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A Historical Examination of Punishment and Forgiveness
In
Literature for Children

By
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November 2013

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THE MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM IN LIBERAL STUDIES
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ABSTRACT

The study of forgiveness gained momentum in the 1980's when scientists were interested in finding a link between forgiveness and its benefits to mental health. The research resulted in a plethora of published books on the topic of forgiveness, found in the self-help section of many booksellers. However, the topic of forgiveness is often evident in literature for adults and for children, as well. This concept as seen in children's literature has undergone changes over history. This final project analyzes select picture books and books for independent readers and adopts a historical perspective in order to illuminate a historical shift in how punishment and forgiveness play out in literature for children.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness is an important human experience. It encourages one to see beyond the transgression and engage in positive feelings and behaviors. It can also be a motivator to salvage damaged relationships. There is a connection between punishment and forgiveness that might mediate a forgiveness outcome.

Punishment and forgiveness do not always go hand-in-hand, but can often be the case in literature for children.

My graduate studies have afforded me the opportunity to explore many subjects through the lens of children's literature including gender, identity, attachment, and the human-animal bond. These studies have informed and broadened my understanding of children's literature. A class on the subject of forgiveness gave me the opportunity to study forgiveness theory and apply that theory to books for children. I found the stories of those who could not forgive compelling, and I found the stories of those who forgave following heinous transgressions truly powerful. This class provided the inspiration for this study.

This study will explore the subject of forgiveness in literature for children from a historical perspective. Selection of literary examples involved three parameters: 1. Two major time periods in history: books published before 1960 and after 1960; 2. A small sampling of books: eleven; and 3. Two different types of children's books: picture books and independent readers. All of the books selected for this study are currently in print.

I propose that there is a historical shift in the presentation of the relationship between punishment and forgiveness in books for children. I suggest that in older canonical books punishment is represented as overt and physical, such as a spanking or whipping, which is in the spirit of retributive justice. More recent books published after 1960 present punishment as subtle and cerebral such as withholding a toy or isolating a child in his room to encourage thinking about the issue, which is in the spirit of restorative justice. This project suggests that punishment in children's literature changes over time: from very overt and physical to more cerebral and subtle. This study also suggests that the relationship between forgiveness and punishment moves from simplistic to a more complex, nuanced understanding of forgiveness. This complex, nuanced understanding of forgiveness involves feeling of empathy for a transgressor. This will be examined in more recently published independent readers.

This study will examine the relationship between retributive and restorative forms of punishment and evidence of forgiveness in texts for children through three points: the nature of the transgression, the form of punishment, and evidence of forgiveness in the text. To further the discussion, a fourth point will be discussed: the study will evaluate the response of the reader. More specifically, does the reader's empathy lie with the transgressor, the one who wrongs another, or with the one who punishes the transgressor? Questions for further discussion include:

1. What can we glean about society and literature in examining books for children over a historical period of time? What is the difference in how punishment emerges in books for children over time, and what is its

- relationship to forgiveness? And is the target year of books published before and after 1960 a useful turning point for this analysis?
2. What types of books might be appropriate to discuss forgiveness with young children as they progress as readers?
 3. Do the victim's in the books in this study receive the justice that is initially intended as a result of the punishment, and is the offender held accountable?
 4. Do the books in the study do justice for forgiveness? Can the reader find it or is it hidden?

Friends, divorce, death, and pets are some of the many subjects present in picture books for young children and books for children who read independently. But the subject of forgiveness falls among these more mainstream and marketable subjects. For example, two good examples of books addressing the subject of forgiveness are Edith Hope Fine's *Under the Lemon Moon* (1999) and William Steig's *The Real Thief* (1978).

The victims and offenders engage in positive behavior in this picture book and independent reader, Furthermore the victims develop feelings of empathy for their offenders. These two factors – positive thoughts and actions and empathy – encourage forgiveness. Steig's book will be discussed in chapter VI: Punishment and Forgiveness in Children's Books Published after 1960.

There are many other books for children that address the subject of forgiveness. Forgiveness may be obvious, as it is in Fine and Steig's books, but in other books, the subject of forgiveness might not be as evident. Further discussion of such books is needed in order to uncover its significance.

This study includes an overview of forgiveness and its relationship to religion and a brief discussion of the instinctual nature of forgiveness. A theoretical

framework of forgiveness is presented including a definition of forgiveness and retributive and restorative justice models and their relationship to forgiveness.

Moreover, this framework includes Worthington's model of forgiveness suggesting that empathy is an important factor in forgiveness. Following an introduction to the literature, these theories will be applied to the selected literature from a historical perspective, highlighting the historical shift between punishment and forgiveness.

A discussion will address questions posed in this introduction followed by a conclusion, which suggests directions for future research.

CHAPTER II: OVERVIEW

For those whose religious teachings and traditions begin in childhood, a life-long exposure to a specific religious teachings and traditions can be a guide in one's life. The teachings and traditions can provide solace during times of profound grief, but they are also celebratory in times of joy. The same can be said with regard to forgiveness. "All religions," Whitney states, "have some kind of structured mechanisms that are rooted in fundamental existential concerns" (xviii). These structured mechanisms, however, are very diverse whether one is an observer of Catholicism, Judaism, Muslim, or Amish (Whitney xviii). Though there is great diversity among faiths, "forgiveness," write Rye et al., "becomes a means for imitating God, carrying out God's plan, or embracing one's relationship with the divine" (17). There seems to be purity in this statement. One is not trying to fulfill a hidden agenda by engaging in forgiveness. The motivation to forgive comes from God's divine qualities, and it suggests an attachment to God.

An article by Davis, Hook, & Worthington in 2008, suggests that a secure attachment to God is positively related to forgiveness. This secure attachment to God might be at the root of why the Amish choose to forgive immediately following the horrific shootings in their peaceful community of Nickel Mines, PA, in 2006. Their attachment to God gives them comfort as they deal with such an atrocity. Their teachings also dictate if you don't forgive, you won't be forgiven. So they practice acts of forgiveness everyday as situations arise (Whitney 8). This practice

perhaps brings the Amish closer to God, enabling them to embrace their relationship with God.

This secure attachment to God may be a life-long process for some, but others may feel a profound attachment quite quickly. Nevertheless, the relationship between forgiveness and religious teachings and traditions is evident. But religions provide numerous role models for those who have forgiven despite horrendous transgressions. These role models help those who are faithful to see that forgiveness is a positive option following terrible injustices. Religious teachings and traditions also help those who are victimized to adjust their attitudes toward their offenders (Rye et al. 18). A relationship with God and members of the religious community helps in this process. Not everyone, however, relies on his religious background to engage in the process of forgiveness. For some, forgiveness might be more of a process or decision unrelated to religion. In fact, it may be more of an instinct.

Several decades of research on group living animals suggests that conflicts among animals often end with peaceful reunions. This evidence helps to understand humans' propensity for forgiveness (McCullough 114). Reconciliation may be the goal of the forgiveness instinct.

Early in the twentieth century a leading scientist named Wolfgang Kohler punished a chimpanzee. Following the punishment, Kohler wrote: "she had flung her arms around my neck, quite beside herself, and was only comforted by degrees, when I stroked her" (McCullough 117). Kohler suspected that the chimpanzee was seeking forgiveness and reconciliation. While it is known that chimpanzees raised

in captivity are different from those in the wild, this exchange set the stage for continued research. Decades later, research showed that non-human primates engaged in friendly contact following a conflict. This suggests that this is done to preserve the relationship in the family unit, even if that family unit is non-human (McCullough 117). In fact, reconciliation among family members following a conflict is often evident. "Human beings," writes McCullough, "maintain a certain set of moral rules for kith and kin, and a very different set for outsiders" (3). In other words, our propensity to forgive family members may be stronger because the familial relationship may need to be salvaged, and in the instance of non-human primates, survival of the species.

The evidence suggests that the instinct to forgive is an evolved feature of man, and that the instinct to forgive might be inherent in all humans. While the instinct to forgive may be present, the circumstances involved play an important role in activating that instinct. Consideration might be given to the nature of the transgression, what punishment might be involved, who is involved, and if the victim seeks to continue the relationship.

This overview provides a snapshot of the nature of forgiveness, which is helpful in the broader understanding of the subject. In order to examine the children's books selected for this study, the following chapter provides a theoretical framework is outlined including a definition of forgiveness and retributive and restorative justice models of forgiveness. This framework also includes

Worthington's model of forgiveness suggesting that empathy is an important factor in forgiveness.

CHAPTER III: FORGIVENESS FRAMEWORK

How is forgiveness defined? The answers may vary depending on who is hurt and the nature of the offence. For instance, following a transgression between siblings, a heartfelt apology may end the hurt, heal the wound, and encourage forgiveness. On the other hand, in order to forgive a thief, justice might be sought. Depending on the severity of the transgression, justice might be incarceration. Alternatively, it may take years for a betrayed spouse to let go of the negative feelings of hurt and anger in order to forgive. But a pastor might urge a congregant to follow the teachings of the scriptures in order to engage in forgiveness. All of these instances may be accurate definitions of forgiveness. Researchers, however, have not always agreed on a single exact definition of forgiveness because it is multi-faceted and context dependent. Factors influencing forgiveness include the nature of the offence, the severity of the transgression, the parties involved, the need for justice, or one's moral beliefs. There does, however, seem to be a consensus among researchers on what forgiveness is not.

Forgiveness should not be confused with pardoning, condoning, excusing, forgetting, and denying. Pardoning implies the offender is excused from punishment; condoning implies the offence is justified; excusing implies the offender has good reason for committing the act; forgetting implies the offense is gone from memory; and denying implies the offense is not hurtful or harmful (McCullough et al. 8). For the purposes of this paper forgiveness will be defined as:

1. Decisional forgiveness: to release the offender from debt incurred by wrongdoing and;
2. Emotional forgiveness: the process of setting aside feelings of resentment in order to let go of negative thoughts and feelings toward the offender replacing those thoughts and feelings with positive ones.

The difference in these types of forgiveness is dependent upon the relationship with the transgressor. If the transgressor is a stranger, the victim may feel motivated to forgive in order to move on from the event, but continuing a relationship with the transgressor is not the goal. However, if the victim has a close personal relationship with the offender, forgiveness may be a path to heal the damaged relationship (Wade, Worthington & Meyer 423-424). Healing of the damaged relationship can lead to increased positive outcomes for both parties in the future.

One might also need to assess the nature of the transgression. Is the transgression mild such as a strange, hurtful remark, or is the transgression severe such as an adulteress affair? The severity of the transgression impacts how a person engages in the process of forgiveness. In any case, Lawler-Row et al. states that "(1) the reduction of negative feeling, thoughts, and behaviors and (2) the enhancement of positive thoughts, feelings and behaviors" (235) are two processes of forgiveness that may lay the groundwork for forgiveness. Positive behavior might be the end result regardless if there is reconciliation with the offender. A clear-cut definition of forgiveness may never develop. Although philosophical debates on forgiveness will continue, for purposes of this paper forgiveness involves the act of letting go of negative thoughts, feelings, and actions in favor of positive ones.

