

https://dspace.org/

The responses of contemporary South African children to threshold experiences in Grimm fairy tales and African folk tales

Wolpert, Stacey

2008-10-02T09:48:42Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/5711

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Aim

This study is an investigation of the responses of Grade one children from one school to two particular sets of stories, those being a selection of Grimm fairy tales and African Zulu folk tales. The study tries to gauge the children's responses, as well as the value of these stories in the present South African educational context. The research considers the children's gender and background as aspects that could influence their responses to the stories, as these factors may affect their understanding of the plots and morals in the chosen stories. It is also an exploration of the potential for cultural education, understanding and exposure of these stories for these children in contemporary South Africa. Since South Africa is still adjusting to multicultural education, it is important that we ensure that the literature given to young children who are just beginning their schooling careers is conducive to their learning and is easily understandable by all of them, not just a particular group. Therefore, this study tries to assess what literature is most helpful and enjoyable for young children, especially Grade ones, in South Africa.

The main aim of this research is to advance our understanding of the impact of Grimm's fairy tales and African Zulu folk tales on Grade one children from one public school. The main research questions are:

- in which ways does each individual child enjoy these stories (many of whom experience stories from different sources and media), and what stories they enjoy
- whether gender is a factor – either the gender of the children in regard to their responses, or the representation of characters and gender roles in the stories
- whether the stories are trans-cultural or whether they are seen by the children as coded for race
- to what extent the children identify with the characters, values and morals in the stories
- to what degree children identify with threshold experiences, and their responses to them.

This may reveal a number of aspects about fairy and folk tales, namely:

- how appealing these stories are

- how valuable these stories are to read today
- how relevant they are in a modern context
- how accessible they are to children
- to what extent the children can identify with the values and different cultures shown in these stories.

The two genres of stories, which may seem very different, share many similarities (see Pages 11–17 & 43– 46). The African Zulu stories have a long, oral tradition and have been passed on through the generations, while the Grimm tales have a shorter history, but possibly have more exposure in a modern, Western context. These two types of stories are useful in conjunction with each other because of their diverse backgrounds, which may link with or contradict the subjects' backgrounds. Although some children will have been exposed to Grimm's tales, African Zulu tales, or both, their responses to these stories and their enjoyment of them despite their reading backgrounds, are investigated.

Thresholds are often the most important and exciting parts of a story, so it seems apt to use these as focal points to narrow the scope of the investigation. Threshold experiences are those experiences where a protagonist is forced to face certain challenges (Bettelheim, 1991, 7 & 8). When the tales have human characters, the child may be able to identify with those characters and overcome his/her problem. These challenges that characters may face, such as loneliness and fear, are still applicable today, even though the issues that are faced and our environments have altered considerably (Zipes, 1983, 8) (see 30–33 & 60–62 for more information). By using these experiences, the study should be able to elicit information about whether the children still find these challenges exciting or engaging.

Although the children who were interviewed are all from the same school, this school is a public one and the children come from a variety of backgrounds and are of varying economic status. The intention is to see whether any trends emerge in the individual children's responses, which may give some indication as to whether or not children from different cultural backgrounds or genders respond to stories in a similar manner. As Rosenblatt (1970) says, "There is no such thing as a generic reader…there are only the potential millions of individual readers…" (25), which suggests that each child is bound to respond in a unique way. Luke & Freebody (1997, 193) say that when we read, we enter another person's perspective, and we are able to do this because of our histories as readers.

But even though each reader is unique, there must be some shared experiences, or writing would never be able to communicate (Rosenblatt, 1970, 25). Luke & Freebody (1997, 3 & 193) also say that no writing is neutral, so we are automatically entering another's world, and this could affect the responses to a story.

The aim is to develop a hypothesis (for fuller investigation in later research) using grounded research. This will be done by using qualitative research, as this type of research tries to build theories, rather than beginning with preconceived ideas – it creates meanings (Merriam, 1998, 7) (see Pages 53 & 54 for a full description of qualitative research). Because this study will make use of this type of research, there will not be testing of a specific hypothesis, but rather the research will look for trends that may develop from the data. The theories that will be drawn on to explore this area are a combination of the Reader-Response and Reception theories, as these are reading theories that will help structure the research in the most useful way (see 'Theoretical Framework', Pages 46–52).

1.2. Rationale

This study aims to see whether the stories that are commonly accepted as suitable for children, are in fact enjoyed by a sample of South African children. It seems that there is a gap in our knowledge, as although we assume that children from different backgrounds and of different genders may respond to a story differently, there is a need to find reliable evidence to prove or dispute this statement. The results of this study could guide us as to which books and stories may be best enjoyed by individual children, and whether reading practices and text selection need to be more diverse to accommodate a variety of children from different backgrounds.

Reading is known to help children learn about themselves, others and the world in general (Jacobs, 1966, 4 & 5). Grade one children are just beginning to learn to read, so well-selected texts can help ensure that the reading that they do is beneficial to them and can assist them in many aspects of life. Children learn about the practice of reading from teachers as well as from parents (Luke & Freebody, 1997, 193 & 194), so appropriate story selection may give them a strong grounding and help to encourage reading. In order for children to benefit from a story, it helps if they can identify with the story or with the characters in it. So if children are being read stories with which they do not identify, they

will not really gain from them and it is possible that perhaps there are more suitable stories that could replace these.

This study may provide teachers with information about the likes, dislikes and responses of a group of contemporary, South African children to fairy and folk tales. There is not much of this information available in South Africa, especially since much of the research done on the responses of South African children to reading is at least ten years old. This needs updating, as so much has changed in South Africa in that time. This could be a unique aspect of this study, especially since the chosen age group includes children's most formative years with regard to reading. Most of the research that has been done on children's responses to reading has been done outside of South Africa, so this research is more grounded and relevant to the particular needs of our own children, which are probably vastly different from those of children in other countries. This study therefore serves to update the information available on such responses to reading, which is scarce at the moment. It is hoped that by providing such information, this study may, in a small way, contribute to the building of a multicultural society.

Chapter 2 –Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter is an investigation of some of the theories of children's literature and research that has been done in the field of children's literature. Although the research in this area is vast, this study focuses on fairy and folk tales and looks at children's documented responses to these particular tales, as well as responses to children's literature in general. This establishes a context for the study. But these findings and theories neither dictate nor shape expectations and hypotheses for this study. Rather, there is an awareness that these findings and theories can help to explain the findings of this research, but also that this study may in some ways either confirm or contradict the earlier findings.

2.1 Children's Literature

Children's literature as an exclusive genre does not have a very long history. Since definitions of childhood have varied throughout past generations, the literature available to children has fluctuated in a similar state of uncertainty. Children only became defined as children in the 1800s, as before this they were categorised as small adults (Karl, 1970, 3). Only later was it noted that children were completely distinct from adults and needed to be treated differently and more sensitively. Therefore this is when children's literature began to emerge. This literature was, however, usually didactic or religious (Bratton, 1981, 1), as although children were seen as unique entities, any activities, including reading, were aimed at educating, or contributing to the children's moral and religious background. Many books and stories, such as fairy tales, were not originally intended to be read to children (Bratton, 1981, 1), although evidently this changed, with these kinds of stories being edited in order to coincide with what was thought suitable for children (fantasy only became a positive aspect for children later on). Children had no real choice in selecting their own books at this stage, but with the improved steam presses from 1811, more attractive book covers were able to encourage them to read and to become more active participants in what they read (Bratton, 1981, 20). These days, however, book choices for children are extensive and the personality of the modern child and his/her individuality is of paramount concern to writers, publishers and parents. Although there are still many educational and religious stories, more emphasis is placed on wonder and

entertainment, rather than on simply providing a synopsis of adult interests. Folk tales have always had all age groups as their audience, whereas fairy tales were only more recently deemed suitable for children. But both have been used to entertain and educate children, thus uniting the modern and old-fashioned views.

2.1.1 Definitions of Children's Literature

Children's literature has never been an easy genre of literature to define, possibly because it is newer than many 'adult' genres. There have, however, been several attempts to define it over the years. The following definitions have been selected, as they provide an overview of the range of definitions of children's literature and provide a justification for the definitions used in this study.

In general, children's literature can be defined as literature written with children as the protagonists (McDowell, 1990, 51 & 52 & Chambers, 1990, 98). This involves child characters, often dealing with similar experiences and problems to what the children in the reading audience might be dealing with. This type of literature may be more accessible to children, as they may be able to identify more easily with the characters. Also, often these characters undertake adventures that may not be possible for the reader, thus they allow a certain extent of escapism, without any risk to the child. In this way, their experiences are so different to those of the children in the audience, that the characters can be intriguing and voyeuristic for them.

An interlinked definition of children's literature is literature that is stylistically written for children, with no complex literary devices, and with simpler language and vocabulary (McDowell, 1990, 51 & 52). But a problem here could be that the simpler style could restrict certain issues from being dealt with, may miss out on important aspects, or may not be very realistic. So, an exciting adventure story, for example, cannot be told without descriptive adjectives and strong verbs, but these may need to be omitted if it is thought that the children are too young to understand them. Also the use of only basic vocabulary could mean that stories lack a certain depth, as the author cannot complicate the language, and the more complex issues cannot be expressed in any other way. Literature for children of different ages must necessarily differ, as their knowledge and development will be at different levels.

A further definition of children's literature with similar problems is that it is literature that is circumscribed by content, and so it has an uncomplicated plot and an absence of sensitive topics, such as violence, death and sex (Adams, 1953, 5–113 & McDowell, 1990, 51 & 52). This type of literature often includes themes such as family, toys, adventure, school and fantasy, but these also exclude a vast range of other stories that may deal with issues outside of the child's general knowledge. This could mean that they may also leave out issues that are pertinent to a child, such as if he/she is dealing with death. This may therefore restrict him/her from having these issues explained or dealt with. But it also has the benefit of thematic censoring, so that although it considerably narrows the scope of possible topics, it also protects children from what many parents and educators assume is unsuitable material. Of course, there are books and stories which deal with sensitive issues including divorce, dying and gay relationships, but these are often educational rather than entertaining (although these days authors try to mix entertainment and education so that the children will not get bored). There are examples of books involving death dating back to the Victorian era, yet these topics are still generally avoided in children's literature intended rather to entertain.

Another definition of children's literature includes stories written specifically for children. Although the definitions in the previous paragraphs also discuss literature for children, in this case it is a wide term for actually defining the genre as a whole (if the intended audience is children, it is automatically children's literature). There is the inherent problem that various children of different ages and genders will enjoy a variety of stories. Whereas in the past, literature for children was generally didactic, the themes in children's stories have changed. Today, more care is taken to ensure that the needs of a child of a specific age are provided for so that his/her psychological development is encouraged. Therefore the type of literature thought to be suitable and enjoyable for children is dependent on the attitudes towards children and the definition of childhood at a particular time (Hunt, 1990, 15).

Margaret Meek (1990, 168) defines children's literature through the child's relationship to literature. She says that children's literature must match a child's real experiences. This suggests that fantasy has no place in this definition as it is not part of real life. This would therefore exclude fairy and folk tales. But it also suggests that a child must find something familiar in the literature in order to benefit from it. This is particularly

significant when discussing fairy and folk tales, as often these stories seem so fantastic that they look as if they have no place in reality. This could mean that the child will have difficulty matching the characters' experiences to those in his/her own life. If Meek's theory is true, this means that children will not in fact benefit from these stories in a very useful way. So if we ascribe to her theory, it is necessary to establish the stories' messages and links to children's everyday lives in order to surmise which stories will help them the most.

J.R. Townsend (1990, 61 & 64) claims that there need to be criteria to define a book as a children's book, as at the time that a book is written, its classification is only decided by what shelf it lands up on. This gives us a definition of children's literature that is dictated by marketing. Perhaps these criteria could include factors such as whether or not the book is intended for children, the level of the vocabulary or if the characters are children. This seems to be an unstable definition though, as we are not guaranteed that any children's literature we read is actually intended as such. Aidan Chambers (1990, 92) suggests one of these criterion when he says that a children's book is successful as a children's book only when the reader coincides with the author's created image of the child. This means that there needs to be a match between the author's constructed response and the actual response that a story may elicit.

In Adams's book (1953), William Darton defines children's literature as those "…printed works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure, and not primarily to teach them, nor solely to make them good, nor to keep them *profitably* quiet" (26). This definition suggests that children's literature should entertain a child and provide pleasure, rather than only educate. This concept is more in line with modern views, as it acknowledges that didacticism and morals have their place in this literature, but also realises that fun is key to encouraging children to read and allowing them to enjoy the experience.

There is therefore no definition of children's literature that is without problems or challenges. Most of them deal, either explicitly or implicitly, with the child audience, as well as with the concept of what a child is, which itself is a debatable notion. One of the things that this study looks at is whether the two viewpoints of what the author thinks the child is and what the child actually is can still merge, even in old-fashioned stories,

despite the time gap since they were written. For the purposes of this study, the chosen definition of children's literature is that it is literature that has traditionally been read to children, or read by children, with a focus on fairy and folk tales.

2.1.2 Concepts of Childhood

The concept of childhood has changed over the years because both society and the type of childhood experiences that a child would encounter have changed (Adams, 1953, 3–26 & 102–113). These changes are due to increased urbanisation, the evolution of a global youth culture and the rapid growth of television. These aspects have changed children's pastimes and ways of seeing the world, as children are exposed to much more reality and more varied experiences. The potential still exists that fairy and folk tales may have lost their appeal to modern children, as the topics that children find appealing may have changed. This is one of the main research questions that this study tries to answer.

Children all over the world have long been intrigued by literature that in some way influences, affects or entertains them. Children's literature has metamorphosed over the years, often adapting to definitions of childhood (or lack of them) at the time. One book that gives a useful, comprehensive discussion of the history and development of children's literature, as well as suggests age-appropriate books, is Bess Porter Adams's *About Books and Children: Historical Survey of Children's Literature* (1953). This book gives a detailed trajectory of the development of children's literature, from purely didactic books, to stories that could entertain as well as teach children, which is where fairy and folk tales fit in, as these tales can help a child's psychological maturation and they also have the potential to enthral a child (Adams, 1953, 163). A story such as *Hansel and Gretel*, for example, allows a child to overcome his/her separation anxiety issues, as well as allowing him/her to enjoy the adventures that those children embark on (Bettelheim, 1991, 11). Adams (1953, 103 & 110) suggests that the attitude towards children is much more relaxed these days and there is an emphasis on teaching them practical things, such as about money and gardening, but also a focus on the imaginary, including exotic lands.

Because in the past, children were not seen as distinct from adults, the way that they were treated and the literature available to them was not specialised, but rather merged with much of the literature available to adults. This would mean that children had no unique arena in which to grow and develop as separate entities. Jean Karl's *From Childhood to Childhood: Children's Books and their Creators* (1970, 3), asserts that children are not small adults and that there is a dire need to cater for the interests of children, as well as a need for a diversity of books to cater to the wide range of children that exist today. This is significant because in South Africa we see a huge range of children in a single classroom and one story may not be suitable for all of them.

Bechtel (1969, 144) suggests that the word "child" is almost impossible to define because "Any certainty of that word as implying a mental state is shaken by the army and other intelligence tests …we are still so far in the dark that our only honest recourse is to try to treat each new person as a person…" (144). This definition suggests that since being a child eludes definition, it is necessary to be extra cautious when choosing children's literature. This contrasts with other critics' ideas that children's literature requires certain criteria, as Bechtel suggests that it is important to remember that each child is unique and may understand and appreciate different aspects than other children do, and will therefore require unique things from a story (144). Of course, it is impossible to choose literature to suit each individual child, but if their needs are considered, it may be possible to accommodate many of them.

In *The Impact of Victorian Fiction* (Bratton, 1981, 1), we are able to see the kinds of literature that appealed to children at that time. This suggests that different literature is popular for children at different times, depending on current beliefs and ideologies. Bratton informs us about the Victorian child and the reading practices of the child at the advent of the concept of childhood (1 & 12–17). He emphasises the fact that children of about six or seven cannot differentiate between fact and fiction in narrative (30). This means that children of this age who read fairy and folk tales may perceive fictitious parts as fact and vice-versa, but also that they may learn valuable life lessons through fantasy. He mentions that even though education has improved, children of this age still cannot make this distinction. It is therefore probable that these types of tales are still applicable and enjoyable for contemporary children, as regardless of the era, six and seven year olds will not have attained that vital developmental stage of differentiation (30).

Yet taking a Freudian approach, Bettelheim (1991, 47) maintains that children are psychologically active, thinking beings. He says that they are consumed with questions about their identity and how to deal with certain issues that arise in their life. Bettelheim suggests that fairy tales are the child's solution to these nagging questions, as they provide the much sought-after answers (47). He adds that children do not require scientific explanations to questions that bother them, but rather that fantastical solutions, such as those proposed in fairy tales, can often be more understandable and realistic for them (48 & 49). Thus Bettelheim seems to view children as capable beings, but also acknowledges that their world views are not as developed as those of adults. For this reason, they should be educated according to their needs and abilities.

Zipes (1983, 9) has a view that is more affected by society and culture. He suggests that all children develop separate story schemas (frameworks for stories and what to expect in the stories) that are learned according to which culture they come from. This concept proposes that a child is heavily influenced by his/her background and that this in turn affects his/her interests. This type of socialisation may not only come from family, but from school as well. This suggests that these early influences create a blueprint of what children expect in literature and in life. He says that when fairy tales began emerging in France, their main purpose was to convey the image of the perfect child and to encourage the child readers to emulate this (9). Therefore Zipes constructs the image of the child as a social being and thus a part of the whole and not distinct from his/her environment.

2.1.3 Fairy Tales and Folk Tales

As a specific branch of children's literature, fairy and folk tales may have different histories and uses to that of children's literature as a genre. W.H. Auden, the renowned poet, said of Grimm's fairy tales,

> For, among the few indispensable, common-property books upon which Western Culture can be founded – that is, excluding the national genius of specific peoples as exemplified by Shakespeare and Dante – it is hardly too much to say that these tales rank next to the Bible in importance (in Arbuthnot and Sutherland, 1972, 158).

The Grimm Brothers, as described in Ludwig's article, 'Once Upon a Time' (1999), originally wrote the stories in order to try and preserve German oral tradition. They had many contributors to their tales, both rich and poor, which could indicate that the stories appealed to many people and also dealt with issues with which many people could identify. Hurlmann (1967, 31) documents that the Grimm Brothers originally wrote their tales for adults and only thought of writing for children afterwards (although this does not mean that all children's literature evolved in this way). Their first edition came out in1812, but it was only in their second edition that the stories were adapted for children (Hurlmann, 1967, 32).

Thompson (1977) defines the fairy tale or *Märchen* as a story,

> …involving a succession of motifs or episodes. It moves in an unreal world without definite locality or definite characters and is filled with the marvellous. In this never-never land humble heroes kill adversaries, succeed to kingdoms, and marry princesses (8).

Similarly, African folk tales have been passed down to children for an indeterminate number of years, but are told to and read by adults too. So fairy tales (and therefore folk tales too) may be likely to appeal to a wide audience.

Of interest to this research is *Children of the Sun: Selected Writers and Themes in South African Children's Literature* (Jenkins, 1993, 1), a book about the availability and existence of South African children's literature from the 1800s until 1993. The book shows that folk tales, that were probably influenced by foreign tales, were among the first types of books available in South Africa (South African children's literature has a shorter history than in other countries). Contrary to common belief, oral story-telling did not cease when books began to be printed (Zipes, 1997, 11). Although the term 'folk tale' sometimes refers to fairy tales, it includes all written and oral prose that has survived generations of recounts (Thompson, 1977, 4). Fairy tales and African folk tales are very similar, as a critic, Savory, said, "These African tales follow very much the same pattern as European tales, telling of magic and ogres, fairy princes and talking animals, witches and wizards" (in Jenkins, 1993, 24). Zipes (1979, 20) concurs that folk tales have generally changed into fairy tales, which

suggests why the story patterns are often so similar. Fairy and folk tales were used to express people's frustrations, as well as to talk about their wishes, and they also helped to explain social problems in a simple way (Zipes, 1979, 4). But Zipes (1979, 11) says that whereas folklore is said to be oral, performed, communal, traditional, has an unconscious structure and is told from memory, fairy tales are written texts, are individually read, have a conscious design and are simply re-read. Although modern, written stories strive for originality, these oral tellers are proud that they are re-telling the stories of their ancestors (Thompson, 1977, 4). Thompson states that oral stories are often passed down and translated many times, so that they may improve or weaken, although most translators focus on keeping the traditions accurate (4 & 5). He says that often, oral stories become written ones and vice versa (5). Machet (1994, 65), though, says that oral stories include different thought processes, world views, narrative structures, understanding and structures to written stories. This is because they use flatter characters, more clichés and stereotypes, as well as more standard themes. Machet (1994, 65 & 66) says that oral literature also has more repetition (as one cannot refer back to the book), more physical involvement and a more circular structure and that written stories have more action, rounded characters and a linear structure. These types of stories have their own unique characteristics, but fairy and folk tales have enough in common to be compared with each other.

The similarity between fairy and folk tales from different countries (and possibly all stories in general) is that tales from groups as far apart as the American Indians and African slaves are similar, and represent similar human emotions and problems. This suggests that these tales have a universal appeal and relevance (Horrell, 1966, 265). The themes of oral storytelling can be traced to many peoples, as everyone has similar needs, including the need to recount religious stories and the heroic events in a civilisation's past (Thompson, 1977, 5). Thompson says that although some African tales may be influenced by those from Europe and other places, they tend to remain relatively indigenous, depending on a tribe's contact with people from other countries (284). Therefore some African tales are borrowed, but some may simply be very similar story ideas that could be universal (285). Thompson also says that although some topics in European culture are foreign to African people, some of these are adopted by Africans as exotic tales anyway (286). He says, however, that stories in general do not usually struggle to find an audience because people crave entertainment and they enjoy listening to heroic anecdotes (3). Many Zulu stories in collections resemble fairy tales, although the traditional animal stories still exist in these

collections too (Werner, 1995, 26). Werner, however, does not totally believe that stories similar to those in other cultures must have come from contact with those cultures (307). Therefore, there is debate as to whether similar stories arose due to all people sharing universal themes or because of contact between different cultures, but either way, the similarities are prevalent.

According to writings on folklore, there are numerous types of tales and the ones discussed here are those most relevant to this study. African stories include myths, animal trickster stories and stories about cannibals (although this may sound gruesome, African tales are teeming with stories containing this theme) (Werner, 1995, 24). Thompson defines these prose tales as that story that "…has been handed down from generation to generation either in writing or by word of mouth…" (4). This is probably the category that most of the stories being used here, both African and written (they all started off as oral tales), would fit into. He adds that animals are prevalent in many folk tales and often think, act or look like humans, so it is often difficult to tell whether a character is a human or an animal (9 & 217). Animal stories feature prominently in the chosen stories for this study. These are the stories that are not myths and,

> They are designed usually to show the cleverness of one animal and the stupidity of another, and their interest usually lies in the humor of the deceptions or the absurd predicaments the animal's stupidity leads him into (Thompson, 1977, 9).

Thompson defines fables as those animal stories that have a moral (10) and therefore contain didacticism similar to that intended in old-fashioned children's literature. But these structures, he says, are fluid and therefore one type of tale may merge with another, such as fairy tales becoming myths (10).

There are certain characters that often feature in African stories. The hare is probably the most popular character in African stories, usually because it is the underdog that can triumph over its stronger counterparts (Werner, 1995, 25 & 26). Werner shows that many stories have been translated as containing rabbits, but since rabbits are not generally found in Africa, this is incorrect (253). The tortoise is a symbol of perseverance, as he overcomes the other animals through strong resolve, although his character is not always upstanding

(26). Other characters, Werner says, include the elephant, lion and hyena, who may be physically strong but who are outwitted by the hare or the tortoise (254). He continues that the lizard and buck are sometimes also tricked, while the crocodile also features, not always in a negative way (254).

Factors that could influence this study and that should be kept in mind in reference to African tales are as follows. Jenkins (1993, 151) says that African tales provide children with the imaginative space to get to know the 'other', as children are allowed to interact with characters and people who they may fear or with whom they may not have contact in their everyday lives. Interacting with them in stories can therefore create a familiarity that can aid better relations with different kinds of people in real life. This is also important in multicultural literature or in literature read in a multicultural context, as it allows contact with diverse types of people. Very importantly, many African tales were translated by white translators, so we cannot be sure that they are not labeling black people as the 'other'. Jenkins says that this is because these translators could have translated the stories with different emphases in order to fit in with their own ideals, which included "othering" the black people (12 & 25). Yet Jenkins concurs with previous statements that there are startling similarities between folk and fairy tales, suggesting that despite possible prejudices, there is still a basic element of commonality (24). Mingshui Cai and Rudine Sims Bishop (1990, 57–59), say that multicultural literature in the United States can include translations of popular books, stories about immigrants, stories about other countries or books about black people read to white children (and today vice versa too) – they agree that all have an 'other'. They feel that literature in general can empathise with the 'other' and challenge presuppositions. Cicely van Straten (1996, 334 & 335) says that oral tales differ in that there is no real or right version, but rather this depends on the teller. This could mean that children coming from oral story-telling backgrounds may approach the fairy and folk tales differently. One observation made by Jenkins about South African children's author, Jenny Seed (1993, 126,) is that Western authors supposedly focus on the individual and African authors on the community, which again affects the focus of the story. But ultimately, by using fantasy, fairy tales may ensure increased universality, and may therefore appeal to a range of modern, South African children (van Straten, 1996, 330–333), which is what this study aims to assess.

The reasons Zipes (1979, 15) says that the Grimm brothers collected their tales were so that they could be preserved in their supposedly most honest version. Some folk tales were rewritten so that the content that children would be exposed to could be censored, although others simply recorded these tales for entertainment. This idea that some stories were censored for children suggests that they were initially considered unsuitable for children by Victorian audiences in that the stories were teaching children inappropriate things. The new, more sanitised versions were deemed more acceptable. Yet Zipes (1979, 105) also suggests that Disney dictates how we should experience fairy and folk tales and popular culture has also adopted the fairy tale genre to sell its products, such as that a product that you buy will turn you into a princess. This implies that Disney has taken the rewriting too far, as the stories are being told simply for marketing and entertainment reasons, not for any of their original intentions, such as teaching moral lessons. Zipes (1979, 17) says that movies made from fairy tales, although reworked, are able to draw large audiences by creating a uniting voice, only now the audience is no longer involved in the process, but is passive in its reception.

Zipes (1979, 4) says that because of the way that old tales have been reworked into modern children's books and movies, it is often difficult to tell the difference between fairy and folk tales. He adds that people also forget that the stories teach about society and are not simply fantasy-based (4). In the past, folk tales were the arena for the storyteller to express his/her feelings about the goings-on of society, as well as his/her wishes, and therefore help unite and enlighten the community (4). Unlike Western fairy tales which were reworked by collectors and authors, folk tales were altered and told by regular people (5). Zipes (1979, 6) says that although certain occurrences such as cannibalism, animals helping humans or people becoming plants seem fantastical, these all emerged from certain beliefs held by primitive groups, but these beliefs changed according to the particular ideas of the day. Also, many folk tales that had originally represented the lower class, were altered in order to represent the bourgeois beliefs of the day (8).

Horrell (1966, 263 & 265) informs us that fairy tales can be called "household tales", as they do not actually contain fairies. She says that characters in fairy tales represent types, or a universal emotion, not individuals. Children may be able to recognise these types, depending on who they are familiar with in real life, and perhaps identify with them, or

recognise the emotions in the stories. Zipes (1983, 1) agrees that fairy tales are universal and that they can repeatedly be used to placate and comfort children. He (1983, 6) says that although tracing the origins of folk tales is difficult, the history of fairy tales is simpler and must automatically begin with the restructuring of the elements of the folk tale to suit the upper-class of that day. Zipes talks of the writer Marie-Louise Tenèze, who quotes the author, Propp's idea that,

> …there are a limited number of functions in the magic folk tale with an identical succession of events. The hero lacks something and goes in search for aid (intermediaries) to achieve happiness, most often marriage. The structure of every magic folk tale conforms to this quest (1983, 4).

By linking this theme with author Lüthi, who said that heroes know their duty and the solution to their problem in advance, she explains that this is the reason why many tales are very methodical and structured (5).

Since all children learn a story schema, it is likely that children from various backgrounds who have been exposed to different story formats will learn different schemas (Zipes, 1983, 9). They may thus react to stories in diverse ways, depending on how familiar they are with the particular story format. But Bettelheim (1991, 45) says that all children believe in magic, whether or not they have stories read to them, which suggests that any story with this element will probably be enjoyed. These stories have different characteristics and intentions, so it is interesting to see if the children respond differently to stories of varying origins.

2.2. Functions of Children's Literature

Children's literature undeniably performs numerous functions, including having formative, educational and affective uses. This type of literature therefore has a purpose that is different from that of adults' literature. Whereas an adults' story may simply educate or entertain, a children's story cannot merely fulfil one of these criteria. Neither purpose is sufficient in itself, but rather a combination of the two is necessary for a successful children's story. Bettelheim (1991, 12) says that it is important that what

children read is significant and teaches them something, or else reading may seem pointless. For a story to be well-received, Bettelheim (1991, 5) says that it must entertain, promote curiosity, aid emotional and intellectual development, rouse the imagination and acknowledge the difficulties that a child has to deal with. He states that children need to hear stories more than once for them to benefit from them, such as that in a first reading, a child often cannot identify with a character of the opposite sex (this could be significant in this study, as the stories were only read once to each child). Therefore, it is often useful to retell a story to a child, rather than telling another one, as he or she will be able to gain more from it. Bettelheim continues that in order for a story to be useful and successful,

> …it must at one and the same time relate to all aspects of his personality – and this without ever belittling but, on the contrary, giving full credence to the seriousness of the child's predicaments, while simultaneously promoting confidence in himself and in his future (5).

2.2.1. Reading as Pleasure

Bettelheim and Zelan (1982, 49–51) say that enjoyment is a combination of a child's interest in the story and his/her understanding of it. Children are attracted by books that promise fun, starting with the cover and the information on the cover. Bettelheim (1991, 18) says that the point of telling stories should be for the child to enjoy the fantasy and the adult to be gratified by the child's enjoyment. Stories should never be read purely for didactic reasons, but rather for enjoyment. Bettelheim (1991) compares these tales to seeds, as he says, "Listening to a fairy tale and taking in the images it presents may be compared to a scattering of seeds, only some of which will be implanted in the mind of the child" (154), meaning that these tales can be very fruitful, but only the ones that are well-suited to the reader. He adds that fairy tales should be told with the reader's unique input rather than read directly from a book, as this is more flexible. They also need to be told with some feeling from the reader of how he/she experienced the tales, as well as with sensitivity to what the child may understand or need to glean from the story. Reading aloud can lead the child to express his/her feelings or concerns and the more a child can identify with a story, the more he/she will engage with it (Bettelheim & Zelan, 1982, 99 & 101). Bettelheim (1991, 18) says that it is important that the narrator never explains the

fairy tales to the child, as the narrator cannot know which of the many levels of understanding are important to the child at that time. But active participation of the narrator in the story will increase the child's enjoyment of the story, as it shows the child that he/she has a shared experience with another. Parents should not try to give the child scientific explanations about the stories, as these ignore the workings of a child's mind. Also, stories must be chosen according to the child's level of development and children often remember stories in a manner that suits their emotional needs at the time.

For children, a big part of the pleasure that they gain from reading is simple enjoyment and excitement of exploring another world. Louise Rosenblatt (1978) calls reading for enjoyment "aesthetic reading", as what is important here is the actual experience of reading (the feelings and ideas evoked), not what one has learned from the reading. She says, "In aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text" (25). In this manner, the child will enjoy the actual experience of reading, without the expectation of gathering information. Some texts have more potential than others to be experienced aesthetically, so it is not a given that the folk and fairy tales will be enjoyed by each child, especially since, "…each encounter between a reader and the text is a unique event…" (Rosenblatt, 1978, 35 & 36). Since children are still learning language though, the child needs to separate varying responses that he/she may have (Rosenblatt, 1978, 19). Rosenblatt says that the reader will respond to what he/she hears, but also needs to draw on his/her own resources and experiences to understand his/her response. Reading aesthetically is a unique, individual experience and cannot be interpreted for a person by somebody else and the same text may be interpreted by the same person differently at different times, depending on what is happening in his/her life at that time (Rosenblatt, 1970, 35). Rosenblatt (1970) further says that reading can be "an emotional outlet" (36), can allow us to experience our senses more intensely and can let us experience adventures that we could not ordinarily experience (which links to Bettelheim's idea of experiencing these events vicariously).

Importantly, much of literature's use is to escape from our own lives and provide us with the enjoyment of experiencing somebody else's, as well as learning to sympathise and empathise with others (Rosenblatt, 1970, 37). Also, we can experience life through a character who has traits that we do not have, or who uses characteristics that we possess

much more intensely (Rosenblatt, 1970, 38 & 39). Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard (1996, 7) says that stories help children to link reading with enjoyment, as well as to help them preserve tradition. Therefore this kind of enjoyment can also be seen as a learning experience of its own and is more focussed on the development of the child's emotions. Thus reading for pleasure and adventure can be a large aspect of children's reading. This study aims to assess the subjects' enjoyment of the stories read to them.

2.2.2. Promoting Multiculturalism

Karl (1970, 26) tells us that a good author of children's literature is not simply one who has failed at adults' literature, but an author who can give a child an exciting experience. The most significant point in Karl's book though, is that children assimilate the content of a book to their own lives (6–8). But this also means that if the content is unfamiliar and confusing to children, this assimilation may not take place and the child will not benefit. In a similar vein, (1981, 27) subscribes to the idea that stories can fend off the possibility that life is meaningless, and that stories prove that we are alive, but if a child cannot identify with the story, this may no longer apply. Collectively, this suggests that children's stories, if applicable and interesting to a child, enable him/her to really live life and be able to make sense of his/her often confusing existence. Thus identification with a story is vital for a child's enjoyment of a story and will dictate how much the child will benefit from it.

Dyson and Genishi (1990, 2) also draw our attention to the fact that stories organise our experiences into tales of important happenings that help us shape and reshape our lives. In *The Need for Story: Cultural Diversity in Classroom and Community* (1994), a collection of essays by various authors, Dyson and Genishi tell us that stories teach us about culture (they are a culture's memory) and that there are links between story, self and other (2). Family stories in particular teach tolerance, as they show that ultimately all families are the same. Many fairy tales explore family dynamics, so this is extremely relevant. As Georgiou (1969, 196) said, the issues dealt with in these stories, although old, are still applicable. Because children seem almost instinctively to know that they were created by their parents and a similar being must have created them all, the child often imagines and experiences everything in terms of their parents or family (Bettelheim, 1991, 49).

Likewise, in *Other Worlds, Other Lives* (1996), Saad purports that stories from all cultures overlap, which proves that most people deal with comparable problems. He feels that 'multicultural literature' can teach children about experiences from other cultures, which can lead to cultural pluralism (Saad, 1996, 35 & 37).

Texts, Culture and National Identity in Children's Literature: International Seminar on Children's Literature – Pure and Applied (2000) does not specifically address a South African identity, but it is interesting to see the influence of texts on children's identity formation, especially when those texts can be identified with, understood and enjoyed. For example, Donald (2000, 24) explains how focussed the Irish are on history and how historical fiction can loosen the past's grip on the present (this could be useful in a South African context, especially after the Apartheid era). Palsdottir (2000, 65) shows that children's literature helps one understand a nation's state of mind, which suggests that this type of literature is closely linked with the pulse of a country and can be used as an effective link to understanding the goings on of that place. Similarly, Nimon (2000, 40) says that children learn about their nations through narrative, so children need to read national literature. In this way, these stories not only help us develop in our own lives, but they can also teach tolerance and understanding of other people and heritages.

Renner and Carter, in their article, 'Comprehending Text – Appreciating Diversity through Folklore' (1991, 602), agree with this concept, insisting that folklore in particular provides the bridging effect of learning about new places and people. Their idea is that folklore can open the doors to multicultural education, as it celebrates diversity and builds self-esteem. One of their reasons for this is that folklore creates relationships between the reader and the text, their own identities and diversity in peer groups. They suggest that although most literature achieves these same goals, the last aspect, learning about other groups, is heightened for children here, as they are learning about another culture through the magical aspect of that culture's traditional storytelling, which is an innate part of most cultures. Renner and Carter (1991, 604) also say that it is important to develop a sense of community by having pride in the past which can arise from these stories, that often contain elements such as recurring traditional beliefs, songs and sayings. They maintain that if children are exposed to tales from other cultures, their knowledge can expand immensely and they will understand other people better. Folklore is a good way of exploring culture, especially since one can look at the similarities between stories from

different cultures (Bishop, 1992, 25).

Horrell (1966, 265) highlights the fact that fairy tales represent a universal emotion. Although these stories were written a long time ago, in a world very different from our own, the inner problems that they deal with are extremely applicable. Bettelheim (1991) says, “He (the child) needs ideas on how to bring his inner house into order…” (5). He continues that the fact that the stories provide solutions means that the child will be equipped with the skills to cope with any external problems that may arise. Jacobs (1966, 4 & 5) says that children’s literature, and fairy tales especially, can help children understand their world, other people and themselves, as children see themselves reflected in the books. She claims that although not all problems can be solved through literature, it can help. But this could mean that if a child does not see him- or herself reflected in the stories, he/she may not benefit very much from them. Yet in America, after World War II, Grimm’s tales were used to bridge the language gap for foreigners, as the stories’ ideas were thought to be universal (Kircher, 1966, 339), in that they conveyed shared ideas such as loneliness, abandonment triumph and courage, which are generally common to all people. Therefore these stories could be easily understood by immigrants in a foreign land, even if the country’s culture seems unfamiliar to them. Kircher (1966, 339) says that at the time, America believed in the ideals of liberal humanism and universality, which could be other reasons for their use of these particular stories. This suggests that all children could in fact benefit from the tales.

Bettelheim (1991, 151 & 152) says that even if tales are distorted by parents, children know how to adapt them so that they can fulfil their needs, by changing them or adding to the stories themselves. He says that often parents were not told fairy tales when they were children, so they may not realise how important these tales are for a child. Often a negative attitude of parents (even an unconscious one) to reading can make a child dislike reading and too much pressure on a child can have similar results (Bettelheim & Zelan, 1982, 45). It would therefore be worth seeing whether unfamiliar literature is helpful or is a hindrance to children’s experiences of it, as there are contrasting views around this fact. This study attempts to assess the subjects’ levels of identification with the stories they are told and if possible, make some assessment of the ways in which the children experience the stories (in other words, with sadness, understanding and moral values).

2.2.3. The Value of Fantasy

Bettelheim (1991, 47) states that fantasy is the tool that children are able to use to fill in the gaps in stories, and possibly in life, created by misunderstanding and immaturity. He says that although fairy tales help to answer vital questions about the world and about life, they never tell the child what to think – rather his/her imagination and fantasy interpret it. Some people despise fairy tales, but seem to misunderstand that these stories are not trying to describe reality and are not lying, and that a child asking if the stories are true is not dangerous, but is rather the child exploring how the stories can help his/her understanding. Bettelheim says that the child will encounter a portion of reality that confuses him/her and because his/her logic cannot yet cope with such problems, the imagination is the way that these problems can be dealt with. Tolkien says, "Fairy stories… are plainly not primarily concerned with possibility, but with desirability" (Bettelheim, 1991, 117), suggesting that it could be the child's interest in 'filling in the gaps' that makes the stories appealing for him/her.

Bettelheim says that fairy tales are understood by the children as symbolic, as he states, "The child intuitively comprehends that although these stories are *unreal*, they are not *untrue*…" (1991, 73). He says that after the age of five, children can generally understand that fairy tales are not real in much the same way that little girls may pretend that their doll is their baby, but they know that in reality it is not. He says that fairy tales are presented as reality and the scenarios are described as commonplace, even though their content is fantastical and the hero/heroine continues his/her life on earth, not in another universe, so that the stories could be about any of us. Because parents cannot tell children that life will be perfect, Bettelheim maintains that fairy tales are able to give the child the imaginative examples of happiness which he/she can lean on if in a crisis. He adds that fairy tales' content is almost always hopeful, which often sets them apart from other types of stories. Although the solutions are often far-fetched, the initial problems, such as jealousy, are quite ordinary. According to Bettelheim, fairy tales are first and foremost enjoyable, so we can decide if we want to take any meaning from them. Tolkien (in van Straten, 1996, 330) defined fairy tales as the dimension in which the fantastic can happen. Van Straten (1996, 331) goes on to say that the fact that the stories are not believed is important, as children can therefore use them as an imaginative space in which to explore their problems. She also says that fairy tales are similar to dreams, as they are said to

contain the same archetypes as dreams do, which means that they are primal and innate to our psyche. Therefore neither author views the fantastical elements of the story as destructive, but rather as useful to the learning process.

Witty (1966, 20) discusses the term, "bibliotherapy", which suggests that if a child identifies with a book, or sees his/her problem duplicated in the book, it can help him/her to sort through his/her problems. But because children have different problems, a variety of books would be needed to assist with issues that different children are experiencing. This research attempts to investigate which stories or characters the subjects identify with, which may give some indication of which stories they find helpful or supportive, although it is beyond the scope of this study to draw in-depth conclusions.

Reading about Children's Literature (Nesbitt, 1966, 8) highlights the fact that although children use stories as escapism, the main contribution that stories make is to nourish a child's sense of wonder. Nesbitt says that authors that capture this wonder of a fantastical and exciting world can create a space that a child recognises and can enter (8 & 9), but because different children will inhabit different worlds, not all children will enjoy the same books. Adams (1953, 307) also highlights the positive aspects of stories and suggests that storytelling is an essential component in keeping alive man's tragic, funny, heroic and romantic experiences, and so it serves a very human function.

A thought-provoking idea proposed by Jenkins (1993, 103) is that fantasy can reach all aspects of the child's mind (especially during Apartheid – fantasy stories could subvert the racial divide), while real stories often cannot, as they may leave out a specific group of people. Judith Inggs (2000, 46) shows that changes in South Africa altered its children's literature, as previously, fantasy was the only place where child characters of different races could mix. Yet newer, more realistic stories contain characters of many races, so perhaps fantasy is no longer the only space where integration can occur (especially because racial mixing is now possible in real life, such as in schools, too). But there are undoubtedly many other lessons and morals that can be gleaned from the stories.

2.2.4. Didactic and Moral

Bettelheim (1991, 8) states that a child's first exposure to ethics is often in fairy and folk tales and that these tales can satisfy the child's need to deal with good and evil, which are able to help with the shaping of the child's personality. Louise Seaman Bechtel (1969) said that, "A youngster needs the strong stimulus of mythical figures, striding about a simpler earth with grandeur, and he must see beside them the small plain men of our day in whose minds this grandeur speaks, however differently" (149). This suggests that the characters common to these tales serve as counterpoints against which children can evaluate and learn about their own lives. It is necessary to have knowledge about these fairy tale conventions in order to understand how they work, to be aware of their potential and to know how they have been used in educational settings in the past.

