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Teaching and Learning Good Quality Literature using a Drama in Education Methodology in Primary Schools in Ireland

By

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Supervised by Dr Carmel O'Sullivan

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Dublin

Trinity College

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Summary

The focus of this study is an exploration of a teaching and learning intervention using a drama based approach, into the issue of whether quality literature can be taught successfully in primary schools in Ireland. The study aims to examine claims in the literature that exposure to good quality literature at primary school level contributes to the academic and social development of children, and subsequently aims to explore if good quality literature taught in an age-appropriate and creative, interactive manner can achieve those claims. This action research is aimed at altering curriculum and challenging common school practice by engaging in a process of problem posing, data gathering, analysis and CPD intervention.

Although the topic of teaching literature at primary school level has been extensively researched internationally, it would appear from the literature that there is a dearth of research in this area in Ireland. To contribute to the research to date, it is the aim of this small-scale study to explore, through appropriate methods of data collection and qualitative analysis, the rate and value of good quality literature (with special reference to the works of Shakespeare, Chaucer, Dickens and Wilde) in the primary school. There is evidence in the literature that good quality reading materials (literature) need to be presented in a challenging and active way to engage children and develop learning, and therefore drama in education is explored as a teaching and learning method in this study.

This project established a baseline employing quantitative and qualitative measures and qualitative data analysis to explore the attitudes, beliefs and ideas of teachers, their pupils and stakeholders on the value of teaching good quality literature in the senior classes in primary school, and their views on the advantages of using educational drama as a methodology in this area of the curriculum. From the findings of the study it was concluded that good quality literature is suitable for the primary school child because of the scope of the vocabulary, the challenge of the language and the exploration of character, theme and setting. Specifically it was found that:

- drama has much to contribute to the area of evoking interest in children in quality literature in primary school;
- exploring literature through drama enhanced the participating pupil's literacy skills, offered them opportunities for social interaction and helped them come to think of themselves as capable of independent and collaborative learning;
- being involved in a four week CPD project and having easy to follow lesson plans was essential to the success of the intervention; and

- teachers continued to use drama to explore literature with their pupils almost one year after the intervention but requested further training and more resources to expand and develop their abilities in this area.

It is hoped that the findings and the implications of this study will contribute towards the development of an educational policy about the importance of exploring good quality literature within primary schools in Ireland, and that training in this area will be provided for all primary school teachers and student teachers.

To my family

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration		i
Summary		iii
Dedication		v
Acknowledgements		vii
Table of Contents		ix

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	The Rationale of the Study: Why Literature is Valuable	2
1.3	The Research Questions	4
1.4	My Profile	5
1.5	The Research Methods	6
1.6	Chapter Layout	7

CHAPTER 2 – GOOD QUALITY LITERATURE

2.1	Introduction	9
2.2	Defining the Concept of Literature	9
2.3	What Defines Good quality Literature for Children	13
2.4	The Role of Quality Literature in the Life of a Primary School	18
2.4.1	Literature: Moral Values and Personal Identity	22
2.4.2	Literature and the Imagination	29
2.4.3	Literature: An Educative Power in Society	32
2.4.4	The Human Value of Literature	34
2.4.5	Literature: Language and Literacy	36
2.4.5.1	Linguistic Competence	42
2.5	Children Reading for Pleasure in the 21st Century	45
2.6	Conclusion	56

CHAPTER 3 – THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE

3.1	Introduction	57
3.2	Teacher's Role in Exploring Literature in Schools	57
3.3	Choosing Literature	63
3.4	When to Introduce Literature	68
3.5	Methods to Introduce Literature	73
3.6	Strategies Recommended in National and International Curricula	79
3.7	Conclusion	83

CHAPTER 4 – DRAMA: A CREATIVE AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

4.1	Introduction	85
4.2	Drama in Education: A Valuable Pedagogy	86
4.3	Drama and Literature	90
4.3.1	Drama to Explore Texts	94
	Drama and Language Skills	99
4.3.3	Drama and Writing	101
4.4	Drama, Literature and Social Development	102
4.5	Pioneers in the Field of Drama in Education	105
4.6	Drama and Literature: Evidence from the Academic Literature	107
4.7	Conclusion	114

CHAPTER 5 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1	Introduction	117
5.2	Research Questions	119
5.3	The Nature of the Research	120
5.4	Model of Continuous Professional Development (CPD)	123
5.5	Overview of Research Methods	124
5.5.1	Literature Review	127
5.5.2	Participant Observation	128
5.5.3	Interviews	130
5.5.4	Questionnaires	135
5.5.5	Journals	137
5.5.6	Drama in Education as a Research Tool	138

5.6	The Pilot Process	139
5.7	Determination of the Target Population	140
5.8	The Inclusion of Pupil Voice in the Data	141
5.9	Analysis	142
5.10	Triangulation	148
5.11	Ethical Considerations	150
5.12	Reliability and Validity	151
5.13	Bias	152
5.14	Concluding Comments	153

CHAPTER 6 –FINDINGS

6.1	Introduction	155
6.2	Pre-Project Baseline Data	155
6.2.1	Results from the Teachers' Baseline Questionnaire	156
6.2.1.1	Attributes and Choice of Literature	156
6.2.1.2	The Teaching Methods Used	157
6.2.1.3	The Curriculum	158
6.2.1.4	Drama as a Teaching Method	159
6.2.1.5	CPD Training	160
6.2.2	Data from the Group Interview	161
6.2.3	The Pupils' Opinions	163
6.2.4	The Opinion of My Class	167
6.2.5	Summary	171
6.3	Teachers' Data During the Drama Intervention	171
6.3.1	Oscar Wilde	172
6.3.2	Shakespeare	176
6.3.3	Charles Dickens	180
6.3.4	Chaucer	185
6.3.5	Summary	189
6.4	Overarching Themes	190
6.5	Teachers' Post-Project Questionnaire	193
6.6	The Teacher Participants' Pupils' Opinions	199
6.6.1	Oscar Wilde	199
6.6.2	Shakespeare	203

6.6.3	Charles Dickens	207
6.6.4	Chaucer	212
6.7	Anomalies During the Four Weeks	217
6.8	Data from the My Pupils	218
6.9	Relevant Stakeholders' Opinions	223
6.10	Interview with Siobhán Parkinson	229
6.11	My Past Pupils' Questionnaire	230
6.12	Conclusion	231

CHAPTER 7–DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

7.1	Introduction	233
7.2	The Importance of Good Quality Literature	234
7.3	The Choice of Literature	236
7.4	The Four Texts	242
7.5	Teaching Methods	245
7.6	Modern and Classic Literature	247
7.7	Teachers' Development over the Ten Months	248
7.8	Teaching Literature through Drama	250
7.9	Implications for Practise	257

CHAPTER 8- SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1	Summary of the Study	261
8.2	Major Findings	261
8.3	Recommendations	264
8.4	Limitations of the Study	267
8.5	Areas for Further Study	268
8.6	Personal Reflection	268

REFERENCES **271**

APPENDICES 301

1.	Information for Teachers	302
2.	Pre-Project Teacher Questionnaire	307
3.	Teacher Group Interview	319
4.	Lesson Plans	325
5.	Pre-Project Pupil Questionnaire	351
6.	Teacher Observation Sheet	360
7.	Pupil Journal Sheet	365
8.	Post-Project Teacher Questionnaire	369
9.	Letter to Stakeholders	381
10.	Stakeholder Interview Questions and Answers	383
11.	Pupil Focus Group Interview	392
12.	Past Pupil Questionnaire	395
13.	Letters to My Pupils' Parents	399
14.	Letters to Participating Teachers' Pupils' Parents	401
15.	Letters to Principals in Participating Schools	403
16.	Participant Pupils' Work	405

LIST OF TABLES

2.1	The Main Features and Characteristics Identified	18
5.1	An indicative time line of the research	125
5.2	Core Pillars that underpin the study	144
5.3	Identifying Cohorts	146
5.4	What I Did with Each Data Set	147
5.5	Colour Coding: Linking Themes to colour	147
6.1	Respondents' preferred teaching methods	157
6.2	Barriers to Teaching Literature	162
6.3	Why the Pupils Read	164
6.4	What the Pupils Read	165
6.5	Methods to Increase Enjoyment in Reading	166
6.6	Methods to Increase Enjoyment in Reading (My class)	168
6.7	Teachers' Text Preferences	192
6.8	Development of the Participants' Practice	197
6.9	Positive Outcomes for Teachers and Pupils	198
6.10	Comparing Two Sets of Data	221
6.11	Similarities and Differences of Opinion	222

Chapter 1

The Study Design

1.1 Introduction

This study explores the relevance of quality literature in the education of children in the final years of primary school, with particular reference to the education of primary school children in the Irish context. The analytical enquiry seeks to examine the extent to which the role of the teacher and teachers' attitudes impact upon the experience of using quality literature with this age group, and to investigate if drama could be used as an active learning strategy in the study of literature. In this study quality literature is understood as those texts (poetry, prose and play text) which stretch the learner cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. It aims to address whether drama could make the study of such literature age appropriate and present it in a motivating way that would challenge the learners and bring them into constructive critical engagement with its universal themes, characters, and plots and allow them to develop their own voice to express their views and contribute positively to discussion. The available literature is examined in order to investigate the purpose of teaching good quality literature at primary school level and discusses what authors consider as suitable literature for this age group. The proliferation of investigative studies on the value of literature for young learners is a potent indication that educators and researchers consider this aspect of the school curriculum to be of major importance. Although numerous studies have been conducted internationally, the area of teaching literature in primary school has remained to a large extent unexplored, especially in the Irish context.

This study explores the purpose of teaching literature in the primary school and traces the role and value of literature from early centuries to the present day. Teaching literature refers to the pedagogic approach adopted by teachers when working with literary texts in the form of poetry, prose and play text. The objective of this analysis is to trace the extent to which literature is an integral part of the personal, moral and intellectual development of the child, in addition to being a source of inspiration, information, entertainment and insight into the child's life and the world she inhabits. This investigation is as broad and informal as possible without losing sight of the

original and fundamental aim of the research. Because of the scope and complexity of this topic and considering the time constraints, it was necessary to concentrate almost exclusively on literature within school curricula. The literature review seeks to establish what importance researchers attribute to the teacher's role in choosing suitable literature and to the methods he employs to teach it to primary school children. The review concludes with an investigation into the teaching methods recommended for the effective teaching of literature in the primary school. After an in-depth exploration of these factors the review considers arguments relating to the teaching of good quality literature to primary school children through the medium of drama. This project aims to establish a minimum standard utilising a mode of triangulation, employing quantitative and qualitative measures and qualitative data analysis to explore the attitudes, beliefs and ideas of teachers and their pupils to the value of teaching good quality literature in primary school, and their views on the advantages of using educational drama as a methodology in this area of the curriculum.

1.2 The Rationale of the Study: Why Literature is Valuable

Down through the centuries people have a human need to tell stories about themselves, about others and about the world in order to understand the world they lived in. All literature is born from the need to tell stories and yet the exploration of literature in primary schools is arguably being sacrificed because of overloaded curriculum where teachers no longer have time to read with their pupils (NCCA, 2010) and from the use of basal readers, workbooks for novels, over analysis and the use of other strategies for dissecting literature clinically (Norman, 2008). There is a strong emphasis on words such as aesthetic and enjoyment and on reading for pleasure in the English curriculum for Irish primary schools (DES, 1999), yet with an increased use of technology based games and activities, children are reading in general much less than they did in previous generations (Johnsson-Smaragdi and Jonsson, 2006; Sloan, 1991). There is evidence to suggest that children's lives must be enriched with literature in order to create a strong desire to read which will continue throughout their lives (Cremin et al., 2008; Reynolds, 2005).

Researchers such as Bagdanoff (2008) and Tomalin (2012) argue that children want to explore the world of literature in today's best works, but also need to have an appreciation for the great writers such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Wilde, Yeats, Chaucer and Heaney and many others. The child is just waiting for great literature but many teachers limit their pupils by offering only a narrow diet of modern authors

(Carter, 2000). Young children need to be stretched, and facilitated to explore the great works through active participation in the lives of the characters to develop their language, cognitive, kinaesthetic, personal and social skills. The purpose of this study, in the light of previous theories, such as Bagdanoff (2008) and Tomalin (2012) is to test if this is possible by exploring the works of Shakespeare, Wilde, Dickens and Chaucer using drama as a teaching and learning method.

The rationale for conducting this study is to examine the value of quality literature in primary schools and the importance of exploring this literature in an environment where the child can become involved with the text, question and understand the characters and explore the relevance of the themes in relation to events in their own lives or in the world around them. To achieve this, this study employs drama as a teaching and learning methodology. Drama has been recognised for its pedagogical contribution to learning in primary education and there is evidence in the international field that supports its use in developing the teaching and learning of literacy (Baldwin and Fleming 2003; Belliveau and Kim, 2013). Wagner (1976) believes that drama is powerful because its distinct balance of thought and feeling makes learning exciting, enjoyable, challenging and relevant to real-life concerns. Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998: 1) write 'through drama, students became a part of the learning process rather than mere observers or inactive receptacles of the rich experience of learning; in this way, their learning was deeper, more sustained, and infinitely more complex'. Henry (2000) believes that some basic questions about the potential drama holds for learning have not been adequately defined or understood. This statement may be especially true in the Irish context where drama has been a curriculum subject in primary schools since 1999, yet evidence from a national survey carried out for my Masters study (O Shaughnessy, 2007) and from my own observation as a principal teacher suggests that some primary school teachers in Ireland may not be fully aware of the potential drama holds for learning, and especially for exploring quality literature and linking this exploration with other areas of the curriculum.

This study on the value of good quality literature in the primary school is timely. It comes at a time when there is a decline in the practice of reading for pleasure in primary schools (Cremin, 2007; Clark, 2011) and when, regardless of resources and additional teachers being supplied in disadvantaged areas to improve literacy standards, the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy (2011) reports that one in every three children in disadvantaged areas has serious problems with reading skills. The National Strategy for Literacy and numeracy did not emphasise the importance of literature in a child's social and academic development, yet the literature search

reveals that exploring both modern and classic quality literature gives pleasure and understanding to the child (Graham and Kelly, 2008; Lukens, 1982; Huus, 1973), invites the reader to empathise and identify with the characters in the text (Kingsley, 1854; Alber et al. 2011; Nodelman, 1996; Sayers, 1968), gives meaning to life (Nuba et al., 1999; Carter, 2000; Roche, 2004; Miller, 2012; Mc Garrell, 1995) and develops emotional, intellectual and literacy skills (Sloan, 1991; Tucker, 1991; Knapp, 2006).

Twenty first century society in Ireland is undergoing major cultural, economic, technological and educational changes. It is important for teachers today to ensure that children acquire a positive attitude to and an appreciation of literature, if they want the child to acquire a broad outlook on the world and an understanding of their literary heritage. Children need to have access to quality English language: spoken, read and written (Department of Education and Skills (DES), 1999) to offset the influence of rapid changes to language which are becoming pervasive through film, television and text language and the influence of 'a vast array of mediocre literature published today under the umbrella of children's literature' (Flannagan and Cregan (1998) as cited in Shiel et al., (2000:44). It is therefore important that teachers ensure that pupils are introduced to quality literature such as the works of Shakespeare, Dickens, Wilde and Chaucer and other classic authors from an early age.

1.3 The Research Questions

The main research question seeks to investigate the value of using drama as a teaching and learning methodology when exploring good quality literature in the senior primary school to develop the child academically and socially. In this study the research question is further divided into sub-questions to help drive the design of the study forward.

Main overarching research question:

Does using a drama in education approach to the stories, language, characters and themes in the literature they explore enhance pupils' language proficiency and develop their written and creative skills?

Sub-questions:

1. What benefits is exposure to good quality literature in the primary school to the academic and social values of education?

2. What is the attitude of pupils to literature in general and to the prospect of exploring good quality literature?
3. What methods are currently employed to teach literature in primary schools, are they sufficient to motivate pupils to read good quality literature, and is there a connection between the teaching methods employed and the response of children to literature?
4. What benefits can teaching literature through the medium of drama bring to the primary school pupil in her study and appreciation of literature?
5. How effective is an in-set model of continuous professional development (CPD) in motivating and instructing teachers in how to use a drama in education approach to teaching literature in their own classrooms?

1.4 My Profile

I am a principal teacher in a rural four teacher primary school in the West of Ireland with forty years teaching experience. During my years of teaching I have always had a special interest in the kinaesthetic as well as the academic development of pupils. Even before the introduction of the Revised Curriculum (1999) for primary schools I used active and inclusive methods to teach the subjects on the 1971 curriculum. It was my belief that pupils would not be motivated to learn unless they were enjoying the experience. The power of well written literature to motivate even the youngest child has not in my experience been surpassed yet by modern technology. Good quality literature gives the child an understanding of the world and the people who have inhabited it down through the centuries, and of the people who inhabit it today. Being involved in a drama group myself I experienced the power of drama to transport those involved in it into 'the other worlds' where they could experience the feelings and emotions of the characters and come to understand their actions. Being aware of the benefits of drama, it was at this stage that I began to experiment with using drama as a methodology to explore literature with my class. I found that by using drama I could challenge my pupils to explore authors such as C.S. Lewis, Mark Twain, Oscar Wilde, J.M. Barry, L.M. Montgomery and Charles Kingsley, alongside modern favourites such as Roald Dahl, Michael Morpurgo, and J.K. Rowling. In recent years I have experienced the pressure of an overloaded curriculum, continuous assessment, policy making and the introduction of new initiatives year on year. Even though the DES has recommended that teachers give extra time to teaching literacy skills (DES, 2011), this time is not easily available. Teachers frequently report that they are disillusioned due to the volume of external pressures and curriculum overload (INTO, 2010). There is

increasingly little time for either teacher or pupil to enjoy the teaching and learning environment.

Yet having seen my pupils thrive on the experience of exploring the works of great authors, I believe that it is imperative that teachers find time to explore good quality literature with their pupils. There is a culture in the school I teach in that pupils in all classes explore good quality literature. From 2nd class upward they enjoy hearing about and becoming the characters in Shakespearean plays and experimenting with some of the wonderful language of this great writer. They explore short extracts from novels such as *The Hobbit, Anne of Greene Gables, Alice in Wonderful or Peter Pan* through drama and they become involved as fairies, spirits or witches in the annual school Shakespearean production. They look forward to being in 5th class when they get an opportunity to visit Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford upon Avon and attend a play in the theatre.

Since I am based in a rural area I keep in contact with my past pupils who recall their memories of exploring Shakespeare and other authors in primary school and of the advantages they have over their peers when they begin to study Shakespeare in secondary school. Recently I met a past pupil who had just started to study The *Merchant of Venice* for her Junior Certificate. She told me that her teacher could not understand why she was excited about the prospect of exploring the play in comparison to her peers in the class. She explained that she had explored other Shakespearean texts in primary school and that she loved the language. Her teacher replied 'you must be the only one who does'.

Exploring quality literature through drama has been a very positive experience for me and I would be happy to see this culture permeate into other primary schools. Building on my Masters level study which was specifically focused on teaching Shakespeare in primary school, I have now decided to broaden out and explore the feasibility of exploring Dickens, Wilde and Chaucer as well as Shakespeare in the primary school using drama as a method of teaching and learning. Hence my reason for embarking on a doctoral level study of this topic.

1.5 The Research Methods

This is a predominantly qualitative study, which combined elements of quantitative and qualitative technique, depending primarily on the latter because the enquiry was mainly conducted through the medium of drama in education, employing participant

observation as one of the main data collection methods. For triangulation purposes and to obtain comprehensive data from a sample of people involved in language and literature education, the use of questionnaires featured as an important data collection method. To ensure that the voices of the participants were directly heard on issues concerning the value of good quality literature in primary school and on using drama as a teaching and learning methodology to explore such literature, this study involved pre and post semi-structured group interviews, teacher and pupil questionnaires, and teacher and pupil journals. The design of the research was selected to suit the participants which included 7 participating teachers who answered questionnaires, participated in interviews and completed observation journals, 103 pupils in their classes and 25 pupils in my own class who completed a pre-project questionnaire and journal each week. A group of pupils from my class also took part in a focus group interview. 11 stakeholders, representing a variety of relevant areas of interest in the Irish education system expressed their views in face to face or phone interviews about the subject matter. A questionnaire was completed by 5 of my past pupils and an interview was conducted with a famous Irish author.

1.6 Chapter Layout

Chapter 1: This chapter sets the background, content and motivation for the research and outlines the study design, which includes the significance and purpose, research questions, limitations, methodology, and organisation of the study. It outlines a short summary of the main developments of the thesis, including the research methods employed. Background information on the researcher and on the rationale for undertaking the topic is offered in this chapter. This chapter concludes with an outline of the dissertation describing each chapter briefly.

Chapter 2: The main purpose of this literature review chapter is to survey and present an overview of previous research, knowledge and findings which share an interest in the area of good quality literature for children in primary school. It explores the advantages and disadvantages of exposing primary school children to such literature and seeks to establish a definition for good quality literature by exploring the views and beliefs of educationalists since the seventeenth century. The literature search focuses on the role of literature in the life of the primary school pupil and its contribution to areas of the child's education such as moral, human, linguistic, language and literacy and imaginative development. The reading habits of children in the twenty first century are presented by exploring recent research in this area.

Chapter 3: The focus of the literature search in this chapter is on teaching literature within the formal school system. The chapter explores studies and research on the role and attitude of the teacher in both choosing suitable literature and methods to teach it in primary school. The recommendations of the curricula in Ireland and in other English speaking countries is examined in relation to the value of good quality literature to primary school children which is the main focus of this study.

Chapter 4 focuses on drama as a form of engagement, a creative and critical pedagogy, and an approach that might be useful in the teaching of literature. By summarising prior discussion and research, it aims to explore if using this strategy can address some of the concerns of the teacher when teaching literature and if drama can present literature in a way that would make it motivating, enjoyable and challenging while allowing pupils to have their own voice and opinions during its exploration and study. The role of some pioneers in the field of drama education is acknowledged.

Chapter 5 describes the data source, the data collection instruments and variables included in the study, and the methodology used to conduct the analyses. The nature and general aims of the project is outlined, and an indicative time line of the research process and key phases of data collection included. The pilot process and CPD (continuous professional development) programme in which the participating teachers engaged is explained.

Chapter 6: Here the findings are presented including original material from the participants, in a systematic approach to each author explored. The aim of the chapter is to present the voice and perspective of the research participants.

Chapter 7: The data raised a number of issues and related themes which are discussed and considered in light of the research questions and evidence from the available literature in the field.

Chapter 8 concludes with a summary of the study and personal reflections. It recognises the study's limitations, identifies policy recommendations and provides guidance for future research in related areas to this research.

The appendices present the materials and instruments used in the study, in addition to sample lesson plans and a selection of creative work by the participant teachers' pupils and the pupils in my class.

Chapter 2

Good Quality Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the definition of good quality in relation to literature for children in primary school and examine the advantages, both intellectually and socially of exposing primary school children to such literature. The literature search will focus on the role of literature in the life of the primary school pupil, both educationally and socially, and in the development, expansion and education of a child's imagination. The reading habits of children in the twenty first century will be presented by exploring recent research in this area. Children deserve success as soon as they start attending school and should be afforded an opportunity to continue succeeding throughout their years of education (Sawhill et al., 2012). To enable the child to achieve this success, educators at all levels of education have a responsibility to expose the child to good quality education in all areas of the curriculum. In trying to define the concept of good quality in any aspect of education, educationalists have agreed on the idea of a degree or grade of excellence being present.

2.2 Defining the Concept of Literature

Speaking on the occasion of her appointment as the first Irish children's laureate in May 2010, Siobhan Parkinson said 'I believe that literature lays the foundations of the imaginative life of a people and that every child deserves to have access to a reading haven'. In response, Pat Moylan (2010) chairperson of the Irish Arts Council defined the concept of literature as that which gives us pleasure and has the power to make us understand what it means to be human. Many researchers have asked the question 'what is literature?' and see the art of describing it as a complex undertaking (Bainbridge and Pantaleo, 1999; Hernadi, 1978 and Gibson, 2007). In the last three centuries theories on the definition of literature have been developed, advanced and argued and to date a consensus has not been arrived at. However many educators believe that literature can be a very powerful tool in education. According to Weaver (1994) literary characters have almost the same power to influence the reader as the real people they meet each day. Miller (2012) believes that literature can broaden perspectives for all readers and create classrooms where all, including those with

disabilities are accepted. Webster's (1976) Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary defines literature as writings including both prose and verse, which display excellence of structure and expression and express ideas which hold lasting and universal interest. For Lukens (1982:3), literature is more than a piece of writing that clarifies but 'a significant truth expressed in appropriate elements and memorable language, expressed in words chosen with skill and artistry to give the readers pleasure and to help them understand themselves and others'. It is the opinion of Lukens (1982) that books giving only information and writing that is primarily scientific are 'non literature'. Krystal (2014:5) endorses this view, arguing that every book published is not literature as literature has 'both a Platonic form and an Aristotalian concreteness, and is what serious writers aspire to when they try to outmuscle their precursors in order to express their own individuality'. He likes to think of literature as a record of a man or woman's stay on earth, presented in verse or prose that entwines knowledge of the past with a strong awareness of the present in verbal designs.

