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Philosophy for Children in a Foundation Phase Literacy Classroom in South Africa: Multimodal Representations of Knowledge.

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Education

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DECLARATION

I, declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other University.

Robyn Thompson

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_____ Day of _____ 2013

Signature: _____

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to understand how children explore and communicate philosophical concepts in the oral, written and visual modes as part of a literacy lesson and how Philosophy for Children (P4C) can be used as an approach in the Foundation Phase classroom. An additional aim is to determine whether a P4C approach complies with the National Curriculum's requirements as stipulated in the CAPS documents to develop young children's creative and critical thinking.

This research study was important as it has implications for the theory and the practise of teaching early literacy in South Africa, in particular thinking, reasoning and comprehension. The research was carried out with my own class of Grade Two children as active participants throughout the process. Action research proved to be the most suitable methodology for this study as this methodology encourages both practioner based research and self reflective practise. The research provides evidence that the visual mode can be a sophisticated mode of communication and not only an aesthetic activity that supplements the written work. This mode allows children to express their own original ideas and offers rich material for reflection on children's thinking and reasoning.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

My research focuses on Philosophy for Children (P4C) as an approach in the Foundation Phase classroom. In particular, I investigate how children explore and communicate their ideas about philosophical concepts in the oral, written and visual modes as part of literacy.

The Outcomes Based Education curriculum implemented by the post-apartheid government has not been successful in raising or improving the levels of literacy practises in South Africa and this is evident in children's ability to communicate effectively both orally and in the written form. Foundation Phase learners consistently underachieve in International Literacy Bench Marking Assessments, where a variety of literacy skills and competencies are assessed. For example, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study or PIRLS (Howie, Venter & van Staden, 2006 & 2012), a comparative study involving Grade 4 children from 40 countries, shows that South African Grade 4 children are the lowest scoring applicants. The PIRLS Report (Howie, et al, 2006) states that South Africa's learners are experiencing great difficulty in mastering basic literacy skills which include reading and viewing text, interpreting written texts and doing creative writing. While South African learners performed adequately with the reading and viewing components of the assessment, they performed poorly in the thinking and reasoning tasks (Howie, et al, 2006).

As a consequence, these poor literacy results have resulted in curriculum change with the implementation of a new curriculum, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement or CAPS (DoE, 2011). The CAPS documents recognise the importance of developing thinking and comprehension skills in literacy as a basis for children's learning. This is evident in the different skills stipulated in the documents. In the Language Overview Document (DoE, 2011), learners must be able to demonstrate that they are able to talk confidently during class discussions by "expressing feelings about a story or poem and give[s] reasons" and "participate[s] in discussions, and report[s] back on the group's work" as well as being able to "answer open ended questions and justif[y]… answers" (DoE, 2011, p. 23). Their vocabulary is extended by the children being able to "make up their own rhymes" and to "tell a story that has a beginning, middle and end" (DoE, 2011, p. 23). The learners' listening skills are developed by being able to "listen to complex sequence of instructions and respond appropriately" as well as to "listen without interrupting, showing respect for the speaker asking questions and commenting on what was heard" and to "listen for the main idea and detail in the stories" (DoE, 2011, p. 23). The CAPS documents also state that the learners should be able to "use visual cues to predict what the story is about", "identif[y] key details in what was read", "answer[s] higher order questions based on the text read" and "interprets pictures and other print media" (DoE, 2011, p. 26). While children are being expected to 'read' and interpret the visual cues in a story, very

little importance is placed on the child making her own drawings to communicate meaning as an alternative means to the traditional methods of communication.

Traditional approaches to teaching literacy do not always successfully achieve these requirements, as shown in the PIRLS report, and South African children appear to experience difficulty in engaging meaningfully with various multimodal texts. Texts that incorporate the use of images, writing, layout and moving images are considered examples of such multimodal texts (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2009; Janks, 2010).

Schools have traditionally concentrated on and used texts that are print-based, but increasingly these types of texts are no longer the main mode of representation (Larson & Marsh, 2005; Bezemer & Jewitt, 2009). Rather the texts that children encounter in their educational, social and cultural environment are becoming increasingly multimodal (Larson & Marsh, 2005; Janks, 2010) and the child, in order to be considered literate, must be able to communicate and make meaning effectively across a range of these multimodal texts. Modern texts are becoming progressively more visual (Janks, 2010; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001), so children need to be able to read both visual and printed texts in order to communicate and make meaning successfully. Reading these multimodal texts is cognitively more demanding as children need to display high levels of functioning in thinking and reasoning tasks when viewing these particular texts. I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 2.

I have been teaching in the Foundation Phase for 19 years. Ideas about knowledge, education and teaching strategies have changed over the years and although there have been changes to the curriculum, certain traditional attitudes and values still pervade the school environment. The quality of the relationships and interactions with the learners in the classroom is constrained by the current curriculum that leaves little room for conversations with the children that encourage deep, critical thinking and reflection. I was introduced to a new approach, Philosophy for Children, and I became aware that I needed to change my own teaching practises in order to create a ‘thinking classroom’.

In order to develop a ‘thinking classroom’ that encourages responsive listening, debate and creative and critical thinking between the teacher and children and between the children themselves while simultaneously meeting the required curriculum, the possible use of Philosophy 4 Children (P4C) as an approach and its pedagogy, the community of enquiry, was implemented in my classroom and formed the basis of this research.

For this research project, I was worked with my own Foundation Phase Grade Two class of 21 children. At the time of the research their ages ranged from 7 to 8 years old, while three of the learners were 9 years old. This research study was carried out at a private school on the East Rand.

1.2. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aims of my research study:

1. To implement Philosophy for Children (P4C) in my Foundation Phase classroom and to investigate how my learners are able to engage philosophically with picturebooks as part of literacy.

2. To analyse how my learners express and communicate their own individual philosophical knowledge through the oral, written and visual modes of communication.

3. To explore whether P4C can be used to teach literacy as set out in the CAPs documents.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTION

How do my Grade 2 learners explore and communicate philosophical concepts through the oral, written and visual modes as part of the literacy curriculum?

1.3.1 SUB-QUESTIONS

The following sub-research questions were developed from the main research question.

1. What does it mean for me to listen responsively to my learners?
2. Are my learners capable of philosophical thought?
3. How effective are picturebooks in opening up a space for philosophical discussion amongst my learners?
4. Can the P4C intervention be used to implement CAPS in my classroom?

1.4. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

This research study explores children's oral responses, writings and drawings that might show how a child engaged with a stimulus like a picturebook and subsequently was able to communicate his or her philosophical thoughts. At the same time, while completing this research I considered my own teaching practise and how I evaluated children's thinking and their methods of meaning-making, in particular in the use of their own free drawings and writings. I introduced picturebooks as a way of opening up a space that encouraged the participants to explore, express and communicate their understanding of philosophical concepts in a multimodal way while meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum.

My research has implications for the theory and the practise of the teaching of early literacy in South Africa, in particular thinking, reasoning and comprehension. The implementation of Philosophy for Children (P4C) is new to South Africa and challenges existing literacy practises in that young

children's individual work may be viewed and assessed differently if alternate methods of meaning-making are being used (oral, visual) to complement the reliance on formal written tests that prevail in classrooms.

While this particular practise has been challenged locally and internationally, the school where I currently teach still favours the traditional written test as the method of assessment, some oral aspects like formal speeches are considered but no visual artworks are used for evaluation purposes.

During the traditional P4C enquiries, the children involved express their ideas mainly through the oral, and occasionally written, means of communication. Currently, there is very little focus on using the visual mode of communication to convey philosophical concepts during the P4C enquiries. My research will highlight the importance of using the visual artwork a child creates as a means of evaluation. This research report also adds to the body of P4C knowledge, in that my philosophical enquiries children are encouraged to make their own drawings and writings as a means to construct and represent knowledge and ideas.

1.5. CHAPTER OUTLINE

This research study consists of 6 chapters. I will give a brief outline or purpose of each chapter.

Chapter 2, the review of the literature, focuses on the relevant literature that underpins this research. I begin by discussing the intervention, Philosophy 4 Children and its pedagogy, the community of enquiry and how it is used in a Foundation Phase classroom. I discuss the relevance and importance of picturebooks as complex texts and how they challenge the cognitive abilities of children by encouraging them to explore the 'gap' between texts and images. Finally, I explore the potential of using visual artworks as a way for children to make meaning of their environment.

Chapter 3 discusses the research site and the research participants. In this methodology chapter, I outline the intervention, the Community of Enquiry, which was implemented at the research site and how this intervention was useful in collecting the data. Following this, I discuss the type of data that was collected in order to answer the research question. The limitations of this study are mentioned and finally, I explain the ethical considerations that I took while completing this research study.

Chapter 4 highlights the oral and written data that was produced by the participants. I introduce the relevant data that was collected from the oral responses made by the participants in response to picturebooks during the P4C sessions and the subsequent entries the participants made in their reflective journals. I then identify and discuss the themes that emerged after I analysed the data.

Chapter 5 focuses on the data, in the form of the visual artworks that were produced by the participants. This chapter is discusses the artworks in detail and I identify the themes and patterns that became apparent during the analysis of the individual visual artworks.

Finally, chapter 6 draws the research to a conclusion and looks at how the research could be used to answer the questions raised in Chapter 1 as well as recommendations for further research in this field.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will discuss the Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach in the context of early literacy. I will focus on the pedagogy of P4C, that of the 'community of enquiry' – its ethos and principles, and how the pedagogy in practise can benefit the teacher and the young children in the literacy classroom. I will look at some of the National Curriculum requirements in Literacy and discuss the benefits and challenges of P4C in the context of the new South African curriculum (CAPS). Moreover, I will argue for the use of picturebooks as texts in P4C literacy lessons and the advantages of using them as stimulus in a community of enquiry. Lastly, I will explore the benefits of using visual modes of meaning making as part of P4C early literacy lessons.

2.2. PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN (P4C)

The educational approach known as Philosophy for Children (P4C) was pioneered by Professor Matthew Lipman. He concluded that there was a need for a philosophical curriculum that would encourage children to develop, sharpen and improve their thinking skills in a multidimensional process which incorporated thinking in a critical, creative, collaborative and caring manner (Lipman, 1991). Lipman and his colleague, Ann Margaret Sharp, developed a programme in which philosophical content is adapted to the children's needs and interests. The aim of P4C is considered by Vansieleghem & Kennedy (2011, p. 174) as an approach that is "to help them become more thoughtful, more reflective, more considerate and more reasonable individuals" and has profound implications for teaching literacy in schools.

The Philosophy for Children classroom environment aims to develop and foster an atmosphere that explores issues that matter to children and not issues that are only decided upon by the teacher. Although the teacher usually brings in a stimulus for the children to consider, the teacher and learners develop the questions for exploring the text collaboratively and democratically. The children are encouraged to ask their *own* questions as starting points for enquiries where ideas are expressed, listened to and challenged by teacher and peers in a careful and critical manner. Through regular discussions, the children develop their thinking so that they are able to make more sound judgements based on critical and creative reasoning. Lipman explained this kind of critical reasoning or thinking as being "multidimensional thinking" (Lipman, 1991, p. 264), a mode of thinking, incorporating caring, creative and critical thinking skills that would benefit teaching and thinking in schools (Ndofirepi & Mathebula, 2011)

2.2.1 COMMUNITY OF ENQUIRY (COE)

The pedagogy of P4C is the community of enquiry (Lipman, 1991; Fisher, 1998) which encourages both teachers and children to work collaboratively in (what is claimed) a secure, caring environment while exploring philosophical issues through dialogue. The planning of a community of enquiry is different to a conventional lesson in a classroom setting. The children are often seated on chairs[1], not behind desks or tables, in a circle so that everyone is visible to the other members of the group. The teacher takes the role of facilitator and is also part of the group or circle. S/he is also part of the learning and discussion process and is seen as co-learner and philosopher, bringing his or her own experience into the discussion when explicitly asked by the rest of the group, rather than being the authority or 'keeper' of all knowledge. A crucial part of a facilitator's role is to relinquish the need to maintain control over the discussion. As Haynes and Murris (2008, p.7) point out, when reading books in class, the practise "often involves teachers retaining control of questions and these are carefully constructed for pupils to arrive at the right answers". It is also important that "part of a teacher's preparation is to try and remove any personal attachment to the story and to come to it afresh- as if one is reading it for the first time" (Haynes & Murris 2000, p.9). Although daunting and at first difficult, a philosophical facilitator guides the enquiry rather than dominates it through skilful open-ended questions and at the same time, s/he makes links between the questions by encouraging the children to draw on similarities or threads of thoughts. However, the teacher only asks open-ended questions to support the community in making progress in answering the questions they themselves have formulated and chosen as starting points for the enquiries. Through regular experiences of participation in communities of enquiry, the children's discussions become more focussed, imaginative and rigorous (Fisher, 1998; Haynes, 2008).

The intention of a community of enquiry is to create a safe space for "thinking, a creative context for moral and social enquiry" (Fisher, 1998, p. 57). Whereas there is no control or guarantee of the responses that the children will give during a discussion, the children are given opportunities to express and develop their way of thinking and acting that will "cultivate virtues such as respect for others, sincerity and open-mindedness" (Fisher, 1998, p. 57). Also important in establishing and maintaining a community of enquiry is an attitude of 'responsive listening' which involves the individual taking seriously the personal, concrete daily experiences that others may bring to the discussion. Conversations and the resultant listening amongst each other is a valuable experience. It encourages children to develop their imaginations, while at the same time develop their hypothesizing skills, a fundamental necessity for scientific thinking, problem solving skills and teamwork capabilities necessary for other academic subjects. For early literacy practises, it is important that the learning environment includes a cultivation of respect for others, sincerity and an attitude of sharing

[1]In a Foundation phase classroom children sometimes sit on the floor on a carpet.

and acceptance of alternate ideas. This encourages the child's self confidence in his/her ability to express their own thoughts as part of a community.

In order for a child to do philosophy as part of literacy they should participate in a community of enquiry with other individuals in which all the participants develop reasonable, multidimensional thinking and interconnectedness with others (Ndofirepi & Mathebula, 2011; Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011).

2.2.2 REASONABLENESS

By exhibiting reasonableness or carefulness, a learner is showing an attitude of tolerance and the ability to consider alternate points of view or positions without making a rash judgement. Reasonableness indicates that a learner has considered and reflected on multiple positions and the merits of each. The aim of P4C is to make reasonable judgments (Haynes & Murris, 2012), which involves a set of virtues that are important for literacy. In contrast to the formal, rigid rules and procedures of thought and knowledge that govern the Cartesian concept of *rationality* (Benjamin & Echeverria, 1992, p. 64), *reasonableness* is shaped by our interactions with communities and society at large. Burbules (1995, p. 86) argues that each individual is 'reasonable' in their judgements and opinions and identifies virtues inherent in each individual and explains that,

> Virtues are flexible aspects of character, related to our sense of self and integrity, but also fostered and encouraged by communities and relations with others that provide the context in which we decide and act.

So, virtues are not fixed, formal rules that have been applied to certain concepts or circumstances and that must be adhered to or followed. A reasonable individual would exhibit certain virtues in different contexts, around other individuals and their responses. A reasonable person is one who exhibits character traits of "objectivity, fallibilism, pragmatism and judiciousness" (Burbules, 1995, p. 89).

As the cultivation of these virtues is important for the teaching of literacy to young children, I will explore each virtue in more detail. Objectivity, which is developed through the interaction with others (Haynes & Murris, 2012), is an "awareness of and reflection upon positions one does hold and their consequences for other people" (Burbules, 1995, p. 91). The virtue of objectivity is therefore relevant for literacy, because it involves caring enough about what people are saying and making an effort to hear them. The "real sign of objectivity is the capacity to recognise the merits of each view" (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 173). This is important in the literacy classroom as the children learn to explore alternate points of view; they begin to critically engage with and question the text and learn to distinguish the different points of view that may be presented (Haynes, 2008). Objectivity also encourages the child to be able to put themselves in alternative positions of characters and be able to

suspend their disbelief. The learners take an active, critical role in listening, reading and viewing texts and their authors.

The second virtue, that is, *fallibility*, means that a learner, and teacher, are able to reflect on his or her thoughts and are willing to admit that the opinion they are holding is incorrect, flawed, or incomplete. In a conventional classroom, the teacher is often seen as the epistemological authority and is regarded as someone who asks the questions and knows the answers to them, while the student is not capable of asking the right questions (Benjamin & Echeverria, 1992, p 64). As a result, the child stops wondering and asking questions (Haynes & Murris, 2012). Children should be encouraged to ask questions and the classroom environment should foster an atmosphere of trust and a willingness to risk reflecting on personal opinions. In this way, the child, "through the discovery of error", is driven to change his or her mind and "gain new understandings" (Burbules, 1995, p. 93).

Burbules' (1995, p. 93) concept of pragmatism is argued by Haynes & Murris (2012, p. 172) that children benefit from being in an environment that views failure and frustration as contributors to useful growth and learning rather than producing perfect results all the time. A pragmatic attitude recognises the need for a tolerance of uncertainty, persistence and flexibility. This is important for young children in that experiencing uncertainty and developing attitudes of tolerance and flexibility is beneficial to managing practical problems they may encounter. This virtue also asks that the child is sensitive to the particular contexts and the variety of human needs and purposes.

The other virtue of reasonableness important for early literacy is *judiciousness*. By being judicious in a community of enquiry, a child becomes aware of the "limitations of reason and the acceptance of fallibilism and imperfection" (Haynes & Murris, 2001, p. 174). There are often a number of answers that are applicable or acceptable. Through discussions, the child should be encouraged to listen to the different arguments offered and through reasoning and justifications be aware of the limitations of each argument and make a decision based on this. Through the evaluation of the arguments, critical reasoning and thinking are developed.

Burbules' analysis of reasonableness is useful for a deeper understanding of the community of enquiry in the context of teaching in the Foundation Phase. Not only because these traits are considered important for citizens of a democratic society[2], but these traits of objectivity, fallibilism, pragmatism and judiciousness are necessary for developing and engaging in critical thinking strategies that are required by the National Curriculum. Burbules argues that dialogue should be

[2]The role of schools in democratic education is complex and goes beyond the topic of this research, but the position taken here is that in a participatory democracy, schools are required to offer children opportunities to experience democratic processes, and participation in communities of enquiry offers such opportunities.

central as it has these intellectual and moral virtues. These virtues are developed in the literacy classroom when children enter into dialogue with others about the text.

2.2.3 THE 4 C'S OF P4C

It is claimed that by participating in a community of enquiry all members, including the teacher, develop the caring, creative, critical and collaborative multidimensional thinking identified by Lipman (1991). Engaging in 'care-ful' thinking during a discussion is not to be regarded as not voicing one's own opinion in fear of hurting someone's feelings. Rather, being 'care-ful' is taking care about what and how things are verbalised. Being care-ful thinkers asks that the children take responsibility for their words and actions. Sharp emphasises that 'care-ful' thinking "attends to the feelings of students as well as their thinking" (Sharp, 2007, p. 248). This has an impact on literacy, and other subjects, because the social concepts of "respect and care permeate the practise of all other thinking strategies, providing an ethical overlay which reinforces the interpersonal dimensions of thinking" (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 10).

Creative thinking in children is connected to the children's and teacher's ability to think imaginatively and offer opinions and ideas that are connected to other's thoughts and ideas. It requires a developed level of inventiveness in thinking processes to make links and connections to another thread or train of thought (Haynes & Murris, 2011). This is important for literacy, because while a child might not have 'background knowledge' of a particular concept, the ability to engage in creative thinking allows him/her the opportunity to comprehend, evaluate and use the information given in creative ways (Van den Brink-Budgen, 2002, p. 28). The child is also able to make links to other subjects or experiences so his/her knowledge is not compartmentalised or isolated (Lipman, 1977, p.7).

Critical thinking, like making distinctions and connections and recognising inconsistencies in an argument, is not the only focus in a community of enquiry. In addition, children also need to become critically aware of their own thoughts and reflective practises so as to develop the capacity to resist the overt persuasion from more articulate peers (Haynes, 2003; Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011; Splitter & Sharp, 1995). Although the CAPS documents (DoE, 2011) expect critical thinking and reasoning to be incorporated into the daily class teaching, there are no clear guidelines as to how to achieve this. Critical thinking in literacy involves the child "thinking about thinking" (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p.10), which happens when the child thinks about the meaning of abstract concepts. For example, as the child thinks about their everyday language and questions the language itself, critical reflective thinking is taking place.

Collaborative thinking is nurtured in individuals of a community of enquiry as the members learn *as* a group rather than *in* a group. The difference being that *in* a group, the members think and behave as individuals, but when thinking *as* a group, the members contribute, compare, suggest and test

hypothesis, build on to one another's ideas and arrive (possibly) at a consensus, although dissensus is also celebrated

As a way in which to explore philosophical concepts during the community of enquiry and be involved in developing their multidimensional thinking, the children engage in a collaborative dialogue. This dialogue is based on philosophical questions that are raised by and appeal to the group (Mohr Lone, 2011). The CAPS documents ask that the child answers higher order questions. It is implicit that all questions are asked by the teacher (DoE, 2011, p. 23). However, these questions are often based solely on the text and do not really engage the child in a deeper involvement with the text or go 'beyond' the text. The importance of the fact that the questions are raised by the members of the community of enquiry will be discussed in the following section.

2.2.4 PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS

Inherent in young children is a natural curiosity to wonder and ask open-ended questions about their environment, but as they become older and enter the classroom, the expression of this kind of questioning slowly comes to an end as a direct result of school practises. In the school environment, children are often discouraged to ask open-ended questions. The teacher now poses the mainly closed questions and, according to Jana Mohr Lone (2011, p 3), is usually "not attempting to engage in a dialogue about the question or to demonstrate the value of questioning, but rather seeking a specific answer from the students".

The CAPS document asks that the learners "answer open-ended questions and justif[y] answer" (DoE, 2011, p. 23) as well as to "answer higher order questions" (DoE, 2011, p. 26). However, it is assumed that it is only the teacher who should ask the higher order thinking questions in order to develop critical thinking in the children, but generally, these questions only make allowances for one correct answer, which the teacher knows and the children have to ascertain. Often, the teacher, as well as the child, has to learn to ask higher order questions that involve critical, creative thinking. The criteria set by the National Curriculum can therefore be restrictive and confining and limit children's ability to think critically. There is also a missed opportunity to make learning more engaging for children, which is more likely to be the case when they are allowed to ask the questions that matter to them when drawing on their prior knowledge and experiences. Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan (1977, p. 11) argue that "it is the exposure to the questions themselves, as well as the range of alternative answers, that develops the ability to help children become aware of the meaning of their own questions and the range of alternatives that are present to them".

Critical thinking in communities of enquiry involves the asking of open-ended questions that are 'deeper' and more complex than as set by the National Curriculum. In the Grade One English Home Language document, it is stipulated that questions the teachers ask should be worded as "Do you

think...?" and "Why did...?" (DoE, 2011, p. 69). The criteria set for the Grade Two children include suggested questions such as "What would happen if...?" and "Do you think he was right to...?" (DoE, 2011, p. 84). The Grade Three questions include "What will happen next...?" (DoE, 2011, p. 104). This type of questioning technique set by the CAPS document seems to have lower expectations of the child's capabilities as there is no ambiguity in the way teachers should ask the questions nor is there the opportunity for multiple answers to be considered or that Grade1 children are capable of answering questions that are considered suitable for Grade 3 children.

On the other hand, various answers to questions explored in P4C can be considered as long as there is a reasonable justification for any particular answer. The positioning of children as question-posers also creates or opens the space to discover and discuss philosophical issues that are of interest to the children. The right questions are important in a community of philosophical enquiry as they draw the community into a deeper investigation for knowledge and shaping of cognitive concepts (Haynes & Murris, 2012). During the community of enquiry, the children's questions determine the discussion or topic that will be explored during the enquiry. The philosophical community of enquiry is one of the most powerful learning environments for helping students learn how to ask good questions. Not only do the children learn to articulate concepts that puzzle them, but they also learn that asking questions is in itself a valuable practise (Haynes & Murris, 2012; Mohr Lone, 2011).

