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Rethinking literacy: communication, representation and text

Context Statement in support of application for the award of PhD by Published Works

Eve Bearne

May 2003

Middlesex University

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List of Figures

Published Works used for this submission

Bearne, E. and Farrow, C. (1991) *Writing Policy in Action* Open University Pres: Buckingham [except Chapter 3. See statement on following page]

'Where Do Stories Come From?' in Styles, M.. Bearne, E. and Watson, V. (eds.) (1994*)* *The Prose and the Passion* Cassell: London pp 81-96

'Mind the Gap : critical literacy as a dangerous underground movement' in Styles, M.. Bearne, E. and Watson, V. (eds.) (1996) *Voices Off* Cassell: London pp 316-329

'Past Perfect and Future Conditional: the challenge of new texts' in Cliff Hodges, G. Drummond, M.J. and Styles, M.(eds.) (2000) *Critical Narratives: Tales, Tellers and Texts* Cassell: London 1999 pp 145-157

'Multimodal Narratives' in Barrs, M. and Pidgeon, S. (eds) (2002) *Boys and Writing* London: Centre for Language in Primary Education pp 67-74

Acknowledgements

9, Burney Bit
Pamber Heath
TADLEY
RG26 3TJ
29/12/2002

Re: "Writing Policy in Action" by Eve Bearne and Cath Farrow, Open University Press, 1991

I, Cath Farrow declare that my contribution to the book, 'Writing Policy in Action' consisted of the whole of chapter 3, The Writing Environment, apart from the first paragraph. The rest of the text was the sole work of Eve Bearne.

Cath Farrow

Cath Farrow
29/12/2002

Context Statement

Eve Bearne

The dominant thread of the work I present here is an analysis of children's text production. I begin with a book I co-wrote in 1991 [Cath Farrow wrote Chapter 3] containing a framework which forms the basis of much of my later analysis of multimodal texts. In that first book I offer a critique of genre theory so that a second thread traceable through *A Writing Policy in Action* and the later chapters presented here is about genre in writing from its early adoption into a view of literacy in the UK through to current issues of multimodal texts [see Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996] and the ways in which these cross genre boundaries. My interest lies in the ways in which texts are shaped to have coherence, and this means considering what has become a pivotal part of my current work: a concentration on text cohesion. The gradual shift in my focus towards multimodal texts relates to two other areas of interest: popular forms of text, their place in cultural settings and their impact on children's text production; and the demand for a more precise description of the texts children now produce which goes beyond simply giving status to the verbal elements. In presenting a critical reflection on my publications, my concern is to outline the possibilities for a new theory of 'literacy', based on cohesion, which takes into account a range of texts beyond written genres. For me, it must also be a critical theory and this inevitably means taking into account the popular cultural forms of texts which children absorb and use, so that this statement presents a cultural theory of text which acknowledges and honours the agency of the young text-maker.

Any adequate educational theory has to take into account: theories of individual development; issues of pedagogy, classroom culture and the nature of knowledge; and social, cultural ideological and political discourses which surround schools, classrooms and learners. This is a demanding agenda in a relatively short context statement and whilst I offer background discussion, I

have decided to concentrate on my analysis of children's texts and their production. In sketching an integrated theory of multidimensional text, my starting points are: children's production of texts, how these can be analysed and the implications for teaching. However, I begin with some of the theoretical background to my writing over the years to give the broad context.

Rethinking literacy

Whilst some educational theorists are quite comfortable with the use of the word 'literacy' to describe new forms of communication, I am not. This is partly because a ready use of the word can operate against radically rethinking what new forms of texts are doing for children, learning and communication. Partly also, because in a pedantic way I want to assert that the dimensions of text include much more than 'words' and that using the term 'literacy' continues to privilege words over other forms of communication, particularly the pictorial, diagrammatic, photographic, gestural, and moving image. Discomfort around the word 'literacy' arises not only because there are competing theories of what makes for useful and valid literacy teaching in schools, but because of the new forms of text which must now be included, in particular, the visual [Raney, 1996]. The world of communication is not standing still. A profound change is happening because of the newly pervasive and more dominant presence of image in the world of communications. Of course, image and word [both in writing and speech] have co-existed for some time [Lanham, 2001, Kress 1997] but the relationships between the different modes of communication are in a rapid and radical process of remaking. This raises serious questions about the nature of learning:

> Does 'learning' happen in the same way when it happens via the spatial arrangements of the image rather than via the temporal arrangement of the sounds of speech, or the linear arrangements of the letters of the alphabet? Can image do what writing does? Can writing do what image does? If there are these two modes of communicating what do we need to understand about each of them, about what each can and cannot do or cannot do easily, about their arrangements on the page or on the screen? [Bearne and Kress, 2001: 89]

These questions also raise insistent issues about teaching. If the text experience of young learners about new combinations of modes of representation are to be realised, then teachers need to know something about how these texts work. This means that older theories of representation, of communication, of writing and reading, of valuations of speech and writing alongside other modes, all need rethinking [Bearne and Kress, 2001: 93]. This is even more necessary and compelling because of the effects of the major shifts in forms of text which are now part of our world. I use the word 'world' as a deliberate signal that communications are now increasingly world–wide. That is not to suggest that access to communications is equal across the world or across cultures, but, rather, to signal that new ways of thinking about literacy must be wide, culturally sensitive and attuned.

If common frames of reference for communication are now being reshaped, then it follows that we are in the process of re-theorising communication and literacy, of seeing language, literacy – and the way we think - differently. As a contribution to the process of seeing literacy in a new way, I want to explore some ideas about texts. However, I want to go further than looking at how a theory – and so a descriptive vocabulary – might be developed to take account of the several dimensions of texts, including the movement, the sound, the dynamic, implicit in print texts – both visual and verbal. I am here more concerned with the production of texts, although, of course, text production is the 'other face' of text reception – reading and listening [1]. Put another way, I want to sketch a theory which can combine understanding of representational **modes** [what the culture provides as a means of making meaning: speech, writing, image, gesture, music...] with the existing and emerging **media** of dissemination [what the culture makes available as a means of distributing these meanings as messages]: book, magazine, computer screen, video, film, radio. Further, I want to exemplify the ways that shifts in media require thinking about all representational modes as part of a whole system of meaning. To do this means examining the **affordances** [what is made possible and facilitated/made difficult or inhibited] of the different modes and media. The pivot of this theory is related to the **logics** of texts – the text cohesion which makes for coherence.

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My research journey

This journey began in the classroom. The first class I ever taught in a secondary modern school on a new housing estate in Hertfordshire taught me a great deal about young people's cultural knowledge and the gap between that and the formal demands of schooled literacy. I was impressed with their knowledge of the best places to fish, the ways of homing pigeons, how to manage the social security system, about drugs, popular music... But they couldn't read and write very well. My insecure steps as a very young teacher led me to the visual; whilst print was a barrier, film, television, pictures, drawing weren't. I learned very quickly that conceptual ability was not only discoverable through reading and writing. However, it was my job to help them get to grips with literacy and good-humouredly they joined in with some unorthodox ways of learning. These experiences from my very early twenties established my passion about literacy and the critical importance it holds. They also indicate an early awareness of the importance of the visual.

Later, when working in north London, I began to focus more on writing. I was concerned that my pupils wrote narrative with some ease and success but found it difficult to shape argument and persuasive forms of text. Part of my 'itch' was that these young people were bringing a great deal of cultural knowledge and experience into the classroom which was not being energised by school writing demands. I used the opportunity of my MA thesis to begin thinking about these issues then registered for an M. Phil. By this time I had become more interested in the detail of text organisation. I began a research programme of classroom observations in science and English lessons in a secondary school and analysed text examples. These were beginning to suggest a disjunction in the relationship between form and meaning for some pupils, a link between talk and writing, particularly in terms of rhetorical forms, and some significant features of gendered approaches to writing. In 1985/6 I joined the National Writing Project and put my research on hold, intending to resume after three years with a great deal more data to draw on.

The project gave me an extraordinarily rich basis for thinking more carefully about writing but inevitably shifted my thinking. Hundreds of classrooms and teachers and thousands of young writers contributed to the research base of this project. After analysing a mass of children's writing and visiting schools and classrooms in the UK and abroad, my earlier research proposal did not satisfy the ideas I then wanted to get into shape. I had also become much more involved with the primary sector and a purely secondary focus for my research was not, by then, my area of choice. I was driven by other urgencies, however. The education reforms of the late nineteen-eighties had introduced the National Curriculum and statutory testing. High value was being put on elements of writing which could be easily quantified and this inevitably meant a move away from valuing content towards technical and secretarial aspects. There was also an underlying assumption that standards of writing had fallen, yet we had seen on the Project that this was clearly not the case. The richness and variety of what young writers could achieve belied the scare headlines. Being faced with an assessment process like this, I was keen to show that progress in writing could be seen through richer descriptions than the government was offering. I decided, with some reluctance, not to continue with the conversion to PhD but to write *Writing Policy in Action* instead. This was based on analysis of a large body of children's writing collected over a year in a Y 6 class and a term's work collected in two year 3/4 classes. The framework for analysis is outlined in Chapter 2 of that book.

Looking closely at such a large number of texts during the NWP reinforced the interest I had developed in text structures. The 'genre debate' was well under way by then [1990-1] and I felt ambivalent about the arguments. Links with the National Oracy Project and the Language in the National Curriculum project gave me the chance to continue to think about the construction of texts and about how young people's cultural experience is realised through both spoken and written texts. I started with narrative. For a year [1991-2] as a way of thinking through the relationship between narrative and non-fiction genres, I was 'hunting cultural texts' [Bearne 1994: 93]. I began collecting texts and interviewing young text makers. Some of these are described in 'Where Do Stories Come From?' I had got into the habit of collecting and analysing texts from my days with the

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Writing Project and although at that time I did not have any formal means of presenting my findings I was publishing and presenting at conferences.

I was still also keen on offering descriptions of progress which would fulfil a requirement for accountability whilst also valuing learners. The edited collections *Greater Expectations* and *Differentiation and Diversity in the Primary School* continued my interest in critical literacy and *Making Progress in English* asserted my view that teachers deserved access to ways of describing progress which go beyond surface features. 'Mind the Gap' gives a flavour of where I was getting to in looking at children's texts. Although I do not refer to multimodality, this chapter represents the thinking which led me after some years of solo research to register for an Associateship at the Institute of Education in London to give a more formal frame to my work. From 1997 to 1999 I observed, interviewed and collected texts from four widely different schools: one in Cambridge in a very mixed socio-economic area; one in Kew where most of the families were professional workers; one in Norfolk and one in London Bridge, both areas of significant economic deprivation but with different demographic features. During that time I also acted as participant teacher/observer in the Cambridge classroom. This research allowed me to absorb some of the ideas I had gathered from my reading on analysing pictorial text and to develop a way of looking at multimodal texts which drew on my previous analytical framework. Analyses of texts drawn from this research are shown in 'Multimodal Narratives' and later in this context statement, as well as being published in articles and books not included here.

My research has been largely based on text analysis supported by interview and observation. The methods of analysis draw heavily on Kress and van Leeuwen but include earlier use of Halliday's work. I have more recently included insights from the New Literacy Studies and work from the Sheffield group [e.g. Marsh, 2001] where I have presented seminars. My analysis turns, however, on semiotic theory [see following section]. There are obvious disadvantages in pursuing a research pathway like the one I have described. Clearly, it is open to criticism for a lack of focus and consistency. However, had I pursued my PhD fifteen years ago, I could not have taken account of developments in texts which have made

such an impact on teaching and learning in the last few years. I should also not have been able to benefit from the work of significant contributors to the fields of critical and situated literacies and multimodality. The analyses may be seen as limited because I have not had access to a larger corpus although my current research work, funded by QCA, offers the scope of analysing multimodal texts taken from five different areas of England and Scotland [2]. It will be, I hope, a step towards bringing together institutional assessment arrangements with a wider view of text making.

Social semiotics

For the 'published works' part of this thesis, I begin with a book which is mostly about writing and trace the application of my ideas about text production to a more explicitly social semiotic view. Semiotics is the study of signs within social and cultural space. Such a theory sees signs as products of the complex environment within which they are produced. Social semiotic theory assumes intention in a communicative act. It also assumes that individual language choices draw on the inner world of thought and the outer world of social experience. Choice and interest come into play in any social exchange and these are interrelated with matters of readership and form, aspects of my early [1991] framework for text analysis. However, notions of 'choice' or agency need to be set within a wider social and cultural critique as I argue later. From the moment I first came across Halliday's model of language as an essential part of the social system, it made a great deal of sense to me [Halliday 1978]. I had so absorbed his ideas that when I came to develop a framework for analysis of children's writing [arising from my work with the National Writing Project 1985 - 88] the interrelatedness he describes is clearly evident as an influence. Halliday describes three kinds of function necessary for any communicational system: the **ideational** function represents processes, content, ideas or information both in the external world and the internal world of the speaker/writer; the **interpersonal** function reflects social interactions and relationships in the processes of communication and the **textual** function puts the ideational and the interpersonal into the shape of a recognisable text [which relates to other texts].These three elements function simultaneously, 'reflecting the variety of functions that

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language is required to serve'. [Halliday 1978: 360] The ideational component involves choices related to decisions about the interpersonal [audience/readership] component and will be realised in a text form which communicates the writer's ideas and intentions coherently. So meaning drives the approach taken to the listener/reader/watcher and influences the structure of the text, shaping meaning, sense and appeal.

Halliday's model can be expressed spatially as:

IDEATIONAL   INTERPERSONAL

TEXTUAL
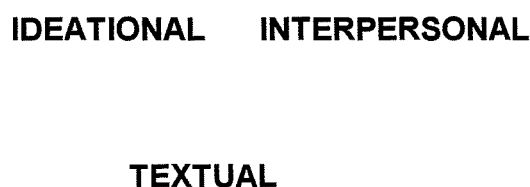
Fig. 1   Halliday's functional components of communication

This is only part of what Halliday offers in his social functional view of language, but has formed the basis for much multimodal theorising [Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Kress and van Leeuwen 1996].

In *Writing Policy in Action* [Bearne and Farrow 1991] I offer the following categories to describe children's writing:

Choices/writer's intentions   **Awareness of reader**

Form/organisation   **Technical features**

Fig. 2 Bearne's framework for analysing texts

The parallels are clear; without being explicitly aware of it, I drew on Halliday's model but used terminology which classroom teachers could easily apply to their own everyday knowledge. I also divided Halliday's textual function into the larger elements of text grammar and the sentence/word level aspects of language.