Wellek and Warren (1956) discuss the concept of literature and insist on this concept including oral literature. Although they confine the term literature to imaginative literature they offer a similar definition to Lukens, claiming that the material of literature does not merely state what it says but influences, persuades and at times changes the reader or listener. These ideas have been endorsed by reading researchers who concur that literature is not the use of language in print or in speech that is wholly trivial or strictly utilitarian but works of art that are the pinnacles of human civilization. Huck (1979) affords literature intellectual edification describing it as the imaginative shaping of life and thought into the forms and structure of language, while Bettelheim (2010:4) believes encounters with literature help children 'transcend the narrow confines of a self-critical existence'. For twentieth century American poet, novelist and literary critic Robert Penn Warren (1950) cited in Trelease (2013), literature is vitally important as a means of escape or release, allowing the reader to express his emotions with tears or laughter, as he is released from the pressures of life and becomes engrossed in the lives of others. Cecilia Magdalena du Toit's (2007) theory is that the term literature basically means all reading material and printed texts that a reader encounters and is 'the optimal experience to be derived from the reading of texts because reading is one of the most rewarding aspects of life'. Du Toit's (2001) earlier view that literature does not merely entertain but is the key to personal, moral and intellectual growth, and the source of inspiration, information and insight into our own lives and the lives of others, holds a closer relevance with that of Lukens (1982) and Bettelheim (2010). Miller (2002:15) raises some interesting insights into the magical power of the language in

literature, seeing it as 'the use of words that make things happen by way of the reader'. Alber et al. (2011) define literature as an exercise in empathy where the reader explores the lives and thoughts of others, a special medium for studying points of view and a place to experience aesthetic experiences.

At the end of the nineteenth century there was concern among the leading educationalists that the explosion of cheap publications aimed at children and young people had the power to corrupt and debase, and that the introduction of a canon of literature that was deemed acceptable for young children would act as a defense against 'the penny dreadful' (Mathieson,1975:53). The whole field of popular literature, especially the type that is, according to Haggart (cited in Miller 2002:131) 'produced for financial gain', including popular fiction, graphic literature, comics and magazines still remains a blind spot within academic study. The Graphic Novel which according to Hatfield (2005), has given the nineteenth century comic recognition as a form of literature in the twentieth century English reading world is a narrative work in which the story is conveyed to the reader using sequential art in either an experimental design or in a traditional comic's format. The term is employed in a broad manner, encompassing non-fiction works and thematically linked short stories as well as fictional stories across a number of genres. Researchers express conflicting ideas about the benefits of exposing children to these types of literature. Ross (1996) believes that the child's voluntary reading is improved when leaders provide access to reading material of varying quality. Traw (1993) notes that sub literate readers were the most prolific readers in a study he conducted and adds that lower quality literature has the capacity to act as a bridge to high quality literature. Leonhardt (1996) agrees that children who read popular literature develop reading skills at a faster rate than those who don't. Peter Dickinson (1976), children's author, argues in his essay *A Defence of Rubbish* that although children should not be encouraged to read rubbish (which he defines as reading matter in which adults can see no educational or aesthetic value), they should be allowed to read a certain amount of it, as it offers the child a whole culture and allows him discover things for himself while acquiring the art of comparison. Dickinson defends this view by adding that it is preferable for a child to read something than read nothing, and that the habit of reading rubbish might evoke a tendency to read quality literature The opportunities that comics and graphic novels offer for constructing meaning making in the twenty first century visual age classroom is highlighted by Low (2012) who insists that it is essential that teachers expose their students to this type of literature. Monnin (2013: xii) is more adamant in his assertion:

> Failure to adopt pedagogy of multi literacies will only create a further gap between what kinds of literacies students interact with at home and those they interact with at school...Outside of the classroom, the world is already immersed in reading print-text literacies alongside image literacies.

Others hold dissenting views and note that although popular literature will not adversely affect language development, this type of reading alone is insufficient to achieve higher level outcomes in literacy. Many warn that children need guidance in choosing literature because if they are given a choice of reading material, they may well continue to select popular in preference to quality, and this may not engender thoughtful readers or contribute to the creation of critical thinkers (Krashen, 1993; Saltman, 1997). Foster (1995:188) warns against material such as comics and popular literature with poor writing styles as these do not extend readers or rarely contribute to their personal development, and argues that it is imperative that 'an appropriate balance be maintained between popular fiction and works of quality literature'. Lott (2014) writing in the *Guardian Newspaper* states that comics are not as powerful a form as they once were, having been replaced by technology and an abundance of children's novels. He contributes his success as a reader to comics he read in the 1960s. He states that the power of this medium to move children's imagination (and his own) and to get him accustomed to the narrative form of reading was extraordinary.

Stoodt (1996) advises teachers to introduce pupils to literature that will develop social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, and physical skills. The primary consideration in evaluating this literature is according to Stoodt (1996) the literary quality but this should never preclude the child's interest in the book. Nell (1988:2) maintains that enthusiastic readers have the desire to enjoy 'deeply felt and delicately wrought' literature but also continue to delight in 'less intellectually inclined texts' from time to time. Hall and Coles (1999) make a strong case for the importance of ensuring that children are introduced to quality literature such as classic texts in schools since these children may not come from homes where they are introduced to this type of literature or see their parents reading such texts.

It is evident that a considerable debate has taken place over the last century and still takes place today regarding what constitutes literature, and its impact on children. New poets and writers have joined the masters of old such as Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton as influential cultural figures. Bob Dylan who has been nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature every year since 1996 has been described by Marcus (2009) as the greatest poet America has ever produced.

Having established that all literature does not merit the title quality literature and considering that this study's basic premise is the teaching of quality literature, it is important to consider what the definition of quality literature is. Ezra Pound (Pound and Eliot, 1918:28) in his Literary Essays defines literature as 'language charged with meaning' but for great literature he reserves the definition 'language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree'.

2.3 What Defines Good Quality Literature for Children?

The belief in the importance of exposing young children to good quality literature is not a new phenomenon. In 1660 Charles Hoole a school teacher and author advised his pupils to read George Herbert and Francis Quarles from the school library (Michael, 1987). Matthew Arnold (1883), a nineteenth century poet, school inspector and critic, writing one hundred and fifty years ago, recognises literature as one of the principal agents of culture, which has a civilising influence and the power to enrich and transform human life. Arnold in his essay *A Guide to English Literature (*1883:136*)* advocates that children should be exposed to literature where we find 'the best that has been thought and said in the world' waiting to form the student. Charles Kingsley (1954:262), another famous nineteenth century British novelist affirms Arnold's view and explains:

> Except a living man there is nothing more wonderful than a book, a message to us from the dead, from human souls whom we never saw, who lived, perhaps, thousands of miles away; and yet these, in those little sheets of paper, speak to us, amuse us, terrify us, teach us, comfort us and open their hearts to us as brothers.

A salient aim that informs the best practices of teachers of English is to develop the pupil's ability to read with pleasure and understanding so that reading will become an important part of the child's life with the potential to transform her future (Graham and Kelly, 2008). Stoodt (1996:7) informs us that W.H. Auden differentiated between first-rate literature and second-rate literature, writing that the reader responds to second-rate literature by saying, 'That's just the way I always felt'. But first-rate literature makes one say 'Until now I never knew how I felt. Thanks to this experience, I shall never feel the same way again'. These views are still held today by modern theorists but like their predecessors in the nineteenth century, many great theorists throughout the twentieth century and in the early years of the twenty first century have held conflicting views on what exactly defines good quality literature and what distinguishes the valuable from the second rate. Canadian researchers, Bainbridge and Pantaleo

(1999:75) claim that a book can be deemed quality literature if the content remains relevant to readers because it deals with issues that confront both children and adults growing up throughout the generations. Although the language and settings may not be as familiar to the reader, the characters and the human situations depicted in this book are as effective and vivid today as they were when it was first written.

In the work of Shakespeare it is arguable that Bainbridge and Pantaleo's claim is valid. 'Shakespeare depicts the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply' (Johnson, 1765: ix). Shakespeare deals with familiar and abiding concerns. His characters, stories and themes have been, and still are a source of meaning and significance for every generation (Bagdanov, 2008). John Dryden's (1928) theory that the characteristics of Chaucer's pilgrims still remain in mankind is reiterated by Blake (1809) who believes that these characteristics live age after age and are a feature of all human life. It is therefore important that the literature which is presented to children should be of a high quality, entertaining, delightful, and have a lasting impression on them so that they become lifelong readers (Lukens, 1982; Nuba et al., 1999).

Literature for children can and should do the same thing for young readers as literature does for adults, giving pleasure and understanding, showing human motives, helping to focus on essentials, revealing the institutions of society, providing an outlet to empathise with the feelings and emotions of the characters which helps the reader give meaning to her own life and understanding to her daily predicaments, revealing nature as a force and providing vicarious experiences. This literature according to Winner (1982) should have three essential features to market as a literary text: the sound properties of words, the weaving of words into metaphors and the structure of text as a whole. Nodelman (1996:129) suggests that good literature not only helps to educate the child but also offers a 'vast spectrum of ways of being human'. Fenwick (1990) believes that a quality book is simply a well written one, which is original and offers a child excitement and suspense.

Researchers have found that the enthusiasm and motivation that children bring to reading depends on how well they can respond to the literature, and therefore it is imperative that the literature presented to children gives meaning to the child's life. In the quest for quality, Frances Clark Sayers (1968:24), a famous twentieth century American lecturer on children's literature, directs us towards books where children can respond to:

> The great elements of art, to drama and originality, to conflict and resolution, to feeling of place and atmosphere, to the emotions of fear and love and hate, to the inevitability of character and the mystery of personality, to humour and nonsense, to truth and to wizardy of words in the hands of the masters'.

To Huus (1973) quality literature refers to writing of quality that children can read or hear and understand. She includes books that have been kept alive and handed down from previous generations, as well as contemporary works that meet the test of beauty in style and content. Walter de la Mare (1921,11), an early twentieth century writer, who maintained the same high standard of artistic integrity whether writing for children or adults, once said 'only the rarest kind of best in anything can be good enough for children'. Nicholas Tucker, an educational psychologist and expert in children's literature (1991), recognises de la Mare among critics with a background of literary studies who take a critical approach to children's literature and assess the quality of a book not on its popularity but on the author's ability to offer the reader an opportunity for emotional and intellectual development. Tucker (1991) agrees that children should be exposed to the best in literature but suggests that there is a place for literature that is popular with, and appeals to the child, provided that the child wants to read this literature and is not told they want to read it by commercial forces. A basis on which a literary work may be deemed one of quality is provided by Jacobs and Tunnel (1996:15) when they state that 'style and language, together with character and plot must be analysed. In addition, the presence of a major dramatic question is required'.

Julie Shepherd Knapp (2006) defines the quality of a book by its literary excellence. For her, quality literature are books written by respected authors who are both interested in and knowledgeable about what they write. This literature offers a rich tapestry from which children learn vocabulary, grammar, and word usage and it sets an example for them of good writing skills and strategies. Holly Koelling (2004:9), a young adult reference librarian in Washington, views quality literature as:

> The cream of the literary crop, words of magnificence and meaning, lovingly woven by men and women who possess the drive and talent to express with depth and beauty both the real and imagined stories of tantamount importance to us all.

This aesthetic quality that Koelling (2004) finds in good quality literature is likewise appreciated by Lo Monico (2002) who advises that the aesthetic beauty of quality literature, which teachers should encourage their students to appreciate, is found in the wonderful sound of the words and the flow of the well structured sentences, and the marvellous way authors such as Twain, Dickens and Shakespeare choose the right words. Quality literature is the best tool for developing genuine literacy, being a work of

art that pleases the author and the reader because the words are chosen with skill to create wonderful stories. (Koelling, 2004)

This view of the aesthetic quality has been shared by many theorists. Sloan's (1991: xix) research affirms that quality is achieved through 'unique writing that demonstrates excellence of form and expression, addressing itself principally to the imagination'. Sloan is adamant that children will become readers only if their imaginations are stretched and their emotions stirred by these works of excellence. Among the masses of printed material available to readers, Sloan (1991:5) reserves the term quality literature for the works 'that possess the greatest potential to influence the feelings and the imagination and the magic to engross, enchant and enlighten'. Estes and Vasquez-Levy (2001:507), who conducted extensive research into the value of literature to teach moral values, simply tell their readers that 'good literature gives readers something to care about'. Carter (2000:77) makes a distinction between literature that is great in itself and that which is great as a text for primary school children. 'Literature taught to a young child must be understood by them and relate to their psychological needs and also be sufficiently challenging'. Carter's (2000:78) belief is that children should engage with a full range of children's literature to give them the full experience of the world and allow them reach the heights of excellence that they deserve. He claims that children need access to 'great works, not only Roald Dahl but also Charles Dickens, not only Tom's Midnight Garden but also The Tempest', while Lombardi (2010) agrees that great works of literature enkindle children's hearts with their universal themes of love, hate, death, life and faith.

Not all educationalists agree with Carter's view of exposing young children to the works of Shakespeare. In an article in *The Independent Newspaper*, in which the education director of the RSC, Jacqui O Hanlon (2009) expresses a view that children aged eight should be enjoying the language of Shakespeare because at this age 'they still have their natural playfulness, they want to solve problems and they are learning new language every day'. However a lecturer at Westminster Kingsway College, Brandon Robshaw disagreed that young children are capable of appreciating 17th century language. In the same article this opinion is refuted by drama teacher Sarah Sawyer who thinks teaching Shakespeare is 'fab', and by Michael Boyd, artistic director of the RSC who stresses that young children are proud of being able to deal with the vocabulary. The importance of exposing children to a variety of stimulating text is acknowledged by Mc Garrell (1995:359) who believes that ' literature is not only about the artistic and imaginative works of writers, it is also about life and living; it is about human experience and humanness'. Mc Garrell sees the benefit of literature in

the young child's development and argues that in every form of literature, poetry, drama, biographies, and prose works the idea of a story is present, and because stories appeal to children and take them into a world of imagination, it is this that ensures the value of literature for young readers as well as pleasure and understanding. It is through exposure to many forms and genres of literature that children discover the themes, recognise goodness, discover hidden meaning, and experience enrichment within an enjoyable and delightful structure (McGarrell, 1995).

Michael Clay Thompson (2009:3), who through his teaching and books has inspired thousands of students and educators with a new love of language and literature, distinguishes quality literature as humanity's most wonderful stories, metaphors and ideas and warns his readers that to be ignorant of those wonderful stories 'is more than a pity, it is a deprivation of joy and enlightenment, a loss of brightness in life'. Roche (2004) defines the quality in literature as an essential quality found in writing that unites its readers with the ideas and ethos of the world they inhabit and which safeguards them against isolation and solipsism. The debate regarding the difference between adult and children's literature has attracted comments from many researchers. Lukens (2012) maintains that children's literature differs from adult literature in degree only, however writers such as Lesnik-Oberstein (1994) hold an opposing view, stating that it differs in kind: that is that the word literature when used in the context of children's literature which cannot necessarily be related in any straightforward way to the word literature as used in other contexts. Bottigheimer (2009:190) argues that children's literature is 'an important system of its own'. Carter (2000:78) feels the need to broaden the definition from children's literature to literature for children. He argues that although it is essential for children to engage with the full range of good quality literature written specially for them, they need access to great works of literature 'that reach the full heights of excellence that children deserve'.

Most authors however agree that literature presented to children must be of a high quality. Flannagan and Creegan (1998), cited in Shiel et al., (2000:46) argue that 'not everything purportedly written for children attains social and ideological objectives'. Bettelheim (2010) expresses similar sentiments and dismisses much of the literature that claims to develop the child's mind as it fails to stimulate the child's resources for coping with inner problems. To date, the definition of what defines good quality literature for children has not been completely clarified, with various authorities stressing different aspects of the material collectively known as quality literature. Table 1.1 attempts to summarise the main features and characteristics as identified in the

literature. This set of descriptors will comprise my definition of quality literature in this study.

Table 2.1 The Main Features and Characteristics Identified in the Literature

Good quality literature gives pleasure and understanding;	Graham and Kelly (2008); Lukens (1982); Huus (1973).
It shows human motives and invites the reader to identify with the characters.	Kingsley (1854; Alber et al.(2011); Nodelman (1996); Sayers (1968).
It provides vicarious experience and gives meaning to life.	Nuba et al. (1999); Carter (2000); Roche (2004); Miller (2012); Mc Garrell(1995).
It develops emotional, intellectual and literacy skills:	Sloan (1991); Tucker (1991); Knapp (2006).
It highlights the aesthetic quality of words in quality literature.	Koelling (2004), Lo Monico(2006)

2.4 The Role of Quality Literature in the Life of a Primary School

Regardless of the definition of quality literature, many writers agree that exposing children to quality literature at a young age is essential for developing the child cognitively, imaginatively and socially. Charles B. Gilbert (1913:14) an inspector of schools in the U.S. who was familiar with the value of good literature argues that it stands to reason that the thought the child reads should be worth the child's thinking about. He suggests that reading is the most important of all arts for the young child because:

> The greats of all ages, poets, sages, seers may be his friends and associates. He may pace the academe with Plato, may listen to the inescapable questions of Socrates. The verses of Hafiz, the gentle speech of Buddha, the laws of Moses, the songs of Homer, of Dante, of Goethe and the dramas of Shakespeare all are his.

Another early twentieth century writer, Arnold Smith (1915:15) reaffirms the value of literature for children and recognises that reading material in the school should be

worthy of the child's time and effort. He believed that 'students should be active in their desire to know, and should wish to apply their knowledge practically, either in creative work of their own or in the solutions of the great problems of human life which are the subject of literature'. The 1928 Hadow Report on books in the public elementary schools in England suggests not only increasing the quantity of books available but also improving the quality so that children can learn what is admirable in literature and in human life. If children are immersed in quality literature 'their tastes will not be corrupted by the reading of words which are false in sentiment and second rate in expression' (Hadow, 1928:18). This perhaps is a rather old-fashioned didactic and teacher-centric inference and does not consider the rights or views of the child. A less pedantic suggestion is presented by the Ministry of Education in England (1959:135) for the consideration of teachers in primary schools which states that 'story and poetry which introduced children to a concentration and interpretation of human experience, are among the most powerful educational resources and are interwoven in children's growth in language'. In The Bullock Report (1975) we can look to the results of various studies of children's reading as some indication of its value as a personal resource. These have suggested, for example, that children's favourite stories at different ages reflect the particular fantasies and emotional conflicts which are foremost in their experience at that time. The child gets most enjoyment from those stories which help him to resolve these inner conflicts:

> Books compensate for the difficulties of growing up. They present the child with a vicarious satisfaction that takes him outside his own world and lets him identify for a time with someone else. They present him with controlled experience, which he can observe from the outside at the same time as being involved within it. Thus, the fulfilling of private wishes, the fabrication of an inner environment, is an important property of children's reading. (Bullock Report, 1975:126)

Andrew Wilkinson (1971) claims that through encounters with genuine literature, which he calls art in words, children can begin to learn about the nature, the uses and the joys of language. Resnikoff (1971) asserts that regardless of whether literature is being taught in primary school or in university, the main aims should include improving the student's ability in textual analysis, nourishing an appreciation and interest in literature and providing answers to questions about living. Rosenblatt (1978:22) suggests that 'well selected literature is an experience for the reader because it uses his uniquely human capacity to sympathise and to identify with the experience of others'. Just as constructivist psychologists, such as Piaget (1951), Vygotsky (1962), Bruner (1973) and Gardner (1983) emphasise a knower's acts of interpretation in deriving meaning

from experience, Rosenblatt (1978) emphasizes the reader's activity in constructing meaning from an encounter with a text and claims that the discussion of literature demands consideration of the mind of the individual reader or groups of readers and an interchanging common relationship between the reader and the text. It requires us:

> To see the reading act as an event involving a particular individual and a particular text, happening at a particular time, under particular circumstances, in a particular social and cultural setting, and as part of the ongoing life of the individual and the group. (Rosenblatt, 1978:126)

Logan and Logan (1976:486) acknowledge the diverse value literature has for children and emphasise the emotional, psychological and cultural attributes:

> Literature is the means by which children widen horizons, heighten awareness, develop the imagination, stimulate thinking, discover meanings, expand vocabularies, develop sensitivity to words and grow in understanding of both other people and themselves. As children come in contact with the cultural heritage of the past and present through literature, they are guided to appreciate the gifts of past generations and of other peoples, and so understand better the cultural milieu in which they live.

Stoodt (1996) acknowledges the views of the earlier twentieth century educators and states what she considers as the basic benefits of exposing children to literature at an early age:

- Literature is central to education in that it contributes to readers' growing experience, extending and enriching knowledge while stimulating reflection.
- Literature entertains listeners and readers, at the same time giving them access to the accumulated experiences and wonders of the ages.
- Literature motivates readers to think, enhances language and cognitive development, and stimulates thinking.
- It transports children beyond everyday experiences, broadening their background, developing their imagination and sense of humour, enabling them to grow in humanity and understanding.
- It provides pleasure, relaxation and opportunities for aesthetic responses.
- It expands knowledge and experience, helps readers solve problems and plays a significant role in children's developmental journey
- It permits readers to walk in other's shoes for a time, thus giving them a better understanding of another's feeling

A more recent development in this area is provided by Yorke (2008), who carried out an investigation to see if teachers have clear priorities when teaching literature to nine

to thirteen year old pupils. Sixty nine students in their first year of teacher training were asked what would be their justification for teaching literature to this age group. The most popular answers reiterate Stoodt's reasons for teaching literature. The student teachers' answers included:

- literature develops a child's imagination;
- it provides ideas, encouragement and inspiration for children's written work;
- it teaches vocabulary, as the children learn new words in context;
- it gives enjoyment, pleasure and entertainment.

All of the student teachers questioned agreed that through books pupils see characters struggling with the same problems they themselves face, and coping in ways that give them useful ideas. Likewise they agreed that books introduce readers to people they could never meet in real life, those who lived long ago, both real and fictional, people in lands they may never visit, and those in their own country who lead very different lives or imaginary creatures they could never have invented in their own minds. In addition all participants agreed that through literature pupils see themselves and the world in a new perspective. Sloan (1991:5) determines that 'unless printed words make a strong appeal to their emotions and imaginations, children will remain indifferent to reading and writing them. For children, printed words must provide wonder, delight, interest and pleasure, or they won't bother to read, even though they may have learned the rudiments of reading'. Fenwick (1990:x) supplies a number of convincing reasons for teaching literature to young children. Among his reasons are:

- Studying literature helps improve children's reading skills and also their attitude to reading.
- Children become more effective writers as they use various genres of literature as models for their own writing.
- Literature is part of their heritage, consisting of classical myths, folk tales and fiction from many countries and civilisations, all of which will have relevance in the child's life.

Many other writers discuss similar values associated with exposing young children to a culture of quality literature in primary school. Appleyard (1991) suggests that involvement in reading good quality literature may offer children an emotional engagement that goes beyond that of other subjects. Benton and Fox (1985:15) state that stories which contain stimulating vocabulary and engaging themes educate the child's feelings and offer their readers a means of developing a more subtle awareness

of human behavior. The high esteem in which the value of literature was held by educationalists in the twentieth century continues to survive in the early part of the twenty first century. At the initiation in 2010 of Ireland's first laureate for children's literature Pat Moylan, Chairman of the Irish Arts Council, spoke on the importance of encouraging a love of reading and inculcating the value of literature among children and young people. 'Literature', she said 'plays a unique role in helping us to interrogate who we are as a society, it has the power to make us understand what it means to be human, and it offers us that most subversive of things -pleasure'

Showalter (2003:24) acknowledges the role of literature in training pupils to think, read, analyse and improve their writing skills but he believes literature is not just important in education but in life. The value of literature in developing in children an awareness of moral values and an understanding of themselves and others has been, and still is the subject of debate among many writers. Flannagan and Cregan (1998), cited in Shiel et al., (2000:48) believe that this morally instructive feature of children's literature is fully recognised by those who take children as well as literature serious. O'Dell (2010:5) informs us that the Russian language distinguishes between two types of education, 'obrazavanie' which is concerned with knowledge, information and instruction and 'vospitanie' with attitudes, morals and upbringing. In this literature review the role literature plays in the former type of education has been acknowledged. The role literature plays in the 'vospitanie' or as O'Dell terms the 'character-building' of the child will now be investigated.