W.H. Auden (in Arbuthnot and Sutherland, 1972, 158) also saw the value in these tales, as he said,

> It will be a mistake… if this (a collection of Grimm tales)… is merely bought as a Christmas present for a child; it should be, first and foremost, an educational 'must' for adults, married or single, for the reader who has once come to know and love these tales will never be able again to endure the insipid rubbish of contemporary entertainment.

Although this is a strong claim, it is widely accepted by specialists such as Bettelheim (1991, 5 & 24), who insists that fairy tales are an indispensable tool for socialisation. According to these authors, fairy tales are able to teach us the ground rules of society and they can socialise us to become functional members of contemporary society. Of course, other forms of entertainment will probably not be considered 'rubbish' by children, especially since there are so many new, innovative toys these days, and children often seem to accept the classics and contemporary literature equally. They are simply highlighting the stories' importance in society.

Fairy tales are often thought of as didactic, but it is possible to make a distinction between tales that are explicitly didactic and implicitly didactic. Whereas many contemporary

stories aim to educate about specific themes, such as divorce or democracy, many fairy tales and folk tales do not openly teach, but knowledge is rather gained through their more subtle messages. In *Can Fairy Tales Help?*, Cicely van Straten (1996, 330) talks about how European fairy tales reflect the cultural development of the past century, as they represent social issues of the time. In Hunt's book, *Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism* (1990, 24 & 25), Dickens is quoted as saying that fairy tales have taught us to be kind to the old and to have a love for nature, and that a successful nation needs fairy tales for imagination. This supports the concept of these tales performing a didactic function. Despite society having changed so dramatically, the moral lessons remain applicable and important to children today. In this same book, G.K. Chesterton also says that these stories are didactic and even logical (1990, 29). One needs to fulfil certain tasks in these tales, such as the performance of services for a king or the collection of certain objects, in order to be rewarded, which teaches a good life lesson in that one needs to do something worthy in order to reap the benefits.

Evil in the stories is often enjoyed, but the moral lesson is that the crimes committed by the 'villains' do not ultimately benefit them, so it is this "lose(ing) out", rather than the punishment, that is the deterrent (Bettelheim, 1991, 9). Although Bettelheim (1991, 141) says that adults think that graphic revenge can be upsetting for children, he shows that in reality, it actually comforts a child by showing him/her that justice has been done. He believes that today's society tries to pretend to children that evil does not exist in man, but fairy tales show that if one fights hard against the challenge, one can succeed. Death and ageing are often wholly ignored in modern texts, which could be detrimental to the child. Bettelheim says that anger is often viewed in a fantastical manner in fairy tales, as this matches the stories' exaggerated fear. These tales, he says, also broaden children's thinking so that it becomes more abstract and can satisfy in fantasy their need for love, beauty and achievement, and although the stories are often violent, this violence is often shown to be useful. Children may find these tales comforting as they are able to address concerns that they are not able to express or may not even be aware of. Therefore the timelessness of these stories could be a main aspect of their continuing success, as well as their ability to teach children valuable lessons without preaching to them.

Bettelheim (1991) claims that a child needs,

> …a moral education which subtly, and by implication only, conveys to him the advantages of moral behavior, not through abstract ethical concepts but through that which seems tangibly right and therefore meaningful to him (5),

and that fairy tales provide this education. He adds that, "In the traditional fairy tale, the hero is rewarded and the evil person meets his well-deserved fate, thus satisfying the child's deep need for justice to prevail." This is because children desire justice rather than compassion, which is different to what adults desire (144). When the heroes are rewarded and the villains are punished, this "…satisfy(ies) the child's eye-for-an-eye code of ethics…", possibly because the stories are so obviously fantasy, as well as putting "…the stamp of approval upon certain values…" (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972, 154 & 142). These conventions of fairy tales are useful to a child, as they teach him/her that moral behaviour is rewarded, whereas evil is not.

In this way, fairy tales are viewed by Bettelheim (1991, 13 & 53) as being very similar to Bible stories, but the similarities will only be noticed in relation to what the child already knows about religion. He adds that most of these tales were written during a time where religion was very important, so their connection to religion may be quite strong. Bettelheim also says that many of the more obviously religious tales are no longer used, as they are not universally applicable anymore and that although religious symbols were rife in the older tales, newer ones may have edited these out.

Bettelheim (1991, 10, 15 & 74) says that the characters and stories with which a child is able to identify suggest at what stage of development he/she is. He states that children often base their choices of which character they would want to be if they had a choice, on who they have sympathy for. Fairy tales, he says, become most useful to a child after the age of five, as between three and six, children cannot understand characters who are neither wholly good nor bad – since the characters in fairy tales are "one-dimensional", the child can comprehend them.

Bettelheim (1991, 32) further says that the happy endings in fairy tales are necessary, as children may not be able to envision such happy endings themselves, and so the guidance helps the child to create them. He says that children also learn that although life may be difficult, if one works hard, one can succeed, again providing a didactic function. "Happily ever after" does not signify that the characters will live forever, according to him, but rather that they have found real love and security and this should be reassurance enough. Also, the child is guaranteed of a happy ending, so he/she need not worry about a lack of resolution, which makes the stories less anxiety-provoking. If this were a real story, the child may be disappointed that his/her life does not go as smoothly, but since it is openly set in a different world, this disappointment does not occur. We are never told what the king or queen in a story do, other than that they will live happily ever after and this indicates to the child that he/she can rule over him- or herself wisely. Tolkien adds that fairy tales require "…fantasy, recovery, escape and consolation…" (Bettelheim, 1991, 143), and states that consolation is the biggest comfort to the child. Therefore a positive outcome to a story seems to be the most vital ingredient for children.

Parents are key role players in children's understanding and enjoyment of fairy tales. Sometimes if parents do not want to read fairy tales to their children, it may be that the parents do not like to realise that they themselves are often viewed by the children as giants (Bettelheim, 1991, 27). Bettelheim says that children are able to deal with their inner emotions in fairy tales, so when children are told only non-fictional stories, it is as if the parents are saying that their inner world is undesirable and they may therefore distance themselves from this world that they think is unacceptable. He says that stories that are based purely on reality often lack connection to the child's inner feelings and therefore do not contain much personal meaning.

Bettelheim (1991, 40) writes that fairy tales are different from myths in that myths are seen as impossible, yet fairy tales, although fantastical, are believable. He states that there are no partly good characters, which shows that these tales present simple, useful characters for children. He notes that fairy tales use common names, if they even assign names, so they can refer to any number of people, and therefore children can insert themselves into the stories, which is a further indication of their universality. Arbuthnot and Sutherland (1972, 152) write that "Once upon a time" introduces us to a world of open-endedness, where the action could be anywhere and the hero could be anyone. The

lines “Once upon a time” and “long ago” are intentionally vague so that the child knows that the stories are not based in our reality (Bettelheim, 1991, 62).

Fairy tales are very short, but the words used are very descriptive, so that they are able to convey a lot of information in a very limited space. Some examples of this economic use of space, is the extensive use of symbols in these stories. All these that follow are images that appear in the stories that were used in this study. Although this is not a psychoanalytical study, they may still be interesting or useful to keep in mind. Bettelheim (1991, 162) says that the witch character is a combination of the good and bad mother proposed by psychology, but she is seen as completely unrealistic. The character of a stepmother plays a psychological role for the children as she represents the bad mother, that part of the mother that the child fears, but that he/she can therefore confront in a fictitious manner. He says that the characters are usually punished because they refuse to do what the step-mother asks. He says that birds can be symbolic of the soul’s freedom and may be the superego, which is less grounded than the ego. Bettelheim’s interpretation of symbols in stories extends to include frogs that symbolise our evolutionary progression from water to land. We all initially live in water, but must live on land as frogs do, and they therefore represent our id, the oldest part of our being. Other symbols include dogs, who live closest to man and with whom the child can identify most. But they are also symbols of freedom as they can bite or express anything at will, yet are also loyal and can be trained. Dogs may therefore represent a person’s ego, as that is the part of our minds that is the most accessible. Dogs have always helped us to fight off danger or show us how to deal with dangerous animals. Bettelheim (1991, 101) comments that violent dogs need to be interpreted as man’s angry instincts, as if we do not understand them, they can destroy us. He says that they are also possessive, as they are the guards, which, when understood, can be dealt with. Therefore, it may be significant to remember these common symbols of stories, as they are relevant to the deeper meanings of the tales.

Bettelheim has a far more psychoanalytical approach than Zipes, who, although he makes frequent reference to Bettelheim, has a more contextual approach. Zipes (1979) quotes Walter Benjamin as saying, “The folk tale, which to this day is the first tutor of children because it was once the first tutor of mankind, secretly lives on in the story” (94). This suggests that he agrees that tales have a place in children’s education. He therefore states that all types of tales, both fairy and folk tales, can benefit a child’s development.

Arbuthnot and Sutherland (1972, 40) state that since emotions and needs do not change throughout the eras, the stories continue to convey applicable messages about love and security. They feel that physical location, such as the small cottage in *The Twelve Brothers*, or a castle, can create a sense of security (159). Even if a child feels insecure in his/her life, the stories can provide that sense of comfort that they are safe and need not fear, as they are protected in their own environment. These days, the moral education at school is not backed up by the home and society (Bettelheim, 1979, 127), so children may receive conflicting viewpoints and could be unsure which one they should ascribe to.

In recent years, there have been concerns about whether or not these stories are sexist. Especially in fairy tales, the male is usually the one to achieve his goals, while the female usually depends on his prowess in order to attain her dream – a comfortable life with him. Since the female characters are usually at the mercy of the male ones, it may be seen by some to provide a bad example for young girls. Even the earliest known versions of fairy tales show how the girls' maturation and development has a decidedly patriarchal influence (51). Similarly, the stories used morals to prove that work was necessarily divided by gender (3). This is therefore also an area for the observation of levels of identification of subjects, as modern boys and girls may be unfamiliar with this description of women and it could also cause them to question their preconceived ideas of the different gender roles. Some recent authors have felt that the sexism in these stories is unacceptable and have rewritten them with a feminist slant, such as O.F. Gmelin's *Fairy Tales for Girls with Spunk*, 1978 (Zipes, 1983, 66). Any supporter of fairy tales would of course insist that themes such as sexism recur in children's conscious and unconscious experiences and so are necessary and are not outdated. But sexism involves the reinforcement of gender roles by portraying them as natural, rather than created by society. Therefore if children are repeatedly shown these same negative perspectives of females, it is possible that they will accept them as being commonplace in society. This could be a way that children learn negative stereotypes instead of useful coping strategies, and could propagate the pre-existing problem of sexism. It may therefore be necessary to be aware of these tendencies and to deal with any questions surrounding their validity.

2.2.5 Thresholds

Since a focus of this study is responses to thresholds in the particular stories that have been chosen, it is important to concentrate on what these may involve. For the purposes of this study, a threshold moment is defined as an incident in the story where there is an exciting experience, a transformation or when a character is forced to face a challenge and tries to overcome it. This may involve, among other scenarios, being forced from home, being made to survive alone or having to save another characters. These incidents often provide the most entertainment, suspense and fun in the stories. Although there seems to be more information available about thresholds in fairy tales than in African tales, both types of stories usually contain similar threshold moments, probably because of their similar folk tale origins and intentions. Although thresholds were included in the title and were thought to be the most significant aspects of stories, on closer inspection it will appear that they were not the only important parts to be investigated, despite their focus on the excitement and intrigue. Yet because of their initial focus, they have retained their significance in the research.

Bettelheim's (1991, 6 & 7) discussion of thresholds was found to be particularly useful for this study and the following are some of his comments. He suggests that a reason that threshold experiences are found in most tales is that these experiences are related to the type of pressures that a child faces. Even though the situation at this crucial threshold moment may be difficult, the child is shown that he/she can overcome it. He suggests that the child is able do this by "…fit(ting) unconscious content into conscious fantasies…" (Bettelheim, 1991, 7). The child can face these experiences in the imagination, rather than in reality. Bettelheim claims that children will often choose to read a story that contains the threshold that they are facing in reality. The child can take from the resolutions what he/she wants and adapt it to him- or herself as he/she finds useful. These experiences may be strange, but the characters are very human, which convinces the child that he/she can cope with them too. The tales' humanity is what makes the stories so applicable. He also says that the stories encourage children to persevere, as the characters never give up on the task at hand.

Bettelheim (1991, 100 & 102) says that in fairy tales, the plot moves along quickly and there are recognisable conventions that are used, such as the numbers three and seven.

Therefore there are certain standards that can be looked out for so that these thresholds are pinpointed and taken note of. Georgiou (1969, 188 & 190–192) highlights the simplicity of tales, as he shows how tales are written in a conventional pattern, with the beginning introducing the problem, the body containing the action and the end showing how evil is punished and good is rewarded. Although African stories do not always end in redemption, the characters, be they human or animal, must usually overcome some obstacle during the story.

Grimm's tales socialise children by teaching them particular values, often of a bourgeois society, as they usually involve a battle for independence as well as the chance to advance in society (Zipes, 1983, 57 & 58). African stories seem to be more focussed on teaching general lessons about society, including topics of greed, laziness and dishonesty, rather than teaching about materialism. This means that through these threshold experiences involving a fight for survival or by being shown a wrongdoing, the child is able to learn that he/she can overcome any challenges, however diverse they may be, in his/her own life too.

In fairy tales, the usual pattern is that the protagonist must leave home because of changed familial relations or because the social hierarchy is in turmoil (either someone does something to him/her or the social situation, such as the family's wealth, has changed) and he/she must fulfil a mission in order to "reconstitute home" (Zipes, 1983, 57). He says that ultimately, the mission is to remake home in some way, which is achieved by fulfilling a task. Homecoming can therefore be seen as the ultimate reassurance that life will turn out successfully. Leaving home and the final fulfilment of the task can be seen as threshold moments.

Bettelheim (1991,11) states that fairy tales generally follow the pattern of the hero being belittled, his/her relying on benevolent people that he/she meets and ultimately his/her triumph and finding his/her identity. Zipes (1983, 57) maintains that through fulfilling these tasks, the male learns to be sly, competitive and entrepreneurial in order to get the wealth and the woman, by ensuring that he enforces his power properly; the female learns to be passive, patient and self-sacrificing, with the goal of achieving money, jewellery and a man – all these goals are achieved by obeying the patriarchal system. These

traditional roles may be seen as sexist today, but the basic challenges and final goal of achieving a happy equilibrium are still applicable.

In African tales, the characters with unacceptable traits such as lying, are not always rewarded with their desires, so this could also be seen as a lesson applicable to reality, in that negative actions do not generally garner positive results. Zipes (1979, 6–9) insists that these tales depend on traditions, values and power in a society – it seems that even though societies evolve, the crossroads that we come to in our individual development never really change, which is why these crucial thresholds that the characters face still remain applicable. These experiences are often the most crucial and dramatic in the stories, so as well as bringing a focus to the questions, these experiences may also form the most attractive aspects of the stories for a child.

The thresholds in these stories may seem outdated or unrealistic today, but very often, children still struggle with them in their unconscious. The cruelty of children being separated from parents in fairy tales is included, as it was a common problem at the time the stories were written. But the tales still aid emotional development by helping a child to overcome fears, such as that his/her own parents will abandon him/her (Georgiou, 1969, 196). Bettelheim (1991, 16 & 17) observes that many tales are about pubertal females, as it shows the power battle that ensues between them and their parents. This type of struggle, involving maturing and becoming independent, represents a threshold, as the characters are being forced to face their authority figures and are challenged by them in order to attain this liberation.

Bettelheim's psychoanalytical ideas, although written in relation to fairy tales, seem to be significant for folk tales too. Symbolically, being thrown out of home can mean being forced to find one's identity, which can be very difficult (Bettelheim, 1991, 98). This is a scenario that is common in both fairy and folk tales. Bettelheim says that once the character has left home, his/her task is to gain independence. He says that stories that portray a person splitting into different characters show that these different aspects make up the same person (this could be the case in *King Grisly-Beard*). According to him, there are two types of desertion that are significant here, including being forced out of home (usually when the children are pre-pubertal), or being left somewhere and not being able to find one's way back, such as those where servants are ordered to kill them. However,

these were not encountered in this study. His findings are that being forced out can be viewed as the child's wish to escape from the parents or that he/she thinks that the parent wants to be rid of him/her. Being abandoned in a forest expresses the parents' and child's wish to become independent, but usually at the end, the child triumphs over the parents. The father in these stories is usually happy that the child is getting married and often arranges it. Also, often the daughter is given to the hero and shares or takes over the father's kingdom, which can be a child's fantasy. Bettelheim says that finding a suitable partner and getting married represents the transition from the oedipal complex and therefore independence. When a pubertal girl leaves the house and becomes independent, it could be symbolic of her reaching sexual maturity. Since incidences of leaving home are prevalent, these may be seen as thresholds.

Reassurances of love are explicit in many stories, often expressed in attempts to save loved ones from spells and these comfort us that although life is dangerous, we will survive and be supported (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972, 151). This can be seen as didactic for children, as they are reassured that they will be looked after. They fall into the threshold category because the attempts at saving loved ones are usually valiant and can involve a character who did not originally show strength, but who becomes strong by doing something heroic to save a person he/she cares about. These valiant endeavours to save others are also common and are significant to the development of the plot. Arbuthnot and Sutherland add that the stories also teach about heroism and perseverance, often in the midst of evil, and this can encourage children to be brave and persistent (151). Therefore, whether the characters are facing danger to themselves or to others, their endeavours to overcome them involve their crossing a threshold particular of their situation.

2.3. Factors Affecting Children's Responses to Literature

There are numerous reasons why children enjoy or dislike a story. These range from what the children are familiar with, whether or not the characters appeal to them, their stage of development and even to their mood or the weather. Often, it is not possible to establish what is affecting the child, as the factors can vary from session to session. Therefore it is

important to be aware of these possible influences, even if we do not always realise that they are occurring.

2.3.1. Reasons for Positive or Negative Responses to Being Read Stories

Bettelheim and Zelan (1982, 49) agree with the claim of Reader-Response theory that reading only becomes enjoyable when it is decoded in a personal way. It is difficult for children, according to Piaget, to see words as more than simple objects. Yet once they do, they will be able to understand deeper meanings. However, often only the surface meanings are concentrated on at school. Also, it may take some time for children to understand that words can convey messages too. The reader's unconscious plays a role in interpretation, according Reader-Response theory, and there may not necessarily be a match between the author's intended meaning and the reader's perceived one. Also, if the author's intention and the reader's interpretation are mismatched, resistance may occur. Piaget and Freud, among others, also agreed that people often alter stories to make them suit their problems or expectations, so children will view stories from the perspective with which they are already familiar. Therefore, if a child changes the stories, it is normal for his/her age. A reader will connect with scenarios in a story more if it links to his/her own life, but less intellectually developed children often cannot think in such abstract ways and they may be distracted by their feelings at that time. But children will have more of a connection to the story if it has personal input. Bettelheim and Zelan (1982, 88) suggest that Grade one children cannot yet separate themselves and their feelings from the stories.

Sometimes children's mistakes in understanding stories can arise because the child may be protesting against the characterisation in the story or he/she may draw on his/her own knowledge (Bettelheim & Zelan, 1982, 94 & 95). Bettelheim and Zelan note that Freud says that mistakes made in reading and writing are similar to slips of the tongue and the things we forget are often replaced with related, but more 'acceptable' content for that child (95).

Another reason for negative responses to stories is that perhaps the child cannot gain a useful response from the tale, as if a child does gain something, he/she will often ask for the story to be read to him/her repeatedly, until he/she has gleaned everything he/she can

from it (Bettelheim, 1991, 58). Bettelheim (1991, 117, 151 & 155) says that adult interpretation of stories can detract from the meaning-making of the child and the child may resent that. Although when Bettelheim and Zelan (1982, 34–47) describe why children resent reading, they are talking about children refusing to learn to read, the reasons could possibly be extended to account for children resenting being read to. Although Bettelheim and Zelan (1982, 87 –107) say that the obvious reasons for not wanting to concentrate on reading could include medical reasons, the hyperactivity the child displays is often a tool that the child can use to fight those in authority. Not being able to sit still is often not a sign of rejection, but rather can seem a suitable expression to the child of what he/she is experiencing or feeling, especially if he/she is in a comfortable environment. But also, this movement could be a response to what the child sees as unreasonable demands from the person in authority. Bettelheim and Zelan say that although we assume that children want to read, this is often not the case. They say that children that find reading boring may find the experience unpleasant and too demanding (34–47).

2.3.2 Culture and Otherness

In a country such as ours, where there are such diverse groups of people living together, it is necessary that we are aware of the literature that the children are reading. It is very plausible that some of it may be focussed more on one culture than on another and it is useful to know which texts are able to cater to a variety of these groups. Rosenblatt (1970, 79) says that during any reading, a child brings both his/her past and present experiences, which can either help or hinder the process. A local journal article by Machet, 'Black Children's Ability to Access Western Literate Stories' (1994), studied fourteen black Standard five children and suggested that those from a background of oral literature had not internalised Western story structures. Machet says that oral stories are structured differently to written Western ones (as discussed on Pages 11–17), so they contain different thought processes, perceptions of the world, narrative structures, and elicit different understandings and responses to literature (65 & 66). Children begin developing story structures at about age four or five and so it makes sense that if they learn the oral tradition, they will not find it easy to adapt to the written, Western story structure (66). Machet's study found that children from an oral tradition had trouble understanding some

Western stories whose messages were more abstract and they often did not remember resolutions, as these are not an important part of the oral tradition (65). She found that whereas they tended to remember folk tale-type stories such as *Red Riding Hood*, they found it more difficult to recall more westernised ones, such as *The Cherry Tree*, which deals with "...finding hope in a situation that seems hopeless" (69), which is evidently less straightforward. This is confirmed in another study, about black second-language English students, which found that the subjects tended to choose books according to their backgrounds and education, and often children without experience of Western literature cannot understand a Western story (McMurray, 1996, 180). But this research is relatively old in a South African context, as so much has changed in the interim. Machet (1992) also found that children process culturally familiar text better than that which is unfamiliar, but each reader reads differently because of his/her unique culture and identity. Although she feels that some books represent universal values (possibly fairy tales), she suggests that readers respond better to books that represent their culture properly. This is relevant to this study, as a child's ability/inability to comprehend a story will obviously affect his/her response to a story.

Thuli Radebe (1996, 184–200) gives a different argument about responses to literature when she suggests that although children should be given books that they can identify with (even though we cannot actually say that all children will be familiar with the same things), foreign literature can intrigue them, which is an argument in favour of all children benefiting from a range of stories. Tucker (in Radebe, 1996, 190) agrees, saying that children anywhere can respond well to any story. Since we cannot group people because they are so diverse, Radebe feels that we should try to accept a common South African culture, as because the cultures are so diverse, we need to assemble those things we share as common (or take different parts of these cultures and put them into a workable whole) (198). In this way, we collect particular aspects of a culture that can conceivably be accepted by other cultures, and by taking these aspects from a diversity of traditions, create one that can be shared. This means that we will be able to separate this rich diversity from the 'lowest common denominator' of the different cultures. Wagener (1996, 264) writes that the problem in encouraging multiculturalism lies in that although black children learn about white culture in books, it often does not apply the other way around.

Muursepp (1996, 306–313) found that children are very good at identifying "otherness". She saw this by asking children to identify the eras that pictures in certain texts came from, which the children did quite accurately. This suggests that children are adept at spotting difference. Milner (1975, 51) says that children like to categorise their environment in order to understand it, so they quickly learn about "own-groupness", which can lead to discrimination, as children generally favour their own group. Children may therefore notice immediately if they or others have been excluded from texts.

Lena Strang writes in her article, 'Language Against Racism in the UK' (1992, 14 & 15), that much of children's literature portrays minority groups in a negative light, and she agrees that rather than removing such literature, we should be aware of the bias. We need to remember that some books were not meant to offend, but rather to entertain a white audience. Often, characters in multicultural books become interchangeable and lose their uniqueness. The teaching of *Journey to Jo'burg* in a UK school by Shaharna Mirza (1992, 86 & 87), saw an enlightening of students that she taught to support, and not pity, black South Africans at the time. A similar study by Beverley Naidoo (1992, 104) involved reading a story about a black girl in the South of America, to white British students, and investigating whether their limited environment and culture would restrict their understanding of the story. Naidoo (1992, 104) found that the students enjoyed the story, but how much of it they could really identify with was unsure. A study of second-language English readers by Napheas Akhter (1992, 116 & 117) found that reading material for these pupils should represent their cultural beliefs. He states that one needs to establish whether the feelings, actions and emotions in stories are universal, as if they are not, second-language readers may have difficulty understanding them. These factors have the potential to influence the subjects' responses to the stories in this study.

A valuable aspect of Bob Dixon's book, *Catching them Young: Sex, Race and Class in Children's Fiction* (1978), is that he shows how sexism, racism and classist ideas are prevalent in children's literature and how they often go unnoticed. He says that sexism is seen in the representation of boys and girls in stories and in the language the characters use, or even in the children's toys and games (1 & 2). Class differences are highlighted by certain groups being left out of texts, while ideas of aristocracy are propagated in fairy tales (49–55). These tales also show what good people and bad people stereotypically look like, which could lead to children becoming judgmental, because if they see people

that fit this mould, they may generalise. Racism in children's literature is more symbolic and unconscious than in adults' literature, which could be more dangerous because children are so impressionable. A very significant point that Dixon makes is that stories about transformations could be about black people wanting to become white, or they may simply represent the yearning for acceptance of a marginalised people (107–112). Mia Osterland (2000) says that because children are changing and growing up, they like characters that change too. In tales, children are transformed as punishment, or to fulfil a regressive wish. Osterland says that there is a pattern that is established – deprivation of identity leads to the creation of self-rejection, which leads to black children feeling sub-human (180). This suggests that as long as the stories do not represent a diversity of children, these feelings of dislocation and inferiority will continue. Dixon (1978, 95) feels that newer books need to try to change this attitude, but he says that it is uncertain whether this new form of propaganda to get rid of racism by representing more people and views in books, is any better than the racism found in other books. This could be because even if there are more diverse characters who are represented, they could still be stereotyped.

The idea of sexism in children's literature is just an extension of prejudice. Often, the accepted canon of literature is male-dominated, says Maxine Greene (1990, 15), and we need to acknowledge the culture of an oppressed people in order to counteract the instances of unacknowledged cultures. Pam Gilbert (1990, 125) agrees, saying that language is gendered and that young girls only have a limited set of stories they can tell (romance, fairies, dress etc.), as masculinity and femininity are partially constructed in literature. The same would relate to race too – language and storylines may be constructed more around certain readers than around others. Young children may not yet be affected as they may not have that 'storied' idea yet, which means that their ideas and expectations of stories may not yet be too rigid.

2.3.3. Race and Racial Attitudes

Much research has been done on race as a factor influencing the responses of children to literature. As there is the possibility (although it is definitely not a given) that a child's

race could affect his/her responses to a story, this section has been included, although it is by no means exhaustive of the factors that could influence responses.

Two books that were particularly helpful with regards to the prevalence and development of racism and prejudice are David Milner's *Children and Race* (1975) and Frances Aboud's *Children and Prejudice* (1988). Both books point out that 'black' has had negative connotations for years (as far back as 400 A.D.) and Milner says that initially slavery and scientific reasons were given to justify this racism. Only later, in about the early 1900s, did people realise that racism had social and cultural causes and that prejudice comes from hearsay, differences in personal attributes and from personal experience (1–18). One theory that may seem obvious, but that was not initially commonly used, the "social problems" theory, states that one should look at a person's education, culture and finances instead of blaming the person for being different (28). Parents do not necessarily teach prejudices, but children may hear racist attitudes, copy them, and eventually internalise them. Also, the "scapegoat theory" states that people's frustrations are often taken out on weaker groups (29). Aboud (1988, 20) talks about a similar theory, the "inner state" theory, that says that children cannot get rid of their frustrations by getting angry at their parents, so they take it out on less powerful groups. Cultural, social and individual elements determine racial attitudes, as once racism takes root, cultural influences keep it there and then it is passed through the generations by socialisation. This suggests that texts may contain particular presuppositions about the character's race.

Stereotypes of black people are propagated by the media (especially in the past), which reflects majority culture, so children may learn these attitudes as young as three years old. A study by Machet, 'The Effect of Socio-Cultural Values on Adolescents' Responses to Literature' (1992, 356), states that children's books reinforce the values of the dominant class, especially in intolerant countries (this would have applied to South Africa during Apartheid) – this is a form of social control. This can even be seen in the prevalence of white characters in illustrations of fairy tales. Black people were taught to see themselves through white people's eyes, so they needed to develop a sense of self to overcome it. Many people still internalise the values that they are fed which leads to a devalued identity and a preference for certain groups. In a similar manner, black children (poorer ones) are often more anxious than other children to start school because they are not as

well-prepared, may have language difficulties and are sometimes discouraged from doing well at school so as not to attract attention (Milner, 1975, 142 & 174). This too is old research, and it is very possible that the situation has changed.

Newfield (1992, 40) in 'Reading Against Racism in South Africa' says that in 1992, books in South Africa were chosen according to Eurocentric ideas, and that South African books were considered too political. She says that racist texts should be read in an oppositional way (44) (similar to resistant reading, discussed on Page 51). One needs to ask questions about the author, setting and the time the text was written in order to discuss the prejudices that may be inherent to the story. The Storyteller Group tried to write non-racial anti-Apartheid literature in opposition to what was available at the time, which is one way of opposing such writing. Other ways that one can read against racism is by oppositional reading of overtly racist texts, reading anti-racist texts and reading to create a new present (Newfield, 1992, 60).

Milner (1975) suggests that, "The acceptance of white skin as associated with all that is important enough to be in books, pictures and 'school-learning' tends to be an unconscious rejection of a child's own colour" (216). This suggests that if a child's group is not represented in literature, he/she will feel humiliated and deprived, and other children will be taught that that group is not worth mentioning. Bishop (1992, 19) agrees and says that people look for reflections of themselves in books to reaffirm that they are good people. By not representing them, the dominant group has an exaggerated power and a negative stereotype of the other, while connections between people are denied. Although this research is from before 1978 and may be outdated, Dixon (1978, 116) also feels that black children did not have much to identify with in literature, as they saw, if anything, a distorted mask reflected back at them. Dixon also notes that in a doll study where children were asked to decide which dolls were prettier, between white or black dolls, most children chose the white ones simply because they were white (116 & 117). This shows how ideas of beauty and values were internalised, although this may have changed in more recent times. Older books that contain stereotypes or that do not even mention black characters, create the perception that only white characters are beautiful (Dixon, 1978, 93 & 94). It is very possible that television has had a lot to do with altering perceptions here. Furthermore, Aboud (1988, 7) says that ethnic self-identification involves identifying oneself in terms of a group. This could affect the Grade ones in this

study, as if they are aware of this, they may realise that their group is absent in some stories.

Another fascinating study, although it was conducted in the 1930's in Britain and may be outdated, found that some black children did not even identify themselves as black (Milner, 1975, 93 & 94). Milner noticed that black children were affected by their parents' anxieties about being black, and that they suffered from more anxiety, neuroses, negative self-concepts and aggressiveness than other children did (141–143). Parents sometimes make children look whiter, which makes them think that white is better (151). Aboud (1988, 40 & 41) writes that black children often prefer black people, but do not reject white people as much as white people reject black ones in books and illustrations. Again, this research is old, but provides pointers on aspects to be looked at in the children's responses.

Interestingly, Aboud (1988, 86) found though that children were less prejudiced towards a group if an examiner was from that group, so reduction in prejudice could be linked to a need for approval. Since the group of subjects in this study consists of both black and white children and the researcher is a white female, it is possible that this type of prejudice could occur (this is a concern in the study and will be discussed later).

In *Children and Prejudice*, Aboud (1988, 4) explains prejudice as a type of negativity towards a group because of a group, rather than an individual trait. Some prejudices are aggressive, while other people develop prejudices simply because they are frustrated by their circumstances. Ethnic awareness (recognising individuals in a group), can lead to generalisation, but children under seven may not be able to generalise, so they may not be prejudiced (6). Aboud states that the "social reflection" theory presents children as blank templates and that prejudice is passed down the generations to them, while the "social-cognitive developmental" theory maintains that prejudice levels differ according to age and development of cognitive ability (19 & 20). This concurs with the idea that younger children may not yet be prejudiced. Apparently, prejudice levels can drop with age though, as older children can then see individuals in a group and can minimise differences and see similarities to their own group in other groups, even if they are unfamiliar with that group. It therefore seems that racial markers involve some kind of generalisation.

In *'Race', Ethnicity and Education: Teaching and Learning in Multi-Ethnic Schools* (1990, 3 & 4), David Gillborn argues that there is a difference between biological racism (based on common physical differences and common ancestry) and social racism (more prevalent today – people who are socially defined in impermanent groups as sharing characteristics). He says that an ethnic group is culturally distinct from others (language, history, ancestry – often implying physical differences, such as skin colour), while an ethnic minority is a group with less power than others have (4). He adds that power plays a big part in racism, as although one group may hate another group, one needs power to affect the prejudiced people's experiences and life chances (8). Gillborn studied a multi-ethnic school in the UK, where there were white, Afro-Caribbean, South Asian and mixed race children. He states that although people thought that once immigrants had learned English and Western norms, they would be integrated, this was not enough. In reality, the whole curriculum needed to have multicultural classes introduced, in order to create a better understanding of other people. In order to assess whether literature is racist or not, and thus to see whether it can be used effectively in a multicultural context, one needs to: see whose perspective is being reflected; look at whether all characters are represented as individuals; see if cultures are represented with empathy; check if there is accurate information about cultural differences and similarities; see if children are encouraged to see cultural diversity positively; and if efforts have been made to counter racism (161 & 162). Although racial attitudes will not be investigated in this study, these considerations will be kept in mind while analysing the children's responses to the stories.

2.3.4. Story Features

Children enjoy and expect different books and stories from the ones that adults read, although obviously not all children will like the same stories. Adams (1953, 117 & 118) says that children of about age six are very malleable and enjoy stories to be repeated. Sound, illustration, repetition and rhythm are important, as are animal stories, so these could be factors that will contribute to the enjoyment of the tales in this study (except for illustrations, as these will not be shown, as explained on Pages 45, 53, 70 & 104). Baker (1966, 75) makes the point that precision of language is necessary in a good book and this is often found in older books. But older English could also lead to confusion in second-language English students. Nikoljeva and Orlov (2000, 78) make a valid point that

language is an integral part of national identity. This is relevant because although all the stories that are being read are in English, not all the children in this study speak English as a first language, and so this could be an alienating factor. Arbuthnot and Sutherland (1972, 155) state that the language of fairy tales is part of their charm, thus suggesting that simplifying the language could detract from the enjoyment of the stories. A further research question could therefore be whether children who do not speak English as a first language are able to identify with the stories as well as first-language English speakers do, even if the characters are recognisable to them.

Bettelheim (1991) states that fairy tales these days are often "prettified and simplified" (24) so that they lose much of their deeper meaning and simply become entertainment. He says that the tales have either been summarised or extended, depending on what the writer thought was of greatest consequence at the time. If the suspense is drawn out for too long, it can destroy the story (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972, 154). Therefore the decision to simplify the language in the tales in order to cater for a Grade one audience may be a positive or a destructive influence and this researcher had to use her judgement as to what alterations seemed necessary.

Fairy tales can contain both heroic and dangerous animals, yet they are usually to one extreme, so that the characters are totally good or totally bad (Bettelheim, 1991, 74). Children may enjoy animal stories more because these characters are often embellished models of humans, which makes them funny (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972, 144 & 145). This humour could be a large part of their appeal. Georgiou (1969, 196) says that animals often portray human behaviour and that when children see their behaviour, it is almost like an outlet for them, as the animals' behaviour may be attractive to them. Also, Arbuthnot and Sutherland say that these stories are able to educate without sounding as didactic as some of the human tales (144 & 145). Canonici (1989, III) agrees and says that animal stories, "…are meant to educate through an easily remembered moral, and to stimulate close observation of nature." This suggests that they can be useful in their simplicity and impact. Bettelheim (1991, 45–47) says that because children under the age of twelve or thirteen still have animistic thinking (they think that inanimate objects, such as the sun and rivers, are alive and feel, as humans do, as they have a type of spirit in them), it is not far-fetched for them to believe that animals can behave and think as we

do. Talking-animal stories enable adults to distinguish the 'other' in what may be a more tangible form (Baker, 1993, 124).

Karl (1970, 12) says that because books shape a child's early listening and looking, illustrations or scenarios with which a child cannot identify, could be destructive or useless. Bettelheim (1991 59 & 60) also has a negative view of illustrations, as he shows that they detract from the imaginative process of being able to insert oneself into the story. He thinks that children need to be given ample time to digest a story, as if they are denied conversation or time to contemplate, the story may not be beneficial. This is why Bettelheim feels that illustrations do the children a disservice, as they deny the child the use of his/her imagination, as he/she is led in what to think. For example, asking people to describe a monster in a book would elicit creative and diverse images, yet if they are shown what to think, this opportunity for imagination will be lost. Others, such as Moore (1966, 195 & 196), state that good illustrations have their place in stories. Rudisill (1966, 208) found that 'real' pictures appeal to children more than unrealistic ones do. Hunt (1990, 132) suggests that in order for illustrations to be successful, they need to work in conjunction with the text, as pictures can say a lot about a character.

A common mistake in children's reading is that adults select the books for their children instead of allowing children to select books themselves. Bechtel, in *Books in Search of Children* (1969, 147 & 148) says that one should not be swayed by good marketing, but should focus rather on finding the right books for children. For this study, this suggests that just because a story, like a fairy tale, has been popular for a long time, does not guarantee that it is still the most suitable story to read to children. A point that Bechtel (1969, 152) stresses is that teachers need to be aware that children come from different story-telling backgrounds – some oral, some written, some none – and this will affect the responses to the stories. This, as well as other issues mentioned in this section, is an aspect that the study will be considering.

The approach in this research in general will be a contextual one, as the study is looking at the responses of individual children to the stories within a specific (contemporary South African) context with an awareness that factors such as prior story-telling experience and perceived racial and gender coding may affect these responses. There will, however, be no preconceived notions about these aspects, but only awareness that they

could be potential factors in the research. The methodology in a study such as this one also needs to be underpinned by theories about the reading of literature, which in this case, will be the Reader-Response and Reception theories.

2.4. Theories of Reading

Peter Hunt's *Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism* (1990) makes the point that children's literature can be a rather open field, as there are a number of ways of defining it and there is no criticism created specifically for it. In this book, Michael Benton, in discussing children's literature, subscribes to Reader-Response theory and says that reading is active, unique, creative and co-operative (115 & 116). This is the reading theory that has been chosen as suitable for this study because of its focus on responses to literature. The Reader-Response and Reception theories also highlight the fact that it is necessary to select books for children carefully, as each child has different needs that must be taken into consideration in order to maximise his/her development and enjoyment.

Therefore the theory of reading that will be used is a mix of the Reader-Response and Reception theories (the most suitable parts from each have been drawn on) and is suitable as a basis for the methodology because its focus is on responses to texts and it provides a number of concepts that are useful for this study. Among the leading theorists in these fields are Iser, Jauss, and Bleich, and their theories will be drawn on. Louise Rosenblatt (1978) in *Reading Against Racism* summarises these theories appropriately when she says, "…a text, once it leaves its author's hands, is simply paper and ink until a reader evokes from it a literary work" (2). This highlights a main theme in that the reader creates his/her own meaning from any text. These are theories of reading, and since the study focuses on how individual children react to stories that are being read to them, this is most apt.

The main tenet in Reader-Response and Reception theories is that the reader is at the centre of the reading process (Selden, 1985, 107). Selden says that the reader is an active participant in making meaning, and interpretations differ as readers select what they think is important. Generally, he says, the theorists in this area feel that meanings are not predetermined, but rather readers determine what the meaning will be (107 & 108). The

main questions in this theory are who makes this meaning and where it is made – we want to discover the authority in the text, meaning who is in charge of the abovementioned aspects (Bennett, 1995, 3). Reader-Response theory has helped people realise that readers are diverse and that one cannot place a single identity on them or arrive at identical meanings (4).

Wolfgang Iser was very popular in America and is a leading theorist in Reader-Response and Reception theories. Iser focuses on the reading process, rather than on the historical reception of texts. He feels that we are not looking for an objective meaning in the text, but rather focussing on the individual reading experience (Newton, 1990, 138). Literature only gains meaning when it is read, so we need to focus on the relationship between the text and reader (which creates the meaning) and how the reader responds (Iser, 2005, 1). He says that if texts only contained the meaning brought forward by a general reading, there would be little else for the reader to do. Literary texts are different from other texts as they are made of objects from the real world, even though there is no corresponding object in the real world to verify the readings. A text therefore falls between the world of real objects and the reader's own world of experience (Newton, 1988, 228). Iser states that texts do not have hidden meanings, and meanings do not change, as the text stays the same. The diversity of meanings comes from the text's varying interactions with its readers. Readers bring their norms and codes to the text, which influences their interpretations (Newton, 1990, 139). The reader therefore receives a message by composing it himself, and readers need basic structures (verbal and affective) that allow them to describe what meaning they take from the reading (Iser, 2005, 7). Iser's claim that readers will have differing responses to the texts, because of the norms and values they bring to the text, could support the view that children from different backgrounds and experiences will respond to the texts differently.

A major concept in Iser's theory is that of 'filling in the gaps'. He feels that people need to use their imaginations to fill in the inherent gaps in a text, but that these are important to the interpretation process (Newton, 1990, 219 & 220). The gaps seen in the text will depend on the stories a child has been exposed to. Children who are totally unfamiliar with these tales may have larger gaps to fill than those familiar with the genre, but according to this theory, these gaps will not be too large to be filled by the children. It is very possible, though, that they can use their imaginations to fill these in. These gaps are important for

the interpretation process, as they tell people when to be active, and they disappear once things have been linked together (Bennett, 1995, 24). Reading is dynamic and readers' norms and values can be called into question by gaps, which can lead to the formation of new viewpoints (Newton, 1990, 139). Although we have expectations from past readings, these are constantly modified. Characters themselves present a norm, which we are encouraged to question through the character's actions (Selden, 1985, 112 & 113). Gaps break up the connectability in the reader, so that the reader is blocked from familiar orientations, but cannot yet gain access to unfamiliar ones (Newton, 1990, 139 & 140). When a reader manages to bridge these gaps, communication begins and the work is actualised by the reader to become a "virtual" aesthetic work (Bennett, 1995, 20). Since each child is unique, their identification of gaps and responses may vary.