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Choices/writer's intentions　　　　　**Awareness of reader**
[IDEATIONAL]　　　　　　　　　　　**[INTERPERSONAL]**

Form/organisation　　　　　　　　　**Technical features**
　　　　　　　　[TEXTUAL]

Fig. 3　Comparison of Bearne's framework and Halliday's functions

In acknowledging my debt to Halliday, I want to emphasise that it is the action in
the centre of Halliday's triangle or my square model which interests me most –
the text which arises from the writer's intentions to communicate specifically to
an identified readership. The different elements which contribute to text
production describe a dynamic process of interaction which transforms ideas,
experiences and text knowledge, creating a new text with the maker's own
particular mark on it. Whilst this is not a straightforward matter of reproducing
existing forms, the individual is inevitably influenced by the social and cultural
settings of family, home, educational arrangements, governmental views of what
counts as valid or valuable literacy and the texts and forms which are part of the
culture. And this is where genre comes in.

The New London Group express Halliday's functions as the functions of
'Available Designs':

> Any semiotic activity – any Designing – simultaneously works on and
> with these facets of Available Designs. Designing will more or less
> normatively reproduce, or more or less radically transform, given
> knowledges, social relations and identities, depending on the social
> conditions under which the Designing occurs [Cope and Kalantzis, 2000:
> 22].

These social conditions and the degree of normative reproduction are important
factors to consider in analysing text production. The New London Group explain
that Available Designs 'take the form of discourses, styles genres, dialects and
voices' [Cope and Kalantzis, 2000: 21]. Whilst they point out that genres are
'forms of text or textual organisation that arise out of particular social
configurations or the particular relationships of the participants in an interaction',
they draw on an 'intertextual context' [Cope and Kalantzis, 2000:21].

In other words, no text is innocent of influence. Indeed, such text experience is necessary. In *Writing Policy in Action* I point out that writers need ' some notion of genre, the patterned forms of writing which have been developed in our society to carry particular kinds of messages' [Bearne 1991:13]. However, drawing on patterned expectations about forms of writing does not imply straightforward replication. The New London Group explain:

> But it will never simply reproduce Available Designs. Designing transforms knowledge by producing new constructions and representations of reality. Through their co-engagement in Designing, people transform their relations with each other, and so transform themselves. [Cope and Kalantzis, 2000: 22]

I see transformation as both related to text production and to extension of experience:

> In developing their awareness of and their capabilities using different genres for writing children are not only learning how to organize writing but also extending their experience of different ways of thinking about texts. [Bearne, 1991:13]

Texts are shaped by historically developed cultural and social practices. However, they also have the potential to act on the world, being part of newly developing cultural and social practices [Miller, 1984]. In making selections, or choices, about what to tell, how and to whom, writers categorize experience:

> a cognitive operation which sets mental frameworks for later, more complex forms of categorizing, selecting and generalizing of experience or facts. [Bearne, 1996:88]

Further, it seemed [and still seems] to me necessary that teachers should appreciate the dual nature of genre if they are to teach writing as meaning-making, rather than simply learning the forms:

> For teachers, coming to understand genre as a way of organizing thought as well as describing texts, is essential if children are genuinely to be able to use writing to form and communicate their thoughts. [Bearne, 1991:13]

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In 1996 I reiterate that view:

> Both teachers and children need to pay attention to just how texts have been put together; how they can be reorganized, if necessary, to do the job better. [Bearne, 1996:94]

And in 2000 [in 'Past Perfect and Future Conditional'] I quote Raymond Williams' point that language itself is a 'practical and radical element of critical enquiry', extending this to teachers' own use of language:

> One 'practical and radical' move would be to get to grips with the language of new forms of text; to teach pupils how to describe, analyse and evaluate new forms of text. [Bearne 2000: 149]

Bringing this theme right up to date:

> Children deserve to be given greater scope in their text making by explicit discussion of variations in the structures, purposes and effects of multimodal as well as written texts [Bearne 2002:73]

Understanding genre as socially formed, whilst seeing the text maker as operating on the basis of choice from what is available, leads to a consideration of pedagogy. It inevitably involves a view of individual agency and identity. In my writing framework I use 'intention' – 'the motivated relation between signifier and signified' - as a key area of text production. I am not interested here in trying to invoke some kind of essentialist 'inner state'. Rather, I have been keen to look at the materiality of the sign – what is there on the page – as an indicator of some of the choices a writer has made in putting a text together at that time. Kress uses the idea of 'interest' to indicate intentionality:

> Signs arise out of our *interest* at a given moment, when we represent those features of the object which we regard as defining that object at that moment.... . This interest is always complex and has physiological, psychological, emotional, cultural and social origins [Kress 1997:11].

Otherwise, he argues, 'we assume that we live in a world of constant accidents' [Kress 1997:36].

My analytical framework for writing assumes a link between intent and awareness of readership. Both of these inform the communicative as well as the representational aspects of composition as the choices and decisions made in composition are firmly linked to a sense of what the reader might need to know.

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These underlying intentions are also related to the chosen form – or Design – of the text and the syntactical and lexical choices made [3]. The framework also rests on an explicit link between the ideational world of the text maker, informed and shaped by social and cultural experience, and the interest, at the time, of the text maker in communicating ideas.

The maker of any communication/ representation will use the resources available to make their meanings as clear as possible. 'What is to hand' [Kress 1997] includes materials in the form of paper, card, colours and so on, but importantly also includes the abstract materials in terms of experiences, concepts and known strategies which are available. This has significant implications for teaching.

Critical literacy and critical pedagogy

I assume then, that no text is constructed as an act isolated from the social, cultural, even economic and political, contexts of its making. In 1996 I used Raymond Williams' careful distinction between a view of culture which is 'analytically constructive as well as constructively analytic' [Williams 1981:233]. This means not only thinking critically, but developing a critical pedagogy which 'begins with the premise of social context, the barriers that inhibit critical thought, and the need to learn through activity' [Burbules and Berk, 1999: 62]. That activity can, of course, be intellectual activity: reflection, analysis, debate. Certainly, to me, critical literacy is a matter of both abstract and practical action: an exchange between theory and practice: 'praxis' [Friere, 1985].

The matter of choice within a socially and culturally constraining, or at least shaping, context has to be theorised in terms of identity and social practice. However, identity itself, a concept which has been given much space in modernism and postmodern thinking [Butler, 2001; Giroux 1988; Habermas, 1987; Bakhtin, 1984], should also be seen as a process, an activity:

> *Identity is not a given, but an activity, the result of which is always only a*
> *local stability.* This activity is not one of balancing between the

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expectations of others and those of the individual itself. Rather, the balancing act is between different expectations, each of which has been partly internalized. Within every person there are different voices which can be, and usually are, contradictory.... *Identity is not only produced dialogically; it always retains a dialogic character.* [Miedema and Wardekker 1999: 79]   [italics in original]

Such a fluid view gives a more productive slant to the concept of individual agency which in turn makes demands on a critical pedagogy. The dialogic character of identity demands a way of teaching which makes space for the important inner debates which are part of critical thinking. Critical thinking and critical literacy are very closely related; each demands an analytical approach to any texts encountered. In 1995, in a book not included here as published works, I wrote:

Getting to grips with literacy is critically important but developing a critical approach to literacy is equally important. This is because literacy has to do with power – but not just the power of the individual in relation to some view of literacy held 'out there', important though this is. It is not just the case, either, that those who are literate have more power over those who are not, but that those who have the power *to define what counts as literacy* [original emphasis] hold the greatest power. Literacy, then, can be exclusive as well as inclusive.... This is because texts, the ways they are made and the ways they are given value or status, are part of wider cultural practices..... [Bearne, 1995: 149]

In terms of children's text production this is significant, since it acts as a reminder of the importance of paying attention to the number of possible permutations and transformations which are available to young text makers now. Critical pedagogy is also related to these reflexive positions, since it demands a constant examination of both the content and process of teaching and learning and, further, some action in seeking to develop critical thinking in relation to texts.

In 'Mind the Gap', I argue for teachers 'finding out what children think and know' [Bearne 1996: 312]. However, it seemed important then, and equally important now to explain the nature of my view of where critique comes in, requiring 'some attentive and careful work by teachers' which will:

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allow children to adopt a critical view of the texts they come across, but also give them the means to analyse the cultural conditions in which these texts are produced. This means acknowledging that literacy has an ideological component; it is not innocent, nor can it ever be neutral. It also means acknowledging the diversity of cultural contexts in which texts are read and produced. [Bearne, 1996: 312]

Whilst I am still at this point using 'literacy' as a term of convenience, I focus on multimodal texts to exemplify why it is important to pay attention to what children know about texts. I include text forms drawn from everyday home literacy items such as leaflets, advertisements, letters, arguing that this situated literacy experience deserves attention equal with the status given to the more usual forms of texts encountered in classrooms. A critical theory of literacy has to take into account not only the content and processes of literacy teaching and critical thinking, but the transformative demands of such criticality. I return to the matter of those who have the power to define what counts as valid and valuable literacy as a key question: *who benefits from theorising about literacy?*

There are two obvious answers: the individual and the state. These two categories represent the levels at which literacy theory is often carried out. At the micro level a focus on individual literacy development gives an opportunity for a precise description of what the individual can do with texts. At the macro level, a view of the state as an agent for literacy development offers possibilities for analysis of the ideological, economic and political imperatives acting on literacy education. However, an equally important level of analysis could be termed the 'medial' level which acts as a connection between the micro and macro. It is at the interface between individual and state that specific, local, culturally developed literacy practices inform a critical theory of literacy teaching. Descriptions and analysis of *literacy practices* offer a way in to conceptualising the relationships between all three levels [Barton, 1994]. Theorising about *practices* rather than simply about the products of literacy also acts as a reminder that such theories need to include the unobservables – the values, attitudes, emotions, social and cultural relationship networks – which surround literacy events [Street, 1993]. An analysis which takes into account both the visible and invisible elements of literacy events allows descriptions of how groups of people– as well as, but perhaps distinct from, individuals - in a

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variety of social settings are regulated by and regulate literacy practices. Whilst this can only be a small part of this context statement, it is, nevertheless, important in constructing an educational theory of text production. Situated literacy means looking at the detail of text production whilst setting such an analysis within the wider political frame.

Literacy as a social process: situated literacy

In 'Mind the Gap' I list the principles which might underpin an analytically constructive theory of literacy [Bearne 1996: 327]. I have also argued throughout the published works presented as part of this submission, that a starting point would be teachers extending their own knowledge and experience of multimodal texts. However, it is not enough to expect individual teachers to extend their expertise; this would have to be supported by inclusion of multimodality in institutional arrangements for assessment. In arguing through the complexities of the different strands involved in analysis of situated literacies, it is important to stress that settings or situations are also theoretical constructs. Human beings are constantly remaking their social worlds:

> Situations [contexts] do not just exist. Situations are rarely static or
> uniform, they are actively created, sustained, negotiated, resisted, and
> transformed moment-by- moment.... [Gee, 2000: 190]

This echoes my views of classroom literacy:

> It places texts and the intertextual meanings that readers may bring to
> them into a specific environment – the context of a cultural institution for
> education which itself is a continually shifting construct. Readers, texts
> and institutions change and so should ways of helping children get hold
> of the kinds of literacies that are given high prestige. [Bearne 1995: 152-
> 3]

The protean nature of situatedness is often theorised in New Literacy Studies through the use of Bourdieu's formulation of *habitus* [Bourdieu 1977:78]. However, there are reservations about the precision of this concept [Jenkins, 1992; Nash, 1990] suggesting that it often seems to exclude notions of self, choice and agency in its emphasis on the practices of the group in relation to

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culture. 'Disposition' at times seems to imply conscious action and at other times, unconscious action. Although some research into educational settings makes telling use of the concept of *habitus* [for example, Brooker, 2002; Pahl 2001], Bourdieu's concept of *field* [although it is not easy to separate it from *habitus*] can be more useful in relating the large scale effects of government institutions and ideologies to the educational settings of school and classroom and the lived realities of children and their families [Grenfell, James et al, 1998]. Bourdieu's views of these constructs as 'thinking tools' can offer a useful stance for interpreting situated literacies. Most particularly, I find his view of social practices as 'regulated improvisations' [Bourdieu 1977:78] useful as a tool for analysing both children's text production and the social and cultural conditions in which the texts are produced. Further, this concept recognises the value of thinking fluidly whilst seeking a structural and principled analysis of what is observed. Bourdieu's formulation seems to me to sit comfortably with Raymond Williams' call for a theory which can be both analytically constructive as well as constructively analytical.

In taking a view of situated literacy, the New Literacy Studies critique the ways in which institutions, particularly, perhaps, schools, constrain the expression of individual or group literacy experience [for example, Gee 1990, Barton 1994, Street, 1993]. This can create a tension when seeking to understand individual text production in a school situation. In pointing out that studies of situated literacies can become a means of 'implicitly or explicitly critiquing schooled literacy' [Moss 2001: 147], Gemma Moss uses Bernstein's [1996] work on horizontal and vertical discourses and knowledge structures to argue that there is no direct transfer between the informal [horizontal] domain and the official [vertical] domain of schooling:

> vertical discourse is institutionally and structurally resistant to invasion
> from without. From this point of view, the literacy competencies which
> marginalized social groups can muster for themselves will either remain
> undervalued and excluded; or in the process of transfer into a pedagogic
> setting, be effectively recontextualised into something else. [Moss, 2001:
> 159]

She acknowledges that this point of view may seem unduly pessimistic to those related to New Literacy Studies who argue for the inclusion of horizontal

discourses within educational settings. However, I would draw a distinction between content and process. The content of horizontal discourses may shift with fashion, but the processes of reading popular cultural texts are likely to become part of 'what is to hand' for the young text maker. The situated literacies of the young children whose work is described in the identified chapters of published works, and the sections analysing Dominique's [pp 24-41] and Clinton's [pp 47-57] texts, suggest that it is worth paying attention to sites where horizontal and vertical discourses intersect.