2.4.1 Literature: Moral Values and Personal Identity

From as far back as Arnold (1883) in Britain, and Dewey (1900) in America, there have been eloquent and persistent calls from modern educationalists for education to be explicitly concerned not only with formal intellectual achievement but also with the formation of the whole person, the preparation of the rounded citizen for real life. The case in favour of literature as an educational medium, concerned merely with intellectual achievement no longer exists. Literature as a testimonial to both the intellectual and moral education of the reader gained a place in modern educational thinking through the teaching of Matthew Arnold and gained renewed force in 1930 through the work of Dr. F. R. Leavis (Mac Killop, 1995) and his followers in the Cambridge English School. Since then the social and personal sensitivity linked to

literature has been elucidated by many researchers. Dickinson (2011.5) suggests that reading maximizes the different ways in which children can learn language which gives the child a feeling of personal identity. Hollindale (cited in Tomlinson and Quinton, 1986:35) notes that the representations of human experiences found in literature have:

> A uniquely civilising power, they enact the moral dime enrich our awareness of the otherness of other people and extend our sympathies, free us from the limitations of our egotistical perspectives of what is means to be human; they exercise a civilising influence on our own beliefs, values and behaviours.

Reynolds (1996) endorses this view and claims that literature enables the child to experiment with different identities and sequences of events to become familiar with the world. However Hollindale (cited in Tomlinson and Quinton 1986:35) warns that the moral value of literature can be overstressed and that it would be foolish to believe that reading good and moral literature would produce the good and moral man. He believes that literature will only have morally educative power if the reader responds with intelligence, feeling and moral insight. Lukens (1982:3) agrees and claims that 'it is not the role of literature to try to alter human beings, or their behaviour, however it is its jurisdiction to present individuals and their society for the reader to observe and understand'. Coody (1983:27) shares this view and cautions the storyteller to avoid using moralising stories with strong didactic overtones which only serve to offend the sensibilities of children and leave them with a feeling of having been preached to by one who lured them into the situation on the promise of entertainment. Yet it is evident from Jones (1938) that literature was used to alter the behaviour of students and cites an example from the eighteenth and nineteenth century where literature was used all over Europe as a means of forming the moral conscience of children, especially poor children, in the hope that the ignorance, sloth and debauchery that was prevalent at the time would disappear. It is heartening to see that almost a century later educationalists view the role literature plays in the child's development with greater esteem, believing in its power to develop a love for reading, to stretch the child's imagination and afford the child hours of endless fun.

According to Witz and MacGregor (2006:165) many parents and teachers feel that the moral, aesthetic and spiritual side of a young child should be nourished and developed 'together with' the intellectual side. Palmer (1995:8) affirms the idea of 'together with' since he views spirituality not as 'something that needs to be brought into or added to the curriculum' but rather existing in the 'heart of every subject we teach'. However, Coody (1983) and Estes and Vasquez (2001) rate literature as the only subject area on

the curriculum where children's moral values are fostered side by side with their academic learning. Many educators would have reservations about this idea, especially teachers of religious instruction. Perhaps the view of Mc Garrell (1995) that the teacher of literature or language arts has the best opportunity to communicate values to children is a more realistic claim. Estes and Vasquez-Levy (2001), in an article entitled 'Literature as a Source of Information and Values', choose trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship as the important values in a child's culture and state that it is in literature, which confronts the reader with these issues, that a student will find the reasons, explanations, suggestions and models that they will need if they are to own these values. Literature, according to the above authors, creates opportunities for the student to consider what values guide and influence human actions not only in the context of the story but in the 'real context of the child's own life. 'Literature is always concerned with questions of value and should confront the reader with moral and ethical questions' (Estes and Vasquez-Levy, 2001:509). However Henry Newman, writing on the moral value of teaching literature in 1931 warns that a piece of literature should not be chosen chiefly because it conveys a moral value. In Newman's (1931:810) view, for a piece of literature to be morally effective and still deserve the name literature it must measure up to the recommendation of the sixteenth century English poet, Sir Philip Sidney: 'Your poet is the monarch, for he doth not only show the way but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter it'. Newman insists that a teacher need say very little to enforce the moral point, merely co-operate with the author to help the child interpret it because in good literature the children can feel for themselves the moral message being conveyed. C.S. Lewis (1961:96), whose series of seven fantasy novels for children, The *Chronicles of Narnia* are considered classics of children's literature, claims that 'Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides; and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts that our lives have already become'. Lewis claims that 'we read to know we are not alone'.

It is with good reason that educationists all over the world have contributed to the debate that the common childhood experience of fairy tales introduced a whole generation to an alternative source of moral education. Guroian (1996:129), a Professor of Theology sees the value of fairy tales, as an invaluable resource for the moral education of children:

> The great fairy tales and children's fantasy stories attractively depict character and virtue. In these stories the virtues glimmer as if in a

> looking glass, and wickedness and deception are unmasked of their pretensions to goodness and truth. These stories make us face the unvarnished truth about ourselves while compelling us to consider what kind of people we want to be.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the use of literature with young children was a prerequisite because of its moral function in shaping their character and publishers during this period who commissioned authors to write juvenile fiction, published books that 'would mould the character of their reader' (Avery, 1965:11). However the more modern view expressed above by Guroian (1996) on the enlightening power of fairy tales was not acknowledged by some writers and societies in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, fairy and folk tales were considered inappropriate reading material for children, especially among the middle classes. Puritans viewed them as a form of witchcraft, and both Locke and Rousseau warned against their frightening aspects, preferring stories of daily life (Hunt, 1995).

During this time British educators, writers and publishers debated the merits of the fairy tale and many found them useless and dangerous for the moral education of young and old alike. Sarah Trimmer (1786) argued at the end of the eighteenth century that fairy tales made children depraved and turned them against the sacred institution of society (cited in Zipes, 1989). Sherwood (1882) likewise considered fairy tales an inappropriate medium of instruction because she considered it ridiculous in such tales to introduce religious principles. Despite Trimmer's and Sherwood's view, the notion that fairy tales and fantasy stories stimulate and instruct the moral imagination of the young became an accepted fact in the latter half of the nineteenth century. According to Guroian in an essay entitled *Awakening the Moral Imagination: Teaching Virtue through Fairy Tale* (1996), the Victorians certainly held to that notion when they brought the fairy tale into the nursery. Twentieth-century psychologist, Bruno Bettelheim (2010), has interpreted elements of the fairy tale as manifestations of universal fears and desires. This renowned psychiatrist gave the value of fairy tales an important impetus thirty five years ago with his publication of *The Uses of Enchantment* in which he argues that children need a moral education in a tangible meaningful way and not through abstract ethical ideas. The child according to Bettelheim finds this kind of meaning through fairy tales. However Zipes (2002) in his criticism of Bettelheim claims that Bettelheim's knowledge of children's literature, reading and preferences was unfathomable low and declares that Bettelheim's claim that more can be learned from fairy tales about problems human beings encounter and about the answers to their predicaments than from any other type of story the child

might read or hear is indeed an acclamation to the power of fairy tales but argues that despite Bettelheim's good intentions, his ideas diffuse false notions about the literary qualities of fairy tales and leaves his readers in a state of bewilderment.

Musing on the wisdom and ethics of the fairy tale, G. K. Chesterton (1959:50) observes that the genre sparks a special way of seeing, that is essential to morality. Chesterton writes: 'I am concerned with a certain way of looking at life, which was created in me by fairy tales, but has since been meekly ratified by mere facts'. Dr. Maria O' Dwyer in her address to the CECDE (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education) Conference in Dublin Castle in February 2007 told her audience that the fact that every culture has its own variations on well known traditional fairytales, which includes that culture's core values and morals (cited in Duignan et al., 2007) is indicative of the relevance of the relationship between a child's sense of identity formation and literature.

Literature, according to O'Dwyer has a notable impact on identify formation and helps the child get to know herself in relation to others. She explained that although the surface of those traditional tales may be unreal, the core is real, 'disclosing basic and balanced truths about people and life'. In a world where children are taught to understand their own identity in relation to adult authority, a fact highlighted in many children's stories, O' Dwyer (2007) believes that children gain security from knowing that there are certain standards that everyone both young and old is expected to live up to and that literature reflects this by labelling the deviant from these standards as the bad guy. The twentieth century moral philosopher Alasdair Mac Intyre (1984:216) has summed this up eloquently:

> It is through hearing about wicked stepmothers, lost children, good but misguided kings, wolves that suckle twin boys, youngest sons who receive no inheritance but must make their own way in the world and eldest sons who waste their inheritance. that children learn what a child and what a parent is, what the cast of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are. Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words.

Carter (2000), who supports Bettelheim's theories, suggests that fairy and folk tales present true to life characters that children can identify or reject. In this simple presentation of characters, according to Carter a whole range of fears, worries, hopes and wishes can take on a tangible form for children as enact them safely in their imaginations. Carter suggests in addition to this if children engage actively with the

story they claim it as their own, which adds to its value. Good and evil are abstract ideas that represent the rules of behaviour, essential in any society. Children are unavoidably frightened by the idea of evil and are therefore fascinated by stories that overcome that fear. They empathise with stories where evil is banished and good triumphs, which is the basis of many children's stories. This stance that stories allow children to bring to experience provides them with the means to articulate and explore their developing view of the world, 'presenting alternatives, clarifying dark corners, posing contradictions, reconciling conflicts within the realm of their subjective personal experience' (Applebee, 1978:134; see also Fuller:1999). Guroian (2002) hypotheses that fairy tales enable the child to conceive a world in which there are norms and limits, where freedom respects the moral law or else pays a heavy price and where there is a difference between what is logically possible and what is morally felicitous, between what is rationally doable and what is morally permissible.

Children's literature written during the past two hundred years is considered by many writers as a powerful tool to promote moral values. Stories for children are important as they have the characteristics of adventure, entertainment and education that teach children to behave in the society in a proper way (Coody, 1999). The story of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Caroll and *Hansel and Gretel* by Brothers Grimm for example, remain in children's hearts because of the adventures, magic, and fantasy that awaken children's imagination. Mikkelson (1997)) stated that childhood is the age when children respond to fantasy and adventures, and thus, using literature can help children to develop their self confidence and morality and become aware of their personal identity.

Richmal Crompton's *Just William* books which were popular with young readers through the early and middle part of the twentieth century, but which are a minority taste with the modern young reader (Fowler, 2010), contain themes of family and social life, highlighting the constraints these place on individuals. The characters, William and his friends the Outlaws, were seen as puzzled onlookers of society's ways where the children almost always emerge triumphant. According to Jacqueline Edmondson (2010) John Lennon's Biographer, the famous musician who was a fan of these books in his youth was inspired by the character William to realise his own personal identity.

Roald Dahl argued that his writing serves as a motivation for children to enjoy reading. In an interview in Trust Your Children (West, 1988), Dahl claimed that his main purpose in writing books for children was to encourage them to develop a love of

books. He defends criticism that the brutal and evil punishment portrayed in his novel *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* might give a false impression to children that the values are acceptable in real life, by claiming that 'children know that the violence in my stories is only make-believe' (West, 1999: 75). Hissan (2012) observes that Roald Dahl expresses the idea of morality through his work in a very extraordinary sense and that his novels are able to inspire children through the characters presented in them. One of those characters Matilda is described by West (1998) as brilliant, brave and independent and a role model for young readers because although she is very young, she does not let her poor home life affect her self-esteem.

The study on *Harry Potter* novels by Binnendyk and Schonert-Reichl (2002), reveales that *these novels* are helpful in the child's moral behaviour education, and that they promote a love of reading. In this series of novels written by J.K Rowling at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty first century, the battle between good and evil is portrayed, and the lessons learned from the characters' intelligence, reasoning, planning and courage are inspiring for children as well as for adults. Ionoaia (2009) describes the *Harry Potter* books as 'a guiding light in our age of moral darkness' and argues that the importance of the virtues betrayed, such as resolve, friendship and solidarity by the characters in the books may inspire the reader to consider the value of such virtues in his or her own life.

The potential of poetry to raise personal, social and political consciousness in students and enable them to develop personal identity and their own philosophies about life is discussed by Hook (1982:208), who explains that students can discuss the viewpoint towards life in a poem from different angles, comparing and evaluating it in the light of their own experiences and use their own values 'as guides to action through examining dilemmas that all individuals face, making choices and looking at moral consequences'. Theorists such as Maria and Robert Lovell Edgeworth strongly advocated teaching classical poetry and mythology to children. Their philosophical argument about education is that literature should be used to allow children to choose from it what they consider worth their attention and apply what they recall of it to useful purposes (Marley, 2003).

It thus appears evident that the power inherent in the various genres of literature to awaken in children an awareness of their personal identity has been acknowledged by society for centuries but according to Mc Donald (1882) without the redeeming power of the imagination human society would be prey to terrible evils, such as selfishness, avarice and cruelty which would flourish tenfold. Sloan (1991:12) notes that good

quality literature illustrates what is essential for humans to realise and that is 'there are no limits for the imagination'. I will now identify if this theory expressed by Sloan (1991) is embraced by other educationalists who have sought to discover if the child's imagination can be enkindled by exposure to good quality literature.

2.4.2 Literature and the Imagination

> There is no limit to the human imagination, to our ability to re-describe an object, and thereby contextualize it. A descriptive vocabulary is a way of relating one object to other object putting it in a new context .There is no limit to the number of relations that language can capture, of contexts that descriptive vocabularies can create. (Rorty, 2000: 23)

In his *Republic* Plato (380 BC) talks about the education of children. What is important about the education of young people is not to teach them isolated facts but to create in them an imagination. Imagination he implies is 'the machine with which we create the world for ourselves, and without imagination education is more or less useless'. He proposes to educate children with stories, folk tales and myths. These he suggests were the ideal grounding for the future citizen (Plato and Jowett, 2008:61). Bettelheim (2010) supports the view of the classic Greek philosopher but challenges the ideas of other theorists, who believe that by learning to read one may be able later to enrich one's life, describing it as an empty promise when the stories the child listens to are vacuous. For a story to truly hold a child's attention, Bettelheim (2010) agrees that it must entertain him, arouse his curiosity, and stimulate his imagination if it is to enrich his life. Woods (1990) who investigated the views of the value of literature in former centuries relates that during the nineteenth century the enlarging power of literature on the imagination was recognised but it was also feared that this power would be an unsettling influence. George MacDonald, a Scottish writer and author of children's fairytales, expresses a conflicting point of view in an essay written in 1882 when he passionately convinces his readers of the obligation we are under to imagine. The central theme of his essay demonstrates his view that imagination has the power to educate both young and old. To feed this imagination he recommends both food and exercise, prescribing books as the best food for the imagination: 'The best must be set before the learner that he may eat and not be satisfied, for the finest products of the imagination are the best nourishment for the beginning of that imagination' (Mac Donald cited in Hodges et al., 2000:128). The Ministry of Education in Singapore (2010:2) promotes the study of literature in the English syllabus to encourage students

to 'enter imagined worlds and explore, examine, and reflect on both current and timeless issues, as well as their individuality and humanity'.

The belief that literature is personally enriching as one of the finest expressions of the human imagination has been highlighted since Mac Donald, and researchers have vehemently argued that literature is essential to educate the child's imagination, and that it is through the imagination that we participate in every aspect of our human life. Robert Louis Stevenson, a nineteenth century Scottish poet and novelist compares reading good literature to sailing the seas in a sail boat, where your imagination can take you to times and places where you could never go in real life. If teachers wish to encourage children to become readers of good quality literature the literature they present to the child must have a strong appeal, providing wonder, interest and pleasure, stirring their emotions and stretching their imaginations (Sloan, 1991). Teachers can make this happen, according to Sloan (1991) through genuine literature that claims consideration because of two important criteria, theme and use of language to the greatest effect, and she believes that because there is room in every story for endless possibilities, literature demonstrates that there are no limits to the imagination. In this way literature has the capacity to develop the imaginative perspective in reality, giving shape to human experiences and develop emotional intelligence and creativity (Norton and Norton, 2007). The enlightening power of literature is acknowledged by Huck et al. (1987) who believe quality literature holds the ability to enrich the personal lives of children and to develop their creative imagination. Louise Rosenblatt (1978) advises that stories should not only entertain and arouse the child's curiosity but crucially enrich the life of the child. Laughlin and Watt (1986: vii) include the development of the imagination as one of the great values of literature, and inform their readers that 'this is made possible by drawing children into fiction and fantasy worlds, demanding suspension of disbelief'.

The Canadian literary critic, Northrop Frye (1968), speaks about the productive aspect of literature, how reading books educates the imagination and expands the sense of the possible. He believed that everything must be done in the imagination and described in various ways before it can be done in actual life. His argument encompasses the idea that creative thought and imagination are intimately related to higher order thinking skills and that literature is essential to educating the imagination as it clarifies the unlimited range of the human imagination and extends reader's personal opportunities. Frye's theory has been embraced by educationalists, writers and poets who believe that when a child's imagination is set alight by the fancy, fury and wonder of literature, the child is then motivated to learn. One of the pioneers of

this theory is poet and story writer Ted Hughes (1970) who recognised the value of story to awaken a child's imagination in his essay '*Myth and Education'* when he writes that 'a child takes possession of a story as what might be called a unit of imagination. In attending to the world of story there is the beginning of imaginative and mental control. There is the beginning of a form of contemplation. The story itself is a kind of wealth'. Seamus Heaney esteemed Irish poet and writer views the imaginative transformation of human life as 'the means by which we can most truly grasp and comprehend it' (Heaney, 1995: xv). For American philosopher Maxine Greene (2000: 90), imagination is 'seeing anew. 'As we see anew, we share perspectives offered by knowledge and understanding'.

Literature has the potential to illuminate and nourish the reader's creative processes by stirring and stretching the imagination and providing new information, ideas and perspectives, so that readers can 'imagine possibilities and elaborate on original ideas, thus expanding their ability to express imagination in word and images' (Stoodt 1996:12). Addressing the International Reading Association's World Congress on Reading in Edinburgh, Scotland in July 2002 Margaret Meek Spencer told her audience that in her schema for children learning to read and becoming readers and writers, imagination is not something separate or extra that their teachers would add to their learning but at the heart of the process of extracting meaning from texts. She expressed her dissatisfaction in current education practice which concentrates on the outer realities of learning information, leaving less time for the imaginative possibilities of different kinds of reading and thinking and argues that music and art should be compulsory subjects in the curriculum. In his address at the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) Conference in January 2011, Dr Martin Gleeson encouraged participants in their quest for effective literacy development in the primary school to 'foster the imaginative and creative development of the child, drawing on multiple genres and quality children's literature' (Gleeson, 2011).

The early 20th century Russian religious philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev (Berdyaev and Lowrie, 2009) once said that God created the world by imagination. The power of literature to enkindle the child's imagination has been acclaimed by educationalists in early civilisations to those involved in our education system today. As the child's imagination is stimulated, the potential to view this world and its inhabitants in a new light is embellished. In the light of these acclamations the potential of literature to extend the child's imagination to discover the world and its inhabitants will now be explored.

2.4.3 Literature: An Educative Power in Society

A minority of teachers may argue that literature is not a serious, useful study like mathematics or economics, yet few have seriously suggested that literature is not worth teaching (Probst, 1987). Since the early twentieth century, many researchers have agreed that quality literature offers an engaging and logical place for children to begin to engage life and its complexities. Yet during the last century conflicting ideas of the place of literature in the education of a child were presented. In 1917 Nowell Smith saw the purpose of teaching literature as 'the formation of a personality fitter for a civilised life' (cited in Peel et al., 2000: 216). The Newton Report (1963), a U.K. government report entitled *Half our Future,* looked at the education of average and below average attaining children and declared that all pupils, including those of very limited attainment need the civilising experience of contact with the great literary works. Such views may suggest that educators are executing a civilising project on behalf of the state. Bullock (1975:126) refutes these rather patronising patriarchal views that literature has a civilising power but agrees that literature offers a design for living. Literature he believes:

> Brings pupils into contact with language at its most varied and complex and in so doing brings them within consciousnesses other than their own. It brings them imaginative insights into the feelings of others and allows at the same time for contemplation of human experiences and activities. It brings people into contact with the fact that others have the same thoughts and feelings as themselves.

The report continues to see books as a compensation for children experiencing the difficulties of growing up as they can offer vicarious satisfaction and present pupils with a controlled experience which he can observe from outside at the same time as being involved within it. Other researchers share this opinion and see a child's encounter with a work of quality literature as 'an insight into experiences in their own lives, allowing them to pre-live and anticipate events while vicariously experiencing the lives of others' (Furner, 1991:14) or an experience where 'children examine the imaginative constructs they find in literature with a certain detachment and discover things about their own beliefs and actions as a society, that they could never learn in any other way' (Sloan, 1991:13) or an opportunity to provide children with 'enjoyable reading experiences as it has the power to influence readers' lives, to develop compassion, to stretch imagination and to help them to see their world in a new way or entertain the possibilities of new worlds' (Huck et al.,1987:365).

In the light of these findings it is understandable that reading what others have written about their experiences gives the child a picture of his own life and helps him put his

experiences into perspective. Stoodt (1996:5) acknowledges this when she writes, 'through literature and language humans record, explain, understand and control their experiences, learning about the depth and breathe of life'. Nodelman (1996) confirms that the function of good literature is not only to educate but to offers access to a variety of ways of being human. Bainbridge and Pantaleo (1999) invite us to consider the cultural and emotional rewards for children exposed to quality literature, including the experience of other worlds, a feeling of a wealth of emotions, an encounter with different beliefs and values and the ability to generate questions and gain new knowledge.

The stories found in good quality literature according to Bettelheim (2010), can transport a child to a different place and time from where he normally resides and can also help him find meaning in life. Many critics have asserted that the interaction between children and stories has powerful implications for personal and social development and Spink (1989:72) gives an additional impetus to Bettelheim's (2010:4) implicit argument with his words that 'we are, at least in part, what we have read'. In Carter's (2002) opinion good literature helps children understand that all people have feelings such as love, sadness and fear despite their many differences and desire fairness and justice. The function of literature to build empathy with and understanding of others is acknowledged by C.S. Lewis (1961) in his words: 'Through literature I become a thousand people, and yet remain myself'. Huus (1973:53) in praise of literature's ability to open up new worlds to children says:

> Through books pupils see characters struggling with the same problems they face and coping in ways that give them useful ideas. Likewise books introduce readers to people they never could meet-those who lived long ago both real and fictional, people in lands they may never visit and those in their own land who lead very different lives, or imaginary characters they never could have invented. Through literature pupils see themselves and their world in a new perspective.

Literature is not only about the artistic and imaginative works of writers, it is also about life and living; it is about human experience and humanness. Benjamin Demott (1987), an American writer, scholar, and cultural critic endorses this when he says that the whole scope of language, which includes literature, encompasses individual human feeling, human response, and human time, found in the written expression of men living and dead.

2.4.4 The Human Value of Literature

In a recent article in *The New York Times*, Gregory Currie (2013), a professor of philosophy in the University of Nottingham argues that there is a lack of research and no compelling evidence, only mere speculation to prove that reading literature improves the human being in any way. In a later article in *Time Ideas* Annie Murphy Paul (2013) refutes this claim and bases her argument on the findings of American researchers, Mar et al. (2006) which shows that both adults and children who read literature appear better able to empathise with and understand people because they come to view the world from their perspective. The belief in the power of literature to improve the life of both adults and children can be traced back more than one hundred years and many studies conducted over recent decades have shown evidence of this potential.

