses that I have not been able to include. I decided to keep the order of the stories as read or told to the class to show how the children's responses connect through the stories and have been developed through shared discussion. It may not be the best way to present the children's journey through the world of children's literature of trauma, but it could be the most coherent and logical way of illustrating how the children broadened and deepened their response as I attempt to landscape their journey. There is inevitably an overlap; the children's responses to the books often do not fit neatly into the categories I have chosen to explore and there has been 'seepage' into other areas. Nevertheless, the use of finite categories has enabled me to explore a range of responses in more depth than would otherwise have been possible, and I have made every effort to present the children's creativity and reflections with clarity and honesty.

4.1.1 Outline of the Analysis of the Responses of the Children to the Three Selected Topics in Children's Literature of Trauma

In this chapter, I intend to present and discuss the children's responses to the three selected topics in the children's literature of trauma. Throughout, I will demonstrate the children's ability to reshape their world view as they explored their picture of the world, based on moral awareness and reasoning, and discuss their use of language to explore the meaning of the universal condition, and increase their understanding of individual responsibility. As I previously outlined, the children's responses will be examined through their spoken language, writing, drawing and imaginative role play. I will draw on evidence to analyse what they have understood about the issues and what they have taken from the particular experiences in order to discover how they might deal with similar hardships in the future. Throughout, it is clear that the children have tried to make sense of the key focus issues by drawing on their previous experience of things that have happened to them and used that knowledge to interpret and imagine the situations in the stories. In order to make a clear and more coherent analysis and representation of the children's different forms of response, their responses will be integrated and presented to demonstrate how the children have engaged with the material in order to make a reflective and emotional journey through the three sensitive issues. A summary of the children's most relevant responses in each of the different categories in the selected books, is presented in the Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: The children's responses in each different category and to the selected books for analysis and discussion

Form of the children's responses	Categories(Variables)	I will Always Love You	Granpa	The Number on My Grandfather's Arm	The Children We Remember	The Lily-cupboard	Rose Blanche	Erika's Story	The Wings of Hope	Thank You, Kitty	Yuzi's Balloon
Spoken responses	Making sense of the story by questions			v	v				v		
	Considering the evidence from the text/illustration		v					v			
	Responding to illustration		v				v	v	v		
	Expressing and exploring their feelings	v		v				v	v	v	
	Telling their own stories	v	v								
	Accommodating new information	v			v						v
	Developing a value system			v			v	v	v		
Drawing responses					v			v			
Writing responses			v			v	v		v	v	
Imaginative role play responses				v		v				v	

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4.2 Spoken Response

In this research, the children's spoken language played an important role for they were invited and encouraged to respond to the stories through talk and discussions. In this learning community, the children were allowed to express their innermost thoughts in an atmosphere of trust, to respond to the stories in a non-judgemental environment and to form their insights as well as complex ideas about the selected sensitive issues. Smith (2005:22) claims that talk is the best way to "get inside children's minds as they read, so we can see and guide the thought process." Therefore, in this project, the children were given opportunities to express their introspections in a non-threatening, open manner and their voices were equally respected and valued. Their conversations and discussions were complex and they represented these seven and eight years old children's thoughts, their social, moral and perhaps political awareness of what was going on in the world around them and their comments on the sensitive and traumatic issues in a perceptive and critical manner (Evans, 2007:248). While I was analysing the children's spoken responses, I noticed a sequence in their reading experience and comprehension processes starting with making sense of the stories and issues, then bringing their emotions, own stories and the own selves into what they read and understood, and then moving on to develop new insights about themselves, others, and the world as they reshaped their value systems. The children's spoken responses were divided into seven categories and they will be analysed and presented in depth. They are: making sense of the story by answering and asking questions, considering the evidence from the text/illustrations, responding to illustrations, expressing and exploring their feelings, telling their own stories, accommodating new information and developing a value system.

4.2.1 Making Sense of the Story by Answering and Asking Questions

In this section, I would like to present and analyse the children's responses to the selected issues (loss and separation, the Holocaust and earthquakes)

through questions I asked them or questions generated by them in order to make sense of the stories and the events. McLaughlin and DeVoogd argue that there is a need "to read from a critical stance—a need to question rather than passively accept the information [readers] encounter" (2004:52). Therefore, in encouraging the children to think and respond critically to the stories, they were given opportunities to answer and ask complicated questions, as Comber (2001:271) points out:

> When teachers and students are engaged in critical literacy, they will be asking complicated questions about language and power, about people and lifestyle, about morality and ethics, about who is advantaged by the way things are and who is disadvantaged.

In this research, I intended to challenge the children to think critically through questions I asked and to encourage them to ask questions or to articulate their ideas to help them understand the Holocaust and earthquake and the complexity of these two events. In the following section, the children expressed their introspections from various perspectives to expand their thinking and reasoning, and to discover diverse voices in shaping their belief and understanding. The processes of how the children made sense of prejudice, hatred and the historical background of the Holocaust through answering and asking questions form the first part of this section.

By talking about the numbers that were tattooed on the victims' arms or chests in the concentration camps, I introduced a discussion about name-calling and suggested that we perhaps had all done this, consciously or unconsciously in our daily lives and that somehow it affected people's feelings. Almost all the children had been called names. Some of these were nicknames, and were friendly and familiar, but others were unkind and hurtful. I asked the children to recount their experiences. **Eric** said: "My name sounds like 'market', so they call me 'market' but I don't like it at all. *我的名字聽起來跟菜市場很像，所以有些人會叫我菜市場。但是我一點也不喜歡*." Using **Eric**'s example,

I asked the children how they would feel if they were called by a name they did not like. **Tim**, **Becky** and **Mary** were able to respond to this 'name-calling' question empathically.

Tim: I would be very…very…unhappy.*我會非常非常不開心.*

Becky: I would feel so bad and upset.*我會覺得很難過和沮喪.*

Mary: I would prefer they call me by my own name.*我比較喜歡人家叫我我的名字.*

The responses here suggest that the children could begin to empathise with the victims who were known only by their number in the concentration camps:

James: If I'm called by a number, it means nothing to me and I don't like the idea. *如果人家用數字叫我,那對我一點意義也沒有,而且我也不喜歡.*

Jay: My name represents me.*我的名字代表我自己.*

Becky: My name means something to me and it stands for me. Numbers could be for anyone and numbers are meaningless.*我的名字對我很有意義,而且它只代表我. 數字可以是任何人而且沒意義.*

Leo: My name stands for my family background and it's to remember my great grandparents or grandparents. *我的名字代表的是我的家庭背景而且讓我記得我的曾爺爺或爺爺.*

Sue: My name makes me unique. *我的名字讓我很獨特.*

In Taiwan, children are always named by family tradition and genealogy or by their grandparents and parents based on their date of birth, wishing them a successful future. Therefore, the name of each child is unique and is full of meaning and love from his or her family. The children above spoke confidently and were articulate about their feelings. They addressed this important issue free of constraints, informing us all of their strong feelings and of the importance of their identity, of knowing who they are.

In addition, the discussion gave me the opportunity to take the children back in historical time and to broaden their experience of world affairs. The children had heard about both the First World War and the Second World War and they understood that "World Wars" meant that the whole world was involved. The children were very curious about the two World Wars and they asked me a lot of questions such as: When did they happen? Which country started the wars? How many countries were involved? How long did they last? I provided them with some information about the First World War but focused on the Second World War particularly. I began to tell the children about the European dimension and asked them what countries they knew in Europe. The children could name a lot of countries but, understandably, their geographical knowledge of Europe is limited. We looked at a map of the world and identified various European countries, in order to set the geographical context of the conflict.

I then asked the children whether they had heard about Jewish people in the Second World War. Most of the children said "Yes. 有" I explained what happened to the Jewish people in Europe and talked about the hatred and prejudice aroused by the Nazis and Hitler. Suddenly **Jason** asked: "If Hitler thought that German blood is superior to the other races, then the other races could think the same way. And what could we do if everyone in the world believes that he is the best? *如果希特勒認為德國人的血統比其他種族優良，那其他種族也可以這樣想啊! 那如果每個人都相信自己是全世界最棒的人怎麼辦?*" **Jason** was beginning to reformulate what he knows about oppression and suffering in the light of this new knowledge. I asked: "You may think that you're the best person in the world, but does that mean you have to look down on others? *你可能覺得自己是全世界最棒的人，但這表示你需要看不起別人嗎?*"

Jack: No, you don't have to. You can place everyone at the same position. All of them are best *不需要. 你可以把每個人都放在相同的位置，所有人都是最好的.*

Peggy: No, no matter how good you are, you don't have to pick out the weakness of the others. *不需要. 不管你有多優秀，你都不須要挑別人的缺點.*

Jack and **Peggy**'s responses showed their exploration of human morality was beginning to bond them as a social group. They seemed to be taking on ideas from each other. I was anxious to develop this communal learning environment by encouraging all the children to question and to investigate meanings together.

Tom then asked me: "Why didn't anyone help the victims? *為什麼沒有人幫助這些受難者?*" I did not know how to answer his question. I only managed to say that, "No one believed that the Nazis would be so unkind to the victims and the helpers came too late to rescue the victims. *沒有人想到納粹軍會對這些受難者這麼殘忍，而能幫助的人來得太晚了.*" The children, I believe, could see that we were exploring these traumatic events together, and that I too was learning and exploring my own thoughts and feelings. I had no correct answers to certain complex questions that the children asked but told them what I had learnt and interpreted from my personal reading (Walter and March, 1993:48). Questions like "Why didn't the victims fight back? *為什麼受難者不反抗啊?*" or "Why didn't anyone help the victims? *為什麼沒有人幫助這些受難者?*" show how the children were engaged in looking for information, "trying to fill in gaps in their understanding of complex and disturbing historical events" (Miller and Goudvis, 1999:221). They were very interested in the way the world works, and exploring these important questions gave them an opportunity to confront these issues. I was amazed by their insightful and challenging questions that I had no answers to: I did not know how much I should tell them about this tragedy. Sometimes, I kept silent so as not to interfere with the children's responses or thoughts by giving them my subjective or personal perspective on this particular issue.

In the story of *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm*, I planned to ask the children a series of questions to encourage them to make links between the

information they were striving to understand and their own personal thoughts. I asked the children why they thought grandfather tried to hide the number on his arm. The children explained grandfather's behaviour based on their understanding of the issues and their own interpretation. The following discussion demonstrates the children's interaction with each other (ex: **Jack** and **Alex**), and how they build up their understanding to the event, based on my questions:

Jennifer: Why would grandfather not want others to know he's Jewish? *為什麼爺爺不想讓別人知道他是猶太人?*

Michelle: Because someone may see him differently. *因為有些人可能會覺得他跟別人不一樣.*

Jack: Because grandfather felt ashamed. *因為爺爺覺得丟臉.*

Jennifer: Ashamed of being a Jewish person? *身為猶太人很丟臉?*

Jack: No, ashamed of being in the camp. *不是, 去過集中營很丟臉.*

Alex: But he felt that people would look down on him. That's why he felt ashamed. *他可能覺得人家會看不起他, 所以他覺得丟臉.*

Jennifer: Why might people look down on him? *為什麼人家要看不起他?*

Ying: Because he's a Jew. *因為他是猶太人.*

David: Because Hitler disliked Jewish people. *因為希特勒不喜歡猶太人.*

Jennifer: So, maybe grandfather was afraid that people would dislike him if they knew he was a Jewish person. *所以, 也許爺爺是害怕人家如果知道他是猶太人會不喜歡他.*

James: I think so. But I would still like him even though I know he's a Jewish person. He didn't do anything wrong. *我想是吧!不過就算我知道爺爺是猶太人, 我還是喜歡他. 他沒做錯任何事.*

Here, we see the children considering arguments, drawing references from the text, and speculating on grandfather's motives as they explored his decision, and moved between the abstract and the concrete. I believe that the story, my questions and children's responses helped them to build a representation of

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these events, and that the atmosphere in the classroom helped the children to use their language to articulate their thoughts and feelings and to understand the situation. Moreover, from above example, we can see that the children were active thinkers seeking out their own reasons, range of possibilities and interpretations of the stories and issues. I am confident that, through the children's literature of trauma, the children have "affirmed, expanded, and helped [each other to] define realities" (Strehle, 1999:293).

In *The Children We Remember*, the children learned that the Nazis planned to kill every Jew in Europe. This information had a powerful impact on the children. They all looked very upset and shouted "That's unbelievable! 太不可思議了！" **David** said angrily: "They're innocent people. What did they do wrong to make the Nazis treat them this way? 他們都是無辜的人，他們做錯了什麼？納粹要這麼對待他們." Dutro states that "Reading literature is often an emotion-filled experience" and I was prepared for the children's reaction (2008:425). **David**'s response towards the innocent victims aroused his empathic sadness and inspired him to express his moral judgement (Hoffman, 1998:92). **Becky** answered him tearfully: "Because they're Jewish, they're different. 只因為他們是猶太人，而且他們跟別人不一樣." **Becky**'s answer showed that she had listened to **David**'s question and was finding a way of making sense of what happened in a way that formed a reflective and interactive communication. The classroom was quiet for a few seconds. The children needed time to deal with their emotions of anger and sadness as they came to terms with this stark knowledge. And their silent emotional expression was a powerful response. Felman and Laub (1992:58) argue that the listener "must recognise, acknowledge and address that silence, even if this simply means respect—and knowing how to wait." In the processes of learning and discussing, it was understandable that the children would not be able to respond verbally when the impact of grandfather's experience hit them. It had a huge impact. It was my responsibility to wait as the children internalised the meaning, to listen to what would be said and to acknowledge what would be left unspoken.

After a while, **Michelle** asked: "Why did the Nazis hate the Jewish people so much? *為什麼納粹軍人這麼討厭猶太人?*" **Ying** responded: "Because the colour of their eyes is different. *因為他們的眼睛顏色不一樣.*" **Kathy** continued: "Because the colour of their hair is different. *因為他們的頭髮顏色不一樣.*" And **James** said: "Because the Nazis believe that the Jews are inferior to them. *因為納粹軍人相信猶太人是比他們差的.*" It can be seen that the children had already built a certain understanding of the historical background to World War II into their world picture and were dealing here with concepts of hatred and superiority. **Michelle**'s question, however, showed that the children were still puzzled about why one group could dislike another group so much and as they tried to understand about prejudice they struggled with "the futility of questioning the unanswerable" (Voigt, 1992:228). It could be the first time that Michelle had encountered an actual example of prejudice and the misuse of power and her question enabled her to refine and shape her value system and her feelings about the world as she tried to comprehend the atrocity and began to see the book and its contents in a wider social context.

Lowry acknowledges the power of the story as a vehicle for exploring difficult and traumatic ideas. She explains how she uses small but significant symbols as metaphors in her own writing: "As a writer I find that I can cover only the small and the ordinary—the mittens on a shivering child—and hope that they evoke the larger events. The huge and the terrible are beyond my powers" (1990:416). The children here are going beyond the meaning of the words and the symbol of the yellow star, using their personal introspection and interpretation to understand this difficult and complex issue. I shared my own exploration and concern with the children: "The reasons you're giving are what we can understand from the history. This question is exactly what the victims wanted to ask. I'm afraid that I don't have a right answer for you. In my own words, I would say the power of hatred was too strong for people to resist. *你們給的理由是我們從歷史上得來的, 不過這個問題也正是那些受難者想問的. 我恐怕沒有辦法告訴你們一個合宜的理由. 以我的想法, 我*

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只能說這仇恨的力量太強了，大到讓人無法抵抗.″

I had given careful thought to what I might say if the children asked such deep questions. I had directed their attention to these areas of prejudice and aroused the children's indignation, and I needed now to be honest as we all tried to come to terms with Michelle's question. It is hard to say that someone really fully understands the complexity of the Holocaust and the children are no exception. Nevertheless, it is my responsibility to tell the children the truth about what I know about the event and perhaps to deepen their perception of prejudice and hatred.

Pellegrini and Galda (1998:135-139) suggest that through open discussion, the children have an opportunity to share with the learning community what they understand, to ask questions, to extend ideas and to foster their social and intellectual development. The open discussion had played a central role in this research and I must argue that the children were capable of sharing experience, scaffolding meanings with each other and expressing their doubts and fears. In the second part of this section, I will present and analyse how the children made sense of the power of earthquakes, the possible damage they could cause, the possible things they could do to help and the value of having a dream through which to enhance their experience to help them to answer and ask questions.

The children were asked to retell the story of *The Three Little Pigs* but I asked them to change the character of the wolf so that he became an earthquake who shook their houses down before I told the story of *The Wings of Hope*. As it happened, the story ended in the same way; but the children had different views about the changing role of the most evil character in the story. The purpose of retelling the story of *The Three Little Pigs* was to help the children to engage with the uncertainty of natural disaster and the emotions of people caught up in an earthquake. I led a discussion on the theme of earthquakes and invited the children to respond:

Tom: The earthquake destroyed the houses of the three little pigs in a short time. 地震將三隻小豬的房子很快地震倒了

Ying: Yes, it only took a few seconds to destroy the house made of straw. 對啊! 可能只需要幾秒鐘就可以把茅草屋震倒.

Jennifer: Which house is stronger and which house would take a longer time to be destroyed by the earthquake? 哪一間房子比較堅固, 還有哪一間房子需要花多一點時間才會被地震震倒?

Ray: The brick house is the strongest and it would take longer to be destroyed. 磚塊房子是最堅固的, 而且它需要多一點時間才會倒.

Jennifer: Which is more powerful? The earthquake or the wolf? 地震和大野狼哪一個威力比較大?

Brian: The earthquake, of course. 當然是地震.

Jennifer: Why? 為什麼?

Georgia: The earthquake can damage everything in a very short time but the wolf can't. 地震可以在短時間內把所有東西破壞, 但是大野狼不行.

Lisa: Yes, the earthquake can even break bridges or high buildings. 對啊! 地震甚至可以毀掉橋樑或高樓大廈.

Jennifer: Do you think there is anything we could do to stop an earthquake? 你們覺得我們人類有沒有任何辦法可以阻止地震發生?

Jason: No way! There's no way to stop it. 不可能! 沒辦法阻止它.

Stanley: It's hard to predict when we'll be attacked by an earthquake. 我們什麼時候會被地震攻擊是很難預測的.

Eric: It's a natural phenomenon. 地震是自然現象.

James: We just have to accept it when it comes. 我們只能在它來的時候接受它.

The utterances above show that the children (**Jason**, **Stanley**, **Eric** and **James**) understood the destructive power of the earthquake and more importantly that there is perhaps nothing human beings can do to stop an earthquake. It seems that they began to understand the uncertainty of natural disasters. In addition to their basic understanding of the natural disaster, the children also

understood the possible damage an earthquake could cause and other difficult situations people in need may encounter. They shared their ideas about how other people could help those in need. I directed their attention to the problem:

Jennifer: What kind of damage can an earthquake cause other than causing buildings and houses to collapse? *除了房子或大樓的倒塌外,地震還可能帶來怎樣的災害?*

Kathy: People might die or be injured.*人可能會死或受傷.*

Lisa: Some people might not have homes to go back to and the traffic might halt.*有些人可能沒有家可以回去, 而且交通可能會癱瘓.*

Anthony: People might need food or other help.*人們可能需要食物或其他幫忙.*

Jennifer: Who'll help those people? *誰會去幫忙那些需要幫助的人?*

Peggy: Policemen, firemen and doctors.*警察, 消防隊員和醫生.*

Becky: Maybe other people could help too.*也許其他人也會幫忙.*

Jennifer: How do you think other people could help? *你們覺得其他人可以幫什麼忙?*

Michelle: They could donate money or food.*他們可以捐錢或食物.*

David: They could try to give what those people need.*他們可以盡量提供那些需要幫助的人需要的東西.*

Jennifer: Would you help those people if they needed it? *你們會幫忙那些需要幫助的人嗎?*

All: YES! *會!*

From the discussion above, it was clear to me that the children understood the difference between the kinds of loss and damage caused by natural disasters and that provoked by human behaviour. Their understanding about man-made and natural disasters, how they are caused and what the repercussions would be to possible victims may influence their attitudes and value systems, and help them to think critically and thoughtfully about what they could do to stop man-made disaster (Evans, 2008:246; Anstey and Bull, 2000:207). They

understood that the uncertainty and unpredictability of the natural phenomena could cause powerful destruction that would need a lot of help from society. They were encouraged to think of possible ways of supporting people in need and that it was a chance to think about the idea of giving and receiving. To me, it is important to share issues like natural disasters (especially earthquakes) with children in Taiwan for informational and empathic purposes to help them have a better understanding of life and to be able to cope with their emotions and difficulties if they have to encounter a similar experience in the future.

4.2.2 Considering Evidence from the Text/Illustration

The children's responses reminded me of Rosenblatt's (1982:268) argument: "Reading is a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances." This 'two-way process' means life-to-text and text-to-life issues that children use to explore their personal understanding of the experiences in the books. The children here imagined themselves into the heads of the characters in order to understand and reflect on the stories and to explain key events. Moreover, the children tried to discover information to fill in gaps that text/illustration might miss and to make sense of the stories. In this section, there might be some overlapping points through the analysis of how the children scaffold the meaning and respond to the three issues (loss and separation, the Holocaust and earthquakes) through the interaction between the text and illustrations.

In *Granpa*, the children looked at the picture (Figure 4.3) and were encouraged to talk about what had happened between the little girl and grandpa. Most of them said that the little girl and her grandpa were having a fight. They explored some possibilities:

Sherry: She might say something like 'I don't like you anymore' because grandpa did something wrong.

因為外公做錯事惹她生氣, 所以她可能說 '我再也不喜歡你了' 之類的話.

Jack: The little girl was mad at grandpa because he said something not nice to

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her. So she told her grandpa that 'I don't want to play with you anymore.' She didn't want to talk to her grandpa.

這個小女孩在生外公的氣因為外公罵他. 所以她跟外公說我再也不跟你玩了, 她不想再跟外公說話了.

Georgia: Grandpa was mad at the little girl because she was very naughty, so grandpa scolded her. Then she said something mean to grandpa.

外公在生小女孩的氣因為她不乖, 所以外公罵了她. 然後她跟外公說了不好聽的話.

The children were making some confident suggestions about the context for the argument. I asked them to express how grandpa or the little girl might be feeling. **Leo** said nothing in class but later, on his own, he told me: "I fought seriously with my grandma once and she almost fainted. I was so frightened and I regretted so much saying something I didn't really mean. 我有一次跟奶奶大吵了一架, 她差一點就昏倒. 我嚇壞了. 我後來很後悔因為說了我並不真的想說的話." **Leo** brought his own experience to the text as he expressed his feelings. Possibly he had never told anyone about this before, and the story may have given him a chance to work this experience over in his mind. **Leo**'s story echoes Watson's claims during his experience of sharing *Granpa* with children. Writing about this significant page he noticed:

> all readers can fill the gap here because every child knows, from experience, not from imagination, what it is like to say something hurtful to a grown-up. They have all done it themselves, and every reader I have asked about this has told me—in an exact demonstration of what it means to bring our knowledge of life to our reading—precisely what the grandfather has said (1996:86).

It seems that *Granpa* may have helped **Leo** to explore a painful episode in his life. He was able to articulate his feelings, playing the role of spectator on his own life and to experience a process that made it possible for him to understand what was happening between the little girl and her grandpa.

The children were asked to think how the little girl and grandpa might be

friends again.

Robert: Say sorry to each other. *跟對方道歉*.

Mary: The little girl can tell grandpa that she is so sorry and she wants to share her toys with grandpa. *小女孩可以跟外公說對不起而且她想跟外公分享她的玩具*.

Jack: The little girl can take grandpa for a walk to make him happy. *小女孩可以帶外公去散步讓他開心*.

Figure 4.3: Illustration from *Granpa*, p10-11

These children were exploring and discovering reasons for what might have happened between the little girl and her grandfather and trying to find solutions to their problems. Heidegger (2003:92) argues that, "It is one thing to have heard and read something, that is merely to take notice; it is another thing to understand what we have heard and read, that is to ponder." These children were evaluating the situation, using their language to internalise the problem and to understand that there could be a solution. In doing so, I believe they were using the link between experience and language to develop their value system about what it means to be unkind to someone. The children told me that they would be very angry and sad if someone made hurtful comments such as: 'I don't like you我不喜歡你', 'I don't care我不在乎', 'you're stupid你很笨耶', 'you're a pig你像豬一樣' and 'you can't play with us你不能跟我們一起玩'. **James** concluded that "No one is happy if they

know someone is saying something mean about him. *沒有人會高興聽到別人說他壞話的.* " I asked **James** what he would do if someone said something unkind to him. He said: "I'd ask him why they said so. If I'd done something wrong, I'd say sorry but if not, they need to say sorry to me. Then we can be friends again. *我會問他們為什麼要這樣說, 如果我做了什麼對他們不好的事, 我會跟他們道歉. 那麼我們還是朋友.* " **James** was relating something he knew about to the situation in *Granpa*, thus giving meaning to both events. Sumara (2002: xvi) states that children's responses to literature may transform and reshape their thinking and response:

> Although it is not always apparent, large shifts in thinking, like large changes in the natural world, are always preceded by a complex choreography of small changes. This helps us understand why it sometimes is necessary to develop sustained and close relationships with literary texts over time, if deep insight is to be generated.

The story gave **James** the chance to make sense of his own experience and inspired him to think of ways to solve problems and make up quarrels. Like Leo, he understood more about relationships by spectating on his own life.

Most of the children could tell that grandpa was ill from the picture (Figure 4.4). Some of them said that the pale colour of grandpa's face made him look sad and a bit older. **Ling** said with a sad voice: "The little girl must be so sad and worried about her grandpa. *這個小女孩一定很傷心而且很擔心她外公.*" **Alex** turned his head to tell Ling that "Grandpa will be fine soon, he just caught a cold. *外公很快就會好了他只是感冒了.*" There is no doubt that the children were interested in the characters of both grandpa and the little girl, partly because they are presented subtly and gently by Burningham, and partly because they demonstrate the complex process of human relationships. So even though grandpa dies, the story is essentially optimistic, because it shows us the value of human life, and we learn a lesson about life from their particular situation.

I took the opportunity to ask the children whether human beings can live forever, thus helping them to use the story to build on their understanding of life and to understand the situation that is developing in the book. All of them thought that no one could live forever, that we will all get older, become ill and disappear one day. **Tim** then said: "It's just sad when someone you know or you love has to leave you for good. *當你認識或你愛的人要永遠離開你是件讓人難過的事.*" Possibly, this was the first time he had contemplated this situation. Even though adults try very hard to protect children from loss or separation, it seems that children understand what is happening, and while they can appreciate the pain and sorrow of loss, some at least can accept this emotional loss—"it's just sad," so in a sense the world becomes more ordered.

Figure 4.4: Illustration from *Granpa*, p25

The universal experience of loss and separation thus gave me an opportunity to encourage the children to talk about coping with emotions. My role was largely as listener, accepting and encouraging the children, and helping them to interpret their thoughts and feelings, using their own voices. I asked the children how they coped with pain and sadness. **Ying** said: "I cry for a little while or I talk to my family and friends. I'll do something I like so that I soon feel better. *我會哭一下下或我會跟朋友和家人說. 我會做一些我喜歡的事讓自己快樂起來.*" **Claire** described her way of coping with sadness: "I'll

go for a walk and try to forget it. *我會去散步並試著忘記.*" **Tom** then asked me: "Can boys cry? My mum told me that boys need to be brave ad strong. *男生可以哭嗎？我媽媽跟我說男生要勇敢要堅強.*" I threw the question back to the whole class. **Robert**, **David** and **Jack** all said: "Yes, boys need to be strong but it's all right to be sad. *是啦！男生要堅強不過也可以心情不好啊！*" Both **Sue** and **Wei** agreed and remarked that "Crying is just a way to express your feelings. *哭只是一種情緒的抒發.*" In Taiwan, adults hold the view that 'men do not weep easily' and they always tell young boys not to cry. It is therefore hard for boys to cope with universal human experience, particularly sensitive and traumatic issues, by expressing or releasing their hidden feelings. As a teacher, I think that it is important to help children to find a way of expressing their emotions in their own terms in order to understand more about themselves. I had not expected this raw discussion to include ideas of gendered response, but part of the value of this research lies in the unexpected exploration of complex issues.

When we had finished the story, I asked the children whether they had had any experience of losing someone in their life and how they felt about it now. I suspected that, as with *I'll Always Love You*, the children's memories of the deceased would comfort them, even though the experience might have been painful, and that they would cope with their loss and separation. It was becoming clear to me that through stories and discussion, children can get the opportunity to engage with sensitive issues, to express their feelings and concerns and to develop ways of coping with challenging situations (Ordal, 1983:249-277; Roberts and Crawford, 2008:13-14.). I shall argue it is important to value children's response to sensitive issues in order to help them to release their feelings and encourage them to face challenges. The following utterances indicate the range and variety of experiences of these children. They know about sadness and loss and they have brought this understanding to help them come to terms with the themes in *Granpa*. In addition, I believe that the children became aware of the loss experienced by the little girl in the story and this seemed to free them to express their feelings about their own loss.

Georgia: My grandpa died when I was six. I was very sad but I still remember all the happy times we had together. My grandpa used to call me my little baby.

我的爺爺在我六歲的時候過世了, 我當時很難過. 不過我還記得跟爺爺在一起的所有美好時光, 我爺爺以前都叫我小寶貝.