The process of forgiveness appears to lie on a continuum in which the victim moves through stages in order to forgive. This continuum, according to Malcolm and Greenberg (179) ranges from recognition of and acceptance of negative emotions to the development of a new story about the victim and the offender. Within this continuum lies the aspect of empathy. Once a victim is able to feel empathy for his transgressor, he can then begin to create a new story or perhaps move on from the transgression.

“Empathy,” writes Welton, Hill & Seybold, “is the practice of taking the emotional perspective of another individual” (168). This practice could lead to a clearer understanding of the transgression and offender. In order to do this, a victim must imagine himself in the role of the transgressor. The victim must put his own feelings of hurt or betrayal aside in order to focus on the offender. The ability to understand the offender’s actions in a different light, aside from the personal transgression may lead to feelings of empathy for the transgressor, which in turn can encourage forgiveness (169).

In family situations these feelings might develop with more because of close personal relationships, and also there is motivation to reconcile in order to maintain family harmony and salvage the friendship. Moreover, a victim is privy to other positive information about a transgressor from past interactions, which is not necessarily the case with a stranger. This additional information might make it easier to view the transgression in a different light, perhaps as a one-time occurrence or due to circumstances beyond the transgressor’s control. All of this can potentially

play a role in how empathetic feelings develop because it leads to a clearer understanding of a friend or family member's situation, which can lead to forgiveness. On the other hand, with a stranger there is an absence of positive attributions for the transgressor making it more difficult to glean clarity of the transgression. Furthermore, unlike a friend or family member, there is no prior positive history on which to glean and no relationship to salvage. So there might be less personal motivation to forgive.

"Forgiveness," Worthington believes, "is an interpersonal transaction in which a forgiver chooses to abandon his or her right to retaliate against or withdraw emotionally from an offender after an offence" (60). This leaves the door open to communicate about the events that took place that may have precipitated the transgression. Empathy is the heart of Worthington's empathy-humility-commitment model following his research on forgiveness in personal relationships.

Empathy, as discussed above, is the first part of the model. Without an understanding of the transgressor, his feelings, his situation, one is unlikely to forgive because the victim cannot imagine himself as the offender. This shortsighted view doesn't allow the victim to understand or grasp the offender's perspective. The second part – humility – allows the victim to see the offender as human and fallible but also that he himself is fallible. In other words, the victim might have had similar feelings, but wants to see the negative feelings subside from the offender. The victim understands he is not immune to potentially committing a similar transgression. The third part – commitment – is the final step in Worthington's

model. Forgiveness can only happen with a commitment. The victim's commitment to forgive suggests he can communicate his intention to forgive as well as move on from negative events. This commitment also suggests a change in attitude. The victim's first instinct might have been revenge or retribution, but with feelings of empathy and humility, the attitude changes. This attitude shift may be more positive. The commitment to forgive also suggests willingness to publicly announce his intentions to forgive the offender (Worthington 63-64).¹

Following a transgression, one might feel an injustice has occurred. The transgression might be mild or severe but this feeling of injustice creates a gap: "a discrepancy between the way things are and the way things ought to turn out" (Witvliet 305). This is called an injustice gap, which is generally fueled with negativity and unforgiveness. In an attempt to reduce the injustice gap, the negativity and unforgiving feelings, retributive and restorative justice models are activated (Witvliet 305).

The injustice gap may be profound following a transgression and the victim might feel the need for revenge or to "get back" at the offender. This feeling to get even may be a way to begin to close the injustice gap, but it is also retributive in nature. "Feelings of retributive justice," writes Karremans and Van Lange, "entail the motivation to take actions in response to wrongdoing, and to sanction the offender for his or her actions" (291). The U.S. criminal justice system follows this model. A crime occurs, the offender is arrested, and the offender is sentenced or

¹ Worthington's model of empathy will be discussed in William Steig's *The Real Thief* and Vicki Grove's *Reaching Dustin*.

punished for his or her crime. A murderer, for example, might receive 20 years in jail for his crime, but a shoplifter might only receive probation. The purpose of the punishment is to deter future crimes as well as crime of the same nature by another person. Retributive justice is less likely to produce interpersonal connections and reconciliation between the victim and offender may or may not be the ultimate goal. Retributive justice attempts to maintain feelings of safety and order in social situations following the offence (Hill, Exline & Cohen 481-482).

While the main goal or response to retributive justice may be to deter future offences, there is a level of forgiveness that occurs with this justice model. Researchers concur across the justice continuum – no justice to retributive justice to restorative justice – feelings of anger and negative emotions decreased as did unforgiving motivations and there is an increase in empathy, positive feelings and the motivation to forgive (Hill, Exline & Cohen 483). While the first instinct following a transgression might be to obtain justice, the negativity and unforgiveness may decrease following retributive justice because the injustice gap is smaller.²

Unlike retributive justice, restorative justice focuses on restoring “whatever dimensions matter in a specific context to victims, offenders and the community, the aim being able to respond to wrong doing by healing rather than hurting” (Strelan, Feather & McKee 1539). Open communication is the centerpiece of restorative

² The victim may feel better about the situation because justice occurred, as we will see in the picture book *The Lonely Doll* by Dare Wright and the independent reader *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett.

justice. Victim, offender, and community members involved are afforded the opportunity to discuss the events of the transgression and provide an explanation for the hurtful behavior. An opportunity for apology follows, with the intention to heal and repair the damage (McCullough 176). Hill, Exline & Cohen write that “when an offending party apologizes for offensive behavior, the apology results in increased empathy in the offended party” (484). Through this open communication, an offender would have the opportunity to explain why, for example, he stole money: because he was hungry and needed money to buy food. This explanation could also include how truly sorry he is. As a result of this communication, all parties – victim, offender, and community members – have a clearer understanding of the event. Clarity of the events can evoke feelings of empathy for the offender, which encourages forgiveness.

Forgiveness is more readily associated with restorative justice than retributive justice because the model not only encourages open dialogue between the victim and the offender, but also works to repair the damage resulting from the transgression.³

The process of forgiveness is no doubt complex and individualized. No one person experiences the process of forgiveness in a similar manner. The literature examined in this study highlights the complex nature of forgiveness but also informs the child reader – and the adult reader alike – about the relationship of punishment and forgiveness and its shift in perception over time.

³ The restorative justice process will be discussed in picture book *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* by Kevin Henkes and the independent reader *Reaching Dustin* by Vicki Grove.

CHAPTER IV: INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE

Children's literature gained serious recognition in the early part of the twentieth century. Much was encouraged to promote the development of children's literature. The first Newbery Medal was awarded in 1922 to recognize the most distinguished contribution of literature for children. The Caldecott Medal followed in 1938 for the most distinguished illustration. In the nineteen teens, publishers began to develop children's departments for the publications of children's books and newly designed children's spaces in local public library became a haven for children to read and explore literature including picture books designed specifically for them (Kiefer 70-71).

How do we define picture books? Simply put: a picture book is a book designed for children "in which images and ideas join to form a unique whole. In the best picture books, the illustrations are as much a part of our experience with the book as the written text" (Kiefer 156). *Miss Rumphius* (1982) by Barbara Cooney is a good example of this unique whole.

Cooney's pictures in the book are detailed, rich, and vibrant. They do not stand on their own; rather they support the corresponding text creating this unique whole. On page 11, for example, Miss Rumphius is pictured standing on a beach with the ocean in the background. Giant tropical trees wave in the background. The people greeting her are dressed in shorts and shirts, as they stand smiling and barefoot in the sand. Miss Rumphius is pictured talking with the King of the fishing

village, as he gently extends a shell for her. In return, she extends her hand to receive the gift. The illustration includes animals, shells, a grass roofed hut, and many children. Cooney's text reads:

So Miss Rumphius went to the real tropical island, where people kept cockatoos and monkeys as pets. She walked on long beaches, picking up beautiful shells. One day she met the Bapa Raja, king of a fishing village. (11-12)

Cooney's words and pictures work harmoniously to narrate the story, and they are just as important because "they can help children develop an early sensitivity to the imaginative use of language and add to their overall experience with a picture book" (Kiefer 181).

Picture books are most often published for young children. Very young children enjoy touch-and-feel books such as *Pat the Bunny* (1940) by Dorothy Kunhardt that combine interactive elements that enable a toddler to touch, to smell, and to lift flaps. These elements not only delight the toddler, but also are engaging. The toddler is fully engaged with the tactile elements of the book but also enjoys the added benefit of listening to an adult read the story. Preschool and school age children read picture books that are repetitive such as Eric Carl's *The Very Busy Spider* (1984); predictable such as Pat Hutchins's *Rosie's Walk* (1968); and cumulative such as Audrey Wood's *The Napping House* (Kiefer 140). With books such as these, children develop valuable pre-reading skills.

Increasingly more and more picture books are published for older children. Because of this consideration, a book's content is important (Kiefer 181). Patricia Polacco's *Pink and Say* (1994) reflects on the Civil War, and Bill Peet's *The Wump World* (1970) is an environmental tale. In the case of these two books, there is a significantly more text in comparison to Carle's *The Very Busy Spider*. Nevertheless, these picture books for older children adhere to the definition of a picture book: the images and ideas from a unique whole.

Picture books are wonderful because they provide the reader with a unique blend of words and pictures. Working in harmony, the words and pictures convey the author's story. As a book is read, a non-reader can delight in the message of the pictures; an emergent reader can develop and hone his emerging skills as a reader while he decodes the text with the help of the accompanying pictures. As the emerging reader's skills develop, reading gradually becomes an independent activity.

According to the Educator's Guide to I Can Read!, a child who reads independently is at levels 3 and 4: Reading Alone and Advanced Reading. Children reading at these levels read books whose themes and stories are more complex. The vocabulary is challenging and rich. The books often have small chapters, with a wide range of subject matter including humor, historical fiction, friendship, mystery, and adventure (3). Generally, children begin to read independently in first grade. Once this happens, the choices of books for the independent reader are plentiful.

Children reading independently can certainly read picture books and many likely do, but children who read on their own often gravitate toward books that might satisfy their own interests. These books include series books, such as the immensely popular Harry Potter Series by J.K. Rowling and Magic Tree House Series by Mary Pope Osborne. Independent readers also enjoy books about fantasy. For example, the reader meets Bilbo Baggins in Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937), a classic adventure and fantasy tale about underworld creatures and *Across Five Aprils* (1964) by Irene Hunt is a historical novel that tells the story of the Civil War through the voice of Jethro, a nine-year-old boy (Keifer 288, 429, 476). It is likely there is a book available on any subject for any independent reader.