There are often gaps between the four perspectives of narrator, characters, plot and fictitious reader that need filling in (the reader's viewpoints intertwine with these) (Bennett, 1995, 25). The gaps between these viewpoints allow the story to be joined together, as when the reader fills in a gap, it opens up a referential field (26). The gap is then filled by a theme-and-background structure, meaning that the reader uses the basic information that he/she has to fill in what he/she is not understanding. Then the gap from the juxtaposed themes and backgrounds is occupied by the reader's standpoint, which creates an aesthetic object (26 & 27). The meaning comes from the four perspectives merging into a meeting point. The vantage point of the reader shifts, as new meanings need to be accommodated (Iser, 2005, 5). The text, however, guides the reader towards certain meanings (Iser, 2005, 5), so it will be interesting to see how individual children guide the process of deciding which parts are significant and what meanings they make. The text's structure sets off mental images that allow it to be translated in a reader's mind, but these interpretations will be coloured by a reader's own experiences, which are the referential background against which the unfamiliar can be studied (Iser, 2005, 5). Iser states, though, that repeated readings will reduce the gaps and so the excitement and challenge of reading will be lost (Newton, 1990, 140). We need to see what standpoint each child reaches, as he/she brings different experiences into a story and the story may relate better to one child than to another. Some children may not be able to switch vantage points, as they may not be able to assimilate new vantage points, because they may be too different from ones that they are used to (Newton, 1990, 139 & 140).

This is where this research comes in – if the children bring their backgrounds and experiences to the story, some may benefit more from the story than others, as it may relate to their experiences better than it relates to others'. Perhaps the shifting of vantage points will not happen for some children, as they will not be able to assimilate the new experiences into their existing ones, as they are too different.

Another leading theorist in the area is Hans Robert Jauss, and he tries to find a balance between ignoring history and reading the text in the present (he feels that reading needs some affiliation to the history of reading of that particular text) (Selden, 1985, 114). He is the most important theorist in German Reception theory. He says that the reception of a text is more important than its author. Therefore, aesthetics, which refers to how the reader interprets the text, is a significant component of how he/she will respond to the text, as depending on his/her personal interpretation, he/she will either enjoy it or not (Newton, 1990, 133). (This brings up the question that if aesthetics can affect the interpretation of a text, then possibly the formal qualities of a text, and its conception of beauty can affect it too.) Jauss feels that other theories have left out the dimensions of reception and influence of the reader's background on their responses, as they do not view the audience as important enough (Newton, 1988, 221). He talks about the 'horizon of expectations' that involves the criteria necessary for a reader to judge a text in any given period (discussed in the following paragraphs) (Selden, 1985, 114). He states that the difference in horizons in old and new works could be objectified historically, so that the discrepancies are due to the different time period in which a text was written (Newton, 1990, 135).

One tenet of Reception theory is that a literary work is not universal and static and so we can never come to a final meaning (Selden, 1985, 115). How we understand a work depends on the questions our cultural environment allows us to ask, which shows the historical influences on reception (115). But we also need to look at the questions that the original work was trying to ask. Jauss feels that a text cannot be confined to a particular time period, as it can evoke different responses at different times and these reactions keep the story alive (Newton, 1990, 133–135). Jauss suggests that the relationship between text and reader has aesthetic implications (the reader compares a text to previously read texts) and historical implications (the first reader's interpretation will be sustained and enriched from generation to generation) (Newton, 1988, 222). Readers read with expectations gained from other texts and books that do not fit their 'horizons of expectation' become

assimilated and fit in. This can bridge the gap between aesthetic and historical knowledge. In order to do this, modern readers need to recover and experience the original reception of the work and see why it may not have fitted into that era's horizon (Newton, 1990, 132).

Jauss's 'horizon of expectations' is particularly suitable for this study, as this will dictate how well a child understands a story, as he/she may or may not have been exposed to similar stories in the past. This idea is important here as these horizons come from past reading and experiences, so children that come from different storytelling backgrounds may have different 'horizons of expectation'. This could mean that some children may be ill-equipped to understand a story or to fit it into their pre-existing knowledge and expectations. If a child has not been exposed to a similar text before, he/she may not be able to place the story in a genre, which may cause him/her to be confused or not to respond to the story as favourably.

Another theorist, Bleich, says that there is no objective world of facts – knowledge is made by people, as the object being observed changes by the very act of its being observed (Selden, 1985, 123). Bleich looks at the reader from a psychological viewpoint (Bennett, 1995, 45 & 46). He states that literature needs an audience to be true, as it is symbolic and depends on a person to read and interpret it for its existence (Newton, 1988, 233). A child's development of language gives him/her subjective control over his/her experience. Studies in the classroom have shown that there is a difference between a reader's spontaneous response to a text and the meaning that he/she has attributed to it. The latter is objective, but comes from a subjective response (Selden, 1985, 124).

Bleich presents the case for affective responses to reading. He says that the interpretation of literature is the "…belated recreation and presentation of a primary emotional response, consisting of personal perceptions, affects and associations" (Bennett, 1995, 45). He therefore focuses on the affective responses (the way that people felt about and responded to texts), as he distrusts objectivity (45). He suggests that the initial response to a text is private and is what is important, as interpretation is communal, because it is affected by other influences such as previous knowledge and teachers (and advances in knowledge are determined by the demands of the community) (46). Grade ones, however, may still be relatively untainted by outside influences. Affective responses can extend to aspects such

as which parts of the story each child finds funny, scary or interesting, or which characters are his/her favourite. This will be a major focus during the interviews with the children.

Resistant reading is linked to Fetterley's feminist assumption that because texts are made for males, females are forced to identify against themselves when reading, as they must remain sexually female, but intellectually male (Bennett, 1995, 48). By reading in a resistant manner, one could create new interpretations that are necessary to alter society and consciousness (49). This situation is probably relevant in terms of race too. This means that because stories may be written for a particular audience, they may not be universal. This means that readers for whom they were not written must also identify against themselves in order to gain any meaning from the texts. A thought-provoking argument against sexism can also be extended to racism in the classroom. Labuschagne (1996, 138) says that because children are raised to fit into a system, the books they read are often geared towards fitting them into this system. But the dialogue and stereotypes can convey negative images. We therefore need to be very aware of these intricacies that could affect each child's reception of the stories. Also, Paul (1990, 149–151) says that women and children are forced to use subversive measures to be noticed, as they are marginal in texts as well as in real life. It is therefore necessary to keep in mind that children may be reading against themselves, but also to take notice whether or not this is reflected in their responses.

Terms such as 'filling in the gaps', 'horizon of expectations', 'affective responses' and 'resistant reading', are all significant to this research and will be the elements from this theory that will help to structure the types of activities and questions that will be asked in the questionnaires. It will be possible to see whether the children's 'horizons of expectation' that they bring to the text allow them to comprehend the story, even if it is new to them, so that they can assimilate it into their existing ideas. These questions will mostly be answered in the section about the background information of the children (see Pages 55–62), as this will yield information on what they have been read in the past. It will be established whether the child can fill the gaps in the text, or whether the gaps are too big to be bridged. This will also depend on whether the story genres are familiar to the children and whether they are able to understand the stories by using their own understanding and initiative. Lastly, we can see whether a resistant reading has taken place. We can establish this by seeing if the child has been forced to identify against him- or herself because he/she

could not find anything familiar with which to identify in the story. This is seen, for example, when the child is asked to draw pictures of how he/she imagines the characters in the stories. Thus by selecting a few key terms, the theory can be used effectively.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This research is an empirical investigation of ten children's responses to Grimm's fairy tales and African folk tales in the Grade one classroom. Three Grimm Brother's tales were chosen in order to focus on threshold experiences that the characters endure, including stories where the family dynamics cause the protagonist/s to venture out alone. The intention was to find out the children's reactions to the characters' experiences. In *King Grisly-Beard*, a Grimm tale, King Grisly-Beard tricks the princess into believing he is a beggar and a soldier, which acts as a catalyst for much of the action. Three African folk tales that contain threshold experiences were also read. Here, the threshold experiences often involve different types of trickery, such as the rock rabbit in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way* who tries to trick the other characters into fetching his tail for him because he is lazy. Another example is the old lady who tricks herself and her family about drinking sour milk in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*. By reading both types of tales, it was hoped that a picture of the children's responses to the texts would emerge. The children's responses to the stories, particularly with regard to different aspects of Reader-Response and Reception theories, were assessed. Their enjoyment of the stories was also a focus. It was hoped that this would show whether the stories appealed to each of these contemporary children and in what ways, and that it would aid the formulation of a hypothesis about responses to these tales in the final analysis.

The children were not shown the illustrations in the stories, in order to avoid the illustrations coding the stories for race or culture too overtly. Although these illustrations may have enhanced the children's enjoyment, it was thought that they could also restrict their imaginative capabilities.

The methods that were used fall under the heading of qualitative research, which is, "...an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (Merriam, 1998, 5). The data obtained is different from quantitative data, as it is expressed in words rather than in numbers. Qualitative research is used to identify patterns or important aspects of an area of interest, but findings are explained via interpretation rather than statistics, meaning that there are no standardised ways of measuring results. This is

because quantitative data explains parts, while qualitative data explains how the whole works together (Merriam, 1998, 6). Qualitative research therefore attempts to build hypotheses or theories, rather than going into the study with preconceived ideas and this is what this study was aiming for (Merriam, 1998, 7). This research involves personal interpretation and evaluation, which makes it qualitative research. Qualitative research also often involves fieldwork (Merriam, 1998, 7). This study fits this criterion, as it conducts interviews, makes observations and collects raw data. This research is an idiographic, basic qualitative study, as the focus is on a few subjects, in order to get in-depth data, which was more useful than a nomothetic study that uses more subjects, but only collects very basic information (Merriam, 1998, 11 & 13). An interview format was used and information was gathered from the six interviews with each child (and one from each set of parents/guardians), in order to gather comprehensive information about the responses of these ten subjects to the stories.

The researcher was concerned that the children should feel comfortable in the interview situation and this included feeling relaxed with the interviewer. It could have been an influencing factor that the researcher was white, as the black children, who may have felt alienated from her, may have responded differently. But as most of the teachers at this school are white, the children were fairly familiar with having a white female in charge of their education. It was hoped that this would not cause any problems in the process, as the children should not have viewed the researcher as any more foreign than their everyday teachers.

The researcher visited the aftercare classroom a few times before the main study began, in order to carry out the pilot study. This may have made the subjects feel more comfortable, as they may have recognised her. The environment was as unthreatening as possible in the hope that the children's responses would be encouraged to be natural and spontaneous. Any papers on the floor were removed and the chairs were placed at the other end of the classroom from the interest table, which often held displays of animals or dinosaurs and could potentially distract the children if they were too near to it. As the weeks progressed, most children became more comfortable with the researcher and with the process, which was reflected in their responses.

3.1 Subjects

Information was gathered by means of six individual interviews with each of the ten Grade one children involved in the study. Although the total sample size of ten may seem small, the research was rather intended as a preliminary study with a focus on obtaining in-depth answers. The research was therefore exploratory and was not an attempt to test hypotheses, but rather to construct some. Because the intention was not to make vast generalisations, this sample size was sufficient to obtain answers to consider further. Each child had an individual interview once a week and all were asked almost the same questions, although there was some room for improvisation. The subjects were a combination of black and white children of mixed genders from one public school, Willowtree Primary School. Because the sample size is small and only traditionally 'white' stories (Grimm's fairy tales) and traditionally 'black' stories (African Zulu folk tales) were used, the subjects were drawn from only these two cultural groups for whom the stories were originally intended. Using only one public school simplified the investigation, while still ensuring a diversity of children from different backgrounds, as this school draws children from middle-class suburbs, as well as from townships. Therefore, the children came from diverse homes and previous schooling backgrounds.

The teacher in charge of the aftercare programme was informed that the study required a mix of children, both male and female, who all attended aftercare at the school in the afternoons. The children were chosen randomly by her, as the researcher had no prior knowledge of the children. The advantage of this selection was that the children were all already at school, as they mostly attended the aftercare programme daily, so the parents were not inconvenienced and classes were not interrupted. There was a fair range of children in this setting, as some children stay in aftercare because their parents work long hours and can only fetch them late, while other children do not enjoy going home to an empty house, so they stay there out of choice.

The group consisted of three white boys, three black boys, two black girls, one white girl, and one girl who has one white and one Indian parent. The children live in a range of middle-class and working-class suburbs, some newly integrated, while others remain largely unintegrated. These suburbs include Paulshof, Lonehill, Kempton Park (all middle-class

suburbs), Lombardy East, Linbro Park, Alexandra (all generally lower-income areas), and Midrand (ranges from townships to suburbs). Home languages also varied. Four of the children (all white) speak English at home, one speaks Afrikaans (white girl), one black boy speaks Zulu, two black boys speak Sotho (one mixes it with English), one black boy speaks Tsonga and one black girl speaks both Venda and Tswana. It therefore seems that although this group was not an exhaustive representation of South African children, it represented a diverse range that could yield some interesting data.

Some of the children do not speak English as a first language, but assurance was given by the teacher that all the children had a good understanding of English, as this is the medium of instruction at the school. Therefore this did not present a barrier to the children's understanding of the stories. A collection of tales was used where the language was easily comprehensible to the children, or where words in difficult stories were simplified for easy understanding (only difficult words, not ideas, were altered). School readiness and proficiency in English were both factors that could have affected the children's responses to the stories. Children from poorer homes who had not attended pre-primary school, could have been less school-ready and it was anticipated that they might possibly have had more trouble understanding the stories, especially ones foreign to them, and this was taken into account. (Ultimately, though, this did not seem to be a factor, as most of the subjects seemed to have attended at least one year of pre-primary or nursery school).

Information was gathered about the children's reading backgrounds, by asking their guardians and the children themselves questions. They were asked things such as what stories they had been read in the past, who read to them and whether they had ever been read fairy and folk tales. This information was gathered to ascertain whether children who had not been exposed to fairy and folk tales before would have problems adapting to the tales. If they had read fairy and folk tales before, this could have affected how they envisaged the characters, grasped the structure and understood the conventions. It also seemed possible to try to establish if the same applied to children that come from mixed oral and fairy and folk tale backgrounds. One child in particular, Munyadi, was told traditional African stories as well as read fairy tales and sung to, so her responses were carefully tracked.

As a first step, the parents were consulted about the children's reading histories, as they could give more comprehensive details that date further back than what the children would probably remember. This could yield information on an important aspect of Reader-Response and Reception theories, 'horizon of expectations', by helping to establish what the children would be expecting (see 'horizon of expectations' questions within the interviews in Appendices B, D, F, H, J and L). It was expected that the parents would be able to give accurate information about what stories the children had been read, if they had been read to at all in their early years, how frequently they are/had been read to and if they had been told oral stories. They would also be able to give information about what television the children watched, which could also affect the way that they interpret the stories, as they may have been exposed to similar stories or specific genres of stories on the television. This information was collected from parents and then cross referenced with the information that the children gave.

Cole is a white boy from Paulshof, Sandton. At the time of the study he was seven years old. Although he comes from an Afrikaans home, his parents speak to him in English. He became easily bored during the sessions and often seemed to want to leave, yet he was very interested in the logistics of the stories, such as how the pig in *Maqinase* escaped from the dog and how the puppets for the role plays were constructed. He was generally very inquisitive. His mother said that he enjoyed being read to about once a week, but liked to choose the book himself. She also said that he decided what stories he wanted to be made up for him, but that he liked superhero stories, stories about pirates, the school readers (where he sympathised with the pig), the planets and the supernatural. But he questioned these things, such as the existence of Father Christmas, which links up with his inquisitive nature that was observed. His mother thought that he would feel that fairy tales are for girls and that he may get bored, although she said that he was intrigued with scientific details, such as how *Rapunzel's* hair could grow so fast and if it did not hurt to have people climb it. She said that he had never heard African tales, but that he was encouraged to look at books from a young age and loved pictures. His mother said that he loved funny programmes on television, most of which are for adults, such as *Mr Bean*. He also liked cartoons, but was very aware that they are not real, as with fantasy stories, with which he was familiar.

Jarred was six years old during the interviews. He is a white boy from Linbro Park and speaks English at home. His parents had recently divorced and his family life seemed a bit

disorganised at this time. He comes from a very religious upbringing that is very restricted, so that he was only allowed to read non-fiction at home and he was not allowed to watch any television. It was therefore difficult to elicit information from his mother, as she did not approve of fantasy and tried to keep him away from magic, telling him that stories such as *Puss in Boots* are not for "them". She agreed to let him take part in the study because the stories would not be coming from her and she felt that he was aware of his roots. She said that she did not allow him to watch any television, as she viewed many of the programmes as "demonic", although he did watch some cartoons when he was little, as his mother could monitor them. Yet Jarred seemed to thrive in these sessions, possibly because it was all new to him. His mother said that she did not really read to him although he often asked her to, as she was too busy, but that he loved stories and was sometimes read to by other family members. His mother said that she made up stories about anything, such as houses and flowers, but he preferred being read to. She said that he had been read to since birth and generally enjoyed books such as *Going to the Park,* where there are activities and questions. She added that he liked books about cars and mechanical things, as well as about nature and other non-fiction that he was allowed to read. Fairy tales were not allowed in the home and although his mother felt that exposure to other cultures was a positive thing, she thought that he would not enjoy African tales.

Lance is a white, English-speaking boy, who was seven years old at this time. He lived in Kempton Park. He was deeply interested and involved throughout the process, although he was very shy and sometimes hesitant to answer questions that he was unsure of. His mother was very interested in the study, as she is involved in education. She said that she read to him often if she had time and his family bought him many books. She said that he loved looking at books, even in the car, and enjoyed listening to tapes of books. She added that he often asked her to read to him. He only wanted his younger brother to make up stories for him, or else he made up stories for his brother. She said that she sang to him from a young age and he was also told stories with the appropriate voices, so he had been exposed to variety and creativity. When he was younger, she said, he enjoyed fairy tales and nursery rhymes best, while at the time of the study he liked stories about dragons and dinosaurs. Although he had been exposed to many fairy tales, his mother said that she had not read him any African tales, except that he had an African game. Although he used to watch wrestling and cartoons on television, his mother stopped this because of its violence – at this stage he only watched two hours on the weekends, often *National Geographic* programmes that

discuss dinosaurs and animals. His mother said that she explained programmes if she could see that he needed an explanation and she believed in being open with the children.

John was seven years old at the time of the interviews and is a black boy from Midrand. His home language is Sotho (mixed with a bit of English). He always chose to sit on the teacher's chair, which seemed to be part of the fun for him. He was sometimes shy, but generally co-operative and he seemed to enjoy the sessions. His mother said that they read his school books at home and that he liked being read to, and he often asked to be read to. She said that John often made up stories about places he goes on the weekends. He only started being read to in Grade one, so his mother was not sure what his favourites were before, as the only stories that he heard were at nursery school. She also had not noticed a trend in books that he liked from school. She said that he had therefore never been exposed to either fairy tales nor African tales at home. She said that he watched a variety of programmes on television, such as *Generations* and wrestling, and even knew the schedule. He often told his mother what a programme was about.

Kabelo speaks Tsonga at home in Alexandra township and is a black boy. He was seven at the time and was a talkative and extremely participative member of the study. Although he sometimes misunderstood stories and questions, he participated enthusiastically throughout, often making up his own stories that were often initiated by what he heard in the stories being read to him. His mother said that she read his readers and library books with him and said that he loved reading, often reading more than necessary. This is important if we look at his later difficulty concentrating, as well as in answering questions. She said that she often explained the stories as they read, but she did not make up stories. Although she said that he often asked to be read to, his mother only started reading to him the year before, from the books he received from nursery school. She said that he still liked animal stories, as he did in the past and that although she had read him fairy tales, such as *Cinderella*, she had never read him any African tales. Although she said that Kabelo preferred reading to television, he did watch cartoons and sitcoms on television and they often discussed the more adult sitcoms.

Tumelo is a black from Midrand and speaks South Sotho at home. He too was seven years old at this time. He is an extremely creative and talkative child whose answers were accurate and who continued to be enthusiastic throughout the process. He constantly told stories or

elaborated on what was discussed, thus showing a deep understanding of the stories told to him. His sister said that she read to him occasionally and he liked being read to. He often asked her to read to him and could usually answer questions about them too. She said that he made up his own stories, often about lions or about dogs, presumably because at that time he had two dogs named after characters in *The Lion King*. Therefore she said that his favourite stories in the past were animal tales and that they still were. She said that he only started to have stories read to him in Grade one, as he used to live with his grandmother who cannot read, although she did tell him stories. His sister stated that he loved television and watched cartoons, as well as certain programmes that he knew he was not supposed to watch. She said that he liked *The Lion King* the best, but also enjoyed watching the tape of his nursery school graduation. She added that most of their conversation around television involved censorship of what he could watch, such as *Generations*, which seemed to be a contentious issue.

Yolande is a white, Afrikaans-speaking girl who lives in Midrand. She was seven years old during the interviews. She remained enthralled and eager throughout the process and had a good understanding of how stories work, often responding with facial expressions. Her mother said that she loved being read to, although she was not read to at regular intervals. She said that Yolande did not have many stories read to her when she was younger, although at the time of the interviews she liked "girly" stories about fairies and princesses. Yolande's mother said that she had read her fairy tales and African tales, although she seemed to prefer the fairy tales. She said that Yolande often made up stories about a variety of topics, especially in the bath. She apparently went through stages of television-watching when she was younger, and at the time of the study watched cartoons about fairies and princesses. She usually only asked questions relating to other programmes, such as the news.

Kelly is a girl of mixed race (white and Indian), who lived in Lonehill. Her home language is English and she was six years old at this time. Although only white and black children were requested for the study, Kelly had already been given a form by the teacher and it was impossible to replace her at that point. But her mixed race did not seem to create any real problems or differences in terms of her reactions. Although initially she was very excited to begin the interviews, it seemed that her enthusiasm wore off during the course of the interviews and she became uninterested at times. Her father said that she enjoyed being read

to and that they read her library books to her, but that at that time she did not seem to want to hear stories. Although he said that she used to ask to have stories made up for her and to be read to when she was younger, she did not do so anymore. He said that she was read mini storybooks from a young age and she loved nursery rhymes and fairy tales best, but at the time she enjoyed most books. Her parents had never read her any African tales at home. Her father said that she mostly watched cartoons on television, but also watched soap operas with her parents. She understood the content and therefore did not discuss the viewing with them.

Neliswe is a black girl from Lombardy East. She was seven years old during the interviews and speaks Zulu at home. In the study she was shy and withdrawn and often complained of a sore eye. She seemed to enjoy the personal attention, but was often reluctant to answer questions. Her father was involved in the Department of Education and was therefore very interested in the study and his child's exposure to these stories. He said that she loved being read to by him and his wife at least twice a week and that they also told her traditional Zulu stories and stories about the past, as she loved to learn about history. He said that they had read her fairy tales too. He felt that education was important and that even if he and his wife were tired at night, they read to her, so that she did not get the impression that reading is a bad thing (This demonstrates Bettelheim & Zelan's [1982, 45] claim that a parent's negative attitude towards reading can instil this perception in a child). He said that she loved reading everything, even grocery labels. She was only sent to nursery school the year before Grade one, so that she could get a good grounding in Zulu, before learning English. He said that she liked her school readers and also books about superheroes and people who help in the community. He claimed that she loved to read and since their television was stolen, she could not watch television. She used to watch weekend cartoons, but this was discouraged. Her father said that they used to talk about why she liked a programme and what it was about.

Munyadi was six years old at the time and is a black girl from Lombardy East. She speaks Venda to her father and Tswana to her mother. She is very intelligent, but extremely shy and so she was rather hesitant to answer questions and participate for much of the interviewing process. Although her mother said that she enjoyed being read stories, she was not really read to at home. Her mother apparently used to tell her a Tswana story called *Filani*, about a mother who calls her daughter each day. An animal who hears this calling swallows a hot

stove to get the same voice as the mother and tricks the child into opening the door. He then takes her away. It was worth taking note that she only told the story up to this point, as there is no resolution. Yet although Bettelheim (1991, 10 & 11) states that this could be detrimental to the child, it is characteristic of African stories and so may have been acceptable to Munyadi's learned story schema. Her mother said that she also sang African songs to Munyadi, but only read fairy tales from books that she brought home from school. She said that Munyadi loved to make up her own stories and they often ended with her saying that she was only joking. Her mother said that Munyadi was frequently read to from the age of two to five and she used to like the stories with animal sounds, although her mother was unsure what her favourites were at this time. She added that Munyadi enjoyed watching cartoons (*Popeye*), *Mr Bean* and educational programmes that teach people about caring, although she did not really talk about what she watched.

3.2 Stories Used

3.2.1 Stories Used in the Final Study

The stories in the main study included three Grimm tales and three Zulu tales. The copies of these stories have been included in Appendices A, C, E, G, I and K. Certain alterations to the vocabulary were made in order to make the stories accessible for the subjects. The initial intention was to swap between the Grimm and African tales, reading them on alternate weeks, so that the children were exposed to the stories at equal intervals in order to have sufficient time to appreciate them. But in practice, they were read in this order: *The Fox and the Horse* (Grimm), *The Mother-in-Law and the Sour Milk* (African), *Jorinda and Jorindel* (Grimm), *Maqinase* (African), *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way* (African) and then *King Grisly-Beard* (Grimm). It was necessary to read two African stories in a row so that the activities were not repeated, as *Maqinase* and *King Grisly-Beard* both used puppets as their activities (see Pages 71–73 for details about the activities). There was also more than a two-week break between these, as there was a week's interval after every two sessions.

The Fox and the Horse (Grimm, Priory Books, Undated) was the first Grimm tale to be read, as it is the shortest and seemed to be the most appropriate story to ease the children into the process. This story seems more like an African tale in its structure, as it involves the

trickery of the horse and the fox who cheat the lion, and it is an animal story too, which is traditionally more of an African tale feature. In *Jorinda and Jorindel* (Grimm, Priory Books, Undated), we are given the common fairy tale threshold of children getting lost and being forced to fend for themselves against an enemy, in this case an evil fairy, who captures the girls and turns them into birds. In *King Grisly-Beard* (Grimm, Priory Books, Undated), the threshold involves the father forcing his princess daughter into an unwanted marriage, where she suffers, but eventually achieves a typical "happily ever after" ending.

The Zulu stories included *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk* (Canonici, 1986, 182–186), which involves lying as well as being set an almost impossible task. Here an old lady is caught drinking sour milk, which she is forbidden to do, and is sent to find water from a river without frogs. (The researcher consulted a lecturer in the African Languages Department in order to attain accurate translations for the Zulu words that were interspersed in this story.) The next story was *Maqinase* (Canonici, 1986, 14–18), which portrays incidents of a child's' rudeness and the resulting repercussions. *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way* (Canonici, 1986, 6–12) contains trickery and punishment. It seems that these stories are more focussed on setting moral examples than are the fairy tales.

3.2.2 Thresholds in the Stories

It is a noteworthy fact that almost every Grimm Brothers' fairy tale contains a threshold experience – the characters enter a new environment or cross a boundary that shifts their current life experience. An example of this could be the challenge that the character has to face, for example, in *The Twelve Brothers* (a story used in the pilot study) when the brothers are forced to leave home and fend for themselves. Thresholds in stories can be divided into three basic categories – when the characters are forcibly moved to a foreign setting where they must fight for their survival and thus triumph over their circumstances (*The Twelve Brothers* and *King Grisly-Beard*); where the child decides independently to embark on an adventure (*Tom Thumb, Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Brave Little Tailor*); and those where external characters (such as a parent) effect the change (*The Frog Prince, The Golden Goose* and *The Three Old Maids*). The intention was to use stories from the first and third categories, as these are the most prevalent types of thresholds and the challenges are more obvious, although other noticeable thresholds in the stories were also focussed on. Also,

Maqinase is a story about a child who freely embarks on his own travels. A story that involves characters who are forcefully removed is *Jorinda and Jorindel*. Stories where the characters are displaced by others include *The Fox and the Horse, King Grisly-Beard* and *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk. Maqinase* is an example of a story where the character embarks on his adventure of his own free will. Questions and tasks for each story focussed on these threshold experiences in order to restrict the study to only a few areas of these tales, as it would otherwise be too wide. There is an extensive discussion of thresholds in the Literature Review on Pages 31–34.

A very important finding, discussed on Page 31, is that although the term 'thresholds' was initially considered of paramount importance to the study, as these are the most exciting parts of the stories, it emerged in the study that there were other foci that were of similar significance. These threshold points are however important and must still be evaluated in detail, due to their initial emphasis in the study.

The research focuses on how the children responded to these threshold experiences in the stories. Threshold experiences can be defined as challenges or obstacles that the protagonists must overcome, as well as the morals and values the children recognise and identify with in response to these situations. This could show whether individual children could recognise and appreciate the different elements of the stories and could highlight how each child responded to them.

There is not much information available about thresholds in the African folk tales, however the trickery involved often acts as such a threshold. This can be seen as the climax or challenge, as a character is often deceived by this trickery and his/her survival often depends on his/her discovery of the truth and fixing the situation. This can be seen in one of the stories used, *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, where the other animals are initially fooled by the rock rabbit's deception, but seem to realise that he has been lying and punish him by not bringing him his tail. Yet the main threshold in *Maqinase* is when Maqinase leaves home without permission, which seems to be similar to the thresholds prevalent in the Grimm's tales. This is one of the reasons that this story was chosen for the study, as it seems to bridge the two genres of stories. In *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, the old lady deceives her family by lying about not drinking the sour milk and there are thresholds other than lying that occur later in the story. These include her being sent away to find water

from a river without frogs. This is a threshold reminiscent of those in Grimm's tales where a task needs to be completed in order for the character to be redeemed. The thresholds in the African stories may not be as well-documented, but they are easily recognisable according to the chosen definition of thresholds.

3.3 Methods of Data Collection

3.3.1 Interviews

This study made use of semi-structured interviews because they are a good means of collecting qualitative data (Merriam, 1998, 74). Semi-structured interviews consist of some structured and some unstructured questions, or questions with flexible wording. This allows for the subjects to express themselves more freely and also permits the interviewer to be spontaneous by adapting her questions according to the way that a subject responds (Merriam, 1998, 74). This method left enough room for re-ordering and comparison by conducting the same interviews with different children, but also allowed the individual children to express themselves openly. In the interviews, it was necessary, but not always possible, to avoid multiple questions (such as questions with more than one part, as they would be confusing, especially for children), leading questions (encouraging the respondent to answer in a certain way) and yes-no questions (as they hardly give any information) (Merriam, 1998, 75 & 76). The interviews were constructed with these guidelines in mind, in order to yield the most useful information. The interviewer planned to use probes quite spontaneously in order to get information that she felt was available at that point (Merriam, 1998, 78). An interview guide was used and contained a list of questions and probes (Merriam, 1998, 81–83) (see examples of questions during the reading in Appendices A, C, E, G, I and K and after in Appendices B, D, F, H, J and L). The researcher used a tape recorder, as this ensured that the children had the interviewer's full attention, and no conversation was lost (although it was necessary to later make notes on non-verbal action).

3.3.2 Interview Guide/Questionnaire

According to Meriam (1998, 76–79) there are four types of questions – hypothetical questions ('What if' questions – were to be used when the children were asked to use their

imaginations); interpretive questions (the respondent needed to interpret and react – this was useful in eliciting understanding and responses to questions); devil's advocate questions (would challenge the interviewee to look at contrasting views – these would be useful, for example when asking why the princess does not save the prince rather than vice-versa); and ideal position questions (which create fictional, idyllic situations from the text and pose them as questions, such as asking what the ideal outcome of a scenario, such as Jorinda's capture, should be; this was usually tested by asking subjects how they would like a story to end).

Questions were generally divided up into sections including 'questions during the reading', 'understanding questions', 'affective questions', 'filling in the gaps' and 'resistant questions'. The first section of questions after the reading included those testing understanding of the story. This was quite a straightforward section, as the purpose was to test how well the children understood the stories in the sense that they could follow the plot and understand the characters' actions and motives. These questions laid the foundations for the Reader-Response-based questions by testing the comprehension of the stories. A lack of understanding would undoubtedly affect the answering of questions that followed. There were mostly 'who', 'what' and 'why' questions in this section, as well as questions asking very basically what the story was about. These included questions such as who the different characters are in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, what Jorindel uses to break the spell or why the witch cannot come near Jorindel in *Jorinda and Jorindel*. In *the Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, the subjects were asked to retell the story as they remembered it. This showed which parts they deemed important or exciting and also their reactions to this question (such as that the story was too long to retell in *King Grisly-Beard*) also revealed their feelings towards the stories. These questions would simply provide an overall view of the reception of the stories. But it was necessary to approach these indirectly and in different ways, as varying levels of cognitive understanding are involved. For example, questions involving morals in the story are more advanced than those testing simple facts. Other questions asked in this category tested whether children understood certain words in the stories, such as "stable" in *The Fox and the Horse* or "hoe" and certain Zulu words in *The Mother-in-Law and the Sour Milk*. This would show the vocabulary with which the subjects are familiar and would ensure that they understood the story clearly. The children were also asked whether or not they liked the stories, as well as which parts they liked the best, to see what they saw as the focus or highlight of the stories. (Examples of these questions to test

understanding can be seen in the questionnaires in Appendices B, D, F, H, J and L). The understanding section therefore yielded specific information about the facts of the stories.

'Affective' responses involve whether or not the children enjoyed the story, which part they found best or worst, which characters they liked and disliked, and how they responded to the characters and situations in general. There were also questions about how they felt about the experiences in the stories. A frequently asked question was who their favourite character was, as this could have revealed what traits they valued or admired in the characters. Many questions dealt with feelings and the children's opinions about morals, such as how they thought Maqinase's mother felt when she saw that Maqinase was missing, or whether the children felt sorry for certain characters or could identify with their feelings. Examples in *King Grisly-Beard* included whether they felt sorry for the princess when she is sent away or whether it is right for King Grisly-Beard to pretend to be other people. In *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, they were asked if they had any sympathy with the rock rabbit for not getting his tail. They were also questioned on whether they were scared or excited by the adventures that the characters would undertake and which character they would like to be. In addition, the children were asked whether they found the story interesting or if they would recommend it to other children. (Affective questions can be seen in the 'Affective Questions' sections in Appendices B, D, F, H, J and L). Non-verbal reactions to the stories, such as gasping, laughing or surprised eyes were also carefully noted in this section. Their responses may therefore have yielded information about their predictive abilities.

There are different aspects of understanding and response, suggested by the Reader-Response and Reception theories, that were assessed through the activities and questions created around the stories. 'Horizons of expectation' was tested by looking at whether the children could predict the development of the stories, either from knowledge of story conventions, previous exposure to similar stories or from their ability to read clues (although it would probably not be possible to know which of these factors to attribute this to). The subjects were also asked questions during the reading (see within the stories in Appendices A, C, E, G, I and K). These included questions about what the children thought would happen next, such as what would occur after the horse is kicked out by the farmer in *The Fox and the Horse* or what would happen after the old lady is caught drinking the milk in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*. These kinds of questions would link to the 'horizons of expectation', as described in Reader-Response theory, as they would show

what children usually expect to happen in stories, which could possibly be affected by previous stories that they had heard or had even seen on television.

A significant finding was that the Grimm's tales and the African tales had many similarities. For example they had similar 'horizons of expectation', such as that they elicited analogous predictions in terms of what would happen next in the story and what the children expected from the stories. Just as fairy tales begin, 'Once upon a time', so Zulu African tales begin with the Zulu equivalent, "Kwesukesukela/Kwasuka" (Canonici, 1989, II). This suggests that when children from either story background hear these words, they may expect a certain type of story and are therefore able to predict quite accurately how the story will develop.

Prediction was tested around the thresholds by seeing what the children expected to happen after a character was disobedient or was sent away, as their responses may have been taken from their previous knowledge of other stories. The endings of the stories, however, differ slightly, as whereas fairy tales usually end with "And so they lived happily ever after" (Bettelheim, 1991, 10), many Zulu tales end, "And so, little by little, it is finished, or come to its end" (Canonici, 1989, II). The Zulu stories in this study do not end with this exact phrasing, but the overt reassurance that all the characters will be happy is usually lacking. It could be that it is enough for children to understand the sense of resolution or completion and for them to enjoy the different stories. A main difference with the Zulu stories is that they are much more participative, such as during the telling, the audience will coax the story along by saying things such as, "Little by little", and will thank or compliment the storyteller at the end (Canonici, 1989, II). Children who are used to this format may feel that the Western stories are not as much fun if there is no interaction during the stories. But the activities included in the sessions and the continuous questioning may have compensated for this. Since all of these subjects had previous exposure to Western stories, they may not have noticed a discrepancy in the storytelling.

Canonici (1989, II) goes on to say that just like fairy tales, the Zulu stories must contain suspense and conflict (in fact, these are the main ingredients of African tales) – at the beginning, we meet the main characters and there is peace, but we are shown that something will disturb this harmony. He says that something then causes the conflict to emerge and attempts are made to remedy it. This is where the climax arises. Finally, he

says, the situation is resolved, evil is punished and good is rewarded. It seems that although these types of stories are different to fairy tales, there are many similarities, as fairy tales also contain a build up, a climax and a resolution, and the best way to test knowledge of story conventions and structure was to allow the children to predict what would happen next. This was even done in relation to the title, by questioning what they thought the story would be about. It was also possible to evaluate these aspects through the children's spontaneous reactions, as some reacted to the stories without being prompted. This was evident in responses such as when the title of the story was mentioned and it was met with an "Ooh!" or "Huh?". Also, there were often spontaneous questions asked by the children, such as those in *King Grisly-Beard*, that are discussed later in the findings section (Page 104 & 105).

'Filling in the gaps' is a feature of Reader-Response theory that has special significance here, as it was speculated that there would be readers from different backgrounds, who might locate different gaps in the stories and fill them in, depending on what stories and conventions they are used to (those being fiction, non-fiction or oral traditions, as well as other influences, such as television, movies and religion). They would also show whether or not the children noticed that there was information missing in the stories and if they were able to fill it in themselves. It seemed implausible that there would be no gaps in the stories, as not all information is blatantly stated in them. An example of a gap would be in the plot of *The Twelve Brothers* – we are told that the brothers go and live in the forest, but we are not told where they get a cottage and how they manage to look after themselves. Similarly, we do not know how their young sister is allowed out of her house to find them, and how she finds them at all. These types of gaps could be filled in by the imagination, or they might not even be perceived as gaps by the children.

Questions of fiction and reality were dealt with, such as why the animals could talk in stories such as *The Fox and the Horse*. Other questions in this story included how they thought a horse could tie down a lion, as this did not seem to follow the laws of logic. It seemed interesting to see whether or not the children could validate this. Another important area that was focussed on here was endings. The children were asked what they thought would happen after the official endings of the stories, as this could reveal what endings they were used to from other stories or even how they would have liked stories to end, thus showing the gap between the actual stories and ones that may be desired. This would link to

the ‘horizon of expectations’ section, as the children would once again be revealing what they wanted or expected to happen. Because different children would probably perceive different gaps, questions such as, “What part of the story did you find confusing?”, or “What happened when…?” showed where these gaps were and whether they could be surmounted. (Examples of questions focussing on these gaps can be seen in Appendices B, D, F, H, J and L).

The Reader-Response theory also identifies ‘resistant reading’, which occurs when readers are forced to identify against themselves because the texts are not constructed for them. Illustrations by the children after the stories were seen as one way of possibly identifying resistance in a reader, and other activities included selecting pictures that they thought were suitable representations of the characters in the stories. The children were not shown the illustrations in the books, but were rather asked to draw scenes or characters from the stories in order to establish how they would imagine the characters and whether their own race or gender would influence the race or gender of the characters. By looking at whether the children imagined the characters as similar to themselves or more like the ones they usually see in fairy tale or African folk tale books, it would be possible to see if a resistant reading had taken place. Drawing was used as the task in the first story, *The Fox and the Horse*, but the later stories used role plays and felt boards, as these seemed to elicit more useful information.

Each activity was structured around the threshold experiences in the story being read. At first, it was thought that activities such as giving the children paper dolls of different races and genders and asking them to act out the story with the dolls that they had chosen, would be useful. But during the process of finding such dolls, it became apparent that they were stereotypically white or black and this may have affected the children’s choices, as the dolls belonged stringently to one group. Therefore, homemade puppets made of cardboard were used instead, as these were made in a variety of different colours so as not to impose the researcher’s imagined ideas about the race of the characters on the subjects. These puppets were made of various colours, including blue, pink, yellow, orange and green, but purposely not black and white, as it was thought that their choices could then be based on the children’s stereotypes. ‘Resistant reading’ was tested in a number of different ways, but tasks and questions that were perceived to work better were repeated. Some questions centred around gender, such as asking why boys are always the saviours. An example of

this was in *Jorinda and Jorindel*, where it was asked whether girls could also be heroes, since in this story, only Jorindel, the boy, is portrayed as the saviour. This showed if the children resisted certain gender stereotypes. They were also asked if they could identify with the characters' traits or if they knew others that could, such as if they or others they knew were lazy like the rock rabbit in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*. Morals were also tested here, such as what they thought the story was trying to teach in, for example, *King Grisly-Beard*. Thus the tasks and activities were used as the main platform from which to investigate the resistant reading. (Examples of these activities can be seen in the 'resistant reading' sections of Appendices B, D, F, H, J and L.)

3.3.3 Activities

Bettelheim (1991, 59) says,

> …when the storyteller gives the children ample time to reflect on the story, to immerse themselves in the atmosphere that hearing it creates in them, and when they are encouraged to talk about it, then later conversation reveals that the story offers a great deal emotionally and intellectually…

By conducting the activities that followed each story, children could be encouraged to learn even more than they ordinarily would. Each story had an accompanying activity at the end, set up to test the children's resistant reading, as well as their comprehension. Tasks were selected according to how much useful information they could elicit. Children were usually given a chance to be creative and imaginative by drawing, acting or role playing. Besides being useful to glean this type of information, these activities were enjoyed and anticipated by most of the subjects. Therefore besides being helpful, they created diversity in the stories, as the children did not only encounter reading and questioning, but also had some interaction with the stories. Although some of the activities were repeated, the intention was to stagger them so that the subjects did not become bored.

Since the children were not yet able to write competently, various methods were used to elicit and assess responses that did not involve these types of skills. Different techniques for

rating these elements initially included asking the children to point to the appropriate expression on the posters of smiley/frowning/indifferent faces (there was going to be a wide selection to choose from, so as not to be too restrictive), or to put pictures of the characters in a hierarchy of preference. But these methods were reconsidered even before the pilot study, as it did not seem that they would be able to yield sufficient information. Role plays and felt boards were used instead to re-enact the stories, as discussed on Page 72.

In *The Fox and the Horse*, the task after the reading and questions was to draw a picture of the lion and the horse (see Appendix M for examples of drawings). This gave an indication of how well the children understood the story and also how they imagined the characters. It was later observed that simply asking the children to draw the characters was much too directive and nothing much was gained from the activity. For this reason, drawing was not used again in the activities, as it did not yield the kind of information about the children's understanding of the stories that was required.