Matthew Arnold (1969) believed in the power of literature to enrich and even transform human life. Bibliotherapy is defined as being the use of books as therapy in order to help children relate to characters and cope with their own emotions (Galen and Johns, 1979), and help resolve problems of a personal nature (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1989). More than three decades ago researchers such as Galen and Johns (1979) recommended the use of bibliotheraphy to help children who were looking for a solution in their own personal lives and enable them to feel more at ease when learning that they are not the only people dealing with such a situation. The increase in societal problems is noted throughout Western culture, and Ouzts (1991) stresses the need for educators to be aware of this fact. By the use of good quality literature, material that is relevant for today's children may be used to great advantage. Roberts and Crawford (2008) call for the use of real books that will provide information, comfort and models for coping in this real life where children encounter difficult times. Smith (1991) states that contemporary society no longer views literature as primarily a means for escape and adventure. Some controversy arises over the emergence of the genre of literature which deals with contemporary issues such as drug addiction, suicide, family breakups and homelessness, and is directly targeted to the adolescent. This serves a valuable purpose in modern society, with the view that this content offers a pathway that allows young readers to experience danger vicariously and safely. Burnett (1997), Huck et al. (2001), Ouzts (1991) and Rudman (1993) recommend that literature to help children cope with problems be well written and appropriate to the child's developmental level. The use of literature to help children cope with problems can be an important part of teaching because it is through literature that children understand that they are not alone in experiencing problems. They can learn how

others have dealt with and resolved problems that cause sadness, stress, fear, and trauma in their lives and also how to use conflict resolution strategies to cope with these problems (Tu, 1999). The important role literature plays in the development of the child and his future life in society has been well documented by researchers. Mark Twain writing in 1890 gives testimony to this when he writes 'I conceive that the right way to write a story for boys is to write it so that it will interest any man that has ever been a boy' (Sattelmeyer and Crowley, 1985:151). Similar sentiments are expressed by C. S. Lewis while reviewing some of the books he read in his childhood: 'No book is really worth reading at the age of ten that is not equally (and often far more) worth reading at the age of fifty and beyond' (Lewis, 1961: 24).

W.H. Auden (1954:16) had a clear idea of the human value of literature and recognised its ability to fulfil a desire he believed was present in all of us, 'to make new secondary worlds of our own and to know the truth about our own world'. The wide reaching effects, both for the child herself and for the society in which she lives, of exposing children to literature is affirmed by educationalists. Carter (2000:7) judiciously warns that those who cannot read are alienated in society, suffering 'a devastating form of exclusion', Koelling (2004) believes that the exposure through reading good and important books is significant to the ethical development and choice making skills of both children and adults, and Trelease (2013), a well known American educator and author, is adamant in his belief that common sense should tell us that reading is the number one weapon to destroy ignorance, poverty and despair before they can destroy our world. This author warns that a nation that doesn't read much doesn't know much and a nation that doesn't know much is more likely to make poor choices in the home, the market place, the jury box and the voting booth. The challenge therefore according to Trelease is to convince future generations of children that carrying a book is more rewarding than carrying a gun. Affirming these observations, Estes and Vasquez-Levy (2001) and Diamond and Moore 1995) likewise recognise the moral value of literature, not alone to the child but to all society and believe that literature is always concerned with questions of value and should confront the reader with moral and ethical questions. They see the value of stories to influence students' attitudes, values, and beliefs and to create opportunities for readers to consider the values that guide human actions in both the imaginary context and the real context of their lives. Sloan (1991) creates an analogy between the myths children encounter in stories and the myths presented in advertising and argues that those who wish to influence others, for good or evil, make use of the same myths we find in literature. However, Sloan (1991) believes that students who have experienced the genuine form

of a myth in literature will recognise that myth in advertising and will be able to fight the propaganda and social conditioning they encountered in advertising and popular entertainment, because they has been educated on literature and are guarded against social mythology and the language of cliché and stereotype. Research has shown that the meaningful benefit of quality literature include personal and social development, greater academic achievement and the increased ability to cope with the demands of an information rich world (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). Thompson (as cited in Allen, 1980:9) speaking at the U.S. *National Council for the Teaching of English* in 1965 said:

> Literature shapes the habit of mind and feeling which determines a man's capacity for living. The case for literature is it stands for humanity at a time when human values are not upheld; among these values we number imagination, as well as the obviously acceptable ones like sympathy, understanding and tolerance.

Attitudes to the value of literature remain unchanged almost half a century later when at a conference held in Reading University, Jeff Wallace (2010) contended that through literature individuals can come to understand and value themselves, their pasts and their place in society more fully.

It is through literature that a child learns to define himself and his relationship with the world. Probst (1987) argues that if children's literary studies are to be humanising and if children are to become truly literate adults then teachers much encourage then to engage fully both in mind and spirit with the literary text. As children engage in this manner with the works of fine writers, Huck et al. (2001) believe they will consider the power of the language used with precision and imagination and develop literacy skills.

2.4.5 Literature: Language and Literacy

Even before the formal advocacy of early education, the great seventeenth century educator Comenius believed that language provided the foundation for all later learning (Laurie, 1892). The belief that the power of language is extended as children read or listen to stories and poems has been and still is held by many theorists. Elkin and Handel (1978) observed that children who were exposed to good literature from an early age begin to get a sense of the power and beauty of language. In a paper entitled *The Importance and Use of Quality Literature in the Classroom* presented by Marianne Carus at the annual meeting of the National Conference of Learning Art in Elementary School in 1976 in Atlanta Georgia, the author claimed that literature 'has to be the focus of the English lesson, because with literature as the focus you can develop a truly correlated language arts programme'. Although researchers have explored

literature and literacy as separate entities in the reading experience of the child they still view them as twin vehicles. Fenwick (1990) places literature at 'the very centre of language teaching in Primary school', while Sloan (1991: xix) finds the roots of literacy 'in wide reading, in discovering firsthand the delights and satisfactions to be found in the various forms of literature'. According to Knapp (2006:14) quality literature offers 'a rich tapestry from which to learn vocabulary, grammar and word usage and sets an example for good writing skills and strategies'. Hirsch (1987), a distinguished American educator and academic literary critic believes that a child should acquire a broad vocabulary, which Knapp (2006:14) believes literature offers, because it is 'an index to broad knowledge, and broad knowledge extended over time is the key to a depth of knowledge and an ability to learn new things'.

Kortner (1990) argues that children are never too young to be introduced to literature and recommends using books in preschool to stimulate language. Kortner (1990) also sees the value of literature to teach reading and recognises that through the use of literature in a school reading programme, youngsters become familiar with the world of literature as they learn to read.

Eeds and Wells (1985) advocate the use of literature discussions which they term *grand conversations* but warn of the danger of teachers insisting on a unitary interpretation of the text, and her idea of studying literature is studying *about* the literature. Manzo and Manzo (1995) agree with Eeds and Well's (1985) theory but advise that there are many reasons to include literature as part of the early literacy programme of the child:

- it enhances reading fluency and builds further interest in reading;
- literature is a model of what authors do and therefore aids oral and written expression;
- it is a major source of content information and vocabulary improvement;
- it develops higher order thinking in children.

Researchers have agreed that reading literature affords intellectual enlightenment and when it is fully optimised its benefits are endless, for example thought and logic are stimulated, new ideas are generated, arguments and counterarguments developed by the reader, and according to Kozulin et al. (2003:94) literature provides us with a most powerful tool to make increasingly complex meaning of our lives and the world around us. The central purpose of education is to teach children to think and with this in mind, claims that sharing literature with children provides opportunities for the development of thinking skills have been put forward by many writers. As children begin to

understand theme, assert character development, note the importance of setting and appreciate style, they are developing lifelong skills that will help them to experience the magic of words and become personally involved in ideas (Laughlin and Watt, 1986).

Research on **critical thinking and cognitive development** demonstrates the link between language and thinking ability. The recommendation of literature to promote critical thinking was made by Sprood (1995) after using a number of case studies. Likewise Barber (2004:2) acknowledges that literature offers many openings to knowledge and learning by 'striking a critical balance between the cognitive and the affective' because through her literary imagination the child is able to access deep feeling which in turn will lead to deep thinking. Belcher and Hirvela, (2008) believe that reading literature demands a search for meaning and it provides students with a useful skill in language learning. This skill is valuable for young children and helps them read and respond to the text critically. Tung and Chang (2009) view a piece of literature as a reflection of life and the world. They encourage teachers to expose young readers to the plot and the themes and the interactions of the characters. In this way readers are aware of the multiple points of view in the text and thus are enabled to think and rethink their own ideas and actions.

Zhang and Alex (1995) bemoan the fact that in teacher-centred classrooms, dominated by teacher discourse and worksheets, the development of oral language is not as progressive as that where literature dominates. Further evidence from reading surveys reveals relevant information on this topic. Senechal *et al.* (1996) undertook a study of forty seven first-grade children to investigate the effects of storybook exposure and found that language skills and emergent literacy were enhanced. Similarly, Otto (1993) undertook a project designed to increase inner-city children's opportunities to interact with storybooks. The project focused on enjoyment in reading and involved parent co-operation. Twenty eight children were each given a story to take home and keep every two weeks for fourteen weeks. Emergent literacy was assessed through parent and teacher observation together with using an emergent reading ability judgement scale. Findings showed that 75% of those in the study demonstrated a higher level of emergent reading at the end of the project. These results add impetus to Higgins' (1986:39) theory that students 'accustomed to reading widely in non-basal reading material establish an important connection, they know reading class is really about reading books'. Caldwell (1991:95) emphasises the dynamic process of constructing meaning from text, a process he believes begins with the development of oral language and is enriched by the act of reading aloud to young children. During a child's preschool years parents reading to their children and being seen to read

themselves is according to du Toit (2007) the most important influence on children's reading. Dickinson et al. (2011) claim that book reading has been found to have the power to create interactional contexts that nourish language development, and like du Toit (2007) acknowledge the power of early parent-child book reading as a context for nourishing multiple aspects of development, including fostering children's language, helping maintain their attention by using books with bold colours and objects and animals that appeal to young children, and requiring them to be actively engaged in discussions about word meanings

Caldwell (1991:95) considers that 'the single most important activity for building the knowledge and skills eventually required for reading, appear to be reading aloud to children'. During this activity, according to Caldwell (1991:95), the child and the reader become involved in a conversation about the characters in the book and the child is encourages to construct meaning from the story. Pressley et al. (2001) agrees that literary development begins at the same time as oral language development and is supported by teachers who value and model literacy activities and who make books accessible for children. Stoodt (1996) believes that the reader is as important as the literary work he is reading because he relates to the text and constructs meaning from it using the author's words as cues but constructing his own meaning, based on his personal experiences, knowledge and feelings. This idea concurs with Rosenblatt (1978) who believes that because each reader brings a different set of experiences to the text, each creates his own meaning for the same text.

In recent years teachers have embraced the idea that quality literature can be applied as an alternative to basal readers in the classroom. Van Sledright and Kelly (1998) found that fifth grade students who were permitted to use alternative texts that they had selected demonstrated signs of advanced thinking, in addition to the development of quality judgment skills. Angeletti (1990) conducted research on teaching critical thinking strategies with the use of student-selected reading materials. It was proven that gains were made in skills areas and attitudes towards reading. Manzo and Manzo (1995) see the development of higher order or evaluative thinking as perhaps the most important reason for teaching literature to children at a very young age, as it allows each child the freedom to like or dislike any book they read.

The role reading quality literature plays in developing writing skills and nurturing a positive attitude towards writing in students has been prolifically researched throughout the world. Morrow and Gambrell (2000) reveal that a literature based approach to reading produced higher reading achievement and fostered more positive attitudes

towards writing. Lehr (1988) and Eckhoff (1983) compared the style of writing of children who read higher quality literature to that of those using basal texts and found that the former group used more complex and elaborate literary styles in their own writings, while the later group used simplified sentence structure. The research of DeFord (1981) and Dressel (1990) again reported that children exposed to high quality literature were more likely to show this influence in their own writing than were children exposed to writing of lesser quality. Stood (1996:14) found that 'Literature provides young writers with a source of ideas and inspiration, as well as with structural models for organising ideas in text'. Graves (1983:97) recommends surrounding children with literature to prepare them for writing. Mills (1974) notes that children increase creative writing ability while reading, hearing and discussing quality literature. Research conducted by Bas (2012) among elementary students in the Turkish Education System to investigate the correlation between their reading attitudes and their writing dispositions showed that reading and writing are integrated language skills and reading attitudes affect students' writing dispositions positively. These findings support related findings by Goodman & Goodman (1983), Loban (1963) Stotsky (1983) and Carrel et al. (1988), who all discovered a strong correlation between students' reading and their writing skills.

Susan Barber (2004) speaking at an education conference in Vancouver on the power of literature to inspire young writers claims that when a child is inspired by what she has read and her imagination is set alight, she may go beyond the printed page and write her own story. Others have determined that the more time children spend reading literature, the better their reading and writing abilities become (Cohen, 1968; Fox and Allen, 1983; Hepler and Hickman, 1982; Loban, 1963; Cobine, 1995 Roe and Ross, 2005; Allington and Gabriel, 2012). Stewig and Sebesta (1989:78) recommend a programme where reading literature and writing are viewed as supportive and interactive processes which complement each other as children are guided in developing the interest, knowledge, skills, and appreciation needed to enjoy literature and develop their own expressive skills. Research widely acknowledges that the stories children write reflect the characteristics of their reading material (Eckhoff, 1983, DeFord, 1981, Bissex, 1980). These researchers found that reading cultivates writing abilities because it enlarges children's sensitivity to and understanding of language, thus enabling them to choose the words and create the syntax that best expresses their thoughts. Howells (2010) affirms the belief that reading good literature forges connections between what the child reads and events in her own life which motivates the child to explore and expand her own capacity for personal writing. Latham

(2002:131) concurs with this theory and acknowledges that experience of good quality literature gives the child a knowledge of the narrative form and helps children realise that the written word is an important medium 'by which experience can be extended'. Kinmount (1990) stresses the importance between reading and writing and emphasises the need for developing the child's awareness of the link between the two language modes. Stewig and Sebesta (1989:78) observe that children who listen to or read good quality literature develop a repertoire of knowledge and experiences 'that will guide them as they discover the means to express their own ideas'. Khatib and Janpour (2012) acknowledge that writing in response to reading literature can lead to critical thinking. When students read stories which arouse their interests this leads to a desire to respond to the text, thus motivating critical enquiry, while journal writing in response to reading literature gives students opportunities to express their ideas freely. Michael Morpurgo in his foreword to *Singing for Mrs Pettigrew (*2007: viii) contributes his success as a writer to his passion for writing his memories and to having read 'widely and deeply'. He explains:

> But memories themselves are not enough to create the fusion that fires a story. To have read widely and deeply, to have soaked oneself in the words and ideas of other writers, to have seen what is possible and wonderful, to have listened to the music of their words and to have read the work of the masters must be a help for any writer discovering his own technique, her own voice.

A study conducted by Dr. Dorothy Cohen (1968) for her doctoral dissertation with disadvantaged second grade children in a New York elementary school to test the value of oral reading of literature to increase reading achievement, found that presenting books as a source of pleasure and strengthening vocabulary offered wider language models than the disadvantaged child's social environment provides. The results reveal that the improvement of the experimental group over the control group was significant in vocabulary, word knowledge and reading comprehension; marginal in quality of vocabulary and insignificant in word discrimination. Among the conclusions were that associating language learning with intellectual and emotional experiences strengthens the student's language power and that reading to socially disadvantaged children helps to overcome their lack of experience with books and increases their perception of meaning and word skills.

D'Alessandro (1990) undertook research on the introduction of a literature-based reading programme for emotionally handicapped children, and found that not only did they learn to read more proficiently, but also there was a measurable increase in their desire to read. Englert et al. (1995) explored the effect of an integrated reading-writing

programme that utilised children's literature for the development of literacy with mildly intellectually handicapped children, and reported positive benefits of this approach. Children experiencing learning difficulties were exposed to children's literature. A longitudinal study of low socioeconomic status students with African-American background in kindergarten and first grade was undertaken by Sulzby (1993). Despite the fact that these children were unable to read, they responded positively to stories and picture books that identified with their personal circumstances. Collins and Aiex (1995) argue that talented and gifted students may not have their needs met without adequate access to children's literature and note that a differentiated reading program is appropriate for these learners. Nancy Pollett (2000:2) recommends that gifted children who are often not allowed develop 'an elasticity of mind should be exposed to meaningful books, including fantasies that will teach them about life. These children like all other children need 'not only mystery, awe and wonder but also laughter, joy and delight (Pollett, 2000:3). Seney (2006) advises against using the classics with gifted children on the grounds that these books do not deal with contemporary issues and that children, even gifted children do not have the life experience to appreciate these literary treasures fully. Thompson (2009:1) disagrees with this view and advocates teaching classics that have endured and mean something to gifted children to 'elevate the highest spirits of humanity'. In Thompson's (2009:1) view 'The classics are a repository of ideas revealing the mind of the world'.

Not only does the literature suggest that exposure to good quality literature attribute benefits to children's language development but specific benefits are also noted in the area of linguistic competence.

2.4.5.1 Linguistic Competence

The linguistic advantage children enjoy when they are exposed to quality literature from a very early age is loudly proclaimed by researchers. Extensive reading has a definite influence on the development of linguistic skills, and the earlier and more conclusive the contact with books the better (Clark, 1976; Meek, 1988; Mc Dowall, 2014; Thompson, 2009). According to Meek (1988) early contact with stories and poems has the greatest single effect on a child's linguistic development. Phillippa Mc Dowal's (2014) recent research shows that children who had been at school for a longer period, and children from homes with greater resources, had higher reading outcomes in both the first and second year at school. Parent-involvement practices also had predictive associations with child reading and growth trajectories. Michael C.

Thompson (2009) claims that exposing young children to good quality literature has various aims, including developing students' interpretive skills, vocabulary, writing sensitivities and human feelings while at the same time informing students about famous writers and characters and titles that populate the world's consciousness. Winch et al. (2004) outline the important roles that literature plays in the cognitive and linguistic development of children, being the focus for their speaking and listening skills and giving them a purpose and a direction and a place where they encounter a variety of possible views on philosophical issues, world happenings, social ideas and cultural practices in a non threatening way. According to Foster and Johnson (2004) children who are frequently exposed to good quality literature tend to develop high linguistic competence. The more experience a child has with literature, the more the child will be able to comprehend story meaning and predict upcoming story events. In a paper entitled *Teaching Classic Literature*, Shaw (2006) believes that to be ignorant of the world's great stories is to rob oneself of enlightenment and to deprive oneself of the joy of lively characters and unique settings. He continues to hail the value of good quality literature with the words 'the classics can provide all readers with the greatest gift of all, our magnificent language. A reader exposed to classic literature can't help but be exposed to a huge vocabulary'. Carter (2000:21) maintains that children respond in different ways to literature where language is in the background, such as storytelling, and literature such as Shakespeare, where language is in the foreground, acknowledging that both kinds of verbal form are of equal importance as both help children to develop fully as 'users of their language and gain a mastery of story structure and personal style'. When, according to Carter (2002), a child engages with a story where text is in the background he will use words he already has to enact the story, but when a child engages with say the works of Shakespeare the child is likely to mix elements from Shakespeare's text with his own response.

At a time when children seem to be coming to school with an increasingly limited vocabulary, exposure to the rich language of quality literature is essential (Biemiller, 2003). Coles (1984:160), an eminent child psychiatrist has written about this exposure to story and literature:

> Novels and stories are renderings of life; they can not only keep us company, but admonish us, point us in new directions, or give us courage to stay a given course. They can offer us kinsmen, kinswomen, comrades, advisers-offer us other eyes through which we might see, other ears with which we might make soundings.

In research conducted by theorists including Galda et al. (2000), Fuhler (1990), Hade (1999), Meek (1988) and Sipe (1997), multiple benefits of using literature in the

classroom were found. These findings show that literature not only assists children to learn to read but also helps them develop an appreciation for reading as a pleasurable aesthetic experience, while stretching the imagination, eliciting a wealth of emotions and developing compassion. Another benefit highlighted in the research was the ability of good quality literature to generate questions and new knowledge, afford vicarious experiences of other worlds and provide encounters with different beliefs and values. Stahl (1998) acknowledges all these values but prioritises its value to develop and refine a child's development, arguing that children who read more have a richer vocabulary. Zhang and Alex (1995) bemoan the fact that in teacher-centred classrooms, dominated by teacher discourse and worksheets, the development of oral language is not as progressive as that where literature dominates.

E .B. White (1973:140) a famous children's writer, makes the following observation about the language of literature we present to children:

> Anyone who writes down to children is simply wasting his time. You have to write up not down. Some writers for children deliberately avoid using words they think a child doesn't know. This emasculates the prose and bores the reader. Children love words that give them a hard time, provided they are in a context that absorbs their attention.

However Mc Dowell (1973) and Lukens (2012) argue that the language in literature for children should be child oriented and simple, while Stewig (1995) Saxby (1997) and Babbit (1973) favour language that is rich and varied, fresh and imaginative. According to Winch et al. (2004:402), children's literature provides a 'wonderful opportunity for children to see language in action', and they also note the relationship between literatures based activities and oracy, observing that 'guided discussion promotes many literate oracy behaviours, it improves vocabulary, offers opportunities for more sophisticated sentence construction and syntax and lets children hear the sound of words as their peers say them'. Lin (2006) recommends using activities based on literature to enhance children's communication skills and self confidence. Huck et al. (2001:12) assert that literature plays an important role in all aspects of language development, stating that when young children are read to their own phonological production increases significantly. Like Galda and Cullinan (2000) and Lin (2006), Huck et al.'s claims lack any specific evidence. Fox (1993:185) in studying children's language development notes that storytelling and listening to stories 'exposes children to linguistic and narrative conversations'. Evaluative thinking about literature focuses discussion. In research conducted by those authors they found that children who are taught to read in a basal reader programme begin to speak in the unnatural way basal

sentences are constructed, while children exposed to good quality literature develop language which is elevated, more imaginative, colourful and conversational. Researchers such as Cazden (1974) and Whitehurst et al. (1988) have also found that children tend to assume the language and the attitudes inherent in the language to which they are most frequently exposed.

The benefits of literature for children's cognitive and aesthetic development appears to be well researched and well established, but for many children reading and writing have become activities almost exclusively associated with school (Sloan, 1991). The question remains as to why children who are able to read choose not to.

2.5 Children Reading for Pleasure in the Twenty First Century

Famous Polish poet and Nobel prize winner Wislawa Szymborska (2002) maintains that reading a book is the most important game that people have yet invented in the preface to her book *Nonrequired Reading.* Reading for pleasure or voluntary reading has long been enthusiastically endorsed by reading researchers and the tenets advanced in favour of this activity are varied. Reading for pleasure is:

- a form of play that allows the child to experience other worlds and roles in their imagination (Pullman, 2004),
- an important gateway to personal development (Holden, 2004),
- a way to combat social exclusion and raise educational standards (OECD, 2011).

Krashen (1993:85), a major proponent of the value of reading for pleasure expresses his unrestrained view:

> When children read for pleasure, when they get hooked on books, they acquire involuntarily and without conscious effort nearly all the language skills many people are so concerned about; they will become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use grammatical constructions, develop a good writing style, and become good (but not necessarily perfect) spellers.

Despite these findings, over the past thirty years many surveys have highlighted that reading for pleasure is certainly not a firm habit with the majority of primary school children, and less so with those in secondary school in Ireland and throughout the world. Anderson et al.'s (1985) study in the U.S. with ten year old revealed that reading books occupied less than 1% of the children's free time. Sloan (1991:3), investigating

early childhood education in New York revealed that 'in this electronic age children are likely to feel no urgent need to read or write while for many children reading and writing have become activities almost exclusively associated with school'. This, despite the manifold benefits of pleasure reading identified by researchers such as Clark and Rumbold (2006) which include personal and social development and greater academic achievement. In a study carried out by Weis and Cerankosky (2010) into the effects of video games on the academic abilities and behaviour of young boys, results showed that after four months the boys who used the video games displayed more academic problems at school and had lower reading and writing scores than their console-less peers. According to Trelease (2013) many educators have pointed out that a child must actively use a variety of skills when reading while viewing television requires no such mental activity. Winn (1985:59) has no doubt that watching television requires only passive intake because 'the mind does not have to decode and manipulate during the television watching experience'. Johnson-Smeragdi and Jonsson (2006) examined whether new forms of media were contributing to the lack of interest in reading among young children. In their research they examined over two decades worth of data regarding children's reading habits and found that many potential readers are attracted to alternatives such as television, the internet and video games which all impede on their reading development. In an article in *School Library Journal,* Leonard Sax (2007) expresses the same concern and cites video games as the main distraction from real world pursuits such as reading. The Human Science Research Council monitored children's viewing habits in South Africia over a twelve year period and found that children in grades five to twelve average twenty hours of viewing a week, accounting for almost half their leisure time (Geyser, 1986, cited in du Toit, 2001). The research established that a child in this age group spends more time watching television than he or she spends talking to parents, playing with peers, or reading books. Dr Sigman (2012) a psychologist and child health expert claims that a child born today will have spent a full year glued to screens by the age of seven and that the length of time children spend viewing television and using smart phones, laptops and game consoles has been linked to attention problems and other psychological difficulties at school.