The asking of not only open-ended, but also *philosophical* questions is important for early literacy as the ability to construct good questions is an important literacy skill for young children to develop so that they are able to critically evaluate information, make decisions and determine disparities in their knowledge (Mohr Lone, 2011). The more accomplished the child becomes in critically evaluating information and posing good questions, the more able "he or she will be able to think clearly and competently for herself" (Mohr Lone, 2011, p. 2) about texts, which is important for comprehension. The skill of posing a good question is also linked to Burbules' concept of reasonableness (see earlier in this chapter). All members of the community of the enquiry listen to and consider alternative points of view. There is also the implicit assumption and acknowledgement that they may hold ideas or points of view that have limitations and imperfections and therefore take a risk in putting their ideas forward to be scrutinised by the other members of the community. Such rigorous oral practises are important for literacy, because early language development through oracy is a fundamental cornerstone of literacy development. Oral discussions assist in developing vocabulary, speaking and listening skills as well as developing the child's ability to think about concepts critically.

Engaging in an enquiry about what may be bewildering or puzzling for a child is vital for "helping children develop the ability to formulate and pose clear and articulate questions" (Mohr Lone, 2011, p. 4). In order to encourage critical thinking through questioning, the children's questions need to be taken seriously and this involves really listening to what the children are interested in pursuing further

(Haynes & Murris, 2012; Mohr Lone, 2011) and therefore also includes a 'listening out' for the philosophical in the contributions they make – either orally, or in their diaries or drawings.

Gardner and Lipman (cited in Haynes, 2003, p. 94) explain philosophical questions as having at their "heart those concepts that are central, common and contestable. They are questions that are answered through reasoning, rather than through empirical enquiry". These questions provoke thinkers to reflect on the meaning of philosophical concepts that are central, common and contestable. Philosophical concepts are central concepts, because they structure how human beings think of themselves, other people and things. They structure individual's thoughts and actions. Central concepts include 'big' concepts such as 'jealousy, 'anger', 'family' but also 'small' ones such as 'same', 'cause', or, 'different' (Williams, 2006, p. 3). Philosophical concepts are contestable concepts in that they are abstract and encompass many instances or examples and their meaning is 'fuzzy' at the edges and depends on the situation or context of the question. Not only is there disagreement about their meaning, but there is often a disagreement about the value of these types of questions. Philosophical concepts are also common; because they include the concepts we use every day.

The CAPS document assumes a rather limited view of early literacy with teachers asking the higher-order questions. All listening activities involve the children listening to the teacher, for example, the document states that children must "listen to complex sequence of instructions and respond appropriately" as well as to "listen without interrupting, showing respect for the speaker asking questions and commenting on what was heard" and to "listen for the main idea and detail in the stories" (DoE, 2011, p. 23). There are no clear guidelines set out for the teacher about how to teach thinking and reasoning as part of the literacy lesson as the intention of the CAPS document is to have the thinking and reasoning components embedded in the other outcomes. As these components are no longer made explicit as in the RNCS (Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2005) they have been marginalised.

Listening for the philosophical concepts that children use in everyday discussions and conversations and then incorporating these abstract concepts into questions the teacher asks is important for literacy practises. The questions get the children thinking and talking about the meaning of words and abstract concepts and ultimately the language they use. These abstract concepts that are explored through the questions have no unambiguous meanings and so no one in the community has the correct answers. These abstract concepts are embedded in all literacy texts so the literacy practises in P4C equates to a more meaningful reading and comprehension of the text that is deeper than a 'normal' reading of the text that presumes the concepts always have a straight forward meaning. The meanings of the concepts are also explored by the children connecting with their own experiences and so, by drawing on their own experiences and thoughts, the children are more motivated to engage and be involved in the literacy work.

Philosophy for Children also has its critics. For example, Richard Fox believes that this particular approach "has a great deal to offer" and that philosophy "potentially has a lurking role in the school curriculum" while simultaneously, it also realises a means of "promoting metacognition at different levels" (2001, p. 46). However, Fox has doubts about the usefulness or effectiveness of using the approach to explore philosophical concepts with young children for a number of reasons. He claims that the majority of approaches that aim to develop a child's thinking skills are largely based on reading, discussions, writing and reflections. These activities are passive and require little movement, "physical exploration and active manipulation" (Fox, 2001, p. 47). P4C requires the young child to be involved in listening responsively and empathetically, contributing to a focussed discussion without repetitions, reflecting on abstract concepts for an extended period of time while being aware of the "subtleties of communication" (Fox, 2001, p. 47) and nuances of language. In her reply to Richard Fox's argument, Murris says that young children can be focussed for long periods of time when the activity is meaningful to them. Murris argues that the "space P4C provides for children's own interests and concerns is unique" and it is incorrect to assume that P4C is "synonymous with just any whole-class discussion" (2001, p. 47). Richard Fox argues that these skills are extremely difficult for young children to develop and utilise successfully and he concludes that teachers would be better informed of the child's progress in improving their thinking skills if the teachers were to have a more "realistic acceptance of the nature and pace of children's cognitive development" (Fox, 2001, p. 49). Murris argues that while the assumption of developmental theories is maturity, "improved handling of philosophical questions is not guaranteed by just growing up". Abstract concepts do not develop with maturity and ironically, "maturity may even bring 'staleness' and 'uninventiveness'" (Murris, 2001, p. 48). Fox does not advocate the exclusion or stopping of the philosophical discussions with children, but rather that adults be aware of the kinds of difficulties and lack of progression that one may experience when using this approach with young children. In her argument against Fox, Murris explains that the younger the child starts philosophy, the better as "most skills and attitudes are acquired more easily at an early age" (Murris, 2001, p. 49).

Fox argues that it is difficult for young children to convey their philosophical knowledge through passive activities like reading, discussions, writing and reflections. My study will show that the children in my class were highly engaged, involved and interested in exploring and representing their philosophical knowledge through different multimodal means.

2.3. PICTUREBOOKS AS TEXTS

The CAPS assessment criteria states that children must "use pictures in the text for understanding" (DoE, 2011, p. 82). By looking at what is 'in' the picture, the children are given an indication as to what the vocabulary may be in the text or what the story is about. Illustrated books are very different to picturebooks and teachers are generally used to using the illustrations to support the reading of the

words. According to Susan Hall (1990, p. 11), in picturebooks the "pictures provide information not contained in the words and both the pictures and the words are read" whereas in illustrated books, the "text alone makes sense and the illustrations are not integral to the basic meaning of the story"

Other criteria set by the CAPS document include "interprets pictures to make up a story" or "uses the pictures on the cover of the book to predict the story" (DoE, 2011, p. 82). Working with the pictures in a book is essential for a child's cognitive development and the ability to build the narrative which is an extremely important tool for young children to develop in literacy. However, the assessment criteria can be viewed by teachers in a limiting way. According to the CAPS document, the assessment criteria based on using pictures that supplement the text is open to interpretation. It is this interpretation by the teachers that can be viewed as restrictive. The CAPS document asks that young children must also be able to "use visual cues to predict what the story is about", "identify key details in what was read", "answer higher order questions based on the text read" and "interprets pictures and other print media" (DoE, 2011, p. 26). Often in a classroom setting, the emphasis can be placed on the child's ability to comprehend the written text and very little attention is given to the visual images that accompany the text.

The starting point of a community of enquiry is usually based on the introduction and the use of a stimulus which can take the form of photographs, texts or objects. The stimulus chosen to develop a community of philosophical enquiry is important as the stimulus should raise complex issues, concerns or philosophical questions with no clear, determined answers. The stimulus should create an opening or opportunity that encourages creative and critical thinking amongst the children. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, texts used in the literacy classroom are becoming increasingly multimodal. According to Anstey & Bull (2009, p. 31) authors and illustrators have "self-consciously constructed both the visual and the print texts in picture books to create multiple meanings through the use of techniques such as different narrator positions and points of view." With this in mind, picturebooks are considered forms of multimodal texts and an individual needs to be a reader and a viewer in order to fully engage with this type of text.

Picturebooks add value to a child's experience on a personal as well as academic level. On a personal or individual level, children's literature brings enjoyment, imagination, inspiration, understanding, empathy, moral reasoning, literacy and artistic preferences as well as to vicariously experience a situation through the characters in the book (Haynes and Murris, 2012; Stanley, S, 2012). Educationally, picturebooks are well suited to teaching critical reasoning and reflection skills and the illustrations allow easy access of the abstract concepts to a greater audience. These concepts are not only focussed on the rational, but also include the emotive and social concepts such as friendship, love and death. Haynes and Murris (2009, p. 178) argue that well chosen books can present a variety of aesthetic styles and different cultures, giving the child a "rich and varied source of ideas to think

and feel with…the better a book is illustrated, the more thoughts, feelings and images the reader can work with".

2.3.1 THE 'GAP' BETWEEN TEXT AND IMAGE

Story or picturebooks that offer "rich, complex and ambiguous pictures and texts" (Haynes & Murris, 2009, p. 178), encourage the child to explore their thoughts creatively and critically and the opportunity for the "freedom and support to make sense of it themselves" (Haynes & Murris, 2009, p. 178) by drawing on their own prior knowledge experiences.

Perry Nodelman (1988, p. 56) explains the intricate relationship between the words and the pictures as being ironic as words often tell the reader something that the pictures do not and vice versa. Bettina Kummerling-Meibauer (1999, cited in Sipe, 2012) explores the ironic relationship between these two different sign systems in which there is "important information missing from the text that is supplied by the pictures" and calls this a "semantic gap". Reader-response theorist, Wolfgang Iser identified that every text has a gap or "indeterminacies" (Iser, 1978, cited in Sipe, 2012) which the reader or viewer needs to explore and process in their own minds while reading the picturebook that results in an infinite number of creative possibilities. This is an opportunity for the child to be cognitively involved in establishing alternate possibilities or suggestions while filling the 'gap' in the story. Nikolajeva confirms that children make use of complex narrative strategies or techniques in order to read the pictures, but she cautions that the visual images in picturebooks "seldom convey first-person point of view, which creates a confusing contradiction" for children (Nikolajeva, 2003, p. 242).

In contrast, Haynes and Murris welcome this 'confusing contradiction' for children. They argue, that it is this 'gap' between the text and the pictures and the "resulting indeterminacy of meaning [that] requires hard, intellectual work" (Haynes & Murris, 2009, p. 179). And so with their "multiple narratives, ambiguity and contradictions, picture books are regarded as emotionally and cognitively demanding texts" (Haynes & Murris, 2009, p. 179). Each time the child reads the picturebook**,** the child needs to interpret and think about the text, the pictures and the 'gap' between the two sign systems which invites further reading, investigation and exploration and most importantly necessitates creative and critical thinking of readers of all ages (Sipes, 2012, p. 4). Reading picturebooks involves complex skills that require "transmediation" or "the translation of content from one sign system into another" (Sipes, 1998, p. 101). He explains that there is a constant flow or movement between the reading of the text (words) and viewing the images, and back again.

The result is a process of oscillation, as the reader adapts their interpretation. Because the meanings of each sign system are always shifting, there is a continuous oscillation. Sipes points out that the possibilities for new meanings to emerge each time the reader reads the picturebook are "inexhaustible" (1998, p. 103). It is this 'inexhaustible' potential for new meanings that makes

picturebooks a rich resource to encourage children to review and reread and, in so doing, they will produce ever-new insights as they construct new connections and make modifications of their previous interpretations (Sipes, 1998, 103).

Good stories or picturebooks, while being realistic and familiar, also often highlight a different version of 'reality' and allow the reader an opportunity to look at reality through different lenses. Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott claim that picturebooks are "particularly stimulating because they elicit many possible interpretations and involve the reader's imagination" (2000, p. 235). Part of the creative thinking and imagination involved in using picturebooks for teaching literacy is the characters and situations those texts feature. Picturebooks often have unknown or strange and magical settings, problems or characters. They are about outer space featuring aliens, the man in the moon or ugly monsters.

Often these stories are built on binary opposites such as 'beauty and ugliness', 'big and small', 'love' and 'hate', 'good' and 'bad' as well as 'human' and 'animal'. Kieran Egan (1993, p. 301) explains that these binary opposites are crucial for the imagination as "children might not use abstract concepts explicitly, but they constantly use abstractions in their thinking". In the picturebook, *The Big, Ugly Monster and the Little Stone Rabbit,* by Chris Wormell there is an example of the binary opposites described by Egan. The story features two characters who are both unlike anything one can encounter in real life. The first character is a huge, horrible monster while the second character, his friend, is a stone statue of a rabbit.

When consulting international literature on the teaching of (visual) literacy, reader's response-where the focus is on the reader of the story, their experiences and how the reader interprets the story (Baddeley & Eddershaw, 1998), considerable changes have been made in the way literacy is currently viewed. There is now growing awareness and understanding that literacy can be communicated via mediums other than print-only texts (Anstey & Bull, 2009). The idea that literacy may be communicated in different ways suggests that there are different forms of literacy (Bouwer cited in Eloff and Ebersohn, 2004, p. 85). This has implications for children and the way in which they comprehend and process the various literacies, which would include not only written, but also visual literacies. In the CAPS documents, there is little significance attached to the child's ability to communicate meaning or concepts visually. Children's drawings are often viewed as not being as important or as valuable as the more traditional methods of conventional reading and writing**.** In contrast contemporary approaches to literacy encompass not only the traditional aspects of reading, writing, speaking and listening, but also the "thinking that underpins the understanding and the construction of basic concepts and subject area knowledge" (Bouwer cited in Eloff and Ebersohn, 2004, p. 86). Not only does the child need to be able to engage with the various literacies and communicate effectively on a 'higher' level, but his or her thinking processes or comprehension skills

have also become a significant factor when 'reading' these texts. Not only must the child read and comprehend the text, but s/he must also be able to read the pictures and the 'gap' between the two.

In sum, what it means to read and comprehend a text has shifted. In particular, the choice of picturebooks for literacy is in line with this shift to include other forms of literacies. Picturebooks are texts that contain a rich and complex mixture of written words and visual images that offer powerful, thought-provoking and emotional experiences for the young reader. On an academic level, Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (2007, p. 70) argue that children's literature encourages and "develops reading skills, a learning of content knowledge, comprehension of texts, evaluation or judgement of different texts and literature as well as syntactic and grapho-phonic knowledge". It has also been argued that picturebooks are suitable texts for the use as starting points for philosophical enquiry.

2.4. DRAWING AS A WAY TO MAKE MEANING

In my experience, many teachers in Foundation Phase Grade 2 and 3 classes consider a child's drawings as an inferior tool to represent her ability to construct knowledge or communicate meaning in comparison to formal writing activities. Whilst arguably teachers are able to make accurate judgements about a child's educational capabilities through habitual form of *written* academic assessments according to national assessment criteria (DoE, 2011), there is little significance attached to the child's ability to visually communicate meaning or concepts in a Foundation Phase class.

So there is a concern that the detail of a child's drawing remains unnoticed and that evidence of learning might be missed as drawing is not truly recognised as a mode of constructing knowledge or communicating meaning. Children's drawings are often viewed as not being as important or as valuable as expressions of complex thought as the more traditional methods of conventional reading and writing (Brooks, 2009). Children's drawings are rarely used as a means of assessing children's understanding of a topic. The idea that children's drawings are merely a decorative embellishment that enhances the 'real' work of writing still persists in education, with the consequence that the child receives little formative feedback on what s/he has drawn in contrast with frequent judgements about achievements in and targets for their written work (Mavers, 2011).

Judging by their body language, eagerness and absorption in drawing tasks and their reluctance to finish when time is 'up', I have come to the conclusion that learners often seem to experience a sense of freedom when engaged in drawing activities. The sense of doing something 'wrong' is diminished and the risk of performance anxiety is lessened. Moreover, the literature also indicates the cognitive value of drawing as a meaning-making tool (Brooks, 2009; Mavers, 2011; Clark & Moss, 2001; Einarsdottir, Dockett & Perry, 2009; Einarsdottir et al., 2009). For inclusive practise, it is imperative to recognise and value the meaning making evident in the drawings that children produce, in order to

assess a child's expression of ideas and academic achievements in ways other than formal written assessments.

Children's drawings are also increasingly used as a research instrument. There has been a growing emphasis on the benefits of using children in the research process itself (Clark, Clark & Moss, 2001; Einarsdottir, Dockett & Perry, 2009), and in particular in the use of their drawings in order to gain an insight into the individual's views, perspectives and understanding of topics that concern them directly. This is especially worthwhile when combined with "listening to children as they draw and paying attention to their narratives and interpretations" (Einarsdottir et al., 2009, p. 218).

For the researchers mentioned above, children's drawings are now considered as a communicative tool in order to convey important information and evidence as opposed to only being used as an indication of a child's possible developmental stages. Often children's' drawing are not viewed for meaningfulness or as evidence of assessing the understanding of concepts, but rather as a 'time-filler' or an activity that children can complete while they wait for their peers to finish other required tasks. Pictures can have a depth of meaning and express creative thought that might have been lost or ignored when 'assessed' through the more usual academic means, which usually excludes the artwork and the discussion or exploration of the artwork with each child. However, the drawings take on greater significance when attention is also paid to the "narratives that develop around the drawings" (Einarsdottir et al., 2009, p. 218). By listening to the child's explanation during the drawing process, the "journey of their construction of meaning" (Einarsdottir et al., 2009, p. 219) can be highlighted and, together with the drawing itself, an insight is gained into the child's understanding and perspectives of the world.

Diane Mavers explains the need for discussion with the drawer or illustrator of the picture because, "asking children to talk about their drawings after completion produces different kinds of data: it is an interpretation of what was done" (Mavers, 2011, p.38). The child's artistic expression enables them to interpret what they know and observe into another mode of communication so that they are able to convey meaning. These drawings or artistic expressions can also provide teachers with another way of assessing a child's understanding of concepts (Sidelnick & Svoboda, 2000). Simultaneous actions, gestures, talk and vocalisation as children draw can provide insights into how they connect form and meaning and so if children make meaning in a "variety of ways then all aspects of their designs warrant acknowledgement" (Arizpe & Styles, 2003, p. 37). It is the focus on the communication of meaning and understanding that is important in the child's drawing, rather than the aesthetic qualities of the drawing. This changes the perspective from a performance driven objective to a powerful teaching and learning tool (Brooks, 2009).

Arizpe & Styles argue that "children communicate what they see through their drawings and their drawings, in turn, reflect their responses to the visual stimuli they encounter" (2003, p. 117). It is

through the children's drawings that there is evidence of them thinking and displaying evidence of their understanding of metacognitive processes that are involved in creating visual texts. As Arizpe & Styles point out "drawing can create a bridge between ideas in a child's head and the blank piece of paper on the desk" (Arizpe & Styles, 2003, p. 177). It is often through drawings that children are able to access a different mode of communicating what they know and create different portrayals of themselves that may be quite different to what they may create with written language. Wilson and Wilson (1982, p. 36) argue that "unlike the structure of language, the structure of drawing does not demand a precise placement of elements in order to convey meaning" and drawing their understanding is a more flexible way for young children to construct meaning.

While there are clear advantages and benefits in using the children's drawings and accompanying narratives, there are also distinct disadvantages to this particular mode of finding out how children communicate their ideas.

Adults and the child's peers influence the drawings, the interactions, discussions and listening to the meanings "ascribed to the drawings can often be co-constructed by all the participants in the drawing experience" (Einarsdottir et al., 2009, p. 219). Children may draw a "certain aspect and describe it as something completely different in order to appease social, cultural or academic expectations" (Einarsdottir et al., 2009, p. 219). In this way, children can exercise a sense of self control over the drawing and what they say about it. The completed drawing should not viewed in isolation as there may be an element of tension or discord between what has been drawn and the child's verbal explanation.

As the child progresses through the different grade levels in school, the available time allocated to the drawing activity seems to diminish. In schools, as mentioned earlier the perception is that drawing is an activity to occupy the quicker workers, illustrate or decorate the children's exercise books or as a purely aesthetic activity to "encourage realistic representations of objects, people, places or events" (Einarsdottir et al., 2009, p. 219). Also by focussing on these above aspects or on the finished artwork as being the most valuable or worthwhile aspect of the activity, the child may experience some discomfort due to their perceived lack of ability to draw realistically, become judgemental about their ability and may withdraw or have little interest in the activity. Drawing can be a successful, reflective strategy for engaging and interacting with children in order to understand how they communicate meaning, but it may not be a comfortable and positive experience for every child.

I conclude that it would be beneficial to include a more visual way of making meaning, not only in the classroom, but also in educational research as a valid research instrument. I have argued that drawing should be considered, alongside with and in addition to oral and written modes of communication, as a way in which to assess the child's ability to engage in creative and critical thinking when teaching literacy. Teachers need to be actively involved in this process through careful instructions at the

drawing stage (e.g. not just copying pictures in a book), by observing the child's practises and interacting with them during the drawing activity so that not just the final picture (the product) is taken into consideration, but a more complete picture emerges of the entire multimodal meaning-making process. It is for this reason that in my research project I have included the visual mode of meaning-making and compare this research instrument with the oral and written work.

In this chapter I have argued that the CAPS documents set out certain assessment criteria that the learners need to achieve in order for them to improve their skills in listening, speaking, reading components as well as to develop their critical thinking and reasoning. These criteria are unambiguous in what the teacher needs to teach yet there are no guidelines offered on how to achieve them. The approach, Philosophy for Children, pioneered by Matthew Lipman, offers children an opportunity to decide on philosophical issues they would like to discuss within a community of enquiry. The concept of a reasonable individual is at the core of the community of enquiry. The reasonable individual is someone who is able to reason well using the multidimensional thinking described by Lipman, respect others and is prepared to take alternate points of view into consideration. Through this pedagogy, children develop their critical thinking, questioning, oral literacy and reading skills which are part of the assessment criteria stipulated in the English Home Language National Curriculum documents. Traditional, print only texts are still being used in the Foundation Phase classroom as a means to encourage comprehension skills. Modern texts are becoming increasingly more visual. Picturebooks, with the text, the illustrations and the resultant 'gap', are cognitively more challenging for the young child to read and comprehend. These texts are a useful tool in getting children to discuss abstract concepts, whilst drawing on their own experiences. Whilst teachers are able to make accurate judgements about a child's educational capabilities through habitual form of *written* academic assessments according to national assessment criteria (DoE, 2011), there is little significance attached to the child's ability to communicate meaning or concepts visually. I have argued for the inclusion of children's drawings to be used as part of the assessment process in the literacy classroom.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the research is to investigate how children explore and communicate philosophical concepts in the oral, written and visual modes as part of a literacy lesson and how Philosophy for Children (P4C) can be used as an approach in the Foundation Phase classroom. In order to carry out this research study, I used a qualitative framework research method and the research design involves the use of the P4C pedagogy, the community of enquiry. This chapter describes the research site and the participants involved in this study. I also discuss the methods of data collection and the instruments used to collect the data. I analyse the data according to themes or patterns that emerged. Finally, the limitations of this study and the ethical considerations are addressed.

3.2. RESEARCH SITE

This research was carried out at an independent, co-educational school on the East Rand. The school has been in existence for 10 years and offers classes from Grade 000 (three to four year olds) to Grade 12 with English as the medium of instruction. The majority of the children come from a white, middle class background. Other race groups and nationalities are represented, but they are in the minority. It is considered a small school and the total number of pupils in the school is approximately 1000 with the class sizes ranging from 16 to 25 learners. The school's educational programme uses the National Curriculum as a guideline and supplements the curriculum with additional Maths and Science programmes. As a private school, the children do not take part in the PIRLS Assessment, as discussed in Chapter 1, which is carried out nationally in government schools. At this particular school, the children in Grade 3, 4, 5 and 6 write the Australian International Benchmark Tests (IBT) in English, Maths and Science. The results from these tests place this school in the 'above-average' category both in South Africa and worldwide. While the Grade 2 children do not write any IBT Assessments, it is still a priority that they are adequately prepared for this assessment in their Grade 3 year.

3.3. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this research project are from my own class of 21 Grade Two pupils who range in age between 7 to 9 years old. There are 4 children who have already turned 9, as they have been retained at some point in the Foundation Phase. The class is fairly evenly balanced with 11 girls and 10 boys. Of the 21 children, there is only 1 girl of Indian descent and the other children are white. Of the 11 girls, 3 take prescription medication for attention deficit disorders, while 6 of the 10 boys are on some form of medication for attention deficit disorders. These children have been identified by teachers (either in Grade R or Grade 1) as having some barrier to learning. It is school policy that the teacher may not officially diagnose the child's condition but may make a suggestion that the child be

formally assessed by an independent educational psychologist. Once the psychologist has assessed the child and made recommendations, it is the parent's prerogative to follow through with the recommendations.