It is clear that young text makers very actively and innovatively transform their experience of all the spoken, cultural, visual, multimodal and print texts they meet. The process of transformation springs from that point of intersection. Moss quotes David Bloome's view of 'necessary indeterminacy' [Bloome 1993] as a possible way forward in critiques of schooled literacies. I would parallel that with Bourdieu's notion of 'regulated improvisation' [Bourdieu 1977] which can inform interpretation of both the situation and the literacy under scrutiny. Such a formulation allows awareness of the effects of, for example, the examination system on school experiences of literacy whilst keeping afloat a sense of individual agency within the situation. In line with a critical pedagogy, it also seems important to be aware of the range of possible text types which students draw on and to make a strenuous effort to develop ways of describing their text production which can move from the horizontal into the vertical domain without dishonouring the text makers, their knowledge or their cultural experience.

Genre – the continuing debate

From the time of *Writing Policy in Action* I have had some concerns about the views on genre expressed by Frances Christie, but representative of the Australian genre theorists in general, that 'learning to write in science, social studies, or literary studies is a matter of learning to distinguish the different generic structures associated with each field' [Christie 1986: 244]. As I

commented then, it could be seen as a somewhat simplistic and even potentially harmful view which could 'lead to the worst kind of checklist approach to teaching writing' [Bearne 1991: 105]. This view is echoed by Aviva Freedman's view that 'explicit teaching can be harmful' [Freedman, 1994:199] and raises issues about the pedagogies surrounding genre.

There have been other criticisms of genre theory, cogently argued both from the point of view of structural linguistics and in terms of pedagogy [for example, in the U.K.: Wyse and Jones 2001, Barrs 1991 and, notably, Dixon 1994]. In the field of literary studies, Ralph Cohen warns that 'genre naming fixes what is necessarily unfixable' [Cohen 1984:6]. Some of the first formulations of the Australian genre school indicate a particular view of language and literacy knowledge. Martin and Rothery, for example, refer to 'developing skill at a genre' [Martin and Rothery 1986]. At the time I argued [and would still now] that children's learning consists not of putting together different 'skills' but of a gradual and recurrent consolidation of experiences which are visited and revisited throughout their schooling. Indeed, as far as writing is concerned it is open to argument whether any adult writer can ever claim to have got to grips with all the 'skills' necessary for writing in a wide range of genres. Since writing changes with time, even mature writers continue to learn and develop their expertise. Also, according to this view, writing is seen not so much as expressing ideas and exploring meaning but mainly as constructing texts.

In the introduction to *Critical Literacy*, Luke and Freebody describe the constraints operating within even the most apparently apolitical approaches to genre teaching:

> instructional approaches that focus principally on the description of linguistic technologies of texts and the cognitive architectures for the construction and processing of text run the risk of mirroring or reproducing these sociocultural restrictions and constraints rather than elucidating and transforming them [Luke and Freebody, 1997:4].

Similarly, Lee warns of the possible misuse of Halliday's systemic functional

linguistics arguing that the 'genre pedagogic project is theoretically and politically naïve' [Lee 1997: 416]. This is because of the 'appropriation and transformation' of systemic functional linguistics to a more narrow pedagogy [Lee, 1997: 426]. It is wise to heed these warnings and this argument returns me to Bourdieu's notion of 'regulated improvisation'; perhaps it is time to shift attention from debates which see genre as production resources and to seek an interpretive framework which offers a flexible way of describing texts and the ways in which they are made, treated and given value.

This may well be assisted by drawing on work on rhetoric [Andrews, 1992]. I would add to this, however, the notion of framing. Once again, this enters tricky definition territory, since it can be differently perceived according to the discourse in which it is used. There is a tradition of the use of 'framing' in media studies. One use, drawn from image analysis, is to describe the ways in which images are related to each other in designed text [see Unsworth, 2001]. McLachlan and Reid, in response to current Australian theories of genre, widen the concept, using frame to refer to semiotic boundaries more generally. Andrews [2001: 113-4] argues that framing has potential as a construct which can avoid overly determined definitions of genre, particularly as texts are now being recognised as multimodal, involving not only combinations of image, word and design, but relating to developments in information and communications systems.

This prompts me to return to Halliday's functions of representation. The ideational and interpersonal elements of a communication, and the shape of the text itself, whether in sound, print or image, together realise the meaning. This is where, for me, the word 'grammar' comes in handy. The grammar of any utterance, any representation, any text, describes the patterns which make it comprehensible to members of the culture in which it is produced and received. Syntax describes sentence grammar – the ways in which any language community expects a sentence to be patterned for it to make sense to that community. Text grammars similarly represent expectations that

certain texts will be structured according to developed conventions. Text cohesion is a critical component of how texts are put together and hold together.

In the most recent of the published works I present here, 'Multimodal narratives', I explain:

> Different types of text have varying patterns of cohesion which contribute to the overall shape or architecture of the text... In films, cohesion depends on repeated visual motifs, perspective, close-up on characters' faces or exchanged glances, choices of setting, colour, intensity of light, the organisation of time sequences, the use of musical or sound patterns to underpin the affective elements of the text ... as well as the text cohesion of dialogue, the connectives, conjunctions, pronoun references, deixis, substitution, ellipsis, lexical patterns. In picture books, lines, vectors, the direction of characters' eye gaze and spatial organisation act as visual connectives and conjunctions; repeated visual motifs echo the text cohesion in narrative verbal text created by lexical repetition or ties; gesture and stance, sustained and changed through framing, as well as depicted action, give narrative cohesion. [Bearne 2002: 73]

It may be more fruitful, then, to look at the features which help distinguish between different kinds of text in terms of the range of components of text grammar rather than through the now increasingly contested notion of genre. Text grammars, the patterned expectations of texts [spoken, enacted, multimedia...], make it possible for members of communities to share meanings. Easily accessible mass media increases the potential scope for sharing meanings across and within communities. If text-makers want to shape content and meaning for communication with the vast range of possible communities of meaning, then they need experience of the ways texts are structured and organised. They also need to examine the variations and subversions which are possible. Shaping meaning gives coherence to a text: the writer's ideas follow a logic intended to convey something to someone – often described as 'purpose' and 'audience'. This, in turn, means choosing structural, organisational and language features which are linked to the purpose and audience for the text. Whilst holding in mind a principle of uncertainty, there has to be some kind of

rule of thumb for distinguishing between different types of communications, particularly if there has to be some principled teaching about text organisation [Miller, 1994]. Such distinctions can be found in the textual and grammatical structures of printed texts as identified by a combination of:

- the content chosen;
- the implied relationship between the writer and the reader;
- chronological or non-chronological organisation of material;
- the use of verbs: active/passive; past/present/future; action/stative; modal....
- the text cohesive devices used;
- features of layout, organisation of material, use of pictorial or diagrammatic detail.

Choices made within these categories frame meaning. Whatever the description used, these elements of text grammar offer ways in to analysing and appreciating multimodal texts.

The integrity of the text

In 'Multimodal Narratives', as well as analysing some 5-year-olds' texts, I look at fictional books written by two Year 5 pupils [pp 70-72] identifying the text grammar, and particularly the text cohesion. They were pupils in the Cambridge school where I carried out part of the research for my Associateship. During one term I worked alongside the teacher of a Year 5/6 class one afternoon a week as each of the pupils composed an information book and a story book for specific readers of their own choice. I have chosen to analyse Dominique's information book here. For me the cultural significance was important as the information is drawn directly from her own knowledge and that of her family, and is not taken from other books. My main aim, however, was to look at this as a multimodal text, to examine the interrelationships between the two dominant modes – words and pictures – and to attempt to see just what Dominique has done as she put the

text together. The book is titled **Information About Jamaica** and emerged as more like a travel guide than a geography text book, an indication of her situation, interest and intentions.

The cover, for which Dominique uses bright felt tip pens, has a central image of a smiling, cartoon-faced sun in sunglasses, surrounded by circles of different colours and with sun rays spilling over the dedication at the bottom, leaking into the word 'Jamaica' in the title and outwards as if spreading beyond the page boundary.
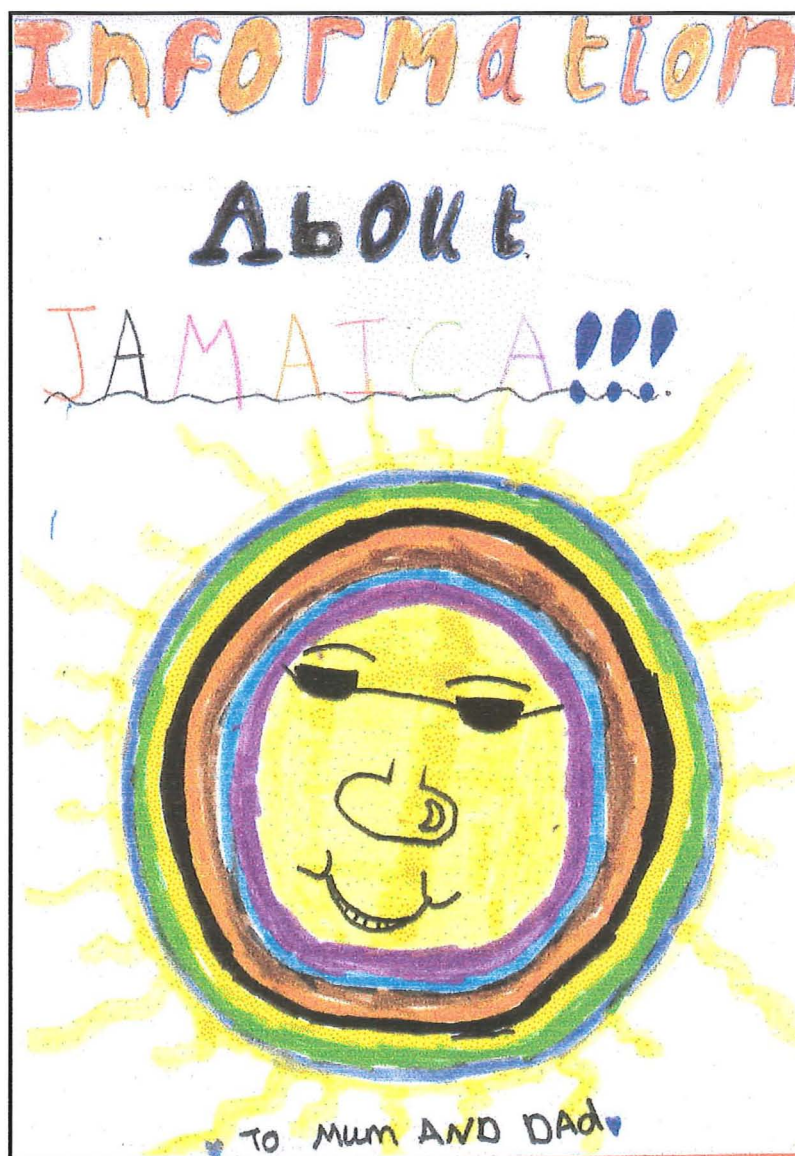

Fig. 4 Dominique's book cover

In terms of interest, Dominique's pictorial text shows that the sun is clearly an important aspect of what Jamaica is all about. Throughout the book she uses the sun as a cohesive thematic thread, at times with low modality as she represents it in cartoon form and at other times with a more realistic representation, the higher modality suggesting a rather more serious approach to the information structure. The variations on the sun motif hold together the key themes of the book: the pleasure and abundance of Jamaica, both in human and material terms: the sun not only warms people but it nourishes the land, too. The repeated sun image acts as a device for text cohesion.

The dominant yellow demand image of the sun on the cover takes up a little more than half of the lower part of the page with the dedication 'To Mum and Dad', framed with blue hearts, at the bottom. According to Kress and van Leeuwen's analytic framework, this is the 'real' part of the cover, the 'down-to-earth' element of the book: a tribute to Dominique's parents and their origins in Jamaica. Throughout her book, Dominique keeps the 'detail' of specific pictorial information to the lower part of the page, thus giving ideational weight to the verbal elements positioned at the top. On the cover, however, the pictorial element dominates.

The cartoon style declares the human, fun element of the enterprise, balanced with the more factual aspects within the text telling the reader about the island. The title words are placed in the 'ideal' position; this is the abstracted form of Dominique's work – the facts which will be presented.

The first double page spread has the contents list on the left and a fold-out map of Jamaica on the right. In the Contents [Figs. 5], Dominique chooses to represent the vibrancy and exuberance of Jamaica through colourful bubble font and capitals linked with the verbal and iconic text.

Fig. 5 Dominique's Contents page

Both the lettering and numbering are deliberately asymmetric and saturated with colour, once again suggesting her view of Jamaica as a land of fun, diversity and abundance.

On the facing page [Fig.6], the decision to have a bigger scale of map, folding out from the book, links with Dominique's opening statements:

> The land in Jamaica is very nice, people have big pieces of land for animals, crops and lots of other things. On a world map, Jamaica looks like a little island surrounded by sea but if a big map of Jamaica it's nice and detailed.