Lisa: My grandma died not too long ago and I miss her every day. I feel that she's still around when I visit my grandpa's house.

我奶奶在不久前離開了而且我每天都很想念她. 每次去爺爺家我都覺得奶奶還在.

Brian: My grandma died before I was born. But my dad and mum tell me stories about her and I look at her photo to see what she looked like.

我外婆在我生出來以前就過世了. 不過我爸爸和媽媽告訴過我她的故事, 而且我從照片中捕捉她的樣子.

Michelle: My big uncle died last year because of a car accident. It's hard to believe that he's gone but I always remember that he always gave me chocolate when I was upset.

我的大舅舅在去年的一場交通意外中過世了, 我很難相信他已經不在了, 不過我一直都記得他總在我心情不好時給我巧克力.

In the story of *Erika's Story*, the children were also encouraged to find out more information from the double page spread (Figure 4.5). This is similar to the image on the book cover, which we had already looked at and discussed:

Sherry: Men, women and children with yellow stars. *男生, 女生和小孩都有黃色星星.*

James: Those people are getting the train to the concentration camp. *那些人要搭火車去集中營.*

Eric: There's only one tiny window with a barbed wire fence in each coach of the train. *火車上的每節車廂只有一個小小的圍著鐵絲網的窗戶.*

David: The Nazis are watching the victims and they've got guns. *納粹軍人們看著受難者而且他們都有槍.*

Peggy: There's a pram for the baby. The Nazis are so cruel and inhuman. *那裡有一臺嬰兒車. 納粹軍人真是殘忍且沒人性.*

Peggy not only pointed out the pram left by the side of the train but also used her moral judgement to comment on the Nazis' inhumanity. Her capacity to explore the concept 'inhuman' shows her in the process of using language to organise her thinking, and to share this with the other children in the group. Together, they built a common understanding of the scene before them, nurturing empathy and understanding, as they dwelt on the details of the illustration. They observed as they talked, exploring the pictorial environment.

Figure 4.5: Illustration from *Erika's Story*, 5-6

4.2.3 Responding to Illustrations

In this section, I would like to present and analyse the children's response to some particular illustrations in the selected picture books. The children's descriptive responses included what they saw in the illustrations, how they interpreted the illustrations and how they felt about the illustrations in terms of the photographs, colours and particular symbolic items used in the illustrations. Moreover, they use spoken language to convey information, to connect to individual experience, to state opinions and to express their

emotions about the illustrations (Kiefer, 1993:272-273).

I heard loud sighs from the whole class when I turned to the picture of the empty chair in *Granpa* (Figure 4.6). I asked the children where they thought grandpa might be. "Grandpa's gone 外公走了.", "Grandpa's too ill to visit his granddaughter 外公病得太嚴重，所以沒辦法來看他外孫女.", "Grandpa's in hospital to be carefully checked by the doctors 外公在醫院，醫生要幫他好好檢查." and "Grandpa went to Africa 外公去非洲了." were the responses from the class. A small number of the children thought that grandpa might just not be in the living room, but **Robert**, **Claire** and **Becky** pointed to the little girl's face and declared that her expression of sadness meant something was not good. Their discovery reminded me of Watson's point that,

> [Granpa's] chair is eloquently empty—and the emptiness seems to have taken possession of the little girl's body too; … Her face is almost featureless and her form comprises only a few unbroken lines. This triumph of minimalist draughtsmanship is a depiction of bereavement (1996:91-92).

The children who thought grandpa had gone to Africa might be making links back to the part of the story where the granddaughter asked grandpa to be the captain. The empty chair in the picture creates many possibilities based on every reader's imagination, personal experience or understanding of the story context. Salisbury (2007:9) argues that "visual thinking" is a term that is becoming recognised by artists who create images in picture books, and as the children 'read' this illustration and reflected on it, they made strong visual connections between the symbol of the empty chair and the little girl's expression.

The children were asked to create their own ending in their groups when they looked at the very last page (Figure 4.7). I gave them time to look at it closely, recalling Salisbury's words: "the beauty of the picture book from the reader's point of view is that it can be 'read' at whatever speed you like. Each page can be returned to, reflected upon and studied at a pace that is not dictated by technology" (ibid).

This is what one group said:

Becky: The little girl's happy again even though her grandpa's gone. She remembers all the fun things and good times she had with her grandpa and she'll always love him.

外公雖然離開了, 不過小女孩再度找回快樂. 她記得所有跟外公相處的好玩的事和快樂時光而且她會永遠愛外公.

James: The little girl's happy to have a baby brother and she's pushing the pram to visit her grandpa.

小女孩很快樂地推著她新生弟弟的推車要去看外公.

Mary: The little girl misses her grandpa a lot but she also knows that grandpa wants her to be happy.

小女孩很想念她外公不過她知道外公希望她開心.

Leo: The little girl has a baby sister and she tells stories to her about her

grandpa. She hopes grandpa's still with them.

小女孩有個剛出生的妹妹. 她會說跟外公有關的故事給她聽，她希望外公還能陪著她們.

In 2.4.3, I pointed out that children use their imagination to 'read' pictures and this point is emphasised here. Four of them have made an individual and unique interpretation of the same picture. **Becky** seems to link the story of *Granpa* with *I'll Always Love You* to create a hopeful ending. **James** and **Leo**'s responses, however, imply a message about moving on with our lives and being happy again. These impressive responses have arisen partly because the children have been encouraged to respond to the story in their own way, and partly because the quality of Burningham's illustrations, invite wonder and speculation. In addition, the children's responses to this final page show the magical connection between the past, the present and the future and the continuity of life (Watson, 1996:81). The children's responses were fuelled partly by their imagination and partly by their way of coping with loss so maturely. And I felt more confident to introduce them the issues of war.

Figure 4.7: Illustration from *Granpa*, p30

Before I introduced *The Children We Remember* to the class, the children were encouraged to recall their thoughts about *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm*. I asked the children what they noticed from both books

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when I showed the children the covers of both books. **Wei** said: "The covers of the two books are black and white.這兩本書的封面都是黑白色的." I asked the children what this might indicate. Kertzer (2000:404) claims that "By including Holocaust photographs in children's books, we demonstrate our commitment to telling children the truth," and this was one of the points the children recognised. **Stanley** and **Michelle**'s responses indicate their view that black-and-white photographs imply "seriousness and authenticity" (Nodelman, 1992:137). The use of black-and-white helped the children to understand that the photographs represented the past, as **Jason**, **Tom** and **Becky** showed in their responses. **Peggy** and **Ying** expressed their sadness as they looked at the black-and-white photographs.

Jason: They're from the old times.*他們是從古時候來的.*

Tom: They belong to old generations. *他們屬於老一輩的人的.*

Peggy: They give me an uncomfortable feeling.*他們給我一種不舒服的感覺.*

Ying: They give me a sad feeling.*他們給我一種難過的感覺.*

Becky: The people in the pictures could be dead already.*圖片中的人可能都死了.*

Stanley: The photos in *The number on my grandfather's arm* make me believe the story's real.*在我的爺爺手臂上的數字中的照片讓我相信這故事是真的.*

Michelle: The photos in both books make me believe the stories are true *在兩本書中的相片讓我相信故事是真實的.*

In 2.4.4, I have previously discussed the ways in which both *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm* and *The Children We Remember* reflect high modality because they use photographs instead of illustrations. Sontag (1977:98) reminds us that "Cameras…transform history into spectacle." In this topic, the children got to know how serious the war could be. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the use of black-and-white photographs was that they gave the children the confidence to state that the events were true.

The children looked at the final double page spread in *Rose Blanche* (Figure 4.8) and commented that it was the same picture as the previous one (Figure 4.23, see page 243) but in different colours. The children's interpretation and response to the pictorial metaphor helped them to develop insights into the nature of human suffering and survival. The bright colours used in the illustration stimulated the children's imagination. The vivid colours of the flowers and the green grass in Figure 4.8 helped to create a cheerful mood; indeed, when we see pictures in which warm and bright colours predominate we tend to feel happy because we associate warm and bright colours with optimism; greens are restful and we tend to connect this colour with peace (Nodelman, 1992:131).

James: The green grass and the flowers bring happiness and hope. *綠草地和開滿的花帶來幸福和希望.*

Becky: The war's over and everyone's happy again. *戰爭結束而且每個人又開心起來了.*

Peggy: It's Rose Blanche's sacrifice that's made the place so pretty. *是白蘭琪的犧牲讓這個地方變這麼漂亮.*

Michelle: Rose Blanche's love and kindness have made the flowers bright and beautiful. *白蘭琪的愛和善良讓花朵都這麼漂亮又有朝氣.*

Ying: Spring's here and it's bringing love and hope. *就好像有愛和希望的春天來了.*

Alex: The bright colours in the picture make me smile and I want to dance around. *圖片中的明亮顏色讓我想笑並跳舞.*

Graham (2001:38) argues for the importance of leaving time for children to look at illustrations and comment on them because "children look more closely than we do and want to say what they see in the illustrations." The children were sensitive to the colours used here. The illustration with the hidden theme of love and hope helped the children to cope with Rose Blanche's death and their admiration for her was shown in **Peggy** and **Michelle**'s responses. The children's responses to this particular double page

spread echo Nicholson's observation that: "their sharing of the text has enabled them to glimpse coherence behind the chaos of war, to make sense of the past and to confirm their faith in the endurance of the human spirit" (Nicholson, 1999:62-63). I was amazed by the children's close and careful observation when they 'read' the illustration and that they seemed to see small details in it that I had missed. Through this project, I learnt to read illustrations more carefully in picture books.

Figure 4.8: Illustration from *Rose Blanche*, p26-27
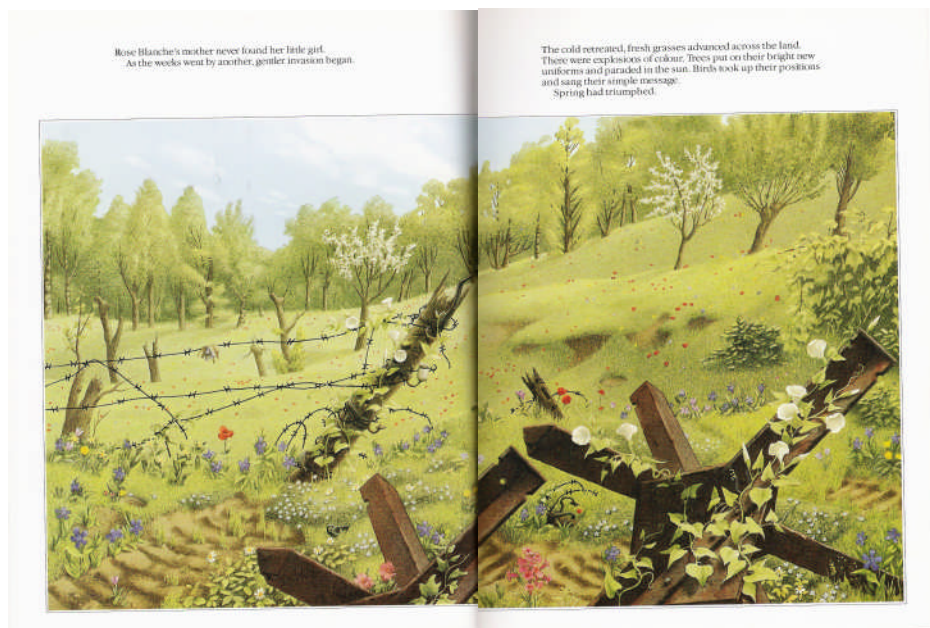
The complex use and absence of colour in *Erika's Story* also helped the children to confront issues of morality. After Erika's mother threw her baby from the small window in the train, the children noticed that the baby was the only object represented in colour in an illustration that was otherwise coloured in shades of muted grey (Figure 4.9). I asked them why they thought the illustrator had decided to do this.

Jane: Because the baby is the main character.*因為小嬰兒是主角.*

Peggy: Because she survives death.*因為她從死裡逃生.*

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Jack: Black makes people feel sad and bright colours bring hope to life.黑色給人難過的感覺, 而明亮的顏色給生命帶來希望.

Doonan (1993:31) argues that, "A high-key colour scheme using light colours is able to suggest feelings of well-being, whereas a low-key scheme in dark colours may well have a more sombre effect." Jack is able to "read" the use of colour in this way. In addition, as I have argued in 2.5.1 this picture allows readers "to infer meaning from the pictures which was not always contained in the text" (Baddeley and Eddershaw, 1998:60).

Figure 4.9: Illustration from *Erika's Story*, p14

The children smiled when they looked at the final brightly-coloured double page spread (Figure 4.10). They predicted the little girl in the picture could be Erika when she grows up or even Erika's granddaughter. However, no matter who she is, the worst time has gone and tomorrow is fresh and beautiful. The illustration "bridge[s] the gaps which the written narrative is unable to fill with words", and the children discovered the meaning in order to make sense of Erika's world and perhaps theirs too (Walsh, 1993:18). The children showed their sharp interpretation and understanding of colour used in the picture. The hidden message of hope and comfort is conveyed by the use of soft colour and by the greens of the natural world as expressed by the

illustrator (Gomez-Reino, 1996:61-65).

James: Erika survived and she's got her own life with no fear. She needs to thank her mother and the lady who took care of her. *艾瑞卡還活著, 而且她過著沒有恐懼的生活. 她要謝謝她的媽媽和照顧她的婦人.*

Beth: The bright picture is different from the previous dark pictures. It means that everything harsh has gone and life has moved on.*這張彩色圖片跟書中之前的黑白圖片不一樣. 這表示每件不愉快的事都過去了, 而生活還要繼續.*

Ying: I feel better looking at the bright picture because it brings me hope. Erika's and other survivors' lives can restart with hope. *看著這張圖片讓我覺得好多了. 因為它帶給我希望. 艾瑞卡和其他生還者的生活可以帶著希望再重新開始.*

Gomez-Reino (1996:70) remarks: "Although children may not be familiar with the 'grammar' of painting, it seems likely that many can approach picture books with an artist's eye." These children have understood the complexity of these images, 'read' the mood of the visual image, and used this information to develop their ideas.

Figure 4.10: Illustration from *Erika's Story*, p17-18

The children were asked to look at the picture in *The Wings of Hope* (Figure 4.11) to predict what might happen in the story. **David** said: "They're all

crying.*他們在哭．* **Anthony** pointed out: "Tian-Yu's parents and his sister look very sad but where is Tian-Yu? *天羽的爸爸媽媽和妹妹看起來很難過，不過天羽在哪？*' I told the class that we would read on and find out what happened to Tian-Yu. After reading the text, the children realised the bold images in the picture were actually mountains.

James: I thought they were stones. The mountains are crying too because of what's happened. *我還以為牠們是石頭．這些山因為失去的痛，所以哭．*

Peggy: Because the earthquake caused such damage and the people are all very sad. *因為地震引起嚴重的災害而且大家都很難過．*

Robert: The lake's made by people's tears, tears of sadness. *這片湖是大家的眼淚所造出來的，哀傷的眼淚．*

Jennifer: Will the people be sad forever? *大家會一直傷心嗎？*

Beth: No, they'll be all right but it takes time.*不會，大家會好的，不過需要時間．*

Leo: The people are sad because of what's happened but they'll be strong again.*大家因為他們的失去而難過．不過他們會再次堅強的．*

Here again is an example of the children's practical common sense. The children's responses above enhanced the Smith's point that adults have to "get inside children's minds as they read, so we can see and guide the thought process" (2005:22). Their responses showed that they were able to deal with difficulty and emotional pain, and to suggest that the victims will move on with their life.
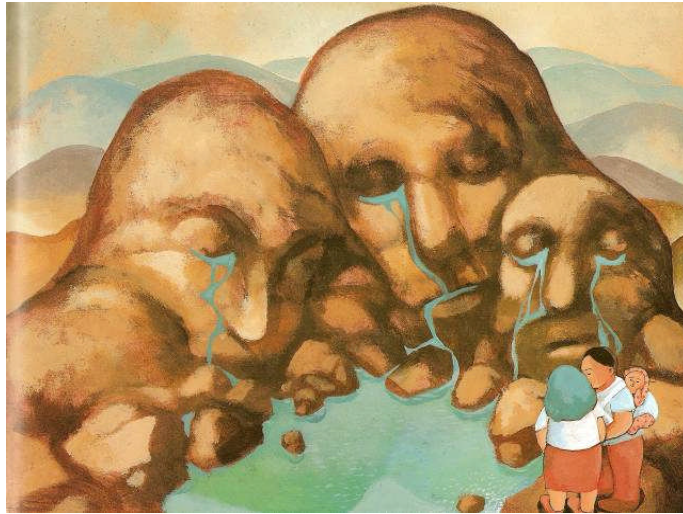
I asked the children to look at the picture (Figure 4.12) and share their thoughts with the class. Perkins (1994:85), argues that illustrations "[create] opportunities to bridge thinking dispositions across to diverse other contexts explored in tandem with the work of art"; that is to say, readers transfer their understanding and interpretation of illustrations based on social issues, personal experiences, aesthetic concerns and different cultural backgrounds to make sense of the symbols. The children, in the following significant discussion, share their ideas about the picture and its symbolic signs to make sense of the images.

Tim: There are lots of hands. *有很多隻手.*

Wei: The hands in the middle of the picture are holding each other. *圖片中間有很多手握在一起.*

Tom: And there are some more hands around the edge. *而且旁邊還有更多隻手.*

Sherry: Giving support and help. *支持. 提供幫忙.*

Michelle: The hands look like birds.*這些手看起來也像鳥耶！*

James: Yes, I think the hands look like doves and this is a sign that means peace.*對耶！這些手看起來像鴿子我猜牠們代表和平.*

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Peggy: I think the picture is about sending a message about helping each other and loving each other. 我想這圖片是要傳達互相幫忙和愛的訊息.

Figure 4.12: Illustration from *The Wings of Hope* (*希望的翅膀*), p20

4.2.4 Expressing and Exploring Feelings

It could be rare for children to have an opportunity to express and explore their feelings about sensitive issues or perhaps, we adults just ignore their feelings. However, that does not mean children have no feelings towards those sensitive issues and they also need to find a way to manage their emotions to know why they feel that way and to feel better. The stories introduced to the children conveyed the emotions attached to 'hardship' and it is singinficant that their spoken responses contained examples of vocabulary that reflects loss and sadness—'sad', 'hard', 'cry', 'upset', 'depressed', 'worried' and 'brave'. In this section, the children explored their feelings about the characters and situations in the stories and were able to express their feelings through the words given as examples above as well as through their facial expression, as I shall explain below.

Even though I could never know exactly what was in the children's heads as I read and told the stories to them, their responses showed that they were not

passive recipients. In *I'll Always Love You*, the children's facial expressions showed their sorrow over the death of Elfie (Figure 4.13), and they expressed their own thoughts and feelings when they discussed these two pages:

James: I'd be very sad and I'd cry hard. 我會很難過而且我會大哭.

Sherry: I'd put her photo somewhere I could see it everyday. 我會把牠的相片放在我每天都看得到的地方.

Michelle: I'd be sad at the beginning but I'd be strong. 剛開始我會很難過, 不過, 不管怎樣我之後會很堅強.

Becky: I'd pretend nothing had happened to Elfie. Elfie's still around. 我會假裝什麼事都沒有發生, 阿雅一直都在.

Beth: I'd get another dog that looked exactly the same as Elfie and take great care of it. 我會養一隻跟阿雅一模一樣的狗並好好地照顧牠.

Figure 4.13: Illustration from *I'll Always Love You*, p22-23

One morning I woke up and discovered that Elfie had died during the night.

It is understandable and perhaps inevitable that we cry over the loss of pets: children are no exception. The following conversation between **Robert** and me helped me to understand that he knew how to deal with his sadness and sorrow, and that being sad and crying over loss are acceptable and universal reactions. However, Robert also pointed out to me that being sad and crying would not help to change the situation.

Robert: If she's died, she's dead and she won't come back to you no matter

how hard or how long you cry or are sad. You just have to accept that she's gone.*如果牠死了，牠就是死了. 不管你哭得多傷心或哭得多久，牠都不會活回來，你就只能接受牠已經死了的事實.*

Jennifer: But it's hard to accept the cruel truth.*但是很難接受這麼殘酷的事實啊！*

Robert: Yes, but you can't sit there and cry for days. It's alright to be sad for a little while. Besides, she's always in your heart if you think of her all the time.*是啊！不過你也不能只坐在那裡哭很久啊！傷心難過一下子就好了. 而且只要你心中有牠牠會永遠在你心裡.*

Robert is using his language to regulate his thoughts, to explain his position and to persuade me that the best way to handle loss is by confronting things the way they are. The conversation with Robert also helped me understand that perhaps children are able to deal with the taboo intelligently if we adults are honest with them and explain difficult events to them carefully.

Booth (1989:41-42) claims that, "Talk can help children make sense 'out loud' as they come to grips with new ideas and understanding. It is a bridge that helps them explore relationships that arise between what they know and what they are coming to know." The children here were able to develop their understanding of the feelings of the victims in the concentration camps. In *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm*, we speculated about whether the grandfather would tell his granddaughter about the number on his arm. Some of the children did not think so: "Because the grandfather would feel upset, *因為爺爺會傷心*," or "She would be sad too if she knew it.*小女孩如果知道也會傷心*." However, some of the children said "Yes *會*", arguing: "Because they're like good friends and they share everything with each other,*因為他們像很好的朋友，而且他們什麼事都會跟彼此分享,*" or "Even though the secret might be sad, it's better if you share it with someone you trust.*即使這可能是個難過的秘密，但是跟你相信的人分享會讓你覺得好一些.*" I asked the children if they would want to know the secret of the number on their grandfather's arm even though it might make them sad. Most of them

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said "I'd want to know.*我想知道.*" **Peggy** affirmed: "I would know how to help grandfather if I knew what had happened.*只有當我知道爺爺到底發生了什麼事，我才知道該怎麼幫他.*" I added my voice: "Just like you want to help a friend who is crying, you need to know what happened to them first.*就像你的朋友在哭，你必須先知道發生了什麼事一樣.*" The children's mature responses to these emotions surprised me and I was also touched that they were trying to think from the characters' position to understand their feelings and to help them solve complex situations.

In *Erika's Story*, the children were surprised to learn that Erika knew nothing about herself and her family. **Becky**, **Leo** and **Anthony** related emotionally to Erika's position and connected her circumstances to their own interpretation of experience (Schlichter and Burke, 1994:281). **Becky** said: "She wouldn't be able to celebrate her birthday with her friends and family if she doesn't know her birthday.*如果她不知道她的生日的話，就無法跟家人朋友慶生了.*" **Leo** said: "How come she doesn't even know her name? *她怎麼會連自己的名字都不知道?*" **Anthony** concluded: "That's too sad that she doesn't know anything about herself. She doesn't even know what her parents look like. That's really too bad.*她好可憐喔！她對自己一無所知. 她連她爸爸媽媽長怎樣都不知道. 真是太慘了！*" It seemed to me that the children began to think and compare their position with Erika's and realised how fortunate they were.

We looked at the illustration (Figure 4.14) and the children used their knowledge of the historical events to make sense of this illustration and the experiences of the people in the train. The following responses show them expressing their feelings about the train journey from the victims' perspectives.

Jason: The Jewish people are standing inside the train and they're being taken to the concentration camp. *猶太人站在火車車廂裡，他們要被帶去集中營.*

Michelle: They must be very frightened because they face an unknown future. *面對未知的未來，他們一定很害怕.*

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Ying: It's really dark and crowded inside the train. *火車裡真的很暗也很擠.*

Mary: They're depressed and worried about what's going to happen to them. *他們很沮喪也很擔心他們將會發生什麼事.*

Figure 4.14: Illustration from *Erika's Story*, p7
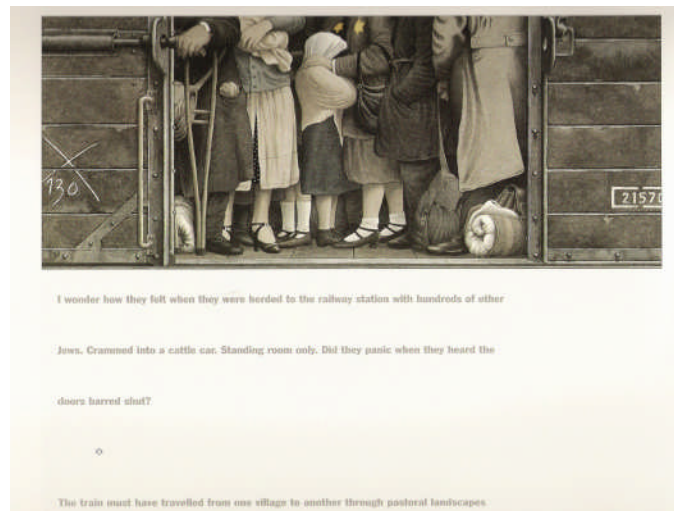
When we looked at Figure 4.15, the children's most immediate response was silence. Indeed, their facial expressions expressed their responses in ways that words could not do. I argued at 2.3.2 that readers may sometimes respond silently. Rosen and Rosen (1973:189) argue:

> Not all response to books can be written or even talked about. No set of writings or transcripts of talk can be an adequate representation of the silence which descends on a whole class when everyone has been affected and satisfied.

After being silent for a while, **Sue** suddenly spoke; and we began discussing the incident:

Sue: I can't believe that Erika's mother really threw her out. *我很難相信艾瑞卡的媽媽真的把她丟出去.*

Jennifer: Do you think Erika's mother is cruel? *你們覺得艾瑞卡的媽媽很殘忍嗎?*

Brian: No, she has no other choice.*不會，她沒有別的選擇.*

Beth: No, Erika might get a chance to stay alive.*不會，艾瑞卡可能會有機會活著.*

Tom: No, she wants Erika to live on. Erika might die if she goes to the concentration camp.*不會，她想要艾瑞卡繼續活著. 如果艾瑞卡去了集中營她可能會死.*

Jack: No, Erika's mother loves her very much so she takes the risk to save Erika's life.*不會，艾瑞卡的媽媽很愛她，所以她冒著危險要讓她活著.*

Jennifer: What was in Erika's mother's mind when she threw her out? *當艾瑞卡的媽媽把她丟出去的時候心裡在想什麼?*

Michelle: She must have been very sad but she has to do it, otherwise Erika will die.*她一定很傷心，不過她必須這麼做，要不然，艾瑞卡會死掉.*

Peggy: She must have cried but she told Erika that she loves her very much. *她一定淚流滿面,不過她會跟艾瑞卡說她非常愛她.*

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Robert: She prays for Erika and hopes that someone will adopt her. *她會幫艾瑞卡祈禱, 並希望有人會領養艾瑞卡.*

The children were building a picture of Erika's world cooperatively in the shared social environment of the classroom. The class was worried about Erika, and the children hoped that she would live and that someone would rescue her. The children were not only encountering the text and the characters as individual readers but having an interactive conversation between themselves and the literature. Rosenblatt (1986:126) argues that the importance of teaching literature aesthetically is to teach "the [literary work] of interpretation, appreciation, analysis, criticism, evaluation" and that this "is the evocation lived through by the reader-critic during the transaction with the text." In the above evidence, the children interacted with the text using their own ways of thinking and understanding. They also expressed their feelings and reasons in the position of Erika and Erika's mother to picture that particular incident critically and emotionally.

We commented on the events that occurred after Erika's mother threw her from the train. The children were relieved to learn that someone picked the baby up. **James** commented: "The lady who took care of her was very brave. Because if the Nazis knew that she had a Jewish baby, she'd die. *照顧艾瑞卡的婦人很勇敢, 因為如果納粹軍人知道她收留一個猶太小嬰兒, 他們會殺了她.*" **Jason** argued: "Erika's mother was very courageous too. She saved Erika's life. *艾瑞卡的媽媽也很勇敢, 她救了她的生命.*" These are the kind of responses that we must encourage children to make. **James** and **Jason** are thinking deeply and critically as they dwell on the significance of these events. James had known about Hitler and Second World War from his previous reading before the project was conducted and therefore, he brought his previous knowledge to bear on the event and responded to it critically but still remained true to his own voice.

In addition to expressing feelings from the characters' position, the children also expressed their feelings about the loss with reflection and empathy, for

example, when we read about the death of Tian-Yu in *The Wings of Hope*. Their responses were optimistic and thoughtful, and they talked to establish and explore their own feelings towards death, as they considered what the future may hold for Tian-Yu's family. Interestingly that **Ying** and **Claire**'s emotional responses echoed **Robert**'s responses to Elfie in *I'll Always Love You* (see p215-216). They began to manage their emotions as they faced the loss by identifying effective coping strategies (Aspinall, 1996:346)

Ying: Even though it's really sad to know that Tian-Yu's died, he's right that people can't be sad forever and he doesn't want his parents and sister to cry for him forever. He wants them to move on with their own lives. *即使知道天羽不在了我很難過，不過他是對的. 大家不能永遠傷心，而且天羽不想要他的爸爸，媽媽和妹妹為他哭. 他想要他們繼續往前走.*"

Claire: Tian-Yu won't forget his parents and his sister because he'll watch over them from heaven. *天羽不會忘了他的爸爸，媽媽和妹妹，因為他會在天上看著他們.*"

The children were happy to discover that Tian-Yu became an angel, just as he had wished (Figure 4.16). Even though the story ended with Tian-Yu's death, the metaphor of Tian-Yu as an angel left room for the children to hope, to imagine and to create their own closure to satisfy them psychologically (Cox and Many, 1992:52; Sylvester, 2002:16-17).