I have had 19 years experience of teaching in the Foundation Phase. I was introduced to the Philosophy 4 Children (P4C) approach while completing my B Ed Honours degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. I have subsequently been using the P4C approach in my classroom for the last 3 years. The children in this particular class have been exposed to the Philosophy for Children approach since the January 2012. While they are familiar with the processes involved in this approach, it is not a regular time tabled activity for the rest of the school. There are a number of reasons for this, such as the time constraints due to the prescriptive National Curriculum and the other teachers are not trained in this approach. In order to create a space for my pupils to explore philosophical concepts in communities of enquiry, I have incorporated this particular approach into the teaching programme as part of the literacy lesson. Once a week, for approximately 1 to 2 hours, the Grade Two children engage in P4C through the use of picturebooks as a starting point for their community of enquiry.

3.4. OUTLINE OF THE INTERVENTION

The Grade Two children were involved in P4C once a week for approximately 1-2 hours at a time. The participants continued with their regular daily programme, which was not interrupted as these sessions took place in the timetabled Literacy lessons.

Before I discuss research design I will give an overview of what is involved in a P4C session.

3.4.1 OUTLINE OF A COMMUNITY OF ENQUIRY:

I used the following strategy or intervention in my classroom:

- An explanation was given of the objectives of the research study.
- A story/picturebook was read aloud to the participants.
- A short time was given in order to engage in reflection or thinking time about the story – incorporating the participants making individual drawings or artworks/writings to encourage creative thinking (optional)
- The participants' wrote down any questions or comments on the story.
- Through a process of voting, participants chose a question they would like to discuss.
- Community of enquiry/Discussion based on the chosen question.
- Reflection or plenary review of the community of enquiry.
- Participants create or complete their individual artworks/writings (optional)

Before the start of this project, I explained the research process and what was required of the children and their involvement. It was made clear to the children that they were under no obligation to take part in the research. If they chose not to participate or wished to withdraw at any stage, they would in no way be penalised and arrangements had been made for them in another class while the research took place. Each child and parent received a letter outlining the process and asked for their consent (See Appendix B, C, D and E). The likelihood of any child not wanting to be involved was doubtful as they had all been involved in a P4C sessions before and seemed to enjoy being involved in the process. However, they were given the option of not participating or withdrawing. Of the 21 children in the class, all 21 agreed to take part in the research study and they all participated in the P4C enquiries as well as the optional activities as listed above.

The community of enquiry begins with the introduction of the stimulus, which has been discussed in chapter 2. By engaging the children with the stimulus and encouraging active participation the children begin to improve their interactions with one another, make judgments, solve problems and initiate action (Haynes, 2009, p. 35).

After the stimulus has been read or viewed, the children are encouraged to reflect on the story by making individual drawings or artworks or writings. This encourages creative thinking, but also a rare opportunity for some time for reflection and an opportunity to construct and represent ideas multi-modally. For this activity, there are no restrictions placed on the medium used and generally there are no other directions given regarding the artwork, apart from a reminder that illustrations in a book should not be copied. Each child chooses how to reflect on the stimulus in a mode of their choice.

Once the children have reflected on the story through their own drawings or writings, they move back to the discussion circle and individually or in pairs, pose or think of a philosophical question that may have been triggered by the material. They then discuss the questions that they have thought of with their partner and choose either one question or combine the two questions so that one question capturing the ideas of both questions are put forward to be discussed with the wider group. The children are encouraged to listen to the questions and determine which questions could be linked through similar themes, ideas or thoughts. When all the questions have been read out and discussed, they are reviewed and grouped according to themes or similarities and they are displayed on the board. At this stage, the children have the opportunity to elaborate on or explain the thinking behind their questions if they wanted to. This process is time consuming, but the time spent on developing clear and complex questions is a necessary skill for the children to learn through practical experience. Jana Mohr-Lone says that “devoting time to listing and analysing the student’s questions lets the students know that asking questions is itself a valuable practise” (Mohr-Lone, 2011, p. 8).

Once the questions have been discussed by the members of the community, a process of choosing or voting for a question can begin. There are a number of ways that the children can democratically

choose or elect a question, but during the intervention, the Grade Two's elected to vote for their favourite question by indicating their choice with a magnetised token stuck next to the question of their choice. The votes for each question were then counted and the question with the majority of tokens was accepted as the question to start the philosophical enquiry.

The planning of a philosophical community of enquiry is different to a conventional lesson in a classroom setting. The children are seated on chairs, not behind desks or tables, in a circle so that everyone is visible to the other members of the group. The teacher takes the role of facilitator and is also part of the group or circle. She is also part of the learning and discussion process and is seen as co-learner and philosopher, bringing his or her own experience into the discussion when asked to by the rest of the group, as opposed to being the authority or keeper of all knowledge.



Figure 3.1 Members are seated on chairs in a circle.

While the facilitator's role will be explored in detail later in this report, it is important to note that a crucial part of a facilitator's role is to relinquish the need to maintain control over the discussion. Haynes & Murris explain that "it often involves teachers retaining control of questions and these are carefully constructed for pupils to arrive at the right answers" (2008, p. 7). It is also important that "part of a teacher's preparation is to try and remove any personal attachment to the story and to come to it afresh - as if one is reading it for the first time" (Haynes & Murris 2008, p. 9). Although daunting, a philosophical facilitator guides the enquiry, rather than dominates it, through skilful open-ended questions. At the same time, the facilitator makes links between the questions by drawing on similarities or threads of thoughts offered by the community.

There are various strategies that may be employed by or used by the facilitator to further develop a community of philosophical enquiry. In order to develop an enquiry, the facilitator can offer the members of the community an opportunity to stop the discussion and take some time for quiet reflection. This can either be done individually or in pairs with a new partner, to discuss main ideas of the discussion up to the point of reflection, or to clarify points of view that may have been raised. Often this is a good opportunity for the members to write down or to draw their thoughts on the discussion. At the end of an enquiry, the teacher or facilitator and the children reflect on the enquiry and often on their own roles and the individual levels of participation during the enquiry. P4C was used as a research tool in order to collect the data.

3.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Action research was the most appropriate methodology to conduct this research as it combines both practioner based research and a self reflective practise. While using this methodology, I was given the opportunity of observing and working directly with the participants during the research period and I had the opportunity to be reflective and critical of my own practise. This benefited me as a practitioner in the classroom as I became more aware and sensitive to how general teaching practises can impact on the participants, my own teaching practises and how I teach in the future. McNiff (2002, p. 9) explains this self reflection in practise as:

> A practical way of looking at your own work to check that it is as you would like it to be. Because action research is done by you, the practitioner, it is often referred to as practitioner based research; and because it involves you thinking about and reflecting on your work, it can also be called a form of self-reflective practice.

Action research is an interactive process that is defined by Lisa Abrams as being a methodology that is based on "data-driven decision making" (Abrams in McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 444). Action research is becoming increasingly important as individuals are being asked to "provide evidence that supports best practice" (Abrams, in McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 444). Action research could be described as process that uses research principles that impart or produce information that educationalists use to increase or develop their own daily practise. I have chosen this form of methodology as I wanted to have the opportunity to reflect on my own teaching practise which, in turn, would improve the teaching and learning in my classroom.

The strategies of observation, audio taping and transcripts of the discussions, reflective journals, field notes, visual research and the pedagogy of the community of enquiry have been selected as appropriate research instruments for this study. Observations of the participants during the discussions, the audio taped discussions and the participants individual work allowed for direct involvement between myself and the participants as well as being a record of what the participants

were thinking and capable of producing. At the same time, I was able to critically reflect on my own practise through the use of field notes. The audio taping also highlighted my interactions with the participants.

The community of enquiry, rather than interviews or questionnaires with the participants, is more appropriate for this kind of research as each participant is given more freedom and opportunity to express his or her opinion or perception of emotions without hopefully feeling that s/he needs to give a correct response or a response that is approved by the facilitator.

I used the above strategies to examine how the participants engaged with the philosophical ideas that a picturebook generates. Also, by reflecting on their thoughts, questions, ideas and any recurring themes, words or phrases I reflected on how the children made meaning visually as part of literacy lessons.

3.5.1 QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

The data necessary for qualitative research is generally carried out in the field. This research was carried out in the classroom, where the participants are more likely to behave in a normal fashion. This enables the researcher to collect data in a way that allows the participants to respond as naturally and honestly as possible.

The role that I assume was one of "complete insider" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 350). I had an established role in this particular field as a class teacher to the children involved in the study. Being a complete insider and having this relationship with the children, gives the data a sense of validity as the children are probably relaxed and behave as they would do normally. With an established relationship between myself and the participants there is less likely to be unanticipated variables that may occur in a more mechanical manner of collecting data in pre- and post-test type situations. At the same time, having prior knowledge of the children allows me the opportunity of understanding the patterns of their choices and certain behaviours. While I consider this last factor a positive one, it could also have a negative impact on the results. It may be that this familiarity clouds my observations as I may not be as vigilant or alert to comments that I would have flagged if I did not know the participants well. Having privileged information about each participant may also influence how I perceive and evaluate the data.

The primary means of qualitative data gathering was through observations of the children. By observing the children's naturally occurring behaviour over a period of time, I hoped to obtain a "rich understanding of the phenomenon being studied" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p.350). I audio taped the children's involvement in the process of the community of enquiry, the activities connected to the enquiry as well as noticing any emerging patterns or critical events in their behaviour or written

work and my reflections on these events. These notes were made immediately after the sessions. If it was possible, I made some notes during the sessions if I felt that it was necessary to record what a child had said verbatim in response to a question or while they were engaged in artwork. My records took the form of written field notes.

The field notes were a record of the children's comments and behaviour during the research. I also made notes of my own experiences and thoughts during the project. My field notes were not only a commentary regarding my observations, but became an evaluation of my own behaviour and teaching practise.

As I had multiple roles as the class teacher, facilitator and co-researcher with the children during the community of enquiry and as the complete insider observing the sessions, I chose to audio tape the community of enquiry sessions. These tapes were transcribed verbatim, by myself immediately after the sessions took place. I also made field notes during and immediately after the sessions so as to keep a record of what had taken place during the discussions. The transcripts of the audio taping, my observations and field notes were used as part of the data that was analysed. Also, as part of the data generated for this research study, the children created their own visual artworks and kept reflective journals in which to keep a written record of their thoughts and ideas that were indicative of their developing philosophical thought processes.

As an experienced teacher, I often have given children explicit instructions on how to complete tasks; however this method of teaching does not always encourage critical or creative thought. My teaching practise is a product of my own schooling, subsequent tertiary education and the structures at my current school which inform how I implement the pedagogies, how I view the children in my class and how they learn. This has a certain bearing on my teaching: I am the authority and the provider of information. I ask the questions and the learners respond by giving the correct answer. I do not always listen to what the learners are trying to tell me as the time constraints caused by the curriculum demand that the content is delivered to the learners quickly and effectively as possible. Haynes and Murris (2012, p. 207) explain that in order to engage and connect with the children, a teacher should be aware of the influences on his or her teaching practises.

Different traditions of thinking can be brought to bear on the analysis of classroom interaction to provide readings, for example of language use, group dynamics, behaviour, development. These disciplinary traditions need to be made explicit if there is to be any potential for listening afresh.

As part of this research study, the children were instrumental in driving the discussions through their own questions and dialogues. It was therefore essential that I engaged, connected and listened responsively to the children throughout this process. Alison Clark and Peter Moss define listening as an approach that "acknowledges children and adults as co-constructors of meaning" (Clark & Moss,

2011, p. 1) and at the same time to understand listening "to be a process which is not limited to the spoken word" (Clark & Moss, 2011, p. 7). It is generally accepted that to listen to a child would suggest the transfer of ideas only through language or words, but listening to children needs to be a "process which is open to the many creative ways young children express their views and experiences" (Clark & Moss, 2011, p. 7).

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS

This research project used a qualitative approach which is an "inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 367). This approach is beneficial for this project due to the nature and sensitivity of the data, such as analysing and interpreting the participants' emotions and personal anecdotes and reflections. The inductive process or analysis allowed me the flexibility to develop a deeper understanding of my findings because it allowed the opportunity for patterns and themes to emerge as I analysed the data as opposed to having the categories be predetermined or imposed on the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 267).

While there is no one right way to analyse the data, McMillan and Schumacher offer a continuum of idealised analytical styles that range from "prefigured technical to emergent intuitive" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 368). I position myself on the extreme end of the continuum, at the "immersion or crystallization style" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 368), which suggests that a researcher experiences this style when s/he "collapses coding, categorising and pattern seeking into an extensive period of intuition-rich immersion in the data" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 368). By being immersed in the data, the authors (2010, p. 368) claim that the analyst is open to maximum experiences within the analytical style; the researcher may conduct intensive reflexive analyses simultaneously. This style often involves reliving each field experience and persistently questioning the data for subtle nuances of meaning.

Once the data had been collected from the observations, my field notes, the audio tape transcripts, the children's drawings and journals, I analysed the data to determine how children respond to and communicate concepts philosophically. I looked for ways in which children communicate their ideas or thoughts orally, as part of the discussion and in the written form, as part of their personal journals, as well as in the visual mode in the form of artworks and drawings. Three themes emerged as I analysed the data. The themes are 1) building and connecting onto one another's ideas, 2) drawing on prior knowledge and 3) the tension between critical and creative thinking.

3.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research study could be considered more subjective than other research methods, as I am basing my study on the personal reflections, ideas and thoughts of the young participants. I also used their writings and artworks to substantiate my argument.

I worked with my own class of Grade Two learners. This may be viewed as a disadvantage as I have already formed perceptions of the participants and how they work in my class and this may cloud my observations. I had to be cautious as well as critical of my own interactions with my learners and see them rather as participants with whom I am engaged in a research study. There is an established relationship with my learners and this could benefit the research study as they would probably feel more comfortable, secure and at ease when engaging in the community of enquiry.

A limitation of being both teacher and researcher is that I felt that I was not able to observe every child in the classroom during the research project and at the same time there was a likelihood of missing vital non-verbal cues. In order to try and overcome this, I audio taped the sessions and recorded my observations as soon after the session as possible.

I am aware that this is a study based on one classroom and so the results cannot be generalised. Also I am aware that various social, economic and contextual factors impact on the data generated in this research.

3.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.8.1 ETHICAL COMPLIANCE

The following steps have been taken by the researcher.

An ethics application form has been filled in before the research was started and was submitted to the Wits School of Education Ethical Committee. The Committee has issued consent and approval of the research study (Clearance Number: 2012ECE59). Working together at regular intervals with my Supervisor, Prof Karin Murris and my Co-supervisor, Dr Kerryn Dixon to discuss ethical issues that may arise as the research progressed. Letters of information outlining the intention of the research project were sent the principal of the school, the parents/guardians of the participants and to each participant. Letters of consent were obtained from the principal, the parents/guardians of the participants and letters of consent and voluntary participation of the participants were obtained.

In order to ensure anonymity, the real names of the participants or school were not used. Pseudonyms were used when presenting and analysing data. The participants involved in the study had the right not to answer the questions posed to him/her, and had the right to withdraw consent at any time without

incurring any penalty. The school's name and the participants' names and identities were kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. The data, audio tapes, transcripts, field notes and artworks will be stored in a secure place that only the researcher has access to, in case there is a need to access this data for further academic research or an academic presentation at a later stage. The data will be permanently destroyed after a three to five year period after completion of the study.

CHAPTER 4 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF ORAL AND WRITTEN DATA

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I analyse how my learners express their understanding of philosophical concepts through the oral and written modes of communication. I wanted to give the children in my class the opportunity to engage in developing their thinking and reasoning skills during literacy using the P4C approach, as discussed in Chapter 2 and I explore how these thinking and reasoning skills became evident through these modes of communication. While analysing the data, I reflect on my interactions with the children and the impact this project had on my own practises as a teacher.

In order to answer my research question, 'How do my Grade Two learners explore and communicate philosophical concepts through the oral, written and visual modes as part of the literacy curriculum?', I used a picture book that the children had not seen or heard before, but that would open a space , draw them in and engage them cognitively and emotionally. I also wanted to present the material in a different way and in doing so, create a pedagogical shift in the way in which I used the picturebook with the children. In particular, I wanted the children to focus on and explore the gap or space, as discussed in Chapter 2, which has been created deliberately by the artist between the words and the illustrations in this book.

The picturebook, *The Big, Ugly Monster and the Little Stone Rabbit* (Wormell, 2004), has a page in which the author deliberately makes *implicit* reference or a clear suggestion – especially for adult readers - as to what has happened to the Monster, but, as later discussed in this chapter, my young research participants offered and were keen to explore alternative interpretations and theories about the monster's fate.

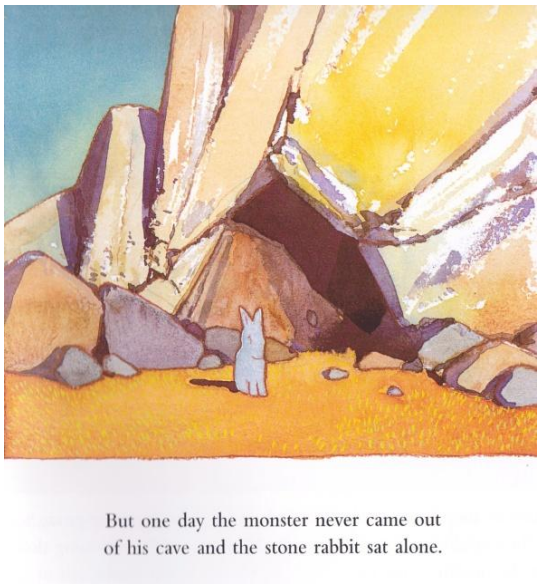


Figure 4.1 The Big Ugly Monster and the Little Stone Rabbit (Wormell 2004)

This chapter is divided into 3 themes, which I will discuss later in this chapter that emerged when analysing the data in the context of the theory and the practise of P4C as discussed in Chapter 2. The data and the themes that emerged are closely interwoven, but for clarity and for the purposes of this research project, I have separated the conventional academic modes of communication, namely the oral and writing components, from the visual mode of meaning making. The visual mode will be explored in detail in Chapter 5.

I comment on data selected from the oral dialogues and written journal entries and focus on any evidence of thinking and reasoning skills. Throughout the chapter, where relevant, I have included certain classroom incidents that have made me think differently about my own knowledge and practise as a teacher as this also connects with the thinking and reasoning skills.

4.2. EMERGING THEMES

While listening to the story in order to explore the gap created by the artist, Sharon raised the possibility of the monster's death. In response to this comment, Neil immediately offered a theory as to how the monster died and, as a result, the Grade Two children had, identified the philosophical concept of death which they seemed enthusiastic to explore.

This chapter is divided into 3 themes that emerged when analysing the data in the context of my research questions and the theory and the practise of P4C as discussed in Chapter 2. The themes were related to the following questions: 1) How do young children communicate meaning of philosophical concepts through different modes in the classroom? 2) How does the P4C approach enhance thinking and reasoning skills?, and 3) How can I incorporate my facilitation skills, as used in enquiries, to enhance my literacy teaching?

Three themes emerged from my analysis of the data on how the children orally and in the written modes communicated the philosophical concept 'death'. These themes are 1) connecting and building on each others' ideas, 2) drawing on prior knowledge and experiences and 3) the tension between the creative and critical thinking.

4.2.1 CONNECTING AND BUILDING ON EACH OTHER'S IDEAS



Figure 4.2 Introducing the stimulus.

I began the project by reading the story to the Grade Two's. They were seated haphazardly on the carpet, but all of the children could see the book and the pictures.

Introduction to the Picturebook:

Teacher: This story is called The Big, Ugly Monster and the Stone Rabbit and the author is Chris Wormell. What is an author?

Chantel: Someone who writes the story.

Teacher: Super, can you all see? Remember we need to sit responsibly, if you can't see you need to move.

[Teacher begins to read story]

Teacher: Look at this monster. Look at his skin...and his eyes...his nose hairs!

Tim: I bet he has no friends.

[A few nods of agreement from other children]

Alex: Actually, that is sad. [Reaction to page when the animals run away]

Alex: No! That is the saddest thing [wiping eyes vigorously]

Teacher: Look at the pictures from the beginning of the story. Don't say anything-just enjoy the pictures quietly.

Alex: That is the most saddest picture! [Reaction to page of Stone rabbit sitting alone]

[Teacher pages through book from start to finish]

Sharon: So he just got old and died?

[A few nods to that comment. Others sit quietly but no verbal responses are made]

Neil: Yes. He died. That's what happens when you get old. Wait...Look at the rocks on this page [pointing to last page]. Look how many rocks there are. Go back to the first page...of the cave... [first picture of cave is shown]. Look...there are fewer rocks. Maybe there was a rock fall as the monster went into the cave and that's how he died.

On the page showing a close up picture of the monster, I paused, letting the children examine the picture of the monster's face. The initial reaction to the monster was physical – through facial expressions showing disgust and bodies shuddering, while some children, kneeling on their legs folded under them, moved their upper body backwards. It seemed as if they were distancing themselves from something hideous and distasteful. They were ready to find the monster and his behaviour repulsive, offensive and repugnant.

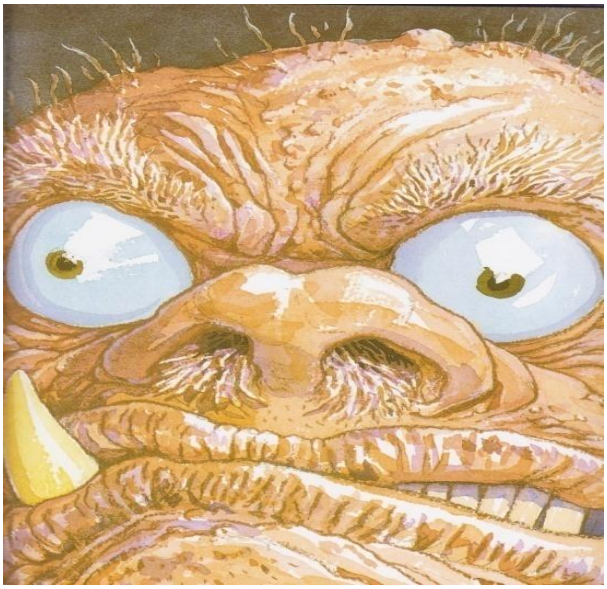


Figure 4.3 The Big Ugly Monster and the Little Stone Rabbit (Wormell 2004)

During the reading of the story, the children were engrossed. They sat quietly and there were very few comments made. Usually, they are quick to point at a picture, ask questions or discuss what is happening in the narrative. At one point, a girl, Alex, said "Actually, that is sad" in response to the illustration of the animals in the story running away from the monster and "That is the most saddest picture" when she saw the Stone Rabbit left outside. At the start of the story, Tim said "I bet he doesn't have any friends" (Field notes, 2012) and there were a few nods of agreement from other children.

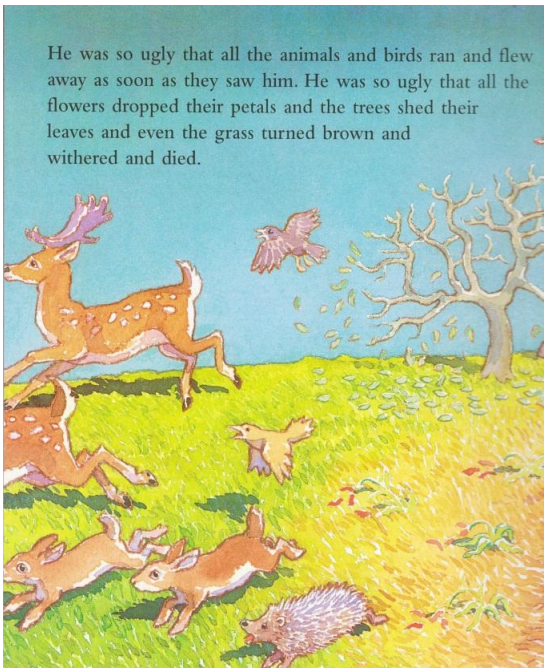


Figure 4.4 The Big Ugly Monster and the Little Stone Rabbit (Wormell 2004)

At the end of the story, I did not close the book but rather continued to hold up the book to show the last picture of the story. This illustration depicts the return of nature to area surrounding the cave. The children did not move and the mood was sombre. Usually, the children are actively involved in engaging with a story. They often interrupt and comment loudly on the narrative, point to things of interest or ask questions amongst themselves or to me. On occasion, some children in the class will get up and physically touch the page to emphasise their point. This quiet, subdued mood that was evident among all of the children was a marked contrast to their usual behaviour. This sombre mood was articulated by Alex when she said "No! That is the saddest thing" (Field notes, 2012), while wiping her eyes vigorously.