This follows the tone of the cover: to Dominique, Jamaica is warm, welcoming, interesting and varied. She immediately locates the reader as someone who may see the island as small and insignificant but who can be invited to see the detail, the evidence for 'lots of other things' presented in the real, pictorial, section of the page layout. The back of the open-out map which is what the reader sees first, declares 'This is a detailed map of JAMAICA!' with the words placed

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above a faintly drawn replica of the cartoon-sun face of the cover, this time with the eyes looking slightly downwards, not engaging the reader's gaze directly and shifting more towards an offer, or an invitation to the reader rather than a direct approach as on the cover. Opened out the map [not shown here] is three times the width of the page, allowing space for the detail. It is precisely drawn in pencil with the sea faintly shaded in a soft blue and place names crowded all around the coast. There are a few names on the interior of the map but no other colour is used and she does not mark any other features nor contour lines. This spareness gives just the information which Dominique wants to convey – in this case of the number of named places.
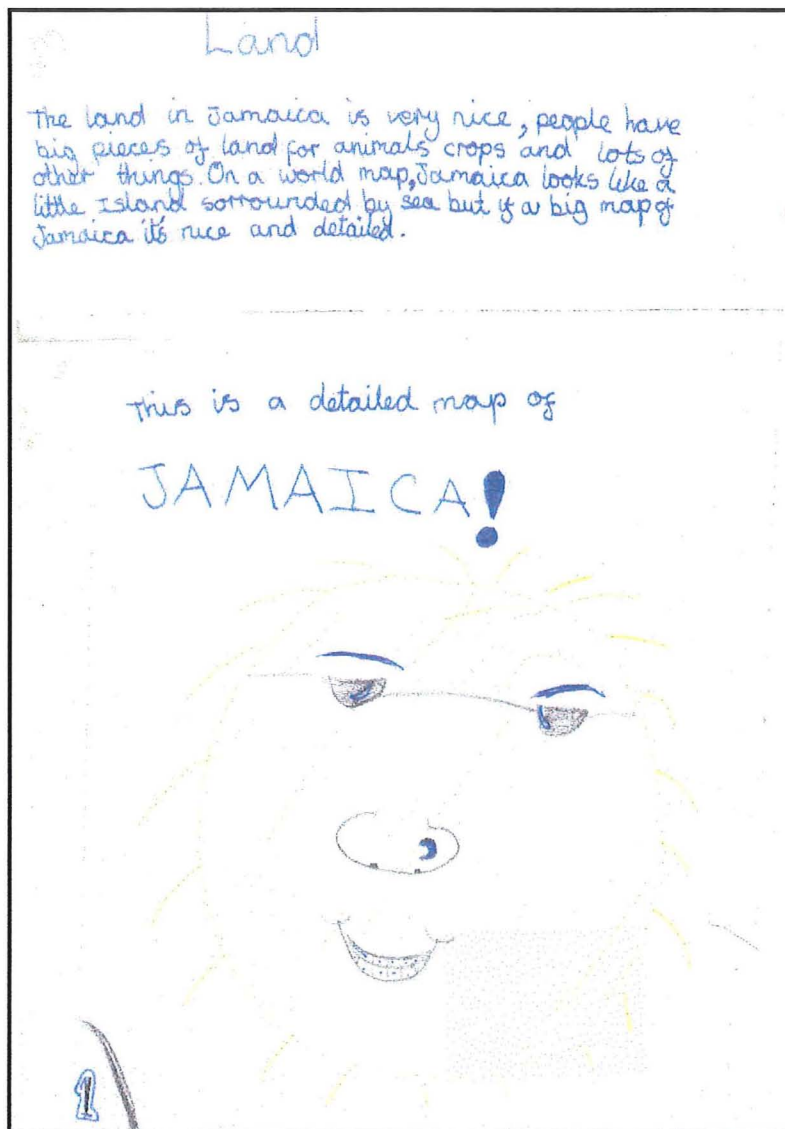
Fig. 6 *Land* and map of Jamaica

Information about 'The Land' is continued on the next page [Fig. 7], providing some of the geographical detail not included on the map.

Dominique has placed a block of text at the top left hand side of the page:

In Jamaica the land is not flat it is quite bumpy, also there are lots of hills and mountains. The land has also got lots of grass and beautiful flowers.

Fig. 7 'In Jamaica the land is not flat'– Dominique's 2nd page

Using contrast, a verbal device which is a feature of the whole book, to indicate the nature of the countryside, Dominique then repeats 'lots of', to express her view of the richness of the land. The close spatial relationship between these statements and the map on the page before, link the ideational content of this page with the previous information and signal that it is a 'given', still within the section 'The Land'. It is worth considering Dominique's placing of the text like this. It is the only time she does it. Although she maintains the 'ideal' position, she also keeps the words in an area described by Kress and van Leeuwen as given: 'something the viewer already knows, as a familiar and agreed-upon point of departure for the message' [Kress and van Leeuwen 1996:187].
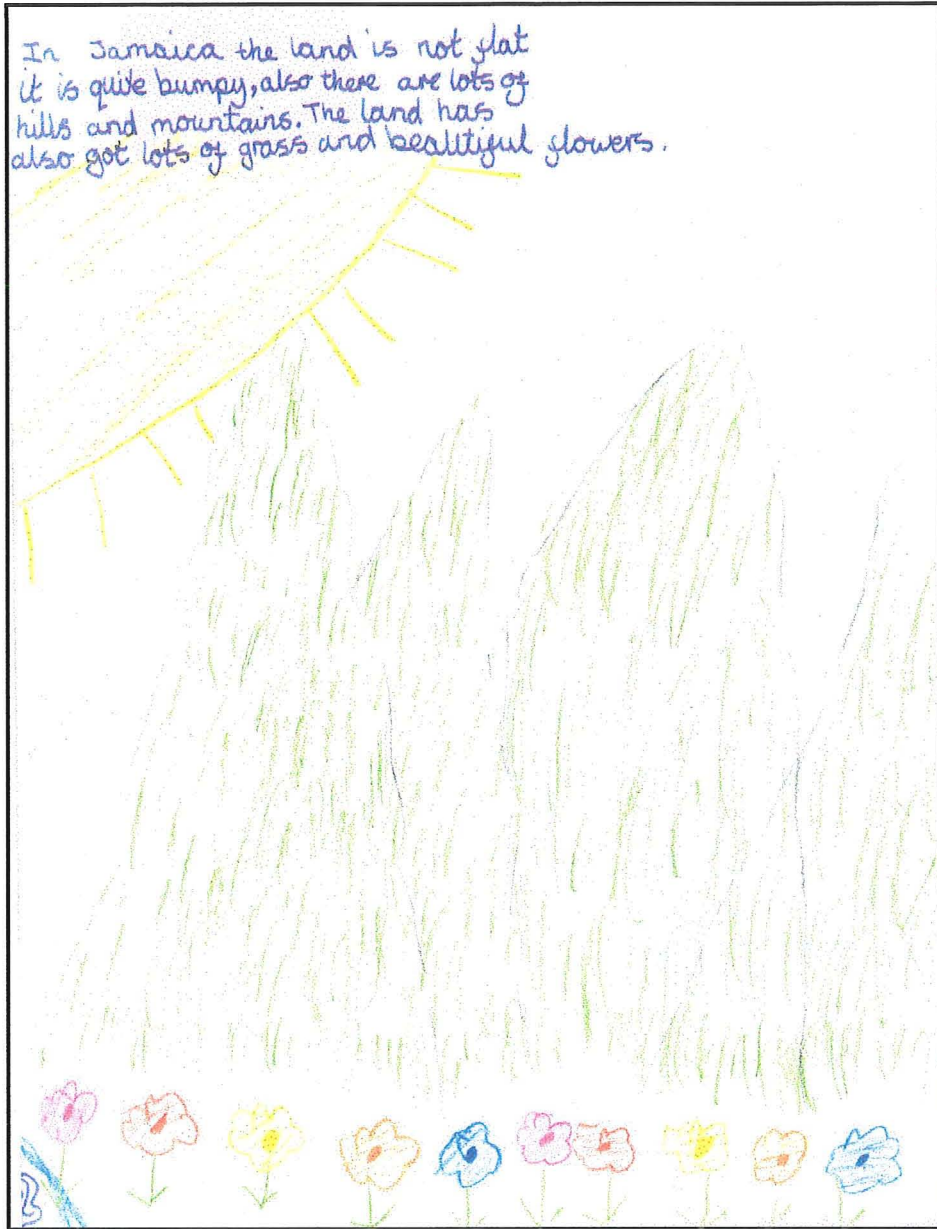
The pictorial element of the page dominates, showing the sun on the left, leaking from under the verbal text, also as a given and part of the thematic linking image of the whole book. The sun is not a 'character' here, however, as on the cover. It is now part of the factual rather than the fanciful elements of the text. Centrally placed are four very tall and thin green mountains with a row of flowers at the bottom of the page, different colours but of uniform and somewhat stylised shape. The heavy dominance of the elongated mountains as well as the rows of flowers parallel the repeated 'lots of' in the verbal text. Once again, Dominique highlights the sensory, pleasurable surroundings as the real ground base of her book.

The facing page, which comprises the section 'Weather' [Fig. 8], is divided equally between verbal and pictorial text. In line with the design of the whole book, the words are at the top. Once again, Dominique uses contrast for effect: hot/cold; day/night, repeated in the division of the picture in the lower part of the page. She also refers back to the flowers of the previous page. The text cohesion of picture and words, linking one page to the next, shows an integrated approach to the information structure of the book. In line with her overall genial tone, she finds a good reason for the sun occasionally being obliterated by the rain although in the verbal text she shows that it is not so welcome on the level of personal experience as the pictorial text shows:
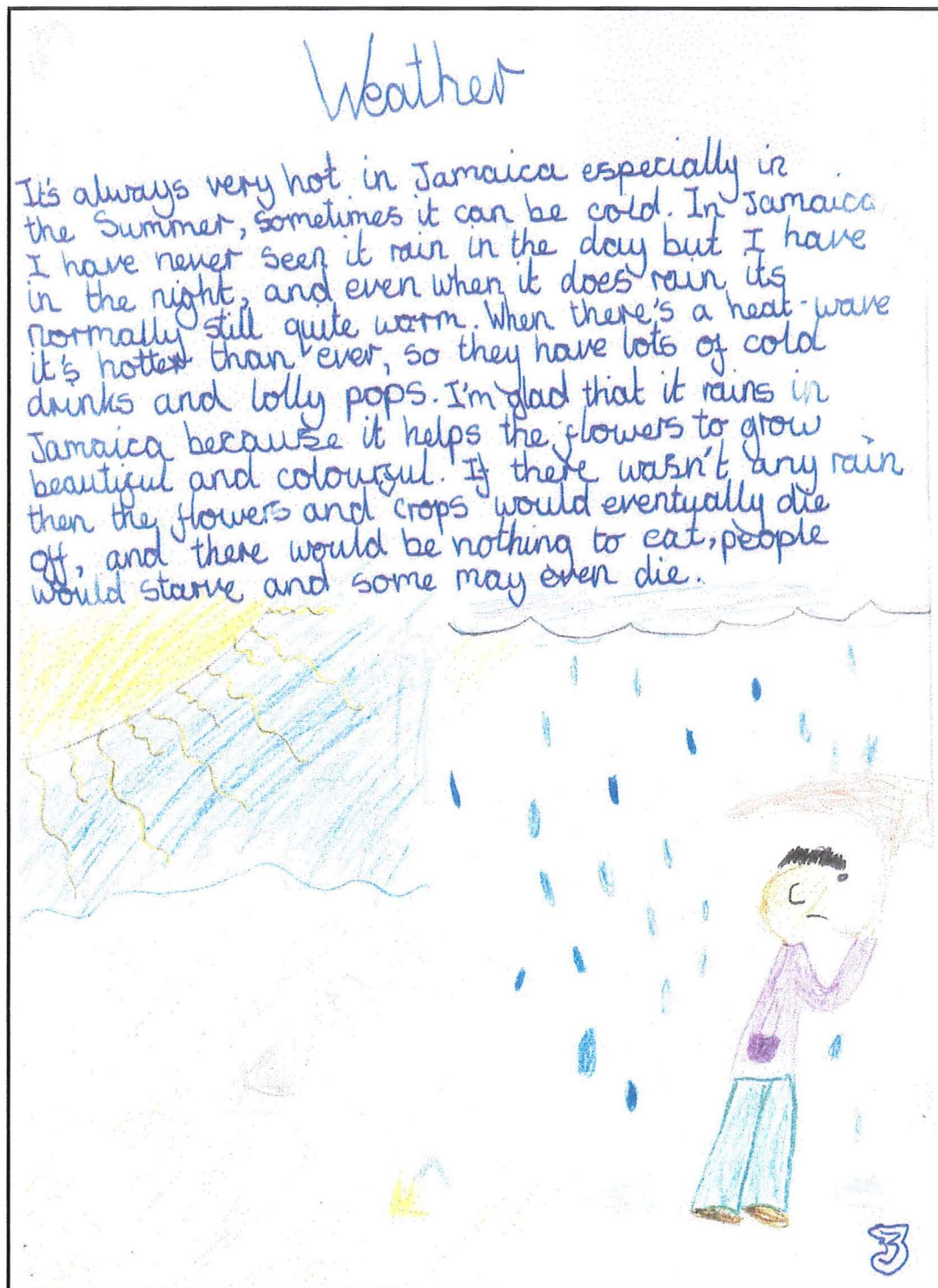
Fig. 8 *The Weather* – Dominique's 3rd page

She signals abundance of sensory pleasure again with 'lots of cold drinks' and in referring to food she makes a forward-reference hinting at the content of the following page which is devoted to 'What They Eat'.

In the pictorial part of the page design, Dominique uses delicate colour pencil. The image is divided into two contrasting sections. On the left, the sun is again the given information, shining from top left on to a smiling sunbathing girl who is facing the viewer directly, encouraging participation in the pleasure, and lying on a fringed towel with a glass of lemonade, complete with straw by her side. The use of a direct gaze, coupled with Dominique's direct assertion 'I'm glad' bring the reader/viewer closer to the experience of warmth. Both the verbal and the pictorial text then move towards the less enjoyable aspects of the threat of starvation and the threatening rain which, although welcome in principle, as expressed through the abstract verbal element of the page, is not so welcome at the level of personal experience, as depicted in the disgruntled male figure of the pictorial text. Dominique uses a very faint pencil wavy line to indicate a different time frame for the right hand [new] image of a man, fully clothed, in profile and grimacing, moving towards the right holding an umbrella over his head, the front part of which is cut off by the edge of the page. Rain is falling from a shallow storm cloud at the top. Taking the page as a whole, Dominique is indicating very clearly some of the salient information for her: the sun theme is only briefly broken by the rain. She uses the pictures to capture the immediate, personally experienced, sensory aspects of her book, not attempting to depict the more abstract concepts of the potentially harmful effects of drought. In the design of this page she is using the relationship between the two modes to signal inherent contradictions and tensions. Whilst she welcomes the sun and dislikes the rain she recognises that too much sun can be destructive and that rain is necessary for growth and sustenance.