In *The Mother-in-Law and the Sour Milk*, a variety of pictures was stuck onto an A3 sheet of paper (see Appendix N). These were of both black and white ladies who were modern, old-fashioned or traditional. The children were then asked to select which candidates they thought could be the old lady in the story. It seemed that this would yield information about racial stereotyping as well as about how stringent their ideas of the characters were.

The reading of both *Jorinda and Jorindel* and *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way* was followed by a felt board for the activity (see Appendix O). The felt board for *Jorinda and Jorindel* contained a background, the castle, Jorinda, Jorindel, the fairy, the flower, the bird and a cage, and the children were asked to enact the story as they imagined it. The felt board for *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way* included the rock rabbit, the pig, the hyena, the hare, the donkey, the chameleon and the hut where they fetched their tails. This task was efficient, as it only required the children to place the characters on to the board in a sensible manner. This was useful for the shyer children, as it did not require any re-enactment if they did not want to act (although some subjects role played voluntarily). This task made it possible to assess the accuracy of their basic understanding of the facts, such as who, what, when and why, without causing as much anxiety as other tasks might have. Although additional role play was encouraged, the focus of the task was a straightforward scene-setting. This tested their comprehension of the story, as if they were able to place the

characters logically, it probably means that they understood the story well. Their imaginative embellishment was tested in their extended role play with the felt board, and subjects who were hesitant to participate in this were given the freedom to refuse to act, which may have made them feel less stressed in the situation.

Maqinase and *King Grisly-Beard* used cardboard puppets for a role play as their task (see Appendix P). These puppets were made from varying colours of cardboard, had their features drawn on and were mostly stuck on sticks so that the children could hold them when they were acting. Some, such as the puppet of Maqinase, had holes for the children's fingers to fit through. This was intended to make the role play more interactive. (See 'Subject Interviews' on Pages 82–85 for more details.)

3.4 Ethical Procedures

All of the university's required ethical proceedings were followed. The proposal was handed in to the Ethics Committee for approval and it was "approved unconditionally" on 10 October 2005. Therefore the project was considered ethical and inoffensive by the necessary authorities. The interviews with the children could only commence later that month after this authorisation was given.

It was necessary to gain consent from the guardians before conducting the interviews (see Appendix U for consent forms). The guardians had full knowledge of the intentions and proceedings of the study, including that the children's responses would be recorded (but that the tapes would later be destroyed). They were also given the option of being in contact with the researcher at any stage of the process to keep up with the sessions or to request information after the sessions. In addition, they were assured of their children's anonymity in the process, as the names of the children and of the school have been changed. They were also guaranteed that the children or the guardians had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point.

The teacher in charge of the aftercare programme was approached in person about whether the study could be conducted with her learners. She agreed verbally and consented to complete a survey on her opinions about the children's reading. This was particularly useful

as she is a Grade one teacher at the school and is well-acquainted with what children of this age are supposed to read and what they enjoy reading. She volunteered to be responsible for collecting the consent forms from the guardians and for following up on any missing forms.

A letter of consent was also signed by the school principal. She was issued with a copy of the proposal and she gave permission for the study to be carried out in her aftercare programme. She was kept informed about the proceedings, but did not find it necessary to intervene at any stage.

3.5 Pilot Study

The pilot study was useful in clarifying the questioning process and the research process as a whole. Pilot studies are vital to interviews in order to see whether the questions are applicable and are correctly worded (Merriam, 1998, 75), which is why this study included a pilot study as a precursor to the main study. By structuring questions in different ways, it was easier to find out which types would yield the most pertinent information. It also gave some clue as to what could be learned within the study's parameters and what could be improved on in the time between these sets of interviews.

The pilot study for this research comprised two students, one black female, Refilwe, and one white male, Jason. The parent or guardian interviews revealed that the one area of the planned research that needed adjusting was that more probing was needed in these initial interviews. The questions did not seem comprehensive, as they did not generate enough useful information, such as that although it was necessary to know how many times a week a child is read to, it was also necessary to know the reasons for this. That is why questions such as whether the children asked to be read to were found to be very useful in the main study. It was also a challenge to encourage the parents to divulge as much information as possible, without being too invasive. The order of questions was kept flexible so that questions would seem to flow naturally. For example if a parent volunteered information about his/her daily reading routine with his/her child, it would be followed up with questions that may have appeared later in the questionnaire, such as who reads to them and how often. These questions sometimes replaced the direct questions such as, "Do you read to your child?" as the alternatives were thought to be less upsetting to and judgemental of the parents or guardians who do not read to

their children. This was necessary because some parents or guardians were particularly defensive when divulging this information. Indirect questioning made the interview seem slightly less formal and less stressful for them. This type of stress could easily have affected their answers, as some felt guilty for not reading more and may have altered their answers to please the interviewer. A desire simply to please the researcher was encountered with the interviews in the main study. Therefore it became necessary to pay particular attention to responses and to use the flexible form of questioning to make the interview more conversational. This hopefully made the guardians feel more comfortable.

It was interesting that guardians' and children's answers about background information did not always agree, due perhaps to the guardians' desire to impress the interviewer, their inaccurate recollections or the children's unreliability. For example, Refilwe's father (see following paragraph for details) said that she was read to at home from books that she brought from school and that she had never had fairy tales read to her, while she said that she had been read fairy tales and that her parents read her stories about princesses and *Cinderella*. This could be the child's confusion in separating what she sees on television and what she is read at school and home, or it could be that there is confusion in the definition of what a fairy tale is. This was pertinent to her ability to distinguish between fiction and reality, which became a concern in the later study too.

The pilot interviews with Refilwe and Jason took place over two weeks, with each child being visited once a week. Each subject had one Grimm tale and one African Zulu folk tale read to them. They were asked a list of questions that had been devised, that were the same as the ones used in the main study (see Appendices D, Q & S for these questions). The pilot study was a very useful way of gauging which questions were useful and whether or not the entire questioning process was appropriate. As a result of the pilot study, the questioning was adjusted and inadequate sections were amended. This led to a more productive process in the main study interviews. For example, an important discovery was that it was difficult to avoid having leading questions during the questioning, including leading children to give similar answers to their parents. This was initially done to try to make the child more comfortable and less anxious to answer, but the researcher realised that it was necessary to try to avoid this type of questioning. Unfortunately this was not always possible, as the children often needed extra help or probing and leading questions seemed to be the best way to encourage answers. Obviously, though, it is not an objective way of getting information. Young interviewees are

easily led by suggestive comments, so an important lesson was that extra attention was necessary to try to probe further without influencing answers.

An important finding that became apparent during Refilwe's interviews was the familiarity that children might have with well-known fairy tales. An example is that of *Cinderella*, of which she displayed knowledge and which would have provided her with some former acquaintance of fairy tale conventions. Another possibility that the researcher was alerted to was that of gender-based responses to the stories, as Refilwe displayed a fascination with magical elements and the beauty of princesses in fairy tales. One such instance was when she commented, "…they've always got such beautiful girls and castles". Refilwe inserted these royal characters into her enactments of or comments about African stories too, suggesting that they were important to her. This alerted the researcher to the possibility of differentiated responses according to gender, as her focus on these types of characters may have been because she is a girl. These findings are discussed further in the 'Discussion of Research Questions', from Page 87.

The pilot interviews with Jason were extremely informative for later interviews. Although his mother had warned that he may have certain learning problems, he seemed to enjoy the stories and generally participated quite well. This suggested that regardless of academic ability, most of these stories could be enjoyed by any children. As Jason was rather shy, this also led to a consideration of how to deal with shyness in children, which was useful, as this was encountered in more than one child in the main interviews. It was therefore an opportunity to try to see how far one could probe without upsetting the child. Although Jason and his mother's answers about his background information did not seem to match up perfectly, they agreed on many points, such as what stories he was read when he was younger (his smile when recalling the "baby stories" that his mother read to him suggests that they were a good memory for him).

The children's behaviour while the first story, the Grimm Brothers' *The Twelve Brothers* (Grimm, 1948, 1–5), was read, also differed. (*The Twelve Brothers* was not used in the main study, as it was read in a group session before the main study began and it did not seem necessary to repeat it.) Refilwe seemed to enjoy her session, although she looked uninterested at times during the reading of the story. She was looking elsewhere and did not seem to be concentrating (the story may have been too long). Jason, however, maintained eye contact and

seemed intrigued throughout. He frowned at the sad or scary parts, and seemed to sympathise with the characters and understand the story well. These types of non-verbal reactions were therefore followed up and recorded in the main study as a point of interest. Perhaps children's ability to concentrate differs and this needed to be taken into consideration in the evaluation, as it is difficult for a child to answer well if he/she is distracted. This difficulty in concentrating affected the researcher's later story choices, as stories of different length were chosen to see whether length was a factor in the enjoyment of stories (see the 'Length of stories' on Page 100).

Numerous considerations for improving the questions and the questioning technique surfaced during the pilot study. One such finding was that more structured, predictive questions during the reading were necessary. These would generally be asked in the same position during each child's reading of the stories so that it was possible to see how the different children were able to anticipate what would happen at the same point. In the pilot study, though, different predictive questions were asked to each child, which was not practical for comparison purposes. Some predictive questions could also interrupt the reading, as if they were not inserted appropriately, they could jar the flow of the reading. Yet it was also obvious that there needed to be room for flexibility, such as when the children needed guidance at a confusing part of a story or with an unknown word. It was therefore necessary to hone skills on how the children were following a story and to intervene where necessary.

An interesting finding was that regardless of the children's previous exposure to the stories, their actual answers often did not reflect their experience. Jason dealt with the predictive questions much better than Refilwe did, by anticipating typical fairy tale storylines and being able to complete the "And they lived… happily ever after" line, although he claimed not to have read fairy tales previously. Yet Refilwe, who claimed to love princess stories, could not complete the line. This suggested that there should not be too much emphasis placed on what the children and guardians claimed about the children's reading histories and that experience did not necessarily translate into awareness of story conventions and structures. It also showed that it was necessary to keep in mind other influences, such as television and friends.

Both children confirmed that they enjoyed the story, and while Jason enjoyed the part in the forest, Refilwe thought that the princess was her favourite (although neither was really able to say why they liked these aspects). On the whole, Jason answered the understanding questions

much more competently than Refilwe did, as she needed a lot of help. Neither of them could give answers to the affective questions in a more detailed way than suggestions such as “They felt sad/bad/happy”. This could show their limited range for verbalising feelings or it may reveal that their vocabulary was not very wide. Jason, though, was able to validate his reasons better that Refilwe could. The silent game was played to help them understand how the princess felt when her power of speech was removed. This involved trying to keep quiet for as long as possible, without laughing, talking or making any sound. They both just treated it as a game and this showed that it was an ineffective way to assess their affective responses. Interestingly enough, both children felt that the evil queen died at the end, even though there is absolutely no evidence of this, which shows that they were able to fill in the gaps. This is also shown in their logical answers to questions such as who they thought does their washing for them. Refilwe thinks the twelve boys do their own washing, while Jason thinks the sister does (this could be a comment on gender, as they each chose characters of the opposite gender to do the work).

The drawing section at the end was very telling and although the evidence was by no means conclusive, both children seemed to envision the characters in their own race, possibly because these are the people with whom they are more familiar. Refilwe seemed to focus on and enjoy the part where the king meets the princess. Even when she was asked to draw a picture, she asked if she could draw the prince too. Both of her characters were drawn in brown – the princess is light brown and the prince is dark brown. This may be of no consequence though, as the princess has green hair and the prince has blue hair. Jason drew both the prince and the princess in a border of black koki. They both had yellow faces and hands and were wearing multi-coloured crowns, with the queen’s having more spikes than the king’s (he said that this was because the queen was prettier).

In the second story, *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, there were some complications with the terminology. Jason did not know what sour milk or *Inkomasi* was and neither of them knew what a mother-in-law was. This alerted the researcher to the possibility of future vocabulary problems and that it was necessary to prepare for these. At times, these problems would be due simply to their unfamiliarity with the words, rather than with the difficulty of the words. It was decided that for future interviews, the term ‘sour milk’, rather than *Inkomasi* would be used and that it would be explained via a sample, that would be given to each child. In this second reading, the questions during the reading were kept similar. A word such as “hoe” was

explained and the main study used pictures to explain these terms (so a picture of the item was shown, as a way of clarifying what they were). When the story was read to Jason, the Zulu words for certain items from the story were used, but this did not seem to affect how he envisioned the characters (as seen later in his choice of pictures). Therefore most of these Zulu words were also used in the main study. (A further discussion about vocabulary is in the 'Findings' section on Page 94.)

The children seemed to reverse roles in the second story, with Refilwe concentrating better than Jason that week. This was significant as it suggested that a bad day or the time of the interview could affect the children's responses. This could be because over the two weeks, the children took turns in being interviewed first (earlier in the day) and second (a bit later in the day, when they may have felt more tired). This was taken into account in later interviews, by trying to vary the children's interview times every week. This could also have been a cultural affinity, as perhaps Refilwe was able to identify with the African story better.

Both children were able to answer the questions testing understanding in the second story better than in the first. This may have been because they were more comfortable with the process, because the story was shorter, or simply because they enjoyed this story more than they enjoyed the first one.

The pilot study showed that the 'filling in the gaps' section was worthwhile, as it was able to expose certain values that a child may have. When Refilwe was asked whether she thought that the woman's daughter would also be cross with her for stealing, she said "yes" because the mother-in-law did "naughty things." This judgment shows what Refilwe has been taught or that she has somehow developed a sense of right and wrong. Jason, on the other hand, said that the mother-in-law did not do anything wrong, but this could also have been because he seemed a bit uninterested that day. He still felt that the mother-in-law should have apologised to the daughter, which indicates that he probably realised that she was perceived as doing something wrong. When the two subjects were asked whether they had ever heard a frog talk, both commented on the noises that frogs usually make, but Jason told the researcher that these frogs can talk because the king had made them special, which seemed to show a familiarity with the fantasy genre. Refilwe thought that the cat can save the old lady because the cat is magic, so she may be familiar with magic in stories. When they were asked why the wild cat wants the bird to be killed, Refilwe eventually said that perhaps he does not like him, and Jason said

straight away that, "…the cat doesn't like the bird," thus showing more acceptance of violence as a strategy. This suggests that it is a gender issue and was another factor to consider in the main study.

Jason refused to draw that week. He was not pushed, as he seemed stressed, which may have been linked to his previous anxiety displayed in relation to his drawing abilities. This was useful to anticipate as a likely problem and to devise ways to cope with such situations. Refilwe's lady in her drawing appears to be black, but she looks Westernised. It seems that she looks similar to the modern people that the child may know personally, rather than like an African farm worker. This could mean that Refilwe was simply drawing from her life, or that she did not understand the story and wanted to express things from her own life. When she was asked where the old lady was going, she said she was off to a party and had just returned from London (just as her own mother had recently done). This could be a sign of resistance to the perspectives of the characters in the story. It may show that her distinction between the story and reality was not yet fully developed and supports the Reader-Response claim that readers use their immediate environment to help them to interpret stories (Selden, 1985, 107).

The other exercise that was conducted was to show the children five colour pictures, both drawings and real photographs, of different black and white women and they were asked to pick who they thought the old lady in the story was (this was used in the main study too). The one picture was of an old lady holding an animal, which was appropriate, as Refilwe chose it because of the animal connection in the story. But ultimately they both chose different pictures of old, white ladies. This may have been because these pictures were more appealing (this suggests that there could have been a problem choosing pictures that were equally aesthetically pleasing). This indicated that it was necessary to find more of a range of these pictures and more equal pictures for both races. Both children conceded that the black women could also be the old lady and when Jason was asked about what clothes he thought the granny that works in the field would wear, he chose the picture of the old black lady in traditional dress, as well as the picture of the white lady. Although Jason could envision what clothes the old lady might wear, Refilwe seemed to just draw what was in her imagination and what she would want her to wear. Again this may show how children associate the stories with their own lives.

The pilot study yielded useful pointers. One was that it was necessary to try to stop asking questions with two parts and to just ask one question at a time, as double questions seemed

overwhelming for the children, as Merriam indicates (1998, 78). Refilwe was definitely more comfortable in the second session and this could show that the answers may have become richer as the study proceeded and the children felt more relaxed. The fact that Jason was so unresponsive in the second session suggests that there would always be the problem that a child may simply be tired or may be having a bad day. Except for certain difficult words that were mentioned, the level of the stories seemed suitable for them, although it seemed more practical to choose mostly shorter stories so that the children could concentrate better. It also seemed logical to ensure that the interviews were kept quite short. Yet the genre of the stories did not seem to affect the subjects' interest, as they seemed to enjoy both types. Although Refilwe seemed intrigued by the Grimm story with more fairy tale elements, she concentrated better in the African Zulu tale, possibly because it is shorter. This suggested that it would be useful to evaluate whether the differences between the two types of stories would become more evident when the children had been exposed to more stories from each genre. It also seemed necessary to try to avoid yes/no questions and to encourage the children to give fuller answers without pressurising them (Merriam, 1998, 79).

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Guardian Interviews

As in the pilot study, information about the children's reading backgrounds was collected from the guardians of the children in the main study. The interviews were done over the phone because it seemed that a request for face-to-face interviews could have detracted from the appeal of the study for the guardians, as it may have inconvenienced them. Also, their children were usually in aftercare because the guardians worked all day, so this system did not seem practical. Although some guardians took a keen interest in the study, even following up on the study with phone calls, others seemed disinterested. As discussed, Jarred's mother even seemed to disapprove of the study due to her religious background. Some of the children lived with siblings at this time, rather than parents, and these siblings were sometimes unsure about questions involving the child's reading history. A recurring finding was that many of the guardians stated that although their children could not yet read properly, they were very enthusiastic about learning and they practised reading every chance

they had. Information from these interviews has been included in the section on ‘Subjects’ on Pages 55–62.

3.6.2 Subject Interviews

The study was conducted over six weeks and there were a total of sixty interviews with the ten children. Half an hour with each child was the estimated time for each interview, especially since children of about six or seven are not able to concentrate for much longer than this. In practice, the shyer children sometimes completed their sessions in twenty minutes, as they did not want to spend a long time on the role plays, whereas some of the more talkative children sometimes took up to forty-five minutes, as they wanted to act out more than one role play or tell their own stories.

These interviews took place over three afternoons each week, so that each child would be at the same point in the study and he/she would not have much time to discuss the study with the others. Although attempts were made to interview the children at different times of the day to accommodate different levels of tiredness, sometimes a particular child was interviewed at similar times depending on the extra murals that he/she took part in. Since the research was usually carried out on the same days each week, the children who did Art as an extra-mural, for example, would arrive later on that day, thus preventing them from getting an earlier time slot. Although every effort was made to alternate, some children were not available earlier, as they were sometimes busy with their homework or they requested to have their interview later in the day. The children who were taken latest in the day were often very tired, so this could have had an effect on their answers. Interviews were conducted for two weeks, followed by a week’s break, then another two sessions over two weeks, another week’s break and then the final two interviews over two weeks.

All efforts were made to ensure that the environment was as unthreatening as possible, so that the responses were natural and spontaneous. The sessions were all held in a classroom upstairs from where the aftercare children play. At first, both the researcher and the child in the classroom sat on a chair, but it later seemed more practical for both to sit on the floor, as it was less restrictive and the children seemed more at ease. It was also easier to position the dictaphone closer to them in this position. All the children except for one were happy with

this arrangement (as discussed on Pages 59 & 89, John wanted to sit on the teacher's chair each week).

The classroom was not an isolated venue and there were often unexpected interruptions. Depending on what time the interviews were held, the cleaner often came in to clean the classroom. Although this did not seem to bother most of the children, some seemed a bit distracted or shy because of his presence. Also, the intercom was a constant interruption. In some sessions, it sounded more than five times. This was a nuisance, as it interrupted and jolted the reading or questioning and often caused the researcher or child to lose concentration. Teachers and children also often came into the classroom, usually looking for things that they had left behind. Unfortunately, since the study was conducted at a school, these interruptions could not have been avoided.

Jarred's sessions were conducted in the media centre because after his first two sessions, he was removed from aftercare and it was necessary to conduct the interviews during school time. There were sometimes the distractions of other children in the library. The auditorium was quiet, but was not always available. If the session was in the library, chairs were used and if it was in the auditorium, sessions took place on the floor.

The presence of the researcher did have an effect on the proceedings, but it does not seem that the race or gender of the researcher affected the results. The obvious effects included the children sometimes reacting in a hesitant manner towards the researcher, possibly because of a fear of being wrong. Also, the researcher's presence made some of the children apprehensive, possibly because they saw it as putting pressure on them or that the researcher was foreign to them. Since the children were used to having white females as their teachers, it did not appear that her presence was unusual or more threatening than their regular teachers. Some children were anxious but may simply have felt nervous because there was a perceived authority figure present or because the process was unknown to them.

In the first story, some of the children were shy, but most were quite excited about answering the questions. Although they sometimes hesitated to voice their opinions, they were very eager to participate. As the interviews continued, some became more hesitant to answer, possibly out of boredom or the routine created by the process (as discussed later in the 'Findings' chapter on Pages 142 & 143).

The questions that were asked during the reading of the stories (about meanings of words, characters' motives and so on) seemed necessary, but may have been disruptive to the flow of the stories. Although some children thrived on being able to answer correctly, others seemed to view these questions as interrupting a story that they may have been enjoying. Questions about vocabulary were quick and innocuous, but ones enquiring about characters' motives, or predictions, seemed to stop their concentration and cause their thinking to diverge onto a deeper plane. This may not have been necessary for them, as this type of analysis often occurs unconsciously in these stories. Yet there were some children who seemed to enjoy the probing into the stories in order to maximise their understanding.

A problem with recording children on tape is that their voices can sometimes sound muffled. This was due to a number of reasons, including talking very softly, speaking with their hands over their mouths, or turning away or moving from the dictaphone. Some of the children were quite intrigued by the dictaphone and sometimes became distracted by it. This especially occurred in the first session, when it was still strange to them. It was explained what its purpose was, but the subjects often commented on its presence. This was because it was occasionally necessary to check whether the dictaphone was working or to change batteries. Also, placing it in a suitable place often took a few extra seconds of organising that sometimes distracted the children. The dictaphone sometimes needed to be moved in order to follow some of the children who fidgeted.

Each of the sixty-six interviews in the main and pilot studies was transcribed for ease of analysis. Although this was an extremely time-consuming exercise, it made the comparisons between subjects' different interviews, as well as comparisons between the subjects themselves, much simpler. These interviews were transcribed as accurately as possible and when it was impossible to hear a line, it was transcribed as best as it could be, but indistinct answers were discarded from the final comparisons. Yet because the interviews were often transcribed soon after the interviews took place, it was often possible for the researcher to recall the answers and to fill in the missing information quite precisely.

The researcher was usually able to ask all the questions that had been set out from the planned questions. The questions during the reading sometimes varied because if the interviewer saw that a child was having difficulty, she included more explanation and extra questions to clarify the facts to the subject. Often though, not all the questions were

answered, as depending on the child's mood, or recollection of the story, he/she was sometimes hesitant to answer. Although the researcher attempted to probe or help the child, he/she was sometimes adamant not to answer and it was thought that it was better not to push him/her and alienate him/her from the process by causing irritation or anger.

3.7 Responses to Props and Activities

When children are playing normally, they use their toys to express those attributes of their own personality that they think are complicated or difficult to convey, such as vicariously experiencing giving birth (Bettelheim, 1991, 56). Bettelheim (1991, 58 & 59) says that fairy tales can help express these feelings by being acted out, but this often only happens once a child is comfortable with a story. Sometimes a child may be unable to act out a story, as he/she may not actually understand the feelings that are being expressed, so this is very significant in relation to the activities at the end of each story, as lack of clarity could affect children's participation.

The props in the stories, such as the puppets and the felt boards that were used in the activities at the end of each story, were much more effective than anticipated. The children generally looked forward to seeing what the task for the day was and often looked questioningly at the props wherever they were stored. They also frequently asked questions about the props, including who the characters represented, how they were made and who made them. The puppets seemed more popular than the other tasks were, possibly because they involved more personal input and interaction, such as the *Maqinase* puppet, which involved the children putting their fingers through the puppet as its legs. The felt board did not encourage as much participation, as it only involved one scene, unless the child chose to elaborate. It seemed that these props enhanced the enjoyment of the stories and in a way replaced illustrations, as these were not shown. Most children were eager to interact with the props, even if they were shy. Although some felt hesitant to act, most did not resist taking part in the role plays. There were, however, some children, such as Neliswe and Munyadi, who preferred to draw pictures, as they seemed to feel uncomfortable acting.

3.8 Data Analysis

Content analysis was chosen as a method that would help organise the data. In content analysis, one can look at interviews and data, as well as look at different levels of content, such as main ideas, themes and background information that might emerge (Mayring, 2000, 2 & 3).

Applying content analysis to this research data meant that responses would be analysed in the following ways:

1) The responses from all subjects would be analysed for:

- responses to specific questions in each story (such as the 'predictive', 'understanding', 'affective' and 'resistant' questions in *Maqinase*)
- responses to similar questions across stories (for example the 'understanding' questions from all six stories).

2) The responses from each individual child would then be analysed for:

- responses to specific questions across stories (such as the 'understanding' questions in all stories)
- all responses to each specific story.

This content analysis would show whether trends emerged across subjects and stories and whether trends or developments occurred within the responses of an individual subject. This analysis of individual children's responses would focus on each child's answers, to see if there would be any noticeable patterns. Only once the patterns had been identified would the study hypothesise around the trends and what they revealed.

Chapter 4 - Discussion of Research Questions

During the study, a great amount of data was collected and the quantity presented challenges in the analysis. This data was mostly organised in terms of the research questions, but when the data was analysed, it was found that it was impossible only to keep to this framework, as many additional foci emerged. Although these questions still remained as the main organising principle for analysis, some of the data is discussed under other categories that emerged, such as 'fiction and reality' and 'humour' in the stories. Other aspects that were not anticipated materialised from the research, such as how the length of the stories can affect enjoyment. All such categories have been incorporated in the following discussion. However, the original, main research questions continue to provide a framework. They are:

1. How did the children enjoy the stories?
2. In what ways, if any, did their cultural or gender differences affect their responses to the stories?
3. In what ways, if any, do the children see the stories as coded for race or culture?
4. How do the children identify with the characters, as well as with the morals expressed in the stories, and in what ways does this occur?
5. What, if any, are their responses to the threshold experiences?
6. How did their responses alter during the sessions?
7. Which aspects of the Reader-Response and Reception theories were confirmed through these sessions?

4.1. Enjoyment and Responses to the Stories

In order to glean information as to what stories children are exposed to at school and which stories they enjoy the most, a questionnaire was sent to the teacher who was responsible for the organisation of the study and who was also the head of the Grade ones at this school. Her comments were extremely relevant, as, in addition to the parent interviews, she was able to fill in the rest of the information regarding the children's reading backgrounds when they are at school. She concurred with the theory that children need a balance of educational and entertaining books to aid their learning and that there is a good balance of plot variations in the chosen texts. Interestingly, she stated that animal stories were not

always the favourites. Of particular significance to this study was that she felt that the children responded best to familiar stories, as well as to interactive ones. Although the stories used in this research were probably not familiar to the children, the accompanying activities involved personal input, which is where many of the children expressed their enjoyment of the stories. She said that the children were read to in class very often, that they loved hearing stories and requested to be read to constantly, "Especially now that print is more meaningful to them (since they were learning to read)". Folk tales and African tales were read occasionally, but fairy tales (both familiar and new ones) were used as the theme for the whole second term, which probably made them more recognisable and perhaps created the perception that they are superior. Her opinion was that all these tales are "Very important and fun", thus confirming their relevance. The teacher regularly made up stories, usually to explain writing lessons or letters of the alphabet, so this format of creating stories was also encouraged. She also observed that children who come from a rich reading background usually already have a love for and interest in reading, which is beneficial to them and to the teachers.

In general, the children seemed to enjoy the sessions, although there could have been contributory factors other than enjoyment. For example, most children seemed to like the individual attention, except for the few who seemed to find this attention daunting or stressful and were reluctant to answer questions. Yolande, who mentioned that she enjoyed acting and drama, seemed to thrive on the personal attention in the sessions. She became animated and talkative and listened attentively, all the while keeping eye contact and reacting with an open mouth, gasps or giggles, according to the action in the story. The interviewing situation was therefore ideal for her. Other subjects, such as Kabelo and Tumelo, also flourished in these sessions. Both boys enjoyed telling stories of their own. These stories were often completely unrelated to the stories that were being read (see Pages 112–120). Their sessions often took longer than many of the others because they seemed to feel free to talk, which may not have been possible or acceptable in a regular classroom setting. Some of the children, though, seemed shy in this face-to-face setting. John was often quiet in the interviews, yet he was quite boisterous on the playground. Although Jarred seemed to enjoy the sessions, he often became shy, mostly if he was asked questions about himself. But Munyadi was the only child who seemed to close up completely in the interviews. She became reduced to answering "yes" or "no", or shaking and nodding her head, yet outside of the class she would approach the researcher freely. Also, in group

readings, she would often volunteer to answer questions, which suggests that the one-on-one structure of the interviews may have put too much pressure on her. Although she is obviously a quiet child, this seemed to become intensified during the individual sessions. Therefore the fact that the interviews were conducted on an individual basis may have had either positive or negative effects, depending on the child.

Enjoyment can be affected by many other aspects, even where the children sit when the stories are read. When the researcher and children started sitting on the floor rather than on chairs (as mentioned on Pages 82 & 83), certain reactions were observed. For Tumelo and sometimes for Yolande, part of the enjoyment was the closeness of sitting next to the reader during the stories. Tumelo would creep closer until he could see the page that was being read, although there were no illustrations. He seemed to react to the physical proximity as an important part of the individual reading process. A possible suggestion for this is that it made him feel like a part of the process. John insisted on sitting on the teacher's chair throughout, whereas the other children sat on a small chair or on the floor. It is useful to speculate about the possibility that this was a type of non-verbal reluctance to accept the researcher's attempts to control the process. By being in a physically superior position, he may have had a certain amount of power in the process. Another possible suggestion is that he was role playing the teacher, which he may have been restricted from doing in normal class time. He also asked about the changing venue (as sometimes the same classroom used for conducting the interviews was not available), which suggests that setting may affect the enjoyment and experience of a story, depending how the child perceives it. This may be because they became comfortable in a setting and therefore did not enjoy being moved away from it.

The questioning process and types of questions also seemed to affect enjoyment of these sessions, although not necessarily of the stories. This is an example of the impact of the research method on the research findings. When questions were not answered, it often seemed due to unwillingness to answer, especially for the questions that required more complex answers, such as retelling the story. For example in *Jorinda and Jorindel*, Munyadi was able to answer the basic questions, such as what her favourite part of the story was, but when she was questioned why she liked it, her stock answer was either "I don't know" or if it was in relation to a character, she would say that the character "liked/didn't like it". Judging from her ability to understand the stories when probed, as well as from

comments from her teacher about her intelligence, it was evident that she understood the stories, yet the setting did not seem conducive to her expressing her thoughts and feelings regarding the stories. Cole would often end questions with the words, “Can I go now?” which suggested that he did not want to be in the classroom. His requests to leave often began at the beginning of the question section of the interview, so it was probably not that the sessions were too long, but rather that he was bored by them. Therefore, being reluctant to answer questions may arise from genuine confusion, being overwhelmed, or simply from being uninterested in and impatient with the process.

Some children responded to the events in the stories with facial expressions rather than verbally, which seems to show natural reactions that do not need words. Yolande, Kelly and Tumelo displayed this trait the most. Kelly laughed at the correct cues of the humour, and seemed to understand the difference between fiction and fantasy. She seemed to respond best in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, as she laughed when the animals without tails are listed and when the horse swishes his new tail to swat flies, suggesting that she appreciated the humour in the story. In *Maqinase*, Kelly copied what she thought the tortoise would look like with his mouth left open after Maqinase is rude to him, suggesting that she enjoyed this interactive part. She also laughed when the donkey fixes his ears. Appropriate facial expressions therefore give clues about how a subject is responding to the story, and diminished the need for verbal articulation.

Yolande laughed at these very same aspects in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way* and then said “Yo!” when all the animals are listed as they walk past the rock rabbit. She was very vocal and responsive throughout. In *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, she again responded with “Yo!” when it is mentioned that the hoe weeds on its own. She too reacted to the humour, as she chuckled in this story when it says that the old lady gets such a shock that she faints. She also gasped when the animal king comes to the old lady near the end of that story and when he says that she will be eaten in the morning. In *Maqinase*, she laughed when the pig is called “naughty one”, when Maqinase insults the donkey’s ears, when the frog uses Maqinase’s nickname, when the reader makes animal noises and when the mother questions him. She allowed herself to laugh, even at the parts that are not particularly socially correct, perhaps suggesting that she was aware that it is fiction and does not ascribe to the laws of reality. Tumelo was able to link the stories to his own life, such as when he heard that the animals do not have tails, he said, “I know – my dog also doesn’t have a tail.”

He also laughed at the horse swatting the flies away, suggesting that he too enjoyed the humour. Thus spontaneous reactions can be very telling about how the children responded to the stories, without using direct questioning.

4.1.1 Personal Preference and Prior Experience

Personal preferences in literature could have affected each child's responses to the stories. This may have been determined by what stories the children were used to reading, or what they preferred to read. Neliswe was the only one to ever say that she did not like a story, which may have been affected by her interests – this story, *The Fox and the Horse*, may not have had any characters with which she could identify. This is apparent because her answers showed that her understanding of the story was faultless, so that her discontent was not caused by misunderstanding, but perhaps rather by unfamiliarity. Another speculation that can be made is that because this was still the first session, she was in the process of trying to discover the boundaries and rules of the sessions. There was one child, Cole, who constantly criticised and fought against the process, both the storytelling (where he seemed bored) and the questioning (where he remained contrary), even during the predictive questions. This may have been because of his preference for non-fiction that his mother pointed out. He liked animal stories best, which seems to support the claim that he enjoyed non-fiction (but goes against the teacher's assertion that animal stories were not preferred to stories with human characters). This suggests that for some children, the fictional aspects of stories are not automatically fun. Another child, Jarred, who is very religious and had not been exposed to much fiction, except at school, was very enthusiastic and seemed to enjoy the novelty of the imagination and the fantastic. Even though, or perhaps because, he had not had much contact with this type of literature before, he was even more enraptured than many of the other children who were more familiar with it. One child in particular, Munyadi, was told traditional African stories as well as read fairy tales and sung to, so her often hesitant responses could be investigated more deeply in relation to her reading background. This could mean that enjoyment of these stories may not have been affected by the children's reading backgrounds.

Yet an author such as Bechtel (1969, 147 & 151) does not agree with this, as she states that children's responses would undoubtedly be affected by their storytelling backgrounds.

Perhaps this statement could mean that children will enjoy that which is familiar to them or with which they can identify. Yet the findings in this research show that children could be intrigued by that which is new and exciting for them. Of course, since this study entails a small sample, it is not possible to make grand claims, but with some of these subjects, prior experience or lack of experience with stories did not seem to influence their responses. Yolande had stated that she loved fairy tales and therefore it makes sense that her interests lay in the stories about royalty and magic. Yet Kelly, who also claimed to love these stories, became bored around the third session, which may have been caused by the stories themselves or by the questioning process. This seemed to suggest that the initial excitement could have worn off and that some children may have found the repetitive process of reading and questioning, monotonous. Although Neliswe's father said that she loved to be read to and enjoyed fairy and folk tales, she was often quite uncooperative with the reading and questioning processes. John had not had exposure to any of these stories at home and he was sometimes inattentive in the sessions. Fortunately, the subjects who did not always enjoy the sessions comprised the minority. Like Cole, Kabelo and Tumelo loved animal stories best and although only Kabelo had heard fairy tales at home before, both children were attentive and eager throughout. A good example of a child affected by his background is Lance, who was read a variety of stories at home and responded positively to anything that was read to him. Cole, however, seemed to be negatively influenced by his previous reading experience. This suggests that children can enjoy stories in different ways, depending on what they would like to get from the process, but of course also on how much they understand.

4.1.2 Understanding as a Factor in Enjoyment

Many children thrived during the understanding section, as the questions were generally straightforward and so the children who understood the story were able to answer quite accurately. Questions in this section varied from "Who are the characters in the story?" and "Why does Maqinase leave home?" to the slightly more in-depth questions such as "What do you think the most important/fun part of the story was? Why?" The benefit of asking these quite basic questions at the beginning was that since the children generally knew the answers to them, it gave them confidence, as they felt that they understood the story well if they answered correctly. A general trend that emerged was that if a child had difficulty

understanding a story, his/her overall enjoyment was affected, as was apparent in *King Grisly-Beard*, which some of the children found too complex and lengthy. Also, these questions proceeded quickly in the questioning section, as they mostly required simple answers. This therefore helped avoid boredom, as young children often do not enjoy tedious questioning.

A major purpose of the understanding questions was to check whether the children were following the story. These questions simply ensured that the subjects were not falling behind in the text. Questions included ones such as in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, where they were asked, "Is she telling the truth that she has not come near the house?" Depending on the child's answer, it was possible to tell whether or not the storyline was being correctly followed. In this particular question, seven of the children realised that she was lying, suggesting that they understood the trickery. If a child answered a question wrongly at this point, it was possible to correct him/her and therefore ensure that he/she was not completely confused throughout the reading. This could, however, also be seen as interference, as perhaps this did not give a clear reflection of their real, unaided comprehension of the stories. But young children's reading is often guided, so this may not interfere any more than a parent guiding his/her child in order to maximise his/her enjoyment.

The questions around 'filling in the gaps' were necessary to see whether the children were able to understand what happened in the parts that were not explicitly explained, possibly indicating the child's understanding of the story. *King Grisly-Beard* was the story that caused the most confusion. The complications probably arose from a convoluted storyline that involved King Grisly-Beard playing the role of numerous characters, which may have puzzled the children. Some participants were hesitant towards answering. It is also a section where one can see how imaginative a child is. This is because answers to predictive questions, such as asking what would happen to Maqinase in the field in *Maqinase*, yielded diverse answers, ranging from getting fat to getting caught. Judging by a child's answers, it is possible to see their creativity, but their ideas may also be inspired by other stories or by television and may therefore indicate their knowledge of story conventions. This could therefore indicate a child's familiarity with what to expect in stories or on television, such as happy or sad story endings, as well as what he/she would be likely to expect in real life if the character were exposed to such a situation. Therefore, the way a subject chose to fill in their own and the researcher's gaps gave an indication as to how they thought and what other stories they had previously been exposed to.

Such an example of a child filling in her own gaps is Kelly. It is interesting that she was aware of creating a mental image of characters, especially princesses, such as imagining what the princess in *Jorinda and Jorindel* looks like, as she said, "…she's pretty, I think in my mind". This is significant for Reader-Response theory, as it appears that some of the children were 'filling in the gaps' in their minds through images that they were conjuring up without prompting.

In general, the gaps about feelings seemed easier to fill in than other gaps. Although some children struggled with filling in other gaps in the stories, such as what happened in particular scenarios, they seemed to find interpreting the characters' feelings much easier. Their vocabulary of affective words seemed quite limited (as discussed on Page 79), but they were mostly aware of what feelings were appropriate and when. An example would be Lance who, in response to the question "How do you think Maqinase's mom felt when she saw he was missing?" answered, "Sad…she thought someone stole him", which shows that he understood the feeling and the reason behind it. Yet his answer to "Why do you think Maqinase is so rude?" was "I don't know", even after several probes. This may suggest that children of this age are able to empathise quite effectively with the characters, yet they may be uncertain about trusting their own instincts involving the plot, as probing sometimes elicited this type of anxious or noncommittal response.

Generally, the children seemed to have a need to clarify the stories and used various strategies to do so. A surprising finding was that in the understanding section, some of the children volunteered to fill in the gaps in order to explain certain situations to themselves. In this case, their need to fill in the gaps arose spontaneously, thus seeming to confirm the Reader-Response theory that states that children of this age try and fill in the gaps as part of their attempt to understand and interact with the text (Newton, 1990, 219 & 220). In *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, for example, Cole seemed interested in the animals in the story. Since the story may have challenged some facts about animals that he knew, he asked questions. When at the beginning it is mentioned that none of the animals has a tail, he asked, "Even the crocodiles? ...Cheetahs? ... Lizards?" He then proceeded to make a joke and asked, "How about the tail animals? It's just a tail with two legs," thus suggesting that his understanding was so clear that he could formulate his own jokes around it. Later during the same reading, when the donkey tells the rock rabbit that he will bring him his tail, he said, "Donkeys always talk too much… In books, movies, in papers… They've got

attitude." In this way, he showed his previous interaction with similar characters and he was able to merge these different perspectives. He also added, "I wish I had a tail", which suggests that he was able to extend the fiction to his own life. By interacting with the story in this personal way, he was able to mix his own knowledge of the facts with the stories.

Some of the questions during the reading were intended to test whether the children understood the vocabulary. It was possible that what vocabulary the children did and did not know affected how they understood the tales. Children can only comprehend stories and situations based on what they have already experienced or learned. Rosenblatt (1978, 132) states that the reader will respond to what he/she hears in relation to his/her experience and understanding. This also affects the vocabulary questions, because if a child does not understand certain words, it could affect his/her overall understanding of the concepts. Questions around vocabulary were simply to ensure that the children understood the text. Certain groups of words, such as farming words, showed what vocabulary the children had been exposed to and therefore may have linked to their backgrounds. A word such as "shepherd", for example, was immediately recognised by Jarred, who probably knew it from his exposure to Bible stories. Another noteworthy finding was that the children had difficulty understanding terms such as "mother-in-law". This could have a psychological basis, as children this age usually have a very limited perspective, so that they may only be able to view their lives from their own perception and be more familiar with a term such as "grandmother" in relation to themselves. Although this particular word, "grandmother", was not tested, no questions were asked by the children about it, suggesting that it was not problematic. The problems that children experience with vocabulary could be related to their differing contexts, such as that a "hoe" is not a familiar term to most city children. This means that in a way, there is a mismatch between the children's context and the story's context, since these stories are very old with a rural setting, and the people they were written for had different interests and concerns.

An interesting, although predictable, observation, was that children associate unfamiliar words with ones that they use frequently. In *King Grisly-Beard*, Kabelo and Neliswe both thought a "beggar" meant "bigger", while John thought a "cottage" was actually "cottage cheese". Tumelo was competent at making meaning for himself, such as although he did not know the meaning of "beggar", when it was explained to him, he said, "Like over there when you driving and they want money… Mainly at McDonalds", thus suggesting that he could integrate the information. Yolande did not know what a beggar was, but when it was

explained, she was shocked that the princess would marry somebody so lowly. She therefore had definite ideas about suitable marriage partners. This may have been due to her familiarity with popular tales, such as *Cinderella*. She related the word "cottage" to her life, as she lived in a cottage. Again this was a situation from her personal experience that ensured her knowledge of certain vocabulary. She understood what servants are and described them like a real upper-class lady, as "…a king and like a prince, so they have to come and say, 'What do you like to eat?' and stuff". She may have been used to these terms from other fiction. Therefore the children's understanding of the vocabulary changed depending on the topic or type of words, as it is needed to be related to what they were familiar with. This means that children who are familiar with farming, royalty or animals, or stories about these topics, may be more adept at understanding words related to these particular areas.