This study examines the subject of forgiveness and its relationship to punishment in children's literature from a historical perspective. A shift in punishment style is apparent around 1960. The pre-1960 books show punishment as overt and physical and the post-1960 books show punishment as subtle and cerebral. This shift in punishment style also signifies a shift in the relationship between punishment and forgiveness: from simplistic to a more complex, nuanced understanding of forgiveness. Children's picture books and independent readers were selected to complete this analysis. Book selection for this project falls within a very clear set of parameters.

The first principal of selection is a representative sample from two major time periods in history. The selection of children's books for this study was compiled according to date of publication: pre-1960 and post-1960. Selection of the earlier

books— particularly the picture books—was relatively straightforward because punishment and evidence of forgiveness is transparent. In particular, the illustrations of punishment in the earlier picture books are obvious: there is no mistaking Edith's spanking in *The Lonely Doll*. However, selection of the post-1960 independent readers presented an exception. Historical books for independent readers did not fit the pattern because the time-period of these stories takes place before the publication date.

For example, Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1975) might seem an excellent choice to include in this study. This book was not selected because the story takes place at an earlier time in history, before 1960. Although the book was published in 1975, much of the punishment is physical, which supports the spirit of retributive justice. Careful attention to the time period of historical novels and their publication date were considered before final selection.

The second principal of selection required numerical manageability. The study examines seven picture books and four independent readers published between 1903-2001. Because the scope of this study is limited in length, this sample provides a sketch of books that discuss punishment and forgiveness. Inclusion of additional books in each time period would provide a more in-depth analysis of the relationship of punishment and forgiveness and evidence of the shift around 1960. A third principal of selection required examining picture books on the one hand and independent readers on the other hand. The study proposes that empathy is a significant factor in forgiveness in the post 1960 independent readers. However, this

factor is evident in the picture book *Mr. Lincoln's Way*. Picture books such as this offer the reader more text and more room for analysis and deeper thought.

The manners in which punishment and forgiveness are presented to children vary. A child's personal experience with these subjects may impact the reader's response. For example, a child raised in a home that condones physical punishment might find the pre-1960 publications in this study completely acceptable. On the other hand, exposure to these books by a child raised with a subtle punishment style could be forbidden. So a child's experience might fully inform his response to the text. But these real-life boundaries can fade with a book such as Steig's.

Because of the highly developed plot in Steig's book, a reader might feel challenged and possibly overwhelmed by the number of issues that surface such as example, betrayal, deception, punishment, forgiveness, and isolation. But because this book is set in a mythical kingdom, the reader can separate himself from the real world. He might have to lean on his own beliefs to rectify some situations in the book, but there is a certain amount of separation between the real and the imaginary. This might enable a more unbiased questioning of the text and fuller understanding of the complex issues and the role that punishment and forgiveness play in rectifying those issues.

The subsequent two chapters examine punishment and forgiveness and applies the theoretical framework to the following pieces of literature:

Pre-1960 Picture Books

The Tale of Peter Rabbit (1902), Beatrix Potter

The Tale of Benjamin Bunny (1904), Beatrix Potter

The Story About Ping (1933), Marjorie Flack

The Lonely Doll (1957), Dare Wright

Pre-1960 Independent Readers

Anne of Green Gables (1902), L.M. Montgomery

The Secret Garden (1911), Frances Hodgson Burnett

Post 1960-Picture Books

Where the Wild Things Are (1963), Maurice Sendak

Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse (1996), Kevin Henkes

Mr. Lincoln's Way (2001), Patricia Polacco

Post-1960 Independent Readers

The Real Thief (1975), William Steig

Reaching Dustin (1998), Vicki Grove

**CHAPTER V:
PUNISHMENT AND FORGIVENESS IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS
PUBLISHED BEFORE 1960**

In this chapter, the relationship of punishment and forgiveness will be discussed through picture books and independent readers published before 1960. All of the literature selected for this analysis is still in print. The picture books *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902), by Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny* (1904) by Beatrix Potter, *The Story about Ping* (1933) by Marjorie Flack, *The Lonely Doll* (1957) by Dare Wright and the canonical novels *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) L. M. Montgomery, and *The Secret Garden* (1911) by Frances Hodgson Burnett present punishment as overt and physical as it relates to forgiveness.

Beatrix Potter, Marjorie Flack, and Dare Wright were three authors at the forefront of the children's literature explosion that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century. Their highly popular and regarded books, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, (1902), *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny* (1904), *The Story about Ping* (1933), and *The Lonely Doll* (1957) share a common thread: they present a relationship between physical punishment and forgiveness. This form of punishment presented in these picture books is retributive in nature because victim's response, as Karremans and Van Lange write, "is to take action in response to the wrongdoing" (291). This action helps quickly address the transgression, deter the behavior from happening again, and maintain order.

Potter's books are charming tales about two mischievous rabbits who are cousins: Peter and Benjamin. In her first book, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Peter forsakes his mother's firm and cautionary warning:

"Don't go into Mr. McGregor's garden. Father had an accident there; he was put in a pie by Mr. McGregor." (Potter 10)

While in the garden, Peter is discovered by Mr. McGregor. Because Mr. McGregor feels a great injustice at the sight of Peter in the garden, his reaction is to "get back" at him. He pursues Peter throughout the garden, running at him with a rake and tries to capture him with a sieve. Potter's illustration of this is interesting: There seems to be a contradiction in how the illustration is drawn and what is actually drawn. Her choice of pastel colors and gentle, lightly drawn characters evoke a sense of calm. The actions of the characters in the illustrations, however, are violent and scary against the calm, soothing backdrop of her illustration style.



<https://www.google.com/search>

Mr. McGregor is frightening as he runs behind Peter, and Peter appears clearly terrified by this. Ultimately, Peter escapes from the garden and Mr. McGregor's punishment, and the reader may think Peter is never punished. But in the process of

eluding Mr. McGregor's wrath, he loses his clothes. Because of Peter's misbehavior, Mr. McGregor feels an injustice occurred. He feels angry and the need to punish Peter. He feels the need to not only get back at Peter but also to capture him. The reader is left to ponder what Mr. McGregor intended to do once he captured Peter. Perhaps relocation? Perhaps death? But taking action in response to Peter's wrongdoing occurs following an injustice (Karremans and Van Lange 291). Mr. McGregor does successfully chase Peter out of the garden, but this chase may prevent Peter from entering the garden again, which is synonymous with the main goal of retributive justice: to deter future behavior. This may have been successful because Peter is apprehensive to enter the garden again in *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*.

Mr. McGregor may feel he receives some justice as a result of his actions. Because of this some level of decisional forgiveness is evident. Mr. McGregor does not excuse Peter's behavior, but releases him from his transgression. Mr. McGregor may feel as though he is able to move on from the offence. This is evident when he makes a scarecrow with Peter's clothes. Erecting and dressing the scarecrow with Peter's lost clothing may have reduced his feeling of anger and negative emotions.

Peter's story does not end when he returns home. His mother is displeased by this loss, and Potter's text portrays this anger:

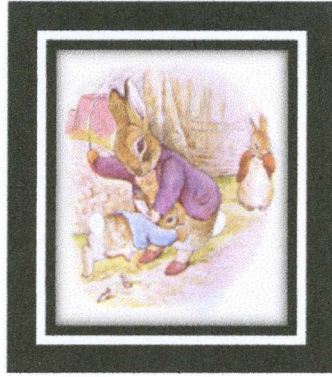
She put him to bed and made some camomile tea:
and she gave a dose of it to Peter!...But Flopsy, Mopsy,
and Cotton-tail had bread and milk and blackberries

for supper. (56-59)

This anger does not last, however. Following another terrifying journey to the garden, in Potter's next book, *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*, Peter's mother forgives him.

In *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*, we meet Benjamin, Peter's cousin. Benjamin assures Peter it is safe to return to Mr. McGregor's garden to retrieve his clothes because "Mr. McGregor had gone out in a gig, and Mrs. McGregor also; and certainly for the day, because she was wearing her best bonnet"(Potter 18). While in the garden, they retrieve Peter's clothes and gather onions to take home. However, they are startled by a cat and hide under a basket. They are trapped under the basket for hours because the cat falls asleep on top of the basket. They are released from the basket when Benjamin's father, Old Mr. Benjamin Bunny comes looking for them.

Old Mr. Benjamin Bunny's response to this wrongdoing is similar to Mr. McGregor's retributive justice: in order to maintain order and achieve justice, Old Mr. Benjamin Bunny physically punishes the two bunnies. He takes his son out of the basket, and "whipped him with a little switch. Then he took out his nephew Peter" (Potter 53). Potter's illustration of this is shocking, but once again she uses a palate of bright colors and gentle lines in tandem with a brutal punishment:



<https://www.google.com/search>

After the whipping, both Peter and Benjamin are traumatized both from the whipping and witnessing each other's punishment. Benjamin is crying and clutching his back, and Peter is wiping his eyes as they walk out of the garden. Both rabbit's ears are down, which may indicate feelings of remorse. Old Mr. Benjamin Bunny follows the two rabbits with his ears held high as he carries the vegetables. He is smoking his pipe.

Old Mr. Benjamin Bunny might feel a bit less angry with his son and nephew. He may also feel satisfied justice occurred, which may encourage his decision to forgive the rabbits. Moreover, this physical punishment may deter the cousins from entering the garden again. Old Mr. Benjamin Bunny decides to forgive the cousins. Forgiveness. On the other hand, Potter's text indicates an emotional forgiveness of Peter by his mother upon his return:

When Peter got home his mother forgave him because
she was so glad to see that he had found his shoes
and coat. (59)

The mother's elation indicates she has replaced negative feelings – evident in the previous book – with positive feelings. These positive feelings lead to forgiveness.

It is interesting to speculate where the reader's response might lie with these two rabbits. Both are young and impulsive and a reader might expect such misbehavior. But Potter's illustrations are powerful because the reader can see the fear in Peter's face as he runs from Mr. McGregor. Similarly, too, the reader is shocked as Old Mr. Benjamin Bunny whips Peter as Benjamin stands crying in the background, tears falling down his front. Both instances could produce empathic feelings for these two rabbits. It might have been Potter's intention to produce these feelings on the part of the reader, but a reader might also feel empathy for the character that punishes.

Both rabbits know they are forbidden in the garden because they could meet their demise. But why wouldn't a reader feel empathetic feelings for Mr. McGregor? If the reader is a gardener himself, he could have experiences such thievery from critters and Mr. McGregor's reaction could resonate with such a reader. Mr. McGregor works hard tilling and hoeing the earth to plant his crops only to have pesky rabbits steal them. Certainly feelings of empathy could be felt for him because of the effort he gives to his garden. Does he need to chase Peter away brandishing a rake? Perhaps not, but this image tells us that he is not only serious but also angry. It might be more difficult to feel empathy for Old Mr. Benjamin Bunny because the reader might associate him with an authoritative father.