I paged through the book for a second time, making no comment but rather just letting the children engage with the illustrations in silence. The children were quiet, and while Alex is a lively, spontaneous child, her emotional reaction to the story and, in particular, the implied death of the monster, was surprising. Usually, stories I share with the Grade Two children are used for purposes other than listening. They are used to introduce new topics for learning, to test comprehension and reading skills or as an enjoyable way to end the school day. The children listen to the story, discuss the text, ask questions and generally are able to move between listening to the story and continuing with the next task or instruction with seemingly no emotional attachment to the story or the characters. Yet, Alex was tearful, other children were subdued and they all seemed reluctant to break the emotional connection they had with the narrative by moving away from the carpet and continuing with the next task.

The children were all clearly emotionally engaged with the story. An extreme case was Alex who was so engaged cognitively and emotionally as evident from her oral responses and bodily expressions such as crying and wiping her eyes.

When looking over the transcripts of that session, I noticed that Neil had also engaged with the book orally. He had been quick to respond to the narrative. His involvement with the story was evident by the hypothesis that he offered to the classroom community. He had constructed a new theory to explain the cause of the monster's death. This was indicative of profound thinking and reasoning taking place as he engaged with the story. Neil, by examining and comparing the illustrations, was constructing his own meaning or interpretation as to a possible explanation for the monster's death. By comparing the amount of rocks on the first and last pages, Neil had offered the suggestion of a rock fall which killed the monster.

In a later community of enquiry, the children picked up the theme of death and explored the idea of what happens when we die.

"What happens when we die?"

Teacher: Decide which question you would like to talk about. Alright, put your token next to the question you like the most.

[Children get up and place tokens to indicate their choice of question]

Teacher: Ok, we counted the tokens and this question had the most votes. The question says 'What happens when the monster dies?' Who thought of this question?

Chantel: The author doesn't tell us exactly what happened and maybe he just stayed there in the cave or died. I want to know what happens.

Daniella: Well when you die like the monster, cos I think he died, you go to heaven. In heaven you are fixed and not in pain. That's what my mom says will happen to my granddad soon. In heaven you are happy and there is lots of food and stuff.

David: Food! There is no food in heaven!

Alex: I agree with Daniella, not the food part, but God will come and fetch you to heaven and then all your sores are gone. You will be happy and well and you can talk to God.

Kate: When you die, you rest in peace.

Teacher: What does that mean, do you think? Rest in peace?

Kate: I dunno, that's what my mom says. Maybe you can sleep forever and then wake up when you want.

Chris: No, I disagree. In heaven you get to work and do chores forever. Then God sees who does the best chores and they get a week's holiday. God pays for it.

Teacher: What would you do on holiday in heaven?
Chris: Maybe a massage?
Alex: Or maybe you get to do fun things like your maid or granny. But I agree with Daniella and Kate, you go to heaven to rest in peace.
Sharon: So maybe he went inside and left the stone rabbit and forgot about it.
Neil: When you die you either go to heaven if you are good and hell if you are bad.
Neil: and...in heaven also there is no global warming and there is lots of animals and lots of things to do and if you go to hell there is nothing good.
David: I disagree with Neil. I have a philosophy question for Neil. What happens if you are a bit of both? Where do you go then?

The interaction between Neil and David, showed evidence of a profound cognitive challenge posed by another child. David had listened to and considered Neil's statement and was then looking for clarification, by asking Neil to think about the implications of his suggestion. By splitting the afterlife into two, David was aware of the problems emerging when an individual is both good and bad.

This was a development in the way in which the children were engaging with one another. There were some interesting philosophical points made especially in the dialogue between Neil and David, for example the concepts of 'being good' and 'being bad', 'animal' and 'human', 'plenty' and 'nothing'. These philosophical concepts could have been explored further to add depth or a richness to the community of enquiry. Susan Gardner argues that it is the facilitator's role to push for depth. The questions that the facilitator asks are "similar to, though more extensive and 'deeper' than those that merely promote 'good thinking'. One way of thinking of it is as the second why" (Gardner, 1995, p. 105). Neil needed to be given the opportunity to clarify his thought processes and then give a second justification so that there is quality of philosophical thought, relevance and a push for depth in, what Gardner calls, the "progress toward truth" (Gardner, 1995, p. 105).

At the time of the research, most of the Grade Two children were able to successfully link their thoughts or contributions to another thought. This has been achieved by encouraging the children, if possible, to start their response with 'I agree or I disagree with...' This goes deeper than mere teaching a particular linguistic convention or behaviour. As is clear from the transcript, the children are beginning to connect their comments and link their ideas to another idea productively. Alex was able to link her comments with Daniella's and Kate's after six comments. The ideas are taken up by the next member of the community to speak and are either built upon, or an alternative suggestion is given. Daniella, Kate and Alex were all building on the idea of the possibilities of what heaven is like while Chris had a completely different perspective of heaven.

But while some children are able to link their comments and contribute to the growth of the philosophical discussion, some children still make isolated remarks which seemingly have little bearing on the topic - like Sharon's comment regarding the monster's death: "So maybe he went inside and left the stone rabbit and forgot about it." In contrast to the emotional and physical reactions to the story by the others, Sharon showed no emotions at all when sharing her understanding of the story. Reading through the above transcript in isolation, I was convinced that Sharon had made an inconsequential remark that had little bearing on the dialogue. However, she had remembered the story, made a comment in the previous dialogue saying matter-of-factly "so he just got old and died." In this dialogue she picked up her own link and continued with it, saying "So maybe he went inside and left the stone rabbit and forgot about it." She was speculating that although the picture implied the monster had died because the rabbit had been left outside and forgotten, maybe the monster had just forgotten the rabbit outside but was not dead after all.

Sharon is categorised as an 'at risk' learner, she is not a very articulate child and can be impulsive and socially inept. In the discussion, she made a comment that did not seemingly connect to anyone else's comment nor contribute to the discussion. But it was the reaction of the others that was worth noting. Nobody scorned her remark and so in that sense Sharon was tolerated by the community. However, in retrospect, I brought my own perceptions of Sharon into my facilitation. While there were no disparaging remarks made about her comment, I did not give her an explicit opportunity to elaborate on her thought processes and I was almost dismissive of her contribution. Being careful of each other during a discussion should not be understood as not voicing one's own opinion in fear of hurting someone's feelings. Rather, being 'care-ful' is taking care about what and how things are verbalised. Being care-ful' asks the members to take responsibility for their words and actions – it has a moral dimension. In time, perhaps the other children would be able to ask Sharon how her comment is linked to the current discussion in order for her ideas to be heard and taken into account when building new ideas with everyone in a class that takes responsibility for this. At the same time, I also need to be careful and reasonable in my own behaviour and not make a judgement or decision based on my presumptions of Sharon's ability.

Children use critical thinking not so much as only an instrument of problem-solving, but as the ability "to fantasise, to wonder and to entertain profound ideas about the world and to confront problems concerning individual well-being" (Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011, p. 176). Looking through the children's journals later, I reread Liam's written work regarding heaven. Although this idea of food in heaven was left and not discussed further in the community, he had picked up the idea and had responded to it in his journal by saying "I agree with Daniella, there must be food in heaven or we wud starf to def" (Field notes, 2012).

4.2.2 DRAWING ON PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES

The transcript in 4.2.1, 'What happens when we die?' can also be read from the perspective of another theme that emerged, that is how the children were constructing meaning using their prior experiences and knowledge. As their teacher, I have very little knowledge of their prior experiences and so I may not be able to see the relevance or the connection they are making when trying to make sense of a story. I need to be aware of my own assumptions that I may bring to my interpretations and, as a result, be tentative and cautious in my critical judgements about the children's comments.

In this transcript, heaven involved "doing chores" and there being no "global warming". An idea that is probably of concern to Neil. His implied argument seems to be that if heaven is a place of harmony and contentment, with lots of animals, then there could not be the threat of global warming. These connections or comments that children make are attached to the child's prior knowledge and experiences. As a teacher, it is often difficult to make sense of these connections and how they are linked to prior knowledge. During a community of enquiry, listening to the children talk, I am often left with the sense that there is no real connection between the children's thoughts or that there is very little evidence of deep thinking and reasoning taking place. It is only when I reflect, almost as an outsider or with a sense of detachment, on the larger web of ideas we are constructing together, that I am sometimes more able to see the cognitive ideas that are being developed.

Kate's explanation that 'heaven is like sleeping forever, but being allowed to wake up when you want' is evidence of her drawing on her own knowledge and preferences. Clearly having the luxury of waking at will sounds like heaven for Kate.

Chris' comment was almost comical: - "No, I disagree. In heaven you get to work and do chores forever. Then God sees who does the best chores and they get a week's holiday. God pays for it" (Field notes, 2012). It is the type of comment that teachers would repeat in the staffroom as being endearing, humorous or a 'cute' retort often made by children in the classroom. As an adult involved in and listening to these conversations, this oscillation by the children can be difficult to attach meaning to and so often, these remarks are viewed as endearing, but not quite contributing to the dialogue in any meaningful way. However, Chris had made a direct link to his prior knowledge, focussing on the actual world of people doing chores and his experience of religion informing his creative idea that God will reward with a holiday and drawing on his experience of people having a massage as a treat. The ideas are fantastical and playful, yet anchored in a real world that gets dirty and needs to be cleaned, inhabited by people who go on holiday and have massages.

The Grade Two children were linking their comments to their individual prior knowledge and at the same time, testing their theories of heaven in a creative and imaginative manner with each other.

Children are active participants in the world; they experience or observe what is happening around them first hand. In their writings, the children were able to communicate their understanding of what happens physically when an individual dies. There were a number of responses that were anecdotal, a written explanation of their personal experiences and knowledge that were offered by the children. Perhaps these children had experienced death and particular behaviour at funerals and this afforded them the opportunity of being experts in this subject or field. As the teacher, I could not give them this experience or even be aware of relevant information that they may need; I could not even pretend that I was the expert with all the answers. It is the personal experience of death, the experience of grief and others dying and not so much age "that seems to be the significant factor in the co-construction of philosophical meanings" (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 116).

Kate, in her journal, again expressed a similar idea to her verbal statement that "when you die yor sole go to heven and you rest in pis" and that a person gets to "toc to god" while their body stays on earth for a "lon time and turns to dust" (Field notes, 2012).

Tamlin wrote "when my old gran died all the people stand around the koffen and then the koffen sinks and when it reaches the bottom they close up the hole and then the bugs come and eat your skin" (Field notes, 2012). Tamlin was confident in her response. She had experienced this event and was prepared to give share her knowledge and views with the members in an honest and frank manner. Haynes (2003, p. 97) explains that:

> Young children have not generally acquired large quantities of public knowledge about the world. Their personal knowledge is direct and familiar. They can speak with confidence and self assurance about their experience, their world and their life.

Other children also wrote similar entries in their journals which explained the physical activities associated with death, these included "when you die you can be bired or crimated" (Field notes, 2012). Or "your family gets to bury you underground" (Field notes, 2012).

When the Grade Two children were first exposed to the P4C approach, they experienced great difficulty in recognising and phrasing a philosophical question. As discussed in Chapter 2, Haynes explains that philosophical questions would "have at their heart those concepts that are central, common and contestable. They are questions that are answered through reasoning, rather than through empirical enquiry" (Haynes, 2003, p. 94). Early on children learn that certain questions in schools are more validated than others. These questions ask for verifiable answers of the empirical kind.

Looking at the questions that the Grade Two's had generated from this picturebook (See Appendix D for all questions), I noted that they had begun to show an improvement in phrasing questions that had

concepts that were central and contestable. This is evident in the type of questions that had been put forward by the Grade Two's. For example:

Jay: What happened in the cave to the monster?
Tammy: Why did the monster leave the stone rabbit outside at the end?
Ciara: Why didn't the monster come out of the cave?
Mia: Did the monster die?

These questions reflect the central, contestable philosophical concepts that the Grade Two's are becoming aware of. The philosophical concepts included loyalty, death and compassion. These particular types of questions need to be answered through discussion, reasoning and exploration with valid justification rather than the teacher, or keeper of all knowledge, providing the right answers.

Critical thinking is concerned with the idea that children are able to distinguish between different ideas and viewpoints, to "analyse ideas, to organise sound arguments and to make well informed judgements" (Haynes, 2008, p. 42). It is through the collaborative participation of a community of enquiry that the children are offered an opportunity to use "logical thinking and to engage with nuances of meaning...instead of working through a taxonomy of critical thinking skills" (Haynes, 2008, p. 44).

Creative thinking is driven by the idea that the members of the community of enquiry have the capacity to "imagine the possibility of things being otherwise" or being able to "construct other worlds" (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 142). Creative thinking in philosophical enquiries is associated with the ability to think freely, respond creatively and playfully without the constraints of having to work exclusively at developing and improving their critical thinking.

It is the tension between the rigorous critical thinking and playful creative thinking that will explored in the next section.

4.2.3 TENSION BETWEEN CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

In previous enquiries and at the time of this research, I was very aware that the Grade Two children had not yet begun to consider an argument and then ask the speaker for justification. Marie-France Daniel explains non-critical dialogical exchange as occurring when the members of the community "respect differences of opinion, construct their point of view based on those of their peers, and begin to justify their remarks" (Daniel, 2004, p. 26). Based on this definition by Daniel, I wanted the Grade Two children to ask for justification and to be as rigorous as possible. I became increasingly frustrated

at what I perceived to be a weakness in our community of enquiry. The children were more willing to engage in creating new ideas, than insisting on the justifications for these ideas through the giving of good reasons for example, or what I referred to earlier as the 'second why'.

The question that the Grade Two's had voted to explore in the community of enquiry, was "What happens when the monster dies?" Chantel started the enquiry by saying that "the author doesn't tell us exactly what happened and maybe he just stayed there in the cave or died. I want to know what happens" (Field notes, 2012).

Chantel is eager to explore alternate options to the death of the monster; she is becoming more creative and imaginative in her thinking. By starting the enquiry, she is inviting others to share their ideas.

Rather than viewing themselves as individuals making random, inconsequential remarks, the rest of the community built onto one another's contributions. This collaborative learning encourages and connects as rational, critical thought that is manifested in the member's lives. While exploring matters that were of concern to my classroom community, the community of enquiry becomes a reflective practise where the children became attentive or focussed on other's needs, questions, suggestions or ideas while examining their own ideas. Through creative, imaginative exploration of issues that were of interest to the whole class, a sense of rationality or reason began to underpin the creativeness and freedom of verbally playing with concepts. This sense of freedom was connected to the continuous growth process of the community discussions. And so, by encouraging the connecting to each other's ideas, becoming attentive to others, their thinking and reasoning skills are developing through deliberate communicative practises. By encouraging my children to push for critical justification they also sensed freedom. The space was created for the children to freely explore the concept of heaven in their own way.

Further analysis of the transcript, "What happens when we die" (Refer to pg 36), illustrates how the children explored the concept of 'heaven' and the themes that emerged.

From the discussion two distinct threads of thought emerged, the first thread included comments based on the accepted religious responses to what happens when you die. These comments included one from Kate, who said, "When you go to heaven, you rest in peace." Another prevalent comment with religious implications was "when you get into heaven, you are happy and well and there is no more pain and your sores are gone and you can talk to God" (Field notes, 2012). The idea that there is a sense of abundance, harmony and contentment was also evident in the statement "in heaven you are happy and there is lots of food and stuff" (Field notes, 2012). The Grade Two children were engaged in creative speculation as to what it is like in heaven.

My first response was that the children found it difficult to explore or investigate these ideas further in the community of enquiry. These statements were accepted with no explanation or justification being called for by the other members of the community, although two children did respond to the statement of food being available in heaven. I however, wanted them to critically test each other's ideas and push for depth.

My second reading of the transcript focuses more on the creative or imaginative explanations. Ideas were put forward that seemed to be almost magical or nonsensical. During discussions, children enter into conversations that seem to oscillate between actual observations and experiences of their world and a sense of magical fantasy that exists in their imaginations and stories that they are exposed to and they are a part of. This lateral and imaginative thinking is triggered by connections that the children find and make during the discussions from their daily experiences with the world in which they live**.** These creative or imaginative comments included Chris' statement about having a massage as a holiday treat in heaven and Alex's idea that you get to do 'fun things just like your maid or granny.' Alex had made a lateral rather than literal connection. She had connected with Chris' creative imagery and experimented with the fun aspect of heaven and in her next sentence she had connected with the religious aspect of resting in peace by saying, "But I agree with Daniella and Kate, you go to heaven to rest in peace" (Field notes, 2012).

When I probed further in order for Kate to elaborate on her thoughts, she was reluctant and seemed unable to do so and answered "that's what my mom says" (Field notes, 2012). Part of the process of developing a community is by encouraging and engaging in reflective practises. This would include reflection on participation by the members and the range, depth or quality of the member's contributions. While I was asking Kate to say more on her contribution, she was unwilling to give reasons for her beliefs and used her mother as the authority who could not be questioned. Initially I saw this interaction as Kate being reluctant to interrogate her own thoughts, choosing to use her mother as a buffer in order to prevent her from interrogating her own thoughts on the subject. On reflection, I could have encouraged Kate to probe her ideas without seeming critical and support the development of her cognitive thought processes by asking if she agreed with her mother, establishing if parents are always right and to explore the distinction between 'being dead' and 'sleeping forever'. Or I could have encouraged exploration of her second sentence which is an imaginative speculation where death is like sleeping forever, but you have the option to wake up when you wish. This highlights the important role of the facilitator in helping children to learn to think and reason.

David was quick to respond and to Daniella's statement of having food in heaven. But there was no elaboration from either Daniella for her statement or from David's to explain why he had reservations about her comment. On reflection, I could have helped draw out this idea by probing both statements and encouraging deeper involvement, and perhaps a richer conversation, by asking perhaps asking

what is in heaven, what sort of space is heaven or even how do we know that there is or isn't food in heaven.

Garth: What happens to the rabbit when he dies? [Later when discussing the questions...] Daniella: That question-the one about the stone rabbit... Teacher: This one? It says what happens to the Stone Rabbit when he dies? Daniella: Yes. That isn't a good philosophy question. We know what happens, the rabbit has to stay in the garden. Teacher: Do you all agree? Yes? Ok, you have your tokens. Decide which question you would like to talk about. Alright, put your token next to the question you like the most.

Garth had written the question "What happens to the rabbit when he dies?" This question was categorised by Daniella, and agreed to by other children, as not being a "good philosophy" question as "the book tells us what happens to the rabbit - he stays in the garden." (Field notes, 2012). It is only on reflection of my own practise that I realised this question needed to be explored further by giving Garth the opportunity to explain his thinking process. I had immediately assumed, along with the other members of the community that Garth was talking about the monster dying but maybe he was asking about the welfare of the stone rabbit. Perhaps, for Garth, the rabbit was a real animal and needed to be taken care of now that the monster was no longer capable of doing so. I realised that although, unlike a conventional lesson, there is no formal preparation required during a P4C discussion, the facilitator needs to be alert and sensitive to questions and statements that have the potential for further philosophical exploration. It is only through this type of reflection that I am aware of the complexity and intensity of this kind of work with children.

4.3. CONCLUSIONS

Meaning making through the oral mode of communication is complex, involving sophisticated thinking and reasoning skills and attitudes. By allowing the children to experience 'thinking time' to think about and reflect on stimulus or starting point like a picturebook, raise and discuss their own questions, the space was created for each child to start unpacking their perceptions and delve further into their personal experiences, ideas or thoughts on the topic.

The oral mode of communication has clear advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include the opportunity for the child to be engaged in a discussion, it encourages the generating and refining of new knowledge and it develops a sense of collaborative learning between the members of the community. At the same time, the children are encouraged to use the space created to explore

concepts and challenge preconceived ideas in an imaginative, creative manner without the obstacle that written work may impose on certain learners.

However, the disadvantages of the oral mode include the chance that the child who is reluctant to talk in front of others will not participate fully and may withdraw from the enquiry. There were a number of children in the class, who did not participate orally in the community of enquiry plenary session, although they did contribute to the pair work. This does not mean that they are disengaged from the enquiry or that there is limited listening, thinking and reasoning taking place; however their ideas and thoughts are not voiced orally and therefore not heard at that point in time by the others and the children miss out on the possibility for their ideas to be tested as others cannot critically respond to what they are saying or creatively include them in the further enquiry. The oral mode provides a space for children whose learning style is in this mode and at the same time, disadvantages children whose learning styles are in other modes and take longer to express themselves orally.

Often, during a community of enquiry, unless recorded, there is no physical evidence of the conversation. In schools, where assessments and evidence of actual measurable tasks are important, it is difficult to assess the individuals on their oral 'performance'. Some children are more articulate and confident in their language abilities and if given the opportunity, could dominate the enquiry completely. In a previous enquiry, Neil had suggested that the children in the enquiry indicate, by using their fingers, how many chances they each had had to talk and people should pick those who hadn't had many opportunities, giving everyone a chance to talk. This practise is now used in all our enquiries so that there is a sense of fairness and equal opportunity.

Due to the nature of the oral activity and the quick pace of the community of enquiry, it requires a different kind of preparation from the teacher. The children decide on the topic and the general course of conversation with carefully considered guidance and input from the teacher. Oral work requires a certain amount of cognitive dexterity from all the members, which not all children display. A challenge for me as the facilitator is that there are no records of the oral 'work' and when I review the transcripts there is often something that I have missed that is evidence of reasoning from the children and I should have followed it up in the enquiry. A systematic analysis of transcripts is useful to look at in terms of refining my practise as a facilitator.

At the end of one of the community of enquiry sessions a child said to me "I love Philosophy - we don't have to do work, we just have to think." The idea that because there was no written work, thinking was easier might be applicable to some children, but others find talking very hard work and so their voices are not always heard. Children learn in different ways and I needed to incorporate other modes of communication, like drawing, so that all children had the opportunity of being heard.

The written mode of communication is the accepted norm in the academic classroom. Written activities are considered to be the serious side of school, the area where teachers can properly assess the academic achievements of the children and a more accurate indication of their potential and ability is reflected. While the Grade Two's were interested in this activity and were prepared to put their thoughts down on paper, it took them longer to get involved. The children who found it easy to express themselves on paper were able to start the activity without any prompting. The children who were not as confident in their language abilities were very concerned about writing in the correct lines, using the correct spelling, writing neatly and they needed to know the exact amount of writing they had to do. There seemed to be a certain amount of tension surrounding this activity that was not evident during the drawing or oral activities. It was almost as if they sensed that this was an activity that was going to be assessed and so they had to do it 'properly'.

Although there were some interesting ideas expressed about death in this activity, I felt that the need to perform and 'do their best' had hindered the children's natural flow of communication that they had expressed earlier. There was a more relaxed atmosphere, a greater sense of freedom, a deeper engagement with the concept and a more sensitive transfer of their thoughts regarding death when they engaged with the concepts in the visual and oral mode.

This mode of communication had enabled the children to articulate independent thoughts. The children had a sense of achievement in the planning and layout of the completed task as well as the, manipulation and mastery of tools. The benefit of the children generating the writing for themselves resulted in a richness and diversity in the variety of written tasks reflecting their meaning making skills.

The completed writing is physical evidence of thinking and reasoning skills that each child is capable of as well as the particular language skills that are being developed. At the same time, the requirements of CAPS are being met and the necessary formal assessment is able to take place. However, the need to meet the national requirements often makes the teacher have a tighter control over the nature and outcome of the activity. The child who is unable to meet the requirements can begin to feel frustrated and withdraw from the activity.

Neil is very competent in the oral activities, he is able to confidently and clearly articulate his thoughts; but he is very reluctant to express his thoughts on paper. He has an awkward pencil grip which makes writing a tedious task, Neil also battles to spell and arrange his thoughts in a logical and coherent manner. Where he can, Neil avoids written activities. Aston, a bright little boy, has been diagnosed with ADHD. Although he is on a high dosage of medication, he finds it difficult to concentrate and follow the oral dialogues during the enquiries. He seldom contributes to the oral activities, but is able to competently write down his thoughts.

Both of these boys, as well as the rest of the children, needed to engage in an activity in which they felt confident and capable, so that they could communicate their philosophical thoughts successfully. The visual mode of communication, which I discuss in the next chapter, afforded them the opportunity to express their thoughts without feeling threatened.

CHAPTER 5 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF VISUAL DATA

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I focus on how my learners express their understanding of philosophical concepts visually. By implementing the P4C approach, I wanted to give the children the opportunity to develop their thinking and reasoning skills through Literacy, as discussed in Chapter 2. I explore how these thinking and reasoning skills became evident through the visual mode of communication. While analysing the data, I also reflect on my interactions with the children and the impact this project has had on my own practises as a teacher.