The next double page spread has two sections 'Things They Eat' on the left and 'Animals' on the right. The information structure of the left hand page is largely pictorial and diagrammatic, illustrating some of the variety of foods available [Fig. 9]. In terms of the double page spread, food is the given, as this section is placed to link with the reference to food on the previous page. Dominique then illustrates orange, bananas, apple, melon in the middle section of the page and akee and a packet of saltfish at the bottom, the pictorial information giving evidence of what is represented in the written text.
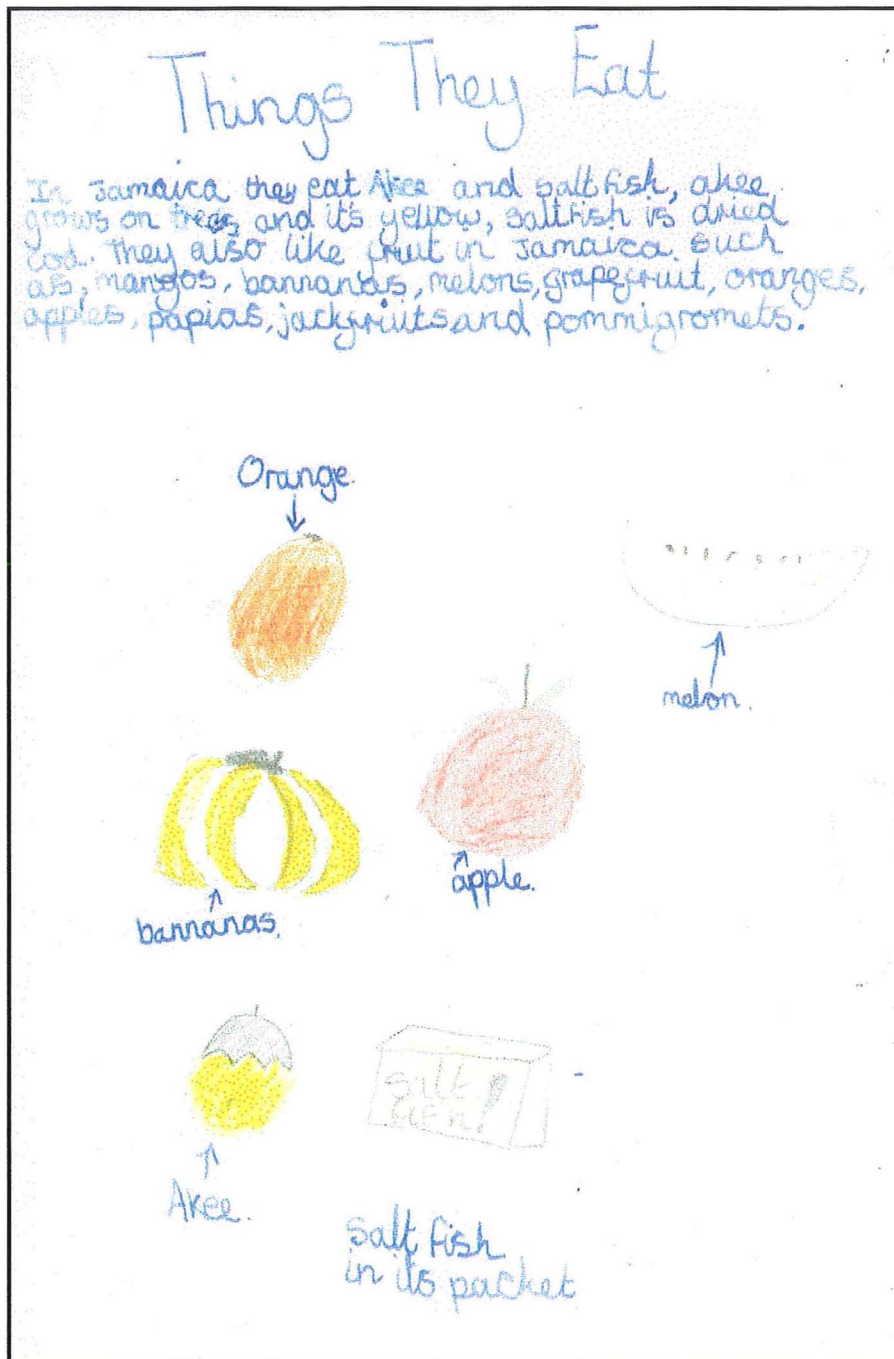
Fig. 9 *Things They Eat* - Dominique's 4th page

These images float freely in white space; each is a statement. Dominique uses arrows as deictic markers to tie the labels to each picture, acknowledging the needs of her readership who may not be familiar with Jamaican food, and explains 'salt fish in its packet' in the caption for that picture. Both types of text tell the reader just what is needed and where something is unfamiliar, she

explains what it is and then what it looks like. The list in the verbal text is echoed by the conceptual grouping of 'food' in the pictorial element, the examples as ever, placed in the 'real' part of the page.

On the facing, right hand page [Fig. 10] there are significantly more words, returning to a more personal address to the reader/viewer

Animals

Animals in Jamaica are quite different from the animals in England, they have dogs, puppys and spiders what we have but they have.... lizards, iguarners, crocans and lots of other ones. Some can change colour and some can just run fast. In Jamaica the have masquitoes, in the night while your sleeping they come and suck at your blood. This leaves you with a bubble of some kind and if you pop it white slippery water comes out. Also in Jamaica they have crocodiles, they won't harm you if you stay out of their way though.

Fig.10 *Animals* - Dominique's 5th page

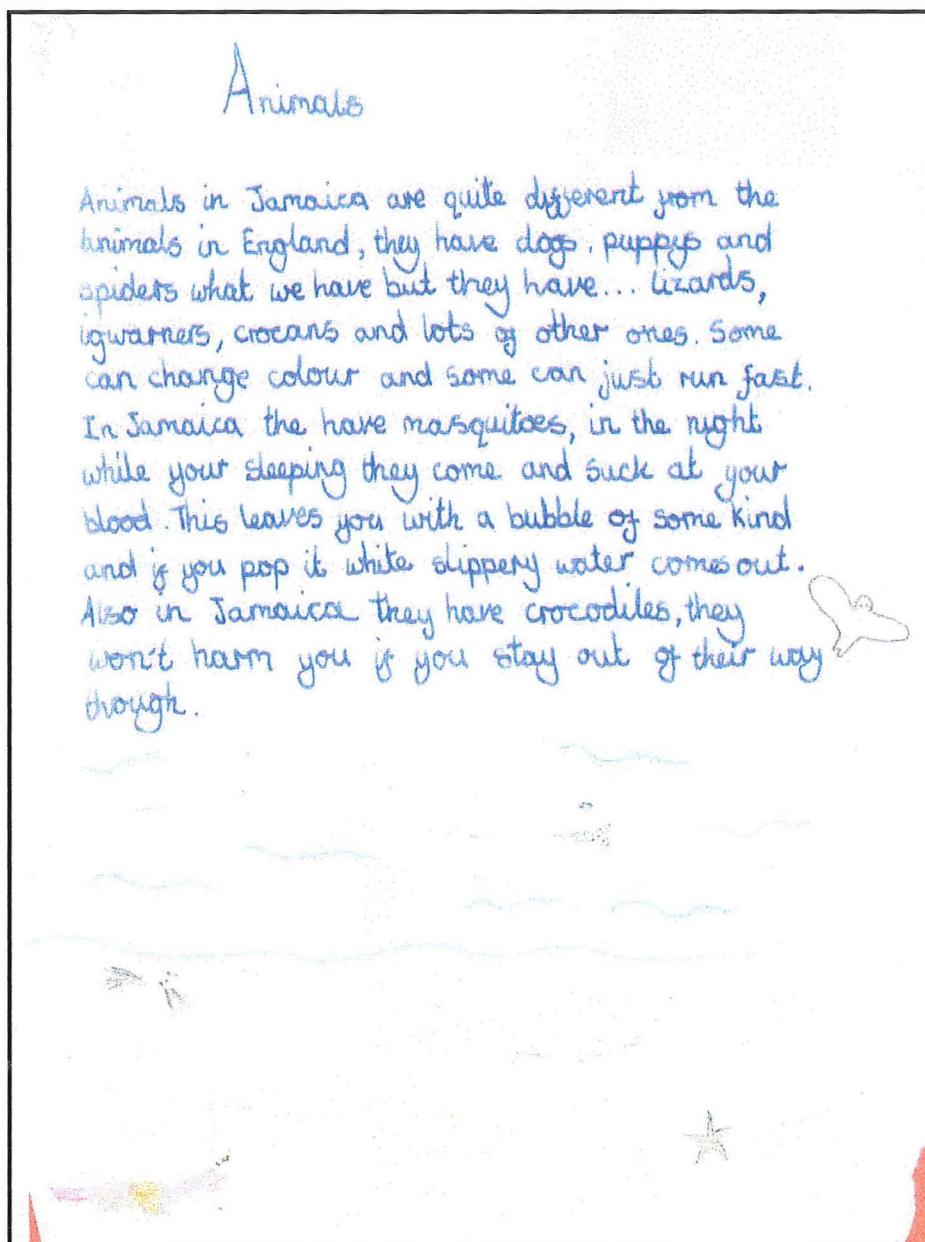The theme of this section is about animals that might scare you or be harmful. Dominique uses ellipsis to create a slight hesitation and heighten the tension as she leads into the scary part about reptiles. The greatest part of the verbal text, however, is given over to what she remembers as most salient in terms of animal life in Jamaica – the effects of mosquitoes! The mosquito creeps into the upper right hand part of the page, bridging the real and the ideal elements and being introduced as new information both verbally and pictorially. It is centrally placed, paralleling the central focus in the written text. The final verbal reassurance leads into a slightly less than half page illustration of others of the animals she has listed. In the balance of affect in visual and verbal text in this case the emotional impact is carried by the words. The illustrations place the different animals and insects on a beach by the sea, all facing to the right, directing the gaze towards the page turning as if urging the reader/viewer to move quickly away from these disagreeable creatures. The animals are in profile, offering no threat and are quite faintly drawn and coloured, except for a bright red and orange lizard. In contrast to the white background of the previous page, the background of the beach and sea adds to the softer effect, the somewhat neutral tone of the picture linking with the reassuring tone of the last sentence of the verbal text.

The final double page spread returns to the sun theme [Fig. 11]. Dominique has once again placed the sun on the given side of the page, this time at the top, shining down on and spilling over the section title 'Beaches'. In contrast to all the previous pages, the sun has moved up the page to a full given/ideal position, taken for granted as an overarching abstraction of what Jamaica means to her.

In the written text, Dominique has carefully chosen the information she wants to give the reader; to her, beaches are comfortable, social places, indicated by the repeated 'nice' and the use of 'lovely'. Although she links with the beach of the previous page, she offers no 'wildlife' information as on the previous page. The picture, taking up a little over half of the page but once again placed below the words, shows two centrally placed palm trees supporting a hammock in which a

girl [Dominique herself?] is depicted in profile and smiling. Above her floats a bright orange butterfly and there seem to be a few drops of bright blue rain in the cloudless, lighter blue sky.
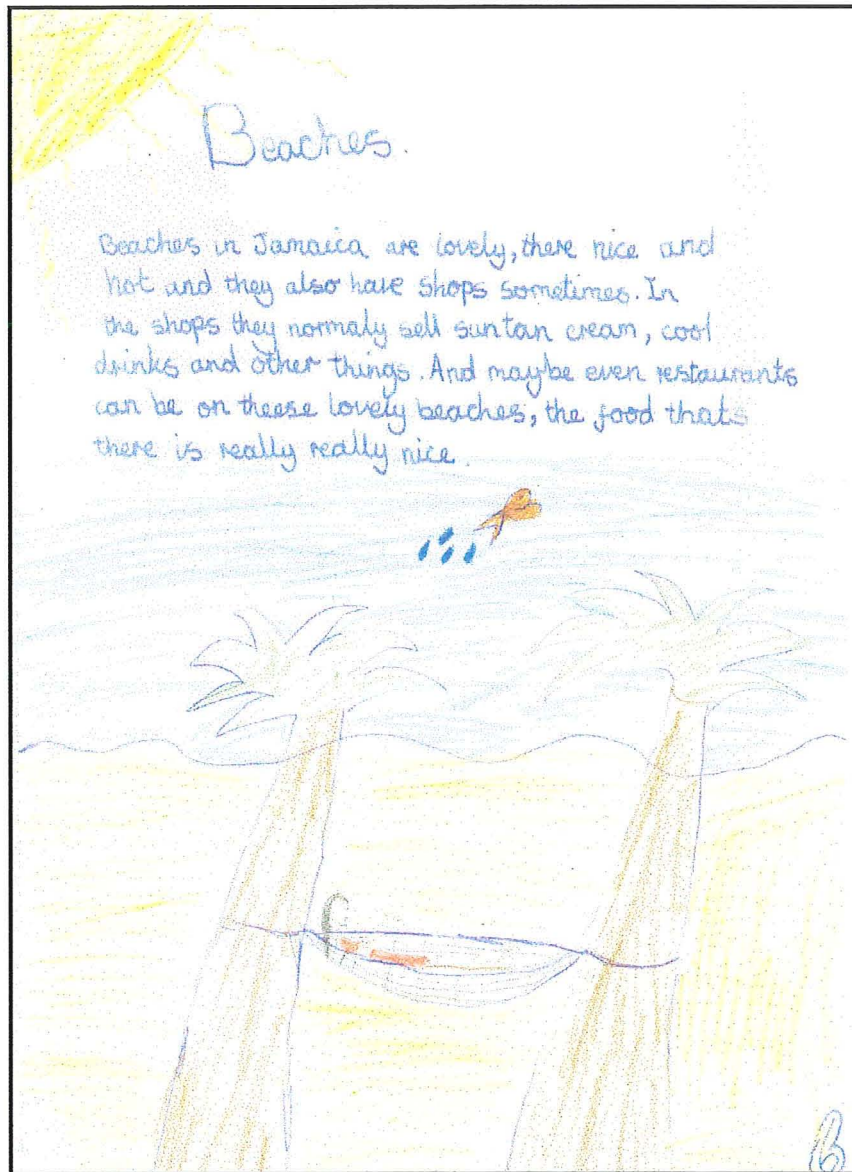

Fig. 11 *Beaches* – Dominique's 6th page

This offer image invites the viewer to share in the warmth and pleasure of the beach. The perspective places the viewer very slightly below the image so that we are looking up admiringly, or even enviously, perhaps, to this tranquil scene. She does not include any pictorial representation of the commercial aspects of

beach life which she details in the verbal text. Dominique has selected as most salient the warmth, leisure and pleasure of beaches to represent the opening of this final section.

The right hand page of this double page spread [Fig. 12] on the subject of Beaches opens with a direct engaging address to the reader, continuing the sense of warmth and comfort, pleasure in the colour of the surroundings.

> If you've ever seen a sunset on theese beaches you are very lucky, I haven't seen one yet but I can imagine how nice it is, the red sun going down and you sitting on the warm sand.