James: Tian-Yu wanted to be an angel before and now he is an angel. He can take care of his parents and sister from the sky. He's not alone there. *天羽以前就想變成天使，而他現在是天使了. 他可以從天上照顧他的爸爸，媽媽和妹妹. 他不是一個人.*

Ling: His sister's flying a kite to send her love to Tian-Yu in the sky. *他的妹妹在放風箏要把她的愛傳給在天上的天羽.*

Stanley: Tian-Yu's not alone, Pika's there with him. *天羽不是一個人，皮卡也跟他在一起.*

Peggy: Tian-Yu hopes his parents and sister will be happy without him. *天羽*

希望他的爸爸，媽媽和妹妹沒有他還是快快樂樂的.

Joyce: Even though Tian-Yu's dead, he's always in his parents' and his sister's minds. They'll love him forever.*就算天羽死掉了，他一直都在他爸爸，媽媽和妹妹的心裡. 他們會永遠愛他.*

Jason: His parents and sister would be happy too if they knew Tian-Yu was happy in heaven.*如果他的爸爸，媽媽和妹妹知道天羽在天堂很快樂，他們也會很開心.*

Alex: Tian-Yu is happy with his new life in heaven and his parents' and sister's lives have to move on.*天羽在天堂的新生活很快樂，而且他的爸爸，媽媽和妹妹的生活必須繼續下去.*

I encouraged the children to interpret the metaphor even more deeply:

Jennifer: Do you think Tian-Yu is happy in heaven? *你們覺得天羽在天堂快樂嗎?*

All: Yes! *快樂！*

Jennifer: Why? *為什麼?*

Sam: Because he's an angel. Now he has the wings that he'd wanted for a long time.*因為他是天使，他現在有了他想要很久的翅膀.*

Ray: He's happy there because he can still watch over his parents and his sister from heaven.*他在那裡很快樂，因為他還可以從天堂看著他的爸爸，媽媽和妹妹.*

Michelle: I think Tian-Yu's happy because he's still around with his parents and sister even though they can't see him. But he can see them every day and he loves them forever.*我想天羽是快樂的，因為他還在他爸爸，媽媽和妹妹身邊，雖然他們看不到他，不過他可以每天都看著他們而且他永遠愛他們.*

The children spoke with passion and conviction. They trusted their own feelings, and their talk gave them a way of examining their thoughts and reflecting on how much they cared. The discussion was evidence that the story had helped the children to develop and express their intellectual, social, and emotional understanding and experience (Cooper, 2007:315).

I mentioned before that children from Taiwan are familiar with earthquake as they happen a few times every year. The children who had experienced an earthquake were asked how they felt when it happened. McCracken (1993:14) claims, "…young children learn best when they start with what they already know and then have opportunities to expand upon their ideas and experiences." I hoped to help the children to develop their understanding of the story, to engage with the storytelling process and to make sense of Midori's feelings in *Thank You, Kitty* through their pre-story responses. The following responses show the children's feelings of fear as they imagined the vivid situation when an earthquake attacks.

Alex: I was so frightened.我非常害怕.

Jack: The house was shaking up and down for a short time and I was scared. 整個房子在短時間內上下搖晃, 而我嚇壞了.

Tom: I didn't like the earthquake at all. 我一點也不喜歡地震.

Wei: I felt dizzy when there was an earthquake.地震的時候, 我覺得頭暈.

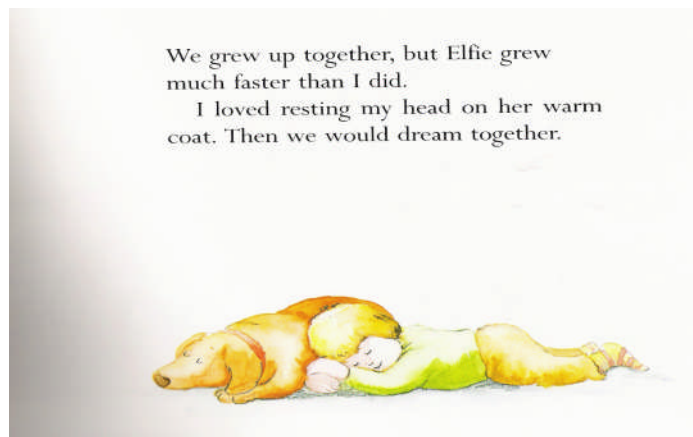**Sue**: I could hardly stand still. 我幾乎站不直了.

Rosen (1996:31) has argued that autobiographical memory becomes social rather than private and individual "as soon as they [memories] are turned into texts, spoken or written." When the children shared their personal experience of an earthquake with each other, their individual stories became public and

therefore part of their collective memory. Campbell (1992:3) argues: "it is not only the power of stories that facilitates the reading development of the young child. Children bring to the task of reading a variety of language and experiences, and a curiosity to find out about the world around them." There is no doubt that the children's personal experiences helped them to build meanings from this story and develop a deeper reflection on the events. It is therefore of great importance for teachers to make time for children to explore their own memories and to relate this knowledge to the text. I shall discuss this point further in 4.6.

4.2.5 Telling Their Stories

I have been wondering since I was little why often only one voice is allowed in the classroom. And whose voice should that be, that of the teacher or the student? It is human nature to explore what we think and how we feel but in the classroom this can only be possible if the voice of each one of us is valued. In this research, a great deal of time was spent asking and answering questions, looking for ideas, speculating and expressing feelings. It is important that children feel comfortable and secure enough to share their thoughts and feel that their voices are valued and respected because they may be more willing to talk about the traumatic issues with trusted teachers and peers (Edwards, 1995:7; Goodwin, 2001: xiv). For this reason I encouraged the children to share their experiences. Many of the children had pets in their homes, including dogs, cats, goldfish, birds, turtles, and hamsters. As I read the story, *I'll Always Love You*, I asked questions to encourage the children to express their thoughts to help them to structure the experiences they were learning about in the stories and to build on their picture of the world. **Jane** and **Anthony** shared their favourite story of their pets: (Figure 4.17)

Figure 4.17: Illustration from *I'll Always Love You*, p3

We grew up together, but Elfie grew much faster than I did.
I loved resting my head on her warm coat. Then we would dream together.

Jane: I like to watch television with Candy, my cat. She's three years old. She likes to sit next to me when I watch television and she likes me to hug her tightly. *我喜歡跟我的貓, 糖糖, 一起看電視. 她現在三歲. 我看電視的時候, 她喜歡坐在我旁邊, 而且她喜歡我把她抱得緊緊的.*

Anthony: My favourite thing to do with Rex, my dog, is to take him for a walk in the park in the early evening. We sometimes run around the park and he always plays with other kids because he's friendly towards everyone. *我最喜歡每天傍晚帶我的狗, Rex 去公園散步. 我們有時候會繞著公園跑而 Rex 總是跟其他小朋友玩因為牠對每個人都很好.*

Both **Jane** and **Anthony**'s stories show us the importance of spectating on our own lives, as they did here, going back over their experiences and sharing them with the class. They told their own stories, brought their past experience to bear on the story in the book and made an emotional connection between their own experience and the literature (Graham, 2001:37). Their own stories created a link, bringing the text closer to their own lives and thus deepening their understanding of the traumatic events in the story.

While we were looking at Figure 4.24, **Becky** shared a story with the whole class about when Peter, her rabbit, "tore my English homework when I forgot to put him back in his cage. I had to re-do my homework and tidy the

classroom after class the next day. I told Peter off, but I still loved him very much. 有一天我忘了把 Peter 關進牠的籠子裡, 牠把我的英文作業撕破了, 我被要求重寫作業並且隔天下課後要幫忙整理教室. 即使為了這件事我罵了 Peter, 我還是很愛牠." Becky's story brought the text alive for her. What she took from the text helped her to enlarge her understanding of Elfie's world and thus helped her to develop the ability to symbolise, to leave behind her own world and to enter the imaginary world of the story (Holland, 2005:243-244).

Figure 4.18: Illustration from *I'll Always Love You*, p10-11
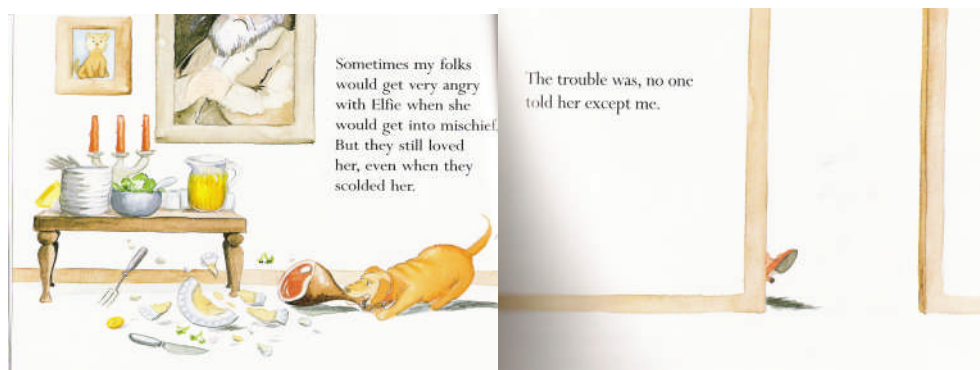
After reading the story of *I'll Always Love You*, I began to share my own story with the class. I told them how I had lost my dog when I was little and how I wished I had told him how much I loved him. Sharing my story helped to put me in a new and closer relationship with the children, not only to encourage them to tell their own stories but also to show them that I was interested in what they had to say. The children comforted me with "You didn't know you'd lose him, otherwise you'd have told him you loved him every day. 妳並不知道妳會失去牠, 要不然妳會每天跟牠說妳永遠愛牠." Other than motivating the children to tell their own stories, the reason for telling my own story with them was also to build up trust and security between me and the children. After my sharing, **Tim** then shared his story with the class of when his whole family went out over the weekend and he found that his two birds were dead when he returned home. They were killed by a cat that had got in.

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He told the class: "I was very sad and I cried for a very long time because the two birds sang for me every time I felt bad. I wished that I had the chance to say goodbye. *我非常難過而且我哭了好久, 因為每次我心情不好, 這兩隻鳥就會唱歌給我聽. 我希望我有機會跟牠們說再見.*" **Peggy** witnessed her cat, Mimi, get hit by a car. She was very sad and did not want to talk to anyone for days because she felt that it was her responsibility to take care of Mimi but she had failed. She wished that she had had the chance to say she was sorry to Mimi and to let her know that she cared for her a lot. Both Tim and Peggy's responses demonstrate that they connected their experience as readers in order to better comprehend their own personal lives (Sipe, 2000:256). Moreover, Tim and Peggy's personal stories helped the children realise that others shared their plight. Their expressions of loss and grief might also bring about a sense of relief.

Martin suggests that stories like *I'll Always Love You* have a great deal of relevance for children. Martin refers to a teacher who writes about:

> a lonely and neglected boy in one of her classes called Gwyn who came to school one day, and said to her, 'Me cat died Miss. Can you find me a story about a cat, Miss? When you read something, it helps you to sort it out in your mind (1976:32-33).

Torbe (Undated, c. 1986:3) states that "Gwyn's response indicates a familiar but always surprising quality of literature: it 'helps you to sort it out in your mind', to come to terms with bruising experiences." I would like to suggest that *I'll Always Love You* offers pathways to enable children to express and reflect and to share their memories and emotions. As Fine comments: "When you live through a bad situation you are often numbed by it, [but when] you read about it happening to someone else then you come to understand from the safety of a spectator" (cited in Booth and Barton, 2000:19). It seems that *I'll Always Love You* offers solace within the lines of the print, and shows children some ways to express and share their feelings about the loss of Elfie and their own personal loss. This evidence supports the argument that the children as young as seven and eight are capable of understanding difficult

issues and coping with their emotions if they are given opportunities to do so.

Similarly, the children shared their memories of their grandparents or other members of their family when we read about the games the little girl played with her grandfather in the story of *Granpa*. The children not only shared their stories but also expressed their feelings and intimacy with the particular member of their family through their shared stories:

Alex: I used to play the same game with my grandpa as in the picture book. My grandpa used to pretend that he was a naughty patient who never took his medication. He never obeyed the rules in hospital so he talked and sang loudly. But I liked it!!
我曾經跟我爺爺玩過像書裡類似的角色扮演. 我爺爺假裝是很不聽話的病人，從不吃藥而且都不遵守醫院的規定，他總是大聲說話和唱歌. 不過我很喜歡!!

Michelle: I played a game like this with my grandpa. I was the teacher and he was the pupil. He had to do whatever I told him (laugh).
我跟外公玩過相似的角色扮演. 不過我是老師而外公是學生. 我說什麼外公都要照做(笑).

Lisa: I loved to play 'show time' with my grandmother when I was little. We had to pretend that we were on the stage and performed for the audience. My grandmother sang very well and she danced for me sometimes.
我小時候很愛跟外婆玩 '表演'. 我們必須假裝我們在舞台上表演給台下的觀眾看. 我外婆很會唱歌而且她有時還會跳舞給我看.

In these stories, **Alex**, **Michelle** and **Lisa** were able to integrate literary and personal experience. Strehle (1999:213) claims, "When literature provides opportunities to make connections between learning and life, learning then moves from the cognitive into the social arena of self understanding." Through telling or listening to their own stories, the children understood

themselves more and could see that their experience was shared. Vygotsky argues that learning is a profoundly social process and that children's interaction and cooperation with their peers in the classroom supports their cognitive growth (1978:86-90). In the above examples, the children not only made a connection between the text and their personal experience, they also created an interactive environment for the whole class to experience their shared stories and experiences. In addition, the children had showed that they 'stepped out' of the stories to reflect on how the stories, characters and experience relate to their own lives or the lives of others.

4.2.6 Accommodating new Information

Willinsky (1990:98) states that "literature works by affecting readers and that teaching literature works if the student connects with the text." In this research, through in-depth discussions, the children made sense of the traumatic issues collaboratively within the learning community. I shall argue that the children learned to accommodate new information from the stories in order to shape and adjust their world view as they learnt to understand and use abstract concepts of loss and separation, war (the Holocaust), and natural disasters (earthquakes).

In *I'll Always Love You*, we looked at Figure 4.19, I asked the children why the little boy felt better because he had told Elfie every night that 'I'll always love you' before he lost her. The following children's responses show how the children interpreted the text through the eyes of the little boy; and thus refined their own feelings:

Beth: Because at least he told her that he loved her. He expressed his feelings to her. *因為至少他跟牠說過他愛牠. 他對牠表達了他的感情.*

Peggy: Because he'd told her that and he had no regrets. *因為他跟牠說過我永遠愛你, 就不會有遺憾.*

Michelle: Because what he told Elfie every night might make her feel better

and help her to understand how much he cared about her. 因為他每天晚上跟阿雅說他永遠愛牠讓阿雅很開心，並且知道牠的小主人有多在乎牠.

David: Even though Elfie died, he still loved her so much and he told her so before she died. 即使阿雅死了小主人還是很愛牠, 而且他在牠死之前跟牠說了他愛牠.

Ying: Because Elfie knew how much he loved her. She'll be happier in heaven. 因為當阿雅死的時候，是知道小主人很愛牠的. 牠在天堂也會開心.

Once again I was struck by the importance of talk and discussion to help the children to interpret their feelings and ideas, remaking the meanings in the book in their own heads and using their language to explain their rationale. In addition, it seemed to me that the children accommodated the new message they picked up from the hidden purpose and meaning of saying 'I'll always love you' to Elfie to shape their insights and their appreciation of love and loss.

Figure 4.19: Illustration from *I'll Always Love You*, p24-25

We read about the little boy's neighbour offering him a new puppy at the end of the story, and how he rejected it. I asked the class if they would have accepted a new puppy if they had been the little boy and why. Only three children (Beth, Kathy and Ling) said yes; the rest of the class said no. These children interpreted what they had taken from the story to help them to

accommodate the new experience. **Beth** said "I think that I'd feel better with a new puppy and I'd take great care of him and love him much more. 我想有新小狗陪我，我會好一點而且我會好好照顧牠和愛牠很多很多." However, **Ying** disagreed because "Seeing the new puppy would remind me of Elfie and that makes me hurt. 看見新的小狗會讓我想起阿雅,而且那會讓我傷心." **James** argued: "Because I loved Elfie, I couldn't accept a new puppy in such a short time even if the two dogs are the same sort. My feelings for the new puppy and Elfie would be different. And I wouldn't want Elfie to think that I'd forgotten her. 因為我很愛阿雅，我沒辦法在短時間內接受另一隻新的小狗,就算牠們是一模一樣的狗. 我對阿雅和新小狗的感情是不一樣的，而且我也不想阿雅以為我已經忘了牠." **Jason** looked ahead and examined the future. As he did so, he fictionalised himself in the story and for a few moments he became the little boy: "I was really sad about losing Elfie, the experience was too painful. I can't believe how I'll get over the sorrow of losing another new puppy again in a few years. So, I think that I may not have any pets. 我很難過我失去了阿雅，這是個很痛的經驗. 我不知道幾年後我該如何再一次承受失去新小狗的傷痛所以我想我不會再養任何寵物了." **Peggy** thought: "It's not fair to the new puppy if I accepted it right after Elfie had gone. It's a different feeling and situation for another new dog, but no matter how, the new puppy can't replace Elfie. They're just different. 我想，如果我在阿雅離開後沒多久就養新小狗，對牠並不公平. 因為對新小狗的感情和情況都不一樣. 不過，不管怎樣，新小狗不能取代阿雅.牠們是不一樣的."

These children are very certain of their decision and this is an indication of how they have been able to internalise the feelings of the little boy in the story. The discussion also shows how the children formed an interpretive community, as argued by Fish (1980) in 2.5.1. They share similar feelings though each child speaks with a unique voice. Their responses also show that they seem to understand that it takes time to get over the pain of loss and separation. Their feelings and reflections are powerful and their responses gave me new insights into the ability of such young children to deal with

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traumatic issues in literature. I was beginning to understand that these children were capable of expressing complex emotions and could work at finding solutions to problems of loss and separation.

At the end of *The Children We Remember*, I asked this learning community of children to think about what 'lesson' they had learnt from the two stories about the Holocaust. They were invited to talk in small groups and encouraged to generalise from the stories about people or life experiences and situations based on their own understanding of morality. The children began to value and respect difference in turn to adjust their belief and views of seeing the world. Here is one group's discussion:

Sherry: No matter what you look like, or what you believe in, that doesn't make you superior or inferior to anyone. *不管你長怎麼樣或你信仰什麼，那都不表示你比任何人優秀或差勁.*

James: Everyone is allowed to have their own thoughts and beliefs and their own ways of living.*每個人都可以有他自己的想法，他自己的信仰和他自己的生活方式.*

Becky: No one is supposed to be better or worse than anyone else. And even if you are better than someone in some ways, it doesn't mean that you need to look down at him or dislike him.*沒有一個人應該比其他人好或不好的，而且就算你在某方面比某些人好，那並不代表你就要看不起別人.*

Joyce: Everyone is unique in their own way.*每個人都有自己的獨特性.*

Peggy: The Nazis needed to learn how to respect people and accept the difference.*納粹軍人需要學習如何去尊重人和接受不同性.*

I then asked the children to name races of people they knew. They answered with names for a wide range of different races, for example: Taiwanese, Japanese, American, African, Jewish and British. I asked them: "Are these people any different from you? Or are they superior or better than you? *這些人跟你們有什麼不同嗎?或者他們有比你們優秀或好嗎？"*

Jason: We look different. But we're all human beings. The blood running in

their body is still red. No different to mine. *我們看起來很不同, 不過我們都是人. 他們身體裡流的血還是紅色, 跟我沒什麼不同.*

Becky: We may be different in many ways but we're the same in many ways too. We cry and we laugh. *我們可能在很多方面都很不一樣, 不過我們也有很多方面很像. 我們會哭也會笑.*

Peggy: I think that we need to learn to see people's strengths rather than their weaknesses.*我想我們需要學習欣賞別人的優點而不是缺點.*

Jason and **Becky** were able to appreciate physical differences; however, they also valued universal human emotions. **Peggy**'s response was consistent with her previous response: "The Nazis needed to learn how to respect people and accept the difference.*納粹軍人需要學習如何去尊重人和接受不同性.*" She emphasised an appreciation of people's strength and diversity.

In their research, Cox and Many examined children's responses to realistic literature and film and they analysed and generalised their data to find different levels of personal understanding, looking at how children connected and applied the text to their life experience. They claim that the highest level of response reaches beyond the text and focuses on the readers' understanding about life and their generalised beliefs. "The personal meaning was more global and applicable to the world in general rather than demonstrating understanding only in terms of specific situations found in the text" (1992:59). The children's common response here emphasised respect and tolerance of difference. **Peggy** was coming to an understanding of what 'Nazi' means. **Peggy** and **Becky**'s responses linked back to the stories and discussions we had shared and remind me that good literature gives us a way of generalising experience, of living our lives. Torbe explains the close relationship between readers, texts and relevance when he comments on literature that touches us deeply: "Such a piece of literature shows us a possible way for human beings to be, even if it does not lie within our direct experience; and if it is possible for human beings in general, then it is possible for us, too" (Undated, c. 1986: 2). I could not say that the children fully understood the traumatic events of the Holocaust and perhaps, they were a bit scared of the horrific nature of the

event, but I believe that they had began to adjust and shape their understanding of humanity and diversity.

After reading *Yuzi's Dream*, the children were asked what they had learnt from this significant experience of loss. **Robert**'s response was half-formed but he pointed out the importance of grasping the opportunity to do things.

Robert: I learnt that I need to hold on to things when I have the chance. *我學到我必需在我還有機會的時候好好把握.*

Tim, **Stanley**, **James**, **Becky** and **Sherry**'s responses were more specific, and took account of the passing of time.

Tim: Do or say something you want to when you still have the chance.*在你還有機會的時候做或說你想說的事.*

Stanley: I learnt to treasure every moment you have with others.*我學到要珍惜每個跟別人相處的時刻.*

James: I learnt that we need to cherish lives. *我學到我們要珍惜生命.*

Becky: I learnt to treasure what I have, especially every moment I'm with people. *我學到我要珍惜我所擁有的, 特別是我跟身邊的人在一起的每個時刻.*

Tom: Good friends are always in your mind no matter when.*不管何時, 好朋友永遠都在你的心裡.*

Sherry: We need to treasure every opportunity for getting along with others, because you never know when they may leave you. *我們要珍惜每個跟別人相處的機會, 因為你不會知道什麼時候他們會離開你.*

These children were very moved by Yuzi's death. Berman (1994:226) concludes that "effective teaching is… affective teaching… Classroom discussions of literature awaken intense emotions within teachers and students alike—love, hate, passion, jealousy, fear." These emotions cannot be ignored. I gave the children time to reflect on the emotions aroused by Yuzi's loss and

on their thoughts about life and the passing of time, as they speculated on Yuzi's life and death, and on their own lives, and how they should live them. **Peggy** took up **Sherry**'s argument about the passing of time and reflected it back to the story to conclude the discussion: "So we shouldn't waste our time squabbling or fighting.*所以我們不應該浪費時間在跟別人鬥嘴或爭吵上.*" Her response seemed to help her to reflect on her everyday behaviour and friendships as well as on Yuzi's experience in the story. These children are exploring and discovering together. In the words of Rosen and Rosen (1973:43): "They have become 'we'." Their shared values became part of their social world. At the end of the school year, these children will go to different classes and perhaps Yuzi's loss reflected their feelings of future separation and reminded them to cherish their time together in the class.

Yuzi's death made the children sad, and I wanted them to think positively or at least to think of more optimistic endings or ideas to take the story on. Therefore, I asked the children what would happen if Taichi had said sorry to Yuzi. **Michelle** thought: "Yuzi would be happy and Taichi would feel much better after her death.*阿讓會很快樂，而且阿太會在阿讓離開後覺得好多了.*" **Sherry** nodded: "Yuzi would be happier in heaven too.*阿讓在天堂也會快樂點.*" **Alex** agreed: "If Taichi had apologised to Yuzi, they would have enjoyed being friends more.*如果阿太跟阿讓道歉，他們就會有多一點的時間享受他們的友誼.*" These children went back over the events of the story and gave them a new meaning, making comments about possible worlds that they hope might exist (Cox and Many, 1992:59). It is clear that it matters a great deal to these children how human beings live their lives and deal with one another. Ms. W once told me that from her observation after I conducted the project, the children did not fight or tease each other as frequently as they had before and furthermore, they seemed to solve their quarrels and problems by themselves instead of complaining to her all the time. I would argue that they began to internalise what they learned from the stories and events and that this learning experience inspired them to think deeply and aesthetically in order to reshape their world (Galda, 1993:303).

4.2.7 Developing A Value System

From the discussions about the Holocaust I had with the children, it seems to me that they were concentrating on understanding the difficult concepts of equality and otherness. I had decided to introduce the Holocaust with the children through storybooks, even though some writers have reservations about fictionalised accounts of the war. For example, Adorno and Wilson cited in Walter and March (1993:39) argue that there is a view

> …that imaginative works about the Holocaust, as opposed to factual texts such as autobiographies or histories, will somehow subvert the truth of what actually happened. There is the worry [expressed by Holocaust literature writers] that readers will think the Holocaust is just a product of the writer's imagination.

My argument throughout has been that storybooks can be used to support and enhance factual historical content, and that the process of using talk to harness ideas, increases children's understanding of the events in the books. I decided to show the class some pictures to help the children gain a visual image of the Holocaust. I used Figure 4.20 to show the children how the Nazis checked people's eye and hair colour and the length of their noses to confirm their racial types. **Kathy** shouted: "This isn't fair. You can't judge people by the colour of their eyes or hair. *這很不公平, 你不能用一個人眼睛或頭髮的顏色來評斷一個人*." **Frank** questioned: "How could you not like someone merely because of their eye colour or hair colour. *你怎麼會只因為一個人的眼睛或頭髮的顏色來決定喜不喜歡他(們)呢?*" This was a new piece of knowledge for **Kathy** and **Frank** and their responses showed that they were adding to their world picture, giving meaning to prejudice, and making a moral judgement. Interestingly, Sherry and Becky's responses (see 4.2.6, p232) to the 'lesson' they learnt from stories of *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm* and *The Children We Remember* were similar to Frank and Kathy's responses here that they were all concerned about fairness and began to think about the concepts of respect and accept difference. I introduced the term 'prejudice' to the class and explained that it meant making a negative judgement or observation about someone without trying to get to know them.

Nevertheless, **Michelle** said frankly: "I do that sometimes.我有時會這樣." I was struck by her honesty and lack of self-consciousness. I smiled at her and said, "Yes, we sometimes do that and it's not a nice thing to do. However, the most important thing is that we don't hate people or hurt people. *是的, 我們有時會這樣做, 但這不是很好的事情. 不過最重要的是我們不去恨或傷害別人*." The children asked me what Hitler did to the Jewish people. I explained that the Jewish people were made to obey the Nazis and were forced to move to the ghettos, then to the labour camps or concentration camps.

Figure 4.20: Photograph shows how the Nazis checked victims

As the children used their own understanding and interpretation to make sense of what happened in *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm*, I noticed that they tried not to interpret the story from the point of view of one character but to think over the relationship between the little girl and her grandfather. So their responses were from both the little girl's and her grandfather's perspective. When we read the following page in the story (Figure 4.21), the children were touched by what the granddaughter told her grandfather. **James** shouted: "Grandfather did nothing wrong, he shouldn't be ashamed.爺爺又沒

做錯事, 沒什麼好丟臉的." **Peggy** commented sadly: "Grandfather would be really touched to know what his granddaughter's thinking.知道他孫女的想法, 爺爺一定很感動." "The Nazis should be ashamed of what they did to innocent people.殺了這麼多無辜的人的納粹軍人才丟臉." said **Brian**, echoing the words of the grandfather.

Becky shared her idea which was slightly different from the previously mentioned ones: "I feel so upset to know that the Nazis killed so many people. It wasn't fair. Hitler had no right to decide whether people should die or live. 知道納粹軍人殺了這麼多人命, 我很難過沮喪.而且這是不公平的, 希特勒沒有權力決定人的生死." **Becky**'s response took a leap from the story as she examined her own feelings and intellectual preoccupations about the issue of the Holocaust and her understanding of morality. I was surprised by **Becky**'s powerful response but perhaps I should not have been. It showed that **Becky** was beginning to think about the rightness of the whole issue from both our previous discussion and from what happened in the story in order to make a judgement and to incorporate this judgement into her model of the world. By sharing her thoughts, she also helped the class to think beyond the storyline to consider the whole issue and perhaps the morality and inhumanity of the Nazis. The evidence presented above harks back to Rosenblatt's (1978) 'efferent' and 'aesthetic' stances in the reading process. **James** and **Brian**'s responses could be considered to be efferent because they focus on "the information provided in the text or ideas acquired through what is being referred to in the text" (Cox and Many, 1992:39). **James** and **Brian** responded to the story with a rather impersonal eye without their personal introspection, revealing that they remained grounded to the text. **Peggy** and **Becky**'s responses can be considered to be aesthetic. Their responses were "not simply the abstract concepts that the words point to, but also what those objects or referents stir up of personal feelings, ideas and attitudes" (Rosenblatt, 1982:269). **Becky**'s response called forth her own judgement as she went beyond the literal story. And I was not surprised to learn that Becky strongly enhanced her moral judgement about fairness and rightness when she expressed her feelings and ideas to her family back home from her parental

questionnaire. **Peggy**'s response was created from the grandfather's viewpoint; she put herself in the role of the grandfather in order to express herself aesthetically. Cunningham defines reading as a 'kind of moral mirror,' that "inducts you into personal and moral growth" (1998:12). What Cunningham states echoes my argument about the role of narrative presented in 2.3.1; that children's picture books of trauma can help develop children's moral awareness and social consciousness.