Purves and Niles (1984:5) concur with these findings, viewing television time as time that 'usurps family time, play time, and the reading time that could promote language development', while Lesson (1985:187) blames television for the poor quality writing style adopted by modern authors writing for young people where 'dialogue enjoys far greater importance than description or reflection and where clipped sentences and meaningless slang abound'. However researchers such as Marsh and Millard (2000)

and Robinson and Mackey (2003) argue that far from being competitive, the process involved in the reading of print and television texts have been shown to be comparable and interactive with popular culture and moving image texts enhances motivation for engaging with related print based texts. Robinson (1997) argues that notions which see reading and television as oppositional and unrelated are inadequate and misleading and advises teachers to take greater account of the strategies and competencies that children bring to the classroom from their home viewing experiences and to draw on this prior experiences to enhance the children's reading of print narratives. Findings from a development project investigating children's reading in Finland includes the ample supply of foreign films on television with sub titles instead of dubbing as a social structure that supports reading in the Finnish culture and claims that while watching these films, Finnish children, who according to the PISA studies are among the best readers in the world develop a quick reading routine. However the report also says that net surfing and texting have increased reading and writing as a leisure habit, although it has decreased the reading of books.

Michele Dunaway (2010) disagrees vehemently and considers television, video games, iPods and website surfing the huge enemy of reading that is preventing children from getting lost in the imaginative world created by the author. According to Dunaway (2010) in an article entitled *Choosing literature in an age of distraction,* 'with the accessibility of electronics students would rather be texting and twittering than reading'. Claire Tomalin (2012), an acclaimed biographer of Charles Dickens, warned that modern youngsters do not have the attention span necessary to read one of his novels and claimed modern education was doing nothing to develop such skills in pupils. She claimed that today's children have very short attention spans because they are being reared on dreadful television programmes which are flickering away in the corner, and are not being educated to have a prolonged attention span which is required to read a Charles Dickens novel. However the decline in voluntary reading should not only be attributed to the deleterious influence of television and other electronic media on the reading habits of young people. Almost half a century ago before the electronic media had become as pervasive as they have in the past twenty years, Gesell and Ames (1956) identified a definite reading decline around the age of fifteen.

The lack of interest in reading for pleasure is not confined to children in the US. Clark and Foster (2005) reported on selected results of a comprehensive survey of children's reading in England, carried out online in 2005 with eight thousand children aged four to sixteen years, by the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature at

Roehampton University. According to the report, girls reported reading more frequently and gaining more enjoyment from reading than boys. Reading enjoyment declined with age, with primary school children enjoying reading significantly more than those in secondary school. However, the report reveals that this greater enjoyment of primary school children's reading outside school consists of a preference for jokes, magazines and comics. A study carried out by the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) in 2007 revealed that children today prefer engaging with multimodal screen-based texts such as TV and DVD over those composed mainly of words. Findings from new National Literacy Trust research (2010) reveals that 86% of young people in the UK own a mobile phone, while only 73% have books of their own. This study of over 17,000 young people highlights a strong link between both young people's reading ability and access to books at home(Clark 2011).

The findings from the 2012 National Literacy Trust's annual survey (Clark, 2013) found that children are reading less as their lives get more crowded. The number of children who read daily outside the class had dropped from four young people in 10 at the end of 2005 to three young people in 10 in 2011. This report outlines findings about young people's reading from a literacy survey conducted in 2011. Nearly 21,000 young people aged eight to sixteen form schools in England Wales and Scotland participated.

The report acknowledges that young people who enjoy reading very much are nearly five times as likely to read above the expected level for their age compared with young people who do not enjoy reading at all.

- 17% of those surveyed would be embarrassed if their friends saw them reading
- 54% of those questioned said they preferred watching TV to reading
- Of those who did read outside class, 47.8% said they read fiction, down from 51.5% in 2005.
- The number of children who read magazines, comics and even read from websites had dropped 10% on average since 2005.

These findings suggest a clear issue with children's leisure time with many children enjoying reading but preferring to use their leisure time for other activities such as television.

A survey of three thousand parents and children in the UK commissioned for Booktime and Booked Up has found, contrary to many other surveys that the love of reading is growing among children, although the report failed to include the type of material the

children choose to read. The report which was published in 2009 also reveals that although 97% of the parents surveyed said they read with their children, only 32% reported doing so on a daily basis. In today's economic climate parents face ever-increasing pressures and demands on their time, such as long working hours, getting home late, tiredness or spending time online, which directly impacts on opportunities for sharing a book with their children. Despite 90% of the children interviewed, who were aged between seven and twelve, saying they enjoyed reading, 55% of the parents interview said their child spent more time facing a screen, playing computer games and watching DVDs than reading.

Sainsbury and Clarkson (2008) conducted a study which looked at attitudes to reading amongst primary school pupils. The report was based on survey responses from a nationally representative sample of pupils from 61 primary schools in UK and was a follow up to similar surveys undertaken in 1998 and 2003. Key findings from the study revealed the following:

- overall, attitudes to and enjoyment of reading, and children's confidence and independence as readers remained much the same between 2003 and 2007;
- girls enjoy reading more than boys;
- the enjoyment of reading poetry at school declined since 2003;
- comics have overtaken other text types in popularity since 2003. Whilst they were popular in 2003, they are now the most popular, since enjoyment of reading stories and information books has fallen by comparison;
- reading at home generally declined with children saying that they now read fewer stories, newspapers, information books, and poetry than in 2003.

Kimberly Reynolds (2005), a professor in children's literature in Newcastle UK, reveals the results of studies carried out in Australia, Denmark, England and Ireland into children's reading habits. In all four countries the majority of the young people surveyed said 'they enjoy reading and they read regularly' (Reynolds, 2005:98). The studies unanimously reveal that when children first come to school they relish reading and being read to, but usually between the ages of nine to eleven the majority of children, especially boys, begin to read much less. In Ireland enjoyment of reading is shown to decline steadily after the age of twelve. In all four countries the notable tendency to move away from reading is sustained with age. The respondents in the

survey identified the pressures responsible for this decline as a lack of time, involvement in extracurricular activities such as swimming, gymnastics, art or music. Another aspect which the students identified is the lack of the right mental and physical space for reading. Reynolds (2005) draws her own conclusions from the results of these surveys and notes that if children are to be turned into lifelong committed readers, parents may need to schedule time for reading in the same way they do for other activities, develop a love of reading in their children by associating it with pleasure and lastly she draws attention to the findings of a survey carried out by the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature (NCRCL, 1996). This survey found that the most active readers of both sexes, at all ages were those whose parents, continue to share books with them, even when they are sixteen (in the case of boys, it was noted that fathers were particularly important).

A report released in July 2010 by the Centre for Policy Studies in UK states that London is suffering from an 'epidemic of illiteracy'. The report relates that one third of children have difficulty with reading when they leave London's primary schools at the age of eleven. The author of the report Marian Gross (2010), insists that methods where the child decodes words by combining letters and sounds are the most effective, and blames teachers for not using these methods despite recommendations from the government to do so. Contrary to the views of many educationists who claim that children learn to read by reading, Gross (2010) favours the synthetic phonic approach in isolation and blames the neglect of this system on the decline of reading. She also blames children's reluctance to read on teachers' inability to spell, and the use of the real book approach where children are given books to take home which include words which they cannot read. Michael Morpurgo, who was children's laureate in the UK from 2003 to 2005 also discusses the state of literacy within the UK classroom and reveals that despite a wealth of children's books being published and read each year, and despite literacy being a major focus of government education policy, one in every five children in the UK leave school without being able to read or write properly. He explains that there is an ever widening gap between children who read and those who do not. The millions of children who buy books and visit libraries are according to Morpurgo (2003) more likely to fulfil their potential in life and become avid readers as adults, than the millions of children who do not read. According to Children's Rights Alliance (2010) in a report on child literacy in Ireland one child in ten leaves primary school with literacy difficulties, this rises to one in three in disadvantaged areas. According to this report's findings, a lack of basic skills in reading in Irish primary schools deter children from developing the habit of reading outside school. Eivers et al.

(2005) argue that in Ireland, pre service training in relation to the teaching of reading is not fully meeting the needs of teachers or pupils and in-service development is unsatisfactory for identifying and dealing with reading difficulties.

Yet despite the above findings, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2011) that monitored the reading habits and backgrounds of fourth class pupils in Ireland's primary schools and compared them to children of a comparable educational level in over 50 countries has found that Irish children are above the international average, Ireland being placed tenth. In Ireland 78 per cent of parents reported that they had more than 25 children's books at home compared to an international average of 59 per cent. The percentage of Irish children who reported more than 100 books in the home (33 per cent) was also above the international average of 29 per cent. Responding to the findings, the general secretary of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO, 2011), Sheila Nunan, former president, said 'There are significantly higher scores in reading since 2007 and this report shows that Ireland has reduced the number of children reading at a low level'.

The decline in reading for pleasure among young people has also been investigated in non-English speaking countries. Beliaeva (2009) calls for a change in teaching methods in Russian schools because recent surveys in that country show that young people are reading less as they get older. According to Beliaeva (2009) Russian students are no longer reading as much and lack motivation to acquaint themselves with literature of high artistic quality. The ever increasing pace of life and the influence of television and other mass media are drawing young people away from the Russian Classics that once enabled that generation on Russians to think about moral, social and economic problems. Beliaeva (2009:61) calls the literature that is now infiltrating the Russian classrooms 'cheap sheets' which is being used to 'jog through information', and calls on teachers to seek out effective ways to improve the teaching of literature. Anna Janus-Sitarz (2009), researcher and educator at the university in Krakow in Poland, examines the causes of non reading against a background of transformation in civilizations. She conducted a survey with 556 fifteen year olds in ten towns in Poland in which just 26% declared that they read in their spare time. Reading took last place to socialising, listening to music, engaging in sports, computer games, cinema and the internet. Janus-Sitarz (2009) suggests reasons for the decline in reading:

- enforced reading in schools;

- general aversion of youth to reading;
- the family home, where stories are read to children but are now replaced by television cartoons;
- multimedia which competes with books, diverting potential readers from them and tempting them with ease of access.

Studies by the National Library's Book and Reading Institute provide evidence regarding the reading gap in Poland. A survey by the Polish educators Golebiewski et al. in 2006 found that reading only takes place out of obligation for school or work while half of the Polish people did not read even one book, 8% worse than in 2004 and 19% worse than in 1992. In the course of two years over two million people in Poland stopped reading and the greatest percentage drop was evident in young people.

Studies conducted in France reveal a similar manifestation of the state of non reading. Roland Barthes (1982) wrote in *La Plaisir du Texte* that every second French person does not read and that the ability to desire pleasure from literature is mysteriously vanishing. More than a quarter of a century later the subject of lack of pleasure in reading by young French people is again addressed by Daniel Pennac (2008). He blames parents and teachers for forcing children to read in the period when they begin to read independently and relates with regret that what used to be a magical time when stories were read now becomes pure torment with unreasonable expectations being placed on the young child.

Academic literary studies specialist Eric Donald Hirsch (2006) blames the decline in reading for pleasure among young people in the United States on the school system which in his opinion does not develop proper literacy skills but prepares students to answer text questions. The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People in Ireland published by the Department of Education and Skills in 2011, acknowledges that the opportunity provided by the syllabus for Junior Certificate in secondary schools in Ireland engages students with a range of literary and non-literary texts but highlights the fact that this opportunity is not fully exploited in classrooms due to a focus on teaching to the examination and an overuse of textbooks which largely promote lower-order thinking skills.

Powling et al. (2003) have argued strongly that the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and national tests have discouraged children from reading for pleasure in the UK because enjoyment was not a priority in the primary or secondary strategies. Sainsbury and Schagen (2004) also lay blame for the decline in reading for pleasure

recorded between results obtained in 1998 and 2003 on the introduction of National Literacy Strategy. However they also concede that advances in technology and other cultural changes may have caused this change in reading attitudes. Janus-Sitarz (2009) identifies a similar problem in the Polish Education system which in her opinion is doing nothing to motivate children to read and is not giving the children a chance to express their own views. Judy Kravis (1995), who taught literature in Cork University disagrees and does not lay the blame on teachers or school authorities but on the fact that 'the wonders of the world have changed'. Students were once attracted by words but are now fascinated by moving images. As a result of this situation Kravis (1995:6) envisages most teachers of literature introducing books to students who are not attracted by words. Philip Pullman, prizewinning children's author, argues that we are creating a generation that 'hates reading and feels nothing but hostility for literature' Pullman in writing in *The Guardian Review* (2003) observes that enjoyment of reading is not a priority of the national literacy strategy for English primary schools, stating that he recently was struck by the seventy one verbs used in the sections referring to reading in key stages one to three of the NLS. The verbs referring to reading included among others reinforce, predict, check and discuss but the verb enjoy did not appear even once.

Elley's (1992) claim that barriers such as adverse home, school and economic environments and Chall's (1996) claim that insufficient language stimulation and limited intellectual ability all contribute to failure to progress in reading is substantiated in a study by Clark and Akerman (2006) which shows that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds read less for enjoyment than children from more privileged socioeconomic classes. In a report summarising the findings of the 2009 National Assessment of English Reading (Eivers et al., 2010) with four thousand second class pupils and four thousand sixth class pupils in Irish primary schools a similar result was evident and lower pupil achievement was linked to low socioeconomic status, parent unemployment, membership of the Travelling Community, living in a one parent household and being part of a large family. However the home process variables that were positively related to achievement included parents reading for pleasure, the availability of books in the home, parents' confidence in their ability to assist their child with reading and pupils spending no more than a moderate amount of time on school days on the internet or playing computer games.

Yet despite the general consensus among educationalists and despite myriad surveys showing that there is a decline in children reading for pleasure in the past decade some surveys conducted in the UK have shown that the majority of children do read for

pleasure. Nestle Family Monitor (2003) which surveyed nine hundred and fourteen pupils aged from eleven to eighteen in England and Wales reported that 83% of the young people read books in their spare time. Yet one third of those interviewed agreed that they have better things to do in their spare time than read books. In a survey of eight thousand primary and secondary school pupils, Clark and Foster (2005) found that half the sample enjoyed reading quite a lot. Both of the above surveys revealed that girls enjoy reading more than boys and that reading for pleasure decreases as pupils enter their teenage years. This decline is also evident in the Scottish analysis of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data (2003) which reveals that one third of fifteen year old Scottish pupils never or hardly ever read for pleasure. The 2009 PISA results show that Irish students ranking in reading has fallen from 5th in the PISA league tables in 2000 to 17th in 2009 among the thirty four countries that participated in both rounds of PISA (Perkins et al., 2011). Although the general consensus for the drop in achievement was contributed to factors such as the profile of Ireland's student population and Ireland's success in encouraging all students to remain in education, these results and other statistics showing that one in ten children in Irish schools has serious difficulty with reading or writing and that the literacy skills of students in Irish primary schools, measured by the National Assessments of English Reading, have not improved in over thirty years, despite considerable investments in reducing pupil-teacher ratios, the introduction of learning support, the provision of better teaching materials and considerable curricular reform, resulted in the Minister for Education launching a major national plan in 2011 to improve literacy in schools. The National Strategy (DES, 2011: 47) states that 'reading activity gives learners access to a world of knowledge, ideas and situations outside their own experience which can help to consolidate and extend all aspects of their learning' and includes fostering an enjoyment of reading among children and young people as one of the national improvement targets.

Many theorists offer suggestions on what teachers can do to encourage students to develop a love of literature. Camp (2007) suggests that teachers should develop and support programmes that promote parental involvement and inform parents about their children's literacy skills as well as offer guidance on how to read with their children. Cron and Taylor (2008) view the situation as far from helpless and list a number of strategies, such as altering teaching methods and revising curricula that they feel would have the desired effect in reducing the decline in reading for pleasure. Anderson et al. (1988) offer their solution for the problem and believe that teachers who provide time for sustained silent reading, who share books and highlight book authors with

children during the school day, positively influence those children's reading outside of school. Dr. Anna Janus-Sitarz (2009) believes that if teachers listen to their students they will be inspired to create situations that will motivate the young people to read. Slovenian educationalists, Vonta and Balic (2002) stress that a child will learn to love books only by living with them every day. Adults must know how vital it is to involve books in the child's everyday life and introduce books in a manner that takes into account the child's individual and developmental characteristics. Trelease (2013:97) believes that television is the major stumbling block to literacy and boldly claims that exposure to good quality literature is the only way in which the detrimental influence of the language used on television and video games and the 'primal grunts and groans of a rock album can be countered'. Among the recommendations offered by the Children's Alliance (2010) to impact a positive influence on children's literacy in Ireland are the following: development of oral language, targeted literacy interventions, structured literacy programmes, increase in time spent on reading in school, parent involvement and sustained professional development for teachers. Morpurgo (2003) offers the following solutions to the problem:

- Parents need programmes that will educate them in the importance of reading to their children.
- Teachers need training that will help them develop a love of books so they can pass this on to their pupils.
- More time needs to be devoted to the teaching of literature within the English curriculum;
- More books need to be made available within the classroom.
- A well stocked library and a librarian should be obligatory in every school, as it is in New Zeland.
- The media to help by restoring storytelling programmes on radio and television.

According to Pressley (2006:56) 'the frequent admonition for children to read, read, read makes sense in that extensive reading promotes fluency, vocabulary and background knowledge'. Becoming a lifelong reader is dependent on developing a love of reading (see also Sanacore, 2002). Although the cornerstone for lifelong reading is laid for a child in his early years, we also know that it is never too late to start reading for pleasure (Sheldrick et al., 2005).

2.6 Conclusion

The material in this chapter has presented an understanding of what is considered literature and non literature. From the evidence put forward in this chapter it is reasonable to assert that good quality literature plays an important role in the primary school curriculum, complimenting as the literature sources show, literacy and language learning in the primary classroom. Attention has been paid to the power of quality literature to develop and educate the child's imaginative powers, empower him to cope with his emotions and personal problems and help him to build empathy with others, living and dead. Research into the lack of interest among young people in reading, both nationally and internationally was investigated and reasons for and solutions to this decline were highlighted. Based on the evidence presented, I claim that there is sufficient research to support the claim that good quality literature plays an important part in both the educational and social life of the child but one of the issues which arises is that teachers need to be aware of the importance of exposing their students to such literature. The next chapter will focus specifically on exploring the role of the teacher in both choosing suitable literature and methods to teach it in primary school. The recommendations of the curricula in Ireland and in other English speaking countries will be examined in relation to the value of good quality literature to the primary school child which is the main focus of this study.

Chapter 3

The Teaching of Literature

3.1 Introduction

The focus in this chapter is on the teaching of literature within the formal school system with particular reference to the primary school and the role of the teacher. This chapter will seek to discover if the role of the teacher in the study of literature plays any part in children's attitude to such literature. Does the role the teachers play impact upon the child's receptivity of good quality literature or has good quality literature a place in the primary school curriculum irrespectively? As was demonstrated in the previous chapter quality literature is valid and important for young primary school children to engage with. This chapter will now examine the teacher's role and ask when should literature become a part of a child's education? The importance of a teacher's attitude to literature and personal knowledge of suitable literature for her class and approaches to selecting literature will be examined. An investigation into the teaching methods used and how teachers approach the teaching of literature will be evaluated in the light of the available research in this area. The place and value of literature in the English curriculum down through the centuries and in contemporary society will be presented. Although many educationalists have examined the role of the home and parents in this debate, it is not within the scope of this study to explore this area in depth.

3.2 Teacher's Role in Exploring Literature in Schools

For the teacher literature-based instruction should mean more than just providing pupils with quality literature, but involves the teacher in supporting her students in reading and responding to this literature in exciting and interesting ways. As Wells (1990) indicates, children and young adults develop literacy by experiencing and getting support from adults or peers. Research clearly shows that literature-based instruction helps all students become better readers (Tunnell and Jacobs, 1989). Reading a story is an imaginative collaboration between reader and author from which a secondary world is created. The literature teacher has the delicate task of helping to maintain and develop the relationship between the reader's freely taken pleasure in a story and the discipline imposed by the text (Benton and Fox, 1985).

Contemporary educational thought accentuates the significant role the teacher plays in exposing children to good quality literature. There is nothing new in this recognition, since this important role was recognised when the teaching of English literature was in its infancy in British schools in the nineteenth century. In 1855 first principal of The Working Man's College in London, F.D. Maurice said that literature offered contact with the great minds and a bond of fellowship regardless of class or creed, and advised teachers that their first duty was to arouse the enthusiasm of their students (Woods, 1990). Pollock (2007) recognises the importance of enthusiastic teachers and sees their role in teaching literature as extremely important, yet simple if the teacher is excited about the literature he wants his students to read. Pollock believes the best teaching is done by teachers who are moved by the literature. Such teachers help children to find out what authors have to say and build a bridge between the students and the worlds they encounter in literature so that the child will grasp the full meaning the work of literature has to convey. Murray (2013) believes that teacher enthusiasm has a potential impact on both pupil and teacher and is a factor in the description of an effective teacher. David J. Rostron (cited in Chapman, 1976:42), while acting as Head of the English Department in Jordanhill College in Glasgow emphasises the role the primary school teachers play in introducing children to literature at an early age when he states that:

> Children who acquire the reading habit while in primary school are unlikely ever to lose it; those for whom literature remains dull and inaccessible are deprived not only of important academic skills but also of access to a storehouse of pleasure and happiness.

To acquire this reading habit and to help children connect with literature, Wolf (2004) advises teachers to select books that will get children talking about literature and life, and then help the children express their literary response through writing, visual arts and drama. Fenwick (1990) agrees that if enthusiasm for literature is not fostered in the primary school, children will not become committed readers when they transfer to secondary school. To awaken this enthusiasm in children he claims that the presence of books in schools is not enough; children must be taught literature with enthusiasm by teachers because even very attractive books might not appeal to children in comparison to computers and video games. Unless the literature that is being taught excites and attracts the teacher, it will have little effect on the child. Fenwick (1990:ix) states 'when there is adequate time to read books and when strategies which develop children's responses to them are in use, then teaching children literature really takes off'. Huus (1973) advises teachers that when teaching literature, following known or expressed interests of children is not enough, teachers have a responsibility to provide

a literature programme which creates new interests in topics that pupils did not know existed. By teaching literature with enthusiasm teachers fulfil the primary goal of language arts programmes which is to develop a lifelong love of reading so that children will choose to read. Huck et al. (1987:366) outlines for the teacher what the objectives of teaching literature should include:

- to encourage a lifelong love of literature;
- to give children ample time to read;
- to structure classrooms where reading is seen as an authentic and enjoyable activity;
- to encourage discussion about the text read;
- to respond creatively;
- to introduce readers to a wide range of the best authors, living and dead.

To instil a love of literature in their pupils that will lead to them becoming lifelong readers, Knowles and Smith (2001) recommends that teachers ensure that their current reading programme is meeting the needs of the students, allow the students time to read in class every day, value their students' opinions about what they read and encourage them to be enthusiastic in both choosing and reading the literature. Pilon's (1989:2) idea of what a teacher's aims in teaching literature should be is basically to 'help children realise the delight and magic of words, become word gatherers and discover the new vistas of the wonders and joy of language'. Popp (2005) says it is vitally important to create the best possible collection of books for your students to read for pleasure and inquiry. This important role the teacher plays in guiding children in a love and appreciation of quality literature is again acknowledged by Lo Monico (2002), senior consultant for national education at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington. In his paper *Why We Teach Literature and How We Could Do It Better* he states that the role of teachers is to change students' perceptions about the value of literature and to encourage them to love literature as much as they do. In his view one of the major reasons literature is taught is to get children to appreciate the aesthetic beauty of the words and sentences, because:

> The wonderful sound of those words, the gorgeous flow of those well-crafted sentences, and the marvelous way Twain and Dickens and Melville and Shakespeare and Salinger chose just the right words.

