Readers, texts and talk: A symposium

Overcoming adversity through hope: Discussing picture fiction

Sarah Jane Mukherjee and Teresa Cremin, The Open University
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Responsive to need

This OU funded work seeks to address concerns about children’s wellbeing in the context of Covid -19.

The project aimed to provide rich texts and conversational resources for teachers and parents through Reading Together.

Reading Together supports young children’s wellbeing by:
• providing space to explore issues in sensitive, subtle and respectful ways (Levy et al., 2018).
• building affective connections and empathy (Hogan, 2010)
• nurturing conversational engagement and supportive relationships (Cremin et al., 2014).
Recognising related literature

Empirical studies and children’s literature scholarship that:

• examine how children experience, interpret and learn from visual texts (Arizpe & Styles, 2016; Maine, 2015)
• reveal the affordances of picture fiction to examine sensitive issues (Arizpe et al., 2014; Kim and Wee, 2020)
• indicate the interplay between picture fiction and children’s thinking skills (Roche, 2014)
• highlight the potential of picture fiction for nurturing empathy (Nikolajeva, 2015; Ramachandran, 2011)
Research Questions

➢ How does picture fiction mediate hope, understanding and acceptance?

➢ How can ‘Reading Together’ be enriched to support this process?

‘He returned home empty handed but with a heart full of happiness. It lifted him off the ground like a balloon’

Extract: Felix after the Rain by Dunja Jogan and Translated by Olivia Hellewell, Tiny Owl
The picture fiction focus

**Emotions:** worry, concern, fear, shyness, uncertainty, isolation

**Character trait:** trust, friendship, comfort, generosity, empathy, perseverance

**Social and relational issues:** loss, bereavement, family stress (e.g. poverty, family break ups)

**Diversity:** sexuality, disability (physical and mental), family make up, social class, culture, race, linguistic diversity

**Book Covers:**
- It's a No-Money Day by Kate Milner, Barrington Stoke
- Julian is a Mermaid by Jessica Love, Walker Books
Methodology: theoretical and analytical framework

Systemic Functional Linguistics

Kress, G., and van Leeuwen, T., 2020
Reading Images: the grammar of visual design

Painter, Clare., 2009, Children’s Picture Book Narratives: Reading Sequences of Images

The metafunctions of language

- Ideational ‘construing experience’
- Interpersonal ‘enacting relationships’
- Textual ‘organising discourse’
- Social distance, attitudes, stance and power
- Lexicogrammatical features associated with each metafunction

Methodology: The system of ‘Contact’

- Contact
  - Direct
    - As a character
    - Vicarious
      - Along with character
  - Observe
  - Close up
  - Full length

Images:
- It’s a No-Money Day 2019 by Kate Milner, Barrington Stoke
- Jabari Jumps 2017 by Gaia Cornwall, Walker Books
Methodology: Analysis

System choices

Data from books

Definition

Image

Language

Overview

Overview

System

Metafunction
Framework development

I'm walking with a princess. So I pretend I'm one too.

Asiya’s hijab is like the sky on a sunny day. It means being strong

Ideational meanings: How are the characters and the story represented? Projection and expansion

Interpersonal meanings: Degrees of intimacy, power relations, stance, emotion

Mama: Don’t carry around the hurtful words that others say. Drop them. They are not yours to keep. They belong only to those who said them

I feel special. I feel like twirling

Asiya’s hijab is like the sky on a sunny day. It means being strong

Extracts from The Proudest Blue by Ibtihaj Muhamad with S.K Ali Art by Hatem Aly
How can the book offer hope, understanding and acceptance for the reader?

Who are the main and symbolic characters?

How are the characters depicted?

‘Felix was a terribly unhappy boy’

How are the characters described?

‘an enormous suitcase’

What do the characters say, think and know?

‘He dragged an enormous suitcase behind him’

How can the reader connect with the characters?

‘He lay down in the shade and fell asleep’

How are the characters depicted?

‘an enormous suitcase’

What do the characters do?

‘Grandma used to say to Felix that the sun always shines after the rain and that after every uphill climb there’s a downhill stroll.’

How can the reader connect with emotion and power relations in the book?

Expressions of power/vulnerability

‘...with a heart full of happiness.’

Positive/negative expression of feelings

‘an enormous suitcase’

How is the action of the story expressed and what do the characters say, think and know?

Direct Speech

Reported speech

View of the characters horizontally or vertically

Close up/ full length

Eye contact or observe

1st or 3rd person?

Is the readers’ view vicarious or direct?

Expressions of power/vulnerability

‘an enormous suitcase’

Extract: Felix after the Rain by Dunja Jogan and Translated by Olivia Hellewell, Tiny Owl
Overcoming adversity through hope: Forthcoming CPD Resource - Reading and talking together

Advisory Group

- Coram Beanstalk
- THE READING AGENCY
- Parentkind
- UKLA

HEI RfP Partners

- OU and UKLA RfP Student Ambassadors

OU/ UKLA Teacher Reading Groups
References


**Picture Books**

*Felix after the Rain* 2017 by Dunja Jogan and Translated by Olivia Hellewell, Tiny Owl

*Jabari Jumps* 2017 by Gaia Cornwall, Walker Books

*Julian is a Mermaid* 2018 by Jessica Love, Walker Books

*It’s a No-Money Day* 2019 by Kate Milner, Barrington Stoke

*Mum’s Jumper* 2019 by Jayde Perkin, Book Island

*My Monster and Me* 2019 by Nadiya Hussain & illustrated by Ella Bailey, Hodder Children’s Books

*The Perfect Shelter* 2020 by Clare Helen Welsh & illustrated by Asa Gilland, Little Tiger