He uses punishment to curb bad behavior. And the punishment is harsh!

In fact, Potter's illustration is difficult to look at because it is so real. But he does not attempt to discuss the situation with either rabbit. Also there is no remark to the cousin's explaining their transgression such as, "I told you two not to go in the garden." They only receive punishment.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit and The Tale of Benjamin Bunny were both published right after the turn of the twentieth century. In 1933, Marjorie Flack published *The Story about Ping*, a picture book about a yellow duck living on the Yangtze River. Flack's text alerts the reader of the physical punishment following a specific transgression:

Ping was always careful, very very careful not to be last,
because the last duck to cross the bridge always got a spank
on the back. (5)

Unfortunately, Ping is fishing, his head underwater when the Master of the Boat calls for the ducks to return. Afraid of his certain fate, Ping goes ashore for the night. His is reunited with his boat, but quickly realizes he will be the last to board. His efforts to avoid the painful spank are in vain; Ping cries out in pain:



<https://www.google.com/search>

In order to reclaim order, the Master of the Boat uses spanking as punishment. His actions clearly sanction the offender. However, the Master of the Boat never forgets the transgression, because every duck that is last is spanked. Forgetting the transgression is not necessary to forgive (McCullough et al. 8). But the Master of the Boat decides to forgive Ping because he is allowed back on the boat--as well as all the other ducks that commit the same offence. Furthermore, as a result of this punishment forgiveness is also evident because order is restored, and it is likely Ping will never transgress in the same way again.

A reader could feel great empathy for Ping. His transgression happens because he is doing what is asked of him. Unlike Peter and Benjamin who blatantly disregard instructions to stay away from Mr. McGregor's garden, Ping is innocently unaware of the call. It is easy to put oneself in Ping's shoes because this is an occurrence that can happen to anyone. Similarly, Ping's apprehension to return to the boat is easily understood. Who would want to be punished simply for being last? After all, someone has to be last! So all of the ducks live with that understanding. This is somewhat difficult to reconcile because Ping is receiving punishment for following instructions. Not feeling empathy for Ping would be a tragedy.

Published in the first third of the 20th century, Potter and Flack's books physical form of punishment is done with an object. *The Lonely Doll* published in 1957 by Dare Wright shows punishment without an object. Additionally, unlike

Potter and Flack's books, which use illustrations, Wright medium is black and white photography. Her use of photography brings a life-like quality to the characters. *The Lonely Doll* chronicles the experience of a doll named Edith and her adventures with two stuffed bears.

Edith is a lonely doll looking for a friend. She immediately befriends Little Bear and Mr. Bear, and the three of them have many adventures. Early on, Edith and Little Bear learn Mr. Bear will scold them if they are naughty. For example, Edith and Little Bear are scolded when they make a mess or get dirty. But the major transgression happens in Mr. Bear's absence.

Edith and Little Bear make a mess in the bathroom and write a hurtful message on the mirror with lipstick: "Mr. Bear is just a sill old thing" (Wright 36). Mr. Bear is angry when he sees the message and the mess and as a result Mr. Bear spans Edith and Little Bear:



<https://www.google.com/search>

After they are punished, Edith and Little Bear atone for their transgression by cleaning up but also engaging in an apologetic dialogue with Mr. Bear. Following their apologies, Mr. Bear says, "Well now, in that case I think perhaps we forget all about it" (Wright 45). This is in contrast to Ping's Master who does not forget, but perhaps this is Mr. Bear's way of assuring Edith and Little Bear they are forgiven. He chooses not to dwell on their transgression, which indicates he has "let go" of the negativity surrounding the event. Also, Mr. Bear promises to continue a relationship with Edith and Little Bear.

It might be easier to feel empathy for Edith rather than Little Bear because Edith expresses such fear when Little Bear writes the message on the mirror. She insists on doing the right thing – and is truly repentant with Mr. Bear-- but Little Bear is defiant. He seems fearless, unaware of the potential consequences. His blatant remark, "Who cares what Mrs. Bear Says?" indicates this lack of fear but also rebellion. Even though it is Little Bear who uses the lipstick to write the message, Edith is the first to be spanked, which could evoke feelings of sadness. Little Bear does not own up to his transgression, and it seems as though Edith is the scapegoat.

These four books suggest that the victims decide to forgive their offenders. None of the victims' actions following the punishment suggest they are harboring negative feelings. After all, they seem to return to what they were doing. The offenders are therefore released from their wrongdoing and likely will not offend again, at least in the same manner.

L.M. Montgomery's classic independent reader *Anne of Green Gables* is the first in a series of books about Anne Shirley and Green Gables. In this initial book, Anne, an orphan, arrives at the home of Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert. Anne is curious, imaginative, and talkative and thrilled she will be living at Green Gables. The book recounts her adventures as she makes a home with Matthew and Marilla. Anne goes to school, excels in her studies, and develops friendships and rivalries. Over the course of the book, Anne develops a profound love and affection for Matthew and Marilla. It is clear that this is reciprocated. However, Matthew and Marilla are challenged by Anne's behavior on many occasions. Her tribulations are often result from not growing up in a traditional household with clear-cut expectations and rules. Anne may also not realize that she must respect and honor adults. In particular, we see evidence of Anne's transgressions in Chapter IX, *Mrs. Lynde is Properly Horrified*, and in Chapter XV, *A Tempest in the School Teapot*.

In Chapter IX, Mrs. Lynde is at Green Gables to meet Anne. Mrs. Lynde's first impression of Anne is rather unkind. In fact, her remarks are hurtful. She insults Anne's appearance by calling her skinny and homely and suggests her freckles are outrageous. Mrs. Lynde finishes with a rude comment about her hair, "And hair as red as carrots!" (Montgomery 57). One might think this is the real transgression, but it is Anne's reaction to these hurtful comments that receives overt punishment.

In response, Anne shouts back, "I hate you" (Montgomery 57). Stamping her feet, Anne exclaims to Mrs. Lynde how hurt she is by her remarks. She is without

restraint and really does not care. At the end of her tirade, she shouts, "I will *never* forgive you for it, never, never!" (57).

There is a big difference in what Mrs. Lynde expects to happen following her comments to Anne about her appearance. Mrs. Lynde expects Ann to be polite and accept her comments with grace, but Ann is defensive and offends Mrs. Lynde. This transgression highlights the way things are and how things turned out, an injustice gap (Witvliet 305). In response, both Marilla and Mrs. Lynde feel it is necessary to punish Anne for this transgression.

Mrs. Lynde suggests a physical punishment with a birch switch for Anne, which is certainly an attempt to sanction Anne for her wrongdoing. Marilla does not concur with Mrs. Lynde, but her choice of punishment is overt and in direct response to Anne's wrongdoing. Marilla insists that Anne must atone for her bad temper and ask Mrs. Lynde to forgive her. Anne continues to be defiant, unwilling to approach Mrs. Lynde. Marilla insists on an apology and tells Anne, "but apologize to Mrs. Lynde you must and shall and you'll stay here in your room until you can tell me you're willing to do it" (Montgomery 61).

Anne's confinement in her room is swift and certainly overt. And, she must stay in her room until she relents. This confinement is an attempt to force an apology and beg forgiveness from Mrs. Lynde. So while this overt punishment is not physical, it is an attempt to not only maintain order, but to obtain a certain result.

Marilla seeks retribution to sanction Anne for her transgression and force her to make the right decision. Marilla must maintain order especially in social situations with Mrs. Lynde. After all, Anne must speak respectfully to Mrs. Lynde! So this style of punishment not only maintains order but also helps to deter Anne from acting in this manner in the future. Maintaining order and deterring future behavior are main goals of the retributive justice model (Hill, Exline & Cohen 481-482). This punishment forces Anne's apology to Mrs. Lynde in order to be forgiven.

Anne's apology to Mrs. Rachel Lynde is forthright and sincere. On her knees, holding her hands out to Mrs. Lynde, Anne atones for her transgression saying, "Oh, Mrs. Lynde, I am so extremely sorry...it was wicked of me to fly into a temper because you told me the truth. It *was* the truth" (Montgomery 64). Mrs. Lynde offers her forgiveness to Anne by saying, "of course I forgive you" (65).

There is no doubt that Mrs. Lynde's forgiveness of Anne is the result of her heartfelt apology, but there is a hint of emotion in her forgiveness of Anne. Though she criticizes Anne's hair calling it "terrible red," she does show a bit of emotion in her forgiveness of Anne. She quickly offers hope to Anne saying that as she grows up her hair will darken to a "handsome auburn." This emotional aspect of forgiveness indicates Mrs. Lynde sets aside her feeling of resentment of Anne and has replaced that resentment with positive thoughts and feelings (Worthington, Wade & Meyer 423-424). Throughout the book, Anne continues to have transgressions with other adults. However, in chapter XV, *A Tempest in the School Teapot*, Anne's temper at a fellow classmate brings harsh punishment.

Anne's red hair seems to be the topic of much insult! In an effort to gain Anne's attention, Gilbert Blythe, a fellow student picks up her long braid and says, "Carrots! Carrots!" (Montgomery 93). In a quick thrust, Anne picks up her writing slate and slams it down on Gilbert's head. Similar to the Anne's transgression with Mrs. Lynde, there is a gap in what happened and what is expected to happen.

Perhaps Gilbert expects Anne to give him a nasty glance or tell the teacher she is being teased. Gilbert certainly does not expect Anne to assault him with her writing slate. But it is the teacher, Mr. Phillips, who must interject and punish Anne. Again, the retributive justice model is activated because the teacher punishes Anne in an overt manner, more overt, in fact, than Marilla. His goal: to sanction Anne for this wrongdoing of hitting Gilbert with her writing slate, and maintain order and safety in the classroom, which are outcomes of retributive justice (Hill, Exline & Cohen 481-482).

Mr. Phillips tells Anne to stand in front of the blackboard for the afternoon. On the blackboard, just above Anne's head, he writes, "Ann Shirley has a very bad temper. Ann Shirley must learn to control her temper" (Montgomery 93). Her teacher reads the lines for the class. In essence, Mr. Phillips gets back at Anne through this explicit punishment. This punishment not only sanctions Anne but also deters Anne from doing this again. Moreover, he has made an example of Anne. The entire class is deterred from acting in a similar manner because they witness the transgression and subsequent harsh punishment.

Unlike Mrs. Lynde whose forgiveness of Anne is emotional, it seems that Mr. Phillips makes the decision to forgive Anne. Unlike emotional forgiveness, decisional forgiveness releases the offender from debt incurred by the wrongdoing (Wade, Worthington & Meyer 423-424). His punishment releases Anne of her wrongdoing. Her teacher, choosing to maintain order in the class with a heavy hand, goes back to the business of teaching lessons. At the end of the day, the class is dismissed. There is no discussion of the events and no opportunity for Anne to apologize to the class. The class resumes the next day as if nothing happened. Unfortunately, Mrs. Phillips does not replace the negative feelings with positive ones, because Anne is punished the next day. Instead of seeing Anne as a strong student with good qualities, he views her as a troublemaker. But as a result of the initial teasing, there are some interesting points to observe involving the three parties: Mr. Phillips, Anne, and Gilbert.