Jordan's views support this argument:

> Picture books develop children's thinking. They deal with important human issues. Their themes include those areas of life which concern adults as well as children: jealousy, anger, fear, friendship, family relationships and death. Because these aspects of life are complex, the situations in which they are presented are open to interpretation and therefore invite discussion. In this way the books encourage the exploration of moral issues, and help readers to understand differing points of view and come to terms with strong emotions (1996:49-50).

Figure 4.21: Illustration from *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm*, p22-23
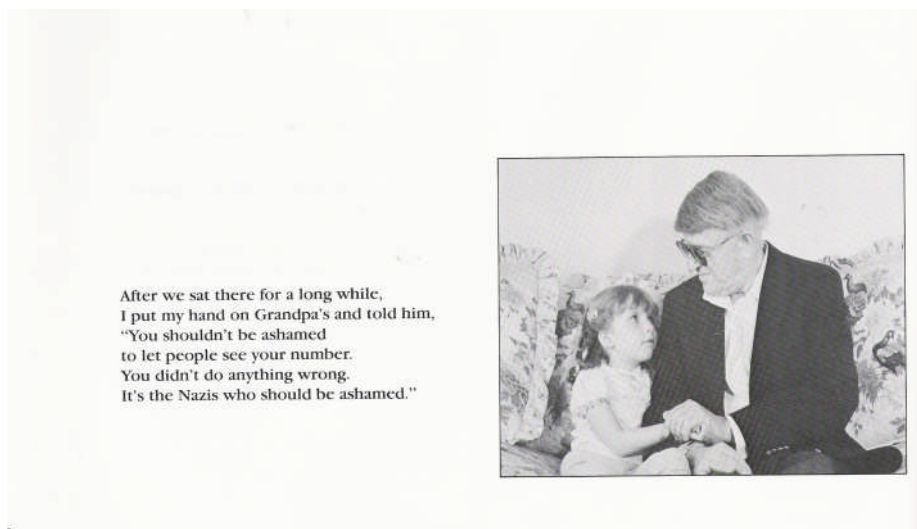
After reading Figure 4.22 in *Rose Blanche*, I asked the children what might have been in Rose Blanche's mind when she saw the victims in the

concentration camp. I was curious to understand the children's reaction and I hoped to help them to create a value system by encouraging them to say what they felt and believed about the events.

James: I'd feel so sad and sorry for them. But there's nothing I could do to help at the moment.我覺得很難過，而且我覺得很對不起他們. 不過在這個時候我什麼也幫不上忙.

Jason: I'd go home and find some food and clothes for them. 我會回家並找些食物和衣服來給他們.

Peggy: I'd visit them often with food and be their friend and encourage them to keep hoping. 我會常常帶食物來看他們, 並且跟他們做朋友. 鼓勵他們要繼續保有希望.

Jennifer: Do you think Rose Blanche would tell her parents about what she saw in the concentration camp? 你們覺得白蘭琪會跟她的爸爸媽媽說她在集中營看到的一切嗎?

**Ying**: Yes, she'd go home and ask her parents for help.會， 她會回家請爸爸媽媽幫忙.

Jack: Yes, she'd ask her parents to think of other ways to help the victims. 會, 她會請爸爸媽媽想其他辦法幫忙那些受難者.

Brian: No, that would be too dangerous. Because Rose Blanche's parents may tell the Nazis. 不會, 那樣太危險了. 因為白蘭琪的爸爸媽媽可能會跟納粹軍人說.

Claire: No, her parents might not believe her. 不會, 她爸爸媽媽可能不會相信她.

Peggy: No, because her parents might forbid her from visiting the victims.不會， 因為她的爸爸媽媽可能會禁止她去看這些受難者.

Figure 4.22: Illustration from *Rose Blanche*, p14-15
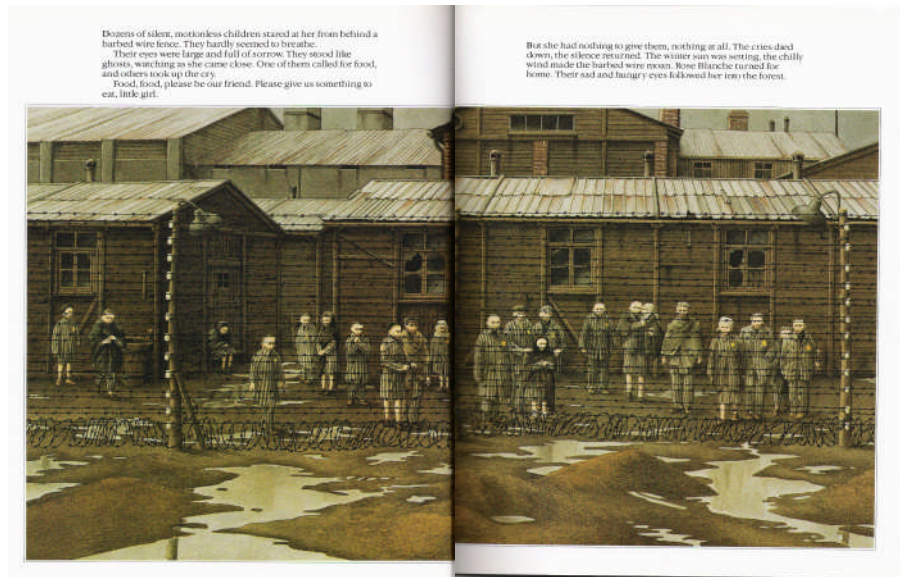
The children thought critically from the point of view of Rose Blanche while still remaining true to their own voice (ex: **James**, **Jason** and **Peggy**). The children's responses shown above might not add anything new to the analysis; however, their responses have helped me learn that they began to consider the whole event seriously and to think about the possible consequences of whether Rose Blanche would tell her parents about what she saw in the concentration camp. They brought their insights to bear on new viewpoints within the group and this inspired them to think deeply and to work on the meanings hidden in the texts (Gilles, Dickinson, McBride and Vandover, 1994:500-502). The children's responses are also evidence of a collective social response as they constructed a scenario by listening to each other's ideas. As Bishop (2000:76) reminds us that

> Literature can help us discover that across time and place and cultures people share certain fundamental human traits and desires and problems. At the same time, literature affirms the great diversity that co-exists with shared human commonalities. … Literature emanating from particular socio-cultural contexts offers multiple perspectives on life and society and history, portraying myriad ways in which people of different times and places and cultures have dealt with the problems of human existence.

The shared experience and children's literature of trauma in this research worked together to help the children to explore ways of understanding the complexity of human behaviour and decision-making. The children wondered where Rose Blanche was and what had happened to her. When they discovered that Rose Blanche's mother never saw her again, they remembered the gun shot when Rose Blanche stood in front of the concentration camp (Figure 4.23). They also developed their understanding and reflection about Rose Blanche's sacrifice.

James shouted: "Is she dead? *她死了嗎？*"

David: Why? She was so brave. *為什麼？她這麼勇敢耶！*

Alex: Maybe the Nazi soldiers thought she was Jewish.*也許納粹軍人以為她是猶太人.*

Mary: The soldiers thought she was an enemy.*軍人們以為她是敵人.*

Ying: She was so innocent and kind. They shouldn't have been mean to her. *她是這麼天真和善良, 他們不應該對她這麼壞.*

Stanley: She was so brave and kind to those victims. *她這麼勇敢並且對那些受難者這麼好.*

Jason: I guess that she was shot by mistake.*我猜她是被誤射的.*

James and **David** generated these questions because they genuinely wanted to know what had happened. **Mary**, **Ying**, **Stanley** and **Jason** contemplated the questions and in doing so, taught each other and learnt from each other in an atmosphere of understanding. I asked:

Jennifer: If you were Rose Blanche, would you have helped the victims in the camp even though you might have risked your own life? *如果你是白蘭琪, 即使要犧牲自己的生命, 你還會幫助那些在集中營的受難者嗎？*

Peggy: Yes, because I might have saved some lives even though I'd die.*我會, 因為就算我死了, 我也許還救了幾個人.*

Sue: Maybe not, because it's really dangerous. *可能不會,因為這真的很危險.*

Jack: Yes, I'd want to help people first even though I might die eventually

anyway. *會, 就算我最後會死, 我都想先幫助人.*

There is no right or wrong answer to any of these questions. These children were making discoveries about their own selves through their responses, evidence surely of why teachers should always place emphasis on children's talk and the contribution it makes to each individual child's emotional and intellectual growth. Moreover, as a teacher, I was very much moved by knowing that some of the children would sacrifice their lives to help people in need or suffering. In addition, the children had developed their value system based on what they understood about the stories and the events and reflected upon the nature of good and evil. The books have invited the children to step into other worlds and share the hopes, dreams, disappointments, loves, upsets and the experience of characters.

Figure 4.23: Illustration from *Rose Blanche*, p22-23
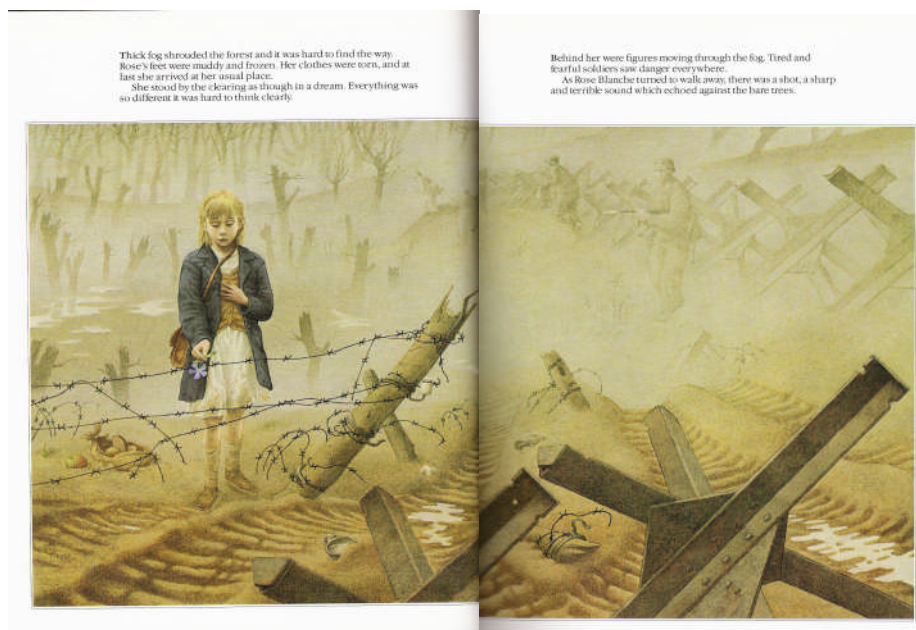
The children were asked what they would do if they saw injured dogs, cats or rabbits on the street when we wondered about Erika's fate after she was thrown out of the train in *Erika's Story*. Similarly, their responses expressed their concern about lives and to find out solutions to help.

Michelle: I'd take them to the vet first then take them home.*我會先帶牠們去看獸醫再回家.*

Jay: I'd like to take them home and take good care of them if my parents said yes.*我會帶牠們回家, 如果我爸爸媽媽說好, 我就會好好照顧牠們.*

Tim: I'd take them to the vet first then to the police station because their owners would be worried. *我會先帶牠們去看獸醫, 然後去警察局. 因為牠們的主人一定很擔心.*

The children's responses show them thinking with compassion and also operating with competence and ability as they discuss family abandonment, and share and build their thoughts together as they create the circumstances for deeper understanding and insights. The children expressed their responses in a way that reflected and illuminated their family values and discipline, their social and cognitive development and their past experience (Chafel, Flint, Hammel and Pomeroy, 2007:75). They were all willing to help the injured animals and there is no doubt that they would have helped Erika. The children are developing a value system based on kindness and taking responsibility. Through the children's responses above, it also shows that if we offer children an opportunity to help others, they can learn to "maintain a sense of control and realise that one person can make a difference" (Sesame Workshop).

Other than kindness and compassion, the children have also developed a positive attitude in responding to the story of *The Wings of Hope*. I have discussed this point in relation to the Holocaust issue before; it is worth presenting again here in relation to the earthquake issue because the children are perhaps reshaping their value systems and understanding how their actions can make a difference. It seemed to me that the children tried to see both man-made and natural disasters positively even though they understand the difference between the two kinds of disasters. The traumatic and sensitive issues in picture books have provided the children with a landscape of hope and struggle through which they attempt to read not only the word but the world (Freire, 1970:72). They were worried about what might have happened to Tian-Yu and his father when they saw that his mother and sister had been

found and taken to hospital. **Ying** said, "No worries, the helpers will keep looking for Tian-Yu and his father. They wouldn't give up.*不用擔心，那些幫忙的人會繼續尋找天羽和他爸爸．他們不會放棄的．*" **Jane** nodded and said: "Yes, I think Tian-Yu and his father will be safe.*是啊！我想天羽和他爸爸都會安全的．*" These responses demonstrate the children's innate sense of optimism as they imagined the future with love and hope, and interpreted the experience through their own personal frame of reference, thus making "it possible for them to become active creators of their own values" (Kohl, 1994:44).

The children were moved by the help and support of the people who brought food, drinks, sleeping bags, tents and medication. **Kathy** showed her appreciation of the value of kindness and said: "Everyone's so generous and kind.*大家都很慷慨而且善良．*" Commenting on the picture (Figure 4.24), **Jason** said: "Even though it's raining outside, people's hearts are warm because they're helping each other.*即使外面下著雨，因為大家的互相幫忙所以大家的心是溫暖的．*" **James** also commented: "Because people get together, the temperature gets hotter.*因為大家聚在一起，所以溫度升高了．*" The 'temperature' here in James' response referred to both the weather— it was getting warmer— and to the symbolic warmth that the supporters brought. **Ying** made a similar comment: "Because people have brought food and drinks to keep the victims warm.*因為有人帶食物和飲料來讓受難者保暖．*" **Becky** saw the umbrellas as a metaphor of protection from fear that supported and encouraged the people: "The umbrellas seem to support the victims, to tell them not to be afraid.*那些傘好像是來支持受難者，告訴他們不要害怕．*" **Sherry** developed her response with what she had learnt from her peers and added her own interpretation: "Those people don't just bring food, and drinks or medication; they also bring their love and kindness to warm the victims' hearts.*那些人帶來的不只是食物，飲料或藥品，他們也帶來了溫暖受難者的心的愛和仁慈．*" The children's responses showed that they have not literally translated or interpreted the illustrations, but rather

"they bring new depths of interpretation which enhance and deepen [their] understanding" (Grigg, 2003:134).

Figure 4.24: Illustration from *The Wings of Hope* (*希望的翅膀*), p16

The notion of helping people is also reflected in the children's responses to *Thank You, Kitty*. I showed the class some photos of the 921 earthquake in Taiwan and asked questions to help them explore the experience of giving help and support. **James**, **Ying** and **Becky** shared their responses with the class in a thoughtful and reflective way.

Jennifer: Why did some people donate food, money and clothes to the people in need? *為什麼這些人要捐食物, 錢和衣服給需要幫忙的人?*

Ray: Because the earthquake damaged their houses and they had nothing to eat or wear.*因為地震毀了他們的房子, 而且他們沒有東西吃或衣服穿.*

Jennifer: Why would some people help the people in need? They didn't even know who they were.*可是為什麼這些人要幫他們啊? 他們又不認識.*

James: Because they have love in their hearts and they're kind. *因為他們心中有愛, 而且他們很善良.*

Ying: They don't want to see people suffer.*他們不想看到大家受苦.*

Becky: Because helping people is the way to be happy.*因為助人為快樂之本.*

This discussion enabled the children to think critically and to develop a value system based on genuine empathy and morality. In this project, the children were not only invited and encouraged to explore issues in the stories, but also to think critically and imaginatively about who they are, what they can do and what they believe is important. In this research, through the exploration of children's literature of trauma, I wanted to help the children to try to see the world empathically and reflectively and to inspire them to make the world a better place for all citizens. From the children's responses to the selected picture books in this research, I am confident that the reading experience and process have helped the children to reflect on the universality of human experience (much like mirrors: as they share their experience of the characters in the stories) while at the same time providing them with vicarious experiences (much like windows: as they immerse themselves in stories that describe unfamiliar experiences and take glimpses into someone else's reality).

In this research, the children have explored the children's literature of trauma containing certain sensitive issues that perhaps were beyond their imagination. However, the selected picture books "[give] life to previously unimagined possibilities" and have invited the children to express their introspection and viewpoints about the stories and events orally in the aspects I have analysed above (Davies, 2000:180). The children's responses have demonstrated not only their understanding and interpretation of the stories and events but also their positive attitude and faith in facing difficulties in life. I shall argue that it would be naïve to say that literature can do the work of changing the world, but it holds the potential to bring about changes in children's thinking. Even though the consequences of that kind of change may not be clearly measurable, it does offer some measure of hope.

4.3 Responding through Drawing

Nowadays different forms of text such as words, images, gesture, voice and movement are available for children and these texts have changed and developed their experience of reading, thinking and constructing meaning (Bearne, 2003:128). In this research, picture books were used not only to teach difficult issues but also to promote the children's emotional and intellectual growth through different forms of response to words and pictures. In this section, I will look at how the children in this research responded to *The Children We Remember* and *Erika's Story* through drawing. *The Children We Remember* was chosen because the children had already been shown some images relevant to the Holocaust and I wanted to know which images affected them the most. *Erika's Story* was selected because it was the last of the five stories about the Holocaust and I wanted to learn what the children had learnt from the issue. Through their drawings, we can see how they shifted their "thinking aloud" (Sedgwick and Sedgwick, 1993:29) from "*telling the world* to *showing the world*" (Kress, 2003:140, his emphasis) and I began to understand more about their cognitive processes and reflection on the Holocaust as they created visual texts.

After we had shared and discussed *The Children We Remember*, the children were asked to draw the image of the Holocaust that was the most meaningful for them. Most of the children drew pictures of the concentration camp or the railway when the train arrives at the concentration camp. Some of the children drew pictures of the gas chamber in the concentration camp. A few drew a picture of the 'underground passage to death' after I had shown them the photograph I took at the Terein concentration camp in the Czech Republic. The following six images (from Figure 4.25 to Figure 4.30), show a selection of the children's pictures to illustrate their understanding of the historical events. The colours they used to illustrate their response show not only their understanding of how colour is used in the published books but also reflect important moral and humanistic reasons which incorporate their own beliefs and metaphors (Pridmore and Bendelow, 1995:473). Figure 4.25 shows

Stanley's underground passage to death and Figure 4.26 represents **Peggy**'s idea of what life was like for the victims in concentration camps. In addition, Peggy's drawing shows what she remembered from the stories and what I had told the class. It covers the underground passage to death I saw in the concentration camp in Czech Republic, Ann(e) Frank's suitcase from Holland, the gas chamber and the railways in the concentration camp.
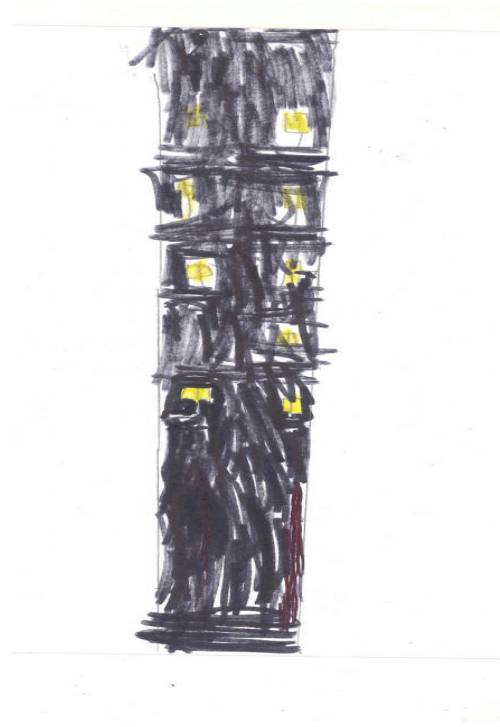
Figure 4.25: Stanley's drawing
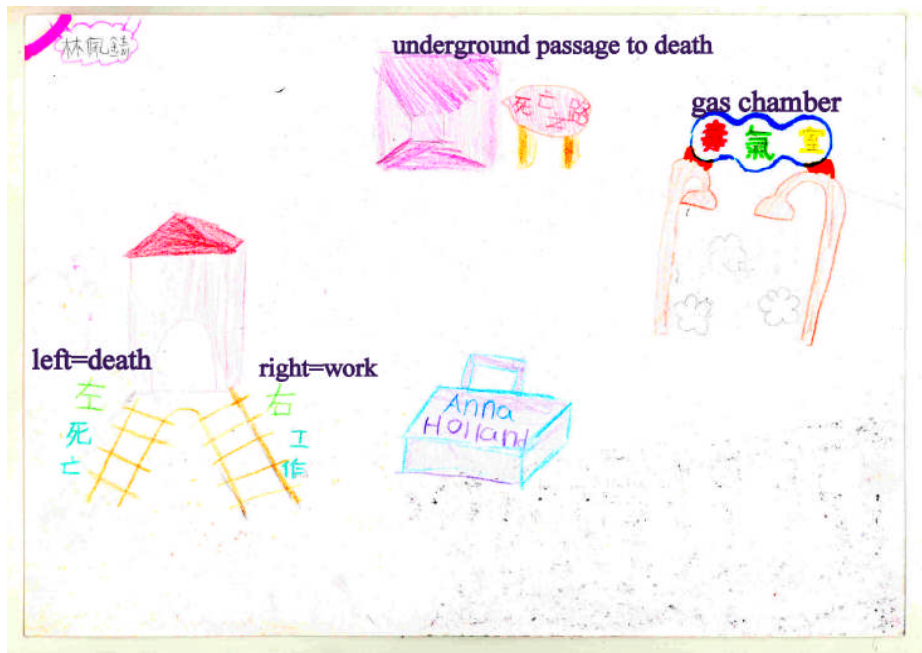
Figure 4.26: Peggy's drawing

Figure 4.27 shows **Brian'**s railway and the selection of the victims into two groups: those who would live on the right (represented by two red hearts and indicated with the written word: live 活) and with a written message: "I hope you are all healthy 希望你們健健康康" and those who would be put to death on the left (indicated with the written word: die 死). **Brian** said he drew the hearts because they represent love, and explained: "I wished that the victims could rest in peace. 我希望受難者們可以安息了." He understands the use of such pictorial metaphors.

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Figure 4.27: Brian's drawing
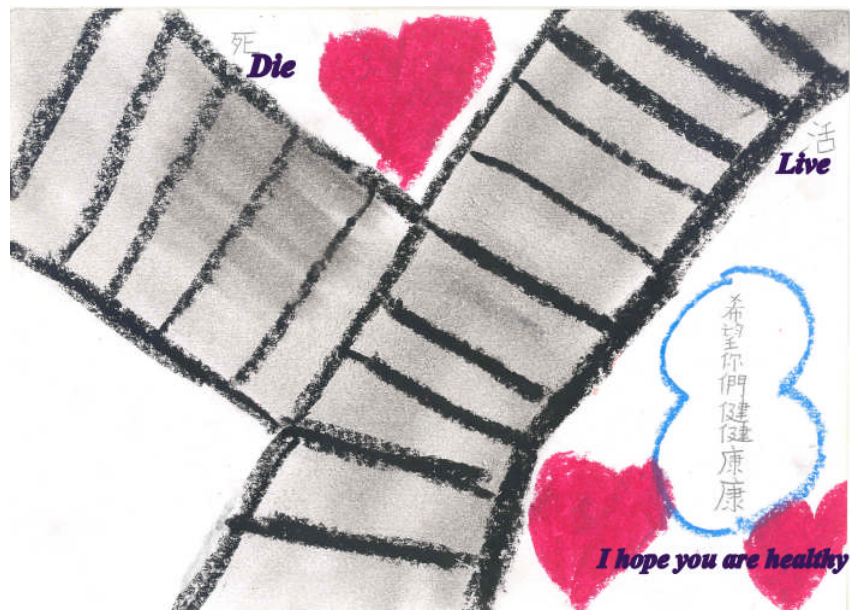
In Figure 4.28, **David**'s picture depicts a grey railway with two tracks and indicates a written message: "It's not fair (太不公平了)" on the left track which represents the victims who were put to death on the left. Specifically, **David**'s drawing presents his strong moral judgement over the events and he has used only grey and black to represent his image of destruction and sadness. Both grey and black can be regarded as dark colours that imply "seriousness and authenticity" which matched well with **David**'s drawing (Nodelman, 1992:137). In addition, **David**'s emotional connotation of fairness was echoed strongly in his use of dark colours to stand for immorality. When the children were asked to draw their most memorable image about the Holocaust, it is significant that both books about the topic of war I had shared with the class were in black-and-white, and this might also have influenced the children's choice of sombre colours. Styles (1996:28) writes about "[the] possible link between the complexity of children's drawing and their interest in the pictures in picture books, the productive and receptive modes of visual literacy." I shall argue that it is crucial to interpret the children's complex and creative thinking through their drawing because there must be a reason beyond their choices, for example, the use of colour and how they want to present their thoughts.

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Figure 4.28: David's drawing

Interestingly, unlike David and Brian's drawings in black-and-white or gray, **Kathy** (Figure 4.29) and **Claire**'s (Figure 4.30) concentration camps are in full colour. **Kathy** explained: "With colours, I hope the concentration camp isn't sad any more. *我希望集中營不再難過，所以我畫上不同的顏色.*" Doonan (1993:31) suggests that bright colours abound with fresh and alive feelings. **Claire** explained: "I drew it in colour because it's not as sad as it was then. But, the railway on the left is still sad for taking away too many lives, so I drew it in grey. *我畫彩色是因為集中營不再像以前那麼令人難過了，不過左邊的鐵路因為帶走太多人命所以我還是畫灰色.*" **Kathy** also drew the concentration camp in colour, but her railway was grey, which was coincident with **Claire**'s drawing. Both **Claire** and **Kathy** felt sorrow for the lives lost and **Claire** specifically said that it was too hard to draw the railway line in colour; therefore, they both drew the railway lines in grey and brown colours. Nevertheless, in their representational world, the concentration camp nowadays is colourful and less painful. Gombrich comments that "What we see is not simply given, but is the product of past experiences and future expectations (1982:28-9)." There are some interesting points I discovered from both Kathy and Claire's drawings about their choice of colour and objects to include. For example, **Claire** was the only one who drew a train in

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the middle of her concentration camp and she drew a big shiny sun on the right side of the concentration camp that gave me an impression of hope and perhaps represented 'life' for victims on the right as it echoes her pink railway line that may represent the innocent victims. Kathy's drew blue sky with white clouds, a few colourful doors on the main gate of the concentration camp with green grass that created a harmonious and peaceful atmosphere where the horror of the war was diminished. Even though I might not know what exactly the children wanted to express through their drawings, I discovered that the children's creative choices and the rich meaning in their drawings showed how they saw the world in the past and also the world that they imagined or longed for in the future, expressed in the light of colour.

Figure 4.29: Kathy's drawing

Just as every child responds to the same text and image differently, he/she also responds differently to different forms (in this case, spoken, written, drawing and imaginative role play) based on their preference, literacy ability and learning background. From my observations I noticed **Wei** was a quiet and passive respondent in the class and his literacy was worryingly below the average, from Ms. W's assessment. However, I was surprised by Wei's creative response to the Holocaust issues and stories, and that he made an 'underground passage to death' with a 3-D paper model instead of drawing one (unfortunately, I was not able to take a photo of it). I shall argue that Wei might not be able to articulate his thoughts but he certainly expressed his reflection through art. In addition, Wei's case helped me understand the importance of creating and offering children different opportunities to express their feelings and ideas.

After reading *Erika's story*, the children were asked to write and draw their reflections on the five stories we had shared on the topic of war. In Figure 4.31, **David** and **Kathy**'s writing showed they want to live in a peaceful world

where there is no killing and no war. Interestingly, they had both drawn hearts. Compared with David's drawing in grey (see Figure 4.28) in *The Children We Remember*, it seems that his emotional reaction is calmer and he is looking forward to a hopeful and happier world through the messages and the use of bright colours in his drawing in Figure 4.31. David's drawing responses demonstrate his moral development, mature thinking and emotional growth through the learning process of the Holocaust. **Becky**'s drawing also had a big heart with the message: "peaceful heart. 和平之心" in the middle that was not mentioned at all in her writing. She had even drawn a Jewish girl with a yellow star and a smile on her face. **Becky** writes: "She's safe and happy now because there are no more Nazis around 她現在很安全也很快樂，因為納粹軍人都不在了." Four children drew hearts in their pictures and they used different colours to symbolise the message of love, hope and happiness. All the children here had used their writing to convey their attitudes to what had happened in the past. Their writing informed us about what they felt, and they did their utmost to persuade their readers (myself, and the rest of the class) to be fair to others, as they formed their own philosophy of life. None of this writing would have been possible without the use of a great deal of open-ended talk to help them handle the experience of the stories and relate this to their own everyday lives.