Fig. 12 Dominique's 7th page

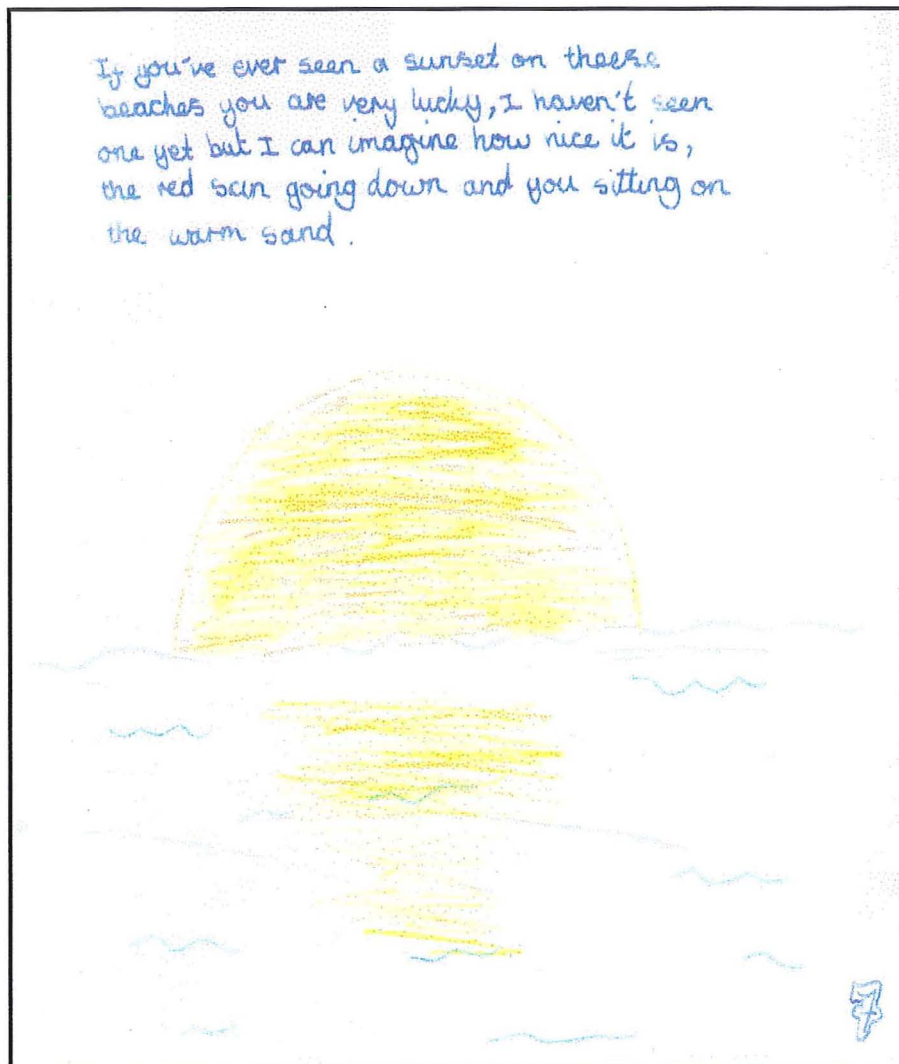The picture of a gloriously setting sun, centrally dominant, this time edged and threaded with orange and red in the yellow, is reflected in a calm sea. There are no rays coming from it and the colours of the sun are more intense than of the 'ideal' sun at the top left of the facing page. This final image moves Dominique to the same position as the reader/ viewer; the girl shown on the previous page is

now also an observer of the beauty of the sunset. The two modes work together to convey the sensory satisfaction, visually and physically, that she observes.

On the last, left hand, page of the book Dominique's message to her parents is written at the top with a centrally placed heart and kisses.

To Mum and Dad I hope you've enjoyed this book
Love from Dominique!

Places to Go

In Jamaica there are lots of places
to go, hot places cool places, rich places
poor places, fun places and lots more,
places in Jamaica are different in England
but it dosen't matter their still very nice
to visit. Nice places you could visit are, Negril,
Montego Bay, Ocho Rios, mandeville, Port Antonio
and Kingston and not just thoose places
are nice to visit, any-way where ever you
go I'm sure it will be nice.

Fig. 13 'To Mum and Dad' Dominique's 8th page

Underneath this valediction, she has placed a central panel titled 'Places to Go' summarising her view of Jamaica as a pleasurable – and richly inviting - location. Most of the sites she lists are on the coast with the beaches which she has just evocatively informed us about. She chooses to write about these and provides no picture. This section draws together some of the key motifs of the

book: Dominique's use of contrast expressing the abundance of variety in Jamaica, hot/cool, rich/poor, fun and 'lots more' experiences which are all 'very nice'. In a completion of the impressive textual cohesion of the book, she closes with a parallel to her opening statement. The book began: 'The land in Jamaica is very nice'; it ends 'wherever you go I'm sure it will be nice'. Dominique is sure that the reader/viewer will enjoy visiting Jamaica because of its richness and variety.

After this verbal summary of one of her main themes, on the back cover of the book, Dominique gives a pictorial summary of her theme of sensory pleasure: the sun – cartoon style again as on the front cover, and with a broad grin – is pictured in a boat facing from right to left, in profile, framed by curtains – a stage? a hotel window? [Fig. 14]. Once again she uses colour for cohesion, the dominant yellow repeating the motif of pleasure. The curtains are purple with yellow in each of the four corners of the cover and the sun itself is uniformly bright yellow. The boat is only lightly sketched in red. Unlike the front cover, this image is in pencil, giving it an overall softer tone than the density of felt tip pens. At the bottom, centrally placed, she has written: 'Love from Dominique' and has once again underlined that with xxxs. This, then, is the summary of Dominique's pictorial theme – to her Jamaica is a place of sun, fun and affection. The sun is centrally placed on the page and in middle distance so that the reader is not so closely related to it as on the front cover. From its position it nevertheless remains the image of most interest to Dominique. Smiling and in profile, the sun invites the reader/viewer to share in the ease and leisure. The image is positioned looking back towards the turn of the page, signalling closure; facing the other way it would have indicated continuance, an invitation to turn the page. Since this is the back cover Dominique has indicated 'the end' by placing this offer image looking back towards the content of the book, in contrast to the demand image of a full face sun on the front cover inviting the reader into the book.

Fig. 14   The back cover of Dominique's book

Dominique makes both modes work together to express her interest – the themes
of warmth, pleasure, diversity and abundance offered by Jamaica. Although the
book is dedicated to her parents who clearly know much more about Jamaica
than she does, Dominique seems to use the book as a celebration of her
Jamaican origins. She also writes for an imagined readership [her classmates,
perhaps] whom she wants to entice into a shared enjoyment of the pleasures
offered by the island. In doing this, she carefully relates the discrete sections,
creating a complex multimodal text, which is integrated and cohesive.

In a similar way to Dominique, Arron and Samantha [in 'Multimodal Narratives'] reveal their interests through the different interrelationships of their verbal and pictorial texts. Reading only the words or viewing only the pictures in each case would be a diminished experience and miss some of the deeper laid thematic meanings. Similarly, analysing only single images misses the complexity of thematic cohesive patterning. This somewhat lengthy analysis indicates the direction of my thinking about the importance of cohesion as part of a theory of text.

Changing minds

Throughout the published works presented here I emphasise the urgency of developing ways for children 'to exert discrimination and choice over the literacies and literacy practices which they encounter daily' [Bearne, 1996: 318]. This is particularly urgent now. The chapter 'Past Perfect and Future Conditional' was written specifically for a book poised at the start of the new century. The theme I had already begun in earlier works is emphasised in this chapter:

> At the start of the 21st century we are experiencing major shifts in the production and reception of literacy, every bit as significant for the population as the changes brought about by the industrial revolution [Bearne 2000: 145].

In *The World on Paper*, David Olson argues that print technology and the growth of a communicative 'paper world' contributed to the development of particular kinds of pictorial representation. These, in turn, led to new ways of thinking:

> inventing the conceptual means for coordinating the bits of geographical, biological, mechanical and other forms of knowledge acquired from many sources into an adequate and common frame of reference. This common frame of reference became the theoretical model into which local knowledge was inserted and organised [Olson 1994: 232].

The 'common frames of reference' for communication in our multimodal world are now being reshaped, resulting in a revolution whose impact will be as seismic as the print revolution. It follows, then, that if Olson is right, we are in the process of re-theorising communication and cognition, of seeing 'our language, our world and our minds in a new way' [ibid. 233]. Shirley Brice Heath

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explains that 'the interdependence of colour, form and line used in icons' and other types of visual symbolic text requires a different conceptual approach from reading linearly. Not only is reading now a different kind of act, it demands a way of thinking which depends on different kinds of categorisation:

> The line between word and image is getting harder to draw; the visual through colour, line and form enables understanding of metaphor – our ability to map interactions, experiences and cognitive operations across concepts to form images. [Brice Heath 2000: 124]

Here, Brice Heath captures the dynamic interplay between received images and imagining, highlighting the complexity of the relationship of outer and inner experience. It is not surprising that there is growing emphasis on the ways people think, on neural networks and on the possibilities of extending conceptual schemata. Different ways of representing knowledge and experience bring different features of the world literally into view and so change ways of thinking about the world. Globalisation is more than a matter of economics; it is the way we think now. Shifts from the possibilities for literacy practices offered by the page [literal and visual] to the several dimensions of the televisual multimedia world mean that children are being introduced to different ways of structuring thought. In 1996 I outlined the ways in which narrative shapes, and is shaped by, thinking. Not only are there now many more kinds of text to refer to than in the past, as children make meaning of new experiences, events and practices, they also think differently from adults' developed frames of reference.

From a constructivist perspective, Salomon argues:

> Technology... can affect minds in a number of principled ways. One of these is the opportunity that it affords of actively constructing knowledge in particular symbolic forms [word, graph, picture] and structured in particular organisational ways [databases, hypermedia], available for exploration and manipulation...
>
> ... Given the possible affinity between hypermedia webs and cognitive ones, is it possible that the hypermedia programs that students cruise......... serve as external intellectual tools that facilitate the construction of their cognitive parallels? ...Might it not also influence students' subsequent ways of organising information in their cognitive webs of meaning? [Salomon, 1998: 7-8]

Children are already ahead of adults in this new conceptual world of text. Observe them interacting with texts, or making their own, and it becomes immediately clear that they have already become part of the paradigm shift about how texts work to make meaning. Whilst adults struggle with the conceptual differences of the 'textnological' revolution, young readers are already there, taking in and producing texts in many dimensions and investing them with meaning drawn from a wide repertoire of their own.

New technologies, as Olson, Brice Heath and Salomon suggest, promote different ways of thinking. Developments in technology mean that there are now more ways to communicate meaning, and these depend on understanding spatial cohesion as well as chronological structure. Children produce texts in a different way from formerly, assuming the integration of image and word and supplying sound, elements of gesture and movement as they compose their own meanings. Childhood has often involved running on ahead whilst the adults stroll behind in a measured way. This now applies to how children make meaning from and in texts.

Gunther Kress points out that there is 'constant transition, translation, transduction' between different modes of representation 'in the brain- even if not necessarily visibly on paper or with other media or modes' [Kress 1997: 39]. At times we may become aware of 'translating' a sound into a colour or an image into a texture on the tongue, a synaesthetic activity which is a recognised human characteristic. Some people may be more aware of these overlapping sensory experiences than others, but children seem to accept the interconnectedness of experience rather more readily than adults. Kress argues, however, that this 'entirely common human characteristic' has been suppressed as children grow into writing-centred western cultures. It is also difficult to describe so that fruitful discussions can be inhibited by a lack of a common language of [or in?] translation. However, Kress goes on to suggest that adults now may need to relearn the connections between the senses in a changing world of representation [ibid: 39]. To a certain extent, such transductions are already part of common usage; archaeologists talk about 'noisy' printouts of geophysical features on

graphs; Savion Glover's book on tap dancing uses typeface, font size, layout and colour to create a tap dancing sequence on the page [Glover and Weber 2000]. A three-year-old plays at being an icon on a computer screen and says to his father, 'Daddy, click on me,' whereupon he begins singing a song, as a hypertext item might do when clicked on [Smith 2002:5]. Translation and transduction, as part of an integrated theory, help to bring together the inner meaning-making of the imagination which draws on metaphor and symbol with the social nature of sharing those meanings within and across communities and cultures.

The rhetoric of design

If different ways of representing the world bring a different perspective and so shift ways of thinking about the world, they also create new possibilities for ways in which the world is represented. New representations require changes in language to describe them and prompt reconsideration of definitions of reading, writing, depicting, literacy, literature, texts. The research project 'Framing Visual and Verbal Experience' found great diversity in definitions of 'visual literacy' suggesting the complexities of describing relationships between the visual and other modes of communication [Raney, 1996]. In seeking new ways of describing multimodal texts I suggest that using the word 'literacy' is not helpful since it privileges analogies with script. However, a theory based on text structures offers descriptive possibilities which might be applied to a range of modes. It also allows for the element of translation in text making.

Whilst it can be argued that all texts are multimodal [Unsworth 2001; Goodman and Graddol 1996], it is quite easy to recognise the different modes of television or a video game: printed words, sound, image, action. I want to revisit the idea that apparently two-dimensional texts can, in fact, be characterised as having the range of dimensions or modes recognised in media and multimedia texts. If the combination of word and image which has up to now been categorised as 'books', 'literature', 'literacy', with heavy dependence on 'the word', can be

seen as similarly multidimensional as, for example, newly available media or computer texts, it makes it more possible to develop a common frame of reference to describe what young readers and composers do with texts. It has text cohesion as its combinatory dimension and affordance as a central element.

The affordances of texts, their modes and media of representation, depend on cohesive devices of time and space and the materiality of their forms. The combined modes or dimensions of written word, image, sound and gesture give texture, colour, substance to meaning. I want to use the cohesive patterning of text as a starting point for sketching out the possibilities of an integrated theory of multimodal, or multidimensional texts. In their writing, children reflect the multimodality of their text experience, depicting sound as part of the pictorial element of text construction, making their meanings clear through written word, image, sound in dialogue and as depicted in images. This interweaving gives texts their 'texture'.

The classroom research which I have carried out as part of my contribution to work in the Sheffield seminars has moved my thinking towards this part of my context statement. In a year-long participant observation project with a Year 3/4 class in Saffron Walden, the class teacher and I encouraged the children to draw as a response to a range of curriculum activities rather than always asking them to write. After listening to *Peter and the Wolf* the class were invited to retell part of the story in drawing [and words if they wished].