The initial transgression occurs when Gilbert teases Anne. She gets-back or punishes him by hitting him. Because of this, she receives a very harsh punishment. What about Gilbert? He is never punished for teasing Anne. And yet, apologizes for his behavior and effectively asks for forgiveness saying, "I'm awfully sorry I made fun of your hair, Anne...Honest I am. Don't be mad at me for keeps, now" (Montgomery 95). So Gilbert forgives Anne for hitting her and apologizes, seeking forgiveness from Anne; Mrs. Phillips punishes Anne and effectively forgives her; but Anne does not forgive Gilbert right away. Instead she decides to harbor the anger and resentment about Gilbert's teasing. Anne's forgiveness of Gilbert comes later in

the book. One has to wonder, is it because of the harsh punishment or because she got tired of carrying around the resentment and anger?

Within this classic novel, Anne is involved in many transgressions. The presence of punishment and forgiveness is at the forefront following those transgressions. Throughout the novel appropriate punishment for Anne's transgressions is discussed among the adults. Forgiveness for these transgressions is very important in the Cuthbert household as we see in the exchange with Mrs. Lynde, but it is also apparent following Anne's exchange with Gilbert.

Anne of Green Gables is only one of many classic novels published at the beginning of the twentieth century. It shares the stage with Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), and Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926). These books continue to be read and enjoyed by children in the twenty-first century. Children can relate to Anne's antics, the genuine friendships in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, and can stretch their imaginations as they travel with Dorothy to Oz. *The Secret Garden* (1911) by Frances Hodgson Burnett is another classic book combining tragedy, family, and imagination. But similar to *Anne of Green Gables*, the book presents a relationship between overt punishment and forgiveness.

Mary Lenox is a 10-year old girl who lives in India with her self-absorbed parents. Raised by servants, Mary is a spoiled and demanding child. The servants pacify by giving her whatever she wants. This comes to a halt when a cholera epidemic breaks out killing all of the servants and both of her parents. Mary, the only survivor, is sent to live in England at Misselthwaite Manor with Archibald

Craven, her uncle. Initially, her life at the manor is uneventful: she is told to stay within the two rooms set aside for her and keep herself occupied. This is difficult because Mary does not know how to amuse herself. But a conversation with Martha, Mary's housemaid, about the secret locked garden, ignites Mary's curiosity. She is determined to find the secret garden. This newfound curiosity brings transgressions and the punishment is harsh.

In chapter 6, *There Was Some One Crying – There Was*, it is raining at the manor and Mary is bored. Mary is told to stay in her room. Without permission, Mary decides to leave her room and explore the house. After a while, she realizes she is lost. Following this transgression, Mrs. Medlock the manor's housekeeper, is not happy when she finds the lost Mary.

Angrily, she reminds Mary she is to stay in her nursery saying, "you come along back to your own nursery or I'll box your ears" (Burnett 70). Boxing the ears, according to urbandictionary.com is "the act of hitting someone's ears with the palms of your hands. Typically results in the recipient being in extreme pain, and occasionally, deafness...Boxing someone's ears is usually done with the express purpose of punishing someone for an offence" (1). Along with this threat, Mary is then pushed and pulled up and down corridors to the door of her nursery where Mrs. Medlock pushes her inside saying, "now...you stay where you're told to stay or you'll find yourself locked up" (71).

In her anger, Mrs. Medlock uses forceful threats to punish Mary. Moreover, the physical act of pushing and pulling Mary is punishing as well. This response to

her wrongdoing gets back at Mary for not following the rules, which is what happens with feeling of retributive justice (Karremans and VanLange 291). Mrs. Medlock sanctions Mary for this transgression with this punishment in order to achieve her main goal: to deter Mary from wandering around the house. She must maintain order and safety. It may also be an attempt to create fear in Mary.

In a similar fashion to Anne's teacher, Mrs. Medlock forgives Mary by releasing her from her wrongdoing. She sends her to her room hoping the punishment results in Mary staying in her room. Similar to Anne's teacher, there is no discussion of the events; there is just the expectation that the behavior ceases. She leaves the room, slamming the door behind her. This decision to forgive Mary Mrs. Medlock releases her from her wrongdoing (Worthington, Wade & Meyer 423-424).

Further on in the book, the reader meets Colin, the sickly, spoiled, son of Archibald Craven, who lives in a cloak of secrecy after his mother's death. After Mary learns there is another child living in the house, she sets out to know him. Their relationship is tumultuous, as they are both spoiled and strong-willed children. It is in Chapter 17, *A Tantrum*, when an exchange occurs between Colin and Mary involving punishment and forgiveness.

In the chapter, Mary hears Colin screaming, and she is so upset by it she exclaims that someone should beat him in order to stop the screaming. This initial suggestion of physical punishment implies that Mary is familiar with overt punishment. In fact, this suggests she wants to get-back at Colin. Mary is able to

fulfill this desire when Colin's nurse suggests to Mary that *she* scold—or punish—him in order to stop his hysterical tantrum. As Mary is rather out-spoken and an unsympathetic child, she screams back at Colin exclaiming, "I wish everybody would run out of the house and let you scream yourself to death!" (Burnett 210). This punishing exchange continues as Mary answers Colin's scream by threatening to scream at him so loudly that he is frightened.

The desire to get-back at Colin is apparent when Mary suggests someone should beat him. This is a direct need to take action and punish Colin for his behavior, which Karremans and Van Lange indicate happens with feelings of retributive justice (291). She does not hit him; instead she threatens to give him a taste of his own medicine by screaming back at him. This restores order and safety, a key component of retributive justice (Witvliet 305). We see evidence of forgiveness in Burnett's text:

Colin's tantrum had passed and he was weak and worn out with crying and this perhaps made him feel gentle. He put out his hand a little toward Mary, and I am glad to say that, her own tantrum having passed, she was softened too and met him half-way with her hand, so that it was a sort of making up. (215)

This gesture suggest resentment and anger is set aside after they both calm down. Forgiveness is further exemplified when the children visit the garden, have cup of tea, and Mary sings Colin a song.

In *Anne of Green Gables*, a reader's empathy might rest with several people. First, as the victim, Ann is innocent and does not mean to offend or disrespect her elders. Anne's actions occur because she does not know how to react in certain situations. She is also impulsive, which also contributes to her transgressions. After all a reader can likely put himself in Anne's situation. Because of this, empathetic feelings could arise. Second, feelings of empathy could be felt for Gilbert Blythe, another victim. His casual teasing of Anne did not warrant her actions. Lastly, feeling of empathy might develop for the teacher, the punisher. He is merely reacting to Anne's actions, trying to restore order to the class. Moreover, if a teacher is reading this to a class of children, he might certainly empathize with Anne's teacher because it is likely the reader – as a teacher – has experienced similar situations with a student.

A reader might find it difficult to feel empathy for Colin or Mary because both are such brats! But does that mean they deserve the punishment they receive? When Mary is the victim, perhaps not. In fact, she is merely being curious when she decides to explore the house. What child is not curious? But her punisher, Mrs. Medlock, cannot get beyond her anger in order to understand Mary's curious nature. She immediately thinks Mary is defying authority. It might be easier to feel empathy for Colin in Chapter 17 because his hysterics are a result of fear, which is paralyzing.

All of these books present punishment as punishment overt and physical, which is in the spirit of retributive justice. In an attempt to close the injustice gap,

the victims seek to curb the misbehavior and sanction the offender for the wrongdoing through the spirit of retributive justice. But as we have discussed, forgiveness is evident following this punishment.

However, in books published after 1960, there appears to be shift from these physical and overt forms of punishment. The punishment becomes subtle, encouraging the transgressor to think about his actions. In contrast to retribution, this model is restorative. In the following chapter, three picture books and two independent readers are examined supporting this punishment shift and the relationship with forgiveness.

**CHAPTER VI:
PUNISHMENT AND FORGIVENESS IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS
PUBLISHED AFTER 1960**

In this chapter, the relationship of punishment and forgiveness will be discussed through picture books and independent readers published after 1960. All of the literature selected for this analysis is still in print. The books discussed in this chapter illustrate the shift from physical punishment to subtle punishment and the shift from a simple understanding of forgiveness to a more complex understanding of forgiveness. The picture books *Where the Wild Things* (1963) by Maurice Sendak, *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* (1996) by Kevin Henkes, *Mr. Lincoln's Way* (2001) by Patricia Polacco and the contemporary novels *The Real Thief* (1975) by William Steig and *Reaching Dustin* (1998) by Vicki Groves present punishment as subtle and complex as it relates to forgiveness. These two independent readers highlight the relationship of punishment and forgiveness in a similar vein to the picture books published after 1960 but with the added element of empathy. Worthington's model of forgiveness states that empathy is a key element in forgiveness. The pathway to forgiveness involves feelings of empathy because the ability to understand the offender and potential reasons for the transgression helps in the forgiveness process.

Where the Wild Things Are tells the story of Max, a mischievous young boy, whose mother frowns upon his misbehavior. Mischief is Max's transgression. His mischief causes trouble when his mother finds him wearing his wolf suit, chasing the dog, and building a fort in the house. In response to this misbehavior, Max's mother sends him to his room without any dinner.



<http://journeytothesea.com/wp-content/assets/wild-things-room.jpg>

While in his room, Max travels to an imaginary place where the wild things are. While there, he becomes king of the Wild Things and engages in a wild rumpus that delights Max. But during his stay, he begins to feel lonely and ultimately leaves the Wild Things.

In contrast to the previous discussion on picture books that highlighted the retributive nature of the punishment, Max's punishment is restorative. The goal is to react to the transgression in a healing manner in an attempt to restore the damage (Strealan, Feather & McKee 1539). This restorative process begins when Max participates in a rumpus as King of the Wild Things.

He begins to feel lonely, and because he has not had any dinner, he feels discomfort. It may occur to Max that his mischief causes his mother real pain, but being away from her and those he loves causes even more heartache. So even though his original punishment—sent to his room without dinner—is difficult, the justice gap is small because Max is thinking about how his actions affect others. The punishment and subsequent thinking process is restorative because it could lead to

the end goal of repairing the damage through an apology (McCullough 176).

Once Max is back in his room, Max finds his dinner waiting for him.

What we can glean from this picture book is that Max's warm dinner waiting for him is illustrative of his mother's forgiveness. His mother emotionally forgives Max because she set aside feelings of hurt and anger (Wade, Worthington & Meyer 423-424). This along with the time alone is in the spirit of restorative justice and encourages both parties to heal the damage from the original transgression and mend the relationship.