In Figure 4.32, **Peggy** and **Brian**'s writing showed their moral judgement about what the Nazis had done to the victims. An interesting point is that they both used bright colours to illustrate their pictures, even though they explored difficult ideas and expressed their angry feelings. Their pictures present an atmosphere of harmony with musical notes, balloons, nice weather and hearts. Brian's black-and-white concentration camp (see Figure 4.27) made an interesting contrast to his drawing in full colour in Figure 4.32. It seems to me that Brian might still not have fully overcome his emotions towards the victims as he cared about them so much, but his drawing with bright colours somehow represents a more peaceful world that is perhaps hidden behind his words. However, through Brian's drawing responses, I can tell that his empathy has helped him to develop from being a spectator to being a

participator because he actually wants to take care of the victims. Both Brian's drawings allow me to witness his thinking in action and his affective development.

Through these children's pictures, they expressed their feelings, thoughts and memories in ways that words could not (Sipe, 1998a:43). The children's illustrations demonstrate how they used art work to make sense of the stories and the world around them. These drawings opened up many avenues for imagination and interpretation to explore ideas that were not expressed in words. The representation of the pictorial metaphors of hearts in the drawings is perhaps a way of imagining how the world can be, and that it can even be beautiful and full of significance.

By looking at the children's drawings in responding to *The Children We Remember* and *Erika's Story*, I have found that children can see the most incredible things and have the most remarkable understanding of the sensitive issues beyond what they might be assumed to know. In this project, I have seen an unprecedented interest in children's art, which has been a celebration of aesthetic qualities and an exploration of their cognitive development (Rabey, 2003:118). Moreover, I have learnt that children's drawing responses can inspire their potential in creativity and deepen their understanding of the issues implicit in the text if they are given opportunities.

Figure 4.31: Four children's drawing and writing 1

David (top left): I hope that the Nazis will not kill people any more and make the world peaceful. …I hope that everyone is happy and safe and sound.希望納粹軍人別再殺人了，讓世界和平. … 我希望大家都能快樂平安.

Sue (top right): Love the Earth (愛地球). Human beings are human beings! What's the difference? Everyone's thinking is different. …If everyone's thinking was exactly the same, there wouldn't be laughter on the earth. …人就是人啊！有什麼不同呢?人的想法本來就不一樣 … 如果大家的想法都一模一樣的話，整個地球會沒有歡笑 …

Kathy (bottom left): I think that everyone should get along with each other then there will be no world wars. …Everyone is the best.我覺得大家要好好的相處,這樣就不會有世界大戰. …大家都是最好的.

Becky (bottom right): Peaceful heart (和平之心). I think that everyone around the world is the same, no one is supposed to be superior or inferior to others. …People who bully others with their authority are very nasty.我覺得這個世界上的人都是一樣的. 沒有說我比你好，你比我差的. … 更不能因為自己權力大就欺負別人，這種人最讓人討厭.

Figure 4.32: Four children's drawing and writing 2

Joyce (top left): Everyone has some strengths and weaknesses. But no one says who is better or who is worse. If you have the ability to help others, then help people and don't bully them 每個人都有優點和缺點. 但沒有人說誰比較好或誰比較不好. 你有能力幫助別人就要很努力的幫助別人而不是欺負別人.

Peggy (top right): …The Jewish people are innocent because everyone has his life. What Hitler and the Nazis did to the Jews is really terrible. … 猶太人是無辜的, 因為每個人都是有生命的, 希特勒對猶太人做的真的太過份了.

Robert (bottom left): We are all human beings. …People around the world should be kind to each other and love each other. 人都是人, … 全世界的人都應該要相親相愛才對.

Brian (bottom right): I feel that the Nazis are very mean. …They are too cruel to the Jewish people. If I was one of the Nazis, I wouldn't bully them but take care of them.我覺得納粹很壞, 他們對猶太人太殘忍了. 如果是我的話, 我一定不會欺負他們, 我會照顧他們.

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4.4 Responding through Writing

Unlike talk and discussion which invite immediate response so that ideas can be shared and expanded or explained, writing is a solitary activity, but the nature of the process of writing may indeed generate a deeper response (Williams and Fisher, 2002:2). In this project, talk and discussion have helped the children generate ideas for their writing and they were invited to write reflectively after activities such as reading aloud, storytelling and imaginative role play. That is to say, the children have had an active experience and context for their writing in order to uncover questions and concerns that perhaps need more time to process or perhaps some hidden feelings that are not easily revealed (Safford and Barrs, 2005:78). Therefore, writing creates a deeper kind of thinking; as William Makepeace Thackeray once said: "There are a thousand thoughts lying within a man that he does not know till he takes up the pen to write" (cited in Cramer, 2001:3). Cox and Many (1992:43) argue that while "some researchers have found that an oral mode generates longer response, written responses seem to result in a more mature, linguistically complex, and interpretative response." I shall argue that children's written responses may go deeper if they are given time to think and construct their thought processes through talk on issues and situations in the stories, and interpret them in their own way. For example, in *Granpa*, **Ling**'s spoken response briefly expressed her sadness and worries to the little girl's grandfather: "The little girl must be so sad and worried about her grandpa. 這個小女孩一定很傷心而且很擔心她外公." However, her written response expressed her awareness of the loss in depth as she pondered on what might have been if death had not taken her grandmother so soon. Moreover, Ling's spoken response seems to reflect her understanding of the little girl's role while her written response tells her personal story and her memory of her grandparents. **Ling**'s written response, however, offers a chance for her to reflect upon concerns relating to her personal circumstances (Hall, 1994:19).

> **Ling** (see Figure 4.33): The story reminded me of my grandparents. I wish I could exercise with my grandma again. But grandma passed away, so it is impossible for me to exercise with her again. I hope that all my loved relatives won't leave me too soon. 這個故事讓我想起了我的爺爺奶奶. 我希望我能再跟奶奶一起運動, 不過奶奶去世了, 所以我再也不可能跟奶奶一起運動. 我希望所有我愛的親人不要這麼快離開我.

In this section, I would like to present and analyse the children's written responses to stories of *Granpa*, *The Lily Cupboard*, *Rose Blanche*, *The Wings of Hope* and *Thank You, Kitty*.

The children were asked to work on a book report as a follow-up activity after reading and discussing *Granpa*. The story reminded eight children of their pets and 26 children of their grandparents or other family members. The children wrote down something they would like to do with their beloved pets or family members, based on their reflection, and then illustrated their own writing. In the following selected writing samples (James, Joyce, Stanley and Jeffrey), all the children wrote aesthetically about something they would like to do with their beloved one again. Through their writing, the children shared their inner worlds and emotions and connected their understanding and personal experiences with *Granpa,* providing them with "insights into their lives" (Nodelman, 1992:64). **James'** writing moves effortlessly between the past, the present and the future and it includes James' childhood memory, his current situation and his dream for the future.

> **James** (see Figure 4.33): The story reminded me of my grandpa. I remember he took me for a walk across a suspension bridge when I was little. It was like an adventure to me. I so much want to talk to my grandpa

now but I can't because I am in class. I want to live with my grandpa and I want us to travel together. *這個故事讓我想起了我的外公. 我記得小時候外公帶我去走吊橋, 我現在很想跟外公說話, 卻不能, 因為我在上課. 我想跟外公一起住和去旅行.*

These children are capable of expressing and exploring their own world and experiences through their writing. **Joyce**'s writing expresses how much she misses her little auntie (the way Taiwanese refer to their youngest auntie) and what they had done together. The story of *Granpa* and the opportunity of writing has helped Joyce to get in touch with her inner life and the memory of her far-away little auntie.

Joyce: The story reminded me of my little auntie who studied in the United States because I haven't seen her for years. I want to visit museums with little auntie so much. Little auntie always read me stories and taught me how to swim and play the piano. I miss her so much. *這個故事讓我想起了在美國留學的小阿姨因為我好多年沒見過她了. 我很想跟小阿姨一起去博物館, 小阿姨總會唸故事書給我聽並教我游泳和彈鋼琴, 我很想念她.*

Stanley's writing, however, addresses the experience of losing his favourite dog. Without expressing too much about this experience, in Stanley's writing, he tries to remember the good times he had with his dog.

Stanley: The story reminded me of the dog at my grandma's place. He died because of his illness. I liked to play with him so much. We always ran around the house and garden for a long time. *這個故事讓我想起了在外婆家的狗. 牠也是生病死掉的. 我很喜歡跟牠玩. 我們總是在家裡跟庭院裡跑來跑去, 跑很久.*

Jeffrey's writing reveals his fear when he was little and how he learnt to cope, with his grandfather's company and encouragement.

Jeffrey: The story reminded me of my grandpa. I remember that once grandpa took me to the playground, he told me to be brave and to slide down the slide when I was afraid. I hope that I can play in the park with grandpa, my brother and my cousins. *這個故事讓我想起了我的外公, 我記得我小的時候, 有一次外公帶我去操場玩. 當我很害怕不敢從高高的溜滑梯溜下來時, 外公跟我說要勇敢, 放膽溜下去. 我希望能跟外公弟弟和表姐表哥到公園玩.*
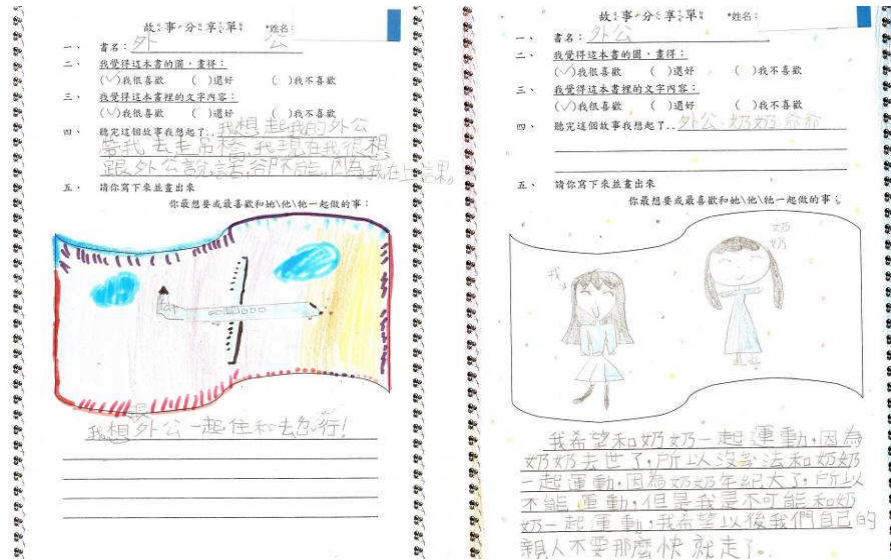
In a context where the children had been encouraged to talk expressively about *Granpa* and *I'll Always Love You*, it is perhaps not surprising that their writing also expresses their own thoughts and feelings and helps them to share deep meanings in their own lives. I felt more confident now about introducing the five books based on the Holocaust, even though the contents might prove challenging and even fearful.

The children were invited to write about their imaginative role play experience for *The Lily Cupboard*, as they walked into the world of the victims, the Nazis and the helpers.

In the following writing samples, the children shared their thoughts about the imaginative role play experience in a written response, where they expressed their deep reflection on the moral perspective and their wish to build a worldwide concept of peacemaking. **Joyce** and **David**'s written responses reflected their reluctant experiences as Nazi soldiers. Joyce felt bad being unkind to her friends in her role as Nazi soldier and asked why she had to hurt

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so many innocent people. David was self-blaming as he examined the cruel role of the Nazi. Both Joyce and David are concerned about justice, difference, loss and kindness. Interestingly, **Sam**'s writing reflects more of a spectator role even though he participated as a helper in the imaginative role play. In his writing, he observed the terrified victims and how frightened he was in his role and that experience led him to think about creating a peaceful world. In addition, Joyce, David and Sam's writing demonstrates their empathetic responses through the roles they participated in through the imaginative role play, which created an opportunity for them to reconsider human behaviour and to seek harmony. A more detailed analysis of the imaginative role play and the children's responses will be discussed in 4.5.

Joyce (Nazi): I didn't want to be so firm with my friend, Michelle. But I played the role of a Nazi, so I needed to be firm. I feel that I am no different from a Jewish person and I don't understand why I have to kill them. …

我不想對我的朋友這麼兇, 可是當納粹軍人的我不能不這麼兇. 我覺得我和猶太人都一樣, 為什麼要殺他們⋯

David (Nazi): When we were role-playing, the first time I was a Nazi and I did not like myself at all because I had to hurt so many people. Being a Nazi made people feel like you are so cruel. …I learnt not to think you are better than others.

第一次角色扮演的時候我當納粹軍人, 我覺得我很討厭我自己, 因為我要殺了那麼多人. 當納粹軍人會讓人覺得你很殘忍. ⋯我學到不要自以為是.

Sam (helper): …After the Nazis came, those in the Jewish role played by my friends screamed loudly and I was terrified. I hope there will be no wars in the whole world forever.

…當納粹軍人來了之後，那些演猶太人的同學都嚇得大叫，十分可怕. 我希望世界各地永遠不要再發生戰爭.

In addition, both Kathy and Tom have used their writing to square up to difficult ideas, to wonder about them and to take a moral stand. Their writing emphasises morality and their set of beliefs about human nature. **Kathy** had some sharp questions about the killing of innocent victims.

Kathy: We are all the same, all human beings. Why do we have to kill those innocent people? Everyone has their own life. We all live on the earth, no matter that we are from the West or we are from the East, so we should get along with each other in peace. Then there will be no wars. Isn't that dreadful if you are Jewish, even though you didn't make any mistakes you were put [into the concentration camps]? So, we should show sympathy to each other, and be tolerant and loving to people around us.

我們一樣都是人，為什麼要殺了那一群無辜的人?人都是有生命的，大家在地球生存不管是東方人還是西方人，都應該要和睦共處，這樣才不會有戰爭. 如果你是那群猶太人，沒有犯錯，卻被關是不是很可憐呢? 所以我們要將心比心，用愛和寬容去愛我們周遭的人.

Kathy's world picture was enlarged as she discussed the issue of race (the

West and the East), and she had thought hard about how a similar experience would affect her as a Taiwanese people. She had also thought about the state of the world beyond Taiwan and gained insights into victims' traumatic suffering (Habib, 2008:47). Unlike Kathy's sharp questions, however, **Tom**'s writing worked hard to explain his ideas and feelings:

Tom: …I learnt not to think you are always right or better than other people. So I hope no one would be like Hitler and kill so many people. It also makes me learn that we must respect lives. …

…我學到了不要自以為自己總是對的或比別人好，所以我不希望有人跟希特勒一樣殺了那麼多的人，這也讓我學到我們一定要尊重生命. …

Tom's writing reflects his deep thought processes and his interpretation of what he has learnt from the experience. His writing is expressive and loosely-structured, as he places himself in the situations from the text in order to make sense of specific events, using a confident personal voice. Indeed, his personal involvement in the events of the story has enabled him to develop this objective view of humanity. In this spirit of intellectual and personal inquiry, full of shared understandings and interpretations, the children's written responses to *Rose Blanche* show that they began to think more deeply with their questions about universal humanity and to find out possible solutions to make a peaceful world.

The children were invited to write a letter to either the Nazi soldiers, Rose Blanche, the victims or the survivors after reading the story of *Rose Blanche*. I thought that writing a letter to a particular character would be a strong contact with the writers' inner voices and would help me as a teacher to understand their concerns and feelings better. It was noticeable that some of their written responses were expressed in ways that made links back to the Second World War even though the writers used the tone of the present tense.

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This written activity provided the readers and writers with an opportunity to engage with the story on their own using a familiar writing model that demonstrated their knowledge of empathy and reflection (Keenan, 1993:75). The following responses extended the story beyond the text to what could be possible. As in Cox and Many's (1992:59) research, these young writers commented on "possible worlds." Here is a selection of their letters:

To the Nazi soldiers,

You were so cruel. Those victims were innocent. Why did you have to kill them all? … There are always better solutions to problems. They can be solved in peaceful ways rather than by killing people. (**Robert**)

納粹軍人, 你們太殘忍了, 那些猶太人是無辜的, 為什麼你們要把他們通通殺掉？ …很多問題總是有更好的解決方法, 不一定要用殺人的方式, 可以用和平的方式解決.

To the Nazi soldiers,

I learnt something about how you killed the victims from the stories, and I am so frightened. … It is not right to kill people. Every life is unique and it should be respected. Just like your lives are unique and must also be respected. Love is the strongest power—use love to treat others well! (**Ying**)

納粹軍人, 我從故事裡知道關於你們殺害猶太人的事, 我很害怕. …殺人是不對的, 每一個生命都是獨一無二的, 都應該被尊重. 就像你們的生命也是獨特的, 也必須被尊重. 愛才是最大的力量, 用愛來對待別人吧！

This story has enlarged **Robert**'s perspective on the world. Robert writes a

letter to the Nazi soldiers and I suspect that he has had to adjust his world view to include notions of hatred and prejudice in his writing. Moreover, even though Robert still has questions about the Nazi soldiers' cruel behaviour, he begins to think that there must be more peaceful ways to solve problems or conflicts. **Ying** also writes a letter to the Nazi Soldiers but her writing is honest and forthright, and she reveals her fear while reading the stories. She explores ideas of morality and respect for others but she emphasises the power of love and she appeals to the Nazis to use love to "treat others well." Robert and Ying's written responses show their strong sense of their understanding about the necessity of convincing powerful people (the Nazi soldiers in this case) to change their minds in order to make a difference (Evans, 2007:247).

In the following three writing samples, Peggy, Georgia and Brian decide to write a letter to Rose Blanche and they all admire her a lot for her generosity and bravery to the victims. **Peggy**'s writing reflects the power of the illustration (see Figure 4.8) and her personal compliment and feelings for Rose Blanche's sacrifice and kindness. Making value judgements about Rose Blanche helps **Georgia** to make sense of the world as she sees it. She also expresses her personal feelings to Rose Blanche and shapes her value system of humankind as a society. **Brian** has set up Rose Blanche as his role model and his response shows Rose Blanche's past has affected him strongly. Brian makes an interesting point in his writing that he even wants to help the victims with Rose Blanche during the period of the Second World War. Brian values Rose Blanche's kindness and bravery and hopes to be someone like her in the future. It seems to me that Peggy, Georgia and Brian see the beauty of the world through Rose Blanche's sacrifice and begin to picture a better world with their own faith in the endurance of the human spirit.

Hello, Rose Blanche,

I am Peggy. You are really a very brave girl. You took food to help the Jewish people everyday. … because of you, the ground (where the concentration camp was) became very beautiful. You are a nice person and I admire you so much. … I believe that I can meet you in my dreams and we can be good friends. (**Peggy**)

白蘭琪妳好，我是 Peggy . 妳真是一個勇敢的女孩，妳每天都拿食物去幫助猶太人. 但是，因為妳，讓那片大地變得很美麗. 妳人真好，讓我很敬佩. … 我相信我可以在夢中遇見妳，然後變成好朋友.

Hello, Rose Blanche,

You are a very warm, considerate and kind girl. You did not hate the Jewish people but secretly sneaked food to them. It takes a lot of courage to visit the Jewish people in the concentration camp and you are so brave. … I admire people like Rose Blanche so much. Our society would develop rapidly if there were more people like you in our society. (**Georgia**)

白蘭琪妳好，妳是一個很溫馨體貼和善良的人女孩. 妳不討厭猶太人反而還偷偷拿食物給他們吃. 去集中營看猶太人需要很大的勇氣. 我覺得妳很勇敢. … 我很佩服像白蘭琪這種人，如果我們的社會上多一些像妳這樣的人，這個社會很快就進步很多.

Hello, Rose Blanche,

My name is Brian. Thank you for bringing so much food to the Jewish people. … But there are so many Jewish people, if you need help, I will

> help you. I feel that you are so brave. I will be like you, so brave in the future. I will remember you forever. I hope that I can take you as my role-model. (**Brian**)
>
> *白蘭琪妳好，我的名字叫 Brian. 謝謝你帶那麼多東西給猶太人吃. …可是猶太人很多，如果妳需要幫忙的話，我一定會去幫妳. 我覺得妳好勇敢喔！我將來一定會跟妳一樣當個勇敢的人，我一定會永遠懷念妳，希望將來可以效法妳.*

The children's written responses lead me to argue that they have developed their thinking from the experience of listening to the story and our subsequent discussions. They put their experience into words that are so vivid in order to confront the content of the story and to express themselves (Engel, 2005:148; Schilker, 1967:25). The children's writing also shows their moral awareness has been raised and their responses echo Mead's (cited in Florian, 1995:247) point that, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world." It seems that the children have understood this important idea through their written responses. In addition, the children's written responses to the Holocaust created positive, nurturing and uplifting emotions towards others and the world they live in. In this research, I learnt that reflective written responses allowed the children to discover the power of their voices. As a teacher, it is my mission to take every opportunity to encourage expression that can help children to create peace and respect within their hearts and minds.

The children were asked to write a book report as a follow-up activity after reading *The Wings of Hope*. In the book report, they were asked to draw their favourite picture from the story and to write down what they had learnt from the story, and it can be seen that the past, the present and the future are interwoven through their writing. For example, **Georgia**'s writing shows that "I learnt that many people are there to help me if I need it and I want to give them my help if they need it. If they can be happy, their family will be happy forever. We need to face future difficulties with courage. *…我學到有很多人*

在我身邊幫助我, 當人家需要幫助的時候我會去幫忙. 如果他們能幸福, 那麼他們一家人就會永遠快樂. 我們要勇敢面對未來的困難…" The children are writing to inform each other about what they have learnt and to explain their position. Their encounter with the story and their previous knowledge shows another way of understanding and interacting with the texts and the world they live in. In the following, I will present and analyse Joyce and Brian's book report in detail. Both **Joyce** and **Brian**'s writing demonstrates how they came to know more about themselves and the community around them. In their writings, they both strongly emphasise the idea of helping others, especially those in need. Moreover, they both begin to realise how much help they have had from the others around them and their willingness to help others in return. It seems to me that through their writing, Joyce and Brian have been encouraged to take social action in relation to the issue they are considering and perhaps they want to know that their actions will make a difference in the future (Vasquez, 2003:2).

Joyce (see Figure 4.34): I learnt there are a lot of people around who will help us when we are in need. …For example, when we are ill, doctors will help us and the firemen are there when there is a fire accident. So I want to help people more. 我學到我們身邊有很多人在幫忙我們. …像我們生病的時候, 醫生在幫忙我們; 失火的時候, 是消防人員在幫忙我們. 所以我要多多幫助別人.

Brian (see Figure 4.34): …I learnt that if anyone needs help, I must be there to offer my help. …I would help to save their lives, give them the medication and donate money. I'm sorry for the people who suffered in the 921 earthquake; I hope the victims are healthy, safe and happy. … 我學到如果有人需要幫忙, 我一定會去幫忙. … 我會幫忙救他們的生命, 幫他們擦藥, 給他們錢, 我覺得那些經歷過 921 大地震的人好可憐喔! 希望他們健健康康平平安安快快樂樂…

Figure 4.34: Examples of book report 2
**Joyce (Left) and Brian (Right)**

The children wrote about ideas and experiences that had meaning for them and shared their unique way of seeing the world with others (Graves, 1991:48). From their writing, it seems to me that they were aware of the hardships that earthquakes bring and voiced support and association for those who endure the hardships. Their empathetic responses, invite others to think about the impact earthquakes could have on their lives and to call for the action of helping people in need. **Brian**'s drawing echoed his writing in the light of helping people in need and he drew a big heart in the middle which is also another symbol of love. There is a mutually supportive relationship between **Brian**'s drawing and writing. Brian's written response shows how he is beginning to appreciate the nature of the events and to link his meaningful written messages with his exploration of the world and his own personal

development (Hall and Duffy, 1987:527). Interestingly, Ling's spoken and written responses to the story of *Granpa* presented previously also connected with each other as she raised her concerns about the grandfather in the story and made a link with her own grandparents (see p259-260). **Joyce**'s drawing reflects the crying mountains in Figure 4.28. She drew a lot of colourful hearts and rainbows to indicate hope and support. Her picture highlighted her point about helping people that she made in her writing. In addition, both children used bright colours to illustrate their pictures; this links back to my discussion in 4.2.7.

Other than through individual writing, shared writing was taken into account when I planned the follow-up activity for *Thank You, Kitty*. The idea of shared writing was inspired by the spiral shape of the illustration (Figure 4.35) and I thought that shared writing experience would offer an opportunity for the children to construct meaning from Kitty's relationship with Midori when they were trapped by the earthquake. The shared writing would also give the children an opportunity to explore the value of being part of a supportive learning community through writing (Laycock, 1999:5). This shared writing was carried out by the whole class with me, though I did not involve myself in the collaborative writing process. Smith (1981:86) claims that: "Especially when writing is being learned, there is often a great need for and advantage in people working together on a letter, a poem or a story. The ability to write alone comes with experience and is not always easy or necessary." Therefore, this shared writing was a valuable way to help the children to communicate their thinking since they were asked to create a spiral poem (just like the shape of Midori holding Kitty tightly in Figure 4.35). They had no previous experience of communal writing and so in order to help them I asked them to think about what Kitty brought to Midori when she was upset. The children first brainstormed their ideas in small groups, then each group shared three different ideas with the whole class. After I had written down all the ideas on the board, the children considered whether there were some other ideas to add on or to revise with the whole class. The children believed that Kitty's company helped Midori to get through her difficult time in the dark and that

Kitty's presence brought warmth, courage, friendship, love and a lot more to her. The children placed themselves in the role of Midori to think empathetically in order to complete the following spiral poem. The poem was created by the children themselves without any help from me or Ms. W. The children were encouraged to think deeply and given plenty of time to work on the spiral poem. In total the children used 25 different metaphors to symbolise the value of Kitty's presence for Midori.

Figure 4.35: Illustration from *Thank You, Kitty* (ありがとう ニャアニャア), p19

溫暖－勇氣－愛－鼓勵－信心－堅持－生命－意志－快樂－陪伴－友情－自信－不寂寞－安全感－不害怕－堅強－安慰－不放棄－一起面對－保護－自由－分享－感謝－微笑－希望
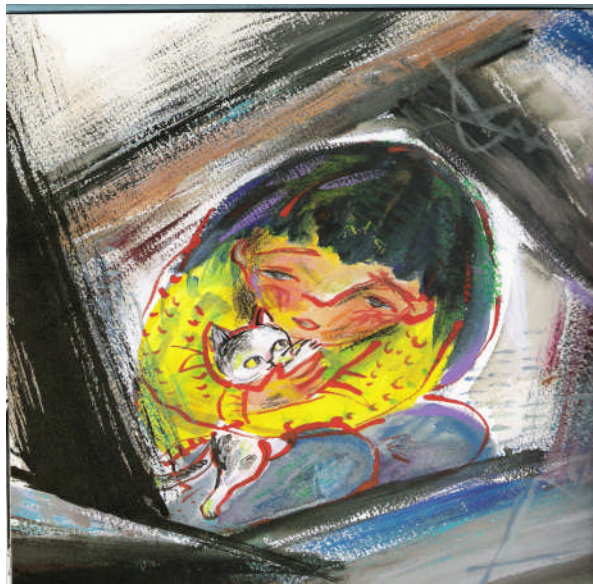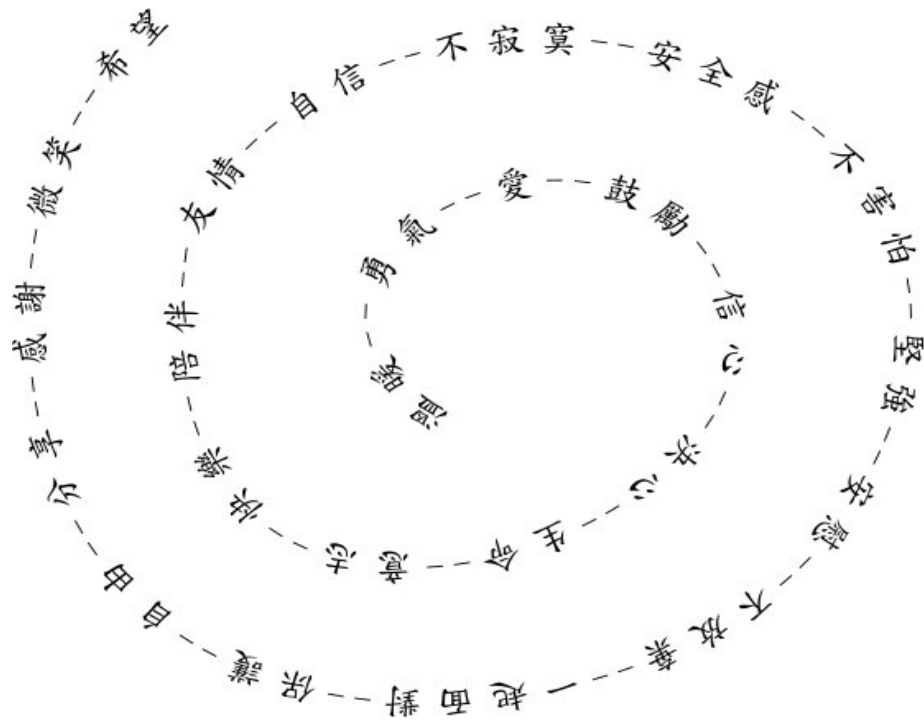
(Warmth—courage—love—encouragement—faith—determination—life—
will—happiness—company—friendship—self-confidence—not lonely—
sense of security—no fear—strength—comfort—don't give up—face
together—protection—freedom—share—appreciation—smile—hope)

Hickman and Helper (1982:281) argue that,

> Talk is the most obvious but not the only way, that children explore meaning in
> literature…. The community of readers furnishes an eager audience as well as a
> pool of resource ideas for response activities that go beyond talk—using
> story… as a basis of writing, or for interpretation with paints or collage.