Many of the children were very resourceful and were able to develop unique strategies for understanding in order to interpret the stories for themselves. Tumelo constantly checked to see whether he was keeping up with the story, thus showing a deep understanding of the text. An example of this is in *Jorinda and Jorindel*, where he asked of Jorindel, "That was his sister?", thus attempting to establish the bond between the characters in order to make sense of the text. Kabelo asked in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard* Way, "Who was making the tails?" suggesting that he was trying to make sense of the story. In this way, children's ongoing comments were very telling in relation to their understanding and enjoyment of the stories. These children were obviously listening intently if they were able to ask quite detailed questions. Therefore, a child's interest in the stories can be judged not only from the answers to the questions that they are asked, but also by their own enquiries and unforced opinions about the stories.

4.1.3 Story Characteristics

Animal Stories: Animal stories seemed to provide more enjoyment than ones involving only humans. Adams (1953, 189 & 193) says that these animal stories can either be purely factual or imaginative, or sometimes a mix of the two, and that animals that behave like humans may reflect our own feelings. Werner (1995, 9 & 217) says that animals are prevalent in many folk tales and often think, act or look like humans, so sometimes it is difficult to tell whether a

character is a human or an animal because of its behaviour. This happened in *Maqinase*, as will be discussed below (on Page 110), where some of the children referred to him as a boy or a girl, thus perhaps not consciously realising that he is a pig. Yet some children enjoyed the fantasy involved in the animals being personified. When animals are given the power to act like humans, it often intrigues children, possibly because the animals' behaviour can be more daring than humans' is. Maybe they enjoy the animal characters because there are different rules that apply to them and the repercussions are less severe, since the characters are so removed from reality.

Story Conventions: Throughout the research, knowledge of story conventions was tested. Although it seemed likely that the children would be aware of most of these, even if not consciously, from television or from other stories, it became apparent that many of them were not. Kabelo, Munyadi and Neliswe were not able to complete the "happily ever after" line in *Jorinda and Jorindel*, suggesting that they did not identify the prompts. These children may not have recognised the phrase, but this seems strange as it is such a common way of ending such stories. It was fascinating that a child such as Jarred, who had no formal exposure to fairy tales, was able to complete this line. Other answers that the subjects gave to this incomplete line "And they lived…", ranged from "in a house", "in a castle" and "by the sea", to "good". It was unexpected that Kelly, who said that she had such an interest in fairy tales, did not complete this line either.

Other endings in the stories were also investigated. In *Jorinda and Jorindel*, all the children predicted that the boy and girl would live happily ever after, while the fairy would not. This suggests that they were aware of conventional endings. In *Maqinase*, every child correctly predicted that after Maqinase leaves home without permission, he will land up in trouble, either getting lost or being shouted at by his mother. Although this is an African tale and not a Grimm story, it showed that this impending feeling of danger was evident to all the children.

Many of the children, including Tumelo, Neliswe, Yolande and especially Lance, seemed to enjoy happy endings. This is not surprising, especially because many children's stories have this element as standard. The children could therefore expect and thus anticipate these kinds of endings, which could be why they predicted them or filled them in themselves if necessary. This could support Bettelheim's (1991, 32, 143 & 144) idea that these endings are necessary

because children cannot envision them themselves. In other words, children often cannot imagine a happy outcome to situations that they may view as horrifying, so the story does this for them. By being read these positive outcomes, children are reassured that the characters, and they themselves, are safe. Yet in practice, many of them created their own happy endings, so perhaps their previous exposure to these types of endings became a template for their own.

Even the more cautious subjects usually predicted happy endings, which often involved the 'bad' characters being punished. This necessity to see justice done is linked to these happy endings, as the perceived 'baddie' would be punished. Sometimes their need for punishment and revenge seemed quite vicious, but it seems that this was simply the morals that they had been taught being put into practice. Other desired endings included weddings, which are traditional endings in popular fairy tales such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Cinderella*. Munyadi was one of the few subjects who did not insist on favourable outcomes, but actually suggested that the old lady in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk* would be eaten, rather than saved. Yet on the whole, there was a desire for a satisfactory resolution, which involves certain degrees of punishment. (A fuller discussion can be seen in the 'Punishment and Morals' section on Pages 136–138.)

In fairy tales, events often occur in threes (Bettelheim, 1991, 100 & 103). This was tested in questions in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, which although not a fairy tale, seems to conscribe to similar rules. Here, the children were asked to predict what the third frog would say, as according to the fairy tale convention, this is where the change would happen, but not all of them, including Munyadi, were aware of this. Cole was extremely aware of the overt workings of these tales, as he even said in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way* that stories usually come full circle. This seems to validate Georgiou (1969, 192), who said that fairy tales have a simple pattern that can be recognisable to some children. Lance predicted scenarios such as that Maqinase would go to the woods, often a place of magic and enchantment, so this suggests that he is in fact familiar with such stories.

Sometimes, the children's predictions were logical, so that even if they were incorrect, they showed accurate thinking. This suggests that if a child's prediction made sense within the context, he/she may have been aware of certain story conventions, even if his/her specific answers were incorrect. Some morbid examples in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*,

when the animal king tells the old lady that she will die, include Neliswe's prediction that "She dies" and Kabelo's that she will get eaten by the son-in-law. Both of these answers seem to be embedded in folk tales, especially since cannibalism is important in Zulu tales (Canonici, 1986, 125–150), as they do not always have a happy ending. Their answers make sense, considering the king's warning, but they lack the hope for redemption that fairy tales often inspire.

Scary elements in the stories: Enjoyment of the stories need not only be a response to fun or humorous elements. Fear in the stories can also add to the satisfaction that a child can get from a story (Gunderson, 1966, 238). There were therefore some questions focussed around whether or not there were any scary parts in the story. Lance was the only child to find any parts of the stories scary, yet this did not affect his enjoyment of the tales in a negative way. In *The Fox and the Horse*, he found it scary when the lion roars, perhaps because of his empathy for the old lady, who may have been scared at this point. He seemed so intrigued by the story that perhaps he got caught up in it. The other children may not have been scared because they are used to much more severe violence and suspense on television. Lance also found it scary in *The Mother-in-Law and the Sour Milk* when the mother-in-law gets stuck in the roots, perhaps because he again became too involved in the characters. It may have made the story more fun for him, as he reacted with big eyes and laughter. The other children almost sniggered when they were asked if any parts were scary, suggesting that there were definitely no scary parts for them. This could have been a desire to act brave or may have indicated that they were able to separate fiction from reality, so that they were not scared simply because it was a story. But suspense and anticipation in stories were sources of enjoyment for many of the children, as was seen at threshold moments, such as in *The Fox and the Horse*, where the children answered excitedly about what they thought would happen next.

One interesting aspect that was picked up on and was unrelated to the stories that were being read, was that Kabelo was intrigued by dinosaurs because they are terrifying. (His conversation about dinosaurs began because of a display of dinosaurs in the classroom in which the interviews were being conducted.) Of course, many young boys like dinosaurs, but his explicit statement that he likes them because they are scary suggests that fear in stories can be appealing to children.

Length of stories: The length of the stories seemed to affect the enjoyment of them, as well as the children's willingness to summarise the tales. Kelly and Yolande were reluctant to retell stories such as *King Grisly-Beard*, saying that they were too long to remember. Just after the story, Yolande said, "That was too big, I can't remember anything", and when she was asked to re-tell the story, she reiterated, "…I can't tell everything". Yet when the questioning was broken down into simpler questions, she coped without a problem. In *Jorinda and Jorindel*, when she was asked to retell the story, she responded, "It's quite a long story", suggesting that it was daunting for her to reiterate the entire thing. As she consistently enjoyed the stories, this could mean that shorter stories are more suitable to children of this age, as it seems that they viewed longer stories as stressful to recall. Of course, this may not have been an issue if the stories were only being read and not questioned too. It was therefore significant that stories such as *The Fox and the Horse* seemed to be more popular than *King Grisly-Beard*, as length may have been a contributing factor.

There were also a few children who appeared as if they were not concentrating, but who claimed to enjoy the process. This difficulty in concentrating affected the researcher's later story choices, as different length stories were chosen to see whether length was a factor. An example of this inability to concentrate for long periods was Kabelo, who, just as he was asked in *Jorinda and Jorindel* what he thought would happen after Jorindel's dream, said, "At my mother, we jumped on the jumping castle and I hurt someone by mistake." This was probably bothering him, but he may have been compelled to discuss it because he was not concentrating. He may also have been prompted to remember this incident because of something that he heard in the story (although he repeatedly interjected with seemingly disconnected comments). Another speculation is that it is difficult for some children to concentrate if there are no visuals, such as pictures, for them to look at during the reading

Trickery: Trickery is an element that occurred frequently in the stories. This can be a rather complicated phenomenon, as the plot twists are usually quite complex. It seemed that it was often the children who understood the stories better or who were more familiar with these types of stories, who understood and enjoyed the trickery more. It also emerged that trickery was accepted by the children if it taught a 'bad' character a lesson, which links to their apparent need for justice. Tumelo enjoyed the redemption scene in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk* where the old lady is freed, perhaps showing an enjoyment or desire for

happy endings or for thresholds. He thought that the most interesting part was when they eat the bird instead of eating the old lady, possibly because he enjoyed the trickery or the unexpected turn of events – the fact that he understood this part so well shows his intelligence. Kabelo and Yolande seemed to think that if in *Jorinda and Jorindel* the girls were not turned into birds, perhaps they would escape, which is also clever. They understood the trickery and planning involved in her scheme. In the same story, Lance understood the deception, as he thought it was a good idea for Jorindel to go to the castle, as the fairy would not have anticipated this visit. He understood that one needs to use trickery to overcome trickery.

Jarred and Lance liked the character of King Grisly-Beard because of his trickery and disguise, suggesting that even though his actions are underhand, his deception can be viewed as entertaining in a story context (both these boys seemed to enjoy adventure, although John did not always understand the trickery). Cole could also validate trickery in this story, if it was for the purpose of teaching a lesson. This trickery might therefore have been a type of humour that appealed to him. It would make sense that he enjoyed trickery, as he liked making plans, which he continually divulged in conversations about his hobbies (In the first session, when he was asked if he made up stories, he said, "…I make up plans. I got my mom caught in a trap… I plan a lot"). In *The Fox and the Horse*, the children recognised the trickery too. For example, Cole thought that the fox was a good actor, which is why he is believed and Lance recognised an alliance between the fox and the horse. Yolande realised that this trickery would lead to a desire for revenge by the lion.

Tumelo and Yolande seemed to enjoy the trickery throughout, while Kabelo, Kelly, Lance and Munyadi often missed the trickery. Especially in *King Grisly-Beard*, it was evident that although Munyadi recalled some of the facts, she struggled with the part about the disguise and trickery. It was necessary to explain the trickery to her numerous times, and she still did not seem confident that she understood it. The understanding of trickery could therefore be a sign of a certain level of development or intelligence, but could also indicate a preference for a certain type of story.

In *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, Neliswe, Yolande and Cole thought that nobody was calling the mother-in-law when she was working in the fields, so their understanding of trickery was good, either because their comprehension of the underhanded plots was good

or they were used to the conventions. Only Kelly, John and Lance did not identify that she was lying. Most of the children were able to pinpoint her lie, possibly because many of them were very aware of morals. In this same story, the major element of trickery involved the large bird, who ensured the lady's freedom. Kabelo, Neliswe and John thought that the wild cat puts dew on the bird's legs because they are dirty, Munyadi thought it was so that he did not get cold and Lance so that they would think it was raining (this seems like a special effect from television). Thus they missed the trickery. Yolande did not know why there was dew on the bird's feet, but understood the trickery in that he would be implicated in this manner. She said that the animals like the taste of chicken (referring to the bird that they ate), which was a joke that she made, thus reinforcing her enjoyment of humour. This kind of sleuth thinking is quite advanced and seems to reflect a deep understanding of the story. It is therefore interesting that almost all of the children thought that putting dew on the bird's feet was a helpful, not a malicious gesture, so again most of them did not catch on to the trickery that is such an integral part of African tales. But it did not seem to detract from their enjoyment.

Magic in the stories: Magic is also a major source of enjoyment for children. Nesbitt (1966, 14) states that magic creates a sense of wonder and escape for a child, so the fact that magic allowed the children to explore alternate worlds could have been a reason for its enjoyment. Aspects such as the characters' ability to transform, for example the king in *King Grisly-Beard*, who is able to act as numerous characters, seemed to be enjoyed by many of the children. Van Straten (1996, 333) says that this fantasy and the fact that the children know that the content is fictional, are instrumental in allowing them an imaginative space to explore their problems. Although there is no concrete evidence of this taking place in this study, there were many favourable responses to the magic in the stories.

The fantasy involved in the magic of the stories seemed to be very appealing. For example, the flower in *Jorinda and Jorindel* was very popular, possibly because of its magical powers to save the girls. In this story, Kabelo seemed to think that the flower was guaranteed to work because it had magical powers, which may suggest that he realised the power of magic in fiction. Kelly also assumed that the purple flower was foolproof because Jorindel had tested it – this shows a link to reality. But she trusted that magic was the correct solution here, showing that she still ascribed to these fictitious ideas. Tumelo liked it when Jorindel picks the flower, maybe because of the magic involved or because it is a

threshold moment, and he may have found it exciting. When Neliswe retold the story, she focussed on the part with the flower opening the cages. When she was asked guided questions about the story, she knew the answers to most of them. Therefore maybe this part with the flower was the most memorable for her because of its magic. Lance was intrigued by the fairy and liked her best. He thought she was very special because she can do magical things, such as picking up the girl, who would be much bigger than she is. He did not dislike her for her nastiness, but was rather amazed by the magical aspects.

Humour in the stories: Humour also proved to be important to the enjoyment of the stories. Although some of the children were shy or did not react with smiles or laughter, many of them quite frequently reacted at appropriate parts and even stated that they liked certain stories, such as *The Fox and the Horse*, because they were "funny". John sometimes missed the trickery, but often laughed at the humour. This suggests that a misunderstanding of the trickery does not exclude enjoyment of the humour. Kelly, Lance, Kabelo and Yolande also reacted well to the humour, often with gestures. This suggests that humour is simpler to understand than is trickery, as it does not necessarily involve any complicated plot twists and is more accessible to a greater number of young children. Tumelo even created his own humour, concentrating on the part when Maqinase talks to the other animals. He also elaborated on this story, which suggests that this was an important factor for him.

Other stories were deemed "funny" too. In *The Fox and the Horse*, Yolande and Cole in particular enjoyed the humour. Yolande said she liked the part when, "…they tied the lion's feet and the horse pulled him", while Cole said, "I thought it was funny because I thought that the horse and the lion were going to chase each other in circles and get tangled". Many of the children found it very amusing when Maqinase insults the animals that he was passing, even though they realised that it was rude. They also laughed when the princess in *King Grisly-Beard* is rude to her potential suitors. This is an excellent example, showing how stories allow children to enjoy things that may not necessarily be acceptable behaviour for them in real life. John based his choice of his favourite characters on humour, as in M*aqinase*, he chose, "The donkey and the frog and the tortoise… Because they funny." They often also chose their favourite parts in a story by seeing which part was the funniest. An example is Yolande, who liked the part where Maqinase said that the donkey had big ears because "They're funny". Lance also laughed at the "Big Ears" part, so humour was important to him too. In *Maqinase*, Kelly even laughed at the ending where it says, "Let those who sleep eat their sleep" although she did not know why,

suggesting that the sounds of words, not only their meanings, can create humour. The appeal could also stem from the lack of meaning in this type of nonsense verse. In *King Grisly-Beard*, Jarred was able to laugh at the humour of the comparison with the king's beard, suggesting a familiarity with the created image. Cole laughed at others' misfortunes throughout the stories and enjoyed the trickery, so this must have been the type of humour that appealed to him. Therefore although this behaviour is unacceptable in normal society, it could be seen as a way for children to work through these forbidden areas safely. Bettelheim (1991, 6–8) states that this is one of the purposes of these stories. The children's acting in many of the activities often illustrated this point.

4.1.4 Props and Activities

The puppets and other props played a big part in the enjoyment and understanding of the stories. This confirms Michael Benton's (1990, 115 & 116) assertion that Reader-Response theory views reading as co-operative, active and creative, if it is to be fully enjoyed. The reason that illustrations were not used in this study was so that they did not detract from the text of the stories. Although this may have worked to some extent, it seems that the children used the pictures available to them (in the form of the puppets or felt boards) to explain aspects of the stories to themselves and to the reader. This was evident when they used the exposed props as pointers in the stories. The difference between props and illustrations is that illustrations are usually used consistently throughout a story, whereas the props, unless they were in view, were only shown at the end. Both the illustrations and the props dictate how the reader must envision the characters, but the illustrations usually introduce this nearer the beginning of the story, so that the prescribed idea may stick with the reader throughout the reading. Also, the environment is shown in detail, so that it may be difficult for the reader to use his/her imagination freely. In this research, the use of the props also yielded interesting information about not having shown illustrations during the readings. For example, some of the children seemed to get bored during the reading and this could possibly have been avoided if they had the illustrations to entertain them.

Tumelo and Kabelo especially seemed to find the props useful to explain the stories to the researcher and to themselves. In *King Grisly-Beard*, Tumelo kept confirming during the reading that he had the right characters by asking, "Is this the skew one?" or "Is this one the

princess?" It seemed that by concretising who the characters were, he was better able to understand the stories. Kabelo was distracted by the puppets in this story even from before the story was read, playing with their crowns and enacting with the puppets what was being read. When it was read that the beggar and the princess get married, for example, he had them holding hands. This seemed to enhance his enjoyment and help his understanding. Before the reading of *King Grisly-Beard*, when it was asked what he thought the story could be about, he asked, pointing at the puppets, "Which one's the king?" and "Why can't this belong here?" (in reference to the princess's crown that he wanted to put on the king). Throughout this story, he continued to play with the puppets, suggesting that their presence aided his meaning-making. This could mean that for children like him, illustrations can assist the understanding process, as the interaction is a way of comprehending what could otherwise be insubstantial details.

As discussed in Chapter Three, most children were eager to interact with the props, except for Munyadi and Neliswe. They preferred to draw pictures, as they seemed to feel uncomfortable acting. The more talkative children, such as Yolande, Kabelo and Tumelo, voluntarily acted out the stories. Jarred enjoyed the tasks, especially the interactive ones. He seemed to work well with these, such as putting his fingers through the puppets as their legs. There was obviously a link between a child's confidence and his/her willingness to participate. Tumelo enjoyed the props, but suggested how they could be improved. One suggestion involved making their expressions more realistic, such as that in *Maqinase*, "…you must make his face to be sad also… Because this one was sad also his mom did shout at him and this one was sad". This was very perceptive, as both the pig puppets are smiling and he said that there should have been happy ones and sad ones, because at different stages in the story, their emotions changed. This shows that he was in touch with the characters' emotions and understood the implications of what they are feeling.

Lance and Kelly both seemed to enjoy the interaction of the puppets and the puppets helped them understand the stories by using them to explain the stories aloud. This could be an argument in favour of illustrations adding to the enjoyment and understanding of the stories, rather than detracting from the text. This helps to confirm Moore's (1966, 195) view that illustrations can be useful. This contradicts Bettelheim (1991, 59 & 60) and Karl's (1970, 81 & 83) ideas that illustrations can hamper the imaginative process and that children will often unquestioningly accept the perspective of the illustrator or writer, given

through illustrations. The effectiveness of these props suggests that learning occurs in different ways and that possibly the visual could be a more accessible form of learning than the written is, as it can encourage interaction.

The children also frequently asked questions about the props, including who the characters represented, how the puppets were made and who made them. In particular, Kelly and Jarred were very interested in how the puppets were made and what they were made of. This suggests that the aesthetic aspects may contribute to the appreciation of and interaction with these props.

Sound effects were also appealing to some participants. This confirms Adams's (1953, 118) idea that sound effects, including repetition, can enhance enjoyment, as these features seemed to make the children laugh. These were either sound effects written in the stories, such as the actual barking of the dog in *Maqinase*, "Heyi heyi heyi!", or Maqinase's shrieks, "We … ho … ho … ho …!" Other sound effects included ones that the researcher inserted, such as emphasising certain words or voices for effect. An example is Maqinase's mother's anger when Maqinase comes home (her possible tone and frustration were emulated and exaggerated by the researcher). The sound effects may make the stories more fun. In *Jorinda and Jorindel*, Kelly laughed after the fairy's song ended with the words "jug jug", suggesting that she may have liked the sound effects. Lance was another of the children who reacted favourably to the sound effects, giggling when he heard them. Yet he was hesitant to answer regular questions, which may show that he was shy to respond. This could suggest that perhaps the plain words were insufficient for him. Tumelo is one child who seemed to like to add sound effects to his retellings of the stories, possibly to add excitement. This means that when he had the chance to be creative, he added in effects that he probably would have liked to have had in the story. This could therefore mean that stories can be more enjoyable if they are told with ample expression and enthusiasm.

4.2 What the Prediction Questions Revealed

There were many questions structured around prediction in these sessions. One purpose of establishing whether the subjects could predict what might happen next, was to see their familiarity with stories in that genre, or their ability to anticipate the plot, as guided by the

story. This type of question was usually asked with a simple “What do you think will happen next?” so that the child was free to anticipate whatever he/she thought was appropriate. In *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, questions were asked in order to establish if the children realised that the moral of the story was that the rock rabbit was lazy and therefore would not be rewarded. The question was, “What do you think is going to happen? Will the hare have his tail?” A similar question was asked for each animal that passes by, to see if the children understood the pattern of negative answers that suited the rock rabbit’s behaviour. In *Jorinda and Jorindel*, asking what might happen after Jorinda and Jorindel cannot decide which way to go in the forest, seemed a useful way to test whether they were familiar with the usual plot in fairy tales where children get lost. All the children except for Munyadi were able to predict that the children will get lost and that danger is imminent. It seems significant that Kelly thought that they would “Get trapped by lions”, suggesting that she did not necessarily distinguish between fairy tales and African folk tales, as she seemed to be mixing them up. Once again, though, Jarred predicted correctly by saying, “They going to the castle”. Even though his exposure to fiction was limited, he was able to acknowledge the possible plot twists. The castle had been mentioned in the story, but it is interesting that he was able to link the plot to this symbol of fairy tales, despite his lack of contact with the genre.

Some children avoided predicting. Munyadi was not forthcoming with her predictions and usually answered “I don’t know”. Although she later interspersed these with one-word answers, she seemed uncomfortable being required to anticipate what was going to happen. There were also those on the other side of the spectrum who were extremely enthusiastic about predicting. Yolande was one such child who often anticipated what was coming next without any probing, yet avoided answering direct questions related to prediction of what would happen next, often at a threshold moment. An example is in *King Grisly-Beard* when the kings and princes are seated at dinner and she stated, “I think what she’s doing is she wants to see a prince who’s clever”, yet when asked what she thought a story could be about or what would happen next, she answered with “I don’t know”. She seemed eager to anticipate what would happen, if it was on her own terms. These predictions may possibly have been based on the stories she had read before.

There were also other children who were very accurate in their answers throughout, yet hesitated to predict. If one speculates, it may be possible to assume that they did not want to

risk being wrong, or even that they did not want to spoil the surprise of the story to come. It could also be, as previously mentioned, that they were bored with the story or the questioning process and did not feel like answering yet more questions. It is understandable that many of the predictions were based on the children's previous knowledge and some of them were able to use the fairy tale conventions that they were aware of to make these predictions. This was specifically highlighted in Jarred's case. Fairy tale conventions were important because knowledge about fairy tales, as well as pre-existing ideas about culture, could affect their answers. Kelly, Yolande and Kabelo often suggested that events would culminate in marriage, which may have been gleaned from other stories or from television. When it stated in *Jorinda and Jorindel* that the characters would get married soon, Kabelo said, "'Cos if you marry, you'll get love with that girl." This seemed to be a stereotype that he had picked up, possibly from television or from other stories, but he definitely had preconceived ideas. Even in *King Grisly-Beard*, when the princess teases all the princes in the beginning, he said something seemingly unconnected, namely, "Because every man sometimes when they getting married, September, July, October, November…all of them…they hold hands." His focus on marriage and the conventions that come with it seem to be the result of outside influences. Also in *Jorinda and Jorindel*, when Kelly was asked for an alternative ending to the story, she responded, "Wedding", thus suggesting that this is both expected and enjoyed in these stories. Yolande's favourite part of this story was the end because "…they lived happily ever after and got married", which suggests that a neat resolution is often important to the children.

As may have been anticipated, some children predicted when they felt confident that they knew the answer, but resisted when they did not. Some resisted answering, even though it was obvious that they knew the answers. Sometimes, they would be given the answer and then say, "I knew it!", as Kelly did on numerous occasions. Although in *The Fox and the horse*, Neliswe simply said "I don't know" in response to the prediction questions, in *Maqinase*, she excelled. She had a good understanding of Maqinase's mother's angry emotions when he leaves home, as she said she would be "angry". She also showed her understanding of right and wrong when she said that he will be discovered in the fields and will be shouted at, so she focussed on morality. It seems that her prediction of this story was her best, possibly because she enjoyed it more or she found it the easiest.

In *The Fox and the Horse*, the children were asked what they thought would happen to the horse. Cole knew what it meant to want revenge and he thought that the lion would seek vengeance on the fox for having been tricked. His suggestion that he would want to kill the fox with his paw is quite violent and may come from cartoons or even from nature programmes. Jarred suggested that the lion would get killed by the farmer for meat, which suggested that the lion deserved to get punished, although he did not do anything wrong. He understood the parallel mechanisms in this story – the lion was going to eat the horse, so now they would eat him. John also made the ending rather vindictive. He felt that the lion would be killed by the horse because of the tail. This seems strange because all that the lion wanted to do was to eat. Kelly gave the story quite a fatalistic ending by having the lion tied to the horse forever – she did not allow the lion a happy ending, despite the fact that he is innocent. Munyadi saw an unhappy ending for the lion too, as she said he would be sad and never be untied. Tumelo predicted a dismal end for the lion, as well as for his lion friends. Even though the lions are all innocent, perhaps Tumelo is judging them on their reputation as violent aggressors. He thought they would die by falling into a trap that was made for them. It was interesting that Yolande felt that the lion would be punished too. She was particularly graphic and violent about the punishment, which seemed like she was influenced by cartoons. She suggested that the lion's mouth would be taped closed, he would be chopped up, and cooked for supper. Neliswe gave the lion a happy ending, maybe because she knew that he was blameless. She predicted that he would just walk away, although he was cross because he wanted to eat the horse. She understood his emotions. Kabelo resisted answering, but when he was told that the answer was not in the story, he said that the lion would be sad. He also gave the lion a happy ending, saying that he would fall and get tired, but sleep safely in a tree (although this seems slightly ambivalent). Lance's idea of preserving the lion seemed mature and insightful. He suggested that the farmer put the lion in the museum (even though it was not dead yet), along with all the other strange things there. Many of these predictions reinforce points made in the 'Punishment and Morals' section that appears on Pages 136–138, as they show a desire for revenge on the perceived aggressor.

4.3 Fiction and Reality

A question that arises from studying children's fiction is the extent of the children's ability to distinguish between fiction and reality. Bratton (1981, 30) asserts that children of about six or seven cannot differentiate between what is real and what is not. Yet in this study, the majority of the children seemed to cope with this competently. In *The Fox and the Horse*, all the children except for Lance were able to understand that the supernatural events in the story, such as the horse becoming stronger than a lion, are possible because they are fictional. All the children except for Yolande seemed to understand perfectly that the frogs in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk* can talk because they are imaginary or from a story. Although children such as John needed prompting, they still understood this.

One area in which there was some confusion in the children's ability to distinguish between fiction and reality, was whether or not they could separate the fact that although the animals act and speak like people, they are in fact animals. Some of the children simply thought that they were people and were surprised to find out, if they were corrected, that they were not. This was seen especially in *Maqinase*, as they thought he was a real boy. Yolande and Kabelo, for example, both called Maqinase a "boy" instead of a "pig" and Tumelo said, "They want to take Maqi-, the girl", suggesting that he saw no difference between animals and humans if they can talk and they display human qualities. Neliswe also focussed mostly on reality and she was reluctant to use her imagination, such as that she preferred to refer to the animals as people, rather than as fictional animals. This was seen in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, when she called the rock rabbit "she" instead of "he", and when she was asked if she thought it was a girl or boy, she said, "I think it's a girl…Because she's got a baby." Kabelo also said in his acting like the rock rabbit, "My little girl", suggesting that he treated the baby like a human. (The children's choice of gender for the characters could also be significant, as perhaps they chose according to their own gender, or according to the traits that the character displays.) Yolande understood that in *Jorinda and Jorindel*, the girls had the potential to escape because they were humans (she suggested that they could use a knife), but that as birds they are less of a threat. These answers suggest that although the plot twists may be unusual or separate from real life, the children could rationalise them and therefore believe them in the context of a story.

Margaret Meek's suggestion (1990, 168) (see Pages 7 & 8) that a story needs to match a child's real experience to be enjoyed, would disqualify fantasy, such as talking animals, since these would not be part of the child's reality. But this did not seem true in this study, especially in relation to Jarred, whose home environment was devoid of any fantasy. Yet throughout the sessions, he remained wide-eyed and interested, seemingly revelling in this unfamiliar territory. Jarred was able to understand and appreciate that characters can act in certain ways because of their fictional status. This was displayed when he was asked in *The Fox and the Horse* why the animals can talk and he said, "Because it's just a story." This suggests that he had somehow learned that this imaginative premise is acceptable in these kinds of stories.

Most of the children were able to articulate that the rules of fiction and reality are different in *The Fox and the Horse*, by explaining why the animals can talk. Examples of answers to why the animals speak included Cole's "Because it's a fairy tale", Neliswe's "Because it's just a story", John's, "It's on TV" and Kabelo's, "'Cos they have a voice…In the TV, the toys can talk…Because the TV, they make them talk". Tumelo said,

> In the story, everything can talk in the story. Also on the cassette, they can talk. They put batteries in them… They are actually people. They go inside the suits and make like they are Popeye and funny things.

Therefore some children even extended this idea of fiction following different rules to real life, to television and tapes that they had seen. In this case, they associated it with humans dressed as characters on television. They could then explain and comprehend fictitious aspects that they see in real life. Only Lance seemed to have difficulty with the concept that the animals can talk because it is a story. Yet other evidence seems to show that his understanding was good, but he may have been shy to express it. The fact that he still believed in the tooth fairy suggests that fantasy was not discouraged at home and that he was probably intrigued by the fiction and its characters. In a similar question in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, only Yolande was not able to answer why the frogs could talk, but it may simply have been a misunderstanding. Some children needed physical proof in the stories in order for something to exist. This means that the character needed to appear and/or speak in order for it to be real. In *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, the children do not encounter the rock rabbit's baby, so they assumed that it does not exist.

Because the baby is spoken about, yet is never encountered in the story, they thought that it had to have been a lie. Although the children were sometimes unable to make this distinction between what was real and what was not, it could simply show that they were engrossed in the action, rather than that they were unable to make this separation. In general, the children's ability to distinguish between fiction and reality seemed to challenge Bratton's (1981, 30) theory that children of this age are unable to do so.

Yet the children sometimes could not traverse the gap between what can happen in the stories and what happens in reality, as they often suggested that a scenario was impossible because it did not obey the rules of reality. In *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, Neliswe and Tumelo thought the rock rabbit may be too young to have a child. Jarred and Kelly did not see a baby in the story, so they thought that the rock rabbit did not have one. John thought that the rock rabbit was lying in order to get a tail, so his dishonesty benefits him. Munyadi simply stated that he was not telling the truth. Kabelo thought he did have a child, but that he was lying about its being sick, while Yolande thought he was lying, but she was not certain. The children filled in the gaps by explaining according to things that they were familiar with, such as the laws of nature or the way peoples' minds work in real life. They also sometimes made up their own stories in order to make sense of the stories.

4.4 Stories as Impetus for Imagination

The desire to tell one's own stories seems to be linked to confidence. But it also seems to be associated with a desire to share one's life, as well as to elaborate on the existing stories. It is also possible that children are inspired by the literature or need to bring the stories closer to their own lives, possibly to establish the link between fiction and reality. Bettelheim (1991, 7 & 73) says that fairy tales are able to speak to every level of a person, as they deal with universally common problems. Without them, it is hard for children to create their own stories, which help them deal with their problems. This is because all that a child can imagine is different scenarios of his/her present life. Although some children were not very good at predicting correctly in response to specific questions in the study, they were able to use their imaginations to create their own stories. Some children's predictions even led to their telling stories of their own, and through the interpretations of these, the researcher was able to see what was important to them. This addresses one of the main research questions

about how previous knowledge can affect children's answers. According to Rosenblatt (1970, 51–53), these personal stories can help a child express his/her emotions and allow him/her to interact with the adventure more closely. Sometimes the subjects' stories were linked to the stories being read to them, confirming this claim. But more commonly, they were linked to their immediate environments, including family and school. Piaget and Freud, among others, agree that people often alter stories to make them suit their problems or expectations. So children will view stories from the perspective with which they are already familiar.

It became evident that many of the children wanted to tell their stories, whether or not this was encouraged. After the first and second sessions, it was recognised that it was necessary to have some preliminary conversation with the children. In the first two sets of interviews, the reading and questioning began almost immediately, but it was found that some of the children were not participating and that they also interrupted the reading or questioning in order to share some of their news. Tumelo, in the second interview, for example, started chatting just after he said hello:

> Researcher: Hi Tumelo.
> Tumelo: Hi, we're having a picnic again at the end of the term. My sister had to buy food for four picnics. And tomorrow's civvies.

Another example was during the reading of *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, when it was read that the old lady talks to the hoe, and Tumelo said, "My friend's dogs like milk, but when it eats dog food, when the little one goes to eat, it wants to bite the small ones…". This may have been triggered by something he heard in the story. Kabelo was similarly enthusiastic to share his news. Therefore from the third to the last session, the children were asked about their day or weekend and if they had any news. These questions helped make the children feel comfortable, and gave them the opportunity to express themselves freely. In this way, they were able to talk and share anything that was important to them, but at a time that did not interfere with the questioning.

Some children, such as Kelly, Tumelo and Kabelo, focussed on their and the characters' families in the stories that they told. This seems to be a natural phenomenon, as children of this age have lives that revolve around school and home, so it is unsurprising that their

answers would be affected by those around them. This corroborates Rosenblatt's (1970, 79) view that children bring their experiences with them into a story and their own spontaneous stories may be this interaction between the fiction and their real lives. Tumelo's sister had mentioned that he loved to tell stories, particularly about his home environment, so his storytelling seemed to be a common practice. Also, these three children, especially Kabelo and Tumelo, were very talkative and participative throughout the sessions and this may have contributed to their willingness to share their personal anecdotes.

Although this extra questioning worked for most children, Tumelo, and especially Kabelo, continued to contribute their own stories throughout the interviews. These were often unrelated to the stories being read, but in both their cases, were often about their families and pets. Both boys frequently focussed on crime too, which may have been a reflection of their concerns in their everyday lives. Kabelo told stories about incidents that occurred when his father was driving, as well as some involving his pets. Tumelo's stories mostly centred around his family and his dogs, two aspects that seemed very important to him. He also talked a lot about crime and the police, suggesting that he may have been scared or insecure in general. In *Jorinda and Jorindel*, he continued to talk about crime and security in reference to the purple flower. He said, "…whoever stealed it, because you only press the thing where all of this and the police comes and knows you have trouble (He indicated a 'button' on his wrist)… And they take him away". Although this is confusing, it seems that he was referring to a remote control that his sister had, which he imbued with magical powers. During the *King Grisly-Beard* session, he again talked about alarms on cars and gave descriptions of how the central locking worked. These stories were not necessarily sparked by the tales that were being read, but rather by the desire to share in an open environment. The actual process of listening and storytelling seemed to provide the stimulus for both boys to share their ideas.

Kabelo stories were sometimes fantastical, but possibly based on reality, with familiar characters, such as his mother and sister. He told a long story about his father being stopped by the cops. He seemed to enjoy telling stories and possibly embellishing on them. Besides creating stories containing topics familiar to him, he also made up stories involving objects that were in close proximity to him, such as the interest table that was situated in the class. These stories may have been ways for him to fantasise about himself in a believable, but distant world, reminiscent of the stories. It is therefore interesting that he said that he did

not watch much television when he was little, as he must have either read a lot of stories or had a very good imagination.

Kabelo often veered off the topic, although sometimes the original story he told was linked to something that had been said. In the very first story, Kabelo answered that his favourite story was *Spiderman*. He then added, "But my friend at home said that *Spiderman* will change… To be another thing like this. When it sees a car, it picks it up and throws it." In this case, his story was related to what he was discussing, but he lost focus of the questioning. When he was asked who fetched him from school, he began talking about the money given to his sister for food, then that he thought she lived in Cape Town. Although this story is partly based on fact, it seems that he got carried away and embellished on it. In *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, when it was mentioned that the cat wiped dew on the feet of the large bird, he unexpectedly said, "After my mom's birthday, it's my sister's birthday". It is uncertain how these ideas were triggered. These trends seem to show that Kabelo had difficulty concentrating, but also enjoyed sharing titbits of his real life.

Kabelo sometimes linked his stories to the questions. When he was told that the wild cat saved the lady, he said,

> 'Cos they always get chased. All the people chase her away. And the police chase ladies… Another dad, my friend's, climbed to his roof and he came, he found them and the cat fell off and ran away and he started to shoot one. And he tried to shoot me and I hide! He ran after me and I ran fast.

This seems to be a combination of fantasy and reality. He was able to make the link between being saved and being pursued, and even added himself in as a character, so that the storytelling process became very personal. The events he talked about may have been amusing or important to him, and may have linked them to the context in a tenuous, but sensible manner.

Kabelo told a very involved story about his father in the traffic. It seems significant that he started this story at the beginning of the session, but because he did not get a chance to finish it, he continued telling it at the end. This traffic story involved road rage and a taxi accident, where he specified that nobody died. He liked to tell these stories in detail,

perhaps because of their relevance to his own life. He also seemed to exaggerate certain exciting details for effect. He even answered that one of Maqinase's dangers is that he may get knocked over by a car, as he said, "They're going to steal him sometimes or they're gonna, the car's gonna bumped him", suggesting that traffic issues may have worried him. He therefore seemed to enjoy recounting real life stories, emphasising the drama.

Kabelo also added on to or altered the stories, such as in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, where he made the story longer. He showed the rock rabbit asking every animal for a tail, then after the animals return, he had them all walking past the rock rabbit's home and falling asleep. He then requested to act it out again, where he placed them in his own order. Later, he again had the rock rabbit asking each animal in turn to bring him a tail, then all of them falling asleep again. In *King Grisly-Beard*, he added the princess and the beggar having wedding photos, which he may have seen in real life or on television. He retold the story well, and ended with the soldier ramming into the princess. Perhaps this threshold was the most exciting part for him, since he did not continue. Therefore, he enjoyed taking the existing stories and personalising them with his unique imaginative aspects.

Tumelo told very long and involved stories about his family in general. In his sister's parent/guardian interview, she mentioned that Tumelo enjoyed telling stories about his two dogs, and it seemed that he elaborated on these so that they fitted into the more fantastical genre of these tales. This could have been a way for him to express himself openly. An interesting comment was that if nobody wanted to read to him, he said, "…I say it myself." This suggests that he took responsibility for his own reading habits and also highlights the importance of not only being told stories, but of being able to tell stories too. When he was asked whether anybody read to him when he was younger, he said, "No, I didn't want it. I liked to count with my fingers and do like this with my fingers (sucks his thumb) and when they gave me something, I liked to throw it down…" These comments suggest self-awareness, as well as a sense of personal input in his reading.

Tumelo's stories about his dogs were numerous. After talking about what he watched on television, he said,

> I have two dogs and I must feed them. I have to give them two foods. When the big one has finished his food, he wants to take the little one's food… But

> the small one has much more power. And he throws him down and goes, 'Row-row!', so I need to go and check. I found them fighting… My brother gave them milk and the big one had more and they were fighting with the plate and I, and the big one played with the bowl and I took the bowl…

These kinds of stories are repeated throughout. The hierarchy of the dogs seemed to be a major concern for him. By the time he was read *Maqinase*, he was still talking about the dogs, ending the story with how he taught them to fight. This seemed to be based on reality, but it was almost as if he was turning it into a drama. For him the stories were highly significant, and since the researcher responded with interest, it may have encouraged him to continue the dramatisation. In the last session, Tumelo immediately started to tell a story about his dog, saying how he saved a dog and he fed it, "…bread and seven, seven milks". This could have been intended to show his compassion and responsibility, but also seemed exaggerated. A seemingly fantastical, but possibly true story about his dog, involved the dog understanding road signs, as he said that his dog knew to stop at stop signs. Also, he linked his own dogs with the animals in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, who had no tails. He thought in a very mature manner and was able to take responsibility for himself and the dogs, and often expressed concern over their welfare. Yet he was still childlike in his selection of the name 'Tiger' for his dog, which denotes strength and power, and that he may have seen on television or in stories

Tumelo told stories about other aspects of his life too. His domestic stories included ones about his sister going out and leaving him at home alone, where he fed himself and washed up, suggesting his independence. This seemed as if it happened, yet also links to the fairy tale theme of abandonment and loneliness, although he did not seem at all upset by it. During *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, he told a story about how he scored a goal in a soccer game and was given money as a reward. Even if this story were based on reality, he seemed to have embellished on it. A later story about soccer seemed similarly inflated, when he said that his team won, and he focussed on their compassion to other players and their reward of a meal at McDonalds. He said, "…we didn't let our goalkeeper down. We didn't shout at him when they had a score, we didn't do nothing…". Therefore, Tumelo used a lot of time before the reading to express himself. His stories seemed to be a combination of real events and desired outcomes.

Tumelo also told stories during the activities. These stories used the characters from the stories, but changed the plot. With *Maqinase*, the story seemed to continue for ages, but it seemed to concentrate on events after Maqinase came home. It was initially interesting because he had the donkey, the frog and the tortoise approaching Maqinase's mother to complain to her about how naughty her son was, and she was defending Maqinase. But thereafter it became a bit confusing and longwinded. It consisted of the animals fighting each other, and of the different alliances between them. At the end, the donkey and the frog were the victors, but then the donkey beat all of the others. The violence and sound effects probably show that he watched a lot of television and he knew how these scenes are conducted. He moved around a lot and seemed engrossed in his story. In *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, he changed the story by saying, "'I'm hungry. I think I must go and eat that bunny." He made the story more violent, introducing chase scenes and threats. This long story, with its added violence and sound effects, could suggest that these were desirable aspects for him. But it also suggests that children are capable of embellishing on, or even inventing, their own stories with their strong imaginations.