Because of his transgression, Max finds himself in the imaginary world of the *Wild Things*, a world where he is accepted and embraced. Ultimately, this is not satisfying for Max because the feelings of loneliness creep into his mind. These feelings of loneliness suggest he is thinking about his transgression. A reader can relate to these feelings of loneliness and understand Max's perspective. This perspective evokes those feelings of empathy and an understanding of the events that lead to his punishment. So as a reader might take his understanding of loneliness and make connections to Max's lonely feelings.

Published just a few years after 1960, the relationship of punishment and forgiveness in *Where the Wild Things Are* suggests a shift from overt punishment and retribution to subtle punishment in order to restore the damage caused by the transgression. As the century progresses, more picture books present his shift. Kevin Henkes's book, *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*, published in 1996 is a good

example. The open communication associated with the restorative model is implied in Sendak's book, but Henkes's presentation of this is in more detail.

Lilly is a young mouse that is enamored with her teacher, Mr. Slinger. One day she brings her purple plastic purse, her movie star sunglasses, and her three shiny quarters to school. She is very eager share these items with her classmates. Despite her teacher's pleas to wait for a more appropriate time to share, she interrupts her teacher and classmates to share her cherished possessions. Lilly's behavior is disruptive and distracting to both her teacher and classmates.

Once Lilly is done sharing, Mr. Slinger confiscates the purse and its contents. He says, "I'll keep your things at my desk until the end of the day... They'll be safer there, and then you can take them home" (Henkes 12).



<https://www.google.com/search?>

As a teacher, Mr. Slinger's motives are not only to bring attention back to his lesson, but also to discuss the transgression with Lilly at another time. Though this response attempts to close restore order, it also attempts to heal the damage caused by Lilly's interruptions. But following this punishment, Lilly is very angry. So

angry, in fact, that she writes an unkind note to Mr. Slinger. After all, he took away beloved purse!

The restorative process is evident when Mr. Slinger returns the purse to Lilly. He says, "It's a beautiful purse...your quarters are nice and jingly. And those glasses are absolutely fabulous. You may bring them back to school as long as you don't disturb the rest of the class" (Henkes 15). Additionally, inside the purse Lilly finds a note from Mr. Slinger, which reads, "Today was a difficult day. Tomorrow will be better" (Henkes 16). Mr. Slinger effectively communicates his expectation, but his words are comforting to Lilly and promote healing.

In response, Lilly discusses the events with her parents who are supportive and encouraging. Lilly writes and illustrates an apology to Mr. Slinger. This open communication with Mr. Slinger (victim), Lilly (offender), and her parents (outside influences), give everyone an opportunity to discuss the transgression, which is the heart of restorative justice and promotes forgiveness (McCullough 176). Henkes's text shows evidence of emotional forgiveness, with reference to the unkind note, in the following exchange:

"What do you think we should do with this?" asked Mr. Slinger.

"Could we just throw it away?" asked Lilly.

"Excellent idea," said Mr. Slinger. (24)

This exchange shows that Lily and her teacher have repaired the damage following the transgression. It also indicates that Mr. Slinger harbors no negative feelings toward Lily; rather he has positive thoughts about Lily. There is no

reprimand about the note and it is clear that Lily – and Mrs. Slinger – seek to put the entire episode behind her.

Henkes's story evokes feelings of empathy for the reader. This is a complex picture book in which the reader has to reconcile many points-of-view: the plight of the teacher and his need to retain order in the classroom; Lilly's desire to share; and the children in the class who are bystanders. Empathy could easily be felt in all of these scenarios. It may merely depend on who the reader identifies with the most. A child reader might feel most empathy for Lilly because her circumstances are familiar. On the other hand, an adult reader might feel more empathy for the children in the classroom who have to sit quietly during the whole exchange. Furthermore, adult readers might also empathize most with the teacher because of the disruptive nature of Lilly's actions. An adult reader can understand this as well as the persistence of her actions. Nevertheless, all of these circumstances can pull at the emotions of the reader, but perhaps in the process there is more understanding of all parties and forgiveness is more transparent.

The last picture book in the study to exemplify restorative justice and forgiveness is *Mr. Lincoln's Way* (2001) by Patricia Polacco. Of all the books in the study, the punishment in this book is the subtlest. Moreover, open communication is demonstrated with deeper resonance and significance. The book tells the story of how Mr. Lincoln, an African-American principal at an elementary school, uses open communication and empathy to end the negative behavior of a student, Eugene. Polacco's dialogue exemplifies this:

“What you lookin’ at, scumball?” he said and he pushed her down and wrenched he backpack away.

“I going to tell Mr. Lincoln,” she announced.

“Go ahead, you little brat. I ain’t afraid of that n---.” Then he stopped. Mr. Lincoln was standing right there. (5)

In the corresponding illustration, Eugene is running away with the African-American girl’s backpack; his arm is raised at another African-American student who is standing with his arms crossed to lessen the blow from Eugene. The girl is clearly distraught: her body is tense, her eyes are shut tightly, and she appears to be screaming. Mr. Lincoln tries to console her.

Mr. Lincoln’s initial response to this transgression is concern, so he engages Eugene in a conversation independent from his hurtful behavior. Initially Eugene might feel this is punitive because he has to not only talk with the principal but also but talk about a subject that might not been very “cool.”⁴ Mr. Lincoln suspects Eugene has an interest in birds because he sees him staring at the school atrium. But this initial conversations blossoms, and Eugene develops a real deep trust for Mr. Lincoln. As they talk about how to develop the atrium in the school to attract birds, Eugene talks about his nurturing grandfather who taught him about birds and his racist father. Polacco’s text conveys the father’s racist tendencies:

“My old man calls you real bad names, Mr. Lincoln. He’s got an ugly name for just about everybody that’s different from us.” (23)

Mr. Lincoln understands Eugene’s anger, and Polacco’s text is a healing response:

⁴ Illustration of the punishment was not available.

“Eugene, sometimes people get trapped in their thinking almost as surely as those ducklings will be trapped in the atrium.” (23)

Because of this open communication, Eugene’s behavior changes. His negative behavior subsides and he engages in positive behavior. Mr. Lincoln’s forgiveness of Eugene happens not only because of this restorative process but also because Mr. Lincoln feels empathy for Eugene. While this component will be discussed with the post 1960 novels in this study, omitting it from this discussion would be negligent.

The three components of Worthington’s model of empathy are present in this book. First Mr. Lincoln has a very transparent understanding of Eugene’s home life and the dysfunctional with his father. This helps Mr. Lincoln to help Eugene curb his negative behavior, and the discussion between the two enable this to happen. Second, Mr. Lincoln is humble toward Eugene. He sees Eugene as a fallible, but Mr. Lincoln wants those negative feelings to subside. Additionally, Mr. Lincoln might have had similar feelings about someone in his life, which broadens his perspective of the situation. Third, there is no doubt of Mr. Lincoln’s commitment to forgive because he not only invests so much time with Eugene but what is interesting is that Mr. Lincoln continually has a positive view of the situation. He never feels any negativity toward Eugene. His main goal is to get to the root of the matter and help Eugene to be a better person, and he does this through the restorative process. Because he has no negative feelings toward Eugene, he does not have to let go of resentment. This might have accelerated the process of forgiveness because he did

not have to reconcile any negative feelings for Eugene. Finally, his commitment is openly communicated in the final pages of the Polacco's book where Mr. Lincoln offers the following words:

"You showed those ducklings the way out, Eugene," Mr. Lincoln said.

"Hey, you showed me the way out, Mr. Lincoln." Eugene smiled. Then he stopped and looked into his principal's eyes.

"I'll make you proud of me, Mr. Lincoln. I promise." (37)

The final illustration shows Mr. Lincoln and Eugene in a warm embrace. Eugene is looking up to Mr. Lincoln smiling, and Mr. Lincoln is looking back at Eugene with pride on his face.

Polacco challenges the reader's emotions from the first page of her book because the reader's initial reaction might be to identify with Eugene's victim. In fact, that conflict is never resolved, so a reader's feelings of empathy for that victim are left hanging. The young girl he initially torments never resurfaces in the story. The focus becomes Eugene and a reader's feelings of empathy shift to him. This might be difficult for a reader to reconcile. While Eugene is truly troubled and needs help, a reader might feel more empathy for the victim of the initial transgression. However, Polacco's story is purposeful in its shift because a reader grows to understand that Eugene is a product of intolerance. A reader's understanding of the source of the intolerance could evoke feeling of empathy for Eugene. These feelings are certainly evident in Mr. Lincoln, who is the recipient of that intolerance.

The restorative justice model seeks to heal the damage through communication and a key component of this process is empathy for the transgressor. William Steig's *The Real Thief* (1975) and Vicki Grove's *Reaching Dustin* (1998) not only demonstrate the relationship of punishment and forgiveness through restorative means, but also portray the feelings of empathy very well through their characters.

William Steig is a prolific author and illustrator of children's books. His book *The Real Thief* (1975) is a short 58 pages with carefully placed black-and-white illustrations. Unlike the previous two independent readers, which have real people as characters, Steig uses anthropomorphic animals. The main character is Gawain, a goose, who is a loyal subject to King Basil, a bear. Gawain is chief guard of the Royal Treasury.

When the royal jewels begin to go missing, Gawain is accused of stealing the jewels because he is the only subject with access to the Treasury. Gawain maintains his innocence saying, "I am innocent...I am an honest goose" (Steig 18). But the King and those in the kingdom do not believe him. They shun him calling him a disgrace to the kingdom, and sentence him to the castle dungeon until he confesses the whereabouts of the jewels. Gawain escapes this punishment by flying away; he lives in exile.

The real thief is Derek, a mouse and Gawain's friend. After Gawain's escape, he continues to steal the jewels to prove Gawain's innocence. This continued thievery causes great pain and despair to the kingdom, but he never confesses.

Because he never confesses, Derek is never punished his crime. Instead, his punishment is more subtle and complex, but it encourages him to seek forgiveness.

This guilt he feels about the grief and despair he causes his kingdom and Gawain is punishing. The stolen jewels bring him no happiness; he is without friendship, and feels distraught that his friend, Gawain, is gone, living alone.

In order to repair the damage, begin to heal, and find forgiveness, Derek sets out to find Gawain. His intention is to have a conversation with him to discuss the events, which is the key to restorative justice. This open communication allows all parties to discuss the transgression and the events that take place that might have perpetuated the transgression (McCullough 176). This discussion occurs in the final section of the book.