Kortner (1990) supports this idea when he explains that as children grow and develop, the refining of the basic skills that make up the language arts, listening, speaking,

reading, and writing is accomplished more easily in an environment that offers the varied language experiences that come with literature. Such a programme requires a teacher who is enthusiastic about using real books, knowledgeable about what kind of materials are available, and eager to help students develop interest and enthusiasm in reading. To enable the child develop this interest, Kortner sees it as the responsibility of the teacher to provide time for a variety of literary experiences and to promote interest in and favorable attitudes towards fine literature.

Mc Garrell (1995) asks the question, can teachers teach literature in a way to provide pleasure and benefit for young readers? She believes that this is not only possible but essential and adds that the best teachers of literature to young children are those who have been encouraged to fall in love with great writing themselves at an early age. Canadian authors, Bainbridge and Pantaleo (1999) suggest that teachers are in a unique position to make links between children and particular books, and add that to engage children in the lively process of making sense of meaningful and important stories is one of the privileges of teaching. While acknowledging the importance of the use of Reading Series in schools these authors warn that these series are contrived and artificial, designed only to encourage code breaking, while literature challenges readers to make inferences to analyse the text, and to predict events and outcomes. They advise teachers to consider literature as an essential component, not alone learning how to read but also learning how to appreciate reading as a pleasurable aesthetic experience. *Wolf (2004) concurs with this, advising teachers to put the emphasis on reading to learn rather than on learning to read.* Cullinan and Galda (1994) clearly identify the importance of literature in the development of the child. They outline the social nature of learning and the need for interaction, and how literature can play an important part, pointing out that children grow in their ability to understand literature, as they gain experience with life, and that the teacher is a powerful determinant of that response. So all teachers should be exposed to literature suitable for their students and should learn to analyse books using definitive criteria. Teachers should know how to develop a literature based curriculum, one where all children will love to learn and read from books. Longo (2006) encourages teachers to employ the best teaching methods when teaching literature to young children to ensure that the child will enjoy the experience of reading and interpreting the texts, but more important this author believes that it is the responsibility of the teacher to choose suitable methods to engage the child so that she will develop as an independent reader able to choose her own literary texts and independently interpret their meanings.

Although the important role of the teacher is stressed here and has been highlighted for almost two centuries, a recent study by Cremin et al. (2008) in the UK which explored teachers' knowledge of the literature most suitable for young children reveals that primary professionals lean on a narrow repertoire of authors. This study also revealed that there was a marked lack of knowledge of poets among the 1,200 primary school teachers who were questioned and the authors argue that this lack of knowledge is restricting children's access to poetic voices in all their diversity. They suggest that knowledge of children's literature is a pre-requisite if teachers wish to nurture positive attitudes and develop young readers. Cremin et al. (2008) stress the urgency of more diverse literary forms being made available in schools and argue that teachers are able to recommend books and suggest named authors that will arouse children's imagination, foster their desire and enhance their pleasure in reading. These authors argue that children are more influenced by what teachers do than by what they say, and that a teacher who reads is the most important educational element in motivating children to read. Therefore, it is fundamental for teachers to read a variety of material in order to expand this knowledge of literature.

Lehman (1991) says one of the primary aims of reading instruction is to develop children who value and enjoy reading. As educators, we want children to associate reading with pleasure and to develop a lifelong habit and love of reading. Stoodt (1996:16) believes teachers can do this by sharing their own pleasure in literature, thus helping children to recognise the meaning and value that books can have in their lives. These enthusiastic teachers create classrooms where children read books, tell about their experience and learn to love them. Teachers who demonstrate a personal love for pleasure reading encourage their students to read and discuss books often (Gambrell, 2007; Pressley et al., 2001). Teachers demonstrate their love of reading by becoming explicit reading models who share their own reading experiences with the students in addition to reading aloud to the class. These experiences can be related to students through discussions about ways in which literature has personally affected teachers' lives, sharing passages or interesting vocabulary to students from personal reading experiences, or creating dialogue journals between teachers and students (Gambrell, 2007; Oldfather, 1993). The practice of relying upon extracts downloaded or purchased as part of publishers' packages has been criticised by researchers such as Frater (2002). Styles (2010) claims that in the last twenty years the teaching of reading in Britain has moved away from an interest in how children take a delight in and make meaning of their literature. The new approach to literacy, using an excess of related material for both teacher and pupil breaks down text into minor extracts which,

according to Styles (2010) fragments reading into a series of isolated skills. This approach has not been particularly successful in raising literacy standards but has on the contrary, according to Styles' findings, turned some children away from reading. In his research Styles has aimed to further an understanding of children's reading. His tentative findings suggest that whatever policy initiatives are taken in literacy, encouraging children to take pleasure in reading whole books of their own choosing should be a priority. Clark and Rumbold (2006) in a study conducted for The British National Literacy Trust note this discrepancy, that although literacy scores in Britain are rising, reading for pleasure is on the decline. According to Flannagan and Cregan (cited in Shiel, 2000) teachers in Irish schools participate in an education system which is preoccupied with and often overwhelmed by the everyday difficulties of teaching a child how to read. These authors argue that in Irish schools more emphasis is placed on the ability of the child to read and less on the quality of what he reads or the value of the experience of good literature for the child. Camp (2007:252), observing the education system in the United States, reports a similar problem, 'that while teachers are generally good at teaching students how to read, they are on the whole not doing an acceptable job of teaching them to want to read'. Cremin et al. (2008:67) argue that:

> The current international emphasis on phonics instruction in both the US and the UK has the potential to produce practice that is both fragmented and limited, practice in which the purpose of reading may be short-changed and the pleasure of literature sidelined'.

In England for example, in the *Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading* (Rose, 2006), the use of synthetic phonics is profiled and almost no explicit connections are made to meaningful motivating texts. In his report, Bullock (1975) recognises that private reading develops a child's linguistic and experiential development and acknowledges the important job the teacher in the primary school has in increasing the amount and range of a child's voluntary reading, and in influencing his choice of book especially in the case of a less able pupil. Acknowledging the school's role in developing a love of reading Bullock (1975:126) says 'It hardly needs saying that where reading has no status and books no place the incentives to read will be slight'.

Hughes et al. (2005) found an association between high teacher expectations and improved performance in the reading of first to third grade pupils. This may indicate that the point stressed by Charles B. Gilbert (1913:5) suggesting that 'to those from poor or sordid homes, literature should be made much of,' has fallen on deaf ears. Goodman and Gregg (2010) stress that teachers make it a priority that no child, regardless of status, is left behind in learning to read. Linda Leonard Lamme (1985)

professor of education at the University of Florida believes that all children including children from poorer backgrounds should be taught to love literature at a very early age and should have the opportunity to read books even if they are too young to write their own names on a card. Teachers should strive to select interesting and suitable text to arouse a child's interest and love of literature. Castleman and Littky (2007) claim that teachers should set helping students become learners for life as a priority when teaching and Atkinson describes motivation as the stimulant that stimulates children in their search for learning To secure a framework that allows the teacher and students to play, build, and learn together, Adomat (2005:11) recommends a classroom cultures that promotes motivation to read through a print-rich environment, opportunities for choice, opportunities to interact with others, and with a teacher who enthusiastically shares a love of reading with students. It is therefore imperative that teachers choose literature and methods to teach it that will motivate their students to gain a sense of ownership and personal connection with the literature they encounter so that they become lifelong readers. To do this teachers must be supported by education systems that offer the extra knowledge, training and financial support a teacher needs (Ladd, 2013).

3.3 Choosing Literature

'Children who have a rich variety of literary experiences become literate, caring, cultured, humanised and informed people' (Livington, cited in Stoodt, 1996:2). Many theorists believe the responsibility of choosing literature that will create those attributes in pupils rests with the teacher. Benton and Fox(1985:34) say 'literature teachers have a special responsibility for widening and developing children's knowledge and experience of stories and poems', while Writing in *The New York Times* Hirsch (1999) informs us that 'theory predicts that by teaching a high octane curriculum, teachers will raise children's reading and learning levels and narrow the achievement gap between social groups'. Barbara D. Stoodt (1996) encourages teachers to infuse a love of literature in their pupils, building this love and enthusiasm with an exposure to good books. When choosing quality literature for children, teachers should consider plot, characters, settings, style, theme and point of view. Story plays an important role in the world of the young child. When quality literature is chosen for children in the junior classes it is best in the form of a story the child can relate to and is interested in.

Wray and Medwell (2000) believe that the language of the stories we offer to children needs to be of an appropriate quality. They stress that there is nothing to be gained,

but a lot to lose by attempting to simplify this rich language. As Nodelman (1996:80) explains eloquently:

> Children become what we believe they are; assumptions about childhood have the potential to become self-fulfilling prophecies. The more we believe that children are limited in various ways, the more we deprive them of experiences that might make them less limited. If we believe that children have short attention spans, we won't expose them to long books. If we believe they cannot understand complicated language, we will give them only books with limited vocabularies.

Sloan (1991:45) also highlights the importance of introducing children to challenging literature that they are unlikely to find on their own, to broaden their experience: 'Broad experience with a wide variety of reading material of relative merit at all levels of difficulty is the best way to develop personal standards and expand sensibilities'. Smith (1979) believes that it is through exposure to literature of a high standard that children can develop and test their assumptions about the attributes of spoken and written language. Squire (1977:168) understands quality literature as a balance between old and new and recommends that teachers present both to their student:

> Old to establish the richness of our heritage and our continuity with the past, and contemporary to establish students' relationship with their world today and tomorrow and the joys and sorrows and stresses that are a part of contemporary literature and life.

Manzo and Manzo (1995:143) argue that although quality literature is merely an assumption, because literature is art and art is a matter of personal taste, yet certain works of literature to preserve our cultural heritage and make classroom discussion more meaningful while giving the child a taste for quality in adult life are essential, as are modern works of literature to establish an awareness of modern culture and ethnic diversity.

According to Early (1960), in her paper entitled *Stages of Growth in Literary Appreciation*, the foundation stage of teaching literature is 'a time of much unconscious delight in reading many pieces of literature'. In the elementary school the groundwork is laid for 'future self-conscious and the ultimate conscious appreciation of literature'. When literature is chosen for children in senior grades in primary school, the first priority should be that the child is interested in the material and that it will be of educational benefit to him or her. There should be conflicts to explore and resolve, and the story should encourage discussion. Nuba et al. (1999) believe that the choice of literature for primary school children should relate to their psychological development.

They see the first three to four years in primary school as a time when the inner workings of the child's mind are rich with fantasy, wonderment and bewilderment and at this stage books of fantasy provide timeless joy. Literature for the child from third to sixth grades should reflect the transition of children from a period where the world of the imagination often governs their thinking and behaviour to one where children have an acute awareness of the real world and the people in it as they actually exist. Wray and Medwell (2000) emphasise the importance of the child understanding and relating to what is being presented and argue that children are most attracted to stories with strong action packed plots containing quality language, and that it is of the utmost importance to the child to be able to identify with characters.

Carter (2000) maintains that a work of literature will only be suitable for primary school children if it is high in quality and sufficiently challenging while at the same time it concurs with the child's interests, psychological needs and potential for understanding. He argues that teachers need to broaden their choice of literature for children because literature written specifically for children is not enough, as it provides an insufficient experience of the world past, present and future and fails to reach the full heights of excellence which our children deserve. He agrees that it is important that children engage with the full range of literature written specifically for them but they also deserve access to 'great works which have become pillars of the culture. In a later publication Carter (2002) reiterates that a canon of great literature such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Milton and Swift is suitable for young children alongside the children's literature that they read themselves. Here he encourages primary school teachers to help children endow their reading of such works with 'a unique flavour and significance' (Carter, 2002:3), and advises that secondary school might be too late for many children to be introduced to great literature because the content of examinations would discourage rather than encourage children to love literature. 'Classical literature provides fictional and metaphoric worlds of a highly wrought kind, and children's involvement in such worlds can have considerable life-enhancing effects upon them' (Carter, 2002; 11). In a lofty thought Carter suggests that regular involvement in great works of literature can fire renaissance for children and then he compares this renaissance to the explosion of cultural activity which was sparked by the discovery of great works of literature from Greece and Rome in the fifteenth century. Other authors do not share Carter's view and this is evident in Hollindale's (1997:35) assertion:

> There is a frequent confusion between the kind of learning that occurs in the mature and the immature intelligence: the most we can expect from children is a good response to simple literature or a partial, unformed, insensitive response to major work. This

> misconception has had the practical effect of discouraging potentially valuable encounters with less distinguished but more accessible fictions, and instigating premature, deterrent confrontations with difficult classics.

Falconi (2011) disagrees and believes classics and youngsters can be joined if methods are employed to teach them that will not result in obligation and boredom which is synonymous with analysing and memorising. Falconi says adults need to seek ways to interest students in reading classics so that they will firstly understand, and then be able to identify with the story and its characters. She suggests choosing texts with a strong and interesting structure that help the children to find out the ending.

'Character development is one of the primary characteristics of quality literature' (Mills, 1995; 1), however, many authors have noted the deterioration of quality in children's books as the quantity of authors increases and add that children's literature has been sacrificed to commercial considerations. Flannagan and Cregan (cited in Shiel et al. 2000:44) acknowledge the decline in the quality of literature which is published for children as the twenty first century begins:

> There is a vast array of mediocre literature published today under the umbrella of children's literature and it is important that teachers ensure that pupils are introduced to quality literature such as the classics, works of Shakespeare and poetry. In this way the child will be afforded the opportunity to explore the world of the imagination and at the same time come to appreciate how language makes it vivid.

The revised curriculum guidelines encourage teachers to lead their pupils to an appreciation of the usefulness and pleasure of reading and a command of reading and comprehension skills by allowing them access to a wide range of texts and by encouraging them to read silently on a regular basis, yet newly marketed teacher resources for novels that have all students in the class reading the same book and spending excessive amounts of time on activities, worksheets, quizzes, and comprehension questions are being used extensively in primary schools in Ireland.

Michael C. Thompson (2009) believes that exposing children to quality literature in this age of global terrorism is more important than ever because these books will 'elevate the highest spirit of humanity'. In his view children love challenge, they love to read beautiful books with wonderful and imaginative ideas and by exposing children to quality literature their interpretive skills will develop while they learn about those famous writers and their characters 'that populate the world's consciousness'. He recommends introducing children to the classics at a young age because they have a 'multitasking essence that other seemingly strong books lack'. Even as they develop

students' interpretive skills, vocabularies, writing, sensitivities and human feelings they also 'inform students about famous writers, characters and titles that populate the world's consciousnesses'. Wolf (2004) highlights the intelligence of children and advises teachers against choosing smooth and sentimental books that will not challenge the child to think or question. If the ideas in a book are too simple, children will have nothing to discuss or talk about.

Although Bullock (1975) argues for the consideration of quality as opposed to non quality literature for children, Whitehead (1968) says there must be a balance of quality and non quality, while Ingham (1982) argues that non quality literature plays an important part is acquiring the reading habit and that teachers need to be as concerned with the development of a reading habit as they are with imparting knowledge. Fenwick (1990:146) favours a variety of quality and what may not be of the highest quality and warns that insisting on children reading 'good or appropriate books' all the time might result in boredom and resentment, yet later warns that what is being read should not be what he calls 'dross'. The distinguished writer Peter Dickinson's (1976) theory is that as long as children are reading and showing some personal development in their choice of literature and while teachers continue to test the quality and suitability of the books they offer children against their own critical judgment, then quality learning is taking place that it does not matter what is read just as long as the children are engaged in reading.

Sir Francis Bacon (1625) a great English philosopher and the first major English essayist, writing in the late sixteenth century, comments forcefully in his essay *Of Studies* on the value of reading and learning: 'some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention'. Ben Nelms (1966) in an article entitled *Reading for Pleasure in Junior High School* advocates a threefold approach to reading;

- browsing in classroom paperbacks or book displays.
- a programme of individualised reading, encouraging wide reading and the development of a lifetime habit of reading.
- in class study of selected pieces of literature linked to the individual reading.

According to Nelms (1966:11) the selected pieces of literature must be of the highest literary standard and more challenging than books they read on their own. The books chosen should be presented so that the study of them will be a pleasure and will lead

students to realise that occasionally in their own reading they will encounter books that will make more demands on them. To ensure that literature study serves for pleasure as well as for more educational purposes, Nelms (1966) proposes that the following elements must be present: The characters should capture the children's imagination, its theme haunt them, its style structure and symbolic implications call into play all their consciousness so that they will cherish in their memory as a thing of beauty and return to it again and again. Literature must provide enjoyment because unless the child finds pleasure in the work he will not listen attentively or absorb ideas to be remembered for ever. Although Nelms (1966) was writing more than forty years ago the same situation applies today. Dunaway (2010) warns teachers that by choosing the wrong literature in school they can make reading a torture for their pupils. For Dunaway (2010) choosing the right literature is the key to arousing a child's excitement about books. He recommends that teachers should teach from books they enjoyed themselves and books that that child will relate to. Wolf (2004:14) sums up the importance of the correct choice of literature for the primary school child. 'If we want our children to engage with literature, we have to give them something to think about'. Having chosen the correct literature for their students, this study will now examine the question which is often asked by teachers; at what age should a child be introduced to literature?

3.4 When to Introduce Literature

Mark Greenwood (2008:31), famous Australian children's author argues that a 'vast treasure of thoughts and deeds and dreams lie waiting to be discovered in books'. When do children begin to discover this treasure? Many theorists encourage parents and teachers to instil in their young children a love of stories to prepare them for more thorough study as they grow older. Fenwick (1990:3) recommends reading stories to children before they come to school and advises teachers to continue this good work and in the case of less fortunate children to introduce them immediately to literature. He acknowledges that 'teachers of young children instinctively sense that the child who comes to school with the experience of many tales already told or read at home has a head start in language development'. Sostarich (1974) reported that sixth-grade children who had been read to from an early age developed into better readers and valued reading more than did sixth graders who had not been read to. Nuba et al. (1999:8) outline many benefits from reading to very young children and insist that children are 'never too young to be read to'. Among the benefits, they highlight not only literacy and vocabulary development but also an understanding of people and things

and a bonding between the child and the reader. Introducing a young child to the wonder of literature at home and in school has been recommended by numerous educators, each highlighting different benefits. Significant increases have been found in young children's comprehension and vocabulary skills (Cohen, 1968; Flynn, 2011), phonological production (Goldsworthy, 2011), complexity of sentence structure (Dickinson et al., 2012) and concept of story structure (Applebee, 1978) expository text structure (Pappas and Brown, 1987; Moss, 2004), and the understanding of interactional patterns (Snow and Goldfield, 1983). Children who have access to literature and stories in their homes have been found to learn to read more quickly, read more fluently, and have better attitudes toward reading (Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1966; Thorndike, 1973; Wells, 1986). The results of a twenty year study led by Maria Evans at the Nevada University in the United States reveal that regular access to books from a very young age has a direct impact on pupils' results. In this major study researchers analysed seventy thousand people in twenty seven countries to access the effect of family circumstances on educational chances. It was found in general that having as little as twenty books in the home had an impact. In China, having in the region of five hundred books in the home added more than six years on to a child's education, while the effect in the US was just over two years (Evans, 2010). This would suggest that children in China read the books in the home, but perhaps American children have books but do not always read them.

In a study of the language and literacy development of young children, Gordon Wells (1986:151) shows that the amount of experience five year old children in the study had with books was directly related to their reading comprehension at age seven and this was even more evident at age eleven. 'Of all the activities that had been considered as possibly helpful preparation for the acquisition of literacy only one was significantly associated with later text scores and that activity was listening to stories'. Huck et al. (2001:3) see literature for children as 'part of the mainstream of all literature, whose source is life itself' and defines it as 'the imaginative shaping of life and thought into the forms and structures of language'. They believe that literature plays an important role in all aspects of oral language development and that parents should read to young children before they come to school. Literature they inform us begins with Mother Goose and includes Sentak as well as Shakespeare, Milne as much as Milton. Other authors disagree and have highlighted the importance of waiting until children have mastered the skill of reading through the use of basal readers before the introduction of trade books. Mc Garrell (1995) recommends introducing children to reading novels in grade three to transmit value and pleasure, since children are able to think more

concretely and form better moral judgments, discover themes and uncover hidden meaning at this age than at earlier developmental stages since they have developed the intellectual skills needed to read and decode. This idea is strongly refuted by Kathy G. Short (1999) in her essay *The Search for Balance in a Literature Rich Curriculum* when she states that 'children should not have to wait until third grade to find out that reading involves critique and inquiry and that literature is much more than reading instruction'. Higgins (1986:27) explains that 'works of literature can have an integral place in the earliest stages of a reading programme through a teacher's practice of reading aloud'. Sloan (1991) urges primary school teachers to provide their pupils as soon as they come to school with a wide variety of literature, both old and new. He too highlights the advantages of reading aloud to all children, whether they can read for themselves or not, because children can understand with the ear what may be beyond them as independent readers. According to Sloan (1991:107) 'experiencing literature is the first step in the study of it'. Calia (2009) agrees and suggests that parents can develop literary interest in children by reading to them in the initial phases of their lives. She further argues that encouraging them to read daily will expose them to language and reinforce the importance of reading. This idea is supported by O Keefe (2014) who states that parents who read aloud and talk about pictures and words in age-appropriate books to their child can strengthen language skills, literacy development and parent-child relationships.

Allington and Gabriel (2012) recommend that teachers read aloud to their students first and foremost to help them learn to love reading. Reading aloud they argue is the foundation of literacy learning. This powerful connection between reading aloud and learning to read is again acknowledged by Huck and Kiefer (2009) when they claim that children who hear books read aloud on a regular basis discover the patterns of narrative and expository texts and learn to understand the meanings of the texts. As they become immersed in rich literary experiences in these read-aloud sessions, children learn about themselves, about others, and about the world, and they learn to think critically and creatively. Reading aloud regularly throughout the primary school years is highlighted by Gunning (2006) as the main element to develop an environment of academic learning where students of all ages develop their vocabulary, syntax and comprehension skills.

Cohen in 1968 conducted research with second graders in a disadvantaged school in New York to test the value of oral reading of literature a reading achievement, the conclusion was that reading to socially disadvantaged children helps to overcome their lack of experience with books, introduce them to books and dramatically increases

their perception of meaning and word skill. A study by Hargrave and Sénéchal (2000) shows that pre-school children make gains in expressive language even when the duration of story reading interventions are short.

Popp (2005:34) believes that teachers who experienced the pleasures of being read to as children and who through this experience have lived in other times and places, exploring the lives of both ordinary people and great heroes and heroines of literature are enthusiastic about reading to their classes and believe that it is never too soon to start reading to a child. The benefits of being read to by a teacher, not only in the infant class but through every grade in primary school will according to Popp (2005) expand the child's vocabulary, improve reading comprehension and the quality of their writing. Diverse studies have been carried out over the past fifty years into the benefits of beginning to read aloud to children at a very young age. Some of the findings include:

- Wigfield and Asher (1984) recommendation that teachers increase the amount of time spent reading aloud and improve the quality of material they select for reading;
- Cromsky (1972) observes that when reading aloud the teacher should choose vocabulary and sentence slightly above that used by the student;
- Elley (1992) note that children can learn the meaning of new words from a single exposure to a book read aloud;
- Cohen (1968) and Feitelson et al. (1986) note that frequent reading aloud increases the child's confidence in comprehension and decoding ability;
- Anderson et al.(1985:23) report that 'the single most important activity for building the knowledge and skills eventually required for reading appears to be reading aloud to children';
- Adams (1990) explained that children may begin school with as little as twenty five hours or as much as one thousand five hundred hours of read-aloud experiences;
- Trelease (2013) claims that through **reading aloud** to children before they come to school, a very young child's brain is conditioned to associate reading with pleasure, create background knowledge, build vocabulary and provide a reading role model;
- High (2014)recognising the importance of literacy development in the paediatric primary care advises that parents who spend time reading to their children create nurturing relationships, which is important for a child's cognitive, language and social-emotional development.

Reading aloud with children has been shown to be particularly effective when it is highly interactive. Beck et al (2002), De Temple and Snow (2003), Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002), Sharif et al. (2003), Justice et al. (2005) and Heisey and Kucan (2010) are among researchers who have, through their research in this area shown that reading aloud to children from a very young age is beneficial to the child's understanding, vocabulary development and preparation for reading.