As part of examining how children communicate meaning of philosophical concepts through the visual mode, I had asked the children to draw what had happened to the monster in the cave. I wanted to find out whether there were differences in meaning making between the different modes and if the making of drawings would offer different educational opportunities for the children to express their ideas about what had happened in the cave as this was not made explicit in the narrative. I left the book open at the page that shows the illustration of where the monster entered his cave for the last time and the Stone Rabbit is left outside. (Figure 5.1).

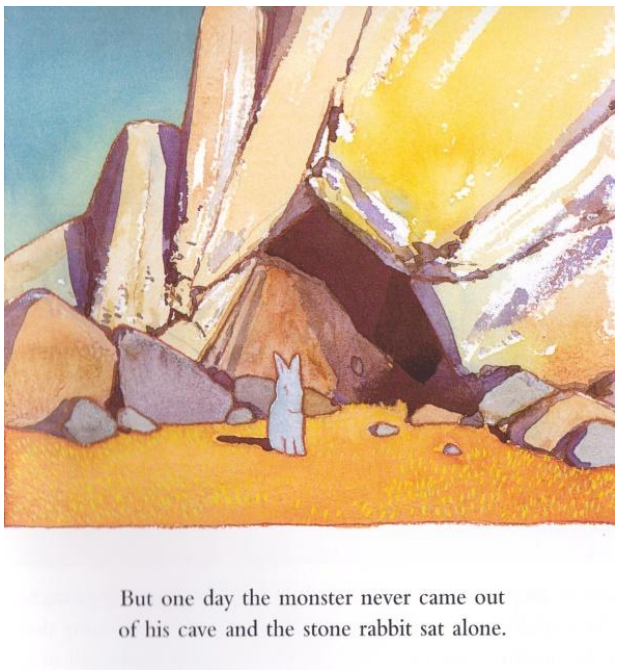


Figure 5.1 The Big, Ugly Monster and the Little Stone rabbit.

I asked the Grade Two's to return to their desks and to draw their feelings, thoughts or ideas about the story as part of Reflection time (Figure 5.2). I asked them to try and not to replicate or copy a picture straight from the book, but rather to draw the picture or image in their minds. A number of the children were looking perplexed and so I suggested they draw what they imagined happened in the cave. This suggestion was eagerly accepted by all of the Grade Two's who expressed an interest in showing what happened in the cave since the picturebook had not made this explicit.



Figure 5.2 Reflection/Thinking Time

I comment on data selected from the children's visual artworks and comment on any evidence of thinking and reasoning skills. Throughout the chapter, where relevant, I have included certain classroom incidents that have made me think differently about my own knowledge and practise as a teacher as this also connects with the thinking and reasoning skills.

5.2. EMERGING THEMES

Just after I had read the story to the children, Sharon had asked the question, "So he just got old and died?" (Field notes, 2012). A few children had nodded their agreement while the others had not made any comment and Neil had replied firmly with some authority, "Yes. He died. That's what happens when you get old" (Field notes, 2012).

It seemed as if the children accepted Sharon's question that the monster "just got old and died". There were no contradictions or alternate suggestions to refute this question. In fact, it almost seemed as if I was the one wanting to investigate what had happened to the monster in the cave by purposefully leaving the book open to the pages that hinted at the monster's whereabouts. The children seemed to be in no doubt as to what had happened to the monster. Because no one else had countered Sharon's question with their own response, I had presumed they had all agreed with her and I did not ask if anyone had an alternative suggestion.

Three themes emerged from my analysis of the data on how the children visually communicated the philosophical concept 'death'. These themes are 1) connecting and building on each others' ideas 2) drawing on prior knowledge and experiences and 3) the tension between the creative and critical thinking.

5.2.1 CONNECTING AND BUILDING ON EACH OTHER'S IDEAS

Children use what they already know, what is in their 'heads', their common sense knowledge of the world and use it as a basis for developing a more explicit knowledge, by connecting and building onto each other's ideas. During the initial reading of the picturebook, Neil had offered a suggestion that the monster had died during a rock fall. While none of the children had explored Neil's suggestion, the concept had obviously appealed to some children who used it as a foundation on which to build their ideas.

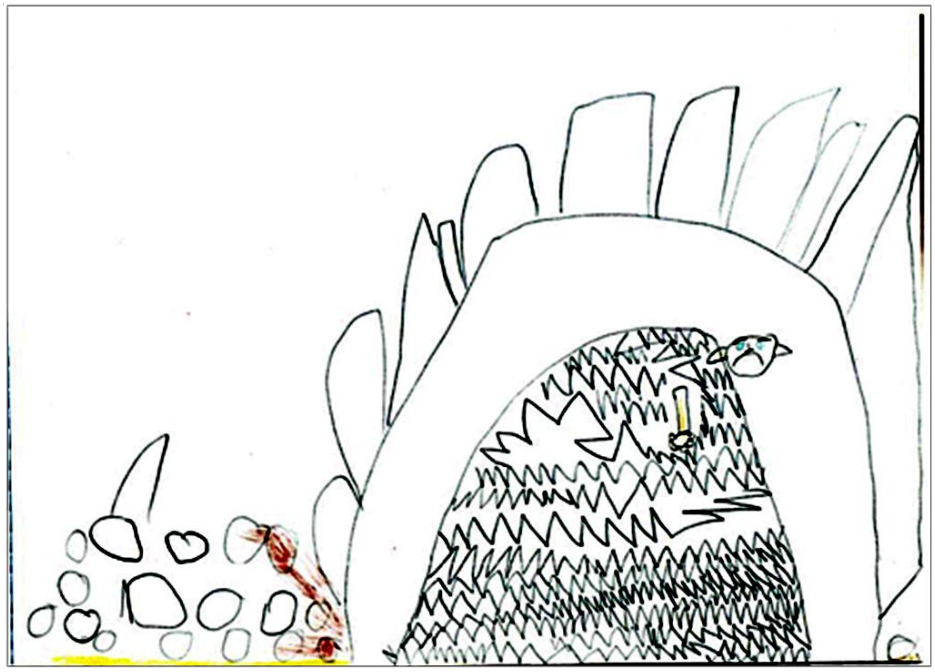


Figure 5.3 David's drawing of the Monster.

One of the children, David, who initially had focused on drawing the area outside the cave, asked for another piece of paper and drew a second picture, (Figure 5.3). In the second drawing, he had filled the entrance to the cave with repeated zigzag lines. At the top right hand side of the entrance of the cave, was a pink arm and slightly above and to the side of the arm was the Monster's head. There is no visible body connecting the arm and the head. While the monster has two round, blue circles for eyes, he also has an inverted arch representing a sad mouth. This child had presumably linked his drawing to Neil's observation of the monster being killed in a rock fall in a previous community of enquiry.

While I was walking around the classroom observing the children involved in the activity, the drawings of two boys caught my eye. Both of these of children are considered 'at-risk learners' or learners in need of support. They have numerous support structures, which include occupational, speech and reading therapy as well as a remedial programme in the afternoons. One of the little boys, Garth, has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), is on a high dose of medication to assist with his concentration levels. While they participate in oral discussions with a certain degree of proficiency and confidence, they find it difficult to convey coherent thoughts and ideas in a written format.

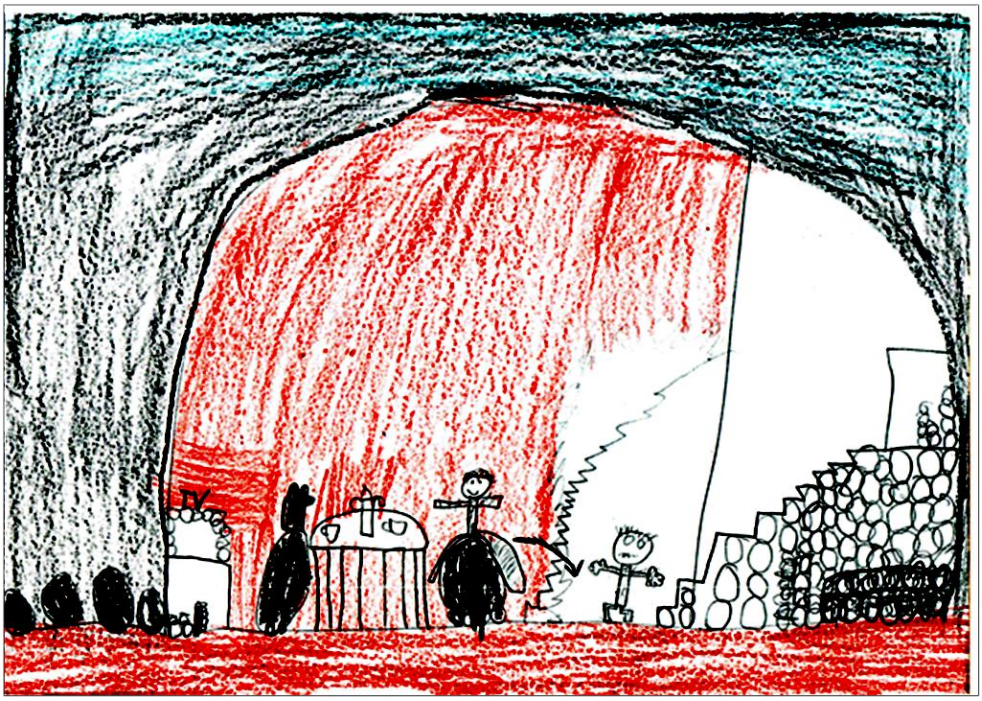


Figure 5.4 Garth's drawing of the Monster's cave.

Garth drew a picture that showed considerable detail, (Figure 5.4). He spent some time on the picture and revisited it repeatedly over a few days. This in itself is unusual as Garth tries to avoid any activity that involves pencil and paper.

At a glance, it is not a neat drawing, the pencil is dark and blunt, and in some places, produces thick black lines. There are no bright colours but rather he has used predominantly black and brown colours and has coloured in large areas in quick, scratchy lines. In this picture, the inside of the cave takes precedence, while the outside area surrounding the cave is coloured in black. There are a few black circles representing rocks outside the cave. The inside of the cave is divided into two unequal sections. The larger, left hand side, with a brown background, shows a domestic scene. There is a TV made from pebbles, a table with two cups and a teapot. On either side of the table are two big, black rocks that serve as chairs. Perched on either 'chair' are the Stone Rabbit and the Monster. The Monster is sitting upright and he is smiling with the usual arch shaped line generally used as a symbol

for a mouth. To the right of the Monster is an arrow, pointing to a second Monster on the floor. The second Monster is separated from the first Monster by a continuous zigzag line. There is no colour used in this portion of the picture. While this Monster has circles for eyes, his mouth is an irregular line, almost a painful grimace. The lack of colour and the grimace of the mouth indicate that perhaps this monster is dead. Had I given the usual cursory glance at this picture, I would have been mildly irritated that, as usual, there was no neatly coloured-in picture and Garth had drawn two monsters. It is only viewing the picture with some sensitivity and interest that this was a clear representation of Garth's understanding of what had happened to the Monster. As the reader, viewing the picture from left to right, there is a progression of time illustrated in the picture – first there is the domestic scene, followed by the death of the Monster, rather than being a static representation of an event. The arrow clearly leads the viewer's eye to the section where the dead Monster is separated from the living Monster.



Figure 5.5 Neil's drawing of the Monster's cave.

Sitting next to Garth, the second little boy, Neil, had also drawn a detailed picture showing the inside of the cave using his HB pencil, (Figure 5.5). There are many similarities between the two boys' pictures which include the positioning of the picture on the paper, the entrance to the cave, the inside of the cave, the furniture and even the Monster is similar in the way the body is drawn. The academic attitude towards these similarities might be that the boys copied one another and this practise is usually frowned upon and regarded as imitation, cheating and even plagiarism. If the similarities are

not shared or 'copied' from one another, then they are shared or 'copied' from the actual picturebook. Mavers says that:

> A social semiotic approach by no means condones deceit or an avoidance of intellectual effort. On the other hand, selections, retentions and modifications in making a copy can be intensely demanding of initiative (2011, p. 31).

Each child, as the argument goes, must produce work independently so that their assessment is a fair and an accurate reflection of their own individual capabilities. Mavers gives a definition of copying as "copying through student choice is commonly deemed to be a failure to engage 'properly' with subject matter as a consequence of an inability to understand challenging materials" (Mavers. 2011, p. 13). However, while the pictures are not exact replicas of each other, there is a "borrowing of ideas" (Mavers, 2011, p. 13) that indicates the two boys have shared thoughts and engaged in a form of sharing or borrowing of ideas from each other.

In his drawing, Neil has drawn the area surrounding the cave which had been coloured in quickly with a green pencil and inside the border outline of the cave had been coloured in a sandy brown. The Monster is shown as having a pink head, arms and feet with a grey, hairy body. The Stone Rabbit is drawn as a grey outline with pencil dots for eyes and nose and a smiling mouth. The furniture in the cave is shown as being made from rock or pebbles and includes a bed, television, a table and two large rocks on either side representing chairs.

He had also drawn a human figure hanging from the roof of the cave suspended by a thick black line. The figure was holding a video camera, which is shining a yellow light, indicated by a burst of quick yellow lines, from a small rectangular shape on top of the camera. Neil explained this figure as being "me, spying to see exactly what the Monster is doing" (Field notes, 2012).

The entrance to the cave is blocked by pebbles which are shown by repetitive small circles and an arrow showing the way in. When Neil had first heard the story and seen the pictures, he was convinced that there were more rocks at the entrance of the cave at the time of the Monster's death than at the beginning of the story. He asked for me to turn to the beginning of the story and back to the last scene of the entrance to compare the positioning of the rocks in order to be certain. He then suggested that maybe the Monster had died in a rock fall when walking into his cave. This idea is subsequently depicted in his drawing. It is only by listening to what Neil had to say about the picture as he completed his work, that I could make the connection between his illustration of the entrance of the cave and his thought processes during the reading of the story. It is this careful listening that also adds meaningfulness to his picture. If the teacher is unable or unwilling to listen responsively to what the children are saying and be aware of the links between their thinking processes, often the child is

not heard and his or her contribution, whether orally or in the written format, is often missed or ignored.

This is also an example of children *thinking* about the meaning of words and abstract concepts and therefore the language they use was the example of Neil's involvement with the story and the hypothesis that he offered to the classroom community. This was indicative of scientific thinking and hypothetical reasoning taking place (if a rock falls, the monster will die) as he engaged with the story. Although strictly speaking Neil might not have been thinking philosophically here for example about the concept 'death', by examining and comparing the illustrations, he was clearly constructing his own meaning or interpretation as to a possible explanation for the monster's death. In philosophical enquiries there are not always clear boundaries between scientific and philosophical enquiries in the pursuit of truth and meaning. His theorising was clearly motivated by the Monster's demise.

While there are the similarities, each boy has used the similarities in a different, creative manner. Both of these pictures demonstrate individual interpretation of and building onto the central idea, which is the suggestion of a rock fall.

Some of the Grade Two children also drew pictures to explain how we get to heaven. Many of the children had positioned heaven as a place in the sky, looking down on the world. They had also shown that the soul needed to move upwards in order to reach heaven. The concept of movement is easier to articulate verbally or write about, oral and written communication enables the child to construct a time sequence, but arguably can be more difficult to convey in the visual mode as many things are happening simultaneously in a drawing and movement is difficult to express. It was Kay who led the children to connect and build their own ideas from her statement expressed in the following excerpt:

> Kay: I know how our souls get to heaven. I definitely know this one, [thinking-pulls a face and purses lips]...there are flesh eating bugs, they only eat flesh. Not your skeleton – bones are hard for their teeth. They get into the box [coffin] and bite you. All your soul needs is just one hole from a bite. Your soul crawls out the hole.

Kay had suggested the idea of bugs eating the corpse's skin and flesh, but "not your skeleton that's left over" (Field notes, 2012). This confidently expressed idea was eagerly accepted and used repeatedly by the class, either because it was a grisly, macabre explanation or delightfully inappropriate in the presence of a 'respectable' adult or authority figure like their teacher.



Figure 5. 6 Chris' drawing "How we get to heaven"

Chris had drawn a picture (Figure 5.6) which had thick black dotted arrows indicating movement from a person's chest, lying in a hole, underground, to the clouds in the sky. In the left set of tracks, half way up the page, Chris had drawn an oval with crisscross lines over it representing memories. In the right set of tracks, he had drawn a red heart. The middle set of tracks did not have an icon interrupting the tracks of arrows like the other two had. All three dotted arrow tracks joined together at a cloud labelled heaven at the top of the page. While engaged in the drawing activity, Chris commented, "These lines are your heart, soul and memories, each one goes up to heaven on their own and then they join up again...in heaven" (Field notes, 2012). This sentiment of only parts of an individual go to heaven is echoed by Deon, who says to a peer in his group while they were drawing, "We would be too heavy. Just your mind goes to heaven" (Field notes, 2012). Do each of these boys consider a person's heart, soul, memories or mind as being the most important part of a human and only these 'parts' warrant the ascension into heaven?

Below are some other visual examples of movement in the context of the problem that needs to be solved of how do we get to heaven?

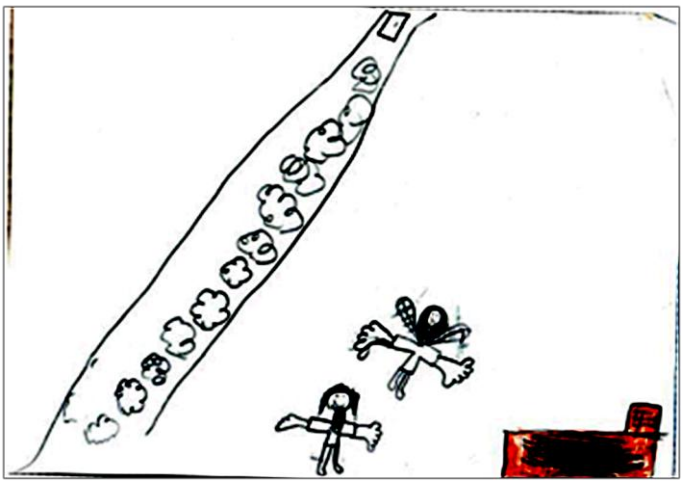


Figure 5.7 Neil

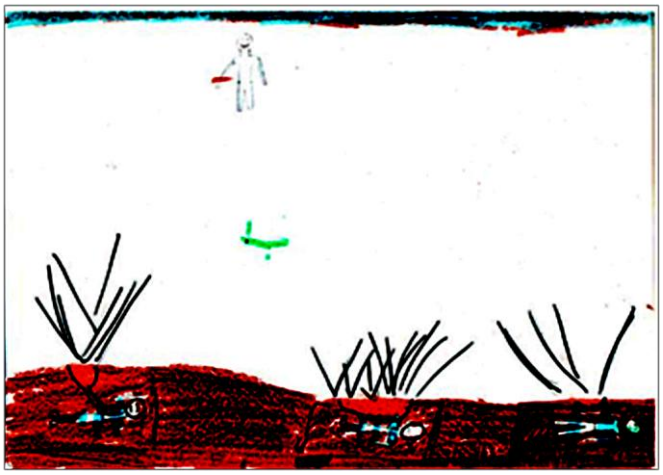


Figure 5.8 Tamlyn

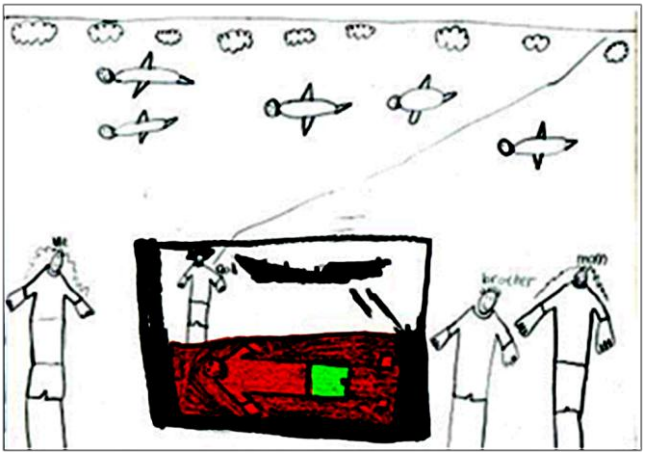


Figure 5.9 Ciara



Figure 5.10 Alex

The children had used one another's ideas onto which they built their own ideas. A sense of collaborative learning had taken place. Looking at the pictures again, each picture was not a completely individualistic piece of work, elements of each member's ideas was visible in the artwork. While the children had used one another's work, they had anchored their pictures by building on their own prior knowledge and experiences.

5.2.2 DRAWING ON PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES

Looking through the visual artwork that the children had created, it struck me how three of the children had explicitly drawn on their prior knowledge or experiences in order to communicate their understanding of the text. Now that they had been given the opportunity to engage in visual work to make meaning, these three children had also explicitly drawn on their previous knowledge and experiences to assist them in constructing the drawing.

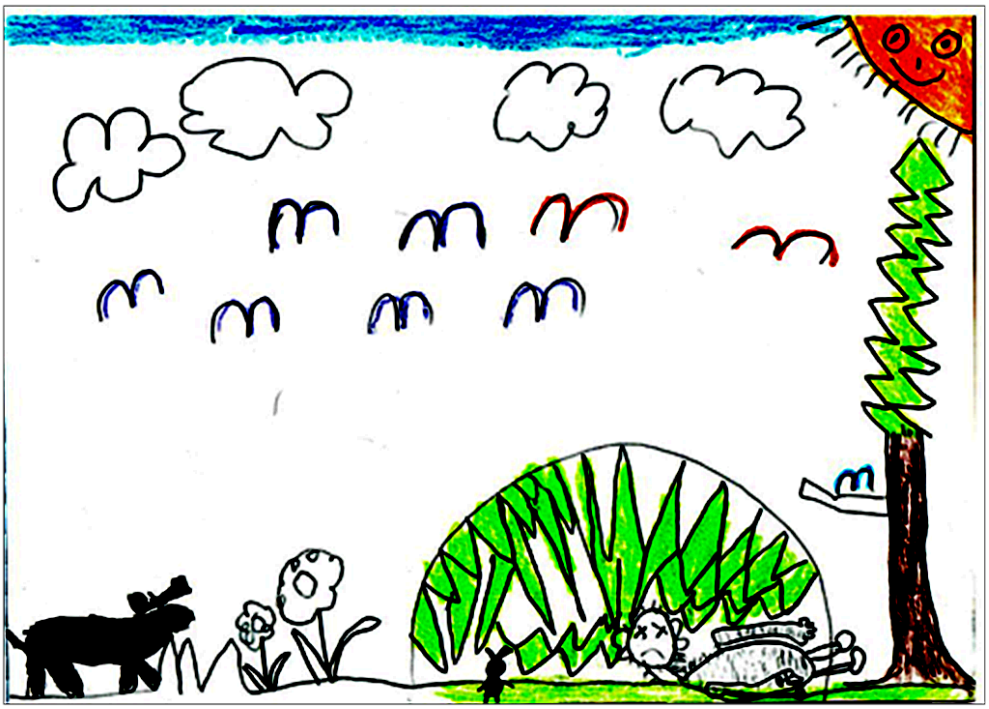


Figure 5.11 Chris' drawing of the Monster

One of the three pictures showed the monster with two lines in a cross formation representing the eyes (Figure 5.11). When I asked Chris about the eyes and the reason for drawing them in this way, he replied "This is the way you draw dead eyes. I have seen this in cartoons. If you are dead, this is what it looks like. You can't have eyes open to look" (Field notes, 2012).