Fig. 15 shows how Chloe invokes sound and movement in her depiction. In the first episode, on the left the bird dives into the branches and the wolf slides down, claws scratching at the tree, cartoon-style. Images of emotion in the second episode on the right [the glum faces of Peter and his Grandfather] and the layout features of the central image [the wolf's circular *I'm going to eat you yumm...*] create a multidimensional text in which sound and movement are depicted visually.

Fig. 15 Chloe retells part of *Peter and the Wolf*

Similarly, when asked to identify her favourite part of the story, Chloe chooses to write and draw [Fig.16].

My favourite bit was when The boy Peter cought the wolf because everyone would be Safe and not worried. If Peter didit catch the wolf everyone would be in danger
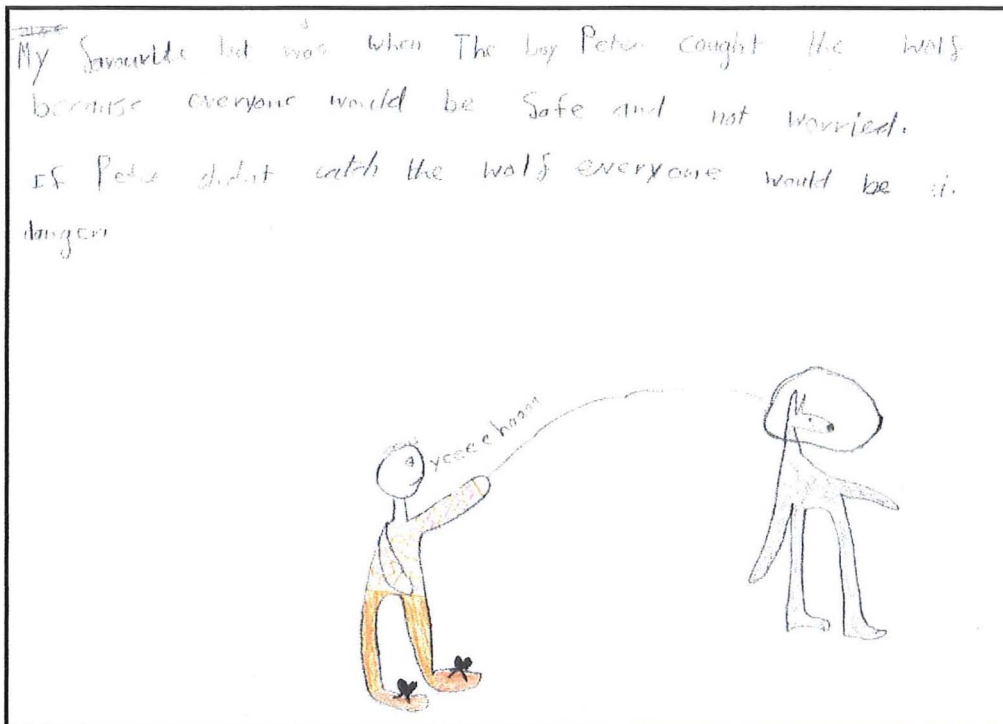
Fig. 16 Chloe's favourite part of *Peter and the Wolf*

Here, we follow the movement of the lasso and Peter's *yeeeehaaa* as he captures the wolf. It is almost impossible not to hear it in our mind's ear. Not only is Chloe investing her text with sound and movement, she is also using her knowledge of other visual, verbal and aural texts and combining them with her implicit knowledge of the grammar of visual design to express her opinions.

It could be argued that this synaesthetic approach was prompted by the use of music and spoken text as starting points for the work. However, the use of aural experience suggests that it is worth including some view of rhetoric here. In spoken rhetoric, the arguments, persuasions and convincing effects are made through emphasis, intonational nuance, pause and pace, all of which can be said to have their parallel in written and pictorial form. In a written or pictorial text emphasis is created by size of image, heaviness of line, punctuation, font, shape of speech bubble, lexical or visual repetition. Spoken rhetoric 'works' because it takes account of gaps in sound. Persuasive emphasis, as any actor, comedian or politician knows, depends on pause and intonational nuance. The gaps, comparable to the white space of the page or the rests in music or punctuation in printed language, alongside the emphatic elements, create the pace of the rhetorical text and so contribute to the force of the message. The relationship between 'weight', space, pace and place comprise the rhetoric of the designed page. As post-modern picture book makers have shown, too, playful disruptions of designed cohesion evoke humour, using juxtapositions in a very similar way to verbal puns and jokes.

I want to consider 'the rhetoric of design' through another of the books composed during my Associateship research. Clinton draws on his experience of texts he has met mostly outside the classroom for his book *Alien Race,* using devices very similar to those analysed in 'Multimodal Narratives'. The opening page builds tension immediately, introducing unfamiliarity into a familiar setting [Fig.17]. By the use of dialogue, implied sound effects, a typographically emphatic statement and a visual image, the reader is immediately led to understand something of what this book is about. Just like an oral storyteller,

Clinton creates tension and anticipation by using verbal, aural and visual elements on this single [black and white] page.

One day in the future:

"Hey Mum! I'm goin to the park with
 J.J. and Mike."
"Yes love see you later."
"What shall we do then?"
"I don't know."
"Play some soccer."
"Be quiet Mike."
"Ray what's that sound?"
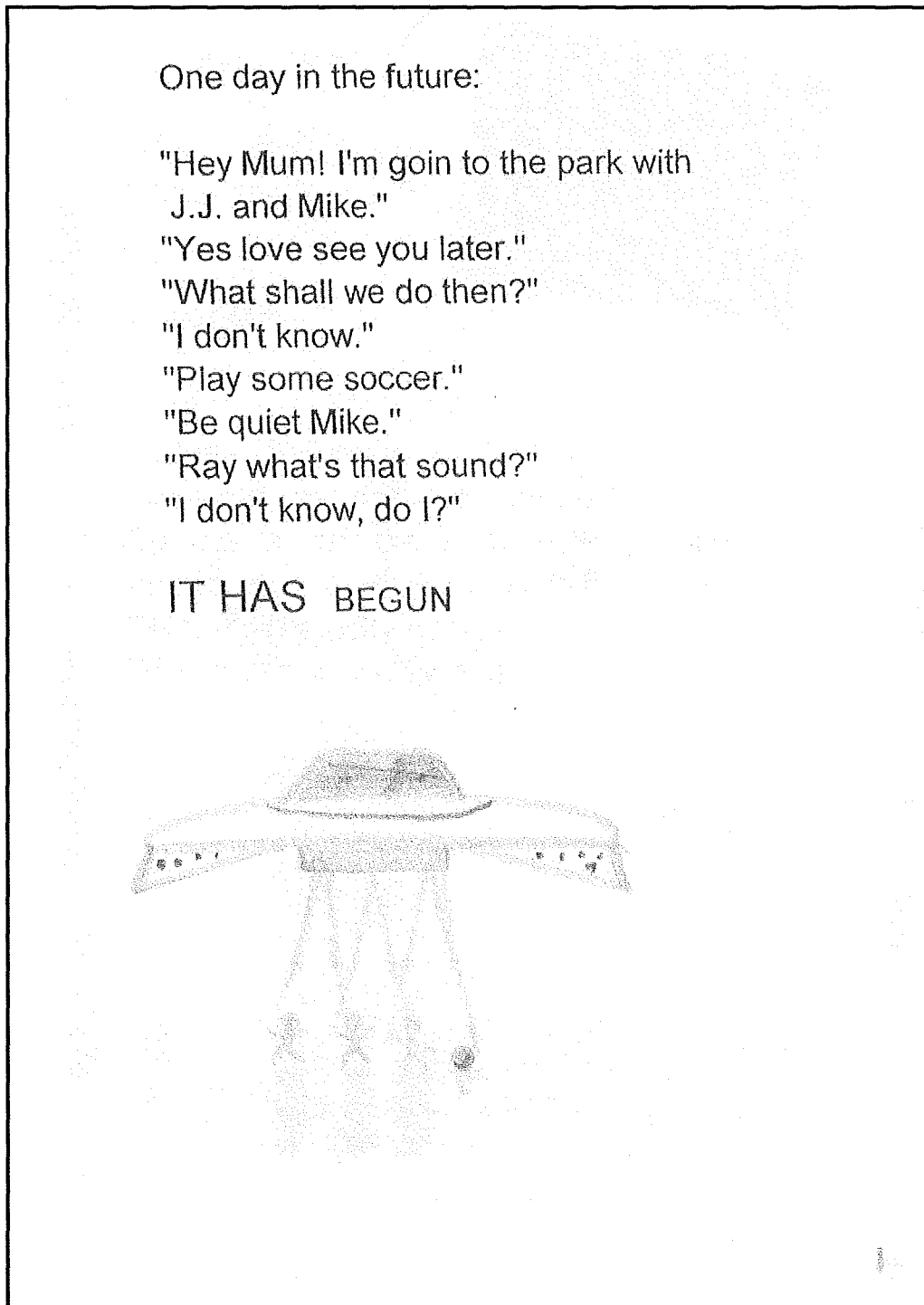"I don't know, do I?"

IT HAS BEGUN

Fig. 17 The opening page of Clinton's book *Alien Race*

The cohesion is created by the juxtapositions of text and image and, importantly, through the use of white space paralleling the telling pauses of rhetoric.

Chapter 1 [Fig. 18] continues the use of typographical features, depicted movement and dialogue; once again the voices sound in the [western European] reader's ear as we recognise the intonation which accompanies 'Wo!' and 'Yep', familiar from film, television and informal talk.
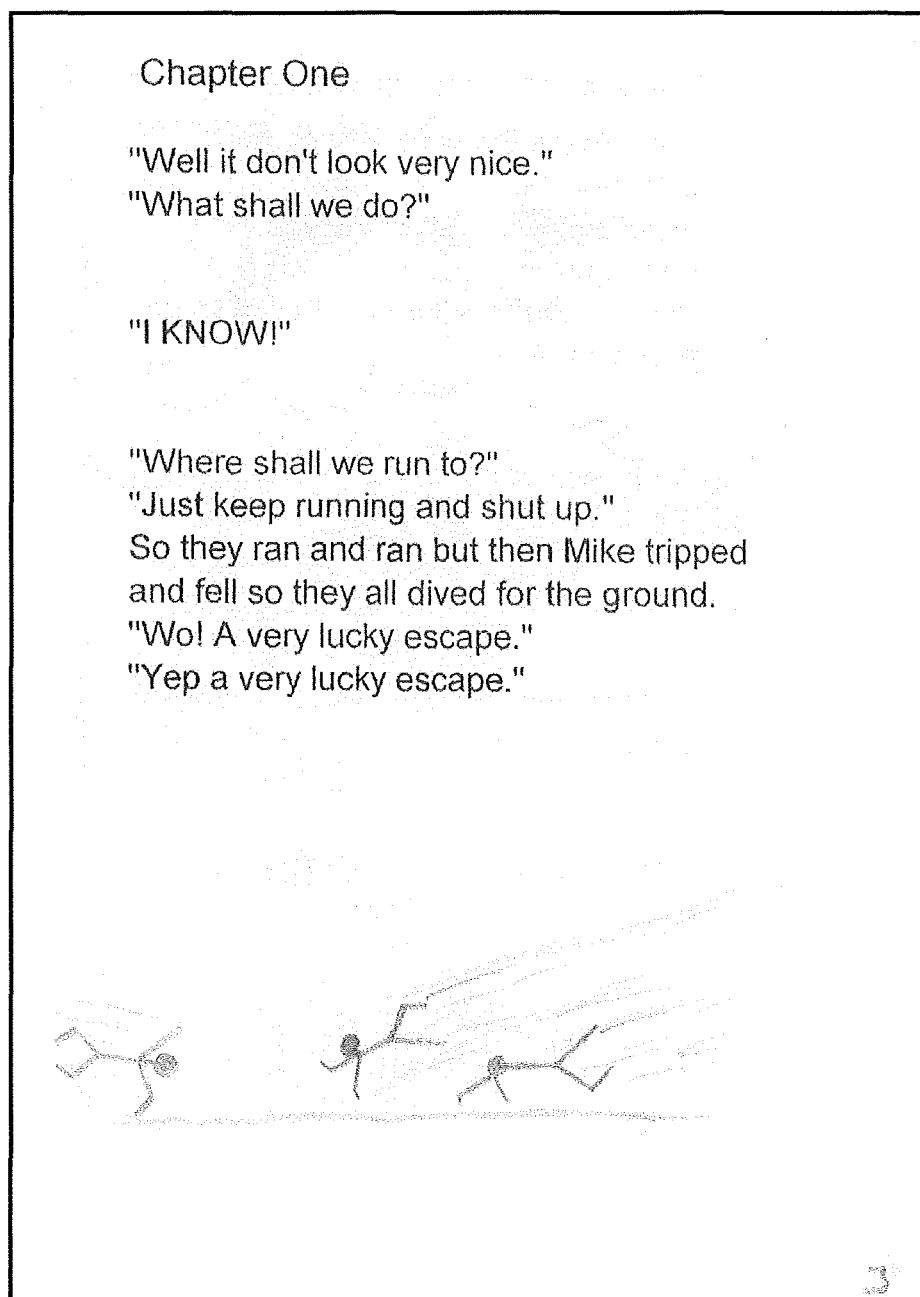

Fig. 18   Chapter One of Clinton's book *Alien Race*

Throughout the book Clinton uses the pictorial element of his text to indicate movement, but also size and extent. The written text on page 7 [Fig. 19] is laconic:

> "Man, this is Evil."
> "I agree with ya."
> "Yep me too."