Despite this ample evidence of the benefits of reading aloud to children, a small selection of studies seem to indicate that reading aloud may not be particularly beneficial to children. Scarborough and Dobrich (1994) reviewed studies since 1960 that correlated the frequency or quality of parent-child reading with later measures of the children's reading ability and concluded that when tested later in their early years in primary school only about 8% of the variability in children's reading scores is related to how much they were read to by their parents. Although Meyer et al. (1993) acknowledge that there are numerous positive effects, such as language development, increased vocabulary and word meaning to be got from reading stories to children, they argue that there is no magic in just reading to children and claim that in primary school it is through phoneme awareness, letter knowledge and word recognition that children will acquire the skills they will need to become good readers. To make sense of these apparent contradictory findings Lane and Wright (2007) say we must look at the conditions under which reading aloud to children is effective and advise that when reading aloud to young children teachers must choose quality books with engaging characters and model clear and expressive reading. Childress (2011) who carried out research into various studies on reading aloud to children observed that benefit from reading aloud to children, but especially to very young children will only be achieved when there is deliberate planning and practice in place prior to the read aloud occurring in the classroom, when the teacher takes the time to carefully select the text to be used and the focus questions to be asked during the read aloud sessions and when the teacher encourages student participation before, during and after the reading thus developing aural comprehension.

As we enter the second decade of the twenty first century we are experiencing major shifts in the production and reception of literature, including children's literature. Today's narratives come in a bewildering array of forms including cinematic, pictorial and computer texts. Hodges et al. (2000:145) cite the many new forms available, and note that regardless of this shift in literature form young children should not be starved of traditional types of texts, what the authors refer to as 'the sequential stories which

helped many of us become assured and hungry readers'. In summary, the bulk of evidence suggests that young children should be read to as early as possible and good quality literature should be introduced to primary school children from second grade upwards. This investigation will now focus on discovering what techniques are implemented to motivate students in their study of literature in the primary school in particular with minor reference to the practice in secondary schools.

3.5 Methods to Introduce Literature

Whitehead (1968) mentions that one factor that goes a long way in determining students' lifelong learning towards reading is how the teacher approaches the teaching of literature. Researchers appear to agree that the two models most widely used by teachers are as follows.

The first model is where the teacher transmits knowledge and information to the students as a means of conveying facts and information to them. Weaver (1994) views such an approach as half hearted and does not endorse such a practice, where the main object of reading literature is only to extract meaning from the text with a view to answering questions. He goes on to argue that meaning does not just exist within the words on the page but that readers should create meaning by using the values and beliefs they already have in their own minds and suggests that the teacher considers the personal growth of his students, offering opportunities to the students to respond to the themes and characters and make a connection with their own lives. This second approach, according to Carter and Long (1991) stimulates the growth of the child's character, arouses his imagination and develops his language. The approach is student-centred and therefore, activities like prediction, role play, poetry recital, forum, debate and discussions can be used to create opportunities for language use in the class (Carter, 1996; Rosli, 1995). Students' reactions to the literature are expressed orally or revealed in a short paragraph or journal writing (Lazar, 1993)

Fox et al. (2003:17) considers the most suitable methods for teaching literature and recommends one that invites personal responses from students as the teacher 'helps them build new understandings, construct new interpretations, gain new insights, and view the literary text from multiple perspectives' to promote social and emotional development. Other authors add their voices to this advice to teachers. The teacher must employ the best teaching methods to ensure that the child will enjoy the experience of reading and interpreting literature, and consequently develop as an independent reader able to choose her own literary texts and independently interpret

their meanings (Longo, 2006). By encouraging and allowing students to respond to literature, we promote the active construction of meaning (Martinez and Roser 1991).

Whitehead (1968) says that one of the principles of a successful literature programme is that the teacher must be acquainted with a variety of techniques and activities so as to stimulate and develop students' interest and knowledge of literature. Activities that will motivate the student should be selected (Duppenthal, 1987). The teacher's role in building a creative classroom climate is essential. This role goes beyond simple encouragement. It involves intervening: actively teaching creative techniques and strategies to develop creativity (McNaughton, 2007). Kelner and Flynn (2006) acknowledge that the methods employed by teachers impact upon the students' learning and their attitude towards reading, and argue that if students understand what they read they will develop a love of reading and a desire to read more. Protherough (1995:55) believes that 'the activities teachers devise should bring in to play the faculties of imagination, emotion and thought which will later make up the active process of reading' and suggests activities for whole class use to enhance the young reader's enjoyment of literature. The suggestions include:

- Using drama strategies such as improvisation and hot seating to develop understanding of characters.
- Using visual stimuli, such as paintings or pictures to prepare for unfamiliar costumes or settings.
- Using the pupils' own writing to awaken and stimulate interest.

Kelner and Flynn (2006:vi) believe that it is essential that the teacher is aware of her important role as coach, as she helps her students build meaning from a text by encouraging them 'to ask more questions, visualise the story, make inferences about the characters and synthesize to find the most important ideas'. Earlier research by authors such as Harvey and Goudvis (2000) and Keene and Zimmerman (1997) support this belief that teachers can strengthen students' understanding of literature and use suitable strategies to make that understanding occur because 'when students are aware of how they can better understand a text, they become more thoughtful and capable readers' (Kelner and Flynn, 2006:14).

According to Edmunds and Bauserman (2006), motivation has frequently made the difference between learning that was temporary and superficial and learning that was permanent and internalized; therefore, educators need to understand what motivates children. Myriad writers have documented how important motivation is in the teaching of reading and in the appreciation of literature. The National Research Council in the

U.S. acknowledges that one of the main stumbling blocks that can prevent children from becoming skilled readers is a lack of motivation (Snow et al., 1998). Hunter (2005) believes that a reading programme, regardless of how well it is structured, is incomplete if it doesn't incorporate motivation. Hunter offers suggestions to teachers on how to motivate their students and help them to discover that reading is fun, interesting and the source of endless information. These suggestions include providing a wide variety of texts that are interesting and appropriate for students' age ranges and personally relevant to individual students. Pieper (2006) suggests that a major aim for teachers teaching literature to young children is to encourage them to experience the encounter with literature as personally rewarding.

Much debate has existed through the last two centuries as to the most suitable way to teach literature to children. As far back as 1800 Maria Edgeworth, Irish novelist and teacher, argued that literature had to be explained to children if they were to appreciate it properly (Jeffcoate, 1992). The Newbolt Report (1921) *The Teaching of English in England* rejected this approach in favour of one which emphasised children's active experience of the text and argue that the aim of the teacher should not be to impart knowledge but to encourage creative and active participation. Yet almost a century later the academic approach dominates the literature curriculum in Irish secondary schools because of the requirements for the Junior and Leaving Certificate. The study of literature in our secondary schools has become a glorified comprehension test. It is my opinion, based on the research presented here, that literature taught in this manner is more likely to impede than enhance literacy appreciation. This academic approach to teaching literature is the approach used in most secondary schools in Ireland particularly to teach Shakespeare. Evans (1984), writing thirty years ago urges teachers not to use communicative moves but to allow pupils to launch initiatives of their own, encouraging and developing their informed opinions and self expression. Using the academic approach to teaching literature according to Evans (1984:15) gives children 'little time or opportunity for interpretation let alone response'. Sadly the situation as Evans (1984) saw it still exists in our secondary schools, where communication is interpreted almost solely in writing. Pupils are examined almost entirely in their use of the written word rather than the spoken word supporting Evan's (1984:16) words that 'the examination system is at odds with how we assess each other in life'. Evans believes that pupils will only be able to make sense of new knowledge and incoming ideas if they are offered opportunities to 'talk expressively, spontaneously and anecdotally'. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) acknowledges that the English Curriculum in Secondary schools in Ireland

focuses on rehearsing questions and answers for examinations. In 2012 the Minister for Education announced that the Junior Certificate has been revised and plans are in motion to introduce changes at Leaving Cert level where rote learning and cramming for CAO (Central Applications Office) points will be addressed. In 2014 the school-based model of assessment in English with an emphasis on the quality of students' learning experience is available to pupils entering secondary school. With the advent of this change new methods of teaching literature that will consider the personal growth of the student may be introduced to secondary schools.

Benton and Fox (1985) call for a change in the manner of teaching literature to young children in order to arouse a delight in literature. These authors advocate a shift from an appraisal based on careful analytical evaluation to one where the emphasis is on the imaginative and creative act of reading where a child can express his personal response.

It is encouraging to see that thanks to the recommendations of the Revised Curriculum for primary schools (1999), most teachers in primary schools have embraced a more active investigative approach to teaching in general yet in focus group research conducted In 2004 by The Education Committee of the INTO, teachers were asked to comment on what ways they encourage children to respond to text. Although participants recognised the importance of developing children's higher comprehension skills, little evidence emerged from the discussions that teachers were offering opportunities to children to use the characters and themes in texts to acquire new knowledge, explore outcomes and make connections with their own lives as recommended by Fox et al. (2003). In 2011 the INTO Education Committee circulated a questionnaire on literacy to a random sample of INTO members in order to ascertain the views of teachers concerning literacy and to obtain a snapshot of current practices in place in schools in relation to literacy. The survey indicated that there was widespread use of a novel in the teaching of literacy with 59% of the teachers indicating that they used the novel in their own teaching, and a further 27% indicating that the novel was used in their school (INTO, 2011). The teachers were not asked what literature they used with their class or what methods they employed to teach literature.

Despite the Revised English Curriculum being so enthusiastically embraced by teachers, the findings of the inspectorate's report on literacy and numeracy in primary schools, the report of the National Assessments of English stating that the literacy skills of Irish students in primary schools have not improved in over thirty years and

Ireland's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2009) results prompted the development of the the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People which was launched by Ruairí Quinn TD, and former Minister for Education and Skills in 2011. The document claims that the learning outcomes in the Primary School Curriculum (1999) were somewhat obscure and recommends revising the English curriculum to develop such literacy skills as reading activity that would give learners access to a world of knowledge, ideas and situations outside their own experience which can help to consolidate and extend all aspects of their learning (DES, 2011).

The revised curriculum for primary schools acknowledges that one of the contributions of drama to the child's development is to give him a rich oral language experience, yet the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People (DES, 2011) fails to make any reference to the value of drama to help raise literacy standards in primary school. In many primary classrooms this experience is offered only through the medium of discussion, quite often with the teacher doing most of the talking. This approach to developing oral skills is criticised by Wells (1986) when he views whole class discussion periods as a time when some children choose not to speak at all. In Irish classrooms often with thirty or more children, discussion strategy denies many children the opportunity to express themselves. Building Bridges of Understanding (Courtney and Gleeson, 2010) is a whole school approach to the teaching of comprehension and has been introduced into many primary schools in Ireland and used by class teachers with the ultimate aim of enabling children to become self-regulated strategic readers. Eight key comprehension strategies are identified: prediction, visualisation, making connections, questioning, clarifying, determining importance, inferring and synthesising and used for this purpose. Each strategy is explicitly modelled through a think aloud process using high quality fiction and non-fiction picture books. Teachers who use this method report a marked improvement in the depth of children's understanding, their ability to listen and respond to each other and accommodate diverse interpretations in their exploration of text. While acknowledging the contribution of such a teaching resource to reading and comprehension in primary school, I would argue that this is a functionalistic approach and takes from the aesthetic enjoyment in a text. It is purely a functional approach which would not embrace the views of Squire (1977, 133): 'We must look for a way to teach literature that will engage students and will permit them to examine and evaluate their own responses to literature without responding in purely egocentric terms'. To attract the child in primary school to literature at a young age Squire advises that in

selecting material and in developing a literature curriculum, the teacher must be aware that literature:

- exists to be enjoyed and to entertain people;
- allows young people to see themselves and their problems;
- provides vicarious experiences beyond the possibilities of any one person's life;
- exposes young people to many values and many value systems and ideas and practices, often at sharp variance with their own;
- gives young people a chance to see their language at work, and an opportunity to perceive how different authors can shape the lives of characters and affect the feelings and beliefs of their readers;
- encourage young people to see the world as it is neither all good nor all bad, but all human;
- furnishes young people's intellects with complex schemata that enable them to interpret the events of their lives, and also gives them models with which to imagine new creations.

John Dewey (1902), the American philosopher sees education as an organised process of directing and guiding the child's activities that will lead to valuable results. This type of education in Dewey's (1902:106) opinion will produce students who are 'culturally and socially efficient as well as being good citizens'. In primary schools across the United States and Canada during the early and middle part of the twentieth century reading was viewed as a skill that could be divided into a set of sub skills involved in both decoding and comprehension which required only literal responses. Readers remained as passive recipients of the information and meaning of the text. Most educationalists of the time believed that reading could be improved by learning these skills and it was understood by employing this pedagogy the student would then become a proficient reader capable of comprehending any text (Moss, 2004). From 1970 onwards a new understanding of the reading process became clear. This shift in research and pedagogy resulted in a focus on students' efforts to make sense of the ideas and to build their own understanding of texts by bringing their own prior knowledge and experience to what they read, enabling them to engage in higher level interpretive responses (Applebee et al., 1987). Rosenblatt (1983, 277) called for literature instruction that emphasised aesthetic reading 'precisely because every aesthetic reading of a text is a unique creation, woven out of the inner life and thought of the reader, the literary work of art can be a rich source of insight and truth'. Collins

et al. (1987) expressed concern at the lack of comprehension instruction in schools in the United States and at the fact that some pupils were leaving not just primary school but also secondary school unable to process texts independently. These researchers have identities strategies to help teachers teach literature with an emphasis on reading-thinking approaches. They suggest:

- engaging in cover-to-cover study of new texts;
- activating and using prior knowledge;
- drawing inferences and making predictions;
- determining importance and evoking mental imagery;
- generating questions and thinking aloud;
- making connections between the text and other texts, oneself, and the world.(Collins et al, 1987)

In the Irish education context it is noteworthy to observe that although the Primary School Curriculum (DES, 1999) presented a strong vision of child-centred education, with children viewed as active agents in their own learning and the guidelines for teachers on the different subject areas explicitly refer to constructivist approaches, emphasising the importance of using 'hands-on' activities and peer learning, the *Growing Up in Ireland Study* (Mc Coy et al, 2012) report provides systematic evidence that whole-class teaching continues to be the dominant approach used in primary education, with much less use of active learning methods (such as group-work) than had been envisaged in the original curriculum document. The report also suggests that more active methods are much less prevalent in larger classes, and that less use of such methods among more experienced teachers suggests that continuous professional development in support of the Primary Curriculum has not led to a change in pedagogical approaches among this group.

3.6 Strategies Recommended in National and International Curricula

One of the reasons why many countries aim at encouraging students to read literature and develop stable habits of reading in their spare time is the conviction that this contributes to reading literacy. 'It is literature that encapsulates language in its most subtle and intricate forms where nuances of meaning and ambiguity have to be embraced' (Fleming 2006: 21). A key aim of the Primary School English Curriculum (1999) is to promote positive attitudes to reading and an appreciation of the value of

language. The Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life Strategy (2011) re-emphasises the importance of fostering an enjoyment of reading among children.The Programme for Government makes clear that the government is determined that all young people will leave school able to read (Ruairi Quinn, Former Minister for Education, 2011).

The Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life Strategy (2011:49) points out that the curriculum in the primary school 'needs to reflect the reading interest of all students, including boys and recommends that students have access to a better balance of text type, but does not recommend any authors. I have experiences of the promotion of poor quality literature by book companies and their subsequent use in many primary schools. Much of this type of literature affords pleasure and fun for the reader but does little to raise literacy standards

In the Revised English Curriculum for primary schools in Ireland (1999), acquiring the skill of reading effectively is considered essential if the child is to develop to her full potential. Emphasis is placed on enabling the child to become an independent reader through exposing him to a challenging and age appropriate range of reading material, which should include stories, poems, myths, legends and novels. The teacher is required to encourage the child to appreciate the value and pleasure of reading by being offered opportunities to choose material and to read silently. The English curriculum acknowledges the value of literature in the child's social and educational development from Infants to 6th class, when it states that the child who is given access to a wide range of texts from an early age, and who is encouraged to develop personal tastes, is more likely to acquire habits that can lead to a view of reading as something pleasurable and satisfying. Although the curriculum does not offer a suggested reading list, the myriad values of exposing the child to stories and literature are documented:

- Stories and literature can bring the child into contact with a wide variety of emotional life and, through talking and writing about responses, he/she can come to a better understanding of human motivation and feeling.
- The child can also explore the world of the imagination and at the same time come to appreciate how language makes it vivid.
- The child's enjoyment of language can be fostered and his/her aesthetic response and sense of beauty awakened.
- The child can develop an appropriate range of comprehension strategies and an awareness of the richness and diversity of reading

material available and read from a variety of texts of gradually increasingly complexity.

- The child can choose his/her reading material and engage in and enjoy sustained silent reading. (DES, 1999b:12)

The teacher is given freedom to choose suitable literature for the child but is advised to choose 'a rich selection of the best literature appropriate to his/her stage of development'. The curriculum recommends that teachers should employ a range of strategies to develop their pupils as self-reliant, confident, independent readers. To achieve this, the curriculum recommends that pupils access, listen to, read and respond to a wide and range of poetry and fiction while using a wide variety of comprehension skills. The curriculum also recommends that the child is given opportunities to respond to poetry and fiction through discussion, writing, drama, the visual arts and dance, relate personal experience to the ideas and emotions conveyed in the text and understand the elements of literature including the development of character, setting, themes and a sense of time. The curricula of two other countries will be briefly considered to highlight their emphasis on a positive attitude to reading literature.

The English Curriculum in England (Reviewed 2012)

There has been much controversy surrounding the National English Curriculum. Teachers and parents complain that the requirements of the curriculum change too often and that this affecting literacy levels and tests scores. Yet the Curriculum states that literature plays a key role in the cultural, emotional, spiritual and social development of the child and the main aims are similar to the Revised Curriculum for Irish schools:

- To develop a love of literature in the pupil.
- To develop the habit of reading widely and often for pleasure.

The document says the programme of study for reading consists of two dimensions at each stage, word reading and comprehension. Teacher should focus on developing pupils' competence in both dimensions and different kinds of teaching are needed for each. The document encourages that reading widely and often increases pupils' understanding and vocabulary because they encounter words they would rarely hear or use in everyday speech. As with language curricula all over the world the statement is adamant that it is essential that by the end of primary school all pupils are able to read fluently, a utopia rarely becoming a reality.

Under the current primary curriculum in England children are expected to be introduced to a range of writing, including fiction, poetry, myths and plays, but there is no central list specifying books or authors. In secondary schools, the current curriculum for 11 to 14-year-olds includes a recommended list of authors and demands that pupils study Shakespeare. There have been many suggestions by the government over the past few years to establish a similar structure for 5 to 14 year-olds, but this has been met with opposition from teachers who favour freedom of choice and by authors who fear their books may not be on the recommended list. For year 5 and 6 the curriculum recommends that the child reads a wide range of books and suggests an increasingly wide range of fiction, poetry, information books, myths, legends, traditional stories, modern fiction, fiction from the English literary heritage and books from other traditions and cultures. The skills required to explore literature at this stage include retrieving, recording and presenting information, participating in conversation about the literature they read. The child should also be encouraged to discuss how authors use language, including figurative language, in the books they read or the books that are read to them. To instil a lasting desire to read in the pupil the documents emphasises the importance of reading whole books to pupils, even though pupils can now read independently, so that they are introduced to books and authors that they might not select themselves.

The German Curriculum

The German curriculum not only aims at introducing students to different genres and works, but also at developing a positive attitude towards reading and stimulating reading practices. All states in the Federal Republic stress that literature should be experienced as a resource of personal enrichment in both primary and secondary schools (Pieper, 2006). In Germany the central purpose of reading literature within primary school is to introduce students to literary reading in such a way that they can enjoy it and develop regular reading habits. Experiences with literature are stressed and creative methods are often used. Knowledge about genres is already aimed at. This remains a stable feature in secondary school (Pieper, 2006)

As with the study of literature in Ireland and England there is no set canon of texts, in general it is to be expected that criteria of text selection will at least partly result in the reading of canonical texts, since the introduction to genres and to literary history will rely on exemplary texts. In primary education typical genres can be identified and an implicit canon of well-used literary works on a national or even international level should be expected. The main genre in the case of Germany is folk literature,

children's poems and children's literature. Here international children's literature makes up a surprisingly high proportion. Often the reading of a literary work with younger students takes place in a framework of achieving world knowledge via reading or of ethical education (such as dealing with conflicts in the classroom or friendship). Three central purposes of reading literature for the young can be distinguished: an opportunity to tackle a specific theme (friendship, family, adventure); an introduction to the specifics of literature and literary reading; enhancing the motivation to read (Rosebrock, 1997 cited in Pieper, 2006). These purposes also serve as criteria for the selection of texts. On the whole, educational systems differ in the amount of freedom teachers have in shaping literary education, but their curricula all share a similar emphasis on enjoyment of literature and the importance of creating life-long readers. However this brief survey highlights a lack of concrete and practical support to teachers in the selection of texts and in terms of what teaching methods to use in their exploration.

3.7 Conclusion

The weight of evidence presented in this chapter suggests that teachers play a pivotal role in encouraging their students to embrace literature and to develop a habit of reading good literature which will benefit the child throughout his life. It has also been established that teachers need to have a positive attitude towards, and a good knowledge of quality literature and appropriate methodologies that will stimulate the imagination of the child. Pieper (2006) points out that policies which have a strong focus on encouraging reading and making books available to students sometimes fail to develop literacy especially with children who come from backgrounds where reading is not part of the family life-style. Teachers must encourage students that reading can be fun through the methods they use to teach literature. To achieve this, teachers need resources and training. As discussed in this chapter, using creative and active learning methodologies encourages the child to enter the world of literature and to explore all of the diverse characters and worlds they encounter therein. From this inquiry into the importance of literature in the primary school and the methods recommended for teaching it, the curricula in a small sample of countries recommend active learning and creative methodologies to enhance the learning opportunities for the pupil.

The English curriculum in Irish primary schools recommends using drama as a teaching methodology. Some researchers have used creative drama as a teaching

methodology to explore the issues in literature, and have suggested that this active learning strategy can impact upon the success of teaching literature, and address some of the concerns the teacher may have. The following chapter will examine the relevant literature to establish:

- if drama as an active learning strategy can address some of the concerns of the teacher when teaching literature,
- if drama as an active learning strategy could present literature in a way that would make it motivating, enjoyable and challenging while allowing students to have their own voice,
- if drama could be an age appropriate method that could bring children into the universal themes, the characters, the plot and all they will find in good quality literature.

The focus of the chapter will be on drama as a form of engagement, a creative and critical pedagogy, and an approach that can be used in the teaching of literature.

Chapter 4
Drama: A Creative and Critical Pedagogy

4.1 Introduction

The literature search in chapter 3 established that good motivation is one of the factors necessary for efficient learning. Harmer (2001:51) defines motivation as 'some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve' and claims that drama involves students in an experimental search for knowledge, as they are offered a chance to learn by doing. This theory of a child being actively engaged in her own learning has been endorsed by educationalists during the last century, and arguments in favour of using drama in education in the primary school classroom have appeared. Throughout the last decades writers such as Heathcote (1983), O'Neill (1995), Kempe and Nicholson (2007), Brouillette (2012), De Blase (2005) point out that the nature of drama exists in its flexibility; its ability to be shaped into that which best serves the needs of the participants and encourages teachers to use drama to include all their students and embrace different types of intelligences and creativity within their classroom. As a social art, drama in education involves the child in active role taking situations where she begins to develop a better understanding of both herself and others and learns to work co-operatively interacting with the inhabitants she encounters (Woolland, 1993; Chukwu-Okoronkwo, 2011).

I aim to present certain relevant aspects about drama, which serve as a background to this study. Machi (2009) asserts that a literature review serves to identify new ways to understand and highlight any gap in previous research and guide the researcher towards further research. It is the aim of this research that through reviewing the relevant literature available, a clearer perspective may emerge on the potential effects of using drama as an active pedagogy.

The first part of the chapter will establish what researchers in the last century and researchers today consider drama in education to be, and identify some of those pioneers who acknowledged the major role drama plays in bringing the world of literature into the lives of young children.

The second part will subsequently discuss several studies carried out to test the validity of introducing drama in education as a creative and critical pedagogy in the primary classroom. The literature search in this area suggests that the full spectrum of drama, including performance, where the children are performing for each other and

attend a performance to increase their interest in the literature they are studying, produces mixed results for the primary school teacher when teaching literature.