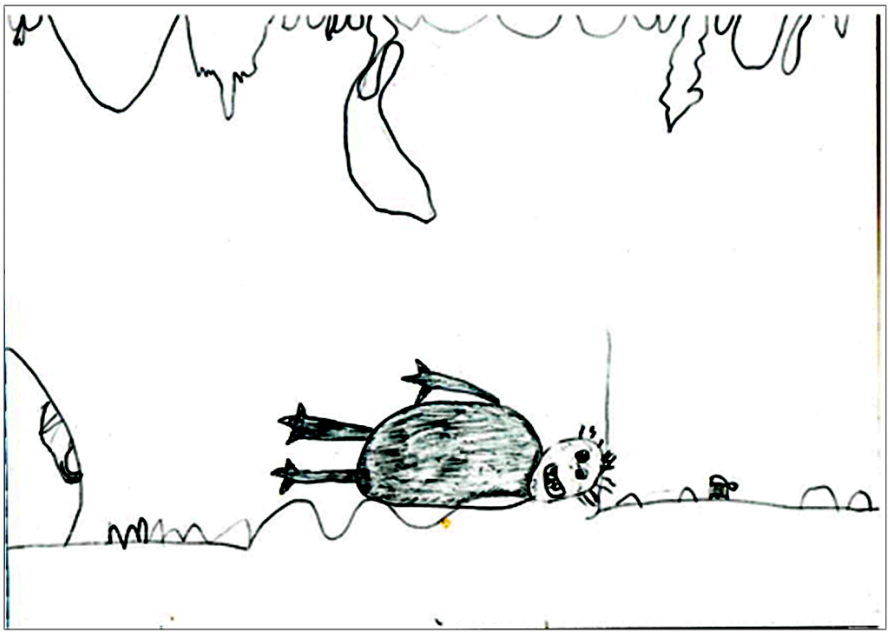


Figure 5.12 Alvin's drawing of the Monster

Alvin had drawn his picture in grey lead pencil (Figure 5.12). His monster's face had two circles that were open and had small dark circles representing the pupils of the eyes. The monster's mouth was open showing uneven rectangles for teeth. When I asked for some clarification on the picture, the child replied, "Sometimes you die so quickly, you don't have time to close your eyes" (Field notes, 2012). It helped to have this child explain his drawing. At a glance, I would have assumed that the monster was perhaps alive and lying on the floor of the cave and assumed that the child hadn't used the narrative strategies successfully to deduce the monster had died. I would have probably labelled this piece of work a 'mistake'.

Both these children had drawn on their prior knowledge of perhaps seeing death on television or hearing about death from others and they had incorporated this knowledge into their drawings. As a facilitator and teacher, I need to be mindful of this and not be so quick to label or dismiss their work.



Figure 5.13 Mia's drawing of the Monster's cave.

Mia had halved the page (Figure 5.13) and on the left hand side had drawn the outdoor scene with an animal facing the cave, green grass, trees and blue slashes representing falling rain. On the right hand side of the picture, the child had drawn the inside of the cave. The cave is shown as a brown arch covered with round circles depicting the rock wall. Inside the cave, lying in a brown rectangle or box is the monster, coloured in red, with open eyes and an inverted arch showing a sad mouth. Attached to the box is an orange square sign with a cross made from two thin rectangles. This child has depicted the death of the monster in two distinct ways. Firstly, the monster is lying face up in a coffin-like box with the sign of the cross above him. Secondly, using the narrative strategies from the story, she shows the animals and nature returning to the area around the cave.

Mavers explains the need for discussion with the drawer or illustrator of the picture because, "asking children to talk about their drawings after completion produces different kinds of data: it is an interpretation of what was done" (Mavers, 2011, p.38). This picture had a depth of meaningfulness and creative thought that might have been lost or ignored when 'assessed' under the usual academic demands which often do not allow for a discussion or exploration of the artwork with each child. Often the children's' drawings aren't viewed for meaningfulness or as evidence of assessing the understanding a concept, but rather as a 'time-filler' or an activity that the quicker children can complete while they wait for the other children to finish the required task. Through the discussion with the child to get a clearer understanding of what the child had depicted, I was able to become more aware and sensitive to the thinking and reasoning skills that was expressed in the illustration. All of the illustrations had shown some element of the children's prior knowledge and experience, their perceptions and understanding of the world around them.



Figure 5.14 Daniella's drawing of "How do we get to heaven?"

Another macabre thought of a slightly singed soul escaping from the confines of a body during a cremation was voiced by Daniella:

> Daniella: When you get cremated, your body turns to ash and then it's easy for your soul to escape. Your soul doesn't get burned kind of, like, ok maybe a little bit around the edges, but it does get out quickly that's all I can say! See I have drawn God-He is powerful and strong. That's why he is so big (Field notes, 2012).

At the time of this project, Daniella's grandfather was diagnosed with cancer. She had drawn a picture (Figure 5.14) with her figures having inverted arches representing sad mouths. She had also drawn herself crying. Was her depiction of the emotions different because she was experiencing the concept of death personally and not just as a bystander? Her picture depicts a conventional graveyard scene with the grave and tombstone. Her powerful picture shows the predominantly yellow god figure as being bigger and brighter than the other figures in the picture and an angel floating above the ground, carrying the body of Oupa, her grandfather, while a skeleton remains in the grave. She mentions in her comment that God is 'powerful and strong'. In the previous transcript, "What happens when we die", Daniella had said "In heaven you are fixed and not in pain. That's what my mom says will happen to my granddad soon. In heaven you are happy and there is lots of food and stuff." Her picture illustrates her prior experiences and knowledge about what she has been told by her mother and her own beliefs. In her picture, an angel carries the 'fixed' body of her grandfather while the 'powerful and strong' God watches.

5.2.3 TENSION BETWEEN CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

After the community of enquiry on what happens when we die, I had asked the children to spend some time drawing their own thoughts. At the start of the enquiry, Sharon had asked if the monster had died:

> Sharon: So he just got old and died?
> [A few nods to that comment. Others sit quietly but no verbal responses are made]

As no one had countered Sharon's comment about the death of the monster, and at the start of the activity, I had asked them to visually explore what had happened to the monster in the story, I was quite sure that the children would all draw a scene showing the dead monster. So I was very surprised that so many children had not focused on his death. Rather they had shown the monster as a living creature.

The children seemed eager to represent their ideas about the monster. Shannon had introduced the idea that the monster had died and the children seemed accepting of this idea. Although, often considered by society as a sad time, many of the pictures showed the family members as happy, smiling onlookers while the corpse is healthy, content and well. Often children draw an inverted arch representing a smile as the standard facial expression in many of their drawings. It could have been that they were focussed on drawing their thoughts about death that the standard facial feature was an automatic response. Could these children, who had drawn smiling faces, not have experienced death and therefore couldn't relate to the sadness of the event? Or had I, as an adult, expected them to depict the emotionally acceptable response of sadness?



Figure 5.15 Tammy's drawing of the Monster's cave.

Eight children had drawn the monster alive inside his cave. Four of these children had drawn the monster lying in bed, crying. This is shown by an inverted arch as a sad mouth and blue lines running down his face from his eyes, representing tears. Tammy had drawn a speech bubble above her monster with the words "I'm sad because everyone thinks I'm ugly". The drawers or illustrators of these pictures had all drawn the Monster engaged in some domestic activity, which often included the Monster sitting at a table interacting with the Stone Rabbit or the Monster was shown as standing upright in his cave (Field notes, 2012).

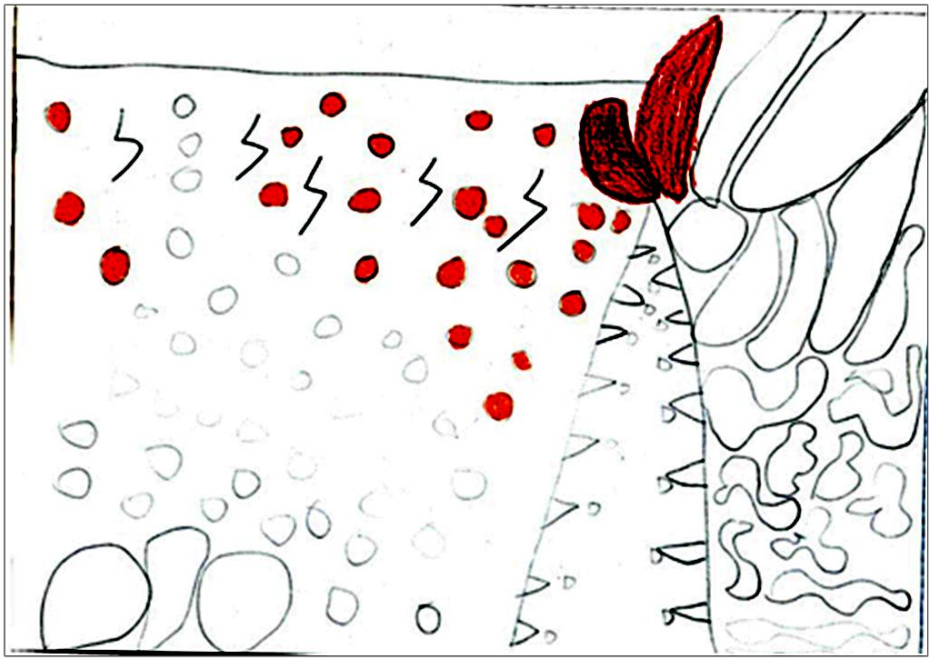


Figure 5.16 David's drawing of the Monster's cave.

Only four children only drew the outside of the cave with no indication of the characters from the story. Rather they paid attention to the area surrounding the cave which was shown in the picturebook on a double spread page filled with bright colours. In the children's drawings, the area surrounding the cave is filled with animals and birds or like David, a drawing showing the horrible weather conditions that occurred while the monster was alive.



Figure 5.17 Tim's drawing of the Monster's cave.

In Tim's picture, (Figure 5.17), the monster and the stone rabbit are tiny characters, inhabiting a cosy space in the cave. Outside at the entrance of the cave, is a pile of heavily coloured, black rocks, indicating that the monster and rabbit are trapped inside by the rock fall. Again, the tension between my expectations and the actual artwork surfaced. Neil had previously suggested the rock fall killing the monster; Tim had connected with this idea, but still shows the monster alive, sitting with the rabbit. In the actual text, the rabbit is left outside the cave.



Figure 5.18 Mia's drawing of "How we get to heaven"

Mia, usually a reserved child, had been quiet during the enquiry about death and heaven, picking at fluff on her skirt. At her desk, she seemed more animated and chatted with her peers. While not considered a neat worker, Mia is articulate and extremely competent in the academic subjects.

She had drawn a picture (Figure 5.18), that on close inspection was based on Christian principles and was similar to a number of other children in the class. She had drawn an outline of an outstretched body lying on its back, with a 'sad' mouth indicated by an inverted arch. This body was in a box, which was represented by a rectangle drawn with a thick black outline. Coloured over the body were stripes of rainbow colours –orange, blue, yellow, pink and red. Placed on top of the box was a flower. At the head of the box, was a rectangle outlined in black crayon and coloured in orange. The name 'Max' is written on the 'tombstone' and above the name is a dark cross, the symbol of Christianity. A smaller square is next to the 'tombstone', also outlined in black with the name 'Hood'. Floating above the grave are five clouds illustrated by scalloped pencil lines and coloured in a pale orange-peach colour. Above the clouds, is a female human figure indicated by her blonde, long hair and a dress represented by a triangle. This figure has blue wings and is holding a stick or wand with a star shape at the top. An orange circle in the top left hand corner indicates a shining sun. Just under the sun is a patch of roughly coloured orange.

Mia did not seem distressed or unhappy about completing the drawing. She interacted with her peers in the small group in a friendly, confident manner. There was nothing in her behaviour that suggested an anxiety or discomfort. When I asked her about what she thought happened when a person died, while still colouring in her picture, she replied:

Mia: In India, they burn you when you are dead. I don't know what happens to the left-overs. But your family waits there with you until you are just ash. I don't know where your soul is in all that. But then you get born again...as something new (Field notes, 2012).

I asked her what she had drawn and she said, "The fairies are coming to fetch the dead person" (Field notes, 2012). She had seen the other children drawing angels, but not being familiar with this concept, had called them fairies. Mia was incorporating what she had heard the other children discussing to try and make sense of and explain her drawing.

I had always known that Mia was Hindu, but during the community of enquiry, she had not participated and I had not opened up the space for her to contribute or add her thoughts or ideas to the enquiry. Yet she had drawn a Christian based picture that had very little to do with a Hindu ceremony, the funeral pyre and the belief in reincarnation. I was struck by the fact that although a community of enquiry needs to create a safe space for "thinking, a creative context for moral and social enquiry" (Fisher, 1998, p. 57), this child, Mia, perhaps, had not feel confident enough to contribute to the discussion. During the reflection time, had she subverted her own traditions and beliefs to the power discourse of the school? How was she 'schooled' into knowing or believing that her discourse was that of a minority and was not as valued or considered to be as important? What tensions did she experience between her daily occurrences, school and society? Haynes explains that often children experience a conflict of values between their personal experiences and school life:

> When children introduce their personal world into a discussion they highlight the different and often contradictory cultures and values that co-exist. As they move between home and school they experience conflicting values on a daily basis (Haynes, 2003, p. 9).

On reflection, another reason became evident. Mia was not unhappy, anxious or uncomfortable with the activity. There was no tension evident in her demeanour or drawing. Perhaps Mia had not subverted her own beliefs or traditions to the dominant discourse, but rather, the visual activity had created a space or opportunity for Mia to explore alternative ideas in a safe environment. It was clear that she was engaged in profound thinking and reasoning skills by processing new knowledge or ideas that had been expressed by others. Mia was still able to share her Hindu beliefs, but imaginatively explore another belief system. On reflection, I realised that I am generally quick to assume that the children automatically share their parents' belief system. Maybe, there is a chance that the idea that Mia had verbally expressed were her parents' religious beliefs and not her own and perhaps the community of enquiry and the subsequent drawing during the reflection time was her belief system.

Looking at the pictures from the whole class, there is a sharing of thoughts and ideas that is evident in the pictures; a level of collaborative learning has evidently taken place. The children had interacted

with one another, listened and critically evaluated the information in order to decide what information to include in their visual artworks and which information to discard. They had creatively used the 'valuable' information to convey their philosophical knowledge.

5.3. VISUAL WALL: 'Exploring the Gap' in Picturebooks

While viewing the artworks, various underlying themes became evident that linked the pictures together.

These pictures showed the interior of the cave and the monster alive.



Figure 5.19 Chantel

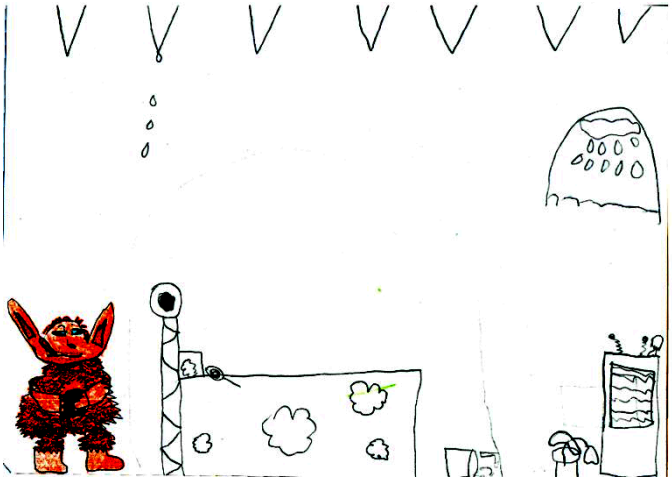


Figure 5.20 Daniella

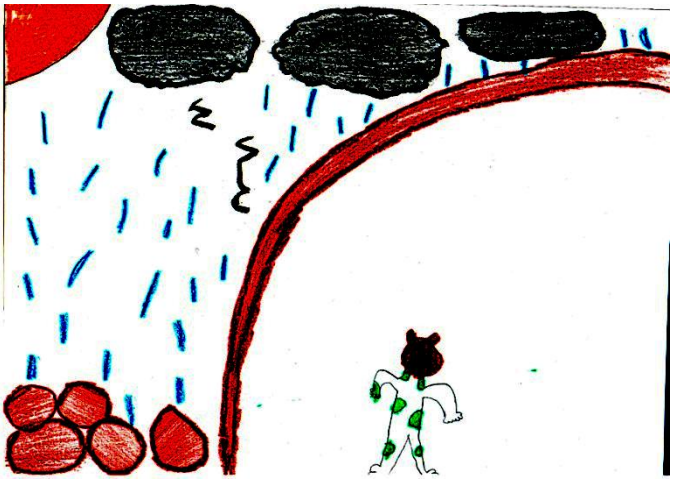


Figure 5.21 Nicky



Figure 5.21 Tamlyn



Figure 5.22 Alex

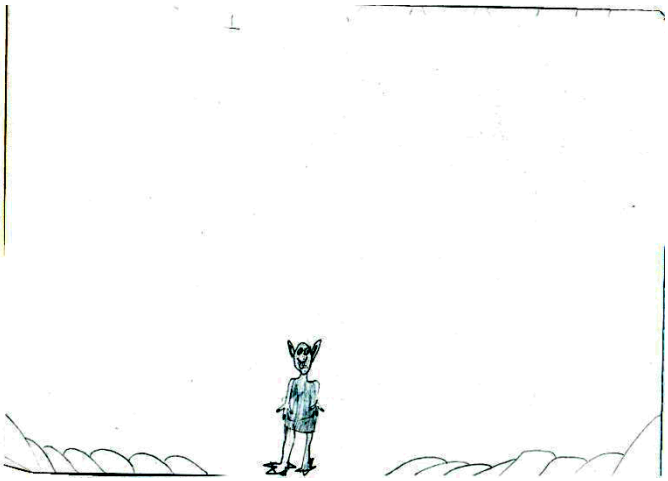


Figure 5.23 Kate

These pictures had the interior of the cave but the monster is dead:

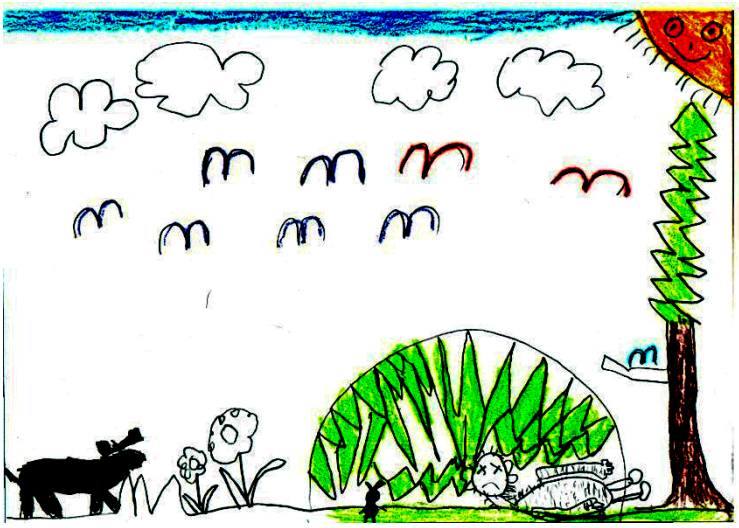


Figure 5.24 Chris



Figure 5.25 Mia

These pictures focused on the cave, but there was no evidence of the monster.



Figure 5.26 Sharon

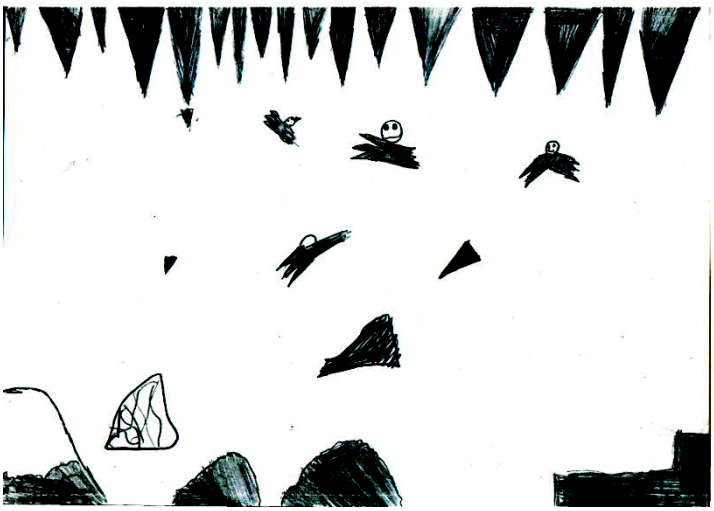


Figure 5.27 Brad

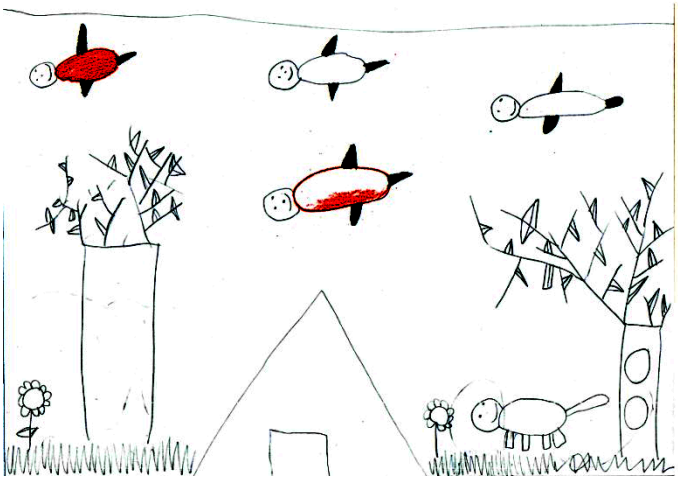


Figure 5.28 Ciara



Figure 5.29 Kay

5.4. VISUAL WALL: 'Drawing your thoughts'

These visual artworks illustrated the possibilities of what heaven is like:

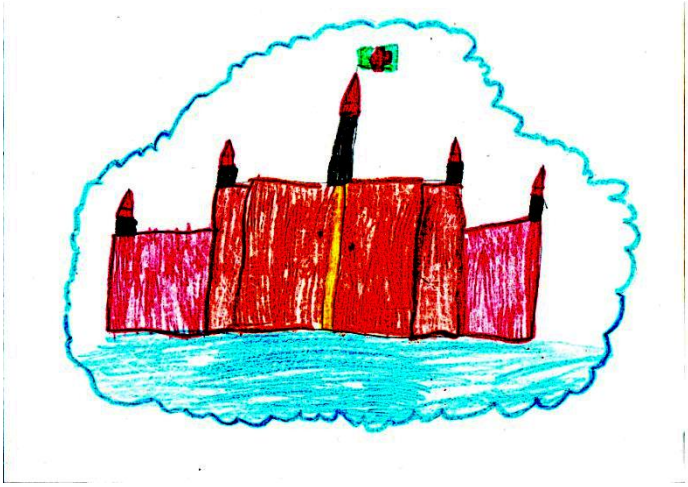


Figure 5.30 Liam

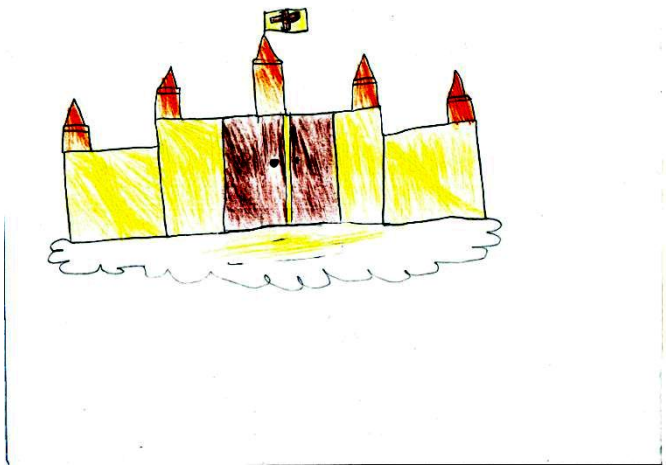


Figure 5. 31Alvin

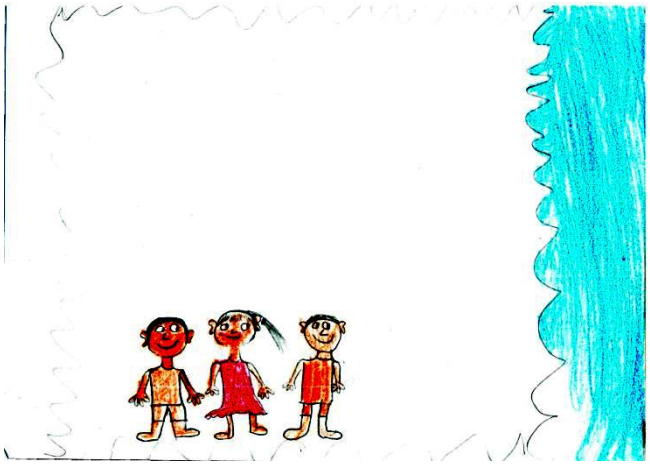


Figure 5.32 Kate

These artworks showed considerable thought into the problem ‘how do our souls get out?’



Figure 5.33 Deon



Figure 5.34 Jay

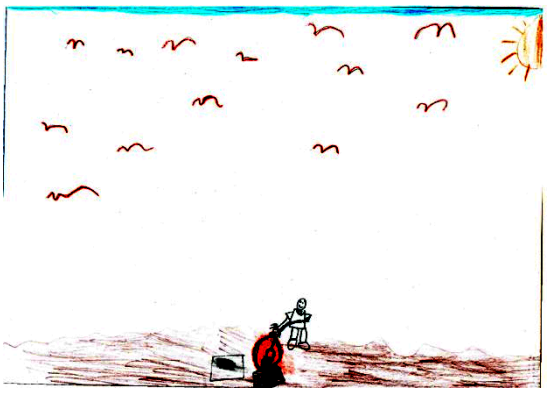


Figure 5.35 Tim

‘How do we get to heaven?’ involved serious thought and hard work to accurately display how the children thought a soul was transported.