This shared writing activity offered the children an opportunity to build a co-
operative model of the world. As they thought deeply about Midori's situation
in the story and made sense of the visual image, they were at the same time
building relationships with each other and creating positive associations with
each other, while exploring their own history and culture.

In this section, the children's written responses across the different books and issues have been presented and analysed. Their written responses have uncovered their concerns, worries and strong feelings about the traumatic issues that perhaps were not easy to voice out in spoken language in front of the whole class. Martin (1999:44) states that:

> Writing is a powerful way for us to make sense of our thoughts and feelings. Through writing, whether it be a response journal or writing based on the text, children can reflect consciously on what they have read, how it affected them and ways in which the text was written to provoke particular responses.

In this project, the children were invited to respond to the stories and traumatic issues reflectively and creatively through their writing to enable them to know more about how they see themselves, others and the world they live in. The children's written responses demonstrate not only their understanding of the stories and events but also how the stories and issues have shaped their value system and connected their personal feelings to the particular characters. In addition, their writing has offered me a chance to get to know all the children's (especially those who were normally quiet in discussion) thinking processes and how they understood these stories and events. The children's written responses, therefore, gave me another way to get an overall picture of what they have learnt from this project.

4.5 Responding through Imaginative Role Play

In the previous sections, I have presented and analysed the children's spoken, drawing and written responses to the selected picture books about the three traumatic and sensitive issues. It was understandable that the children might have experienced loss and separation but yet have no direct experience of wars and earthquakes. In this project, I designed imaginative role play based on the stories we shared with the children in order to help the children to have a better understanding of the issues and to be able to connect their feelings with people involved in these events. The stories shared with the children in this project allow them to experience the world of others and different aspects of the world that they have not experienced at first hand. Indeed, the imaginative role play "may be the prelude to reshaping reality" that creates a tension for the children to engage in the exploration of events in the books (Fox, cited in Somers, 2002:64). In this project, I hoped to create opportunities for the children to experience the world of others, to explore notions of who they are and who they want to be as well as to allow them to reshape or adjust their values, moral behaviours and attitudes that 'matter' to them as they experience the carefully designed imaginative role play (Somers, 2002:66). The children's responses through imaginative role play will be presented and discussed in depth as follows.

After reading *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm*, the children were asked to do an imaginative role play activity. They were divided into two groups: A and B. Group A was asked to play the role of the master and group B was asked to be the slave and then the roles were reversed. The task was that the master had to try to make the slaves work very hard, however tired, and the slave needed to obey and do whatever the master ordered. The children actually played two different roles in the imaginative role play: as participants and percipients (O'Neill, 1989). They were participants when they played the roles of masters and slaves; however, they were also percipients when they had to decide how to make the action as well as how to give out the orders in order to create the 'make-believe' world. The feedback from the children

suggests that the imaginative role play helped them to explore their feelings and ideas in playing the two roles. They discussed notions of power they had internalised from the story and made an intellectual leap as they linked the events in the book with more general speculations on the use and misuse of power. **Mary**'s reflection was based on her participant role as a slave:

Mary: I was so tired when my master asked me to do all the work. I felt that I was almost dying. *當我的主人要我做所有的工作, 我真的好累. 我覺得我快死啦!*

On the contrary, **Eric**'s feedback showed him reflecting on the comparison of both his participant and percipient roles in the imaginative role play:

Eric: If I could choose, I'd prefer to be a master because I don't have to do anything. I can order my slave to do anything. It's good to have power. *如果可以選擇, 我比較想當主人, 因為我不用做任何事, 我可以命令我的奴隸去做任何事. 有權力真好!*

Edmiston and Wilhelm (1998:31) claim that "Students are nearly always asked to interpret readings (text) they have not been helped to experience. And without participation, the reader has no experience and no learning to reflect upon." The children, through this imaginative role play, were able to explore the experiences of both masters and slaves as they stood in other people's shoes and began to understand the difficult time the victims encountered in World War II. This activity offered the children another opportunity to talk about power. The children continued to explore their feelings after the imaginative role play. I helped them to focus on the complex issue of the responsibility that goes alongside power:

Jennifer: Can you really do anything you want when you have power? *當你有權力的時候真的可以做所有你想做的事嗎?*
Tom: No, you can't. You can't hurt people. *不行, 你不能傷害人.*

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Leo: No, you can't make people do things, like Mission Impossible.*不行，你不能叫人家去做不可能的任務.*

Tom offered a response based on common human morality and decency while **Leo**'s response was drawn from the violent portrayal of power in a film he had seen. Their responses led me to ask:

Jennifer: But, why not? Since I have power? *但是，為什麼不行?我有權力啊?*

I intended to push the children to think critically about these processes in order to help them to construct their own arguments, judgements and viewpoints about the sensitive issues and questions that were directly relevant to morality and power, so they could begin to understand their own relationship with power.

Claire: You can use power to help people and to be nice to people. *你可以用權力來幫助人和對人好.*

James: If you hurt people, people will dislike you. And they may try to get revenge. That's not a nice thing to do. *如果你傷害人，人家就不喜歡你. 而且他們可能會報仇. 這樣做不好.*

Claire and **James**' responses focused on building a good moral basis for helping people and being kind to them. **Becky** built on their views when she presented her own critical thoughts, taking on James' idea and making links back to the story.

Becky: If you use power to hurt people, then you're like another Hitler. *如果你用權力去傷害人，那你就是另一個希特勒.*

Scriven and Paul emphasise that:

> critical thinking is the intellectual disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualising, synthesising and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning or communication,

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as a guide to belief and action (cited in Moon, 2008:36).

Becky's explanation reflects her ability to make her own judgement from information gathered directly from the story, previous discussions and her own reasoning, using the language of persuasion to interpret her ideas. **Alex**'s response encompasses his understanding and his own set of beliefs as he forms his critical argument and imagines a world that is less painful, more ordered (Cottrell, 2005: viii).

Alex: When you have power, you should be kind because many people could learn from you. That could make a lot of difference. *當你有權力時，你要對別人仁慈,因為會有很多人學你,那樣會有很多的不同.*

I encouraged them to take this idea forward, in order to stimulate them to think even more critically and deeply.

Jennifer: What difference? *什麼樣的不同？*

Robert: Like Hitler, because he disliked Jewish people, he hurt so many Jewish people. If he'd liked Jewish people, then the Jewish people wouldn't have died.

就像希特勒,因為他不喜歡猶太人,所以他殺了很多猶太人. 如果他喜歡猶太人，那猶太人就不會死了.

Peggy: Yes, if you have power and you have a good heart, then everything could be different.*是啊！如果你有權力，而且你有一付好心腸，那麼所有的事情都可能不一樣了.*

Most of the feedback from the children was about how they felt after taking part in the imaginative experience that helped them to explore the situation and thus enhance their personal understanding. There were two interesting comments from **Peggy** and **James** that reflected and linked their experiences back to the story:

Peggy: I was very exhausted! I can't imagine how tiring life was for the victims in the concentration camps. They must have been so tired after working every day, and without enough food to eat.

我累壞啦！我很難想像那些受難者在集中營會有多累．他們每天工作完一定很累不過又沒有足夠的食物．

James: I felt so sorry for the victims and so angry at the Nazis.

我為那些受難者感到難過而且我很氣納粹軍人．

Peggy and **James** had not only begun to understand the historical facts at a deeper level, but also to understand themselves. Their judgements and their personal feelings were involved, as they made this huge effort to make sense of human cruelty and frailty, and to transform their ways of thinking and feeling. Through this imaginative role play experience with the children, I realised the importance of leaving time to enable them to stay in role, to reflect on the roles they played, and to sort through the information and the experience they encountered. After learning about the children's responses to their first-time experience in the imaginative role play, I was more confident about inviting the children to participate in other imaginative role plays that involved even more challenging situations concerning the Holocaust and the earthquake.

In the imaginative role play based on *The Lily Cupboard* the children were invited to experience and explore the world of Miriam, Nello's family and the Nazis. The outline of the imaginative role play is set out below:

> This activity was designed to help the children to experience a little of the tension of everyday life under the Nazis, and to think about how they could avoid giving their Jewish friends up to the Nazis. We divided into three groups, role playing the Nazis, the Jewish people and Nello's family. Ms. W and I helped the children selected to play the Nazis and the Jewish people. The children who played the role of Jewish people were given a yellow star and told that they must hide it safely so that it would not be seen by the Nazis. The children who played the role of the Nazis were given swastikas to represent their authority. The rest of the children played the role of families who hid the Jewish victims safely. The Nazi group was asked to go out of the classroom

with me to discuss how and what we should do, since we did not know who the Jewish victims were. Meanwhile, Ms. W gave yellow stars out to the children she selected to play the roles of Jewish victims and they were told to hide them safely. The children were invited to do this role play twice so they could play different roles.

The children were all percipients in the imaginative role play no matter which roles they took, because they all had to make their own decision on what would happen and how to react to the roles they acted. They were aware that these decisions could make a difference. The children were asked to think about the roles they had to enact and how their characters would talk, no matter which roles they played. For example, the children in the Nazi group I led thought that they needed to be firm and mean and that they would have to talk loudly. The children were given five minutes to brainstorm ways of enacting the roles in their own groups. The imaginative role play was designed to involve and encourage the children by "drawing on personal experience [that] supports a richer connection to the story and the potential for a more thorough understanding of the text and subtext" (Kelin, 2007:278). Barton and Booth (1990:43) state that "If…a child assumes a role in a story and enacts particular situations, he or she begins to find personal meaning in it." The children clearly had no experience that related directly to the conflict in the story, so through the imaginative role play I hoped they would be able to investigate the problems and emotional difficulties from the characters' perspectives and to make their exploration more personal.

We had a short discussion after the imaginative role play, and then the children were asked to write down their reflections for homework. The discussion centred on how the children felt as they played the roles.

James (Nello's family): I was really scared when the Nazis walked towards me. I tried to think of ways to protect my friends with yellow stars. I tried not to tell the Nazis where they were. Their lives are worth more than anything in the world. 當納粹軍人向我走過來時, 我非常害怕. 我想盡辦法要保護有黃色星星的朋友, 我不告訴納粹軍人他們在哪裡. 他們的生命比世界上的

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任何東西還要有價值.

Becky (Nazi): I felt very bad because I needed to force myself to be firm and to search others to get my job done. I felt that I was cruel and cold-blooded. I didn't like that feeling at all. *我覺得很難過, 因為我必須強迫自己要兇狠地搜查別人, 並找出躲起來的猶太人. 我覺得我很殘忍也很冷血. 我一點也不喜歡這種感覺.*

Jack (victim): I was terrified when the Nazis threatened me because they didn't like the colour of my hair. I didn't know what to say or what to do and I didn't even dare to look into his eyes. *當納粹軍人威脅我說他們不喜歡我頭髮的顏色時, 我非常害怕. 我不知道我要說什麼或做什麼, 而且我也不敢看他的眼睛.*

Edmiston (1993:265) claims that "By reflecting during as well as after their experiences in [imaginative role play], students have more opportunity to deepen their responses and influence each other as they form their interpretations." I believe the imaginative role play helped the children to understand themselves as they expressed their views and discovered their own meanings. Through the imaginative role play, the children were able to appreciate the story and the situation more because they actually had the opportunity to think and feel the thoughts of the characters and to connect with them. Though some may say that it could be dangerous for children to play out these sensitive roles and experience negative attitudes, I would argue that the children were offered an opportunity to do this in a safe and secure learning environment that invited them to think deeply about the situation and emotions of the characters and therefore to understand better the consequences of their own actions and attitudes.

The final imaginative play was constructed from the story of *Thank You, Kitty*. I have included this imaginative role play because it created a close-to-real scenario for the children to experience an earthquake in a supportive and

imaginative context. The tent activity was designed to help the children to experience the feeling of being trapped by an earthquake and I introduced it when we were part-way through the book. Keene and Zimmermann (1997:55) point out that "Great readers, whether they're reading by themselves or listening to someone reading, understand the story better if they think about their experiences *while they read* (my italics)." That fitted with the imaginative role play taking place part-way through the storytelling. The children were divided into six groups and each group was given a very similar but slightly different task to experience. (See Figure 4.36 below). My thinking behind this was to offer the opportunity for the children to share their different experiences and to give them a chance to explore their reactions, feelings and different viewpoints (Neelands, 1992:7). The children were participants in the imaginative play and they were asked to do exactly as they were told due to safety concerns. The children in each group were asked to sit inside the tent, which was arranged in various ways. After this imaginative play, the children were encouraged to share their emotional reactions and thoughts.

Group one: The tent was covered with a mat and a blanket.

Group two: The tent was covered with two mats and a blanket.

Group three: The tent was covered with a mat and a blanket, and was shaken by a group of children outside.

Group four: The tent was covered with a mat and a blanket. The children were each given one item with which to make a sound inside the tent one after the other.

Group five: The tent was covered with a mat and a blanket. The children were each given one item with which to make a sound inside the tent at the same time.

Group six: The tent was covered with a mat and a blanket. It was shaken by a group of children outside. The children inside the tent were asked to make sounds at the same time with the item they were given.

Jeffrey and Wei were asked to listen to the sounds made by the children from group five and six to see whether they could hear them from 50 metres away in order to see if it was possible to rescue the victims.

After the activity, two children from each group (three from group six) were selected to express and share their reflections and feelings about this particular experience with the whole class. Their feedback is presented in Figure 4.37. The children, of course, experienced different tasks and had different reflections and feelings. However, some reactions were similar for each group: it was stinky, hot and dark inside the tent, the children could feel the heavy weight when the mat was put on and they did not like it. It was uncomfortable to be trapped inside the tent. The children also shared their individual viewpoints based on their experience of different tasks. The children's reflections showed that they were capable of expressing their feelings and understanding this frightening situation deeply. This particular imaginative play gave the children the opportunity to play out and to

improvise on what was a scary experience (Wright, Bacigalupa, Black and Burton, 2008:367-368).

Figure 4.37: Reflection after the tent activity

Ray (group one): Inside the tent was stinky, hot and dark. It was much hotter and darker when the mat was put on.帳篷裡面很臭，很熱，也很暗. 當墊子放上來後就更熱了.

Beth (group one): When the mat was put on, it was like the ceiling fell on my head.當墊子放上來的時候，就好像是天花板壓在我頭上一樣.

Tom (group two): When the first mat was put on, I just felt something heavy on top of my head, but when the second mat was put on, it was much darker in the tent and I felt like there were a lot of heavy stones falling on top of my head. It was a bit hard to breathe. 當第一個墊子放上來的時候, 我只覺得頭上有一點重. 不過當第二個墊子放上來的時候, 帳篷裡更暗了. 而且我覺得好像有很多重石頭壓在我頭上，連呼吸都有一點困難.

Becky (group two): We tried to push the mats away but no matter how hard we tried, we couldn't move them at all.我們試著推開墊子，不過, 不管我們推得多大力都推不動.

James (group three): It was dark and hot inside the tent. When the tent was shaking, I felt the rest of the group fall on my body all the time and I could also feel their weight crushing me. It was a feeling like I fell into a canyon.帳篷裡面又暗又熱. 當帳篷在搖的時候, 我覺得其他的小朋友一直往我身上倒, 而且他們的重量也壓在我身上. 我覺得我好像掉到山谷中.

Jason (group three): I felt very dizzy when the tent was shaking up and down. I couldn't think properly and couldn't sit still any more.當帳篷上下搖晃的時候，我覺得頭很昏. 我沒辦法思考也沒辦法再坐穩.

Peggy (group four): It was dark and hot in the tent. I felt very scared when the mat was on.帳篷裡很熱，很暗. 當墊子放上來的時候我很害怕.

Ying (group four): I didn't like the feeling of staying inside the tent. I felt like I was trapped like a mouse.*我不喜歡待在帳篷裡的感覺, 我覺得我好像被困住的老鼠.*

Jeffrey (outside): I could hardly hear the sound they made inside the tent. So, I wouldn't have been able to rescue them if there was an earthquake. (Jeffrey was asked to listen to the sounds group four made about 50 metres away from the tent.)*我幾乎聽不到他們在帳篷裡面發出的聲音, 所以, 當地震來的時候我沒辦法救他們.*

Jay (group five): It was so crowded and hot inside the tent. I felt very uncomfortable.*帳篷裡面很擠也很熱. 我覺得很不舒服.*

Robert (group five): I felt the mat almost fall on my head and that gave me a headache.*我覺得墊子快要掉在我的頭上而那讓我的頭很痛.*

Wei (outside): The sounds they made were really loud. (Wei was asked to listen to the sounds group five made about 50 metres away from the tent.)*他們發出的聲音很大聲.*

Sue (group six): I felt very uncomfortable and I wanted to go out of the tent. It was really hot and I hardly could catch my breath normally. *在帳篷裡讓我覺得很不舒服而且我很想出去. 裡面很熱而且我快不能正常呼吸了.*

David (group six): It was harder to make sounds while the tent was shaken.*當帳篷搖晃時很難發出聲音.*

Jeffrey (group six): The air I was breathing was different before and after the mat was on. After the mat was on, the air was thicker.*墊子放上前我呼吸的空氣和墊子放上後不一樣. 墊子放上後的空氣變厚了.*

It is not easy for children to place themselves in a difficult situation that they have never encountered and it could have been somewhat hard for them to imagine how scared or hopeless people feel when they have been trapped by an earthquake. Even so, I believe that this imaginative play helped them to experience other people's fear and to discuss the events and their feelings at a

deeper level, thus making a new personal connection with the story and developing perspectives they might otherwise have ignored or been unable to examine in a real-life situation (Iaquinta and Hipsky, 2006:210; Whitin, 2009:412). **Michelle** had certainly made this discovery: "I couldn't imagine how people would survive if they were trapped underground for days. I couldn't bear it any more, even just for a few minutes.*我無法想像人要如何存活，如果被困在地底下幾天．才幾分鐘我就受不了了．*" **James** commented: "People need a lot of courage to hang on if they're trapped. They need to wait patiently to be rescued.*人如果被困住，需要很多勇氣才能撐下去．*" **Beth**, **Sam** and **Jason** then shared the lesson they learnt from the experience.

Beth: It gave us a chance to experience being trapped by an earthquake.*這讓我們有機會體驗被地震困住的感覺．*
Sam: I learnt how to protect myself when there's an earthquake, like making sounds with anything I could find.*我學到地震來的時候要保護自己，像是用盡所有的方法或手邊的東西來發出聲音．*
Jason: It helped us to understand how frightened people would be if they were trapped by heavy stuff.*它讓我們知道被很重的東西困住的人會有多害怕．*

There was a general consensus that the experience of being trapped was terrifying. The children's talk was expressive and wide-ranging and I was impressed again by their ability to deal with trauma. I had to admit that I had no idea what kind of feedback I would get from the children through this tent activity and I was worried that they might take it less seriously but have fun inside the tent. Therefore, I actually warned the children before the imaginative role play that once Ms. W and I heard any giggles or sounds from anyone inside the tent, the whole activity would have to be cancelled. Surprisingly, we heard nothing from them and the activity somehow went quite smoothly and I was really happy that this simulating experience helped the children to experience the feelings from a moral perspective, to explore

their emotions and to express feelings safely in the guise of someone else (Mattox, 1975: 55-56).

Throughout this research, I tried to create a specific atmosphere and opportunity for deep thought and careful engagement for the children to focus on the Holocaust and earthquake issues through imaginative role play. The children's experience of imaginative role play has helped them to make sense of the traumatic issues and to express their concerns and emotional response to bear on their understanding of human existence. In this sense, the imaginative role play is "not an escape from reality, but a return to it" (Neelands and Goode, 2000:41). Through the children's responses to the three imaginative role plays in this project, I was confident and pleased to offer them an insight into how those in distress experience the world.

4.6 The Role of the Teacher

In this section, I will discuss the role I played in this project other than as researcher and the selector of the ten books. My role was crucial because I tried to put the children's experience and responses at the centre of the language and literacy curriculum and to invite them to engage with the stories and the world they live in, as people and as learners. I was both storyteller and story reader in the process of presenting the ten books to the children. In the interaction between text and reader, I was the mediator whose role was to help the children to build their understanding of the texts, to develop their interpretation, to inspect their personal experiences and to expand their insights about themselves, others and the world. In order to help the children respond in this way I participated as a questioner, a listener and a learner throughout the presentation of the stories, creating moments to pause for questions and discussion and leaving time and space for the children to interact with the stories and to bring their own voices to the interpretation. I also shared my own personal interest in the books.

4.6.1 My Role as a Questioner and Listener

I asked questions to invite the children to participate in discussion, to inspire them to think deeply, to interact with the characters and to bring their own personal experiences to bear on the stories. I hoped that my questions would help them to generate questions of their own, since my questions were open-ended, and endeavoured to get us all nearer to the heart of each story. I also encouraged the children to ask their own questions during class and small-group discussion. I was also a listener. In the whole-class discussions, I tried not to make any personal judgement on their response or to cut down their time for sharing their voices but listened to their thoughts and feelings, particularly since their responses were always unexpected. It is never easy for a teacher to remain silent, but I knew it was important to encourage every child's voice. Minns (1976:29) states that, "by learning to listen to children

and to value what they say at all times, we [teachers] will be in a much better position to understand the way they talk, and the ways in which they learn." In the process of teaching on this project, I tried to question and talk less and instead to encourage the children to talk more and share their ideas and experiences in order to know how they made sense of the world and how they developed their moral concepts and values.

4.6.2 My Role as a Learner alongside the Children

This research has always been a process of discovery, and so I was not only a teacher, and a researcher but also a learner. I learnt from the children, from their affective and reflective responses and from their insights as they shaped their morality, and their values. They also taught me about their capacity to express their feelings generated by the stories and about their unlimited and unpredictable imagination and thought. In the experience of sharing the books, I learnt alongside the children as we explored our understanding, our feelings and our critical thinking, and the children were conscious that the stories affected me too. They comforted when I told them I lost my dog when I was little and how I wished I had told him how much I loved him: "You didn't know you'd lose him, otherwise you'd have told him you loved him everyday. 妳並不知道妳會失去牠, 要不然妳會每天跟牠說妳永遠愛牠." However, there was always a difference. Britton (1970:182) argues that the teacher-pupil relationship can never be reciprocal, because "its effect is directed upon the pupil and not upon the teacher." He cites Winnicott: "our professional relationships are more balanced and more reliable than our personal ones, and it is important that they should be" (1970:183). I agree with this and always strove to maintain a professional stance in which my attention, and the children's attention, was focused on the book itself. So while their questions helped me to think about the answers deeply, I was always careful not to frighten them and to reserve my own personal judgements. I learnt to understand the children's concerns about the issues, and their questions helped me to reshape and develop my future teaching. Rosen (cited in Britton, 1970:188) puts it neatly: "I can only aim at making a triangle of myself, the

children and the activities outside both of us, but in which we are both involved for different reasons." This triangular relationship between the text, the children and me formed a three-way interaction, between each other, and between the books we shared, as we learnt alongside each other, and jointly focused on the stories.

4.6.3 Exploring the Children's Memories

I encouraged the children by concentrating on their use of spectator-role language to reflect on the stories, using their previous knowledge and understanding to recollect and build on their experience. In the process of the project, the children were not only invited to interact with the stories and the characters but also to reflect and adjust their own life experiences and concepts towards the issues that affect us all in the world. The children's memories, emotions and personal experience were valued throughout our discussions. I shared my own memories and emotions to encourage the children to share theirs, showing my interest in their stories and seeing them as learners and as confident language users. I always tried to maintain a secure learning environment for sharing and exploration so that the children could reflect their views and concerns without threat and worry, and so that they could see that their memories and experiences were valued and respected by me and the other learners (Paul, 1988:4).

4.6.4 Establishing and Maintaining a Communal Learning Environment

In this project, the children were invited to respond to the stories, and they learnt to voice their ideas and to listen to their peers' voices in order to affirm their different perspectives or to work towards communal responses. The children's shared personal experiences, their understanding and interaction with the world helped to develop a communal response. Harold Rosen argues that there is such a thing as "autobiographical memory" and that this is social rather than private or individual (1996:31). Nevertheless, as has become clear,

there were always different insights within the 'reader community'. As I mentioned in 2.5.1, within this environment, all readers were encouraged and invited to share their experience and interpretation with others in order to form an "interpretive community" (Fish,1980:171). The children in this project, through our exploration of the traumatic stories and activities, bonded together as a social group as they shared similar reflections and formed communal responses. However, I also noticed that they built their own individual interpretations and insights in this social environment because they knew that their talk had status and was valued by me and by the other children. Within this interpretive community, the children were able to confront the problems of hatred and prejudice and develop broader connections and interpretations for discussion in order to create joint understandings (Short, 1993:300).

Hickman (1981:353) claims that what the teacher creates for literacy and learning in the classroom strongly affects or motivates the children's responses. Through the exploration of the selected stories, I, as the teacher, was there to help the children to enjoy their reading, to express their responses in multiple (oral, art, drama and written) forms and more importantly, to develop their understanding and introspection beyond anything they could do by themselves. I was the creator of the 'reading community' who shared their unique verbal, artistic, dramatic and written reflections and interpretations of the stories they heard. I provided the children with the space and opportunity to respond to and reflect on the stories and on themselves. Our context was the shared experience of the stories. Their response to those stories surprised and delighted me.

4.7 Closure of the Project

Just as each season has to end, so does each project. The project closed with shared writing where the children were invited to reflect on the ten picture books we had shared together and they were asked to complete a questionnaire to help me understand how they felt about the whole project. In addition, at the end of second topic of this project, parents of the children were asked to evaluate the project and their children's learning through questionnaires. Their responses are discussed below.

4.7.1 Parents' Evaluation of the Project

It was also valuable and important for me and other teachers to learn how parents of these seven and eight year old children viewed and evaluated a project that dealt with sensitive and traumatic issues through the selected picture books in order to meet parents' expectations and to consider the whole project more fully in order to plan and reshape similar researches in the future. All the parents consented to let their children participate in this project and signed permission letters which were collected before conducting this project (see Appendix VIII). By the end of second topic (war), teaching and learning, a copy of parental questionnaires (see Appendix IV) were sent home for parents to evaluate the children's learning feedback and to comment on any of their children's particular behaviours and attitudes observed at home that Ms. W and I did not discover in the school setting. Moreover, I wanted to know the parents' viewpoints on the teaching of sensitive issues that used to be regarded as taboo in order to reconsider whether the choices of the issues, teaching materials, designed activities and ages of target children were appropriate.

From the parental questionnaires, 26 children shared both the stories and what they learnt through this project with their family members back home. About 80% of these 26 children could retell the stories clearly, ask relevant questions

and express their concerns and feelings towards two sensitive issues (loss and separation and the Holocaust). Through the questionnaires, I learnt that the children shared what they learnt from this project with their family members and they were able to retell the stories as well as articulate critical thoughts that, perhaps to some extent, meant they did take away something meaningful from the project. From the parents' view, 80% of the children were interested in the stories we shared and five parents even indicated that their children wanted to know more about the Holocaust in particular. I fully understood that five books would not cover the complex issues of the Holocaust; however, more books relevant to the three topics can be shared with the children at school with me if time and appropriate material are made available. I was glad to know that six children found more information relevant to the Holocaust at home: half of them read historical stories about the World War II, two of them did some research on the internet and the remaining one watched the film 'Life is Beautiful' twice after the Holocaust issue was introduced. I remembered one child shared what she found about the Holocaust with me after I had finished the five stories and Ms. W posted it on the notice board in the back of the classroom for everyone. A few children told me that they wanted to know more about the Holocaust while I told them the last story about it; therefore, I donated a simplified version of 安妮的日記 (*The Diary of Anne Frank*) for the classroom library and this was made available for the children to borrow. I was also relieved to know that the children were not frightened by the sensitive issues, especially the Holocaust since the purposes of this project were for providing the children positive thoughts and developing their empathy through the selected picture books, carefully designed activities and discussions and talks.

In addition, from received parental questionnaires, 80% of the parents thought it was appropriate to teach the traumatic and sensitive issues with their children and 11% had concerns in teaching death: loss and separation to such a young age group. Five of the parents thought it was appropriate to teach traumatic issues to their children because the issues I introduced were part of Life Education and human rights, moreover, three parents thought it was a

good opportunity for their children to learn about discrimination. Two parents pointed out in their questionnaires that they thought the project was appropriate because their children were capable of expressing their opinions about the traumatic events and the world, which were the centre of this project. From parents' observations, about half (17 out of 35) of their children's attitudes towards human issues had changed, for example, they began to be nice to people in need, to take care of their grandparents, to respect difference and to cherish people and other living things around them. In addition, three parents pointed out that they had not observed any particular changes yet but it perhaps was because their children were too young. However, they believed that the seed of respect and empathy had been planted in their hearts and would sprout in the near future. As a teacher, I was touched by the parents' understanding but I shall argue that it might take a while for the children to reshape their beliefs, attitudes and even behaviours.