Derek apologizes to Gawain and explains the circumstances surrounding the transgression. Derek's apology allows opportunity to explain the offensive behavior, an act Hill, Exline & Cohen say is important in order to heal the damage. This can also lead to feelings of empathy (484). This healing process comes full-circle when the friends return to the kingdom. Steig's text completes this communication:

After a long session together in which they discussed the robbery, the trial, its aftermath, and everyone's feelings, not to mention the various problems of living – as a bear, a goose, a mouse, a king, a subject – Gawain returned to his real home and Derek to his. (57)

This open communication between all parties helps to repair the damage from the transgression. From this discussion, Gawain understands the circumstances surrounding the theft and Derek's pain and suffering. Gawain's clarity of the events generates feelings of empathy for Derek. Empathy is the key component in Worthington's model of forgiveness. The other two components—humility and commitment—follow. Humility is apparent because Gawain's experiences are similar. He feels great suffering from being wrongly accused, from living alone, and being isolated from those he loves. But his commitment to forgiveness is apparent in his response after Derek asks for forgiveness, "I forgive you gladly, dear mouse...I can see how much you've suffered, and we both know what suffering is" (Steig 52). The open communication, which seeks to restore the damage, combined with feelings of empathy promotes forgiveness. Forgiveness paves the way for positive feelings and thoughts to occur. These positive feelings are evident because Gawain appoints Derek as his assistant in his new job.

This final book in this study is *Reaching Dustin* (1998) by Vicky Grove. This book beautifully presents the subject of forgiveness and the spirit of restorative justice. It may not be particularly well known but is well written and a fitting book to finish this discussion.

As sixth-graders, Carly and Dustin are assigned to interview each other for a school project. Because Dustin is "obnoxious and gross," this pairing upsets Carly. From the wrong-side-of-the-tracks, Dustin's mother is dead and his authoritative father is a gun toting, conservative, who uses fear and punishment to keep his son in

line. On the other hand, Carly is a good-student with a supportative family, many friends, and longs to be the editor of the sixth-grade newspaper. Although Dustin is not her first choice as an interviewee, she sees this as her chance to be editor.

During the interview, Carly questions Dustin. His answers provide insight about Dustin's family and home life. But when Dustin asks, "Why'd you tell me that sentence wrong that day?" (Grove 101), Carly is confused. He continues by saying, "Back in Miss Tyleson's class. That reading sentence. You told me all the wrong words that day. How come you did that?" (102). Carly immediately realizes what Dustin is speaking of and feels sick. When asked by his teacher to read a sentence aloud in class, Dustin does not know where or what to read. He asks Carly what sentence to read, and she tells him the wrong sentence.

The question Dustin asks continues to haunt Carly. She is sickened. And while there is no outward punishment for this transgression at the time from the teacher—she is actually praised for this as her friend reminisces that it was hilarious—Carly's punishment is her guilty conscience, similar to Derek in *The Real Thief*. This subtle and underlying feeling that she did a horrible thing and contributed to Dustin's unhappy life is torturing.

This punishing guilt suggests that the restorative justice model is activated. In response, Carly talks with her mother about Dustin, which gives clarity to the situation. Additionally, she writes an essay entitled "The Wrong Sentence." In front of her classmates, she reads the essay explaining why she read the wrong sentence,

and she holds the class accountable, too, because they participated in the humiliation by laughing at Dustin after Carly gave him the wrong information. Reading the essay is a cathartic and a restorative process for Carly, and it is a profound and public way to begin to heal the damage. Dustin's feelings of empathy for Carly occur when she continues this restorative process in a conversation with him.

She explains why she said the sentence wrong, and apologizes profusely for her transgression. This apology allows her to explain her offensive behavior (Hill, Exline & Cohen 484). Now Dustin can begin to understand the motives of his transgressor, which encourages feelings of empathy. Empathy is followed by humility; Carly is fallible, not immune to hurtful actions against another. Dustin's commitment to forgiveness is evident when resentment is set-aside and negative feelings are replaced with positive ones. Dustin is willing to confront his unstable home life and excel in school with help from Carly and her family.

These feelings of empathy are beautiful because they enable us to look beyond ourselves. This broader perspective is a key in the ability to forgive. It is particularly apparent as a result of the restorative justice model. And these two books are good examples of this. But for the reader where might the empathy lie in these two books: with the victim, the offender, or the one who punishes?

Betrayed by his kingdom and his friend, Gawain is falsely accused and sentence for a crime he did not commit. A reader might find it easy to empathize because Gawain's circumstances mimic how humans behave. Often humans jump

to conclusions without thinking through a process thoroughly or without the benefit of discussion and explanation of events. A reader can likely appreciate feelings of betrayal and isolation. Gawain's is devoted to his job and his kingdom and took his responsibilities very seriously. To have those in his life turn a blind-eye on those qualities is terribly hurtful. A reader might find it very easy to walk in Gawain's shoes.

Reaching Dustin is a really special book. Grove does an exceptional job of capturing the dichotomy of children who are supported and loved by family and friends and those who are not. From the beginning of the book, a reader can understand the cruelty of the other children, Dustin's unstable home life, and the blatant disregard for the death of his mother – which completely unravels him. But it would be difficult for children to understand all of that pain and turn it around to make sense of it.

Carly's transgression of reading the wrong sentence is very calculated. She purposefully reads the wrong sentence to create a situation that is humiliating – in front of the whole class, no less! This transgression is truly hurtful. Any child would be hurt by this act. Combined with all of the other painful things in Dustin's life, a reader can easily feel empathy for Dustin.

CHAPTER VII: DISCUSSION

This study examines the relationship of punishment and forgiveness in children's literature. There is a shift in punishment style presented in children's books occurring in middle of the twentieth century--1960--because punishment in literature changes from physical and overt to subtle and cerebral. This shift also suggests a change in forgiveness: from a simple understanding to a more complex nuanced understanding. This section will address questions, which were raised in the introduction.

1. What can we glean about society and literature in examining books for children over a historical period of time? What is the difference in how punishment emerges in books for children over time, and what is its relationship to forgiveness? And is the target year of books published before and after 1960 a useful turning point for this analysis?

In examining these children's books over the course of time, it is important to consider the changes in history. As societal attitudes changed, authors of children's literature responded. Twentieth century books were no longer didactic, in order to teach religion, but rather imaginative with curious characters such the characters highlighted in this study. While all of these characters defied authority and challenged social boundaries, they transgress, in part, because they are curious. They are curious about their surroundings, curious about the adult's reactions, and curious about how they might feel about what they find. These books encourage a child's budding sense of wonderment and imagination.

This is no doubt that punishment is overt and physical in the books published before 1960. But while these books support and develop a reader's sense of imagination and curiosity, they maintain a retributive style of punishment and justice. But perhaps the author's attempt, as Jackie Stallcup suggests in her 2002 article "Power, Fear and Children's Picture Books," is to create fear in children in order to curb disobedience. As a result, there is a level of forgiveness: Ping is let back on the boat, Peter is forgiven by his mother, Benjamin is brought back home, and Edith and little Bear are told they are forgiven and the whole event is set aside. Anne and Mary share similar experiences. Toward the middle of the 20th century, however, society was changing and attitudes were more liberal.

The 1960's, however, marked a time of liberation, free thinking, and a shift from conservative culture. The literature available for children reflected this shift. The political and cultural issues of the time were addressed in literature (<http://kclibrary.lonestar.edu/decade60.html>) (7). Sendak's book is at the forefront of this shift because the book not only takes the reader on a journey but also does not use a physical punishment. Because of the more liberal thinking viewpoints and perhaps a shift from authoritarian to a more authoritative parenting style to, this type of punishment is no longer mainstream. So a change in punishment style can be seen in looking at children's books across time. Moreover, the relationship to forgiveness changes as well.

This shift around 1960 brought less punitive illustrations of punishment in children's literature, as is reflected in this study. At this time, punishment seems to

be shifting to discipline. Discipline implies that the transgressor learn something from the offence instead of just receiving a hurtful punishment, a punishment that may or may not curb the disobedience. But this shift from overt punishment to subtle forms of punishment also marks a shift to a more complex understanding of forgiveness. This complexity involves empathy, which Worthington says is at the heart of forgiveness. Empathy is evident in Polacco's book but is even more relevant in the two post-1960 readers.

Gawain forgives Derek in part because he understands Derek's predicament. Carly and Dustin are in a similar situation. Carly's expression of true remorse and explanation of the events give Dustin perspective, which paves the way for feelings of empathy. Empathy in this book plays an interesting role, because it is Carly who first feels for Dustin's situation. This empathy might serve a dual purpose: Dustin is able to begin to forgive Carly and Carly is able to begin to forgive herself. But another interesting aspect of these books in looking at punishment and forgiveness is reconciliation.

Reconciliation is always an outcome of forgiveness. However, in the post-1960 books in this study, this seems to be the case. Reconciliation often happens in family situations, which is the case with Max and his mother. However, all of the characters in the other books reconcile to some degree with another adult or friend. This did not necessarily *have* to happen. But perhaps this is purposeful because the books are for children. The authors attempt to present a happy ending for the child

reader. The child learns that as a result of hard times, hurt and betrayal, a friendship and relationship can be repaired and continue.

2. What types of books might be appropriate to discuss forgiveness with young children as they progress as readers?

Delving into the subject of forgiveness with children is a complex task. As it is discussed in the overview, the religious teaching and traditions of the family may dictate the subject of forgiveness or forgiveness occurs following a punishment. Feelings of empathy and the ability to forgive are essential developmental achievements for optimal emotional well-being. There is no wrong or right way to expose children to forgiveness in texts. In fact, it may be a very personal choice for parents and educators. But it is important when discussing forgiveness with children to be mindful of the child's stage of development.

Are Potter's books appropriate for all children at the concrete operational stage of development? For many, yes. They include young characters that see the world through their own eyes, not unlike a young child. Forgiveness follows punishment, which a child at this stage might experience as well. But for those adults who choose not to expose their children or student to such blatant punishment, a book such as *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* is more appropriate for several reasons. One, the protagonist is a young mouse, which might parallel to the reader's age. Two, Lilly is a student, eager to share her treasured purse. Many children at this age participate in a similar activity in school. Three, it is likely that many who read this book have had a similar experience with the teacher's

frustration and subsequent punishment. A child who is familiar with these circumstances can relate Lilly's experiences to his own or to a classmate. With all of these familiar and concrete parallel events, there is opportunity for rich discussion on events in the book, and the end result, which includes forgiveness.

But as a child grows, the subject of forgiveness in books is more complex, as in *Mr. Lincoln's Way*. This picture book requires more sophisticated thought which happens later in a child's life. A child moving from a concrete thought process to a more abstract thought process could comprehend and appreciate forgiveness in this book. Understanding the role of empathy in this picture book paves the way for the reader to tackle the post 1960 books independent readers highlighted in this study.

This study explores the relationship of punishment and forgiveness from two time periods. While a shift in punishment style in children's literature is apparent beginning in 1960, retributive justice shifts to restorative justice. There is evidence of forgiveness in the literature following these punishments. This forgiveness can result in resolution and positive feelings and thoughts. But the spirit or intention of punishment/justice processes is to obtain some sort of justice for the victim.