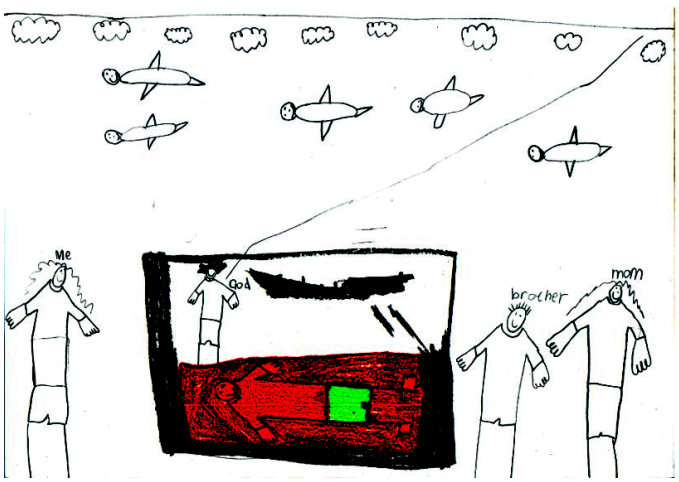


Figure 5.36 Ciara

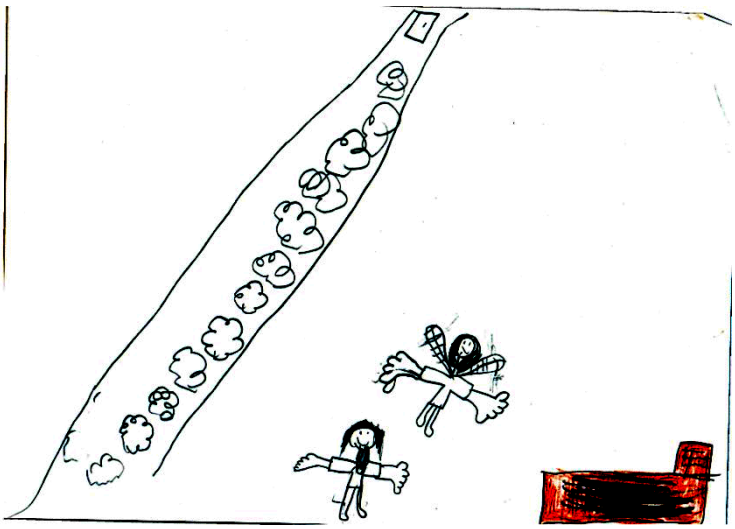


Figure 5.37 Neil



Figure 5.38 Chantel



Figure 5.39 Brad

5.5. CONCLUSIONS

These drawings by the Grade Two children are done during their thinking time and express their thinking, reasoning and emotions and show how they comprehend the story just after it has been read out aloud. The pictures are not intended as completed artworks, focussing on form, line and colour, but rather as a means of making meaning and to help focus the children's thoughts during the time between the story and the philosophical discussion. The variety of different drawings is indicative of the different theories that were thought of rather than a replication of the artist's work.

Looking through the pictures again, I was surprised at the amount of interest the Grade Two children had shown in these activities. The amount of detail, sensitivity and depth of meaning that each child had brought to his or her drawing was indicative of their understanding and the ideas they wanted to convey or communicate to the reader of their pictures. This activity gave them the opportunity to focus on their own meaning making and also to be considered important enough to create and communicate their own ideas about a narrative. The fact that many children spent a great deal of time on the pictures and wanted to revisit them over a few days not only indicated to me how much they enjoyed the activity but also how seriously they take this process of successfully communicating their thoughts. By engaging in the visual mode of communication the children had been offered an opportunity to communicate ideas that may have been difficult to articulate otherwise. Space was created where there was a freedom to explore concepts without being monitored or judged or assessed differently.

This mode of communication reflects a diversity of ideas that the oral mode does not really convey. There is evidence of a variety of voices, offering a richness of differences as shown in the next section, the Visual Wall. The children all had the same criteria given to them, the same access to materials, yet all of the pictures are different. Visual communication is a medium that seemed to offer each child the opportunity of using their imagination and conveying individual meaning. This mode offers the child, such as Neil and Garth, the opportunity of putting their thoughts to paper in a way that allows them to convey their understanding. The visual mode gives the children an opportunity to revisit a picture over time in order to edit and refine their work. Often it is far more complex to illustrate time, a sequence of events in a linear format than it is to write about these concepts. Garth and Neil, although not confident or competent in the written or speaking mode, had engaged in the writing strategies of planning the work, putting it down on paper, revisiting the work, editing and refining before submitting their final piece of work.

In a conventional academic world, written tasks and language activities that focus on the correct answer are favoured as a true reflection or assessment of the individual's cognitive abilities. The oral and written mode affords us the language to convey concepts but this is not always possible in a

drawing. The child needs to work hard at conveying his or her intention so that it is understood by the viewer.

The data in this chapter produces evidence that the visual mode can be a sophisticated mode of communication and not merely a time filler or just an artistic activity. This mode allows children to express their own original ideas and offers rich material for reflection on children's thinking and reasoning, but as a different sign system it requires a different kind of attention from the teacher. I said in Chapter 4, that as the facilitator, I was concerned that the children were not pushing for depth or justifying their statements by using the 'second why'. However, on reflection, maybe the children were using the ideas generated in the enquiry or the oral mode as starting points to think about and then built on and developed these ideas in the visual mode. This could be that the time to draw enables a quieter reflective response as opposed to the more public immediacy of the oral response. In this way the oral mode compliments the visual mode and affords me the opportunity of tracking their thinking and reasoning.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

The main focus of my research was to investigate how young children explore and communicate philosophical concepts through the oral, written and visual modes as part of the literacy curriculum. In the process I hoped to develop a 'thinking classroom' that encourages responsive listening, creative and critical thinking.

In order to answer the main research question, "How do young children explore and communicate philosophical concepts through the oral, written and visual modes as part of the literacy curriculum?" I needed to answer the sub-questions first. The sub-questions include 1) 'What does it mean to listen responsively to my learners?' 2) 'Are my learners capable of philosophical thought?' 3) 'How effective are picturebooks in opening up a space for philosophical enquiry amongst my learners?, and lastly 4) 'How can P4C be used to implement CAPS in my classroom?'

The challenge for me was to implement P4C in my literacy class, and at the same time, surpass the expectations set by the CAPS assessment standards. Traditionally in P4C enquiries, the pedagogy focuses on oral communication. Considering the age of my learners and the knowledge I have of them, I wanted to test more visual modes of communication as part of doing philosophy. I suspected that, as teachers, we might miss valuable signs that the children were making about abstract concepts. I also was interested in how the children used writing and drawings to convey meaning about the philosophical concepts raised in an enquiry.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LISTEN RESPONSIVELY TO MY LEARNERS?

What is involved in listening responsively to my learners is salient in determining how they explore the meaning of philosophical concepts. By listening to the children and taking them seriously as thinkers and by validating their experiences and prior knowledge, I noticed that the P4C enquiries became far more rewarding and valuable, for both myself, and I assume, also for the children. It became clear to me, as the facilitator, that I had to listen carefully and with greater sensitivity in order to identify the potential of what they were saying, drawing and writing for philosophical conversations. I report, in particular, on two critical incidents, which highlighted my own behaviour as a facilitator. The first incident involved Garth. Garth had asked a question about the Stone Rabbit and I had immediately thought that Garth was talking about the monster dying. I realised this question needed to be explored further by giving Garth the opportunity to explain his thinking process. Unlike a conventional literacy lesson, there is no formal preparation required during a P4C discussion. However, what this incident highlighted is the different kind of preparation needed; a kind of alertness and openness to children's questions and statements that have the potential for further philosophical

exploration. An important aspect of such preparation is a letting go of 'the' meaning of a text or picture and a trust in the process and in the children's abilities to philosophise and to explore ideas collaboratively. My critical self-reflections made me aware of the complexity and uncertainty involved in of this kind of work with children and the values involved.

The second incident involved Sharon who made a comment that did not seemingly connect to anyone else's comment nor contribute to the discussion, it was not the reaction of the others that was worth noting, as nobody had scorned her remark. However, I brought my own perceptions of Sharon into my facilitation. While there were no disparaging remarks made about her comment, I did not give her an explicit opportunity to elaborate on her thought processes and I was almost dismissive of her contribution. Being careful of each other during a discussion should not be understood as not voicing one's own opinion in fear of hurting someone's feelings. Rather, being 'care-ful' is taking care about what and how things are verbalised. Being 'care-ful' asks the members to take responsibility for their words and an action, therefore 'caring thinking' always has a moral dimension. I learnt through my P4C sessions that I also need to be careful and reasonable in my own behaviour and not make rash judgements or decisions based on my presumptions of a child's abilities.

During a community of enquiry, listening to the children talk, I am often left with the sense that there is no real connection between the children's thoughts or that there is very little evidence of deep thinking and reasoning taking place. It is only when I reflect, almost as an outsider or with a sense of detachment, on the larger web of ideas we were constructing together, that I am sometimes more able to see the cognitive ideas that we were developing. What I learnt from this action research project is that as a facilitator, I need to be more trusting of the process and not assume that I know what each child is thinking and wants to say. I am quick to 'put words in their mouths' and finish their sentences that I don't give them the opportunity to work through their own thoughts and have the time to articulate the ideas. I need to remind myself to embrace the thinking space and freedom that the enquiry affords each member, myself included.

The conversations and the resultant listening encouraged the children to exercise their imagination, while at the same time develop their hypothesizing skills and teamwork capabilities also necessary for other academic subjects. I was impressed by their sincerity when sharing ideas - sometimes challenging, sometimes accepting alternative ideas. Since I have started to do P4C in my class there definitely seems to be a greater respect for each other. While discussing the concept heaven, creative or imaginative comments were offered, like Chris' statement about having a massage as a holiday treat in heaven and Alex's idea that you get to do 'fun things just like your maid or granny.' Alex had made a lateral rather than literal connection. She had connected with Chris' creative imagery and experimented with the fun aspect of heaven and in her next sentence she had connected with the religious aspect of resting in peace by saying, "But I agree with Daniella and Kate, you go to heaven

to rest in peace" (Field notes, 2012). The interaction between Neil and David, not only showed evidence of a profound cognitive challenge posed by another child, but it is also a good example of how the Grade Two children were interacting with each other in a playful and respectful manner. David had listened to and considered Neil's statement about going to heaven or hell and was then looking for clarification, by asking Neil to think about the implications of his suggestion. They were clearly drawing on their prior knowledge in their thinking, making the enquiries somehow more sincere and genuine than 'normal' interactions I have with them.

ARE MY LEARNERS CAPABLE OF PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT?

It was these rewarding interactions and connections between the children's thoughts in their oral, written and visual work that helped answer the second research question 'Are my learners capable of philosophical thought?' The enquiries the children engaged in got them talking, listening and *thinking* about the meaning of words and abstract concepts and therefore the language they use. For example in Chapter 4, Chris had made a direct link to his prior knowledge, focussing on the actual world of people doing chores and his experience of religion informing his creative idea that God will reward with a holiday and drawing on his experience of people having a massage as a treat. The ideas are fantastical and playful, yet anchored in a real world that gets dirty and needs to be cleaned, inhabited by people who go on holiday and have massages.

The meanings of the abstract concepts the Grade Two children were using and also sometimes explicitly exploring are ambiguous and therefore no one (young or old) has the one right answer. As we have seen in Chapter 2, I have argued that these abstract concepts are what is called 'common' and 'central'. They are part of our everyday language and therefore embedded in all literacy texts. When using P4C as part of literacy, reading for these children becomes more meaningful in that reading is seen as an active process of constructing meaning by connecting old knowledge with new information encountered in the text. However, the meaning of these abstract concepts ('death', 'heaven') is usually taken for granted. The Grade Two children shared their ideas and perceptions and subsequently were able to challenge these concepts and collectively developed new ideas. The children were linking their comments to their individual prior knowledge and at the same time, they were testing their theories of death and heaven in a creative and imaginative manner with each other.

My research findings challenge what is usually understood by the term comprehension. What the children have shown is their ability to explore a carefully chosen text like *The Big, Ugly Monster and the Little Stone Rabbit (Wormell, 2004)* at a 'deeper' than 'normal' level. In that, when they were allowed to explore the gap between images and words in an open-ended and philosophical way they were expressing thoughts orally and in their writing and drawing that were extraordinary and made me rethink my own beliefs about death and heaven.

Kate and Tamlin wrote about what happened after we die. Both had obviously given the event serious thought, and as a result, deep, complex ideas had been made by the girls. Kate, in her journal, expressed an idea that "when you die yor sole go to heven and you rest in pis" and that a person gets to "toc to god" while their body stays on earth for a "lon time and turns to dust" (Field notes, 2012). The notion that the body and soul are separated is extremely complex to consider. While Tamlin wrote "when my old gran died all the people stand around the koffen and then the koffen sinks and when it reaches the bottom they close up the hole and then the bugs come and eat your skin" (Field notes, 2012). Tamlin was confident in her response. She had experienced her Gran's funeral and was prepared to share her ideas with the members in an honest and brave manner. Kate's and Tamlin's ideas are very different – one more spiritual and one more practical, but they are proof that these girls had wondered about their experiences and had engaged in thoughts adults often try to protect children from, because they are afraid they might get upset.

Two other children in my class, Chantel and Chris had given careful consideration, in their drawings, to the process of how we get to heaven. Chantel's picture involved an intricate staircase made of clouds that lead up to heaven, (Chapter 5, p. 71). But she had drawn two distinct pathways signposted 'G' for God and 'A' for angels and the deceased individual, who is represented as an outlined figure. Drawing on her prior knowledge and beliefs, Chantel considers God as omnipresent and powerful and is therefore entitled to his own staircase. Chris had drawn a picture (Chapter 5, p.55) which had thick black dotted arrows indicating movement from a person's chest to the clouds in the sky, labelled 'heaven'. In each of the set of tracks, half way up the page, Chris had drawn two icons – an oval representing memories and a heart. Chris had commented that only an individual's heart, memories and soul go to heaven. Perhaps, he had identified these three 'items' as the most important parts of a human being and that they would move up to heaven while the rest remained behind? Both are clear examples of young children being able to express philosophical thoughts and ideas that seem original and have great potential for further theorising and speculation. How are the heart, memory and the soul related? And what do we mean by each philosophical concept in turn?

Normally speaking what is understood by teaching comprehension as part of literacy is that the meanings of the concepts embedded in the text have straight forward meanings. Tests, curricula, worksheets and so on, assume that the meanings of these concepts can be found in the book itself and if not, we should turn to definitions in dictionaries and the internet. My Grade Two children explored the meaning of concepts such as 'death' and 'heaven' by connecting them with their own lived experiences. Daniella's grandfather had just been recently diagnosed with cancer, so she was bringing her own thoughts and fears to the reading of the text. Tamlin could remember her grandmother's funeral, while others like Kate and Mia, who during the conversations about her heaven picture discussed the concept of death in the Hindu religion, (Chapter 5, p. 64), and were drawing on what their parents had told them about death and subsequent beliefs from their respective religions. By

being allowed to draw on their own experiences and thoughts, the children were clearly more motivated to engage and be involved in the literacy work. I noticed this when the children were asked to draw their ideas about the Monster. Garth drew a picture that showed considerable detail. He spent some time on the picture and revisited it repeatedly over a few days. This in itself is unusual as Garth tends to avoid any activity that involves pencil and paper. Garth was involved in the writing process even though it was using the visual mode. He demonstrated organisational skills by planning what to draw and where to place the picture on the paper. He 'edited' his work by revisiting the drawing and adding to it or deleting aspects of it. Garth then 'read' his work by sharing it with his peers. Neil had suggested the idea of a rock fall in the enquiry and this idea was repeated in Garth's work. While there are the similarities, each boy has used the similarities in a different, creative manner. Both of the pictures demonstrate individual interpretation of and building onto the central idea of a rock fall.

ARE PICTUREBOOKS EFFECTIVE IN OPENING UP A SPACE FOR AN ENQUIRY?

The third research sub question focused on exploring how effective picturebooks are as a way of opening up a space for philosophical enquiries with my learners. As I have argued, picturebooks are texts that contain a rich and complex mixture of written words and visual images that offer powerful, thought-provoking and emotional experiences for readers young and old. The children's immediate reaction to the story, *The Big, Ugly Monster and the Little Stone Rabbit*, was both emotional, with Alex verbalising her sadness, by saying "that is the most saddest picture" and physical – through facial expressions showing disgust and bodies shuddering, while some children, kneeling on their legs folded under them, moved their upper body backwards.
Apart from deep emotional involvement that a picturebook brings, on a personal or individual level, I claimed in Chapter 2 that children's literature **also** offers the opportunity for imagination, empathetic understanding, inspiration, moral reasoning, literacy and artistic preferences as well as to vicariously experience a situation through the characters in the book.

My research findings enable me to substantiate each of these claims. I have looked at the opportunities, as listed above, that are offered by picturebooks and explored by the Grade Two children and discussed them in relation to the 4 C's of P4C.

PICTUREBOOKS AND CREATIVE THINKING

After listening to the story, Sharon had initially asked if the Monster had died and Neil had responded with "Yes! That's what happens when you get old". No one had contradicted Sharon and offered an alternative suggestion. I was surprised when looking at the children's visual artworks, that only a handful of children had actually depicted the death of the Monster, despite the implicit message in the story that he had indeed died, which also would have been the correct answer to a typical comprehension question like 'What had happened to the monster when he didn't come out of the

cave?'. The others had *imagined* life in the cave and drawn domestic scenes with the Monster alive. The Grade Two children had imagined themselves inside the Monster's cave with comfortable beds, furniture, crockery and televisions and drawn a picture that had matched these imagined experience. While reading the book, Tim had said that he 'bet the monster had no friends.' There were a few nods of agreement, after all, no one that ugly could possibly have any friends! Yet as the story progressed, the sentiment changed and the *empathetic understanding* of the monster's situation, the loneliness and desperation he must have felt was recognised by the children. It is through the child's and teacher's imagination or creative thinking that the possibilities of alternative suggestions can be explored in an enquiry. The illustrations in the picturebook had made a powerful impression on the children, *inspiring* them to create their own individual detailed and expressive artworks. It is the creative thinking in a philosophical enquiry that helps the child make links and connections to other thoughts and ideas.

PICTUREBOOKS AND CAREFUL THINKING

The picturebook had evoked these powerful emotions through the interdependent network of pictures and words and the gap between them. The way I had read the book might also have contributed to the affect. I, as the teacher, could have spoken at length about acceptable moral behaviour on the playground and in the classroom and probably never have achieved the emotional impact the lonely Monster had. This *moral reasoning* is linked to the careful thinking of P4C. The members of the enquiry take responsibility for their thinking, feelings, words and actions. There is a heightened level of respect, responsibility and care that is developed amongst the members that permeates all thinking strategies across the curriculum.

PICTUREBOOKS AND CRITICAL THINKING

Picturebooks are well suited to teaching critical reasoning and reflection skills. The illustrations, the text and the intentional gap between the two, encourages profound thinking about abstract concepts by the readers of the picturebooks. These concepts are not only focussed on the rational, but also include the emotive and social concepts such as friendship, love and death. Picturebooks that are carefully selected can offer a variety of aesthetic styles and cultural differences that a child can think about and 'experience' for themselves. Picturebooks that have rich, ambiguous and complex pictures and texts offer the child an opportunity to explore their thoughts creatively and critically whilst been given the structures and freedom in which to make sense of the book for themselves, by drawing on their prior knowledge and experiences.

The Grade Two children demonstrated collaborative thinking, when after they had listened to the story and discussed the relevant issues; they were not only eager, but also able to explore the philosophical concepts in their enquiries. In a sense, the story had become inconsequential to their main interest in the topic of death, which they eagerly explored and learned *together, as* a group rather than *in* a group, during the P4C sessions. While thinking creatively and critically, the Grade Two's were also developing language skills, enriching their vocabulary, practising their listening and speaking skills, and involved in writing activities. The picturebook had given them a starting point to begin talking and thinking about abstract concepts as a group.

My research has shown that if a picturebook challenges children, cognitively and emotionally, they are eager to explore and purposefully make meaning of abstract concepts.

CAN P4C BE USED TO IMPLEMENT CAPS IN MY CLASSROOM?

The fourth sub-question asked how P4C could be used to implement CAPS in my classroom and within the literacy lesson. Using P4C to implement the CAPS requirements in my literacy class has been very successful and the benefits of using P4C to develop early literacy skills are evident from this research.

As P4C is an approach relatively unknown in South Africa I was obviously concerned about how P4C might distract from what I am required to do as Foundation phase teacher, that is to implement the CAPS. However, my research clearly shows that P4C does not hinder or obstruct the implementation of the CAPS. The children in my class have exceeded the assessment standards stipulated by the CAPS document as described in Chapter 1 in the following way.

My Grade Two children are able to talk confidently during class discussions by expressing feelings about a story and were able to give reasons for their answers, but they were also able to analyse the text and discuss the abstract concepts like heaven, death and loneliness in a creative and critical manner. Not only are they able answer open ended questions and justify their answers, but they are able to pose their own philosophical questions that showed a deeper involvement with the text as well as evidence of critical thinking and reasoning. Critical thinking is an important literacy skill for young children to develop so that they are able to critically evaluate information, make decisions and resolve any misconceptions they may have. The questions that the Grade Two children posed were indicative of their creative and critical thinking. Looking at the questions that the Grade Two's had generated from this picturebook (See Appendix D for all questions), I noted that they had begun to show an improvement in phrasing questions that had abstract concepts in them that were common, central and contestable and therefore philosophical. For example, Jay asked what had happened in the cave to the

monster. Tammy was interested in finding out why the monster left the stone rabbit outside at the end. Ciara had asked why the monster didn't come out of the cave. Mia was concerned about the whereabouts of the Monster. They were not bound by the straightforward, more lower order question types based solely on the story content (often used for more conventional comprehension-type activities), but they were starting to engage with the abstract concepts like 'death' and 'loneliness' that were embedded in the story.

While the CAPS document asks that learner's vocabulary is extended by being able to "make up their own rhymes" and to "tell a story that has a beginning, middle and end" (DoE, 2011, p. 23), I think that their vocabulary was enriched by being able to take part in a philosophical enquiry with their peers. They were able to challenge and explore ideas that were of interest to them, rather than to be contained by a curriculum. The achievements of these assessment standards are an indication that P4C is successful as a possible approach that could be implemented in the literacy classroom.

According to the CAPS document, the learners' listening skills must be developed by being able to "listen to complex sequence of instructions and respond appropriately" as well as to "listen without interrupting, showing respect for the speaker asking questions and commenting on what was heard" and to "listen for the main idea and detail in the stories" (DoE, 2011, p. 23). In a traditional classroom, showing respect generally means that the children keep quiet when the teacher is talking. But in the Grade Two's philosophical enquiry, there is a sense of mutual respect for one another, a sincere atmosphere that encourages responsive, 'care-ful' listening between all the members.

The CAPS documents state that the learners should be able to "use visual cues to predict what the story is about", "identify key details in what was read", "answer higher order questions based on the text read" and "interpret pictures and other print media" (DoE, 2011, p. 26). As I discussed earlier in this chapter, the use of picturebooks in the enquiry and as part of the literacy lesson encouraged the Grade Two's to explore the concepts in a playful, creative manner.

As seen in Chapter 1, the PIRLS assessment expects children to be able to master basic literacy skills which include reading and viewing text, interpreting written texts and doing creative writing. This research clearly shows that P4C may be an approach that can be successfully implemented in order to achieve the necessary critical thinking and reasoning requirements that are stipulated by CAPS in order to meet the standards of international bench marking assessments.

There has also been a shift in the Grade Two's social skills; there has been an increase in productive, collaborative work with a clear sense of co-operation between the children in my class. They have also displayed a willingness to negotiate with one another, rather than arguing and looking for some teacher intervention to sort out conflicts in class. The ethos of the community of enquiry has 'spilled over' to other subject teaching and the Grade Two children appear to be more confident in their

abilities. There is an increase in the children taking responsibility for their learning by asking questions and expressing their opinions and feelings about topics that emerge in other subjects. At the same time, they are more involved with one another and there seems to be more listening to one another's ideas. The children are also using the strategies they are exposed to in an enquiry in other subjects, like finding 'links' or finding similarities and differences between concepts.