With the felt board, Tumelo did a role play, like he did with the puppets, and again it was lengthy. He started the story with the rock rabbit asking the animals for a tail, then it went into his own story. It returned to when the rock rabbit asked for his tail and they forgot it and then the hyena was everyone's enemy, but they made friends at the end. He seemed to like being creative. In *King Grisly-Beard*, he focussed on the princess's crown and again added the violence of King Grisly-Beard hitting the princess, and the beggar and the soldier fighting. This showed a misunderstanding that they are not the same person, when in fact they are. The horse and the soldier eventually die, but he still ended with the line, "I wish you went to the party.'" It is quite amusing how he changed most of the story, yet kept the ending the same. A point that could be significant is that he asked to name the soldier Peter. (Another child who was interested in naming characters herself was Yolande, possibly because it makes the stories more personal.) Some of the alterations in these stories could come from misunderstandings, but it seems that a lot of the changes were simply inspired by imagination.

Tumelo also displayed that he had very good recall and understanding of fairy tales. This sharp memory could suggest that the stories he told were real and were from his earlier years. When he was asked if he had ever heard fairy tales, he said,

> I also did watch on TV three goats and father went over the bridge and that thing went 'Ooh, who's that knocking on my bridge? I will eat you goat.' 'Well wait for my brother, he has much more meat, when you eat me, you just take one bite.'

From here, he recalls the entire story in minute detail. He also got very involved in the stories, such as when the horse goes back to the farm in *The Fox and the Horse*, he said, "Maybe they're taking him to that man and that man is going to kill it and let all the lions come and he'll say, 'Leave the poor lion, let him out.' And they will be friends and they will drink the water." It seems that he had a vested interest in the stories and that he was able to insert himself in those stories in order to engage with them more intimately. Perhaps his own interest in telling personal stories led him to empathise with these characters and thus interact with the stories more intimately. When asked what African tales he had read, he answered as follows:

> There was one, the last one I remember was, there was a dog called Shillipi… So it was very, very naughty! When they called it (he whistles), it said, 'Stop call me (whistles – the dog did not want to be whistled at).' And they said, 'Ah, you are bad'. And they took it, so he was outside and it make lot of eggs. And they wanted to took his eggs. And he said, 'You didn't, you taking me out of your house, but now you want to eat my eggs.'

The moral here seemed genuine, whether or not he had created the story himself. Thus for Tumelo, stories did not only seem to be for entertainment, but were also intriguing opportunities that could invite him into a new realm.

Yolande's re-telling of *King Grisly-Beard* was very intriguing in terms of her altering the story according to her own preferences. Firstly, she insisted that she could only remember the end part. This could be an indication that the resolution and typical wedding ending were appealing and/or memorable for her. She said, "But I'm going to pretend these are all princes and kings and stuff…", so that she made them all into the princess's suitors. She also said, "Let's pretend, she doesn't look mean… I'm going to make her nice in this one", suggesting that amiable characters are more appealing for her. She became quite defensive and said, "I'm not going to make them all King whatever… I'm gonna let her be nice and

choose one of them." This suggests that she preferred idealistic storylines and also that she found the conflated story confusing, as she expressed directly after the reading. The rest of the story involved the princess voluntarily choosing King Grisly-Beard, even though he "…had a small horse…" and the father is shocked that she has made up her mind. She will not marry the soldier, as his face is too dirty. She ended it with them kissing, which seems stereotypical and may have been gleaned from previous stories that she had read, or from television.

Yolande also enacted a second story, where a horse steals a crown from a boy whose mother had given it to him. He marries a female horse and she even hummed the wedding march, suggesting her familiarity with this theme. The female horse says to the male one, "Ooh, you are hot!" suggesting a type of slang that she may have picked up on television or at home. The male horse's crown falls off and she was horrified by how ugly he was, suggesting her focus on vanity and beauty. Next, one of the women gets punched by a male and the most of the other characters die. She added that, "…the girl horse gets AIDS and then she dies," which seems like a very mature topic for such a young child, and may also have come from television. She laughed at this violence, suggesting that she enjoyed it as much as the boys did. But it could vouch for the fact that violence in stories can be cathartic and useful. These stories therefore give insight into what aspects and types of stories are enjoyable and important to children and conversely, what could make children reluctant to participate.

4.5 Resistant Readers and Reluctant Answerers

As discussed, the questions to elicit resistant reading were mostly structured around the tasks that ranged from role plays, to felt boards and drawing, in order to find out the children's attitudes towards the stories and their characters. Chambers (1990, 92) says that the author creates a certain image of himself and of the reader and the story is enjoyed most when these two images correspond. Since the children were generally able to empathise well, perhaps the readers do not have to have the same perspective as the author or characters, but rather simply be able to identify with the story. These questions were inserted in order to try to gain some understanding of whether the children needed to identify against their own knowledge or values in order to understand and appreciate the

stories and their characters. A few children were reluctant to answer throughout, but this section simply concretised the fact that they were resistant, mostly to the questioning process. This could be seen in their reluctance to answer questions or their refusal to do a task, and sometimes their replacing the task with their own (such as asking to draw instead of acting). Rosenblatt (1978, 27 & 28) says that children can gain pleasure simply from reading, without any need to gather information. The fact that this study required answering questions, may have detracted from this 'aesthetic reading'. Shyness about acting had an obvious effect on some of their answers that required confidence, so this should be viewed as unwillingness to embarrass themselves rather than any real resistance. Therefore the reluctance identified in a variety of tasks may not be of the same nature suggested in the Reader-Response and Reception theories.

There was often resistance to choosing favourite parts in the stories, which was in the affective questions. It seemed that many of the children were content with the whole story and found singling out a favourite part destructive to the overall enjoyment. Some chose a standard answer, such as that they liked the ending the best, possibly because they enjoyed resolution, which this researcher feels may suggest that children benefit from the sub-conscious working out of their own issues, as Bettelheim (1991, 123) suggests. Overall, though, there was not much evidence of resistance against the plots or characters.

The children sometimes showed themselves to be resistant readers, as they refused to choose mainstream characters or parts as their favourites. They sometimes chose characters that were mentioned, but who did not feature in any substantial way. Examples of these would be the brothers and sisters that Kelly chose as the ones she enjoyed most in *Maqinase* – they are mentioned at the beginning and never feature again. Jarred, in *Jorinda and Jorindel*, chose the flower as his favourite 'character' because he, "…was thinking it looked beautiful." This suggests that he was able to use his imagination effectively to create this image, which in turn contributed to his enjoyment of the story. In *Maqinase*, his favourite part was "…about the beautiful fields… Because it sounded very nice". He seemed to view nature and beauty as the most enjoyable aspects of the stories, which could be what he was most familiar with in his non-fiction reading at home. Therefore there does not seem to be a definite trend in the choice of preferred characters. This is an unexpected finding, as contrary to common belief, these children did not necessarily choose heroes or beautiful characters as their favourites.

Reluctance to answer was seen in a number of other ways too. This did not seem to have been caused by the stories themselves, but rather by the questioning process, which sometimes seemed to interfere with the enjoyment of the stories. Neliswe was hesitant to answer most questions and also complained of having a sore eye during most of the sessions. This seemed like a way for her to avoid answering, and to get attention, simply by keeping silent, with the excuse that her sore eye was more important. But she may have found that the questioning was invasive, as the children could be jolted out of their concentration during the stories by a question to test that they were keeping abreast of the plot. Munyadi was also hesitant to answer most of the questions, but she chose to resist by saying that she had forgotten or she gave answers such as, "because he/she liked it" to explain why a character did something. It was interesting that a child such as Kelly was resistant to answering predictive questions, usually by saying "I don't know," but was not as unwilling with other types of questions. This could be because there was nothing to base these predictions on, while other questions had previous readings from which to glean answers. Lance also answered with many "I don't know" answers, but his hesitance seemed due to shyness rather than dislike of the process. Also, these children may not have been familiar with stories that require such prediction or with being asked these types of questions during the reading. The perceived dissection of the stories may have detracted from what they may have thought were entertainment purposes. In *King Grisly-Beard*, Cole acted out the story with the puppets, but when he was asked what was happening, he said, "Read the pictures". This suggests his irritation with the questioning process, as he seemed to feel that it was all self-explanatory. Some of the children, including Munyadi, did not want to draw either (or wanted to draw different things, as can be seen in Appendix M), which could be resistance against the actual task, or may be a desire to challenge the researcher. Therefore children's reluctance can occur for various reasons, but its prevalence here was undeniable.

4.6 Gender as a Factor in Responses

There do not seem to be too many differences between the genders in the enjoyment of the stories. Although happy endings culminating in a wedding and having children were often suggested by two of the girls, Yolande and Kelly, Kabelo, a boy, also suggested such

outcomes (as discussed on Page 108). This suggests that these fairy tale conventions are not necessarily appealing only to girls, but rather that this type of happy resolution may be equally appealing and familiar to both genders.

Other gender role stereotypes prevailed throughout, such as when Kabelo said in *King Grisly-Beard* that it is the girl's job to clean, as she is a guest. Jarred also had quite stringent ideas of gendered work division, suggesting an old-fashioned concept of gender roles. Kelly ascribed to certain gender stereotypes, as she said in *Jorinda and Jorindel* that the reason that the fairy chooses to turn the girls, rather than the boys into birds is, "Because the boys are handsome and the girls…hmmm… Because the girls…Oh! Because they make too much noise and they talk too much." This is quite a negative view of girls and it seems unusual that it was adopted by a girl. Yolande often commented on the roles of the genders. She had entrenched stereotypes about princesses, such as that they, "…have nice dresses, they always get makeup… and anything they want, they allowed to get it". This suggests her extensive exposure to princesses, and also her admiration and envy of them. She also had set, if unusual views of gender roles. In *King Grisly-Beard,* she was horrified when the beggar instructs the princess to clean, saying, "…it doesn't work that way! ... Um, the guys must clean the house and the women must lie in bed and read the paper", although she admitted that at home, her dad, "…lies on the couch". She also understood the concept of status, which refers to what women in these stories generally aspire to. Her ideas therefore seemed progressive for some of these gender-stereotyped stories, although this did not stop her from enjoying them. These are rather advanced ideas for a child who was so young. Modern boys and girls may be unfamiliar with the old-fashioned description of women and gender roles that are often portrayed in these tales, and it could cause them to question the modern ideas they have about how males and females should behave.

A finding that recurred for both genders in *Jorinda and Jorindel* was that the fairy only chooses girls to turn into birds because she does not like boys, which seemed like a typical response for children of that age. Kelly seemed to think that the fairy changes the girls into birds because she needs company, although this does not mean that they would have to be birds – she could not explain this, though. Tumelo understood the idea of possessiveness, as he thought the fairy changes the girls because "he" wants them for "himself" so that the girls will only like "him". He thought that the fairy also needs to have "his" house cleaned, but it is uncertain how the girls' transformation into birds aids this.

There was also some confusion concerning whether or not the rock rabbit in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way* can look after a baby. It was fascinating that many of the children felt that the baby cannot be his, as he is a man, thus excluding the fact that a man can be a father. Cole and Lance ascribed to gender stereotypes, as they thought that only women could care for babies, which seems to be a rather old-fashioned view of gender roles.

Some children were also hesitant to say that girls can be heroes, which seems like an antiquated view. This type of gendered idea was also investigated in the resistance questioning, as was their knowledge of fairy tale conventions. Cole thought that girls could be heroes, while Neliswe, Munyadi and Kelly suggested that only boys could be heroes, as only they can save people. It is so interesting that only girls felt that female heroes could not exist, which may be a stereotype that they have picked up on and have even internalised. Jarred, Kabelo, Lance and Yolande had seen girl heroes on television, suggesting that they may have viewed them as fictional, or that they were open to the possibility of their existence. This verifies Dixon's (1978, 1 & 2) statement that there is often a sexist portrayal of boys and girls in stories, as girls are generally shown to be vulnerable.

In a similar vein, Gilbert (1990, 126) asserts that girls are limited to certain roles and stories, such as that of the princess in *King Grisly-Beard* or the helpless victim in *Jorinda and Jorindel*. This could be what children expect from stories. Yet television seems to have altered this perception, such as that only males can be heroes, with new programmes starring females as the heroes. But not all children believe in this equality, as demonstrated above. This would again link back to the debate about whether these tales are outdated, or if contemporary ideas can adapt to some of these seemingly old-fashioned views. This is because the stories are sometimes written with a more sexist slant and it is worth seeing whether or not children notice this or are affected by it.

There did not seem to be one gender that enjoyed or disliked the sessions more. Although Neliswe seemed rather hesitant throughout most of the sessions, she was one of the subjects who was the saddest to finish. She attended most of the post-interview, group reading sessions that were held over the weeks after the interviews. Jarred was very upset and

surprised that the sessions were over. When he was told that it was the end, he exclaimed, "Is it?!" and when he was asked why he was sad, he said, "Because we don't get to do any more stories and plays," suggesting that he enjoyed the stories and the interaction. Tumelo was sad, as he said, "…sometimes when I come to you, I'll get sad", suggesting that he would miss the individual attention. Kabelo seemed to enjoy the sessions thoroughly and asked, "Could you do another one?". But he accepted that they had come to an end. John, Cole and Munyadi were the only ones who seemed to be relieved to be finished. The boys said that they could now play without interruptions and Munyadi was happy that she was no longer expected to answer questions. Cole said that he could now "…do (his) homework early," suggesting that the sessions were sometimes inconvenient for him, while John was simply "Happy…to be finished". Therefore, there were mixed reactions to the study coming to an end, ranging from relief to a sense of loss.

4.7 Race and Culture as Factors that Children Perceive in Stories

There were cultural pointers in the stories and recognition of these could be indicative of a child's knowledge of culture. Saad (1996, 35) says that stories from all cultures overlap, so this could be a reason why many of the children perceived similar morals and ideas, since some of these are universal. There was no real prejudice displayed, although some children did show preference for "own-groupness". The proposed "social reflection" theory (racism is passed down from older generations) and the "social-cognitive developmental theory" (prejudice levels fluctuate according to age and cognitive ability) were not confirmed (Aboud, 1988, 19 & 20) (see Page 42 for explanations). But the subjects were not vigorously tested and the ages of the children did not vary drastically in range.

One cultural pointer was the sour milk that the children were allowed to sample in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*. The different reactions that each child gave to the *Inkomasi* sample that they were offered may have been indicative of their particular culture. None of the children stated explicitly that he/she felt that the sour milk was culturally-coded, and it could have just been unfamiliar to them. Neliswe drank the milk freely, possibly because it was familiar to her. As with most of the black children, Kabelo recognised the sour milk immediately and seemed to enjoy drinking it. Tumelo was happy

to try the sour milk because his grandfather liked it, suggesting that familiarity made him comfortable in this situation. Since Munyadi was not afraid to join in by trying the milk, it may be assumed that it must have been the questions in the sessions of which she was afraid. (Since drinking the milk did not involve any verbal responses, perhaps she felt able to participate, as there was no pressure to answer correctly.) John was the only black child to try the sour milk, but not to enjoy it. Lance seemed open to new experiences, as he was not at all resistant to trying the sour milk, although he did not enjoy it. Jarred also did not resist tasting and he enjoyed it, suggesting that it was not stereotyped in his mind either. Yolande was quite resistant to trying the sour milk and first checked if the researcher had tasted it, possibly because it was so foreign to her. Cole, however, had certain preconceived ideas, such as that he would not enjoy the milk and that only black people drink *Inkomasi*. Kelly was adamant that she would not try the sour milk either, possibly because it was unfamiliar to her or maybe the smell was off-putting. There does not seem to be any difference between the genders in their willingness to try the milk, but it does seem that the black children were generally more willing to try the milk, and that they enjoyed it. There were too few subjects to prove these stereotypes, though. The children's attitudes towards culturally-specific items are able to give clues to their possible cultural awareness. Yet it is also possible that they were not aware of the cultural origin or associations of sour milk, so this could simply be coincidental.

Other cultural associations with regard to the sour milk were made. Lance identified the old lady with the Zulu people in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, as he said that she would probably go and join the Zulus after drinking the milk. This could suggest that for him, this traditionally African food was linked to the Zulu people. Yolande, another white child, also thought that only Zulu people would drink the milk. So stories can also aid learning about other groups, and the stories could even further the understanding of groups different to the children's own (Renner & Carter, 1991, 602). This may also have been achieved through the use of some Zulu words in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*.

Some of the stories were culturally coded in their content and characters. *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk* is probably the one that is most obviously related to a culture, as it uses Zulu words and the mother-in-law does farm work, which is traditionally rural. Also, her food, consisting primarily of sour milk, is culturally specific. *King Grisly-Beard* is coded too, as it is Westernised in its use of wealth, royalty and selfishness, and especially

since African cultures would almost certainly disapprove of the princess's rude behaviour. *Jorinda and Jorindel* does not seem too stringently coded in relation to characters, even though it involves a castle. The animal stories are also quite neutral. Perhaps only their morals, such as not to be lazy, are indicative of their source, as these types of teachings are often endemic to folk tales.

Another cultural pointer involved the use of languages. Tumelo was very aware of languages – he commented that where he lived, "It's a different language there", then later said, "When I was at nursery school, I was speaking Afrikaans, so now I forgot what my language is. And I don't know how to talk my language, I know only English." This is interesting, as it suggests a dislocation from his roots. Kabelo also frequently mentioned languages, such as that the stories he had heard included, "Zulu, English…", suggesting that knowing a multitude of languages can conflate one's ideas. In *Jorinda and Jorindel*, Kabelo thought that the birds would sing in English, which is the most common language in his environment away from home. He did however concede that they could sing in other languages. Therefore, familiarity or contact with different languages can confuse a child, but may also open his/her eyes to the possibility that a diversity of stories exists.

The puppets' colours, that were often varying and unrealistic, were sometimes noticed by the children. In Yolande's retelling of *King Grisly-Beard*, she commented that the princess does not want to marry the beggar because his face is blue and, "…she thought that the face is dirty… she thinks that he put blue stuff on it to make him handsome." She therefore focussed on beauty and vanity. She said, though, that the princess likes the king's yellow face. The beggar seems aware of his shortcoming, as he said, "You don't like my blue face?", suggesting that she understood that these differences could be something to feel embarrassed about. In *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, Yolande stated that a white man made the tails because white people usually make things for animals, whereas, according to her, black people often kill them. This is a racial stereotype, possibly learned from home. In *King Grisly-Beard*, she was also aware that the puppets were different colours and that this could affect people's preferences or thoughts about them. This suggests that she was definitely aware of skin colour, which seemed important to her. Kelly also asked, "Why is his skin blue?", as she thought it should have been "peach". This may indicate what she was used to in illustrations in stories. Of course, this could simply be a comment on the puppets, not on race issues. Cole also commented that, "…you don't get blue people, yellow people…", but rather, "You get

peach people, I think." This suggests that he focussed on reality. But another implication for these white children is that they believed the characters should be white, which links to the desire for "own-groupness" (Milner, 1975, 51). Munyadi was the only black child who pointed out that the puppets in *King Grisly-Beard* were different colours, suggesting an awareness of skin colour as a relevant factor. Children such as Jarred, however, loved the colourfulness of the puppets, so that it did not matter how realistic they were. In Tumelo's role play in *Maqinase*, he had the animals making alliances according to their colour, which may just have been a way of grouping for him. It seems significant, though, that the children who noticed the race of the puppets were mostly white. Therefore, many of the subjects seem to be aware of skin colour, but this could be linked to reality, or may simply be linked to the physical makeup of the puppets.

Although Milner (1975, 59 & 60) suggests that if a child's racial group is not represented in a story, the child will reject his/her race, this did not seem true here, as most of the children seemed to focus on the accuracy of the puppets in relation to what was described in the stories, not their own actual races. Also, because of the mix of African and Grimm tales, the representation of both races may have been more equal. This suggests that all children felt represented, despite the particular cultural premises of the story. This could also therefore disagree with Milner, as perhaps children can learn from these various characters, rather than be offended by them.

In *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, when the subjects were asked, "Do you think it's possible that all the animals in the story were family?" some of the children insisted that it was necessary for animals to look alike in order to be related. This suggests the children's attitudes towards the grouping of people. Neliswe said that they could not be family, "Because they don't look the same", which shows her stereotyped view of what constitutes family. Kelly agreed with this, saying, "No, 'cos they don't, um, look the same" and she explained that, "Cats and tigers are family. Like a family". Yet, when she was asked, "So they have to look the same to be in the same family?" she replied "No." Lance made a similar statement, by saying that they could not be family, "Because they're different kinds of animals." He understood the way that species are classified into common groups. Munyadi answered along a similar vein, saying, "'Cos they gonna look the same, the same ones are gonna be family." Yolande agreed with this differentiation, as she said, "Because all the people who look the same, it's like, they're not so different to other people… And

some people's different." This confirms Milner's (1975, 51) view that children like to categorise their environment in order to understand it, which can lead to "own-groupness". Others simply believed that their rudeness excluded them from being family. Although there did not seem to be any discrimination here, it was interesting how strict some of the children were about allowing different characters into the same group (although this could also be based on their knowledge of animal families).

Although McMurray (1996, 180) asserts that children usually choose stories according to their backgrounds and education, this did not seem to be verified in this study. It did not seem to make a difference where the child came from or what previous education he/she had received, as they all seemed to enjoy most of the stories. Only Cole seemed to have more general knowledge than the others and this seemed to affect his choice of non-fiction over fiction. Cole and John liked *The Fox and the Horse* because it was funny, as humour seemed to be very important to them. Neliswe liked *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, but afterwards she said she "liked everything" because "they were the best," which suggests that she may have enjoyed the process as a whole. Kelly and Yolande said that they liked all the stories equally as they were all nice, although Kelly mentions *King Grisly-Beard and* Yolande initially singled out *The Fox and the Horse*. Tumelo said that he liked all of the stories the same because he said that the stories were read nicely, which indicates that it may be the way that stories are read, rather than their content, that affects enjoyment. Jarred liked *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, as did Lance, who found it funny that the rabbit did not get a tail at the end (and he explicitly stated that he liked funny stories). Munyadi said that her favourite stories were *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way* and *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*. The trend could be that they are both Zulu stories, although one involves humans and the other animals. Jarred also enjoyed *King Grisly-Beard* because "…it's more nice." This is unexpected because he answered with so many "I don't knows" and he seemed bored during this story. He said that he liked the kings and the trickery. Kabelo liked *Maqinase, The Fox and the Horse* and *King Grisly-Beard* simply because he "…loved them." He liked *King Grisly-Beard* because it was funny. It may be that they were all quite funny and two of the three stories are animal stories. Therefore, there were a range of favourite stories and numerous reasons for liking them.

The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way and *The Fox and the Horse* seemed to be very popular choices. It may be speculation, but the reasons for the enjoyment of the African

tale, *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, could include the fact that it was funny, that it is an animal story, and also that it teaches an important lesson about laziness. *The Fox and the Horse*, although a fairy tale, seemed a lot like an African tale in its characters and its moral of trickery and animal wit. It too was funny, supporting a trend of humour being immensely enjoyed in these stories. It was unexpected that three children listed *King Grisly-Beard* among their favourites, as they mostly seemed to struggle with this story. This choice could have been due to the fact that when the children were asked to name their favourites, *King Grisly-Beard* had just been read to them. The trickery and deception seemed to be appealing aspects for them.

In a school such as this one, although there is a diversity of children, their cultural differences may be reduced. These children are all urbanised by virtue of living in urban areas and attending an urban school, so their differences are less pronounced. Although those who do not speak English as a first language probably speak their mother tongue at home, they all speak English at school, thus reducing their differences even further. This undoubtedly impacts on the results, as it may be debated how different these children really are. There is no question, however, that their backgrounds before attending the same school were often vastly different. This is because some of them were brought up by relatives other than their parents, and also because of their differing economic backgrounds. Even though none of them seemed to be very rich or very poor, by virtue of the areas that they lived in, it is possible to see that there are definitely differences between them. Yet their common schooling reduces these differences to a great extent.

Aboud's (1998, 86) earlier comment about subjects accepting a race if the researcher is from that group, did not seem to feature as a concern at all with these interviewees. There was not a single comment made to the researcher regarding her race or gender, although this does not guarantee that it did not inspire shyness or confidence in some children. In general, the children seemed to be aware of race and colour, although it was not an overriding distraction for them. Their identification with the characters and the ideas seemed simply to be based on their personal assessments of the characters' defining actions.

4.8 Identification with Characters, Values and Morals

4.8.1 Affective Responses

The affective questions were answered with more ease than anticipated. It was thought that the children would battle with these types of questions, but it seemed that identifying with others' feelings was not too complicated for them. This substantiates Rosenblatt's (1970, 37) claim (discussed on Pages 19 & 20) that stories can teach children how to empathise and sympathise with others, although presumably the children came into the study with some of these attitudes, which may have been learned from a combination of family values, stories, television and school. As stories usually endorse generally accepted values, this also suggests that the children did not often have to reject their own perspectives in order to adopt those of the characters'. This means that they were able to apply their own understandings of situations to help them understand the characters, so that their individual values and ideals were not affected. Yet although some children understood emotions well, they sometimes did not enjoy choosing favourites (this was mentioned on Page 121). Also discussed earlier (see Pages 77–78 & 94), was that some of the children were only able to express simple emotions, such as 'happy' and 'sad', but not subtle ones, such as embarrassment. They seemed better able to identify physical, rather than emotional feelings.

Some children were not able to separate their own feelings from those of the characters'. An example is when Neliswe was asked how she would feel if she were the farmer in *The Fox and the Horse* when the horse came back, and she said, "Sad… Because then I would be a boy." In this case, she could neither imagine being another person nor how somebody else would feel in their situation. In *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, Jarred seemed to falter when he said that he was happy that the old lady got stuck in the roots because he liked the story – he did not seem to be able to separate his own enjoyment from the character's feelings. Lance was able to distance himself in this story, as he said that he felt both happy and sad, as his happiness came from his enjoyment of the story and his sadness from her predicament of being trapped by the animal king. Therefore, other people's emotions were sometimes too distant for some children to fathom.

Another main function of literature, according to Nesbitt (1966, 10) is that it helps children to understand their world, as they can sometimes see themselves reflected in books. This may have been true in certain stories, such as that some participants may have seen Maqinase's rudeness as similar to behaviour that they usually display or Jorindel's heroism as a trait that they would aspire to. Therefore, even if stories seem fantastical, often the characters' characteristics or experiences can be recognisable to a child. An example of this was in the section on 'filling in the gaps', where one could observe the children's ability to see themselves from another person's perspective, as they could try to interpret how a character would feel. This was seen when they suggested that the princess in *King Grisly-Beard* would be sad to be sent away or that the mother-in-law in *The Mother-in-Law and the Sour Milk* was lying about being called by someone from the house, as she wanted to drink her sour milk. This ability was also apparent in the 'resistance' section, as some of the subjects were able to act out the play using their own words and interpretations of the events that took place in the story, such as when Cole added in Maqinase's rude response to his mother. This was how he identified with the little pig's agitation at being so restricted.

Cole, Tumelo and Jarred's understanding of emotions was very mature, which seemed to contribute to their understanding of the text. Although Cole sometimes acted uninterested, he seemed to understand the complexities of emotions. He listened very intently to the actual words of the stories and did not feel that he needed to validate his answers with his own input, as it had all already been said. Yolande seemed to have an advanced grasp on emotions. She was able to balance her emotions, such as that she liked this particular fox, although she was aware of the fox's unsavoury reputation (which also shows that she may have been familiar with this character from other stories). She continually enjoyed a happy ending. Lance and Kelly's assessment of feelings was also generally very accurate. Lance judged characters, such as the fox, by their deeds and not by their reputations. His identification of emotions was usually accurate and sympathetic. He became very involved in the stories and shared a lot of the emotions with the characters, which suggests an intense involvement with the stories.

In general, Neliswe had a good understanding of how the characters would feel in certain situations. Although she did not seem able to express more complicated emotions, she explained feelings with simpler, more logical answers, so it was probably just a vocabulary

problem. She seemed to be quite attuned to the way people feel, or perhaps she was able to express this better than she could express the 'understanding' and other questions.

As the weeks progressed, Kabelo seemed better able to choose a favourite part and to distinguish between what he did and did not like. He identified most of the emotions correctly. He often changed his answers, possibly because he did not listen well the first time, but he usually amended them well. Television may have influenced his perception of the stories, but also the real-life possibilities may have affected him, such as the consequences of misbehaving. For him, therefore, there was a direct link between life in fiction and his own life, as he constantly told stories related to his own life. In this way, making meaning was very significant for him. He also talked about *Snow White*, focussing on the threshold where she runs away and is helped. He could very effectively relate what was being read to him at the time, to other stories he may have heard in the past.

Munyadi seemed to answer "Because he/she/I liked/didn't like it" as reasons for many of her answers. It may have been that for her, this was sufficient to judge a situation, or that it was an easy way out of questions that she did not want to answer. Her understanding of what people like and dislike, and of general feelings, was good. But this often meant that she ignored the deeper emotions or reasons behind them. She identified sadness, happiness, relief and fear in the correct places, and although she often did not give a reason for her answers, she mostly gave suggestions as to how the characters would feel, thus showing her sensitivity. John did not always perfectly attribute the correct feeling to a character, but his general perception of the stories was good, despite his sometimes ambivalent answers.

Kabelo and Tumelo both seemed able to understand the emotions in *The Fox and the Horse*, despite the reputation of the fox's character, which, of course, they may not have been aware of. Tumelo did however put restrictions on how strong the horse could get, despite the fact that it is fiction. In the same story, Kelly's answers to the affective questions were better than her answers to other sections in this particular story, maybe because she is sensitive and dealt well with emotions.

John and Tumelo wrongly thought that the old lady in *The Mother-in-Law and the Sour Milk* would be happy to be caught drinking the sour milk, as she would then be free to drink it. They did not realise that she would be in trouble too. Tumelo thought that she would

now have a partner to drink with – he missed the danger in this situation, but he was able to empathise with her situation and rejoice in her redemption. This seems to be a type of child-like immediate gratification, as the children had difficulty seeing beyond the pleasure of drinking the milk. Lance also misunderstood some of the reasons behind the prohibition on drinking milk and the old lady's lying about being called. He therefore did not view her at all negatively, which could have affected his understanding of the story. Kabelo and Neliswe identified well with the mother-in-law's sadness at being caught drinking the milk, having to go away and getting stuck in the roots. Kelly went even further by identifying her embarrassment.

In *King Grisly-Beard*, Neliswe, Jarred and John seemed to read all the emotions correctly. Neliswe felt no sympathy for the princess, but was still able to like her as a character. She also understood how King Grisly-Beard's deception was wrong. John liked the princess the best, because she was rude. He may have found that amusing and he may have been able to identify with it or wanted to act that way himself sometimes. It is also interesting that he chose a girl instead of a boy as his favourite. Lance seemed to envy King Grisly-Beard's power of transformation and disguise, which suggests that although he identified his behaviour as wrong, he still found his abilities attractive. Munyadi liked the princess, but she called her the "angel", which may be how she envisioned her, as angels and princesses probably have some similarities. It is surprising that Yolande was harsh on the princess because she was rude, and she preferred the king because he taught her a lesson – she seemed to value morals highly. Tumelo liked the characters that taught the princess a lesson, maybe because this supported his belief in right and wrong. He recognised the change in the princess in that she took King Grisly-Beard's hand without knowing him, suggesting that her previous hostility has dissipated. He was therefore very good at relating his lessons to those in the story.

In *Jorinda and Jorindel*, Jarred seemed to comprehend the bond of love between the boy and girl and the subsequent longing that each would feel. Kabelo and Tumelo understood their feelings of loss. The answers to the affective questions for this story were quite accurate, and the subjects seemed to identify these adult emotions very well.

In *Maqinase*, John was the only one who felt that it was a good idea for Maqinase to leave the house, because the piglet needed to escape the heat. John failed to recognise that the mother may

have been worried, not just angry, about her son. This indicated the prominent fear of consequences for children who disobey. Kelly and Lance said that the mother would be sad rather than angry because she thought that she had lost her son. Lance understood the parental worry, as he thought that Maqinase's parents would think that he had been kidnapped, which he may have learned from his own parents. Kabelo understood particularly well the danger that Maqinase would be in by walking alone. He had obviously been warned, but the possibilities of what could happen to him seemed very explicit. Jarred, Tumelo and Kabelo understood that Maqinase's mother would be angry with him and this may have come from home or school teaching – maybe this is how his own mother would have reacted. Yolande liked Maqinase, despite his rudeness, as she said, "…he was rude and doing ugly stuff too, but I like him." She seemed to take offence to his insults, as she thought that they were "Very ugly because the donkey is old, the tortoise is old and the frog is old". She thinks that he is being disrespectful to his elders. She is indignant about the comments and sums up the moral, as she says, "…it's like if someone be's rude to you, you don't feel nice". Jarred and Kabelo understood how the other animals would have felt when they were insulted. Kabelo's sympathies seemed to lie with Maqinase, even if he was the wrongdoer. Tumelo thought that the animals should take revenge on Maqinase by making him acquire the same characteristics that he mocked in them. But he also showed his optimism, as he said that if Maqinase slowed down to the tortoise's speed, they could be friends. This suggests that a simple physical alteration could create friendship.

Although John and Tumelo realised that the rock rabbit was lying, they still felt sympathy for him and seemed to anticipate his disappointment when he does not get a tail. Tumelo felt that his owner possibly restricted him from getting a tail. He called the rock rabbit a "bunny", which seemed to show that he was comfortable or familiar with this animal character. Although Cole realised that the rock rabbit would be sad, he did not feel sympathetic towards him. He was therefore also able to separate his feelings from the characters' feelings. Kabelo understood the rock rabbit's sadness of being the odd one out. He knew that he was lying about his child being sick, but not about having a child, which was quite perceptive. He felt that his lie deserved a lie from the other animals. This is the 'eye for an eye' approach that he did not always subscribe to, as he was not usually vengeful. His suggestion that all the animals are lazy because they all forgot his tail was quite insightful. Kelly seemed able to conceptualise and understand disappointment and being let down very well (she uses the word "heartbroken"), possibly from personal experience. She was able to understand that the rock rabbit did wrong, yet she could also

feel sorry for him, which shows a good balance. Lance understood both the rock rabbit and the other animals' points of view, which made his assessment more accurate. Munyadi correctly identified the rock rabbit's laziness and understood the resulting punishment. Yolande was able to relate characters to others very well, such as the rock rabbit that she compared to a sleepy cat. She also identified with his potentially vengeful need to get revenge on the other animals. The main findings therefore seem to indicate that most of the children responded with subtlety and sophistication. But their emotional responses were usually tempered by their moral reactions.

4.8.2 Punishment and Morals

According to Zipes (1979, 4), both fairy and folk tales can help explain social problems in a simple way, which is why they seem to have been used to convey morals to children. Punishment is an important concept in these stories and it was interesting that most of the children felt that it was necessary to punish the 'sinner', even if that character was likeable (as discussed on Pages 103 & 104). This was evident in *Maqinase*, where although the children generally liked the piglet and his rude behaviour, they realised that his actions were wrong. They advocated punishment for him, and it was usually administered by the dog or by his mother. The children insisted on the offender getting his/her comeuppance, even if they liked him/her. This shows that their own learned values are stronger than their desire to side with characters. Neliswe was often hesitant to answer many questions, but hardly ever failed to answer these questions of accountability. She was generally in favour of punishing the 'criminal.' Her enthusiasm suggests that this need for vengeance was more important to her than questions in the other categories. In *Maqinase*, she said that Maqinase's mother must, "Smack him… 'Cos he doesn't listen." In *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, she said that it was right that the rock rabbit does not get a tail, as, "they hate him… And they didn't want him to make a tail… Because he tells three animals to get him a tail and, and, he didn't want to get a tail." This seems vengeful, but she thought it suited the crime. She also felt that they would never reconcile, "Because they didn't make him one." She seemed to realise that actions have consequences and that if one disobeys, one must face the repercussions. Tumelo is another candidate who felt that justice needed to be done in order for the stories to be properly resolved. When Maqinase goes into the fields, he said that, "They could, the police could come and catch him". This suggests that

if one does wrong, one gets into trouble and it ties in with his preoccupation with the police. He also thought that in *King Grisly-Beard*, the princess learned her lesson because the soldier broke her pots and pans and her father sent her away. He therefore understood that these were sufficient punishments for her to right her ways. Lance seemed to support the underdog, regardless of his/her wrongdoings. John also thought that punishment was vital to the correct resolution of a story. Therefore, there is an overwhelming tendency not to leave any mistakes unpunished, possibly as this coincides with what an ideal world should be like.

This trend continued when the children were asked whether or not they would have helped Maqinase when he was being chased by the dog. Cole would not have helped Maqinase and would have hurt him as punishment. Neliswe, Jarred, John, Tumelo, Munyadi and Yolande also would not have helped because of Maqinase's rudeness. Yet Kabelo felt sympathetic towards Maqinase, as the piglet is young and so he would have helped him, as would Kelly and Lance. It seems that the children use their own morals to fill in the gaps. The majority of the children thought that one should be punished for one's offences and the penalty should be something similar to the crimes one has committed, such as that Maqinase should now have the animals be rude to him, just as he was rude to them.

Cole realised that Maqinase would be in trouble with his mother. Neliswe, Kelly, Tumelo and Kabelo thought that his mother would hit him, which may be the punishment that they themselves were exposed to at home. Jarred and John saw the dog as meting out the punishment, as they felt that the dog should bite him. Jarred, though, thought that the mother should shout at him and John thought she should get angry with him. Yolande had the most violent and creative solution, suggesting that,

> …his mom must, um, lock all the gates up… Lock it and then put shocking gates there… And the mom's got like a key thingy and she keeps it in her mouth… And if she wants to take it away, she takes it out of her mouth and puts it like that – "Diiii" (noise of key opening)… then the shocking thing goes away and the door goes open.

She seemed to realise that this is fiction and is not a viable solution in reality, but this elaborate security system seems reminiscent of cartoons. It seems that most of the children

based their solutions on how they are dealt with by their guardians at home, or on logical options, such as having the dog bite Maqinase. They could therefore envision and rationalise the outcome.

The children's feelings about family and even status also became evident in their responses to these stories. These seemed to stand out most starkly in *King Grisly-Beard*, which deals with issues of class and familial relations. A child who seemed very aware of conventions regarding these issues was Kelly. When questioned about the rude way that the princess speaks to the princes at the beginning of the story, she was emphatic that it was unacceptable, as she said, "'Cos you've got to talk nicely to princes." This could arise from her familiarity with fairy tale conventions, where royalty must always be given the utmost respect. She also had a set of norms regarding how families should treat their members. She said that in this story, she felt sorry for the princess when her father sent her away because "It's not nice to send your daughter away". She seemed to understand the loyalty that is involved in being part of a family. Therefore, the children's morals and manners seemed to affect their answers in some of the questions. Similarly, the others mostly felt sorry for the princess being sent away in *King Grisly-Beard*, yet accepted that her forced marriage and banishment were fitting punishments for her unacceptable attitude towards her suitors. Therefore these morals, that are learned either at home or at school, must be upheld in order to satisfy the children. Cole understood that the princess would not be happy, mostly because of her decreased amenities and status. Neliswe, John, Kabelo, Lance, Munyadi, Tumelo and Yolande thought that she would be angry to be sent away, but Jarred thought that she would be sad. So all the children were able to guess that her feelings about being sent away and towards her father would be hostile, mostly because it seems like a nasty thing for a family member to do and because she left against her will, with a person she did not know.

In *King Grisly-Beard*, John said that the princess is nicer after she is punished. His belief that people need to be punished to improve and redeem themselves may be from his upbringing or from television and stories. Cole believed in punishment, but his feelings seemed much more vengeful than the other children's. Therefore, most children would not have been content with an ending where justice was not served in their eyes. This could be because there are often neat endings in many television programmes and cartoons that they may have been used to.

4.8.3 The Influence of Television

The influence of television on the children's answers often seemed evident. This was noticeable in many of their imaginative answers, as they seemed to be taken from scenarios typical of television. This was seen in explanations of elaborate punishment, often involving violence, as well as in comparisons to cartoon characters that the children were familiar with, such as Yolande's in-depth description of Maqinase's punishment on Pages 136 & 137. This was noteworthy in Jarred's case, as he was not allowed to watch television at home, yet he still seemed to be aware of these same ideas. This could suggest that he had come into contact with these concepts in other places, perhaps from other children, or otherwise that they are commonly discussed or used in society. Other ideas, such as when Kelly says that the birds in *Jorinda and Jorindel* would be reminiscent of how they looked as humans, also suggest that she had been influenced by television, as she said that Jorinda would simply be "The beautifullest one." The reason that this could come from television is because animals in cartoons often have human features, such as a recognisable beauty spot or an item of clothing that they wore when they were human. Since many stories have been made into television programmes, it is hard to separate the two. Therefore, it is impossible to know what influences a child – other stories, stories adapted into television programmes, other children or school. But this sense of excitement and adventure found in many television programmes is often similar to those in stories, as these rely on threshold moments.

4.9 Response to Threshold Experiences

Since one of the foci of the questioning was thresholds, it is worth seeing how the children responded to these situations. These parts of the stories were tested as they are often regarded as the most significant and exciting parts of the story and so seemed to be an appropriate focal point (see Pages 2 & 31–34 for a full definition). Although these elements make up a vast amount of the action in the stories, it was found that they were not the sole areas of interest. But since they played a role in the title, their effects have been documented (as discussed on Pages 31 & 64).

Many of the children, such as John, focussed on thresholds in their answers. This can be seen in the predictions that he made, such as that something of consequence, like being captured, would

happen next. These seemed to be important or exciting for him, or else the questions gave him a clue. This seems to indicate that the children could anticipate, on a basic level, when a threshold was approaching. Tumelo's detailed recounting of stories suggests that he listened carefully and also that it was the thresholds that he recalled most clearly. This reinforces the idea that these are the parts of the story that children enjoy the most and recall the easiest. Kabelo, Lance, Munyadi and Kelly also focussed on these threshold moments. Even when Kabelo talked about other stories, such as *Snow White*, he focussed on the threshold parts, suggesting that these are the most memorable and fun for children. In *Snow White*, he said, "It's the king… And…he wanna a wife… He said he must run run run run run. And then he goes after animals. Then the animals take him where to stay." This suggests that finding a partner and being pursued are viewed as important and exciting aspects of stories. In general, the children seemed to enjoy the threshold moments, possibly because of their excitement or the sense of anticipation created around them. The children remembered them, perhaps because they made an impression on them.