3. Do the victims highlighted in the study receive the justice that is initially intended through the punishment, and is the offender held accountable?

In the majority of the books in this study, the victim receives justice for their offence. This is particularly evident in the pre-1960 books with retributive justice. This style of punishment/justice holds the transgressor accountable because the characters are immediately punished and the punishment hurts! This is the exact

nature of what this process is intended to do—hurt—so the transgression not only will not reoccur, but also holds the offender accountable.

Anne is held accountable when she speaks inappropriately to Mrs. Lynde, and Mary is held accountable for her “crime” of exploring the house. In both instances, their victims receive justice because both offenders explained their transgressions to their victims and accepted punishment. Both Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny’s victims receive justice. However, in this receipt of justice, the cousins are not held accountable because they are never asked to return the stolen vegetables. In fact, in the final page of *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*, the illustration depicts Peter Rabbit’s mother hanging the stolen vegetables in her house, an indication that she condones this theft. We see a similar situation in *Where the Wild Things Are*.

Max’s mother receives justice by sending Max to his room, but Max is not held accountable for his mischief. He is never asked to clean up his mess and he offers no apology. Potter’s and Sendak’s books suggest to the child reader that one is not held accountable for mischief or even theft. But perhaps not all transgressions require a severe or overt punishment. Sometimes the best course of action is understanding the situation, exercising patience and empathy for the offender, in an effort to rectify the situation.

In a similar vein, Mr. Lincoln in *Mr. Lincoln’s Way* receives justice for Eugene’s transgression and forgiveness is evident, but there is no justice for the bullied children. Although Eugene is held accountable for his remarks to Mr.

Lincoln, he is never held accountable for his bullying. Eugene never apologizes or owns up to his defiant behavior. This aspect is put aside in favor of what seems like the more pressing issue of what is causing Eugene to be a bully. We can speculate that because Mr. Lincoln exposes the cause of the behavior, the bullying will cease. As a result, the bullied children may feel cheated, angry, and hurt. They may not consider forgiving Eugene. This scenario suggests that a victim's justice and offender's accountability is not synonymous. The situation is similar in *The Real Thief*. Gawain receives justice but the greater community never holds Derek accountable for his actions because he never confesses to being the real thief. There is nothing to prevent Derek from engaging in the same behavior in the future except his own guilt, which may be the most powerful deterrent. In contrast, justice and accountability are synonymous in *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* and *Reaching Dustin*.

Though these books share similar qualities with regard to justice and accountability. Both transgressions occur in a classroom. The punishment is subtle but justified. Their victim's receive justice through these punishments. Carly and Lilly are held accountable because of their punishments. Accountability for their transgressions is very public. The openness of the transgression, punishment, and accountability is restorative and leads to the positive outcome of forgiveness.

4. Do the books in the study do justice for forgiveness? Can the reader find it or is it hidden?

Although forgiveness may not be the obvious “topic” for publishers to label children’s books, the complex emotional stories are quite compelling. The stories generate feelings that resonate with readers. Often these feelings are generated through stories that are labeled as pets, or friends, or adventure. The subject of forgiveness is gently woven into children’s stories. Although many times forgiveness is right on the surface as it is in Potter and Wright’s books.

But forgiveness in many of the books in this study lies beneath the surface, hidden from the reader. Moreover, forgiveness is so blatantly associated with punishment—particularly in the pre-1960 books--the reader’s focus is pulled away from the forgiving nature of the characters. Children, however, may reread many of these stories over and over, especially beloved picture books. Each time a book is read, a child may have a different idea about the plotline or develop a new perspective about the book. Furthermore, rereading allows the reader to see aspects about the book that might have been missed in the previous readings. This may happen slowly over time as the child grows. After all, a six-year-old child’s perspective of *Where the Wild Things Are* might be quite different than a ten-year old. To an older child, the complex themes may be more palpable. This is very true in Grove’s book.

Reaching Dustin is perhaps the best example of the process of forgiveness and how this complex theme is woven into the book. This may be true for several

reasons. First, because the subject of forgiveness is lying beneath many layers of characters, transgressions, and plotlines, a reader must dig to find it. Second, the reader must find the true transgression among other less significant ones. This is difficult to do because the reader is well into the novel before it surfaces. The reader might focus on the more obvious transgressions in the book involving angst among friends. Third, forgiveness does not occur following a blatant apology. Unlike Anne, in *Anne of Green Gables*, Carly does not get on her knees and ask Dustin for his forgiveness or write a note to him such as Lilly, in *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*. A more in-depth understanding of the subject is required for this book because forgiveness comes following a process. This process involves self-reflection and empathy, which can lead to healing. A causal reader might feel that Carly is making amends to Dustin through her essay, but the deeper nature of forgiveness and healing occur when Dustin accepts her help. A greater understanding gleans that Dustin puts resentment aside, is willing to engage in positive actions and thoughts, and also reconcile with Carly. Reconciliation does not always occur with forgiveness and is not required in order for someone to forgive. But with this reconciliation, the damage can begin to be repaired. Moreover, Carly can begin the process of forgiving herself for her transgression.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, children's literature blossomed. The didactic, moralistic, God-fearing subject matter in the early literature gave way to books about adventure, friendship, and poetry for children. Authors such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Mark Twain responded with novels that are still in print. Many more authors who published material specifically for children joined these authors. This increase in published material for children meant children could enjoy reading age-appropriate material, which includes a wide range of subjects such as friendship and imaginary places. The early didactic material that likely includes teachings about forgiveness may have given way, but the subject of forgiveness is still evident in children's literature. Parents, teachers, and children selecting books may find the subject is present in many books for children.

The books selected for this current study demonstrate the subject of forgiveness in their storylines. The examination of literature over time concurs with the originally proposed thesis: that there is a shift in punishment and forgiveness over time in books for children. Additionally, there was intent to present a representative sample of books across a spectrum. In other words, literature selection for this study was bound by a clear set of parameters. However, the third parameter – two different types of books- clearly demonstrates the intent to highlight not only different types of books, but books that appeal to both younger and older children. Picture books generally appeal to younger children who may or

may not be reading independently and the independent readers or chapter books appeal to older children who read alone.

This historical perspective confirms that punishment shifts from overt and physical to subtle and cerebral and forgiveness shifts somewhat obvious and simple to a more complex manner. In the literature published before 1960, transgression and punishment is portrayed in a very concrete and retributive style: the protagonists disobey the adult, and their punishment is swift and hurtful. The illustrations in the picture books make these actions real and transparent for the reader. The appearance or evidence of forgiveness in books during this time period is rather obvious because many of the victims are told they are forgiven. But the literature published after 1960, punishment is more very subtle manner and forgiveness is more complex.

As the analysis of the literature progresses into the 1960's, the punishment style shifts. This shift is apparent with Sendak's book. The transgressor is subtly punished and this encourages transgressor to ponder the effects of his actions. This supports the spirit of restorative justice. As a result of the punishment shift, the simplicity of forgiveness in the earlier books gives way to a more complex understanding of the subject. This shift suggests that forgiveness in books published before 1960 is more of a decision, but as the century progresses, forgiveness becomes more emotional--a process to move through--ultimately landing at the end of the forgiveness continuum with the presence empathy.

Under the umbrella of children's literature lie many more perspectives that I have been unable to explore. Future research could include examining the subject from a multicultural perspective. This perspective could glean culturally accepted punishment styles and how particular cultures fit forgiveness into their lives. Examining the subject across a series of books such as Rowling's Harry Potter might present some interesting results. In particular, the subject of forgiveness may move from simplistic to complex because of the aging of the characters. Furthermore, the series appeals to a wide range of ages. A young child reading the first book in the series may find the subject easily. But if that young child continues to read the books in the series, he may not unearth the subject because he has not yet developed the cognitive skills. However, if the reader grows with the series as the characters do, he may be able to discern the simplistic nature of forgiveness in the earlier books from the complex nature of forgiveness in the later books.

The subject of forgiveness could be explored from the perspective of gender. In fact, the current study presents gender related questions for future research such as: if Peter and Benjamin were girls, would they be whipped with a stick? How would Eugene's punishment differ if he were a girl? Would Mr. Lincoln spend so much time unearthing the root cause of the bullying if the offender was a girl? Is there a correlation between gender, punishment, and forgiveness?

This study examines the literature from a historical perspective within the twentieth century. An alternate historical examination worthy of note is nineteenth century books and the presentation of punishment and forgiveness in comparison to

early twentieth century books. Early twentieth century books highlighted in this study may be more palatable to readers than books of the nineteenth century books no longer in print. Books such as *The History of the Fairchild Family* by Mary Sherwood first published in 1818 uses the threat of death to scare children into submission. This may not be as acceptable as the fate of Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny. Such analysis would provide interesting commentary about punishment, changes in acceptable reading material for children, and attitude shifts in society.

A victim may feel deeply hurt following a transgression and associate it with negative feelings. But holding on to those feeling of hurt and negativity can be a terrible burden because the victim may define himself by that transgression, it may impact important decisions, and it might negatively affect relationships with others. To forgive allows the negative emotions surrounding a transgression to subside, which paves the way for the victim to move on from the transgression. Positive emotions seep in, which can evoke feelings of empathy. Empathy is so very powerful because an alternate perspective of the transgression comes to light and this can bring clarity to the situation. While this clarity might not mean immediate forgiveness, it might get the victim thinking...thinking about the offender in a different vein, which over time could lead to a replacement of the hurt and negativity with positive emotions.

No one has the same experience with transgression, punishment, and forgiveness. Each situation is unique and may certainly be at different level of severity. But the important human experience of forgiveness is pertinent to anyone

who has been hurt. The experience may come quickly or after much time passes. Some may never be able to forgive. If the victim chooses to engage in forgiveness, it can be very fulfilling.

Reading about forgiveness in children's literature can be an effective way in which to expose children to the subject. The reader has the opportunity to become fully engaged in a book with characters and storylines that may be separate and detached from his own experiences. This could encourage thoughtful discussion of the events in the book, which could inform the reader's own views and ideas about forgiveness. However, a time may come when the reader finds that a particular book may parallel his own experiences; the reader may identify with a certain character or plotline because it is familiar. So the reader grasps from the literature what speaks to him, what generates an emotional response, what gets him thinking, for example. The literature could influence what a reader might think about forgiveness, and on the other hand, may solidify, reinforce, and strengthen what he already understands about forgiveness.

Authors of literature for children take great pains to present such subjects in a manner that is age-appropriate and engaging to the child reader. The books highlighted in this project are reflective of this. Children will continue to enjoy books such as *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and *Anne of Green Gables*, which show punishment and forgiveness in a different manner than *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* and *The Real Thief* for many, many reasons. But if the reader is willing appreciate the

power of forgiveness in the literature, perhaps this very human experience becomes more relevant in real life.

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