In general, 97% of the parents were satisfied with the project so far based on the children's feedback (by the end of the topic of war). It was encouraging for me to receive support and compliments. The parents' comments on the topic of earthquakes were taken into account for teaching and learning. Six parents hoped that this topic would give their children a chance to discuss the uncertainty of life and perhaps that way they would learn to cherish their time with family members and friends. Two parents wished that there could be designed activities or field trips that could bring their children to the real scene of an earthquake. I was therefore glad that I had designed an imaginative role play based on the story of *Thank You, Kitty* that met the parents' expectation. Moreover, I was confident that the children were able to understand the uncertainty of life and, to an extent, to value their getting along with friends and family from their responses to the stories and characters. The parents' perspectives and concerns about this project address ideas that not only gave me much to ponder, but also provided an optimistic outlook for the future when introducing and teaching traumatic issues through literature.

4.7.2 The Children's Preferences

The children rated their personal feelings about the three topics from the strongest to the weakest as shown in Figure 4.38 below. 20 children had the strongest feelings for the topic of war while only three had the strongest feelings for the topic of natural disaster. It was clear that the story of the Holocaust and the suffering of the victims made a deep impression on the children. In addition, we had shared more stories about the topic of war than about natural disaster and this could be another reason for their preference. The number of children who rated their personal feelings towards the topic of loss and death from strongest to weakest was quite even. In my view, it could be because this topic was more personal than the other two and the children who had had similar personal experiences might have had stronger feelings than the children who had no experience of personal loss. The children had the weakest personal feelings towards the issue of natural disaster; this could be because even though earthquakes happen frequently in Taiwan, most of them do not cause huge damage. In addition, the children were very young when the major earthquake 921 happened in Taiwan in 1999. Also, they live in Kaohsiung where there are fewer earthquakes than in any other part of Taiwan.

The children's choices can be seen from another perspective too: based on my observation and my analysis of the children's responses it was the impact of inhumanity that had more power to shock than the power of natural disaster, especially since the children understood there was nothing they could do to stop a natural disaster but they could make a moral decision —not to hurt people.

Figure 4.38: The children's personal feelings towards topics
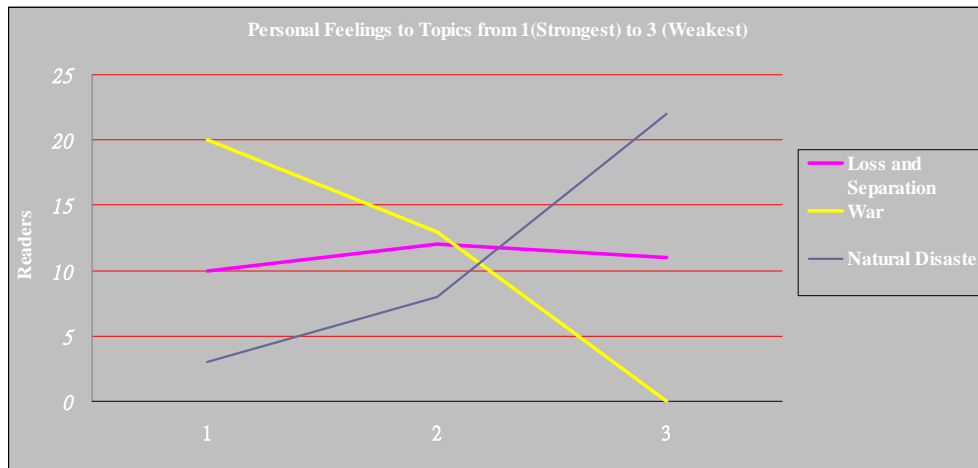
In this project, seven themes were developed based on the stories and their associated topics: a pet's death and life that must go on (from the topic of loss and separation), otherness and prejudice, concealment and courage, confidence in individuality and survival (from the topic of war) and the themes of optimism and hope (from the topic of natural disaster). The relevance of each theme to the children can be seen in Figure 4.39. 27 of the children had experienced a pet's death and were therefore familiar with this experience of loss. About half of the children had experienced the loss of a family member and had learnt to move on in their own lives. Among the themes developed from the topic of war, the least relevant to the children's experience was the concept of survival. The themes of otherness and prejudice and confidence in individuality were highly relevant experiences. My observation and analysis of the children's responses caused me to speculate that to some extent, the children had experienced teasing, bullying and exclusion for various reasons at school. For some, the experience of being different has helped them to understand the importance of respecting individuality. The themes of optimism and hope were also highly relevant. Possibly this is because the children had some experience of earthquakes and of not giving up while they encountered difficulties in life. The analysis of relevance has shown that the children brought their personal experiences to bear on the reading in order to make sense of the stories and to refine their

value systems as they entered the world of the characters and the sensitive events; moreover, they developed their critical thinking patterns and expanded possibilities towards the resolution of social-conflict issues through different forms of response.

Figure 4.39: Themes that are relevant to reader's experience

Showing theme that are relevant to readers' experience
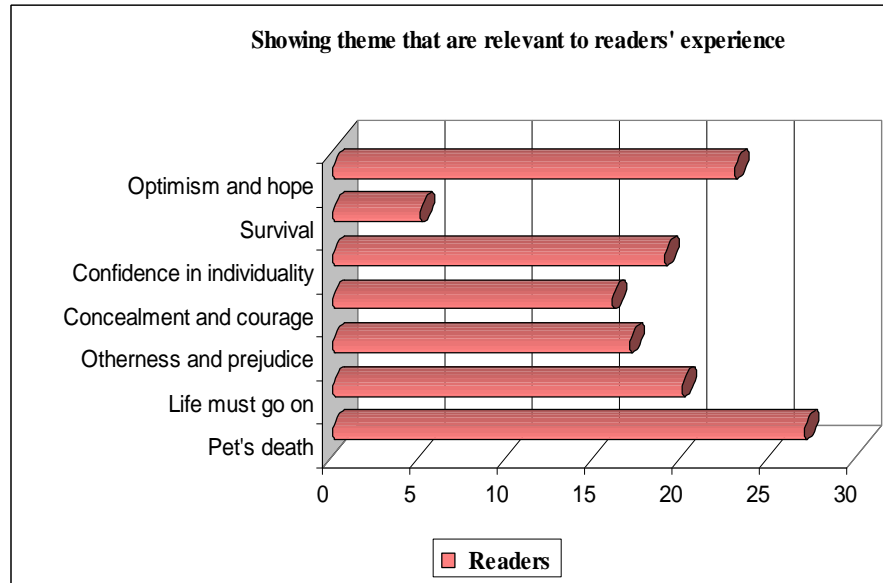
The children were asked to choose the books they had enjoyed most from the project (Figure 4.40). They selected three books from the topic of war, two books from the topic of loss and separation and one book from the topic of natural disaster. 12 children ticked all ten books as they had enjoyed them all equally. They found the stories meaningful and touching, and they learnt something unusual from them. They said the stories contained the power of love, that they were not just nice and that they taught them not to give up hope. Just three children ticked only one book but gave a specific reason for their choice. For example, one respondent ticked *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm* as the book she had enjoyed the most, because even though the grandfather had suffered under the Nazis, he did not teach his daughter or granddaughter to hate others and she believed that the grandfather should tell his story to the world for he had done nothing wrong. Another two

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respondents chose *The Lily Cupboard* as the book they enjoyed the most but for different reasons: one because they identified with Miriam's bravery and the other because she found the whole situation of hiding so breathtaking. Eight respondents did not write down their reasons for their choice. Six children answered the question about the book they had enjoyed the least. One respondent chose *Thank You, Kitty* because it was written in Japanese; *Thank You, Kitty* was the only book written in Japanese and the children had little knowledge of this language especially in its written form. Two respondents selected *Yuzi's Dream* and *Thank You, Kitty* because they did not like the illustrations, which used a lot of black and shades of grey to present the situation of being trapped by the earthquake. It is possible that these children were affected by this and that it gave them no pleasure. Two respondents named *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm* and *The Children We Remember* because they disliked the black-and-white photographs. Another respondent named *Granpa*, *The Wings of Hope* and *Yuzi's Dream* because the characters died at the end of the story. I believe that it was still hard for some children to cope with the sense of loss at the end of these three stories even though the authors ended the stories hopefully. From the children's responses, it is possiblt to argue that stories that do not have a traditional fairy-tale ending can inspire the children to reflect and interpret events using a wide range of possibilities and perspectives (Chafel, Flint, Hammel and Pomeroy, 2007:76).

Figure 4.40: The top six picture books the readers enjoyed the most

Showing the top 6 picture books the readers enjoyed the most
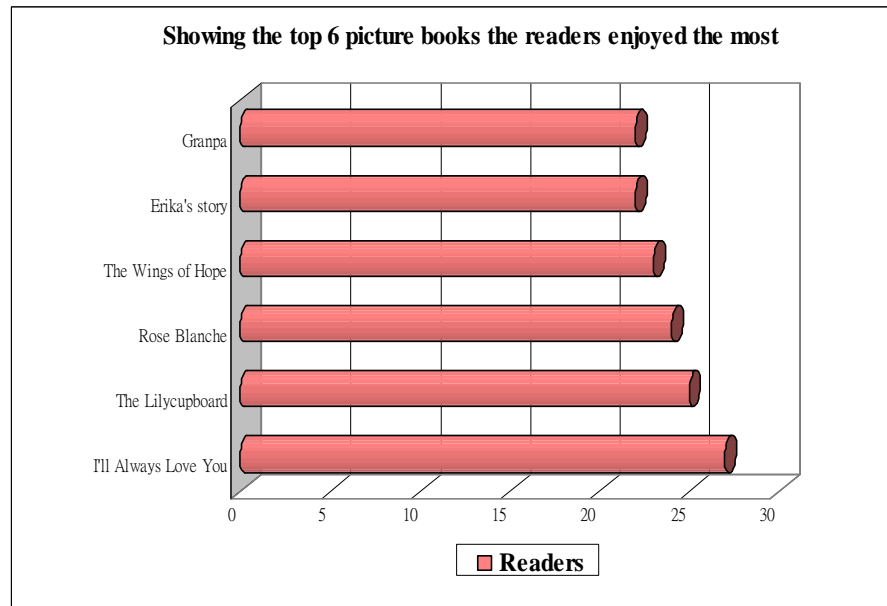
4.7.3 Children's Evaluation of the Project

In the questionnaire, the children were asked to evaluate the project from the point of view of the stories and designed activities, and to make suggestions to improve the project.

First, the children were asked to evaluate what they had learnt from the project. The responses can be generalised as follows: do not be afraid, love people, cherish life, care for people, do not give up and finally, have hope. Some of these responses were similar to the reasons the children gave when asked why they had enjoyed the books. It seemed that the children enjoyed the books because they took something meaningful away from them, something they considered important. They valued love, hope, kindness and life and gave these as reasons why they enjoyed the books. The children also evaluated the activities designed for the project. Figure 4.49 shows that 82% of the children liked the activities very much and 18% thought they were just OK. 15 of the children liked all the designed activities. Thirteen liked the tent activity for the earthquake while seven of them preferred the imaginative role play for war. It is possible that some of the children were scared of the imaginative role play for war, both as spectators and participants; indeed, they

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expressed their fear in their written responses after the imaginative role play presented in 4.3. None of the designed activities was disliked by the children, though five of them complained about too much writing. Most of the children were satisfied with the whole project and their evaluation proved that the stories and designed activities were appropriate for them.

Figure 4.41: Showing to what extent the children liked the activity

☺	**82%**
😐	**18%**
☹	**0%**

4.7.4 The Children's Final Representation of the Project

In the very last session of the project, the children were asked to recall all the stories we had shared over the past months. They were encouraged to name the project and to create a poem based on the name they had chosen that reflected how they felt about the stories. The name Courage 勇氣 was selected from a list that included Love, Hope, Life and Memory. I wondered why they chose courage rather than love or hope. James and Alex's explanation showed that they tried to generalise a bigger conceptual idea from the ten books rather than see them individually. **James** explained: "Because all the characters in the ten stories are very courageous and they don't give up easily. *因為十個故事的主角都很有勇氣，而且他們都不輕易放棄*." **Alex** agreed: "They don't give up even when they're facing difficult problems or situations. *他們都沒有放棄，即使他們正面臨艱難的問題或狀況*." **Ying** explained: "Because courage includes love and hope and that's why I chose courage. *勇氣包括了愛和希望，所以我選擇勇氣*." **Peggy** argued: "You won't be able to do

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anything without courage. *沒有勇氣什麼事都做不了.*" The name chosen by the children for the project surprised me and showed me that the children had read and understood the ten books carefully and reflectively. In addition, they took the whole project seriously, for they shared their feelings and reflections with the class, respecting other people's perspectives while still remaining true to their own voices.

I invited the children to create the poem by themselves and they edited the poem after I had written down every sentence. The children read aloud to check whether the whole poem ran smoothly and made some amendments before being satisfied with the final version presented below. The children then illustrated the poem as shown in Figure 4.42.

Courage

Love is one kind of courage

Courage brings us strength, helps us to face reality, difficulty and fear

Courage also brings hope, let us not be afraid anymore

Courage also brings us a sense of security

Let us carry on to the end

Give us a bit more strength and courage to reach the destination

Let us use all our strength to embrace the world, let us help those people in need with love

Let the whole world overflow with a happy smile

The spirit of Love will change the Earth into the most beautiful and brightest planet in the universe.

勇氣

愛是一種勇氣

勇氣帶給我們力量, 幫助我們面對事實, 面對無限的困難和恐懼

勇氣也帶來了希望, 讓我們不再害怕

勇氣也帶給我們安全感

讓我們堅持到最後

再給我們多一點力量和勇氣衝到終點站

讓我們用所有的力量去擁抱世界，用愛努力地去幫助需要幫助的人，

讓全世界洋溢著幸福的微笑

愛的力量會將地球變成宇宙中最美最亮的一顆行星

Figure 4.42: Examples of children's illustration

Wei, Sue, Ying (Top left to right),
Sherry, Joyce, Jane (Middle left to right),
Brian, Peggy and Tim (Bottom left to right).

5. Chapter Five

Conclusion: the End of the Journey

In this research, the children have been taken on a journey to explore and experience the world of children's literature of trauma. Through this process of reading, interacting, sharing and discussing each book, the children have become time travellers, making connections, and interweaving the past, the present and the future, both in their own lives and in the lives of the characters in the books.

The children's responses to the stories have demonstrated their growing understanding of the events in the past, the interaction between those events, the past experience of their own lives, and the links with their future. Often, the children expressed their responses to the stories and the feelings for the characters by addressing their own relevant experience, in both discussion and writing. They became time travellers in an unknown world and I want to suggest that the interaction between the stories themselves and each individual child's life were woven together as they set out on the journey, becoming actively engaged in the process of co-mingling their ideas, feelings and interpretation of the stories, in a way that would appear to have a bearing on their future lives, and thus this process helped them to see the books in a social context.

The children constantly made connections across their past and present experience in order to make sense of new understandings. Learning is identified in this study as a process of making connections when searching for patterns that connect, so that we can make sense of our world. The children in this project, were travellers among different time zones as they accommodated the new knowledge of the sensitive and traumatic issues. They thought and reacted critically and reflectively about the future as they contemplated past events by making sense of them in the stories and at the

same time explored their own history and culture.

The children's responses show that the texts offered room for the children to understand and interact with the issues or situations in the stories in order to enhance what they knew, how they thought and what they wanted to know. In Nelson's terms: the books have played the role of "taking [the children] to another place as the story [was] woven into the listeners' [readers'] lives and [became] a part of their experiences" (1989:386). The children's responses presented and discussed in **Chapter Four** demonstrate the magical power of story to affect them emotionally, to help them to understand traumatic issues and to bring their personal meanings and reflections to the stories by talking them over as they re-visited the events that they found frightening, moving or exciting. Through this exploration of the stories, the children learnt and came to terms with difficult and traumatic ideas and events actively as spectators, participants and percipients based on the different activities they joined in. They had the freedom to act and make decisions in the role of participant and percipient as they challenged and reshaped their experience and refined their value systems. Their role as spectators was not passive but allowed them, in Britton's words, "to evaluate more broadly, to savour feelings, and to contemplate *forms* –the formal arrangement of feelings, of events and … of ideas, and the forms of the language, spoken or written, in which the whole is expressed" (1970:121). I saw this process at work many times, as the children reconstructed the events of each story, and shared their own personal experience, using expressive language to try out new ideas, to contemplate the unthinkable, and to create their own value systems.

In this research, the children's response to the literature of trauma has taken us on reflective and empathetic journeys. The children's understandings and their capability of responding to the traumatic events has channelled their emotions and helped them to understand that pain and loss are real. Their morality and value systems were thus reshaped through the journeys. Their exploration was a voyage filled with bright, touching moments and meaningful insights, as they sought resolutions to difficulties and took a step towards independence

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and maturity.

The children's reflective responses have enabled me to gain important insights into the ability of young children to deal with trauma in literature. I have drawn five significant conclusions from this analysis: the central importance of spoken language, the experience of learning as a community, the role of the teacher as facilitator, the ability of young children to respond with confidence and maturity, and the power of story to help children make sense of experience.

I have presented the children's responses in order to show how they expressed their fears and concerns, their shared understandings and their emotional engagement with the issues. They wrestled with all ten complicated texts and read them with confidence and in a spirit of intellectual inquiry. Goodwin argues that: "With talk, in all its various forms, being so central to all aspects of our lives, it is essential that children are given opportunities to become confident speakers and listeners" (2001: ix). The picture books gave these children an opportunity for their voices to be heard and valued as they uniquely confronted areas of trauma in the classroom.

The children in this research demonstrated how they interacted both with the text itself and with other readers through talk. It was their unique responses to the issues and characters in the stories that made the research special and essential.

The children spent a great deal of time unravelling the complexity of the illustrations in the picture books as they searched for meaning in the stories and shared their understanding and interpretations. The children often based their own drawings on their close observation of the illustrations in the books and their discussions about their use of colours reflected their unique interpretation. In responding to the topic of the Holocaust, the children used greys to represent sadness and bright colours to indicate the hope in their drawings. What amazed me most was how the children made sense of the issues and explained their reasons for the placing hidden messages in their

drawings and choosing colours that reflected the emotions that lay behind the message.

In this research, the children have not only been individual explorers; they have also bonded together as a social group as we explored the stories. Within this learning community, they experienced similar reactions to the same traumatic events and shared their reflections, feelings and insights through open discussion. In this learning community, every child's voice was respected and valued; and I encouraged them to understand that this process of discussion was part of their learning. The children exchanged insights and their individual responses influenced each other's responses and helped them to bond as a social group, compromising if there was disagreement and sharing and explaining different ways of communication and interaction to make the learning community more productive and enjoyable. Above all, I sensed that the children supported each other as they shared their response to the traumatic events they encountered. Indeed, I believe it was this sense of community that made the project possible. I would not, and could not, have carried out this research with an individual child. The children learnt about the issues and the stories from each other and me. In the process of reading, they were continually challenged to apply their knowledge, experience and understanding through discussions. Their discussions became the glue that bound the classroom community into a network of readers and they were encouraged and supported as they expressed their feelings and reflections securely within this learning community, breaking through the boundaries of the text as they associated and interacted with each other. Sharing children's literature of trauma reminds me of the potential power of literature to influence, as Pinsent says, "the actions and convictions of its readers" (1997:19). The stories, the discussions and the activities we explored together affected the children emotionally and philosophically and, I believe, changed their way of thinking about life.

In this sense, my research builds on the work in the area of children's responses, for example, researchers like Evans (1998), Doonan (1993), Styles

(1996) and Rosenblatt (1978). The boys in Styles' study learnt that "picture books tackle powerful issues and probe difficult areas of life in a way that the rest of the curriculum cannot do" (1996:28). In this research, through the selected picture books, I have dealt with the traumatic issues that many curricula would avoid. But more than this, my work make a distinctive contribution to the field because it inspires the children's thinking and encourages them to deal with their problems and emotions and more importantly that it creates opportunities for them to interact with each other and to value and respect their voices. The children's responses demonstrated that they were capable of understanding them and responding to them thoughtfully and reflectively. The children were also given a language through which to discuss their emotions.

In the process of conducting and analysing this research, I have come to understand that if you give children the opportunity to explore huge social and political issues, they respond with maturity and wisdom, and their logical and meaningful responses and judgements may surprise us. I was very moved when one child said that "even a little ant has its life 就算是一隻小螞蟻也有生命" as she responded to the inhumanity of the Nazis. I was right to value the children's voices and to listen to the way they see themselves, others and the world.

We human beings always tell stories. I tell my story and you tell yours. Someone listens and then retells our stories with their own interpretation or comments. Story exists in our daily life and in all cultures. This research has demonstrated that both the published books and the children's own stories, have enabled the children to make sense of the traumatic events. The children travelled between different time zones to make sense of the events in the past, to interpret and experience the present and to discover the future. They were introduced to two grandfathers, each with a lifetime of memory, and to their granddaughters, with their futures before them. They spoke about their own grandparents, and looked forward to their own future as adults. They were introduced to the historical events of the 1940s and looked forward to a future

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of peace and tolerance as they responded with their own values and reflections to the events in the books and to their own experience.

This research has demonstrated that the spirit and power of story as a learning tool and as a medium through which we come to terms with difficult and traumatic ideas and events cannot be overstated. Moreover, it also showed that the ability of young children to respond to and handle these kinds of issues, should not and cannot be underestimated.

Afterword

The children I worked with are now aged 10 and 11 and I recently contacted Ms. W to ask her how they were progressing. She said that the children still recall the stories we shared. She then told me about their reaction to a political incident in Taiwan, when a certain government officers discriminated against native-born Taiwanese people, whose first language is Taiwanese, in favour of the group of people who moved from Mainland China to Taiwan in 1949, and whose first language is Mandarin. His attitude has fuelled dispute across the country. The children I taught told Ms. W that his behaviour reminded them of the inhumanity of the Nazis and that no one has the right to think they are superior to someone else. The children's reaction reminds me of Habib's point about a story's long-lasting impact on its readers:

> As teachers, we may be able to assess to some degree the meaning of a text in our classroom, yet we will never be fully aware of its long-lasting impact on our individual students, as they may revisit the themes, rethink the themes, and reconnect with the themes of the stories in later life. One story can hold different meanings for different readers, and can also mean different things to us at different times in our lives (2008:50-51).

It will be interesting to see how the stories continue develop in the children's minds.

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

Anne Frank (2007)

6. Primary text

<u>Ten Selected Picture Books Used in the Study</u>

Abells, C.B. (1986). *The Children We Remember*. New York: HarperCollins.

Adler, D. A. (1987). *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm*. California: Urj Press.

Burningham, J. (2003). *Granpa*. London: Red Fox.

郝廣才 (Hao, G. C.) (2000). *希望的翅膀 (The Wings of Hope)*. 台北 (Taipei): 格林文化事業有限公司 (Grimm Press).

肥田美代子 (Hita, Miyoko) (1995). *Yuzi's Dream* (ゆずちゃん). Tokyo: ポプラ社 (Poplar Publishing).

Innocenti, R. (2004). *Rose Blanche*. London: Red Fox.

Oppenheim, S. L. (1992). *The Lily Cupboard*. New York: HarperCollins.

高浜直子 (Takahama,Naoko) (1995). *Thank You, Kitty* (ありがとう　ニャアニャア). Tokyo: 岩崎書店 (Iwasaki Shoten).

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陳致元 (Chen, Z. Y.) (2006). 一個不能沒有禮物的日子 (*The Best Christmas Ever*). 台北（Taipei）: 和英出版社 (Her-Yin Books).

方素珍 (Fang, S. J.) (1996). *祝你生日快樂* (*Happy Birthday to You*). 台北 (Taipei): 國語日報.

Frank, A. (2007). *The Diary of A Young Girl.* London: Penguin.

Grimm, J. and Grimm, W. (2003). *Hansel and Gretel.* London: Walker.

管家琪 (Guan, J. Q.) (1999). *元宵姑娘* (*Lanterns Festival*). 台北 (Taipei): 國語日報.

Hoestlandt, Jo. (1995). *Star of Fear, Star of Hope*. London: Walker.

Jacobs, J. (2007). *The Three Little Pigs*. London: Standard Publishers, Inc.

Kodama, Tatsuhara. (1995). *Shin's Tricycle*. London: Walker.

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8. Appendices

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Appendix I: Summary of the ten picture books

1. I'll always love you (我永遠愛你) written by Hans Wilhelm and illustrated by Hans Wilhelm
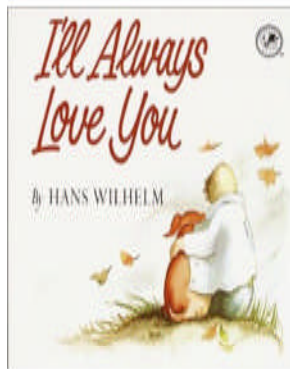
This story is about a young boy who loves Elfie—the best dog in the whole world. Both the little boy and Elfie grow up together. However, Elfie gets rounder and older while the boy grows taller and bigger. The little boy tells Elfie "I'll always love you" every night before going to bed and he believes Elfie will understand. One day, Elfie does not wake up. The whole family feels sad and so does the little boy. However, he feels much better when he remembers that he has always told Elfie how much he loves her. Someone offers him a new pet, but, he refuses it because he knows that he is not ready for it yet. He will always remember to tell the new pet "I love you" when he is ready to have one.

2.<u>Granpa</u> written and illustrated by John Burningham
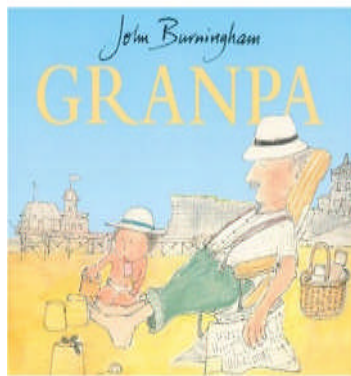
This story is about a very special relationship between a little girl and her grandfather. Grandfather
plays dolls with her, takes her to the beach, goes ice-skating and fishing with her. They share some precious moments and adventures together. However, grandfather gets ill one day. The empty sofa where the little girl used to sit with her grandfather, reminds her that her grandfather has gone.
However, life must go on, and we see the Little girl pushing her doll's pram up the hill.

3.The Number on My Grandfather's Arm written by David, A. Adler. Photographs by Rose Erichenbaum
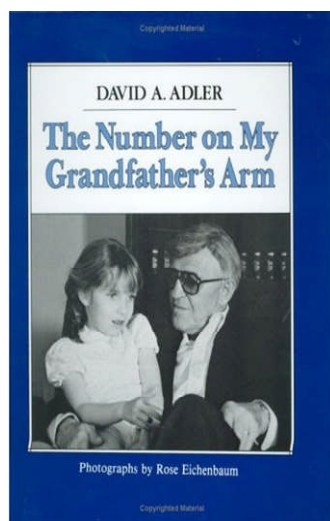
This book is about a loving relationship between a young girl and her grandfather shown through both text and black-and-white photographs.
When the little girl notices a number printed on her grandfather's arm, he finally tells her his story during World War II. He explains to the little girl why and how the war began, how he was sent to Auschwitz and how he, and many other Jewish people were treated before and after they were moved to the concentration camps. Grandfather was lucky enough to survive the concentration camp but many of his friends and family were not so fortunate. The little girl comforts her grandfather with a hug and tells him that he should not be ashamed at all to let people see the number on his arm.

4.The Children We Remember (請不要忘記那些孩子) by Chana Byers Abells, with photographs from the Archives of Yad Vasherm, The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, Jerusalem, Israel.
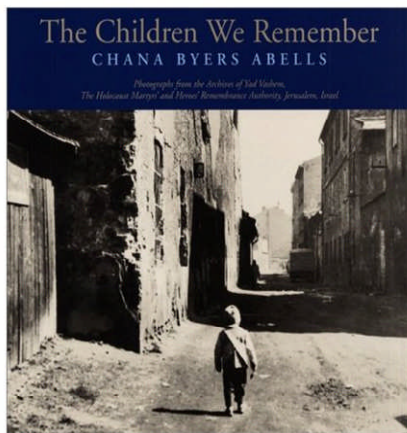

Through black-and-white photographs the book shows Jewish children's lives before the Nazis came and the misery they encountered after the Nazis' arrival. Their happy faces make a strong comparison with their sad, thin faces after the Nazis' arrival. Some children were killed by the Nazis, and others survived. This is a story about loss and death, courage and patience.

**5.The Lily Cupboard, A Story of the Holocaust** by Shulamith Levey Oppenheim, illustrated by Ronald Himler
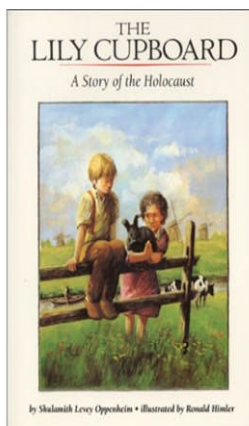
When The Second World War began Mirima's parents decided to send her to a family in the countryside so she would be safe. Mirima did not want to be parted from her parents, and she did not like the new place though it was in a very beautiful environment. She felt unhappy because it was not her house and she was not with her parents. Nello and his parents treated her very well but she was not happy. One day, Nello showed her a hutch full of rabbits. Mirima chose one among them and named him after her father, Hendrik. She promised to take care of him and keep him safe forever and she felt less sadness when she held Hendrik. One day, the Nazis came to the farmhouse and Mirima was told to go quickly and hide in a Lily cupboard. Mirima did not want to hide without Hendrik. Finally, they both hid in the Lily cupboard at the last second. The soldiers checked the house but found nothing odd so they left. Both Mirima and Hendrik were safe.