The favourite parts that the children chose to act out in the role plays, their chosen favourite parts in particular stories, or even their foci in the understanding section, were often these thresholds. The most popular thresholds seemed to be those that were the most action-packed, such as when the dog chases Maqinase, which was Kabelo's favourite. As well as finding the scenario funny, many children chose it as their favourite and acted it out in their role play. In *Jorinda and Jorindel*, the focus was on the threshold of Jorinda being taken, Jorindel being frozen and Jorindel finally saving Jorinda, all of which are thresholds. There is even evidence of children adding in their own thresholds, such as when Kabelo changed the ending in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way* to have the animals being chased by a lion, which may have seemed more exciting to him. It is also interesting that some children, such as Kelly, remembered certain threshold moments as being the endings of stories, even though they are not. This occurred in *The Fox and the Horse*, where she remembered the story ending with the horse running away with the lion tied to its tail. Many children chose this as a favourite part too, although it was not the ending. In *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*, the parts where the old lady is sent to find the water without frogs and the section where she is freed, were often mentioned and they too are thresholds. In *King Grisly-Beard*, Neliswe liked the part where the princess and King Grisly-Beard dance, which suggests that she enjoyed the resolution. Aspects involving neat resolutions and emotional identification at crucial moments were apparent when the children indicated what they enjoyed most, including happy endings and 'criminals' being punished (as discussed

on Pages 136–138). It was therefore important for them that each character received the ending that he/she deserved. Although many changes with the children's skills occurred, their desire for happy endings usually remained consistent.

4.10 Changes over the Course of the Storytelling

For some children, each new session seemed to teach new skills which they could then apply to the next story, such as how to predict what was going to happen. This suggests that stories do not only provide entertainment, but may also teach children what is expected of them. This could be useful in later schooling, as it can help them to answer questions that appear in various forms of testing and comprehension. But it could also be viewed as restrictive if they only use a formula to answer questions. Some children progressed throughout, becoming more co-operative, and it was possible to monitor this in the section on resistance. This could be seen in the prediction questions such as when the children were asked to anticipate what the story would be about. This could suggest that these prediction skills can be learned, if similar questions are repeated enough. Of course, there is the possibility that the children were simply learning a formula, but they could also have been learning this prediction skill. Similarly, 'filling in the gaps' skills could sometimes be learned, yet children could also become more familiar with what the gaps represent and may learn how to complete them more easily.

It was interesting how the children followed the cues of the stories, such as that when Maqinase leaves home without permission, it is a warning that he will get into trouble, or that when the son-in-law hides in the house in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk,* the mother-in-law will get into trouble. This is done without any formal training, but as the stories progressed, the subjects could better anticipate what would come next. It seems like a tool that they were able to use to explain the stories to themselves, as when they were confronted with a particular scenario in a story, such as the presence of the dog in *Maqinase,* they could predict that danger would follow. This could mean that there is an understanding of story conventions and that they do not need to be learned.

The children's opinions about punishment and morals seemed to remain steadfast, despite other opinions changing. It is unusual that Kabelo and Neliswe often had similar answers,

although there were no obvious similarities in their backgrounds. A few examples among many include that in *Maqinase*, they both gave violent suggestions of what the repercussions of Maqinase's disobedience would be and that they both thought that King Grisly-Beard's lying was wrong. This could be because they had similar upbringings or they may have been exposed to similar stories in the past. It does not seem possible that these similarities could be from being in the same class, as a few of the children had the same teacher. It can simply be observed that their similarities remained uncannily alike throughout the sessions.

The changes that could be seen in the subjects were not only seen in their predictions. Their knowledge of story conventions and patterns, as well as other aspects, developed along with these. There were some students whose confidence grew throughout the process, which was often related to their willingness to participate in the activities. Other children were mostly keen to act and to be imaginative from the beginning, be it Cole's manner of applying his facts to the fiction, or Kabelo and Tumelo's voluntary storytelling.

Although some children were able to learn the skills of prediction, or simply understand the pattern of prediction, others were hesitant to predict throughout. In the first two stories, Neliswe did not say much. She started to complain of a sore eye during the third story and seemed hesitant to predict. Yet by the fifth story, *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard* Way, she was able to guess what the story may have been about by giving a very literal guess. Her improvement could have been due to her recently acquired skills or growing confidence and comfort with the researcher. John is another child who showed an improvement over the sessions. In the first story, he did not even hazard a guess at predicting the next event, but in the others he did. He did not predict in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, possibly because he tried to guess what a rock rabbit is and was discouraged by his wrong answer. In the first story, Kelly was also hesitant to predict, possibly because she was shy, but it improved by the second story, perhaps because she had learned the skill that the title often gives clues to the topic. This too could suggest that predictive skills can be learned if they do not already exist. There was definitely an improvement in Jarred's prediction – in the first story he did not even try to predict, but from then onwards, he predicted, even if these predictions were obviously related to the title. Yet Tumelo was by far the most accurate at predicting what stories would be about. From the start, he was not afraid of being wrong and really used his imagination, while still sticking to the guidelines of the title. The children's

varying predictive skills could therefore have been indicative of repetitive questioning, growing ability or stronger belief in themselves.

Other subjects neither progressed nor regressed noticeably. Although Yolande seemed to follow the stories perfectly, she seemed hesitant to predict what the stories were about. She was the only one to hardly ever attempt a prediction. This could be because she did not want to be wrong or because she preferred to hear the story, untainted by other possibly incorrect predictions. When prompted, Munyadi gave logical, conventional answers, such as that she thought that *King Grisly-Beard* was about a beard. So, she did understand, but was not confident to predict. She therefore seemed to be a further example of a subject who did not display much improvement in this area throughout the process. Kabelo's prediction skills did not seem to be very accurate and did not seem to improve much in the process. He either did not predict or simply defined words in the heading, but this is not too different from the other children. Only in the first story did he give an insightful prediction that the story would be one that all children would enjoy, thus suggesting its universality. It is strange, though, that despite the fact that he was told that *Jorinda and Jorindel* was about a boy and girl, he thought it would be about a lion – maybe this was what he enjoyed and he was associating this story with the previous week's story. It could also indicate an overlap of Western and African stories. There was not too much of a change in Cole's manner towards the questions. He was never shy to give information, but was business-like in that he wanted to get out as soon as possible. He did not predict often, however, either because he could not be bothered or he was not certain about conventions in fiction. Therefore, some subjects participated well, but did not alter their methods of answering throughout the sessions in any significant manner (although it does not mean that they did not benefit from the process).

The subjects' personalities often guided their prediction of stories. Neliswe was much more creative and imaginative in *Maqinase* than she had been in previous stories. Perhaps this was because there was more scope for creativity – this shows some development. There was a marked improvement in the last story. This may have been due to her fun weekend that she had just discussed, but she seemed happy, friendly, well-mannered and her eye was no longer sore. In the presence of other children, Neliswe was even more withdrawn, though, suggesting that being in this process may have been very stressful for her. There were other children who may have known the answers, but who were hesitant to predict. Munyadi was very resistant to predict what the stories were about and only predicted when she was really prompted. Even

then, her answers were very literal. The way that predictive questions were phrased affected the way that Lance answered them, too. If they were phrased in a way that allowed him to give a yes/no answer, he generally answered that he could not predict. It is uncertain whether or not Kabelo had learning problems. He seemed to struggle academically, but was able to enjoy the stories regardless of this. The children's own character traits, such as shyness or aptitude to comprehend stories, could shape their answers, as these undoubtedly affect what they know and how they are able to understand and analyse the stories.

Many of the children predicted the content of the stories from the titles of the stories that were told to them. In *King Grisly-Beard*, Neliswe picked up on the royalty link, despite her inability to do this very well with the other stories. This may have been because she was becoming accustomed to the process. For Jarred, some predictions seemed related to non-fiction, such as farms, either from other stories that were read during the study or from the non-fiction that he was allowed to read at home. This shows that he understood that titles and content of stories are related. Yet he was also able to identify the theme of royalty in the last story, so that he must have had a certain amount of exposure to these traditional fairy tale elements. In *King Grisly-Beard,* John was able to guess that the story was linked to kings, from the title and possibly from his previous knowledge of fairy tales. Yolande seemed to catch on what the stories, such as *Jorinda and Jorindel*, were about. She assumed that it was about a girl and a boy, showing that she did in fact understand the rules of fairy tales perfectly and she could work out the content of the story simply by relating it to the contents of the title. For Lance, if the question did not allow for yes/no answers, he usually gave an answer including the words from the title, suggesting that for him, stories were self-explanatory, that he was shy to guess or had run out of ideas. Therefore the titles have the ability to guide the children's expectations in a certain direction.

Another common method of predicting what the stories would be about was looking at the props that were sometimes lying near to the subjects before the reading. John usually predicted what the stories were about according to what the props (the puppets or felt boards) were. This was a reliable method, as obviously the puppets or felt boards were linked to the stories, as they showed who the characters were and what the setting was. Possibly, when he did not use these to predict, the props may have been hidden. He did not employ his imagination any much more, though. He often mentioned television and enjoyed "funny stuff", so this may have been a good predictor of what types of stories he

enjoyed. When Lance could, he also looked at the puppets or pictures for clues, which is resourceful and suggests that he understood how the process worked, with the related activity following the reading and questions. Tumelo used the puppets as inspiration too, but unlike the other children, he was able to elaborate logically and intelligently on what he saw. In *King Grisly-Beard*, Neliswe immediately identified the story name with the puppets. This type of physical interaction could therefore be seen as a useful way for the children to decode the stories with minimal interference from the researcher.

4.11 The Reader-Response and Reception Theories

The Reader-Response and Reception theories proved to be useful theories around which to structure this research. The categories of 'prediction', 'filling in the gaps', 'affective questions' and 'resistance' were effective for grouping, since these areas seemed to cover the vital aspects of the questioning process for children of this age. These were useful aspects in determining the best ways to select stories for children in a multi-cultural society, such as South Africa.

One aspect of Reader-Response theory that was proved was that readers continually predict while they are reading (Newton, 1990, 131). This was shown by the eagerness of some of the children to predict, such as asking questions about the characters or anticipating what would happen ahead of time. This shows that reading can be beneficial as an interactive process, as the children were allowed to assert their own views and then see whether or not these were correct.

Another aspect that was confirmed was that even young children are able to fill in the gaps in stories (Bennett, 1995, 25). This was shown by information that they volunteered, such as comments about the characters or situations that the characters were in. This was also seen in gaps that the subjects identified without any prompting, as they realised that there was something missing and they actively tried to fill it in. Also, questions that they asked, such as who certain characters were, were able to fill in certain gaps that the stories may have contained. Therefore their own inquisitiveness was able to clear up any perceived gaps that they may have noticed.

Affective questions were valuable in assessing who the subjects sympathised with and at what level of emotional development the children were. These worked as intended and were able to expose the children's preferences, as well as the morals that they may previously have learned. Although it may not have been anticipated that their answers would be quite so perceptive, and although their scope of emotions may not have been very wide, their answers to these questions were revealing, as anticipated by Reader-Response theory.

Finally, the resistance questions and activities helped to expose whether these stories excluded any of the children and whether the children rebelled against the characters and plot being presented to them. Although the main kind of reluctance that was encountered here was against the questioning process, this framework allowed for the ability, had the occasion arisen, to identify any other kinds of exclusions.

Chapter 5 – Recommendations, Hypotheses and Possibilities for Future Research

Although the sample in this study was small, it was still possible to identify certain trends that could be important in this relatively under-researched field. These trends provided useful information on what children enjoy, suitable stories, and reading comprehension strategies. One possible trend that emerged is the ability of children to understand the universal appeal of stories, despite their differences in background, and that the unfamiliar characters and situations may be a tool to help them learn. Another observation was how children's reactions changed according to the different functions of stories, be they morality, didacticism or entertainment, as each facet invoked different responses. This information enables the formulation of an hypothesis on the responses of contemporary children to fairy and folk tales that could be tested in a larger study in the future.

5.1 Recommendations about Choices of Suitable Stories

Although it is an obvious finding, there is no doubt that most children love stories. As the teacher had suggested, the children were often eager to have stories read to them. Her comment that because children begin to understand print better at their age and that this makes the reading more significant for them, seemed to be confirmed in the children. Tumelo and Yolande, for example, liked to watch the pages as the stories were read, despite the fact that there were no pictures. One possible area of dispute was that the teacher suggested that children with extensive reading backgrounds tend to have a greater love of stories, but this was not always true. Although Cole had heard many stories, he was not always interested in the study, whereas Jarred, who was hardly exposed to fiction, was intrigued. Overall, however, the teacher seemed to have an accurate grasp of the children's likes and dislikes, although it was not possible to either prove or disprove these within this limited study.

The main significance of the study seems to be the encouraging finding that black and white children, as well as boys and girls, are not divided in terms of story preferences and

enjoyment. Although this may have been the case in Apartheid days (there was no research that was come across that either proved or disproved this), the study seems to concur with the view that these fairy stories and folk tales are universally appealing. Also, both boys and girls seemed open to enjoying the same types of stories, regardless of the gender of the characters.

It seems possible that contemporary children would have different perceptions of gender roles to children who lived in the past. These days, women are often perceived as strong, independent equals and since these views are often contradicted in older stories, the children's expectations of these gender roles are useful to track. A story such as *Jorinda and Jorindel* represents a vulnerable female who needs saving by a man, while the mother-in-law in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk* was under the control of a dominant male. These both seem to ascribe to a more outdated view about gender relations. It was evident that some children, such as Yolande and Cole, were aware of very progressive ideas regarding females, while others accepted the stories' sometimes sexist ideas without question, even suggesting similar ideas themselves. An interesting finding that was discussed on Pages 71 & 124 was that many of the girls did not believe that females are capable of being heroes, which suggests that perhaps gender roles have not changed very much. Although fairy tales sometimes present females as submissive, many rewritings of fairy tales include feisty, strong females. Since these are used widely, it is possible that what children like and expect from female characters has changed.

It seems that many of the children took pleasure in the stories that challenged gender roles. A story such as *King Grisly-Beard* was enjoyed by quite a few of the children and the main character was a spirited, unconventional, powerful female. The children seemed to view her antics as unacceptable, yet amusing. Also, the mother-in-law in *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk* broke the rules by disobeying her son-in-law, and the children sympathised with her when she was in danger with the animal king. This suggests that alternative characters with a daredevil attitude can be appealing as likeable, if controversial characters in the stories.

A similar point is that the children seemed to like characters who contradict societal politeness and expectations. This was evident in *Maqinase,* where many of the children disapproved of Maqinase's behaviour, but they were amused by him and liked him all the

same. This seems to illustrate the well-documented point that children are able to experience situations vicariously through story characters, which may enable them to learn. Also, it could allow an area of expression that they are not entitled to in real life. This is because if they spoke in that manner, they would get into trouble. On the other hand, they did not really like the rock rabbit in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*, suggesting that children do not always support the contravention of accepted morals.

The universality versus difference debate is also highly significant here. This shows that although many of the central ideas in the stories seem to be universal and most children can understand them, the children are also able to learn from those aspects of the stories that are foreign to them. In this way, stories can be formative for children, as they are able to inform them about aspects of life with which they may otherwise not have much contact (Renner and Carter, 1991, 604). Television can be useful in helping children learn, but stories are able to reach children on very different levels. These different levels, such as deep thought and analysis, are only possible in stories, as stories allow for interaction, so there is hands-on learning for children, as they can ask the reader questions and engage with him/her in this 'live' process. Also, the reader has the ability to alter or elaborate on the story at will (especially in oral, rather than written, stories), so that the child is gaining from the reader as well as from the story itself. Therefore, although researchers often claim that stories are universal, which seems to be true to some point, it can in fact be the new knowledge that the tales are able to impart that is most useful to children.

A noteworthy aspect in relation to contemporary South African culture is how similar these supposedly disparate children are. It seems that because they are all urban children, they have many shared cultural factors, so their own backgrounds may not be the main factor to influence their responses. In this way, different races do not necessarily mean different cultures, as the Western influence may be quite strong. Their common education also seems to give them a shared set of morals and beliefs, as indicated in their often converging answers to the stories. Also, the children read the same books from school and are probably exposed to similar television programmes at home and this could lead to a more shared perspective. Of course, there are still differences in their opinions and preferences, which may also be due to their upbringings and the values that they have been taught. In this way, their backgrounds undoubtedly have an impact on their responses, as it is impossible to

separate their present knowledge from their past knowledge, but the setup of contemporary society ensures that the children have some shared heritage too.

An important recommendation for children of six or seven years old, is that the stories that are read to them should be kept short. It became apparent in this study that longer stories, such as *King Grisly-Beard*, seemed to panic the children, as they found that the tales were too extensive to recall in detail. Of course, in normal story-telling scenarios, the children will probably not need to repeat the story to the reader or be intensely questioned on it, but it still seems true that children are only able to concentrate for short amounts of time. The solution could be to edit these stories, but this seems impractical for a home or school environment, as it would take a considerable amount of work. A more practical answer could be to choose shorter, punchier stories for single-sitting readings and perhaps use longer stories to read over the duration of a couple of sessions, be these at home before bed, or for story-time in class, where the story can be read over a few days.

Humour in the stories seemed to be the most consistently appealing feature for children and seems to confirm Adams's (1953, 121) comment that simple humour is the most enjoyable aspect of stories for young readers (and could be another universal feature of stories). When asked which stories were the subjects' favourites, it was undoubtedly the funny ones that were most frequently chosen. There did not seem to be a difference between what boys and girls found amusing, which suggests that humour can transcend this gender divide. It was possible to witness the responses to humour through the children's spontaneous reactions, including in their facial expressions, gasps or chuckles. There was also a resounding consensus that the stories that were enjoyed the most were those that were perceived as funny, such as *The Fox and the Horse* or *Maqinase*. It is possible that this genre of comedy links to what children are exposed to on television, especially children's programmes, such as cartoons. This is not to say that humorous stories can only deal with frivolous topics, though, as stories like *Maqinase*, are able to teach morals too, in this case that being rude is unacceptable. Therefore humour is a tool that is fun for children and seems to appeal to most of them, so it could be used effectively to convey important messages that need to be transmitted to them.

An important counterpoint to the significance of humour though is that neither entertainment nor morality/didacticism is sufficient in a children's story. This seems to

concur with the teacher's view that a healthy balance of both is necessary to ensure that a story is beneficial. The children in this study definitely did not just want a story to preach to them, so that it is openly and only educational. They revelled in the humour, but were also intensely interested in the morals the stories conveyed. They also seemed to enjoy having new words explained to them. Bailey (1966, 31) said that reading for information, which is common at school, cannot help but overlap with reading for leisure. But on the other side, children do not only require fun, as although they may not realise it consciously, they like to learn from what they are reading. A story such as *Maqinase* had its funny points, but also taught a lesson in obeying one's parents. *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way* creates the funny scenario that the animals have no tails, but mixes this with the lesson that laziness does not pay. This suggests that a useful story for children will contain a delicate balance between the playful and the educational, so that while children are being entertained, they are gaining life experience in an indirect way, as Bettelheim (1990, 55 & 56) claims is so useful for them.

5.2 Recommendations for Approaches to Reading and Presentation

The importance of involvement in the stories, as well as freedom to choose how to be involved in them, became apparent. The aftercare teacher had stated that the children preferred interactive stories and this was obviously accurate. On close examination, it was generally those children who were actively involved in the reading process who seemed to benefit the most from the stories. Active involvement in the stories seemed to involve keenly asking and answering questions in the texts and participating in any tasks that the researcher set out. This involvement in and engagement with the stories seemed to add an extra dimension to the stories, in the form of the activities after the reading. For most children, except for the very shy ones such as Munyadi, Neliswe and sometimes John, this type of activity seemed to be viewed as fun and as something to look forward to, be it drawing, acting or the felt boards. The reasons for the enjoyment of the activities could be numerous. One possibility is that they gave the children the opportunity for further involvement in the stories. As there were no illustrations shown to the children, they could not be involved in the stories in that way, but the activities allowed them to be part of the meaning-making process. When the subjects played with the puppets before and during the

reading, this suggested that there was often a desire to be an active part of the story-telling process, by the children adding in their own input. Therefore the activities allowed them to be part of creating their individual slant on the stories

Proximity and freedom to move around during the sessions also seemed to be significant factors for the children. This could be seen in Tumelo and Yolande's cases, where both of them sat very close to the researcher, possibly to become more involved with the action. It could also be an indication that the subjects wanted a closer relationship with the reader. This highlights the fact that an affectionate, positive and inclusive relationship with the reader may be important to elicit the most useful answers from the subjects. This suggests that the environment where the story is read could be important, as a more personal and special reading environment could lead to richer responses. As was proved with John, where a child sits can also affect his/her ultimate enjoyment of the stories. Although seating will probably not be a concern during bedtime readings, the proximity of the reader to the listener may be significant. This suggests that when stories are read to young children at school, they should be allowed the freedom to move as close as they want to be to the reader, as seeing the page or the picture may allow them to feel involved in and important to the process. It may also help them to concentrate better. Similarly, stories read at home should also allow spontaneity in movement, as the child's interest may vary at different parts of the reading.

Other reasons that these activities were successful could be that they may have led to greater understanding in the stories. They could have also enabled the children to make links to their own lives, as well as to make their own meaning. The subjects were often able to gain greater comprehension of the goings-on of the stories because through their own role plays and expression through other media, such as drawing, they were able to interpret the stories in a way that matched their own ideas and imaginations. The stories were left to interpretation by the children, as they could create the characters with as much personal input as they wanted, even if they were sometimes shown what the characters would look like, such as through the puppets. Part of this understanding may have been linked to the children's ability to associate the stories with their own lives. An example was that Maqinase's rudeness had been encountered in other people the children knew, or that if the children were to act that way, they would undoubtedly be punished. Therefore instead of

only having the stories read, it can be useful to consolidate the information in the stories by allowing personal interpretation through certain activities that follow the readings.

The most important function of the activities seemed to be their ability to promote the use of the imagination. This was enabled by allowing the children almost free reign in acting the stories. In this way, they could choose to act the stories as they appeared during the reading, or they could elaborate and create stories that they preferred or would have created themselves if they were the writers. Some children chose to retell the real stories and then create their own, which may suggest that although they did not disapprove of the given tales, they saw room for improvement. Otherwise, it is possible that these activities can act as stimulants to give new ideas for their own stories. The activities can therefore be useful to help promote children's creativity, as the stories can initiate the creative process and some children are able to personalise the stories and use them as a tool for expression.

This particular research left a lot of room for questioning at any stage during or after the reading of the stories. This relaxed approach to the sessions seemed to be beneficial, as the subjects could clarify any problems that they were having before these affected their overall understanding of the stories. In this manner, subjects could ask questions before, during or after the readings. Some children, such as Tumelo, took advantage of this opportunity and his deep understanding of the stories may have stemmed from this freedom. In a similar vein, some children used the puppets to role play their understanding of the stories and this was a similar manner in which they could gain clarification. If the problems were not resolved, there was often confusion in the questions, such as when Munyadi was unable to grasp the concept that King Grisly-Beard pretends to be more than one character. Therefore, the benefits of reading these tales seem to be maximised by allowing the children the freedom to investigate them by clarifying their own misunderstandings.

The opportunities to tell or create their own stories were eagerly employed by some of the children. This was especially seen in Tumelo and Kabelo's stories discussed on Pages 112–120. This is linked to the freedom to ask questions, but has a much more personal aspect, as the stories that children choose to tell may be related to the actual stories or they may be completely unrelated and rather link to their own lives. Although this is not a psychological investigation, these stories allow a glimpse into a child's mind and concerns, and more relevantly, to what issues and topics concern and interest a child. Also, if the children were

allowed to tell their own stories, it made them less disruptive during the process, as they did not feel too confined to express themselves. Therefore, allowing children to tell these stories can reveal a child's concerns or pleasures, thus allowing a deeper understanding of him/her.

The situation in which the children were asked to retell stories and ended up changing them, is also very telling. Altering the endings of stories, such as giving stories happy endings or having *Maqinase* receive his comeuppance, can show what children desire in order to be satisfied by the tales. It is also possible that these stories can reveal what story aspects these children enjoy, such as moral retribution, happy endings and more violence. This can aid us in selecting stories that are appropriate for children's particular levels of development.

A point to consider is over what time period future research should take place. This study took place over about nine weeks (including the week's break between every two sessions). As was discussed, some of the children seemed to become bored by the sessions or felt confined by being obliged to attend. Others, however, were disappointed to see the study come to an end. It is therefore difficult to gauge for how long a future study should go on. It is impossible to gain much information if a study does not consist of at least five or six sessions, but of course, more sessions would yield additional information. Perhaps one needs to select the number of sessions according to the subjects' age, with more sessions being added the older the children are.

5.3 Possible Hypothesis Features for Further Discussion

This study has raised a number of issues for further investigation in larger studies in the future. The following hypotheses could be more fully explored:

- Fairy tales and African folk tales have universal appeal for contemporary children in South Africa, regardless of gender, culture or reading experience. This was seen in that there did not really appear to be any resistance to characters, stories or aspects from different cultures. This could be more fully explored in a bigger study. Except for very few exceptions (see Neliswe's responses on Page 131), the children understood Maqinase's rudeness, the horse's heartache, the mother-in-law's fear, the rock rabbit's laziness and the princess's sense of entitlement. This is a very

encouraging finding, as it suggests that children of such a young age are able to understand the perspectives of other characters, despite their own rather narrow worlds. This seems to confirm the universality of fairy and folk tales, suggesting that all children are able to enjoy these stories. This ability for these stories to reach very different children could be further explored and could be useful in terms of selecting stories for children, as it shows that a great scope of stories may be equally appealing to diverse children.

- Research involving more details about the background of the subjects could yield more interesting results. Instead of doing a simple overview of the children's backgrounds, perhaps there could be longer, face-to-face interviews conducted with their parents. The information that these interviews would yield could be more intricately worked into the children's responses in order to hypothesise more precisely about the reasons behind their responses.

- The fact that diverse children enjoyed the same stories could point towards the notion that South African schools have become more integrated. There seemed to be similar responses to stories, as well as similar levels of enjoyment of the stories, irrespective of the background of the child. This could point towards the universality of these stories, as well as to South Africa's assimilation. This means that it may not be necessary to focus on satisfying the different needs created by children's varying backgrounds, as these stories may be able to satisfy all these children regardless.

- Children benefit more from one-on-one readings than from group sessions. It may be useful to investigate whether the individual setting is in fact beneficial to all children, or if the shyer ones would find group sessions less threatening. Perhaps the same group of children could be monitored for their reactions in both settings.

- Young children are especially open-minded to different issues, such as gender, race and morals in stories. Older children could be read to and their responses investigated to see whether or not they have similar ideas to the younger children, as it is possible that they already have stringent racial ideas, as well as preferences

for stories. This research would be useful in conjunction with this study, as it could indicate which stories may help to create more tolerant attitudes later on in life.

- Although the Reader-Response and Reception theories proved to be useful in organising the questions and later in evaluating the data, it would be worth investigating whether there are other useful theories that also investigate children's responses to stories. The Reader-Response and Reception theories' premises are quite far-reaching, so the sub-categories of 'prediction', 'affective responses', 'filling in the gaps' and 'resistant reading' were able to cover a diverse and comprehensive array of aspects in the stories. It may be useful to adhere more strictly to psychoanalytical forms of Reader-Response theory (perhaps even focussing more stringently on Bettelheim), or even rather to concentrate on feminist theories. These theories could give a different perspective and add value to what has already been investigated.

- Using different methodology, such as other questioning techniques, could be useful. Repetitive questions were sometimes seen as invasive and could have affected the surprise element of the stories. Trying to create a more natural setting, such as allowing children to express themselves without formal questioning, could assist this problem. Another solution could be to read to children in groups and allow them to talk about the story being read to them, without as much interference from the researcher. Therefore, it may be worth trying to find ways of eliciting answers that could avoid or decrease these problems.

5.4 Evaluation of Methodology and Recommendations for Future Research in a Similar Context

One very important recommendation for similar future research is to try to find research methods that interfere as little as possible with the very responses that they are trying to measure. It is very difficult not to probe or suggest in the sessions, especially when a child is struggling. Yet this must be avoided in order to glean useful results. Although the

questions asked before and especially during the reading seemed necessary to ensure clarity throughout the reading, it may be possible to find alternate ways of doing this, as it tended to disrupt the flow of reading. Perhaps a better way of assessing this would be to allow the children to ask their own questions, although the shyer ones would probably avoid this.

Another possibility is that there were too many questions asked. Perhaps rather than investigating every aspect of the Reader-Response and Reception theories, it would be better to focus on one, such as resistance, and rather have a smaller band of questions, centred around this aspect. In this way, the sessions would be shorter, but due to the concentration on certain aspects in activities, each child could dictate the length of his/her session by either prolonging or shortening his/her activities.

Although in this research, the group sessions were not part of the official investigation, it may be useful to intersperse a similar study with such sessions in order to view the difference between the children's responses in a one-on-one and in a group setting. This could give an indication of whether it is the child's personality and inhibitions that contribute to his/her shyness or confidence, and how these affect his/her responses.

Although the subjects' reading backgrounds were investigated, perhaps these can be explored more stringently in a future study. With new movies and cartoons being released that are based on old fairy tales, such as *Barbie and the Twelve Dancing Princesses*, it would be useful to see whether this leads to any resurgence of interest in these older tales. By comparing what the children watch on television and what they enjoy reading, it would be possible to see whether television can complement, rather than be destructive of, reading habits.

Although it may be a contentious issue that some of the words in this study were simplified, it seems to have led to easier understanding in the stories. Yet it would also be interesting to leave the stories in their original formats and to see how the children react to the authentic stories. Although children are used to contemporary Americanisms, the impact of the old-fashioned language could be studied in order to see whether this aspect can actually assist in making the stories more enjoyable. Also, perhaps words should not

be explained as they were in this study, which could reveal how much children can understand without being spoon-fed explanations of the stories.

Future studies should try to incorporate the space for children to tell their own stories. Although this research tried to allow the subjects to express themselves freely, it may be useful to structure certain questions around the children's creativity. Examples of this might be asking them to make up stories with similar characters to the ones in the story. This may be difficult to convey to such young children, so if this is found to be problematic, perhaps individual expression could be encouraged in other ways, such as asking the subjects to act out what they would do if they were a particular character. This could also give an indication of how they relate to the characters and whether or not they are resistant to them and their actions.

This study, although conducted on such a small scale, yielded a huge amount of data. This suggests that this is an area with a lot of scope and that could definitely be investigated further with different stories and perhaps with children of various ages. The Reader-Response and Reception theories proved to be very useful and would probably continue to be useful in any study that explored this line of questioning involving children's enjoyment of reading. Although, of course, it is impossible to make far-reaching claims about the children's previous knowledge and preferences, this study produced some useful information about the similarities between the story preferences of relatively different South African Grade one children.

The study was successful in eliciting information about the present likes and dislikes of stories in South African Grade one children. Important issues, such as how gender and race can affect enjoyment, were investigated and this was significant, as these can be important influencing factors on enjoyment. Especially in light of South Africa's very difficult task of attempting to integrate its children and to ensure that they are all on an equal footing, this research can help teachers to know what literature they should be focussing on. Since research on the literature that South African children enjoy is quite sparse, this study seemed to address an area that needed attention. If teachers and parents take an interest in what literature their children are exposed to, they could maximise their children's learning and pleasure in a highly educational and enjoyable manner. The hope is that this research can contribute to this growing arena in a meaningful way.

Appendices

Appendix A – The Story of *The Fox and the Horse*

Original Version of *The Fox and the Horse*

Edited Version of *The Fox and the Horse*

A farmer had a horse that had been an excellent, loyal worker for him. But now the horse had grown too old to work. So the farmer decided not to give him anything else to eat and said, “I do not want you anymore, so take yourself out of my stable. I will not take you back again until you are stronger than a lion.” Then the farmer opened the door and sent the animal away.

The poor horse was very sad and he wandered up and down in the wood, looking for some little shelter from the cold wind and rain. Soon, a fox met him. “What’s the matter my friend?” said he, “why do you hang down your head and look so lonely and woebegone?” “Ah!” replied the horse, “fairness and greediness never live in one house. My master has forgotten all that I have done for him for so many years and because I can no longer work, he has sent me away and says that unless I become stronger than a lion, he will not take me back again. What chance do I have of that? He knows I have no chance, or he would not talk like that.”

However, the fox told him not to worry and said, “I will help you. Lie down there, stretch yourself out quite stiff and pretend to be dead.” The horse did as he was told and the fox went straight to the lion who lived in a cave close by and said to him, “A little way off lies a dead horse. Come with me and you may make an excellent meal of this horse.”
The lion was greatly pleased and set off immediately. And when they came to the horse the fox said, “You will not be able to eat him comfortably here. I’ll tell you what – I will tie you tightly to his tail and then you can pull him to your den and eat him whenever you want to.”

This advice pleased the lion, so he lay down quietly for the fox to tie him to the horse. But the fox managed to tie his legs together and he tied them all so hard and fast that with all his strength he could not set himself free. When the fox’s work was done, he clapped the horse on the shoulder and said, “Jip! Dobbin! Jip!”

Then up the horse sprang and moved off, dragging the lion behind him. The beast began to roar and bellow till all the birds of the woods flew away from fright. But the horse let him sing on and made his way quietly over the fields to his master’s house.

“Here he is master,” said he, “I have got the better of him.” And when the farmer saw his old servant, his heart gave in and he said, “You will stay in your stable and be well taken care of.” And so the poor horse had plenty to eat and lived – till he died.

Appendix B – Questions on *The Fox and the Horse*

The **threshold** experiences in this story are when the horse is kicked out by the farmer, when the fox overpowers and outwits the lion and when the horse arrives back at the farmer with the lion tied to him.

Questions:

Questions during the reading/ 'Horizon of expectations' questions:

- While the story is being read, the child will be asked what he/she thinks will happen next at the point where the horse is kicked out by the farmer. This will show how resourceful they think the horse is and if they can imagine how he can overcome the situation. This could indicate what their '**horizons of expectation**' are, as this will give information about what they usually expect from stories and whether previous stories have affected their expectations. They will also be asked if they understand certain words, such as "stable", along the way, to check that they are keeping up. After parts such as when the fox ties up the lion, they may be asked what happens in order to clarify that they understand what is going on.

Questions after the reading:

Understanding (Questions to test whether the child understood the story):

- Who are the characters in the story?
- Why is the horse sent away by the farmer?
- Who decides to help the horse?
- Who is tied to the horse's tail?
- What happens at the end?

Affective (Questions to test how the child responds to the characters and situations in the story):

- How do you think the horse felt when the farmer told him to leave his stables?
- Why do you think the fox decided to help the horse?
- Is any part of the story scary? If so, which part?
- What did you think about the fox?
- How do you think the lion felt when he knew he had been tricked?
- Which animal do you feel sorry for? Why?

- How do you think the horse felt when the farmer said he could come live there again?

Filling in the gaps (Where the reader perceives there to be information missing, or where something is unclear):

- How come the horse and the fox are able to talk?
- How could the horse become stronger than a lion if he is so old?
- Why did the lion believe the fox?
- How did the fox manage to tie down the lion, because lions are usually stronger?
- What do you think the farmer thought when his horse came back to him with the lion?
- What do you think happened to the lion at the end?

Resistant Reading (These questions will check whether the reader has been forced to identify against him- or herself because the text was not constructed for readers like him/her):

- Draw a picture of how you imagine the three characters at the end when the horse brings the lion back. Think of whether they are happy, sad, angry and so on.

Appendix C – The Story of *The Mother-in-Law and the Sour Milk*

Original and Edited Version of *The Mother-in-Law and the Sour Milk*

Appendix D – Questions on *The Mother-in-law and the Sour Milk*

Thresholds here include when the mother-in-law is caught drinking the milk, when she is kicked out of home and when she is almost killed by the animal king.

Questions during the reading/ 'Horizon of expectations' questions:

- While the story is being read, the child will be asked what he/she thinks will happen next at the point where the son-in-law catches the mother-in-law drinking the sour milk. This should show what their 'horizons of expectation' are, as this will say what they usually expect from stories. It will be noted whether the child talks during the story, as this may be an indication that they are used to stories in an oral structure. (This tests '**horizon of expectation'** aspects).

Questions after the reading:

- Which part of the story did you find the most interesting? Why?

Understanding:

- Who are the different people and animals in the story?
- Which character eats the sour milk?
- What work does the old woman do?
- What does the old woman's son-in-law tell her to do for him after he catches her eating the food?
- Who saves the old woman from being killed in the forest?

Affective:

- Why do you think the old woman loves the sour milk so much?
- How do you think the old woman feels when her son-in-law catches her eating the porridge?
- How do you think the old lady feels when she has to walk around from river to river looking for water without frogs?
- How do you feel when the old woman gets caught in the tree's roots?

Filling in the gaps:

- Why do you think the old lady is not allowed to eat porridge and sour milk whenever she wants to?
- Do you think her daughter is cross with her too?
- How can the frogs in the river talk to the old lady?
- How can a wild cat save a human?
- Why does the wild cat want the large bird to be killed?

Resistant Reading:

- The children are shown pictures of different old women and asked which one they think the old lady in the story is and why.

Appendix E – Story of *Jorinda and Jorindel*

Original Version of *Jorinda and Jorindel*

Edited Version of *Jorinda and Jorindel*

There was once an old castle that stood in the middle of a large, thick forest, and in the castle lived an old fairy. All the day long, she flew around in the shape of an owl, or she crept about the country like a cat. But at night she always became an old woman again. When any young man came too close to the castle, within a hundred steps, he became very stuck and could not move a step till she came and set him free. But when any pretty girl came close, she was changed into a bird; and the fairy put her into a cage and hung her up in a room in the castle (***Why did she only change the girls, not the boys, into birds?**). There were seven hundred of these cages hanging in the castle, all with beautiful birds in them.

Now there was once a young girl whose name was Jorinda. She was prettier than all the other girls that ever were seen. And a shepherd whose name was Jorindel liked her very much and they were going to be married soon (***Do you know what a shepherd is?**). One day, they went to walk in the forest so that they could be alone. And Jorindel said, "We must take care that we don't go too near to the castle." It was a beautiful evening – the last rays of the setting sun shone brightly through the long branches of the trees on the green forest beneath and the turtle-doves (***Those are birds**) sang sadly from the tall trees.

Jorinda sat down to look at the sun. Jorindel sat by her side. And both of them felt sad, but they did not know why. But it seemed as if they were going to be separated from one another forever. They had wandered a long way. And when they looked to see which way they should go home, they could not decide which path to take. (***What do you think might happen?**)

The sun was setting fast and already half of his circle had disappeared behind the hill. All of a sudden, Jorindel looked behind him and when he saw through the bushes that they had sat down close under the walls of the castle without knowing it, he got very scared, turned pale (***That means very white**) and started shaking. Jorinda was singing:

"The ring-dove sang from the willow spray.
Well-a-day! Well-a-day!
He mourn'd for the fate
Of his lovely mate,
Well-a-day!"

The song stopped suddenly. Jorindel turned to see the reason and saw his Jorinda changed into a nightingale (***That's a bird**), so that her song ended with a sad *jug jug*. An owl with angry eyes flew around them three times and three times screamed, "Tu whu! Tu whu! Tu whu!" (***Why do you think she flew around three times?**). Jorindel could not move. He stood as still as stone and could not cry or speak or move his hands and feet. And now the sun went down. The gloomy night came, the owl flew into a bush and a moment later, the old fairy came forward, pale and small, with staring eyes and a nose and chin that almost met one another.

She mumbled something to herself, grabbed the nightingale and went away with it in her hand. Poor Jorindel saw the nightingale was gone – but what could he do? He could not speak, he could not move from the spot where he stood. (***What do you think Jorindel would say if he could talk?**) At last the fairy came back and sang with a croaky voice:

"Till the prisoner's fast
And her doom is cast,
There stay! Oh, stay!
When the charm is around her,
And the spell has bound her,
Hie away! Away!"

All of a sudden, Jorindel found himself free. Then he fell on his knees in front of the fairy and prayed for her to give him back his dear Jorinda. But she said he would never see her again, and went away. (***What would you do if you were Jorindel?**)

He prayed, he cried, he was sad, but it was useless. "Alas!" he said, "what will become of me?" He could not return to his own home, so he went to a strange village and kept himself busy by looking after the sheep. Many times, he walked round and round the hated castle, as near as he could go.

At last, one night he dreamt that he found a beautiful purple flower and in the middle of it lay an expensive pearl. And he dreamt that he picked the flower and went with it in his hand into

the castle and that everything that he touched with it lost its evil powers and that there he found his dear Jorinda again.

In the morning, when he awoke, he began to search in every hill and valley for this pretty flower. And eight long days he looked without finding it. But on the ninth day, early in the morning, he found the beautiful purple flower. And in the middle of it was a large dew-drop as big as an expensive pearl.

Then he picked the flower and left, travelling day and night till he came to the castle. He walked nearer than a hundred steps to it, but he did not become stuck like he did before, but found that he could go close up to the door. (***Do you think this was the best thing to do – go to the castle?)**

Jorindel was very glad to see this. He touched the door with the flower, and it sprang open. So he went in through the courtyard and listened when he heard many birds singing. At last he came to the room where the fairy sat, with the seven hundred cages. And when she saw Jorindel, she was very angry and screamed. But she could not come closer than two steps to him because the flower he held in his hand protected him. He looked around at the birds, but alas! There were many, many nightingales, so how would he be able to find his Jorinda? (***If you were Jorindel, how would you find out which bird was Jorinda?**)

While he was thinking what to do, he noticed that the fairy had taken down one of the cages and was escaping through the door. He ran or flew to her, touched the cage with the flower – and his Jorinda stood in front of him. She threw her arms round his neck and looked as beautiful as ever, as beautiful as when they walked together in the forest.

Then he touched all the other birds with the flower, so that they turned back into girls. And he took his dear Jorinda home, where they lived (***Pause here – ask them to finish the sentence**) happily together many years.

Appendix F – Questions on *Jorinda and* Jorindel

The thresholds in this story are when Jorinda is turned into a nightingale by the witch and when Jorindel saves her with the power of the purple flower.

Questions during the reading/ 'Horizon of expectations' questions:

- While the story is being read, the child will be asked what he/she thinks will happen next at the point where the couple is sitting near the castle. This will show how familiar the children are with magic and fairies. They may also be asked what they think the purple flower is for. This could indicate what their '**horizons of expectation**' are, as this will show what they usually expect from stories and whether previous stories have affected their expectations. They will also be asked if they understand certain words, such as "nightingale", along the way, to check that they are keeping up. At the end, they are asked to complete the line, "And they lived…".

Questions after the reading:

Understanding:

- Try to tell me the story as you remember it.
- What does Jorindel use to break the spell?
- Why can't the witch come near him?

Affective:

- Why is Jorindel sad when Jorinda is taken by the fairy?
- How do you think Jorinda felt when she became a bird locked in a cage?
- How do you think all the birds feel at the end when Jorindel saves them and turns them into girls again?
- Who lived happily ever after in the story? Who didn't?
- Who do you like best in the story? Why?
- Is there someone in the story you don't like? Who? Why?

Filling in the gaps:

- Why does the old fairy want to turn the girls into birds?
- How long do you think Jorinda was a bird for?