6.3. CONCLUSION

'How do my Grade Two learners explore and communicate philosophical concepts through the oral, written and visual modes as part of the literacy curriculum?'

In response to the main research question, that is, 'How do my Grade Two learners explore and communicate philosophical concepts through the oral, written and visual modes as part of the literacy curriculum?, I found that the children were able to communicate philosophical concepts through the oral and written modes quite successfully. For example, the children were able to interact with one another in a more open-ended learning environment, they began to link their ideas; they started to explore concepts creatively without the perceived risk of giving the wrong answer.

The children were eager to explore concepts that otherwise are not always dealt with explicitly in school. Death and heaven are considered sensitive topics and are not generally open for discussion. But in this more nurturing environment, a sense of trust was beginning to develop and this helped create an environment that was secure, safe and where the children would be listened to by the community. The written mode, and to a lesser degree the oral mode, are the accepted, conventional modes of communication in the school environment and the children are used to communicating through these two particular modes. I aimed to create a more secure, nurturing space for myself and the children in which people's own perceptions can be expressed and explored using their personal experiences and ideas. Through the discussions, the children generated and refined new knowledge about the story and they explored abstract concepts and challenged preconceived ideas in a creative and imaginative way. As the children were exploring the philosophical concepts, the amount of data generated was overwhelming. While looking through their written work, their drawings and reading the transcripts of the enquiries, three themes that were connected with P4C gradually emerged. These were 1) connecting and building on each other's ideas, 2) drawing on prior knowledge and experiences and 3) the tension between critical and creative thinking. By identifying these three themes, it became easier to identify and separate the data. The evidence for the first two themes was quite clear. Identifying the tension between the critical and creative thinking was more difficult to isolate and required repeated reviewing of the data produced by the children. A great deal of the data was closely connected and so it was difficult to view the data in isolation under each theme.

Although there were some interesting ideas expressed about death in the written activity, such as Liam suggesting that if there was no food in heaven we would starve to death, I felt that the need to perform and 'do their best' had hindered the children's natural flow of communication that they had expressed during the oral discussions. The children were concerned about the amount of writing they had to produce. I wanted them to 'just write' and be creative in their answers, but they were bound by doing things correctly, like writing in the correct lines, using the proper spacing and letter formation and asking me to spell some difficult words. These techniques are all important, but at this age they are not second nature and the Grade Two children seem to either be creative in their writing or focus on the techniques. The children also seemed distracted and initially were walking around and they seemed to need encouragement to start the activity.

In contrast, judging from their body language, which included the children bent over their artwork, interacting with one another, offering opinions and explanations about the work being done in their groups, there seemed to be more of a relaxed atmosphere, a greater sense of freedom, a deeper engagement with the concept and a more sensitive transfer of their thoughts regarding death when they engaged with the concepts in the visual mode.

For me, the visual mode of communication was the most fascinating part of my research. The enthusiasm that the children displayed for the visual art work was infectious. After the initial hesitation, when they were unsure as to what I was asking of them, they were eager to convey their philosophical understandings. The ideas expressed visually were highly individual, yet showed how their ideas were linked to one another. They had connected with and built on one another's ideas, used their own prior knowledge and experiences and engaged with the abstract concepts that were raised in the enquiries. The results were far more rewarding and valuable than any piece of written work they had produced. The visual mode of communication seemed to have enabled the children to articulate independent thoughts more than in the other modes. The children had a sense of achievement in the planning and layout of the completed task as well as the, manipulation and mastery of tools. The benefit of the children generating the artworks for themselves resulted in a richness and diversity in the variety of visual tasks reflecting their meaning making skills.

This was particularly evident not only in the individual pieces of work I have analysed, but also the Visual Wall in Chapter 5. Each of these pieces portrays the child's own thoughts and emotions associated with the philosophical concepts. The Monster pictures demonstrate how, while there may be connections between the pictures, each child had given consideration to the Monster's whereabouts on their own. Looking at the pictures, I got a general feeling of gentleness, caring, cosiness and safety. Tim's picture, for example shows a tiny Monster sitting at a table with the Rabbit, the space that they occupy is small and drawn closely together while the entrance is covered by rocks. A feeling of security and cosiness of the monster in a contained space with his friend is established. Looking at a

few of the pictures, the Monster had been drawn with care and with careful attention to detail. The children had almost 'softened' his features, the Monster is drawn smiling at the rabbit or taking care of the rabbit by pouring tea or sitting at a table with the Rabbit. The Grade Two children had thought about the Monster with seriousness and this is evident in the detail they have provided about his life and possibly death in his cave. There were also some children, who had not drawn a monster, but nevertheless had given the task careful thought. As there is no evidence in the book regarding the monster's whereabouts, they had (logically) in a sense, chosen to draw what could, in reality, be found in a cave. So, for example, one child had drawn the rocks and a cave filled with flying bats, while another had drawn sharp, pointed rocks occupying the floor of the cave (Chapter 5, p. 69).

The pictures of death were also fascinating for me as a teacher. It made me realise how little we know about children's own ideas about topics such as death in an ordinary classroom environment. These pictures (Chapter 5) are filled with complicated, intricate ideas and details that I normally would have had no access to. The children chose to explore concepts that were important to them. They were not controlled or restricted by instructions or by what was considered acceptable by some kind of authority. When the pictures of 'what is heaven like' are first viewed, they are in a sense quite straightforward and are simple 'castles' in the sky. But after the enquiries had taken place, the enthusiasm for the topic intensified and the pictures reflected this escalation in interest as can be seen in the pictures 'how do our souls get out?' and 'how do we get to heaven?' Deon had drawn a picture of a graveyard that had a complex machine in the middle of the cemetery lifting out the souls as the bodies would be 'too heavy to get into heaven', while Daniella had drawn a huge figure representing God and an angel holding the soul while the skeleton remained in the coffin. (Chapter 5, p.60).

I conclude that the visual mode in my research has been a sophisticated mode of communication and not merely a time-filler or just an artistic activity. This mode allowed my children to express their own original ideas and offered rich material for my reflections as a researcher on their thinking and reasoning. My analysis shows that it was the visual mode of communication in particular, that gave the children the best opportunity for conveying their philosophical concepts creatively, imaginatively and authentically.

6.4. REFLECTIONS

The advantage of using action research as a methodology is that it provides a framework that gives me an opportunity to continuously review my teaching practise, identify opportunities for growth and change and continuously encourages me to evaluate my own practise. While it leads to constructive changes, I have also found this methodology a challenge as it requires brutal and sometimes painful honesty on my behalf. Often, while reading the field notes in my journal and reflecting on my behaviour and thoughts, I discovered that I am partly a product of my own education, my training and

the school in which I teach. P4C is relatively unknown in South African schools and it is difficult being the only staff member to implement this approach. It is not usual that children have so much input or influence in their own learning or that they are considered serious thinkers capable of abstract thought. So at times, I doubted the abilities of the children in my class and how, if at all, I would be able to convince my colleagues that P4C is a possible approach that could be implemented in our classrooms quite successfully.

I have experienced a significant shift in my own practise as a result of this research study. In the past, I have become bound by the academic content and the time constraints of the curriculum. However, being involved in P4C *with* my children, I am now able to see the value more of what I and the children have gained from being in a classroom environment where we have listened to everyone's ideas, thoughts and perceptions. Recognising that the children are deeply serious and also playful thinkers and capable of abstract thought has changed the way I interact with the children as their teacher and as a fellow human being. This research has also made me appreciate more the importance of drawings for the expression and development of cognitive ideas.

I have found that being a facilitator in a P4C session is a challenge. It is important that I am aware of any philosophical contributions that are being made by the children, which could lead the discussion into a profound exploration of concepts. At the same time I need to be sensitive to the various children in the class and anticipate any difficulties they may experience and help them find a way to manage them. I need to enter into the discussions with a freshness and openness, ready to investigate concepts with my children, yet know when to probe or push for clarification by a child. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, I am often left with the sense that there is no real connection amongst the children or any evidence of deep thinking and reasoning taking place. It is only when I reflect, with a sense of detachment, on the larger web of ideas being constructed, that I am sometimes more able to see the cognitive ideas that are being developed.

However, often it is my presumptions of a child's cognitive abilities that prevent me from giving them an opportunity to express their ideas or to attach any seriousness to their ideas. It is only by regularly reflecting on any interactions and comments, made by each child, with a sense of detachment or impartiality that I can be made aware of their deep philosophical thoughts. In this way, the intricate web of how they may have used their prior knowledge and connected to others' ideas may become clearer. It has become clear to me how important it is to know my children well to understand what some of their comments mean.

Children exhibit a natural curiosity about their environment and using drawing as a way to make meaning of concepts has shown to be of particular value in this project. I need to regard their own artworks as intricate explorations of their knowledge and as evidence of critical, creative thought. This would lead to a change; less narrow and more inclusive, in the way I assess the children's

academic progress and not only view their progress within the confines of conventional assessment conducted by schools. It is also my responsibility to engage in a conversation with the children while they are completing their artworks in order for me to gain a richer understanding of how they perceive the world and not just see the artwork as a way to compliment the 'real work'.

6.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a strong indication, from this research, that being involved in P4C can benefit children's literacy skills, which in turn, could potentially have a positive outcome for future PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) tests and other assessments. Therefore, as further research, it would be worthwhile to track the progress of a class of children from Grade 0 to Grade 4 when the tests are conducted. Moreover, considering that the majority of schools are less privileged than my own, to conduct similar research in a township or other school with learners who have English as an additional language and who share a classroom with many more learners than the 21 in this project would yield results that would potentially be more transformative for mainstream education. Also, it would be worthwhile doing the same research with children from different cultural and religious backgrounds in order to compare the different views about death. It would also be helpful to investigate how P4C may be used to implement the curriculum in other academic subjects, like life skills, as a way in which to develop and explore abstract concepts such as 'home', 'health' and 'emotions'. Finally, conducting a quantitative research study with a large number of schools with the aim of analysing the benefits and effectiveness of P4C on early literacy achievement could possibly transform our schools to become places where children can explore, think and express their thoughts and ideas creatively, carefully, critically and collaboratively.

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APPENDIX A: Letter of Information for Principal

Letter of Information for the Principal

2nd May 2012

Dear Mrs Middlewick

I am currently studying for a Masters Degree in Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. This year I am completing my Research Project. The topic of my project is "To implement the pedagogy of Philosophy for Children (P4C) in my Foundation Phase classroom in order to investigate how my learners are able to engage philosophically to picturebooks as part of the Literacy lesson"

Part of the research I am doing will be with my own class of Grade Two children. I am interested in observing the children during the sessions, creating the opportunity to discuss philosophical topics with them and to audio-tape our discussions. I will also be doing a Literacy project with the children where they will be using journals and taking photographs to illustrate philosophical concepts or topics. At no stage will their academic schedule be interrupted or undermined in any way by this project.

I request permission to observe and work with the children for the duration of this project. The children will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way should you give me permission to complete this project.

All responses, observation material (tapes and transcripts) and the Literacy project will be kept confidential. I will not identify nor use any child's name in my research project. If any child feels at all uncomfortable in any way, he/she may choose to leave the study at any time and alternative arrangements have been made to accommodate them for that period in Mrs Gazard's class.

Should you have any queries or questions you may also contact my supervisor at the university, Professor Karin Murris via email karin.murris@wits.ac.za.

Yours Sincerely

I look forward to your response as soon as it is convenient.

Mrs Robyn. Thompson

APPENDIX B: Letter of Information for Parents/Guardians

Letter of Information for Parents/Guardians

2nd May 2012

Dear Parents/Guardians

I am currently studying for a Masters Degree in Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. This year I am completing my Research Project. The topic of my project is "To implement the pedagogy of Philosophy for Children (P4C) in my Foundation Phase classroom in order to investigate how my learners are able to engage philosophically to picturebooks as part of the Literacy lesson"

Part of the research I am doing will be with my own class of Grade Two children. I am interested in observing the children during the sessions, creating the opportunity to discuss philosophical topics with them and to audio-tape our discussions. I will also be doing a Literacy project with your children where they will be using journals and taking photographs to illustrate philosophical concepts or topics. At no stage will their academic schedule be interrupted or undermined in any way by this project.

I request permission to observe and work with your child for the duration of this project. Your child will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way should you allow them to participate.

All responses, observation material (tapes and transcripts) and the Literacy project will be kept confidential. I will not identify nor use your child's name in my research project. If your child feels at all uncomfortable in any way, they may choose to leave the study and alternative arrangements have been made to accommodate them for that period in Mrs Gazard's class.

Should you have any queries or questions you can contact me via email robyn.thompson@telkomsa.net or phone (011) 894-7107. You may also contact my supervisor at the university, Prof. Karin Murris via email karin.murris@wits.ac.za

Your support will be greatly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely

Robyn Thompson

APPENDIX C: Letter of Parental/Guardian Consent

Letter of Parental/Guardian Consent

Please indicate below whether you will allow your child to participate in this research study titled:

"To implement the pedagogy of Philosophy for Children (P4C) in my Foundation Phase classroom in order to investigate how my learners are able to engage philosophically to picturebooks as part of the Literacy lesson" **and** be audio taped in the discussions.

PERMISSION FOR PARTICIAPTION IN STUDY:

I, _____ the parent of _____ give/do not give my consent for my child to take part in the research study.

I acknowledge that my child may withdraw from the study at any time and will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. Their responses and written work will remain confidential. I also understand that the findings of this study may be presented in an academic presentation or publication.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

PERMISSION FOR LEARNER TO BE OBSERVED DURING STUDY:

I, _____ the parent of _____ give/do not give my consent for my child to be observed in his/her classroom in the research study.

I acknowledge that my child may withdraw from the study at any time and will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. Their responses and written work will remain confidential. I also understand that the findings of this study may be presented in an academic presentation or publication.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

PERMISSION TO BE AUDIO-TAPED DURING THE STUDY:

I, _____ the parent of _____ give/do not give my consent for my child to be audio taped during the discussions in the research study.

I acknowledge that my child may withdraw from the study at any time and will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. Their responses and written work will remain confidential. I also understand that the findings of this study may be presented in an academic presentation or publication.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

PERMISSION FOR THE USE OF WRITING/DRAWINGS:

I, _____ the parent of _____ give/do not give my consent for my child's writings and drawings to be used in the research study.

I acknowledge that my child may withdraw from the study at any time and will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. Their responses and written work will remain confidential. I also understand that the findings of this study may be presented in an academic presentation or publication.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Robyn Thompson: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D: Letter of Information for Learners

Information Letter for Learners

2nd May 2012

Dear Grade Two Learner

Just like you are learning new things and ideas at school, I am learning new things at the University of the Witwatersrand and I would like your help in finding out a few new things about the way you think.

The name of my project is:

"To implement the pedagogy of Philosophy for Children (P4C) in my Foundation Phase classroom in order to investigate how my learners are able to engage philosophically to picturebooks as part of the Literacy lesson"

I am interested in seeing how you work and think during our Philosophy sessions. I will also be doing a Literacy project with you, where you will be audio taped during our discussion times, writing in your journals and taking and using photographs. The project will last for about 2 months in the second term of school.

I will make sure that anything you say, all of your answers, journals and Literacy projects will be kept in a safe place. I will also not use your name or identify you in my project. If you do not wish to be part of this project, your marks will not be changed in any way and you will not be forced to take part. You can change your mind at any time during this project and decide to leave the project. If you choose not to take part at any time, you are welcome to go to Mrs Gazard's class for the period.

I am looking forward to working with you on this project.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs R. Thompson

APPENDIX E: Letter of Learner Consent

Learner Consent Form to **participate** in, complete **writings and drawings**, be **audio taped** project in the research project titled "To implement the pedagogy of Philosophy for Children (P4C) in my Foundation Phase classroom in order to investigate how my learners are able to engage philosophically to picturebooks as part of the Literacy lesson"

Please remember that you do not have to take part in this project. If you choose not to take part, your marks will not be changed in any way.

Name: _____ Age: _____

Grade: _____ Date: _____

Learner Signature: _____ Mrs Thompson: _____

Please tick the box that shows how you feel about being a part of the research project.

	I would like to take part in this research project and Mrs Thompson **<u>may</u>** use my journal and drawings in her project.	
	I would not like to take part in this research project and Mrs Thompson **<u>may not</u>** use my journal and drawings in her project.	

Please tick the box that shows how you feel about being audio taped for the research project.

	I **<u>would like</u>** to be audio taped in this research project	
	I **<u>would not</u>** like to be audio taped in this research project.	

APPENDIX F: Community of Enquiry

COMMUNITY OF ENQUIRY - 'So he just got old and died?'

The Big, Ugly Monster and the Stone Rabbit by Chris Wormell

(All names are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality)

Teacher: This story is called The Big, Ugly Monster and the Stone Rabbit and the author is Chris Wormall. What is an author?

Chantel: Someone who writes the story.

Teacher: Super, can you all see? Remember we need to sit responsibly, if you can't see you need to move.

Teacher: Look at this monster. Look at his skin...and his eyes...his nose hairs!

Tim: I bet he has no friends.

[A few nods of agreement from other children]

Alex: Actually, that is sad. [Reaction to page when the animals run away].

Alex: No! That is the saddest thing [wiping eyes vigorously].

Teacher: Look at the pictures from the beginning of the story. Don't say anything: just enjoy the pictures quietly.

Alex: That is the most saddest picture! [Reaction to page of Stone rabbit sitting alone]

Sharon: So he just got old and died?

[A few nods to that comment]

Neil: Yes. He died. That's what happens when you get old. Wait...Look at the rocks on this page (pointing to last page). Look how many rocks there are. Go back to the first page...of the cave... (first picture of cave is shown). Look...there are fewer rocks. Maybe there was a rock fall as the monster went into the cave and that's how he died.

[No one comments or responds to this statement]

Teacher: I would like you to draw how you feel about this story. Don't draw a picture from the book, but rather try and draw what is happening in your head. Let's go back to our desks and there is paper in the middle of each group for you to use.

Teacher: Are you having difficulty? Alright, could you draw what you imagine what he did in his cave?

[Class is quiet and engaged in activity]

[It was only after approximately 10 minutes before a soft buzz began as they discussed the activity in their small groups]

Teacher: Ok, we seem to be finished. Put your pictures on my table and come and sit in a circle so we can start our Philosophy

Teacher: Now that we have had a chance to think in our own minds about the story, can you think of a question about the story you would like answered? Remember you can't find the answer in the

book, so if you know the answer, you have to think of a better question. Write your question on the slip of paper you have.

Teacher: Has everyone got a question? Talk to the person sitting next to you and tell them your question.

[Children talk to partners quietly]

Teacher: Each group will find one question to share, you can choose a good question or you can make another question out of the two you have.

Teacher: Have you all done that? Ok, we are going to read our questions to the group. As everyone reads the question, remember we have to...

Daniella: Listen and find links.

Teacher: Great, what are links?

Daniella: Things that might be the same in someone else's question.

Teacher: Ok, can you start Daniella?

[Each child reads through their own question]

Teacher: Let's stick all the questions on the board and then read through them quietly for yourselves. Done? Ok, I will read through the questions just to make sure we have read them correctly.

David: That question: the one about the stone rabbit...

Teacher: This one? It says what happens to the Stone Rabbit when he dies?

David: Yes. That isn't a good philosophy question. We know what happens, the rabbit has to stay in the garden.

Teacher: Do you all agree? Yes? Ok, you have your tokens. Decide which question you would like to talk about. Alright, put your token next to the question you like the most.

[Children get up and place tokens to indicate their choice of question]

Teacher: Ok, we counted the tokens and this question had the most votes. The question says what happens when the monster dies? Who thought of this question?

Chantel: The author doesn't tell us exactly what happened and maybe he just stayed there in the cave or died. I want to know what happens.

Daniella: Well when you die like the monster, cos I think he died, you go to heaven. In heaven you are fixed and not in pain. That's what my mom says will happen to my granddad soon. In heaven you are happy and there is lots of food and stuff.

David: Food! There is no food in heaven!

Alex: I agree with Daniella, not the food part, but God will come and fetch you to heaven and then all your sores are gone. You will be happy and well and you can talk to God.

Kate: When you die, you rest in peace.

Teacher: What does that mean, do you think? Rest in peace?

Kate: I dunno, that's what my mom says. Maybe you can sleep forever and then wake up when you

want.

Chris: No, I disagree. In heaven you get to work and do chores forever. Then God sees who does the best chores and they get a week's holiday. God pays for it.

Teacher: What would you do on holiday in heaven?

Chris: Maybe a massage?

Alex: Or maybe you get to do fun things like your maid or granny. But I agree with Daniella and Kate, you go to heaven to rest in peace.

Sharon: So maybe he went inside and left the stone rabbit and forgot about it.

Neil: When you die you either go to heaven if you are good and hell if you are bad.

Neil: In heaven also there is no global warming and there is lots of animals and lots of things to do and if you go to hell there is nothing good.

David: I disagree with NW. I have a philosophy question for Neil. What happens if you are a bit of both? Where do you go then?

[Bell rings to signal end of period]

APPENDIX G: Philosophical Questions

PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS POSED BY GRADE 2's

(All names are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality)

Jay: What happened in the cave to the monster?

Kate: Why didn't the stone rabbit crack?

Tamlyn: Why did the monster leave the stone rabbit outside at the end?

Chris: How is the stone rabbit still there? Shouldn't it be cracked?

Sharon: Why didn't the stones in the cave break?

Chantel: What happens to the monster when he dies?

David: Why was the monster so ugly?

Alex: How come the stone rabbit didn't crack?

Kay: Why were the animals so scared?

Brad: Why didn't the stone rabbit break with the others?

Alvin: Why didn't the bear's face break completely?

Daniella: Why didn't the animals turn their heads and not look at the monster?

Tim: Why didn't the stone rabbit break?

Liam: Why didn't the stone rabbit crack?

Tammy: At the end of the book, why didn't the monster come out?

Ciara: Why didn't the monster come out of the cave?

Mia: Did the monster die?

Deon: Where did he learn to get such a good rabbit?

Garth: What happens to the rabbit when the monster dies?

Neil: Why didn't the monster take the rabbit with him?

APPENDIX H: Informal Discussions with Learners

INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS

Oral Responses, Explanations and Discussions of Artworks "How do we get to heaven?"

(All names are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality)

Teacher: Do you remember how we were talking about dying, death and what happens after we die? I would like you to draw a picture telling me about your thoughts on what happens when we die. Some of us spoke about heaven. How would we get there? What happens in heaven?

[Grade 2 children moved to their desks and drew pictures to explain how they thought we get to heaven]

[I walked around and listened to the comments as they were working]

Chris: These lines are your heart, soul and memories. All 3 make a loop. Each one goes up to heaven on their own and then they join up again...in heaven. [Picture has black dotted lines indicating movement from a person's chest to the clouds in the sky].

Kay: I know how our souls get to heaven. I definitely know this one, [thinking: pulls a face and purses lips]...there are flesh eating bugs, they only eat flesh. Not your skeleton – bones are hard for their teeth. They get into the box [coffin] and bite you. All your soul needs is just one hole from a bite. Your soul crawls out the hole.

Teacher: D...how do you think we get to heaven?

Daniella: How do we get to heaven? When you get cremated, your body turns to ash and then it's easy for your soul to escape. Your soul doesn't get burned kind of, like, ok maybe a little bit around the edges, but it does get out quickly that's all I can say! See I have drawn God: He is powerful and strong. That's why he is so big.

Deon: I have drawn a bigger coffin –all of the bones of this guy. Only way to lift the coffin is with a machine that works in a graveyard.

Teacher: A machine in the graveyard? What does it look like?

Deon: I dunno, I think it would look like this...[indicates own picture]

Ciara: If 2 die at once...that's why we stay in coffins – keep us safe until some angel has the time to fetch us and carry us to heaven.

Deon: We would be too heavy. Just your mind goes to heaven.

Jay: Uh uh...God gets us....

Teacher: But how does God get us?

Jay: ... with a spade, he digs us up. Haven't you gone past the graveyard? All the piles of sand? God has been digging out people!

Ciara: Not people!

Jay: Oh ja, I mean souls.

Teacher: What do you think Mia?

Mia: In India, they burn you when you are dead. I don’t know what happens to the left: overs. But your family waits until you are just ash. I don’t know where your soul is in all that. But then you get born again...as something new.

[Children moved to the carpet and before break were ready to discuss other aspects of the story]