## 6.Rose Blanche (微絲網上的小花) by Roberto Innocenti and Ian McEwan
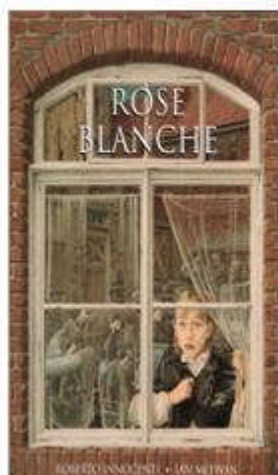
During World War II, life continued as normal for a young German schoolgirl, named Rose Blanche.

She still went to school and played with friends, but one day, she saw two soldiers capture a little boy on the street. The soldiers shouted at him boy and treated him badly. Rose Blanche was furious about the way the soldiers treated the little boy and she was curious about where the people in the lorry were taking the little boy. She followed the soldiers and discovered a concentration camp in the woods. She could not believe what she just saw—she saw a group of children who looked like ghosts with skinny hands and eyes full of sorrow. She heard some of them calling for food, food, food. After this, Rose Blanche saved some of her food and took it to the camp for the children. Rose Blanche did this for a long while until one day she went to the camp and saw that no one was there anymore. She heard gunshots. Rose Blanche disappeared that day.

7.Erika's story (大衛之星) byRuth Vander Zee, illustrated by Roberto Innocenti
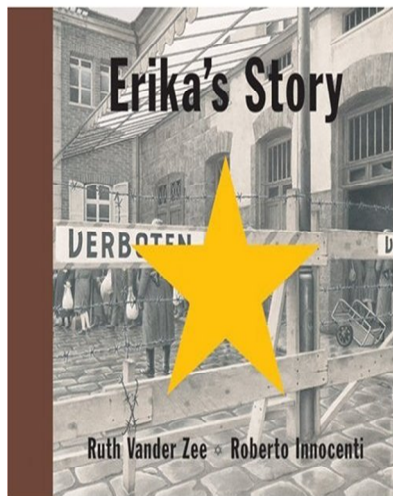
"My mother threw me from the train in order to escape." A Jewish woman in Germany today tells how, as an infant, she survived the Holocaust after she was thrown from a train on its way to the concentration camps in 1944. However, she never had the chance to see her parents again. She imagined what her parents were whispering to her before she was thrown out of train. Erika was raised by a German woman who estimated her age and gave her a birthdate. The German woman gave Erika a new home, took care of her and sent her to school. She married when she was twenty-one and had her own children and grandchildren later on.

8.The Wings of Hope (希望的翅膀) by Kuang-Tsai, Hao, illustrated by Ying-Fen, Chen
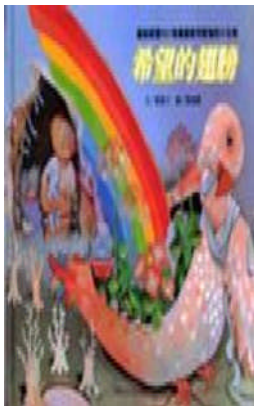
Tian-Yu, was named when his mother who was pregnant with him at the time saw a big white bird flying in the blue sky. As he grew up, he wished to have a pair wings that he could fly and see his school, cars, and trains from the sky. He dreamt about this almost every night. One night, he heard the sound of a bird's wings being broken and then everything in the room was moving. All his toys fell on to the floor and he heard people screaming outside. He tried to shout out but he could not even hear his own voice; he could not move. He kept on screaming but no one heard his voice, no one noticed him. Many people came to rescue the victims of this terrible earthquake; many people sent food, drinks, sleeping bags, tents and medicine. Finally Tian-Yu had his real pair of wings and now he looks at people he loved from the sky and hopes they are as happy as he is.

9.Thank you, Kitty (ありがとう ニャアニャア) by Naoko Takahama and illustrated by Yoshiko Hata

In 1995 Japan experienced a huge earthquake. Midori stayed up late that night to finish making a gift for her cousin. While she was sitting in the room, the house suddenly began to shake. There was a blackout so everywhere was dark and Midori was buried underneath some rubble. Midori heard someone calling her name and, to draw attention to where she was buried, she tried to make sounds as loudly as possible. Unfortunately, the noise she made was not loud enough to be heard and people thought that Midori was no longer there. Midori was scared but there was nothing she could do except try harder to make a louder noise. She felt hopeless and almost wanted to give it up. Meanwhile, she saw a kitten running towards her, Midori hugged it to her chest and she felt much warmer. Midori felt better with kitty's company and she kept making sounds when she heard someone was approaching the house. Because of the kitten, she found hope again.

10.Yuzi's dream (ゆずちゃん) by Miyoko Hida, illustrated by Kinji Ishikura

All of a sudden, the light went off, and everything was shaking. The little boy, Taichi, noticed that he could not move at all. His parents' voices were getting weaker and he heard a very faint sound of Yuzi, the little girl. What the little boy heard was Yuzi calling his name before he fainted. Yuzi and Taichi were classmates and they sat next to each other. Sometimes they quarrelled but they were good friends. One day, the teacher asked the students what they were going to be when they grew up. Yuzi said that she wanted to have a balloon shop. The balloons could be used to heal hurt and cure diseases. This was Yuzi's dream, to give one balloon to every child in the world. These balloons would float high in every corner of the world to cheer everyone up. But there was an earthquake and it took away Yuzi's dream. Yuzi will not go to school anymore. Everyone in the class brought one balloon to say farewell to Yuzi. It seemed to Taichi that he heard Yuzi's laughter when the balloons floated high in the sky.

Appendix II: Example of lesson plan

Topic Two: War (the Holocaust)

Theme: Otherness and prejudice

Grade level: Year 3 and 4 (ages 7 and 8)

Subject: Literacy/reading

Organization: whole class and group work

Time: 40-50 minutes

Goals: By telling students the story of what happened to the character's grandfather during the World War II, I intend to help the students create for themselves an idea of what happened during the Holocaust. Students will be helped to understand how the victims were treated at that time.

Activity procedures:

Activity #1: The teacher will show students a postcard which she collected from the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. showing people with yellow stars, letters and numbers. Teacher will ask students to interpret what they see from the postcard and what they think those stars, letters and numbers represent. Students are then divided into groups to have a short discussion on their findings.

Activity #2: After sharing their ideas the teacher will begin to tell students the story and allow the pupils to figure out what those symbols exactly represent. Teacher will explain in greater detail symbols which were not shown on the postcard.

Activity #3: Show students a world map and help them point out the countries of Europe, and the place where the grandfather in the story came from. Students will share their opinions after the story sharing. In addition, students will be asked to imagine how they would feel if there was a number tattooed on their forearm.

Activity #4: Role play: students are divided into two groups: masters and slaves. Masters will ask slaves to do everything to make them really tired; meanwhile, slaves will obey the orders given by masters. The roles will be reversed so that everyone has the opportunity to be master and slave. Students will shore how they feel after the imaginative role play.

Materials: Story book (*The Number on My Grandfather's Arm*), a world map, and a postcard.

Follow up: *The Children We Remember*, which also contains authentic photographs, will be introduced to students to show what happened to the victims.

Topic Three: Natural Disaster (Earthquake)

Theme: Optimism and Hope

Grade level: Year 3/4 (ages 7 and 8)

Subject: Literacy/reading

Organisation: whole class, group work and individual work

Time: 60-120 minutes

Goals: Through a warm story to express about the feeling of being in dark while there is an earthquake. The story is about the earthquake happened in Japan in 1995.

Activity #1: Students are asked to look at one picture Thank You, Kitty and to predict what might have happened before the teacher tells the story.

Activity #2: The teacher then tells the story but stops in the middle of the story where the main character tries to get out by making noises to attract the rescuers' attention. Students are asked to predict what may happen to the main character.

Activity #3: The teacher will prepare one tent and switch off all the lights in the classroom for students to hide in to experience being in the dark, in order to create a mock earthquake experience. Students are divided into six groups, and take turns to enter the tent. The tent will be covered with one blanket and at least one mat, but the experience of students in each group will be slightly different. Group one: the tent will be covered with one blanket and one mat. Group two: the tent will be covered with one blanket and two mats. Group three: the tent will be covered with one blanket and one mat; the tent will be shaken by another group of students. Group four: the tent will be covered with one blanket and one mat, and students hiding in the tent are asked to make sounds one by one using what they are provided with. Group five: the tent will be covered with one blanket and mat, and students hiding in the tent are

asked to make sounds all together using what they are provided with. Group six: the tent will be covered with one blanket and one mat, the students hiding in the tent are asked to make sounds all together while the tent will be shaken by another group of students.

Activity #4: The teacher will ask students to recall the story told before the tent activity as a review. The teacher will then carry on telling the story, and by the end of the story, students will share their reflections.

Activity #5: Students are going to imagine that they are the little girl in the story and create a spiral writing based on what they think the kitten brings for the little girl.

Materials: papers, tent, mats, blanket and story book of *Thank you, Kitty*.

Appendix III: Participant's Questionnaire

親愛的小朋友們，

這份問卷是要讓你們和蔡老師

🔶 知道你們的閱讀習慣、興趣和經驗。

🔶 幫助你們知道自己在這個主題中學到
了什麼。

🔶 幫助蔡老師了解你們對活動和故事的
喜好程度。

🔶 表達你們對改善課程活動的想法。

謝謝你們花時間填寫這份問卷。

問卷調查

A部份：個人背景

1. 你叫什麼名字？

2. 你的母語（最早在家用來聽、說的語言）是什麼？

3. 如果中文不是你的母語，請問你何時開始學習用中文閱讀？

4. 請問你幾歲？

5. 請問你的性別是什麼？

□ 男生　　　　　　　□ 女生

B部份：你的閱讀經驗

6. 請問你幾歲開始學習用你的語言閱讀？

當我＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿歲時

7. 你最常在那裡閱讀？

□ 家裡．　　　　　　□ 學校．

8. 你多常閱讀？

　　□每天．　　　　　　　□每個星期．

　　□每個月．　　　　　　□不知道．

9. 當你在閱讀遇到困難或問題時，你會請誰幫忙？

＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

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C 部份: 閱讀習慣和興趣

10. 你最喜歡閱讀什麼樣的書和為什麼?(可以選一個以上的答案).

　　□童話故事　　　　□真實和歷史故事

　　□幻想　　　　　　□詩

　　□冒險故事　　　　□繪本

　　□雜誌　　　　　　□幽默好笑作品

　　□漫畫書　　　　　□非文學類

　　□跟動物有關　　　□運動書籍

其他 ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

請寫下你為什麼選擇這些答案的理由.

＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

11. 你喜歡閱讀繪本嗎?

　　□ ☺　　　　　□ ☺　　　　　□ ☹

12. 當你閱讀繪本時, 你會看圖畫嗎?

　　□ 會.　　　　　□ 不會.
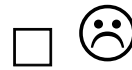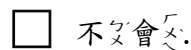
13. 你會利用圖畫來幫助你閱讀嗎?

　　□ 會.　　　　　　□ 不會.

14. 在你閱讀一本書之前,你如何知道故事的內容?

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. 你喜歡跟你的朋友和家人討論和分享你看的書嗎?

　　□ ☺　　　　　　□ 😐　　　　　　□ ☹

16. 請寫出三本你最喜歡的書名.

_____

_____

_____

_____

D 部份: 關於兒童文學的創傷主題

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17. 請依個人對下列那一個主題的感覺或印象，依序填上數字 1 到 3. (1=最強烈, 3=最弱)

☐ 死亡　　　☐ 戰爭（大屠殺）

☐ 自然災害（地震）

18. 你覺得你的個人經驗和那個主旨有相關? (可以選一個以上的答案).

☐ 寵物的死亡　　　☐ 生命必須繼續

☐ 不同性和偏見　　　☐ 隱匿和勇氣

☐ 和別人不同　　　☐ 倖存者

☐ 樂觀和希望

19. 你最喜歡閱讀那一本書?(可以選一個以上的答案).

☐ 我永遠愛你　　　☐ 外公

☐ 在爺爺手臂上的號碼

☐ 請不要忘記那些孩子

☐ 百合花櫃　　　☐ 鐵絲網上的小花

☐ 大衛之星　　　☐ 希望的翅膀

☐ 謝謝喵喵　　　☐ 阿讓的氣球

請寫下你為什麼選擇這些答案的理由.

_____

20. 你最不喜歡閱讀那一本書？（可以選一個以

上的答案).

☐ 我永遠愛你　　　　☐ 外公

☐ 在爺爺手臂上的號碼

☐ 請不要忘記那些孩子

☐ 百合花櫃　　☐ 鐵絲網上的小花

☐ 大衛之星　　☐ 希望的翅膀

☐ 謝謝喵喵　　☐ 阿讓的氣球

請寫下你為什麼選擇這些答案的理由.

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. 你從這些書和活動中學到了什麼呢?

_____

_____

_____

22. 你喜歡這些關於創傷主題的活動嗎?
☐ ☺　　　☐ 😐　　　☐ ☹

23. 你最喜歡哪一個活動?請說明.

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_____

_____

_____

_____

24. 你ㄋㄧ最ㄗㄨㄟ不ㄅㄨ喜ㄒㄧ歡ㄏㄨㄢ哪ㄋㄚ一ㄧ個ㄍㄜ活ㄏㄨㄛ動ㄉㄨㄥ?請ㄑㄧㄥ說ㄕㄨㄛ明ㄇㄧㄥ.

_____

_____

_____

_____

25. 如ㄖㄨ果ㄍㄨㄛ你ㄋㄧ是ㄕ老ㄌㄠ師ㄕ,你ㄋㄧ會ㄏㄨㄟ怎ㄗㄣ麼ㄇㄜ改ㄍㄞ善ㄕㄢ那ㄋㄚ些ㄒㄧㄝ你ㄋㄧ不ㄅㄨ怎ㄗㄣ麼ㄇㄜ喜ㄒㄧ歡ㄏㄨㄢ的ㄉㄜ活ㄏㄨㄛ動ㄉㄨㄥ?

_____

_____

_____

_____

* Question number three was omitted in English version because I was sure that the first language of the children I worked with was English.

Dear boys and girls,

This questionnaire is for you and Ms. Jennifer

- to know what your habits and interests in reading are.

- to help you know what you have been learning about this project.

- to show Ms. Jennifer if you have enjoyed the classroom activities and stories.

- to express your ideas about developing classroom activities.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete it.

Questionnaire

Part A: Background and personal details

1. What is your name?

2. What is your mother tongue (first language)?

3. How old are you?

4. What is your gender?
   ☐ Boy   ☐ Girl

Part B: your experience as a reader
5. At what age did you start to learn to read in your own language?

At_____years old.

6. Where do you do most of your reading?

☐ Home.   ☐ School.

7. How often do you read?

☐ Daily   ☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly   ☐ Do not know.

8. Who helps you read when you have difficulties in reading?

_____

Part C: Reading interests and habits

9. What types of books do you read the most and why? (Tick as many as you wish.)

☐ Fairy tales   ☐ Realistic and historical fiction

☐ Fantasy   ☐ Poetry

☐ Adventures   ☐ Picture books

☐ Magazines   ☐ Humour

☐ Comics   ☐ Non-fiction

☐ Animals   ☐ Sport

Other_____

Please give the reason for your answer.

_____

_____

_____

10. Do you like to read picture books?

☐ ☺   ☐ ☻   ☐ ☹

11. Do you look at pictures when you read?

☐ Yes.   ☐ No.

12. Do you use pictures to help you read?

☐ Yes.   ☐ No.

13. How do you know what a story will be about before you read it?

_____

_____

14. Do you like to talk about books you read with your friends and family?

□ ☺   □ 😐   □ ☹

15. Please name up to 3 of your favourite books.

_____

_____

_____

Part D: Feedback on the ten books we have shared together

16. Please number the three topics from the project in relation to your personal feelings. 1=the strongest personal feelings and 3=the weakest personal feelings.

☐ Death   ☐ War (Holocaust)   ☐ Natural Disaster (Earthquake)

17. Which theme under these topics do you feel is relevant to your own experience? (Tick as many as you wish.)

☐ Pet's death   ☐ Life must go on

☐ Otherness and prejudice   ☐ Concealment and courage

☐ Confidence in individuality   ☐ Survival

☐ Optimism and hope

18. Which picture books did you enjoy reading the most? (You could choose more than one answer)

☐ I'll always love you   ☐ Granpa

☐ The number on my grandfather's arm   ☐ The children we remember

☐ The lily cupboard   ☐ Rose Blanche   ☐ Erika's story

☐ Thank you, Kitty   ☐ The wings of hope   ☐ Yuzi's dream

Please give reasons for your choice.

_____

19. Which picture books did you enjoy reading the least? (Tick as many as you wish.)

☐ I'll always love you   ☐ Granpa

☐ The number on my grandfather's arm ☐ The children we remember

☐ The lily cupboard   ☐ Rose Blanche   ☐ Erika's story

☐ Thank you, Kitty   ☐ The wings of hope ☐ Yuzi's dream

Please give reasons for your choice.

_____

_____

_____

20. What did you learn from these picture books and activities?

_____

_____

_____

21. How much did you enjoy the activities we did?

☐ ☺   ☐ 😐   ☐ ☹

22. Which activities you enjoy the most? Please explain.

_____

_____

_____

23. Which activities you enjoyed the less? Please explain.

_____

_____

_____

24. If you were the teacher, how would you improve the activities that you did not enjoy?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix IV: Parental questionnaire

親愛的爸爸媽媽:

　　這一個月以來,我們透過繪本與小朋友談及黑暗議題(死亡和戰爭)的學習,在家的時候,小朋友是否曾與您及其他家中成員談及相關話題呢?趁著活動接近尾聲之際,妙妙老師想透過這份問卷,觀察小朋友這個月以來的反應,也希望您的不吝指教,給予妙妙老師更多不同的想法.

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　妙妙老師敬上

1. 寶貝是否曾在家談論在學校聽到的故事?請簡單描述寶貝當時的敘述

2. 以您的論點而言,而言您覺得寶貝對這些故事有興趣嗎?

3. 寶貝是否會在家另外搜尋跟聽過的故事相關的資料?請舉例說明之.

4. 以您的論點而言,跟寶貝談論這些議題合不合適?

5. 寶貝在這個活動之後,對 "生命" 的態度或想法是否有改變?請簡單敘述寶貝的情況.

6. 活動結束之際請勾選您對整個活動設計的滿意度.

　　□ 非常滿意,□ 滿意,□ 不滿意,□ 非常不滿意。

7. 活動將進入下一個主題:地震! 請寫下給妙妙老師的建議讓寶貝與我能有更多層次的話題探討.

Dear parents,

We have been learning with your baby about traumatic issues (separation and loss and war) through picture books in the past month. I wonder whether your baby has ever mentioned or discussed any relevant topics with you or other members of family at home. The whole project is coming to the end soon, through this questionnaire, I would like to have a brief understanding about your baby's learning processes and his/her reflection towards these traumatic issues back home. In addition, your opinions in teaching the traumatic issue to your baby will be valued and your evaluation of the project will be very much considered for my further teaching.

Best regards,

Ms. Jennifer Tsai

1. From your observation, does your baby talk about the stories he/she heard from school at home? Please briefly describe his/her expression.

2. From your point of view, do you think your baby is interested in these stories?

3. Have your babies ever searched for further and relevant information related to the stories he/she heard. Please give an example for your answer.

4. From your point of view, is it appropriate to discuss these issues with babies?

5. Does your baby's attitudes or thoughts towards "human experiences" and lives ever changed after the project? Please briefly describe your baby's situation.

6. Now that your child has completed two-thirds of the project, are you satisfied with what has happened so far?

☐ very satisfied ☐ satisfied ☐ unsatisfied ☐ very unsatisfied

7. The project is moving on to the next topic: Earthquake. Please write down your suggestions for my future teaching to develop multiple layers discussions with your babies.

Appendix V: Example of fieldnotes

14-April-2006

Story: Granpa

Students talked about their grandpas before I started to read the story.

Page 4: I asked students whether they had ever sung songs with their grandpa or grandma. They all said yes. James performed the song he liked to sing with his grandparents. Others shared the titles of songs their grandparents like the most.

Page 11-12: Most of the children said that when the little girl and her grandpa were having a fight, she might say something like "I don't like you", "I don't care" or "I don't want to play with you anymore" to her grandpa—in order to make her grandfather angry with her.

However, she regretted it later for being rude to her grandpa. I asked the children what would make them mad if they heard someone say something mean to them. The answers are varied, e.g. "I don't like you", "I don't care", "You're stupid", "You're a pig" and so on.

Page 25-26: Most of the children could tell that grandpa was sick. Some of them said he was still mad at the little girl. The pale colour of his face made him look sad and a bit older.

Page 29-30: The empty chair represented grandpa's death or sickness (stayed at hospital). Some of the children thought that grandpa might just not be in the living room. However, the sadness on the little girl's face brought the messages of hopelessness and the death of her grandpa to the children.

Page 31: Some children thought that the little girl is happier again and some of them thought that she is a big sister now. Most of the children believe that her life must go on with or without her grandpa. However, the most important thing is that her grandpa is always in her mind.

Appendix VI: Example of notes from my reflection journal

My Reflection on 18th of May, 2006 after the story of *Thank You, Kitty*:

In the story of *The Wings of Hope*, most of the children could understand the concept of earthquake, however, they could not really understand the feelings of suffering and being trapped, for that was not part of their personal experience. They nevertheless, built on the value of supporting people in need.

Compared with the story of *The Wings of Hope*, I believe that the children's reaction and reflection to the story *Thank You, Kitty* was deeper and they engaged more with the story and the experience of Midori. The tent activity surprisingly did not make the children giggle or chat inside the tent as I worried about initially. The tent activity turns out more successful than I expected. After the tent activity, they were able to empathise with the main character's experience of being in the dark and trapped by the earthquake. They were all able to talk about their feelings of being in the darkness as well as being trapped.

Appendix VII: Letter asking for premission from the headteacher

Institute of Education, University of Warwick

Coventry, CV4 7AL, United Kingdom

XX 校長鈞鑒:

　我目前是英國華威大學就讀兒童文學的博士班學生，我的研究興趣是透過兒童繪本來引導 7 到 8 歲小朋友對死亡、戰爭和自然災害這些議題的認識，並從中學習小朋友對自己的情緒管理。此外，我也想了解透過兒童繪本和戲劇活動的設計，是否能讓小朋友對這些議題建立起他們自己的想法和面對的態度。

　您可以從我的履歷表知道我有幾年的教學經驗。 我的大部份教學經驗都和讀寫能力的發展有關，像課程和活動的設計。 我希望能透過實現這個教室行動研究對這些議題有更深入的了解， 而且，我相信透過這個研究，能幫助我日後的教學，設計出更能幫助學生互動和了解這些議題的教案。

　身為老師，呈現較敏感和創傷性的議題給小朋友並不是要讓他們害怕，而是透過引導和感受的方式讓他們了解真實的人生，並且建立一個樂觀的人生觀；即使我們曾經痛苦過，即使我們處在或經歷過最艱難的時期，只要心中有愛和希望，一切事情都會再次好轉。 我計畫將一些有關於道德教育的問題像公平、忍耐、同理心和感受都設計到教案中。

　如果您同意讓我在貴校實行我的行動研究，我會非常感激的。我希望能在貴校有 15 到 20 個小時在一個大約 35 人的班級實際教學的機會，我計畫的研究對象是實歲 7 到 8 歲的小朋友(國小二年級)， 我希望能

在不影響學校的課程進度的情況下，利用國語文課或說故事時間或來做我的行動研究。我的資料收集方法包括上課和活動的記錄、小朋友和我之間的對話和互動的錄音和錄影、小朋友的活動照片、日誌記錄、訪問、小朋友的文字或繪畫作品和問卷調查。 我也會透過學校，得到參與此研究的小朋友和父母親的同意。我保證絕對不會擅自公開學校、老師和小朋友的名字,除非獲得參與者的同意.

　　希望能在未來有機會到貴校實際進行我的行動研究. 隨信附上我的履歷表供您參考.懇請您能給予我這個機會。

　　請您在同意書上簽名表示同意此項研究，並在您最方便的時間內繳回。誠摯謝謝您！隨函附上兩份同意書,請自行保留一份以供參考。

蔡佩妙敬上

致 蔡佩妙

　　我,＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿,＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿ 國小
校長, 允許蔡佩妙在本校實施她的行動研究.

校長簽名：　　　　　　　　　　日期：

5-Jan-2005

Dear Mr. xx,

I am currently reading for my Mphil/PhD in Education Studies focusing on children's literature at the University of Warwick. My specific interest lies in researching ways to introduce texts which deal with adversities such as death, war and natural disaster to children in the 7-8 age group, to establish how they deal with emotions that are stirred up through these occurrences and to find out if through reading a range of picture books and engaging in imaginative role play the children may be able to experience these events and respond to them.

As you may have noticed from my résumé, I have some years experience in working with children. Much of my teaching experience focuses on literacy development, such as designing lessons and activities. I would hope to be able to carry out this action research through classroom activities which will help me gain insights into this issue. In addition, the project would help me to develop lesson plans which will facilitate the children's learning and interaction with such issues.

As a teacher, it is not my intention to frighten children with 'traumatic issues' but to expose them, in a way which is conducive to their level of understanding, to the realities of life and to be able to build optimism that "Things will be all right again when we have Love and Hope, even if we have suffered, even in times of great difficulty." I anticipate including moral questions into the lessons about fairness, tolerance and empathy.

In this regard, I would be grateful if you would permit me to carry out my research project at your school in the coming October. I hope to be able to have 15-20 hours of actual teaching with the whole class (roughly 35

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students). I will be also appreciated if I could have the opportunity of meeting with and getting to know students in the school setting for approximately one week in late March. The ideal target population for my project are children aged 7-8. Additionally, I would like to conduct my research in either, or all of these curriculum areas: literacy hour, drama class or PSHE slots, since I intend not to disrupt the daily curriculum. My data collection methods will include audio and videotape recordings of the children and myself in conversation, activities and teaching, photographs, diary recordings, interviews, children's writing, pictures and questionnaires. I will also, through the school, secure permission from parents and children to involve them in the research. I guarantee confidentiality of information and promise that the names of the school, colleagues and children will not be made public without your permission and the permission of those who wish to be named.

I would very much appreciate the opportunity to carry out my research at your school. I have enclosed my résumé for your review. I am willing to provide the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure at your request. I thank very much for your time and consideration. I enclose two copies of this letter. Please retain one copy for your files.

Yours Sincerely,

_____

Jennifer, PeiMiao Tsai

Date_____

To whom it may concern

I,_____,   Headteacher   of

_____(name of school),

give my permission for Jennifer, PeiMiao Tsai to undertake her research in the school.

Headteacher's signature_____

Appendix VIII: Letter asking for permission from the parents

<div align="right">Institute of Education, University of Warwick

Coventry, CV4 7AL, United Kingdom</div>

親愛的家長,

　我目前是<u>英國華威大學兒童文學博士班</u>的學生，我的研究興趣是透過兒童繪本來引導 7 到 8 歲小朋友對死亡、戰爭和自然災害這些議題的認識，並從中學習小朋友對自己的情緒管理。此外，我也想了解透過兒童繪本和戲劇活動的設計，是否能讓小朋友對這些議題建立起他們自己的想法和面對的態度。這將是我的榮幸!如果能得到您的允許和支持您的小孩參與此項研究。

　我的資料收集方法包括上課和活動的記錄，小朋友和我之間的對話和互動的錄音和錄影,小朋友的活動照片、日誌記錄、訪問、小朋友的文字或繪畫作品和問卷調查。 我也會透過學校,得到參與此研究的小朋友和父母親的同意。 我保證絕對不會擅自公開學校、老師和小朋友的名字,除非獲得參與者的同意.

　請您在同意書上簽名表示同意此項研究，並在您最方便的時間內繳回。誠摯謝謝您!

　隨函附上兩份同意書,請自行保留一份以供參考.

<div align="right">蔡佩妙敬上</div>

此致　蔡佩妙

　我　　　　,_____, 允　　　　許
_____(小孩名字)參與蔡佩妙在本校實施的行動研究.

家長簽名:　　　　　　　　　　　　日期:

Institute of Education, University of Warwick

Coventry, CV4 7AL

7-Jan-2006

Dear families,

I am currently reading for my Mphil/PhD in Children's Literature at the University of Warwick. My specific interest lies in researching ways to introduce texts which deal with adversities such as death, war and natural disaster to children in the 7-8 age group to establish how they deal with emotions that are stirred up through these occurrences and to find out if through reading a range of picture books and engaging in imaginative role play, the children may be able to experience these events and respond to them. I would be grateful if you would give your permission for your child to take part.

My data collection methods will include audio and videotape recordings of the children and myself in conversation, activities and teaching, photographs, diary recordings, interviews, children's writing, pictures and questionnaires. I guarantee confidentiality of information and promise that the names of the school, colleagues and children will not be made public without your permission and the permission of those who wish to be named.

I would be very much appreciated if you would sign and return the slip below at your earliest convenience. I enclose two copies of this letter. Please retain one copy for your files.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Jennifer, PeiMiao Tsai

_____

Date:_____

To Jennifer, PeiMiao Tsai

I,_____, (your name), give my permission for _____(child's name) to take part in your research.

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Appendix IX: Ethical form

An University of Warwick ethical approval from was completed and submitted to the Institute of Education and approved.