- Why did Jorindel know that this flower would help him?
- If you were Jorindel, what would you have done to save Jorinda?

Resistant Reading:

- Who do you think is the hero in the story?
- Can a girl be a hero?
- Who do you feel sorry for?
- What do you think should happen to the fairy?
- Do you think the story should end differently? How would you end it if you were the writer?
- FELT BOARD – Place the characters and items from the story onto the board, as you imagine them. (The children were encouraged to act if they wanted to.)

Appendix G – Story of *Maqinase*

Original and Edited Version of *Maqinase*

Appendix H – Questions on *Maqinase*

The thresholds in this story are when Maqinase leaves home, when he meets the different animals and when the dog chases him.

Questions:

Questions during the reading/ 'Horizon of expectations' questions:

- While the story is being read, the child will be asked what he/she thinks will happen next at the point where the piglet leaves home. This could indicate what their '**horizons of expectation**' are, as this will show what they usually expect from stories and whether previous stories have affected their expectations. They will also be asked if they understand certain words.

Questions after the reading:

Understanding:

- What do you think the most important/fun part of the story was? Why?
- Why does Maqinase leave home?
- Who does Maqinase meet on the walk?
- What does Maqinase say to the donkey?
- What happens at the end?

Affective:

- Who was your favourite character in the story? Why?
- Do you think it's a good idea that Maqinase goes for a walk by alone? Why?
- How do you think Maqinase's mom feels when she sees that Maqinase is missing?
- What do you think about the way that Maqinase speaks to the donkey, the tortoise and the frog?
- How do you think the donkey feels when Maqinase says that his ears are big? And the tortoise when he says he is so slow? And the frog when he says his mouth is big?

Filling in the gaps:

- Why do you think Maqinase is so rude?
- If you were the donkey, the tortoise or the frog, would you have helped Maqinase? Why?

- What do you think should happen to Maqinase at the end when he goes home?

Resistant Reading:

- Do you think the story is trying to teach us something? What?
- Do you like the dog? Why?
- Do you think Maqinase will walk alone again? Why or why not?
- Pretend that you are Maqinase's mom - what do you think should have happened to Maqinase at the end?
- ROLE PLAY – Which part was your favourite? Choose some of the cardboard puppets and play out the scene the way you think it happened.

Appendix I – The Story of *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*

Original and Edited Version of *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*

Appendix J – Questions on *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*

The thresholds in this story are when the rabbit decides to lie to the animals about his sick child, when he eagerly anticipates the arrival of his tail and when he is disappointed at the end.

Questions:

Questions during the reading/ 'Horizon of expectations' questions:

- While the story is being read, the child will be asked what he/she thinks will happen next at the point where the animals start returning with their tails. This will show what they expect to happen to a liar. They can also be asked what excuse they think each animal will give. This could indicate what their '**horizons of expectation**' are, as this will show what they usually expect from stories and whether previous stories have affected their expectations. Certain words, such as "rock rabbit", will also be explained to them along the way, so that it is confirmed that they are following the story.

Questions after the reading:

Understanding:

- I wonder if you could try and tell me what happened in this story? (This was an attempt to balance these questions with the Grimm's tale questions)
- What did the rock rabbit want?
- Who did he ask to get it for him?

Affective:

- Do you feel sorry for the rock rabbit? Why?
- How do you think the rock rabbit feels when each animal tells him that they forgot to bring his tail? Why?
- Why do you think the rock rabbit was punished at the end by not getting a tail?
- Do you think anyone in the story is lazy? Who? Why?
- Why does he lie to the animals about his sick child?
- How do you think the rock rabbit feels at the end when he is the only one without a tail?

Filling in the gaps:

- Do you think the rock rabbit really has a child? Why?

- How is it possible that all the animals belong to the same family? Remember, they call each other “cousin”, and so on?
- Why do you think the animals do not bring him his tail?
- Do you think the rock rabbit ever forgives the animals for not bringing him a tail? Why?
- How do you think the rock rabbit feels being the only animal without a tail?

Resistant Reading:

- How did you want the story to end? (What would you have changed in the story?)
- How do you think this sentence should end? – Liars are...
- What lesson do you think the rock rabbit learned?
- Do you ever behave like the rock rabbit does?
- Do you know anyone who is lazy like the rock rabbit?
- Do you know anyone who lies like the rock rabbit?

Appendix K – The Story of *King Grisly Beard*

Original Version of *King Grisly Beard*

Edited Version of *King Grisly Beard*

A great king had a daughter who was very beautiful, but so proud and full of herself and stuck up, that none of the princes who came to ask her to marry them was good enough for her and she only teased them.

Once upon a time, the king had a great feast and invited all the princes and kings for her to choose who she would marry. They sat in a row from the most important to the least important, kings and princes and dukes and earls. Then the princess came in and walked past all of them, but she had something mean to say to every one. The first was too fat: "He's as round as a tub!", said she. The next was too tall: "What a pole!", said she. The next was too short: "What a dumpling!" said she. The fourth was too pale. And she called him "Wallface." The fifth was too red, so she called him, "Rooster head." The sixth was not straight enough, so she said he was like a green stick that had been put to dry over a baker's oven. And so she had some joke to make about every one. But she laughed the most at a good king who was there. "Look at him," said she, "his beard is like an old mop, he shall be called Grisly-beard!" (***I add in, "'Grisly' means 'grey'."**) So the king got the nick-name of Grisly-beard.

But the princess's father, the old king, was very angry when he saw how his daughter behaved, and how she treated his guests so badly. And he promised that whether she wanted to or not, she should marry the first beggar that came to the door. **(*Do you know what a beggar is?)**

Two days later, a travelling musician came by and he began to sing under the window and asked for money. And when the king heard him, he said, "Let him come in." **(*Why do you think he is letting him in?)** So they brought in the dirty-looking man. And when he had sung in front of the king and the princess, he begged for a reward. Then the king said, "You have sung so well that I will give you my daughter for a wife." The princess begged and prayed, but the king said, "I promised to give you to the first beggar, and I will keep my word." So, words and tears were useless. They sent for the priest and the princess was married to the musician. When this was over, the king said, "Now get ready to go. You must not stay here. You must travel on with your husband."

Then the beggar left and took her with him. And they soon came to a huge forest. “Please,” said the princess, “whose forest is this?” “It belongs to King Grisly-beard,” answered her husband, “If you had married him, all of this would be yours.” “Ah! I am such an unlucky girl!” she sighed, “if only I had married King Grisly-beard!” Next they came to some beautiful fields. “Whose beautiful green fields are those?” he said. “They belong to King Grisly-beard. If you had married him, they would all be yours.” “Ah! I am an unlucky girl! She said, “I wish that I had married King Grisly-beard!”

Then they came to a great city. “Whose is this wonderful city?” she said. “It belongs to King Grisly-beard. If you had married him, it would all be yours.” “Ah! I am an unlucky girl!” she sighed, “Why didn’t I marry King Grisly-beard?” “That is none of my business,” said the musician, “Why do you wish for another husband? Am I not good enough for you?”

At last they came to a small cottage. **(*Do you know what a cottage is?)** “What a silly place!” she said. “Who does that dirty little hole belong to?” The musician answered, “That is our house, where we are going to live.” “Where are your servants?” she cried (***Those are people that work for you. Alternatively, ask the children what they are**). “Why do you need servants?” he said. “You must do everything yourself. Now make the fire and boil water and cook my supper, because I am very tired.” But the princess did not know anything about making fires and cooking, and the beggar was forced to help her. When they had eaten very small meal, they went to bed. But the musician woke her up very early in the morning to clean the house.

This is how they lived for two days. And when they had eaten up all the food in the cottage, the man said, “Wife, we cannot carry on like this, spending money and not earning any money. You must learn to make baskets.” Then he went out and cut trees and brought them home and she began to weave. But it made her fingers very sore. “I can see this work will not be good,” he said, “try and spin. Maybe you will do that better.” So she sat down and tried to spin. But the strings cut her soft fingers until the blood ran. “See now,” said the musician, “you are good for nothing, you can do no work. What a bargain I got! However, I will try to let you sell pots and pans in the market.” Alas” she sighed, “when I stand in the market and any people from my father’s palace pass by and see me there, they will laugh at me!” (***Why will they laugh at her?**)

But the beggar did not care about that and said she must work if she did not want to die of hunger. At first, the selling in the market went well because many people saw how beautiful she was and wanted to buy her things and paid their money without thinking of taking away the things with them.

The husband and wife lived on this as long as it lasted, and then her husband bought new pots and pans and she sat down to sell them in the corner of the market. But a drunken soldier soon came by and rode his horse against her stall and broke all her pots and pans into a thousand pieces. Then she began to cry and she did not know what to do. “Ah! What will happen to me?” she said. “What will my husband say?” **(*What do you think her husband is going to say?)** So she ran home and told him everything. “Who would have thought you could be so silly,” he said, “that you would put all your pots and pans in the corner of the market where everyone walks past? No more crying. I can see that you are not good at this work. So I went to the king’s palace and asked if they wanted a kitchen maid. They have promised that you can work there and you will have plenty to eat.”

So the princess became a kitchen maid and helped the cook to do all the dirtiest work. She was allowed to take home some of the meat that was left over and this is what her and her husband ate.

She had not been there long when she heard that the king’s oldest son was passing by and was going to get married. She went to one of the windows and looked out. Everything was ready and all the palace looked splendid (**Emphasise**). Then she thought with a sad heart of her own miserable life and she was sad that she was so rude and silly because that is why she was in this situation. And the servants gave her some of the rich meats which she put into her basket to take home.

All of a sudden, as she was going out, the king’s son came in, in his golden clothes. And when he saw a beautiful woman at the door, he took her by the hand and asked her to dance with him. (***Who do you think this prince is? What do you think is going to happen?)** But she was shaking with fear because she saw that it was King Grisly-beard, who was teasing her. But he held her hand and took her inside. And the cover of the basket fell off so that the meats in it fell everywhere. Then everybody laughed and booed at her and she was

so embarrassed that she wished she was a thousand metres deep inside the earth. She sprang to the door to run away, but on the steps, King Grisly-beard caught up to her and took her back and he said, “Do not be scared! I am the musician who has lived with you in the cottage. I brought you here because I loved you. I am also the soldier from the market who broke all your pots and pans. I have done all of this so that you will not be so full of yourself and to punish you because you were so horrible to me. Now, it is all over. You have learnt your lesson, all your mistakes are gone, and it is time to celebrate our marriage feast!”

Then the servants came and brought her the most beautiful dresses. And her father and all his people were already there and congratulated her on her marriage. Everyone’s face was full of joy. The feast was grand and everyone was happy and I wish you had been at the party.

Appendix L – Questions on *King Grisly-Beard*

The thresholds in this story are when the princess is rude to the guests, when the king gives her to the 'beggar', when she comes to her new cottage, when she starts her jobs and when she finds out the truth at the end.

Questions:

Questions during the reading/ 'horizon of expectations' questions:

- During the reading of the story, the child will be asked what he/she thinks will happen next at the point where the princess is sent away with the beggar. This will show how familiar the children are with the outcomes of fairy tales. They may also be asked what they think will happen at the end with the ball. This could indicate what their '**horizons of expectation**' are, as this will show what they usually expect from stories and whether previous stories have affected their expectations. They will also be asked if they understand certain words, such as "spinning" and "weaving", along the way, to check that they are keeping up.

Questions after the reading:

Understanding:

- Which part did you think was the most fun? Why?
- Why was the princess sent away?
- What work did the princess have to do when she came to the cottage?
- Who was the beggar actually?
- What happened at the end?

Affective:

- Which character did you like the best? Why?
- What do you think about the way that the princess talks to the guests?
- Do you feel sorry for the princess when she is sent away? Why?
- Do you think the princess learned her lesson? Does she become a nicer person or not?
- Do you think it was right for King Grisly-Beard to pretend he was a beggar? Why?

Filling in the gaps:

- How come do you think the princess does not recognise King Grisly-Beard when he is dressed as the beggar?
- Do you think the king knew that the beggar was actually the king? Why?
- Do you think the princess is angry at her father for sending her away? Why?
- How do you think the princess feels working as a maid in the palace kitchen?
- Do you think the princess is happy at the end when she realises that her husband is actually the king?

Resistant Reading:

- What do you think this story is trying to teach us?
- Do you know anyone like the rude princess? What are they like?
- Complete the sentence: Princesses are…
- ROLE PLAY – Please tell me the story with the puppets. You can just act out the parts that you remember.

Appendix M – Examples of Drawings from *The Fox and the Horse* Activity

Example of Resistance to Drawing – Neliswe's Drawing of a Fish

Yolande's Drawing – An Example of a Child who did Not Resist Drawing

Appendix N – Pictures of Possible Old Women in *The Mother-in-Law and the Sour Milk*

Appendix O – Felt Board Used in *Jorinda and Jorindel*

Felt Board Used in *The Rock Rabbit Learns the Hard Way*

Appendix P – Puppets used in *Maginase*

Puppets Used in *King Grisly-Beard*

Appendix Q – Questions to Ask Children During the First Interview

- Do you hear stories anywhere other than at school?
- Do you like being read stories?
- Does anyone read to you at home? If yes, who reads to you?
- Does anyone ever just tell you stories without a book?
- Do you ever ask someone to read to you?
- Do you ever ask people to make up stories to tell you?
- Do you like to make up stories?
- Do you remember being read to when you were younger?
- Do you remember any stories or books that you liked?
- What is your favourite story or book now?
- How often does someone at home tell you stories?
- Have you ever read any fairy tales? And African tales?
- Can you read? If yes, what do you read?
- Do you watch TV?
- What are your favourite programmes?
- Do you ever talk about what you watch on TV?

Appendix R – The Story of *The Twelve Brothers*

Original Version of *The Twelve Brothers*

Edited Version of *The Twelve Brothers*

Once upon a time, a queen and a king lived happily together. They had twelve children, all of them boys. One day, the king said to the queen, “If our thirteenth child that you are about to have is a girl, then the twelve boys must die. Then our daughter can get all the money and the palace for herself.” The king told the queen not to tell anybody what was going on.

But the queen sat crying the whole day long. Her youngest child, Benjamin, who was always with her, said to her, “Mother dear, why are you so sad?”
“My dearest child,” she replied, “I am not allowed to tell you!” But he did not stop asking until she unlocked the door and showed him the twelve coffins and pillows. Then she said, ”My dearest Benjamin, your father says that if I have a little girl you and your twelve brothers will all be killed” And she cried while she said this. Benjamin tried to make her feel better and said, “Do not cry mother, we will look after ourselves and leave the palace”. But she said “Go with your eleven brothers into the forest. One of you must climb into the highest tree you can find and keep watching the tower in the castle. If the baby that I have is a boy, I will hang out a white flag – this means that you can come home again. But if I have a girl, I will hang out a red flag – and then run away as quickly as you can. Every night I will pray for you – in winter I will pray that you have fire to warm yourselves and in summer I will pray that you have not melted from the heat.”

She blessed each one of her sons and then they ran away to the forest. Each one had a turn to sit in the highest oak tree and to watch the tower to wait for the flag. When eleven days had passed, it was Benjamin’s turn to watch. He saw that a flag had been hung out the tower – but it was not the white one, but the red one, which meant that they must all die. When the other brothers heard this, they became very angry and said, “Are we going to die because of a girl? We must take revenge – wherever we see a girl we will kill her.”

After this, they went deeper into the forest, and in the middle, where it was the darkest, they found a cute little cottage that was empty. They said, “We will live here. Benjamin, you are the youngest and the weakest, so you must stay in the cottage while we go out and hunt.” So they went into the forest and shot rabbits, wild deer, hares and pigeons and whatever

else they could find. They brought these home to Benjamin to cook and prepare them for their meals. They lived in this cottage for ten years and time passed very quickly.

The queen's little daughter had now grown up. She had a kind heart and was very beautiful and she always wore a golden star on her forehead. Once, when there was a big spring clean at the palace, she saw twelve boys' shirts hanging up and she asked her mother "Whose shirts are these, because they are much too small for my father?"
The mother answered sadly, "My dear child, they belong to your twelve brothers!"
The girl replied, "Where are my twelve brothers? I have never heard of them."
The queen answered, "G-d only knows where they are; they have wandered into the wide world. Your brothers ran away secretly before your were born." And she told her everything that had happened.
Then the girl said, "Don't worry dear mother, I will go and look for my brothers." She took the twelve shirts and went into the great forest. All day long she walked on and on, and in the evening she arrived at the cute house and she stepped inside. There she found a young boy who asked her, "Where do you come from and where are you going to?"
The boy was amazed to see how beautiful she was and he was also surprised at her queenly clothes and the star on her forehead.
Then she answered, "I am a king's daughter and I am looking for my twelve brothers. I will go as far as heaven is blue until I find them." And she showed him the twelve shirts that belonged to them.
Benjamin immediately realised that it was his sister and he said, "I am Benjamin, your youngest brother."
When she heard this, she began to cry for joy and Benjamin also cried and they kissed and hugged one another with great love.
Then he said, "Dear sister, there is one terrible problem – my brothers and I have agreed that every girl we meet must die because we were forced to leave the palace because of a girl."
Then the girl replied, "I will gladly die if it means that this will free my twelve brothers."

"No," he answered, "You will not die. Hide yourself under this barrel until our eleven brothers come home." She did this. And when it was night time the others came back from hunting and their dinner was prepared. As they sat at the table eating, they asked, "What news do you have, Benjamin?" Benjamin said, "Don't you know?"

“No.” they said. Then Benjamin spoke again, “You have been in the forest and I have been at home, but I know more than you do.”
“Tell us right now!” they said.
Benjamin answered, “First you have to promise me that you will not kill the first girl that meets us.”
“Yes, we promise!” they shouted, “We will not hurt her. Tell us right now.”
Then Benjamin said, “Our sister is here.” He lifted up the barrel and the king’s daughter came out from underneath it, looking very beautiful and gentle in her royal clothes and with the golden star on her forehead. When they saw her they were happy, and they kissed her and loved her with all their hearts.

Now the girl stayed at home with Benjamin and helped him with his work while the eleven other brothers went into the forest and caught wild animals, deer, birds and pigeons for their meals, which Benjamin and his sister carefully prepared. The sister looked for wood for the fire and for vegetables which she prepared and she put the pots on the fire so that their dinner was ready when the eleven brothers returned home. She also cleaned the cottage and put beautiful, clean, white sheets on the beds. The brothers were always happy and they lived together happily.

One day, when Benjamin and his sister had cooked a delicious meal, the others came in, sat down, ate and drank and were very happy. But there was a little garden outside the cute cottage. In the garden there were twelve flowers called lilies, and the sister picked twelve flowers to give to each of her brothers as a present. But as she picked each flower, the twelve brothers were changed one by one into twelve black birds and they flew off into the forest. At the same time, the house and garden both disappeared.

So the poor girl was left alone in the wild forest. As she looked around, she saw an old woman standing near her. The old woman said, “My child, what have you done? Why didn’t you leave the twelve flowers alone? The flowers were your brothers, and they have now become black birds!”
Then the girl asked with tears in her eyes, “Is there no way I can save them?”
“There is only one way in the whole world,” said the old woman, “but it is so difficult that you will not be able to free them. You must keep quiet for seven long years – you cannot speak or laugh, and if you say even one word it will not work and your brothers will die as

soon as you speak." Then the girl said in her heart, "I know for sure that I will free my brothers." She went and found a tall tree and climbed into the branches. She spent all her time sewing, without ever speaking or laughing.

A while later, a king was hunting in the forest. He had a large dog. The dog ran to the girl's tree and ran around barking loudly. So the king went to see what he was barking at and he saw the beautiful girl with the star on her forehead. He was so enchanted with her beauty that he asked her to marry him. She did not answer him, but only nodded her head a little bit. So the king climbed the tree, brought her down, put her on his horse and carried her to his home. Then the wedding was celebrated with a big party – but the bride did not speak or laugh.

After the king and the girl had lived together happily for two years, the king's mother, who was a wicked woman, began to say bad things about the young queen to her son. She said, "Your wife is just a poor girl that you have brought home with you. Who knows what bad things she did at home? Even if she can't speak, she could still laugh sometimes. People who do not laugh are trying to hide something." The king did not want to believe this, but the old woman kept telling him these bad things, and the king eventually believed her. He agreed with his mother that his wife is evil and must die.

A big fire was lit outside the palace where they were going to kill the girl. The king stood and watched from a high window. He had tears in his eyes because he loved her so much. As soon as the fire started to lick at her clothes with its red tongues, the seven years were up and the spell was over. There was a loud whirring sound in the air and twelve black birds came flying by. They landed on the ground and became her twelve brothers once again. She had freed them. They put out the fire around her, set their sister free and kissed and hugged her.

And she was finally able to open her mouth and speak and tell the king why she had been quiet and could not laugh. And the king was very happy when he heard that she had not done any evil things. And so the girl and the king lived happily ever after.

Appendix S –Questions from *The Twelve Brothers*

Questions during the reading/ 'Horizon of expectations' questions:

- Predictive questions would be useful to establish the child's 'horizons of expectation'.

These questions could be used near the end, to ask the child what he/she thinks is going to happen just before the princess is about to be killed. By looking at how the children respond, it will be possible to get an indication of what they expect from endings in these tales ('**Horizon of expectations**').

Questions after the reading:

Understanding:

- How many brothers are there?
- Why do they have to leave the palace?
- Who moves in with them in their cottage?
- Why do the twelve brothers change into black birds?
- How is the princess saved?

Affective:

- How do you think the twelve brothers felt when they were alone in the forest?
- How do you think the girl felt when she left to find her brothers?
- Whose fault do you think it is that the boys turned into birds?
- Let's play the quiet game. See if you can keep quiet and not smile for a whole minute. How did that feel? The princess did it for seven years – what type of person do you think she is?

Filling in the gaps:

- How do you think the parents felt when their daughter left them?
- How do you think the boys managed to survive on their own in the forest?
- What do they eat? Who does their washing?
- Why do you think the boys became birds?
- What do you think happens to the evil queen at the end when the princess is saved?

Resistant Reading:

- Draw a picture of how you imagine the girl/ sister. Think about what types of clothes she wears, about the star on her forehead, her face, her hair and anything else you can think of.

Appendix T – Questions to Ask Parents in Phone Interview

- Does your child hear stories anywhere other than at school?

- Does he/she enjoy listening to or being read stories?

- Do you or another family member read to your child? (This was sometimes placed later, depending on the parent or guardian's attitude. If it was felt that the parent was insecure about the interview, this question was asked later or integrated into other questions about their reading habits.)

- Is your child ever told made-up stories, either by you or by another relative?

- Does he/she ask to be read stories?

- Does your child ask you to make-up stories?

- When did you begin reading/ telling stories to your child?

- What types of story have been his/her favourites?

- Was your child read to when he/she was younger? If yes, what books/stories did you read to him/her?

- What books/stories does he/she enjoy now?

- Has he/she ever been told fairy tales or African folk tales?

- How often is he/she read to or told stories?

- Can the child read? If yes, what does he/she read by themselves?

- What TV does your child watch?

- Has he/she always watched TV?

- Does he/she watch a lot of cartoons?

- Does he/she ever discuss the TV that he/she watches?

Appendix U – Consent Forms

LETTER OF CONSENT TO PARENTS

Dear Parent/ Guardian

My name is Stacey Wolpert and I am an English Masters student at Wits University. I am researching how different children respond to fairy tales. In order for me to do this research, I would like to interview your child to get his/her opinions on six stories that I will read to him/her (Grimm Brothers' tales and African Zulu folk tales).

There will be a total of ten children that I will be interviewing individually. I will need to meet with your Grade one child for about half an hour once a week, for six weeks in a row. This meeting will take place while your child is at aftercare at school and will not require any additional inconvenience. I will be reading your child one story each week, and then asking him/her questions about the story. He/she will be asked to answer questions and complete certain tasks, such as drawing pictures from the stories or doing other fun activities related to the stories. These interviews will be taped on a tape recorder, but only to keep as a record for my final study. There will be no testing or assessment of your child involved.

I would also need to speak to you, the guardian, for a short conversation, either in person or on the telephone. This will help me to find out whether your child has been read stories in the past, if he/she has been told stories and if he/she watches television. This interview will not take long, but will help me understand your child's story-reading history. It does not matter if your child has not been read to before, I just need to know this information as part of the background to the study.

If at any point in the study your child no longer wants to take part, he/she will be free to leave the study. All information is completely confidential and children and guardians will not be referred to by name in the study. All results of the study will be available to you on request. I need your consent for this study, as Wits does not allow any student to conduct research with children without their guardian's consent.

This experience should be fun and enjoyable for your child. He/she will hear some new and exciting stories and will hopefully have fun discussing them. This research should help us select the best stories for children to read in the future.

Please complete the attached form and return it to the aftercare teacher as soon as possible. This form says that you are giving permission for your child to participate in the study. Please remember that your child does not have to take part. If you have any questions, please call me. Dates on which your child will be interviewed will be given to you in the next few weeks.

I really appreciate your cooperation and look forward to meeting your child.

Yours Sincerely

Stacey Wolpert (Cell number)

****

I _____(parent/guardian) hereby give permission for my child, _____(name of child), to take part in this six-week study. I understand what it involves and I realise that if at any point my child wants to leave the study, he/she will be allowed to. My contact details are: (Cell)_____, (Home No.) _____. I would prefer to be contacted at (time)_____.
.

_____(Signature) _____(Date)

RECORDING CONSENT FORM:

Dear Parent/Guardian

As mentioned in the other information sheet and guardian consent form, I will be taping the six interviews with your child on a tape recorder. Wits requires additional permission from you to show that you are aware that your child will be recorded. The only reason that the study will be recorded is for research purposes, so that I can keep track of the children's responses to the questions. These tape recordings will NOT be used in any other way, except to enable the interviews to be typed out and attached to the research as a record of the different answers. The tapes will then be destroyed after they have been typed out. Your children will be anonymous in the research – no names will be mentioned at all, and their voices will not be heard (as the interviews will be typed out). Once again, if you do not feel comfortable with this, you are not at all forced to let your child take part in the study.

Please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions.

Thank you again.

Yours Sincerely
Stacey Wolpert (Cell number)

I _____ (parent/guardian) of
_____ (child's name) understand that the six interviews that he/she will take part in will be tape recorded. I am also aware that these recordings will only be used for research purposes and that my child will be anonymous in the final research. I also realise that his/her participation is voluntary and that the tapes will then be destroyed after the interviews have been typed out.

_____ (Signature) _____ (Date)

Bibliography

Primary Texts

- Arnott, K. *Five Zulu Tales*. Cape Town: Anansi Publishers, 1992.
- Canonici, N.N. *An Anthology of Zulu Tales (Revised Edition)*. Durban: University of Natal, 1986.
- Grimm. *A Selection of Sixteen Grimm's Fairy Tales*. London: Haeper of Holloway, 1948.
- Grimm. *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. Bridlington: Priory Books (Undated).
- Grimm. *The Classic Grimm's Fairy Tales*. (Egan, L.B. Ed.). Philadelphia: Courage Books, 1989.
- Grimm. *The Juniper Tree and other Tales from Grimm*. London: The Bodley Head, 1973.
- Joubert, E. *The Four Friends and Other Tales from Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 1987.
- Mabuya, L.T.L. & Khathi, N.P. *The Babbling Stream*. Pretoria: Daan Retief Publishers, 1991.
- Matthews, T. *Tales of the Secret Valley*. Harare: Baobab Books, 1988.
- Murgatroyd, M. *Tales from the Kraals*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1987.
- Pitcher, D. *Tokoloshi: African Folk Tales Retold*. London: Skilton & Shaw, 1980.
- Turkington, K. (Ed.). *The South Wind and the Sun: Stories from Africa*. Pretoria: De Jager-HAUM Publishers, 1983.

Secondary Texts

- Aboud, F. *Children and Prejudice*. New York: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988.
- Adams, B.P. *About Books and Children: Historical Survey of Children's Literature*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953.
- Akhter, N. 'The Use of Literature in the ESL Classroom'. In *Reading against Racism*. Evans, E. (Ed.). Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992. pp. 116–123.
- Arbuthnot, M.H. & Sutherland, Z. *Children and Books (4th Edition)*. Glenview, Illinois & London: Scott, Foresman & Company, 1972.

- Bailey, M. ‘Therapeutic Reading’. In *Readings about Children’s Literature*. Robinson, E.R. (Ed.) New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966. pp. 31–40.
- Baker, A. ‘What makes a good Book?’ In *Readings about Children’s Literature*. Robinson, E.R. (Ed.) New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966. pp. 74–77.
- Baker, S., *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity and Reputation*. Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1993.
- Bechtel, L.S. *Books in Search of Children*. London: The Macmillan Company, 1969.
- Bennett, A. (Ed.). *Readers and Reading*. New York: Longman Group Limited, 1995.
- Benton, M. ‘Children’s Responses to Text’. In *Children’s Literature: The Development of Criticism*. Hunt, P. (Ed.). London and New York: Routledge, 1990. pp. 115–116.
- Bettelheim, B., *Surviving and other Essays by Bruno Bettelheim (Education and the reality Principle,* Moral Education: Five Lectures *[Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970, pp. 85–107])*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979.
- Bettelheim, B. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Penguin Books, 1991.
- Bettelheim, B. & Zelan, K., *On Learning to Read: The Child’s Fascination with Reading*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1982.
- Bishop, R.S. ‘Children’s Books in a Multicultural World: A View from the USA’. In *Reading against Racism*. Evans, E. (Ed.). Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992. pp. 19–31.
- Bratton, J.S. *The Impact of Victorian Children’s Fiction*. London & Sydney: Croom Helm Ltd., 1981.
- Cai, M. & Bishop, R.S. ‘Multicultural Literature for Children: Towards a Clarification of the Concept’. In *The Need for Story: Cultural Diversity in Classroom and Community*. Dyson, A.H. & Genishi, C. (Eds.). Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1990. pp. 57–66.
- Canonici, N.N. *Zulu Folktales for Beginners*. Durban: Department of Zulu Language and Literature, University of Natal, 1989.

- Chambers, A. ‘The Reader in the Book.’ In *Children’s Literature: The Development of Criticism*. Hunt, P. (Ed.). London and New York: Routledge, 1990. pp. 91–105.
- Chesterton, G.K. ‘The Ethics of Elfland’. In *Children’s Literature: the Development of Criticism*. Hunt, P. (Ed.). London and New York: Routledge, 1990. pp. 29–32.
- Dixon, B. *Catching Them Young 1: Sex, Race and Class in Children’s Fiction*. London: Pluto Press, 1978.
- Donald, B. ‘Circling Back on the Road to Independence: Models of History and National Identity in Irish Children’s Literature’. In *Texts, Culture and National Identity in Children’s Literature: International Seminar on Children’s Literature, Pure and Applied*. Webb, J. (Ed.). Helsinki: Nordinfo, 2000. pp. 24–32.
- Dyson, A.H. & Genishi, C. (Eds.). *The Need for Story: Cultural Diversity in Classroom and Community*. Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1990.
- Evans, E. (Ed.) *Reading against Racism*. Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992.
- Georgiou, C. *Children and their Literature*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1969.
- Gilbert, P. ‘And they Lived Happily Ever After: Cultural Storylines and the Construction of Gender’. In *The Need for Story: Cultural Diversity in Classroom and Community*. Dyson, A.H. & Genishi, C. (Eds.). Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1990. pp. 124–128.
- Gillborn, D. *‘Race’, Ethnicity and Education: Teaching and Learning in Multi-Ethnic Schools*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1990.
- Greene, M. ‘Multiculturalism, Community and the Arts’. In *The Need for Story: Cultural Diversity in Classroom and Community*. Dyson, A.H. & Genishi, C. (Eds.). Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1990. pp. 14–18.
- Gunderson, A.G., ‘What Seven-year-olds Like in Books’. In *Readings about Children’s Literature*. Robinson, E.R. (Ed.) New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966. pp. 232–238).
- Hall, L. “Fairy Tale Ending?”. *Junior Education* 20 (1) (1996): pp. 54–55.

- Horrell, R.C., 'Fairtales and their effect upon children'. In *Readings about Children's Literature*. Robinson, E.R. (Ed.) New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966. pp. 263–269.
- Howard, E.F. 'We all have our Aunt Flossies: Literacy, Cultural Heritage and Inter-Group Appreciation through Family Stories'. In *Other Worlds Other Lives: Children's Literature Experiences. Proceedings of the International Conference on Children's Literature, 4–6 April, 1995*. Machet, M., Olen, S. & van der Walt, T (Eds.). Pretoria: Pretoria Unisa Press, 1996. pp. 6–9.
- Hunt, P. *Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Hurlmann, B., *Three Centuries of Children's Books in Europe*, London: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Inggs, J. 'Character, Culture and Identity in a Contemporary South African Youth Novel'. In *Texts, Culture and National Identity in Children's Literature: International Seminar on Children's Literature, Pure and Applied.* Webb, J. (Ed.). Helsinki: Nordinfo, 2000. pp. 46–54.
- Iser, W. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. London Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.
- Iser, W. "Wolfgang Iser, from The Act of Reading". *NSCU Website*. 5 April 2005, Available URL: http://social.chass.edu/wyrick/debclass/iser.htm.
- Jacobs, L.B., 'Give Children Literature'. In *Readings about Children's Literature*. Robinson, E.R. (Ed.) New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966. pp. 3–7.
- Jenkins, E. *Children of the Sun: Selected Writers and Themes in South African Children's Literature*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993.
- Karl, J. *From Childhood to Childhood: Children's Books and their Creators*. New York: The John Day Company, 1970.
- King, E.W. & Kerber, A. *The Sociology of Early Childhood Education*. New York: American Book Company, 1968.
- Kircher, C.J. 'Foreign Books for Children'. In *Readings about Children's Literature*. Robinson, E.R. (Ed.) New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966. pp. 339–343.
- Labuschagne, M. 'Sexism in the Schoolroom: A Feminist Literary Analysis of the Reading Schemes used in Primary Schools'. In *Other Worlds Other Lives:*

Children's Literature Experiences. Proceedings of the International Conference on Children's Literature, 4–6 April, 1995. Machet, M., Olen, S. & van der Walt, T. (Eds.). Pretoria: Pretoria Unisa Press, 1996. pp. 137–152.

- Ludwig, G. "Once Upon a Time". *National Geographic*. December 1999.
- Luke, A. & Freebody, P. 'Critcal Literacy and the Question of Normativity: An Introduction'. In *Constructing Critical Literacies*. Muspratt, S., Luke, A. & Freebody, P. (Eds.). New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 1997. pp. 1–18.
- Luke, A. & Freebody, P. 'Shaping the Social Practices of Reading'. In *Constructing Critical Literacies*. Muspratt, S., Luke, A. & Freebody, P. (Eds.). New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 1997. pp. 185–225.
- Machet, M.P. "Black Children's Ability to Access Western Literate Stories". *South African Journal of Libraries and Information Services*, 62:2 (1994): pp. 65–74.
- Machet, M.P., "The Effect of Sociocultural Values on Adolescents' Response to Literature", *Journal of Reading*, 35:5 (February, 1992): pp. 356–362.
- Machet, M., Olen, S. & van der Walt, T (Eds.). *Other Worlds Other Lives: Children's Literature Experiences. Proceedings of the International Conference on Children's Literature, 4–6 April, 1995.* Pretoria: Pretoria Unisa Press, 1996.
- Mayring, P., "Qualitative Content Analysis". *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*. June 2000. Available URL: http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-00/2-00mayring-e.htm.
- McDowell, M. 'Fiction for Children and Adults: Some Essential Differences'. In *Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism*. Hunt, P. (Ed.). London and New York: Routledge, 1990. pp. 51–52.
- McMurray, S. 'One City, Other Worlds: the Reading Preferences of Black Second-Language English Readers in a Large Urban Library'. In *Other Worlds Other Lives: Children's Literature Experiences. Proceedings of the International Conference on Children's Literature, 4–6 April, 1995*. Machet, M., Olen, S. & van der Walt, T. (Eds.). Pretoria: Pretoria Unisa Press, 1996. pp. 169–182.
- Meek, M. 'What Counts as Evidence in Theories of Children's Literature'. In *Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism.* Hunt (Ed.). London and New York: Routledge, 1990. pp. 166–177.

- Merriam, S.B. *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998.
- Milner, D. *Children and Race*. London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1975.
- Mirza, S. 'Journey to Jo'burg: Reading a Novel with Years 7 and 8'. In *Reading against Racism*. Evans, E. (Ed.). Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992. pp. 83–87.
- Moore, A.C. 'Illustrating Books for Children'. In *Readings about Children's Literature*. Robinson, E.R. (Ed.) New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966. pp. 195–196.
- Muspratt, S., Luke, A. & Freebody, P. (Eds.). *Constructing Critical Literacies*. New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 1997.
- Muursepp, M. 'Information about "Other Worlds" in Children's Book Illustrations'. In *Other Worlds Other Lives: Children's Literature Experiences. Proceedings of the International Conference on Children's Literature, 4–6 April, 1995.* Machet, M., Olen, S. & van der Walt, T. (Eds.). Pretoria: Pretoria Unisa Press, 1996, pp. 305–315.
- Naidoo, B. 'Can you fully understand it?' In *Reading against Racism*. Evans, E. (Ed.). Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992. pp. 104–114.
- Nesbitt, E. 'An Enviable Possession'. In *Readings about Children's Literature*. Robinson, E.R. (Ed.) New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966. pp. 8–14.
- Newfield, D. 'Reading against Racism in South Africa'. In *Reading against Racism*. Evans, E. (Ed.). Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992. pp. 39–60.
- Newton, K.M. *Interpreting the Text: A Critical Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Literary Interpretation*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990.
- Newton, K.M. *Twentieth-Century literary Theory: A Reader*. London: Macmillan, 1988.
- Nikoljeva, M. & Orlov, J. 'A Room of One's own: The Advantage and Dilemma of Finno-Swedish Children's Literature'. In *Texts, Culture and National Identity in Children's Literature: International Seminar on Children's Literature, Pure and Applied.* Webb, J. (Ed.). Helsinki: Nordinfo, 2000. pp. 77–85.
- Nimon, M. 'Building a Nation through Children's Literature'. In *Texts, Culture and National Identity in Children's Literature: International Seminar on*

Children's Literature, Pure and Applied. Webb, J. (Ed.). Helsinki: Nordinfo, 2000. pp. 34–42.

- Olson, D.R. & Torrance, N. (Eds.). *The Handbook of Education and Human Development*. Massachusetts & Oxford, 1996.
- Osterland, M. 'Girls in Disguise: Gender Transgressions in Swedish Young Adult Fiction of the 1980's'. In *Texts, Culture and National Identity in Children's Literature: International Seminar on Children's Literature, Pure and Applied.* Webb, J. (Ed.). Helsinki: Nordinfo, 2000. pp. 175–182.
- Palsdottir, A.H. 'Rolling Hills and Rocky Crags – the Role of Landscape in English and Icelandic Literature for Children'. In *Texts, Culture and National Identity in Children's Literature: International Seminar on Children's Literature, Pure and Applied.* Webb, J. (Ed.). Helsinki: Nordinfo, 2000. pp. 65–71.
- Paul, L. 'Enigma Variations: What Feminist Theory knows about Children's Literature'. In *Children's Literature: the Development of Criticism*. Hunt, P. (Ed.). London and New York: Routledge, 1990. pp. 148–162.
- Radebe, T. 'Context and Culture: as a Factor in Black Children's Responses to Books'. In *Other Worlds Other Lives: Children's Literature Experiences. Proceedings of the International Conference on Children's Literature, 4–6 April, 1995*. Machet, M., Olen, S. & van der Walt, T. (Eds.). Pretoria: Pretoria Unisa Press, 1996. pp. 184–267.
- Renner, S.M. & Carter, J.M., "Comprehending Text – Appreciating Diversity through Folklore". *Journal of Reading,* 34:8 (May, 1991): pp. 602-604.
- Robinson, E.R. (Ed.). *Readings about Children's Literature*. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966.
- Rosenblatt, L.M. *Literature as Exploration*. London: Heinemann, 1970.
- Rosenblatt, L.M. *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*. Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.
- Rubin, J.S. "What is the History of the History of the Books?" *The Journal of America*. 26 November 2003. Available URL: http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jah/90.2/rubin.html.

- Rudisill, M. ‘Children’s Preferences for Colour vs. other Qualities in Illustrations’. In *Readings about Children’s Literature*. Robinson, E.R. (Ed.) New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966. pp. 205–214.
- Saad, M.S.M. ‘Oral Tradition and Children’s Literature: Facing the Challenges of nation Building’. In *Other Worlds Other Lives: Children’s Literature Experiences. Proceedings of the International Conference on Children’s Literature, 4–6 April, 1995*. Machet, M., Olen, S. & van der Walt, T (Eds.). Pretoria: Pretoria Unisa Press, 1996. pp. 34–41.
- Selden, R. *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. London: The Harvester Press, 1985.
- Sienart, E., Bell, N. & Lewis, M. (Eds). *Oral Tradition and Innovation: New Wine in Old Bottles?* Durban: University of Natal Oral Documentation and Research Centre, 1991.
- Strang, L. ‘Language against Racism in the UK: The Classroom as a Muliticultural Publishing House’. In *Reading against Racism.* Evans, E. (Ed.). Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992. pp. 11–15.
- Thompson, S., *The Folktale*. London: University of California, 1977.
- Townsend, J.R. ‘Standards of Criticism for Children’s Literature’. In *Children’s Literature: The Development of Criticism.* Hunt, P. (Ed.). London and New York: Routledge, 1990. pp.57–69.
- van Straten, C. ‘Can Fairy Tales Help?’. In *Other Worlds Other Lives: Children’s Literature Experiences. Proceedings of the International Conference on Children’s Literature, 4–6 April, 1995.* Machet, M., Olen, S. & van der Walt, T (Eds.). Pretoria: Pretoria Unisa Press, 1996. pp. 330–345.
- Wagener, A. ‘Multiculturalism in Children’s Literature’. In *Other Worlds Other Lives: Children’s Literature Experiences. Proceedings of the International Conference on Children’s Literature, 4–6 April, 1995.* Machet, M., Olen, S. & van der Walt, T. (Eds.). Pretoria: Pretoria Unisa Press, 1996. pp. 264–267.
- Webb, J., ed. *Texts, Culture and National Identity in Children’s Literature: International Seminar on Children’s Literature, Pure and Applied.* Helsinki: Nordinfo, 2000.
- Werner. A., *Africa*. London: Studio Editions Ltd., 1995.

- Witty, P.A. ‘Meeting Development Needs Through Reading’. In *Readings about Children’s Literature*. Robinson, E.R. (Ed.) New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966. pp. 20–28.
- Woodhead, M., light, P. & Carr, R. (Eds.) *Growing up in a Changing Society*. London & New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Zipes, J. *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*. London: Heinemann, 1979.
- Zipes, J. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*. London: Heinemann, 1983.
- Zipes, J. *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children, and the Culture Industry*. New York and London: Routledge, 1997.