accompanied by a suggestive image of fire trails from rockets cut off from the verbal text but moving upwards towards the block of text.
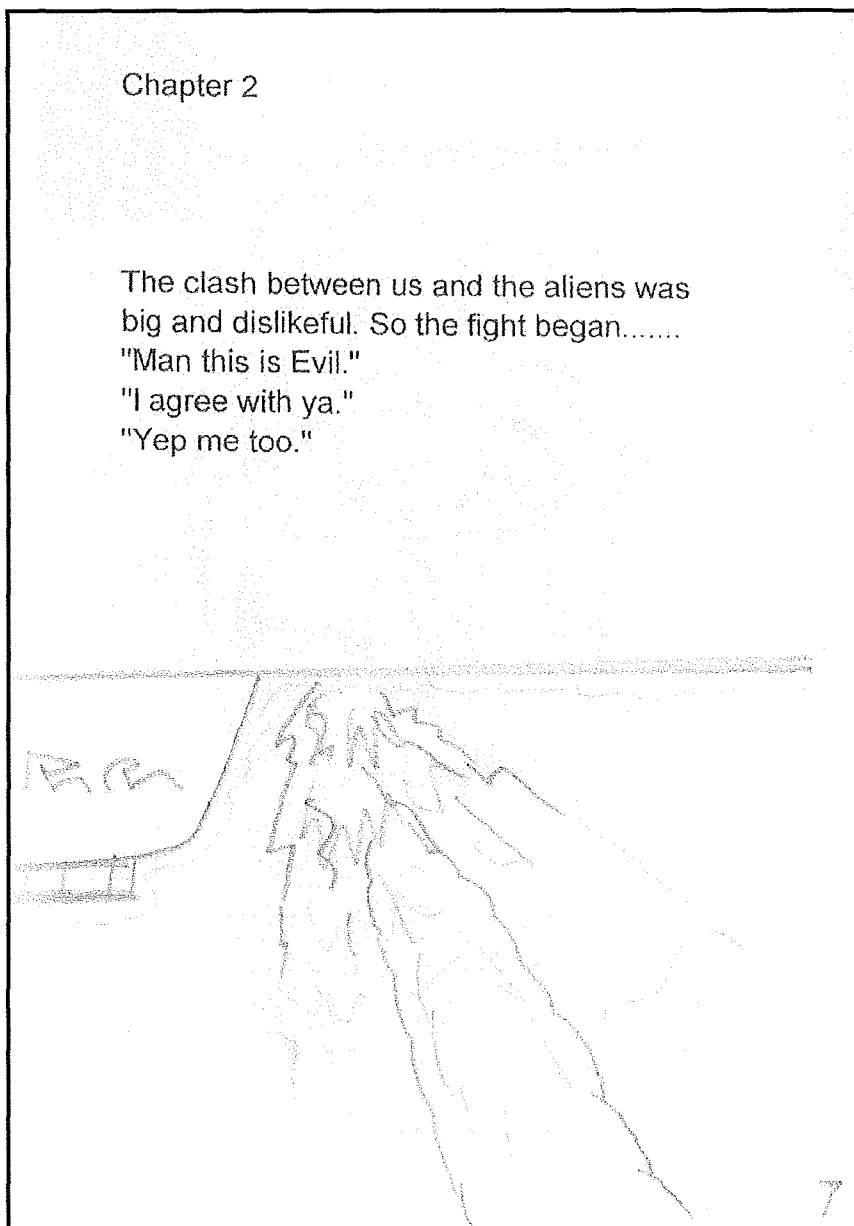

Chapter 2

The clash between us and the aliens was big and dislikeful. So the fight began.......
"Man this is Evil."
"I agree with ya."
"Yep me too."

Fig. 19 Clinton's 7th page

However, as part of his cohesive patterning, Clinton includes a significant white
space between the words, almost like an intake of breath before an impact. Just
like many published authors of picture books, or accomplished storytellers,
Clinton leaves the reader to read into the gaps. The double page spread of pages
8 and 9 [Fig. 20] shows an equally telling use of white space to create an
impression of the power of the alien force.

Then it was their turn.

A super extra terrestrial group
of combat ships.

We thought they won at first but we
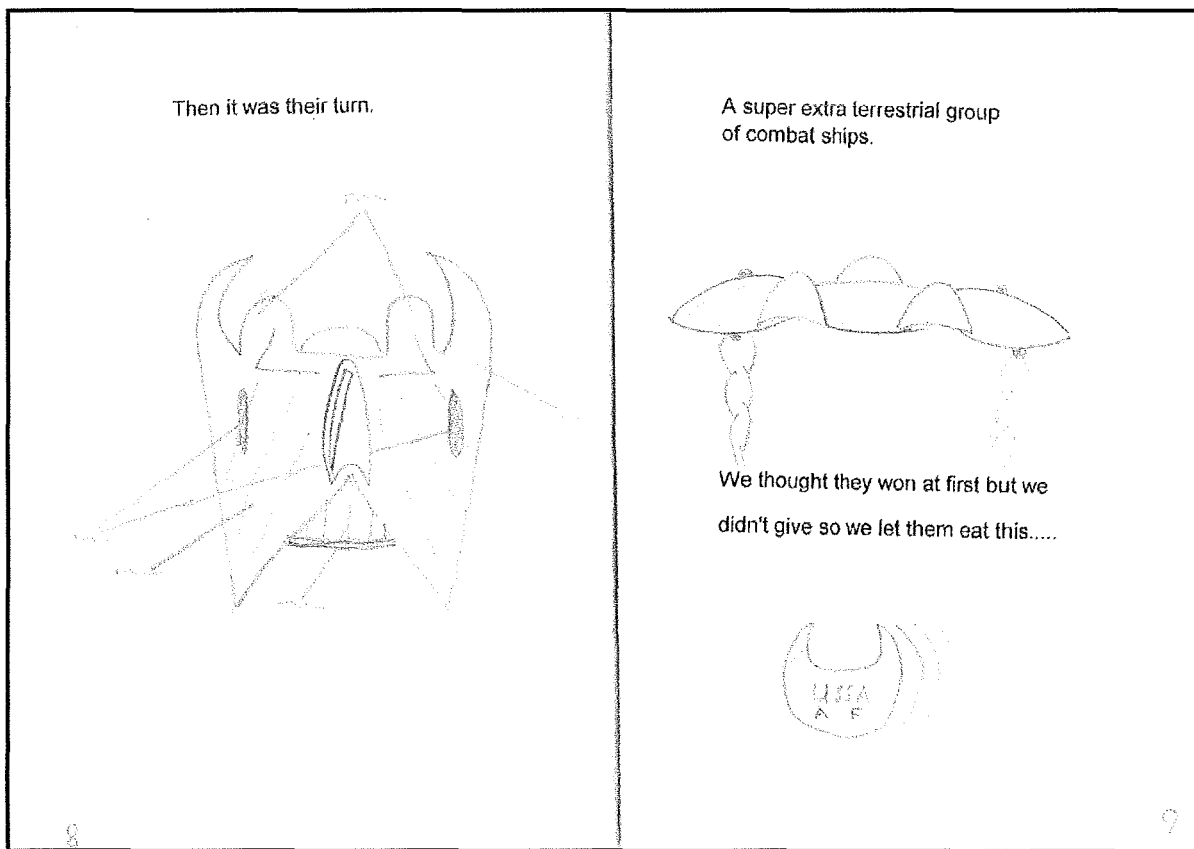didn't give so we let them eat this.....

Fig. 20 Clinton's double page spread - 8th and 9th pages

At the bottom right of the spread Clinton uses visual signals of movement to
drive the narrative forward and urge the reader to turn the page. In filmic
fashion, the action, extent and power of the battle is signalled by visual images

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whereas the human and emotional element is carried by dialogue, as shown by the double page spread on pages 10 and 11 [Fig.21]. Here, Clinton has captured the qualities of film in an apparently two dimensional text.
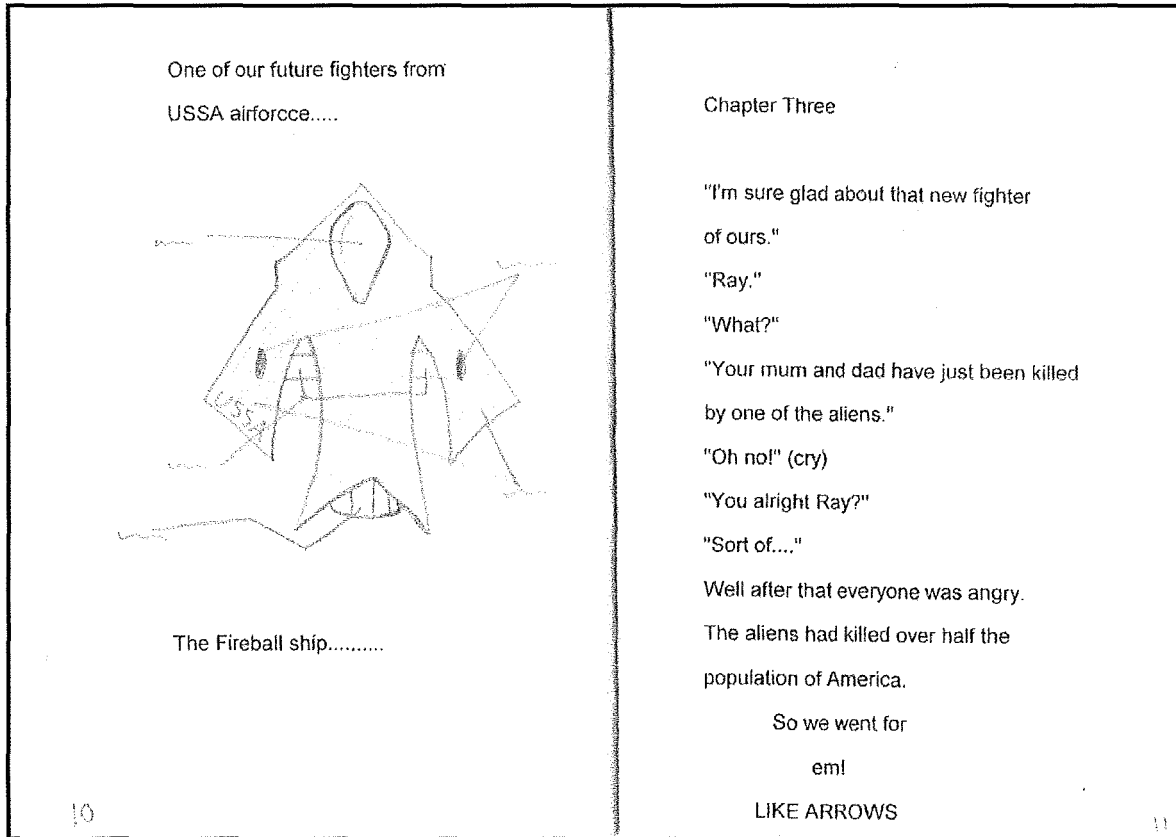
One of our future fighters from USSA airforcce.....

The Fireball ship..........

Chapter Three

"I'm sure glad about that new fighter of ours."

"Ray."

"What?"

"Your mum and dad have just been killed by one of the aliens."

"Oh no!" (cry)

"You alright Ray?"

"Sort of...."

Well after that everyone was angry. The aliens had killed over half the population of America.
So we went for
em!
LIKE ARROWS

10

11

Fig. 21 Clinton's double page spread 10th and 11th pages

The kinds of multimodal texts which Chloe and Clinton have made are familiar in homes and classrooms. However, for examinations and assessments, rather than personal expression, texts are still expected to be written rather than designed. This has pedagogic implications.

As I outline in 'Multimodal Narratives', whilst some young writers find it relatively easy to slip into representing sound, image and movement in words, others end up writing only the words of what in their heads is, in fact, a multimodal text. They are asked for the words, so they supply the words, but fail to represent the pictorial and moving elements of their inner narratives on the page. As a result their writing is seen as lacking organisation and cohesion,

whilst it is very possibly only a partial representation of the full story carried in the mind's eye and ear. They are thinking in a 21st century way but – sometimes desperately - attempting to respond to the teacher's 20th century request for writing-dominated forms of narrative. Kunal's story in 'Multimodal Narratives' [p73] shows a writer who has a wealth of pictorial images in his head. As I point out, he is clearly quite competent technically. He would benefit from discussion of the different ways in which written and visual texts are put together and the ways in which they are read – the affordances of modes and media. Clinton's successful multidimensional text and Kunal's imperfect depiction highlight the importance of the intersection between Bernstein's horizontal and vertical discourses. A theory of text [making and reading] should help make explicit the text cohesive differences between a purely written telling and a multidimensional one and expose the social, cultural and situational expectations surrounding different types of text.

Conclusion – and beyond

I am proposing a radical shift in theorising 'literacy' and in teaching about and with multimodal texts. There have been great strides made in reading theory as a result of the material possibilities of production of picture books. There has not yet been a similar shift related to young people's text production. However, the texts analysed here are evidence that young people's texts reveal all the variety of published texts – and perhaps more. They deserve to be seriously regarded, particularly in respect of formal valuations of achievement. The analyses offered here demonstrate the possibility of a pedagogy which I describe as necessary in 'Mind the Gap' – a critical and situated literacy. The theory of text outlined here, takes into account debates surrounding popular cultural texts and issues of gender, culture and class through the interplay of social semiotics and textual affordances. I am proposing an integrated theory which brings together text grammar and rhetoric and which goes beyond current arguments about genre, shifting away from attention to formal properties alone towards possibilities for seeing new formations as valid. It is based on analysis of the 'regulated improvisation' of children's production of texts as they draw on their experiences of what they read and see, what they know and what they show.

A theory which has text, its patterns and dimensions as a central feature offers a means of integrating different views of representation. It also highlights the critical importance of a pedagogy which acknowledges the different ways of thinking brought to texts by young people with an increasing range of 'textnology' experience. So far, my contribution to the field of critical pedagogy, traced through my research journey, has been in praxis situating the young text maker at the fulcrum of a theory of teaching about text-structure. Through close analysis of texts I have drawn attention to the complexity and accomplishment of young text-makers. I have also emphasised the importance of theorising culturally situated knowledge articulated in different sites. There is still much to do in developing the kind of language about text making which can inform – and subvert or at least amend - institutional assessment practices. A theory of text offers a means of sharing common terminology about text structure and cohesion – the rhetoric of design – whilst recognising the differences between the material and communicative affordances of modes and media. There is still a way to go in developing classroom practices which acknowledge and extend children's multimodal text production. I hope that I can continue to contribute as I pursue and clarify a theory of text which can 'keep a promise with the future' [Bearne, 1996: 328] .

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Notes

1. I am aware, of course, that reading and listening, whilst receptive, involve activity.

2. At the time of writing, QCA is providing a research grant for members of the United Kingdom Reading [Literacy] Association to undertake a description of the features of multimodal texts at Key Stages 1 & 2

3. I use upper case here as reference back to Cope and Kalantzis, but revert to lower case for the remainder of the statement, particularly in view of my section 'The rhetoric of design'.