4.2 Drama in Education: A Valuable Pedagogy

Before this research highlights the value of drama in education as a teaching methodology for literature in the primary school, it will aim to establish the various definitions of what drama in education is, and why it is recognised throughout the world as an effective approach in pedagogy. Researchers seem to agree on the following three summary points:

- Drama exists for the benefits of the participants and focuses on the process of the experience for them and their teacher and not on a finished product created for others.
- The participants are simultaneously the playwrights, directors, actors, audience and critics who live in the moment and use their imaginations to experience what others think and feel.
- The participants learn to empathise with others, comprehend complex situations, consider others' points of view while expressing their own and accepting the consequences of their actions and behaviour.

Drama in education has been explained by many researchers and each highlights its value. Ewing and Simons (2004) describe it as both a method of teaching and a body of knowledge in its own right and add that the substance of drama is that it affords an opportunity to a child to use both her body and mind to explore issues, views, questions, outlooks or ideas. The theory that learning in and through the body is the essence of drama is explored by Nicholson (2000:630):

> The body is not an instrument of the mind nor secondary to it, it is central to the development of understanding, and very literally how we interact with and experience the world.

The main objective of drama is to give the child an opportunity to pursue an understanding of the society he lives in, consider his own values and learn to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity, and develop an imaginative capacity through thinking and questioning (Craft, 2000; Grainger, 2003; Cremin, 2004; Toye and Prendiville, 2000). Bolton (2010) points out that while much school learning is an accumulation of facts, drama can help students restructure their knowledge into new interpretations. He identifies drama activity as a way of explaining subject matter and its relationship to self and society, a way of drawing meaning and sense from the world around us, and

a way of understanding abstract, social, moral and ethical concepts through experiencing them in a dramatic context. For Ataman (2011), creative drama involves fictional journeys where students are allowed to enjoy and inquire into their fictional experiences. According to Dorothy Heathcote (1983:701) an important value of using drama in the classroom is that 'in drama the complexity of living is removed temporarily into this protected bower, so that children not only can learn it and explore it, but also enjoy it'. Her view remains the same many years later: 'the child can express his feelings from within the world he creates' (Heathcote, 2007).

Researchers in countries all over the world have acknowledged the role drama in education, as a mode of learning, plays in the child's educational and social development and in the role it plays in the development of literacy skills for the young child. Drama is seen as a manner of education in its own right which builds students' personal growth and enhances their learning, as they respond to situations in role as imagined characters (Neelands, 2010; Kempe and Nicholson, 2007; Szauder, 2005). Gilham (Cited in Bolton 1984:157) describes classroom drama as 'a unique pedagogic situation, where 'a teacher sees himself as teacher, but the participant does not see himself as learner'. O Sullivan (1999:21) recognised this method of learning as a strategy employed by educationists to invest meaning and content into the teaching, while O'Neill and Lambert (1990:11) acclaim it as a means of exploring issues, events and relationships within imagined roles. McNaughton (1997) views drama in the primary school not only as an outcome in itself but as a method of helping children to learn and as an opportunity for learners to gain a sense of achievement and self esteem due to the high level of active engagement and experiences it provides.

O'Toole and Dunne (2002) describe dramatic play as one of the central ways in which young children learn about the world, about themselves and about human nature. It is little wonder then that O' Neill (2007) encourages teachers to use drama as a learning tool for students to explore the curriculum and acquire knowledge. How this learning occurs for children was explained over forty years ago in an article to explore the value of drama as a teaching tool by Smith (1972), who believes that the reason why drama is a vehicle of instruction that supports every aspect of a child's educational development relates to the fact that it directly involves the child and awakens his interest. Mc Master (1998) endorses Smith's belief, acclaiming drama as an important tool for teaching in general but particularly for teaching the language arts and supporting literacy development. Drama according to Mc Master offers the child various communicative experiences including encouraging the child to think out loud, developing their oral language skills such as defining, expressing, articulating and

verbalising their thoughts in improvised situations and strengthening their listening skills.

Chukwu-Okoronkwo (2011) views a child's early involvement in dramatic activity as essential to his development, because it expands his vision beyond everyday experience, affording him the opportunity to find himself and discover his personality, his capabilities and restraints, his language capacities and distinct interests. This view is based on Vygotsky's (1978) theory that drama draws upon children's current knowledge, interests, understanding and language and offers opportunities to extend these into the zone of proximal development. The use of drama in education is highlighted by various researchers for its ability to tap into children's intrinsic motivations where the child enjoys and remembers the learning that occurs. Martello (2001) sees drama as pedagogy where teachers use fictional contexts and a safe and distanced environment to guide their students in the exploration of issues and situations faced by people in real life and asserts that the teaching and learning potential of drama lies not only in the drama activities that explore particular moments within the drama framework but also in the guided reflection that occurs during and after the drama itself. Drama enables children to use and reflect upon what they know, and through this, assists them to understand their own knowledge. Davis, in Bolton (1999: xii) describes this as 'involving young people in the present moment in a way where something significant is happening to them'. Heathcote (cited in Warren, 1999:94) says 'children are often barely conscious of what they know or understand and drama promotes awareness and ownership of knowledge'. Educationalists agree that drama is a medium all children relish and are good at, offering a context and a powerful motivation for learning, while providing confidence and independence, and because it is generic, all pupils succeed regardless of home, socio-economic or cultural backgrounds. This realisation and the research which has demonstrated drama as a subject that can also form the basis of a powerful pedagogy in schools has led many countries in recent years to provide drama with an integral place within their primary school's arts curriculum framework.

In Ireland, the revised curriculum acknowledges that educational drama allows children to explore the full potential of the art of drama as a learning experience, assuring teachers that 'successful drama will reflect life in a realistic or metaphorical way and will classify elements of real life and paint up the patterns beneath it' (DES, 1999:2). In this document Drama is included as a discrete subject and a strand in the Arts Curriculum for Irish primary schools as it is in a growing number of other educational systems. These include certain provinces and states within the USA, Canada and

Australia, Cyprus, Taiwan, Czech Republic, Norway, New Zealand, France and Malta among others. Drama is also included as part of the Arts Curriculum in Scotland and Northern Ireland (Neelands, 2008). In the drama curriculum for Northern Ireland's primary schools, drama with an emphasis on enjoyment is designed to develop self esteem and confidence, contribute to the social and emotional development and improve the child's language and literacy skills (CCEA, 2007). In recent years Singapore, whose primary education system is considered an exemplar throughout the world, has restructured its ministry of education, raised the profile of the arts and appointed a curriculum officer for drama. Although Drama is not included as a subject within the British education system, all students in the five to sixteen age groups are entitled to experience drama within the National Curriculum Order for English and drama as part of the speaking and listening strand in the National Curriculum. However, a letter received by the Birmingham Repertory theatre, sent in November 2012, from the Department for Education (DfES) suggests drama is not a subject in the minds of Ministers. The letter reads: 'Ministers do not consider drama to be core knowledge, as it is more a question of pedagogy and therefore outside the remit of the primary curriculum review' (The Guardian Teacher Network, 2012). The tone of this letter would suggest that despite requests from drama experts throughout Britain, it appears unlikely that the present government will promote drama to the status of subject on their primary school curriculum.

Irish primary school teachers are encouraged to believe in the special contribution drama makes to the intellectual, emotional and physical development of the child. 'The content of educational drama is life. It encompasses the entire range of a child's experience and every facet of his/her personality; and because it constitutes a unique way of learning it should be an indispensable part of the child's experience in school' (DES, 1999:5). Despite the portrayal of drama in the curriculum as a creative process, giving children special learning experiences and offering 'ways of perceiving and knowing that are otherwise inaccessible' (DES, 1999:54), twelve years later in a survey conducted by the IPPN (Irish Primary Principals' Network) three quarters of the 669 school leaders who responded said that time should be taken from certain subjects including drama and music to support literacy and numeracy (IPPN, 2012). Sheila Nunan (2011), who was at the time General Secretary of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, challenges this utilitarian view when in her foreword to the organisation's discussion document, *Creativity and Arts in the Primary School,* she expresses her opinion that developing young minds through exploration, discovery and creativity is one of the most crucial roles a teacher experiences. In 2011 the DES launched *The*

National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People with one of its primary aims being to foster an enjoyment of reading among this age group. Despite a submission to the DES by the staff and students in Trinity College, Dublin which outlined the role and value of drama in education and its place in literacy and numeracy development, the DES has instructed primary schools to reduce the time allocated to drama. The proposal in the draft document to reduce the subject of drama to a teaching method only was not implemented in the 2011 strategy, and drama tentatively remains a subject on the curriculum for Irish primary schools.

In view of the evidence cited thus far, it is relevant to explore what drama as a subject and as a teaching method might achieve that other disciplines cannot. The literature is in agreement on the following areas:

- Drama techniques enable the teacher to establish an atmosphere in their classroom conducive to deep understanding, producing quality and meaningful learning contexts.
- Drama puts the child at the centre of the learning process in a way a traditionally technical approach of teaching and learning is unable to achieve.
- Teachers can look at process rather than the content alone and the learning becomes more student-centred as a result.
- The drama process helps students to develop generic competences such as solving problems, taking risks and developing better communication skills.
- Students are challenged to think more deeply and become aware of the world around them.
- Students learn that it is all right to make mistakes and to view their peers and the teacher as co- learners.

This acknowledgement of the importance of drama in education means that there is an argument among educationalists that in drama there is learning taking place. This research now seeks to establish if drama as a pedagogy for exploring literature with children in primary school could build personal growth and accommodate learning.

4.3 Drama and Literature

When exploring literature in the primary classroom, the values of drama as pedagogy outlined in this literature search, such as challenging the child to think more deeply,

developing communication and encouraging the child to become involved in her own learning, may enable the teacher to bring the characters, themes and plot of good quality literature to life for her pupils. Ewing and Simons (2004) acknowledge this, claiming that one of the areas where the benefits of using a drama methodology are evident is in the teaching of literature, because it leads the child to more critical investigation of the text, looks at events in the story from different perspectives and examines the characters' motives for certain actions. Drama that is used in classrooms as a teaching and learning methodology uses many theatre terms and strategies, yet according to Kelner and Flynn (2006:8) 'its focus is on the process of the experience for teachers and students, not on a product created for others'. This methodology has been used by teachers and researchers to explore texts because creative drama allows children to move, listen, speak and have fun as they learn (Kelner and Flynn 2006). Ashton-Hay (2005:9) affirms that drama helps pupils engage more fully with text and encourages them to read more because it is 'a powerful motivating tool for learning, developing children's understanding of themselves and the world as well as their community skills'. Havell (1987) believes that although the process is placed at the centre of drama in education this should not involve a rejection of performance by pupils but should remain one important element of a complex aesthetic field. After exploring good quality literature such as Shakespeare or Dickens through various drama strategies the child enjoys performing this literature, perhaps among their fellow students or maybe a more public performance, or at times attending a performance. By placing emphasis on the process, a teacher promotes a method of learning that allows children to become involved in their own learning and develop an interest in the worlds they explore through drama. Drama places unique demands upon the critical thinking and emotional engagement of participants. Planned drama approaches which develop students' critical analysis and creativity move them from a superficial response to texts and situations to a more sophisticated ability to think critically (DfES, 2003a). The main role of drama in education is to develop the child's imaginative thinking. Many drama theorists consider stimulating imagination as the most important facet of creative drama. Imagination has been recognized as 'the magic force that goes beyond the mastery of facts and techniques in the search for new ideas' (McCaslin, 1996).

In the previous chapters it has been established that exposure to good quality literature awakens and develops the imagination of a young child (Mc Dowell, 1973; Sloan, 1991; Rorty, 2000; Gleeson, 2011). Literature can open up enjoyable reading experiences for children because it influences the reader's life, develops compassion, stretches the imagination and gives them a new outlook on the world they live in (Huck

et al., 1987). Yet the literature would suggest that exposing the child to good quality literature is not sufficient. The teacher needs to involve the child in his own learning and find methods to awaken his imagination and motivation. *Carlson (1970:22) claims that:*

> *Boys and girls can be exposed to much of the finest literature of our culture, but if their imaginations are not kindled by some spark which relates them to the spoken work or the printed page, their literary experiences may become a series of unrelated sound utterances, ot a procession of black and white blurred sticks walking across a snow-white page.*

Professor Sir Kenneth Robinson patron of Action for Children's Arts believes that a person's imagination is the most wonderful resource any nation can possess and acknowledges that it is through the arts the imagination is trained (Robinson, 2011). Courtney (1990) sees a novel as an imagined sequence of events in language and recognises drama as a means to translate these imagined events into practical realisations. Tolkien (1964) wrote about the power of literature to extend a child's imaginative faculty and open the gates to the world of fantasy, while Graham and Kelly (2008) believe that it is in the fantasy world that the child experiences other scenarios, places and times and develops an understanding of other characters. 'Imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible, drama facilitates this by enabling the participants to stand in the shoes of another' (Greene, 2000:3).

Many teachers engage with play activities when exploring children's literature in the infant classes but would abandon this method when teaching literature in the senior classes. Grainger (2003) assure us that learning through play is not just the domain of the youngest child in the school, but that opportunities for play and playfulness, for role play, for exploration and investigation exist across ages and stages of education and are essential for children to effectively engage with literature and literacy with interest and motivation. The literature in chapter three would infer that many teachers engage in a traditional approach such as rote reading and answering questions when exploring literature and allow little time for active exploration of characters and themes. The literature has shown that this method is perhaps the accepted method in secondary schools. Montgomery and Ferguson (1999:19) suggest that a traditional approach to literacy tuition 'does little to promote learning'. In addition a compelling argument that children do not learn well if they are treated simply as recipients of information is put forward by educationalists (Lambirth, 2005;

Slavin et al., 2008). With this in mind, educators who use a traditional didactic style to teach literature in the primary school may be introducing the children to good quality

literature but depriving them of a more creative approach to learning which research shows develops interest, enjoyment and a lifelong love of literature (Baldwin and Fleming, 2003). Huus (1973) suggests that learning activities associated with teaching literature in the primary school should be receptive and expressive, where pupils absorb their ideas, and then show their reactions: they read and listen, then speak and create. Many teachers when exploring literature invite the child to read and listen, encourage them to absorb the ideas and show their reactions in writing but fail to allow the children to speak and create. This theory of an active approach to exploring literature with young children while encouraging them to become involved and interested has been endorsed by theorists throughout the last century and was the basis of Caldwell Cook's (1917) theory that the actual doing of things as opposed to the passive reception of information was the key to learning.

Gardner (1983) offers a psychological reason for his preference of active learning, stating that passive experiences alone tend to constrict and have little lasting impact, while a child learns best and retains most when the organism is actively involved in exploring physical sites and materials and asking questions and exploring and discovering answers. Lujan and Di Carlo (2006) tell us that learning is not entrusting facts to memory, but involves being able to use resources to discover, ascertain and refer information so that students may become active, independent learners and problem solvers. Taylor (2013) supports the idea that learning matters to children when they have a sense of ownership and agency of it, and argues that learning should not be delivered to a class, but explored, examined and argued over in an atmosphere of collaboration between teacher and students.

The literature would suggest that if teachers wish to encourage a love of literature in their students they must present it in an enjoyable way. Flennoy (1992) recommends using drama to help build interest and motivation because it brings fun and pleasure to the learning experience which leads to success, allowing learners to use their feelings, their thoughts and their imaginations to express themselves to and with others, while all the time gaining in language ability. The child will not get involved in the themes and characters in good quality literature if the experience is perceived by them as boring. According to Atkinson (2000:38) 'in education pleasure is success while pain is failure' and teachers need to make their students feel successful in the classroom. The brain learns best when it is dynamically involved. To keep a child interested in his learning he must be involved in exploring, enquiring, and analysing. When drama and movement are integrated within the curriculum, engaging and numerous learning experiences with literature transpire for children in the primary school (Chauhan,

2004). In enabling children to participate more directly in interpreting and reflecting upon literature, drama provides greater access to the themes, contents and features of the text. This is acknowledged by Fleming (2003:6) who argues that 'drama can provide forms through which children's personal and interpersonal collective responses to literature can be explored and communicated'. Clipson-Boyles (1998) recognises drama as the ideal medium for many activities which will extend and develop pupils as readers and claims that the interaction with and exploration of texts through drama leads to children becoming ardent active readers.

4.3.1 Drama to Explore Texts

It has been acknowledged by many drama theorists that drama is a productive, effective and efficient pedagogy for language and literacy development and as such can be effectively employed to support the examination of a wide range of literary genres (Grainger and Pickard, 2004; Baldwin and Fleming, 2003). In enabling children to participate more directly in interpreting and reflecting upon literature, drama provides greater access to the themes, contents and features of the text.

It was established in chapter 3 that an important recommendation of the English curricula for primary schools in many English speaking countries is that children's reading should encompass 'a rich and varied range of texts' (DES, 1999:46). Some curricula advised teachers to use active approaches to explore text. The Ontario Curriculum documents for English Language regards the arts as an integral part of the learning processes for students. A variety of dramatic activities are labelled as specific expectations which must be met by elementary and secondary grades. The Ontario Language Curriculum Grades 1-8 (2006:*574) states:*

> *Drama is an invaluable tool for educators because it is one of the few vehicles of instruction that can support every aspect of literacy development. Drama encompasses all four of the language arts modalities and is an effective medium for building, decoding, vocabulary, syntactic, discourse, and met cognitive knowledge.*

Not all texts used may be suitable for exploration through drama. However if teachers wish to expose their students to substantially more sophisticated text such as the works of Shakespeare or Dickens, the child may benefit from dramatising the story (Mages, 2006). Using a drama approach may facilitate discussion, debate and exploration of these texts and the opportunity for the young students to actively interrogate and investigate, 'exploring and making meaning as they take on roles and look beyond the words themselves' (Grainger and Pickard, 2004:3). The universal

themes explored by great authors can be examined by using drama techniques such as improvisation, which when applied 'allows students to first discover themes through their own voices, terms and sense of reality which may then be accessed during a critical reading of a text' (Weltsek-Medina, 2004). Baldwin and Fleming (2003) explore the power of drama to transfer the words which authors use to build up description and visual images of fictional settings into experiences which children encounter each day. They share these experiences with the characters which the author has created. The children have to delve deeply into the texts to discover the characters that are embedded there. This enhances their comprehension of the story they are reading. They develop many comprehension skills such as summarising, comparing and contrasting, drawing conclusions, self-questioning, problem-solving, relating background knowledge, distinguishing between fact and opinion and finding the main idea, important facts, and supporting details.

An Australian government document *Focus on Reading* (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2010) says that comprehension is the ability to understand and retain the details, sequences and meaning from written material and describes it as an active process between the reader and the text that should take the reader to a higher level of active understanding. When using drama in education as a teaching methodology for literature, teachers encourage students to visualise the scene they are reading and all of its elements so that they can recreate a meaningful story based on the text. Research suggests that memory in reading can be enhanced by creating a vivid image of the scene described in the sentence (Anderson, 1985; Banikowski, 1999; Zyoud, 2010), thus providing students with the opportunity to elaborate on the text they are reading, especially if it involves vivid visual representation. Research argues that a child's engagement in drama activities is likely to improve the recall and comprehension of the material he reads, yet many curricula, including the Australian Curriculum fail to suggest drama as a comprehension strategy. The primary school curriculum for English in many countries offer interesting and valuable suggestions on how students demonstrate their understandings of texts, including locating and recalling information, completing multiple choice questions, thinking deeply and expressing ideas verbally, completing descriptions, recognising causal relationships, making logical connections, and writing short reflective responses. Although drama has been recognised by researchers for the past century as a pedagogic methodology that enhances many of the reading comprehension strategies, it has not been recognised as such on curricula. Reading comprehension has been defined as the ability to understand and retain the details, sequence, and meaning from written

material and a basic skill that is one of the critical elements of any primary-level education (Rose et al., 2000). In their investigation into the benefits of teaching reading using drama as a methodology, Rose et al. (2000) explored the relationship between drama-based learning and reading comprehension. The results of this study will be examined in detail later in this chapter. Creech and Bhavnagh (2002) suggests that children who are offered the opportunity to be directly engaged and involved through drama identify with the literature they read and enlarge and expand their repertoire of responses to the literature, resulting in an enriched, interactive involvement with a book and improved comprehension. Kelner and Flynn (2006, 17) assert that 'Teachers who strengthen their knowledge and skills in drama and combine them with existing reading comprehension knowledge and skills are more fully prepared to meet the challenge of successfully integrating these two subjects'. Therefore, it follows that teachers may have more success when they engage in curriculum reform if a drama-based reading curriculum is implemented.

The ability of primary school children to draw inference from the beliefs, motivations and feelings of a character in literature has been debated and questioned since its introduction as pedagogy. Research to test the assumption reveals that drama could be an effective medium for exploring the characters in texts and encouraging a child's interest in reading (Lukens, 2012). When children become emotionally engaged with a story they often form identification with aspects of the story that hold personal meaning for them. They show personal reactions to a character or a situation, relating such elements to their own lives. Paul Davies (1990:97) explains:

> An active experience through drama' puts language into context, and by giving learners experience of success in real life situations, it should them with the confidence for tackling the world outside the classroom.

Szauder (2005:340) refers to 'the double frame of emotional involvement' and conceives that when a child assumes the role of a character she can experience her own emotions and the emotions of the character at the same time. Leslie and Jett-Simpson's (1997) theory is that readers construct meaning from text by using background knowledge that is stored in their brains. He recommends high active student involvement where the child is encouraged to use certain creative drama strategies to awaken background knowledge and build meaning from the text. He also defines the value of creative drama to support the prediction process so often used by teachers of literature. It is a consensus among drama practitioners in the twenty first century that drama can help students observe the lives of characters more deeply. The

value of active participation was recognised a hundred years ago by Piaget (cited in Wadsworth, 1979) who observed that this interpretation of character begins with the student becoming aware of the character's observable behaviours and gradually moves to understanding the psychological interior. Assuming the role of the character puts students inside the story, whereas scripted questions typical of reading comprehension lessons generally require students to stand outside as observers, abstractly distancing themselves from the action. A teacher who employs creative drama as a means of teaching literature allows the child the enjoyable and motivating experience of being actively involved in the life of the character' which is denied to the child who is only a passive observer. According to Belliveau and Kim (2013) exploring the characters and themes of a story through drama offers the child a kinaesthetic as well as a cognitive and emotional educational experience, as she looks at the characters and the story from different angles and interprets it whatever way she wishes and then responds in a creative interactive manner.

Clipson-Boyle (1998:61) discusses the problem of a lack of motivation to read in some older primary school children. She suggests harnessing the positive attitude these children hold to drama to deliver an exciting and productive approach to reading. By doing so, according to Grainger and Pickard (2004) children are afforded the opportunity to actively interrogate texts, exploring and making meaning as they take on roles and look beyond the words themselves. Drama transfers the words which authors use to build up description and visual images of fictional settings into experiences which children encounter each day. They share these experiences with the characters which the author has created. The characters are embedded in the text and the children as enactors and performers are motivated to delve deeply into the text to support their portrayals and enactment of characters and situations (Baldwin and Fleming, 2003). Neelands (2008) outlines the ways drama can be used to explore literature because drama affords children, as readers the opportunity to understand the written word through the senses, employing a range of multi-intelligence strategies such as exploring the issues within the story before meeting the text, enacting scenes in the original text or taking on the roles from the text and being questioned about the motives and intentions of these characters. Teachers teach children to read because it is a tool they will use throughout their lives but they must also learn that different modes of response are needed by different text situations. Drama facilitates discussion, debate and exploration of texts, as the children interact with the characters and produce a range of responses.

Requirements for reading laid out in the revised Curriculum (DES: 1999) are of an active rather than a passive nature, requiring children to respond and relate to text. If teachers wish to fulfil these requirements they need to employ interactive models of learning. Clipson-Boyles (1998:59) recognises drama as the ideal medium for many activities which will extend and develop pupils as readers. Welkem's (1997) research shows that when struggling readers use process drama strategies to explore written texts their understanding of the text and insights into characterisation are heightened. 'Exploring texts through drama has long been accepted as a potent and successful teaching method' (Baldwin and Fleming, 2003:5). If we wish children to enter into the world they encounter in literature, which is a world of great stories, Ackroyd et al. (1998:vi) believe that it is through drama that children cross into that world, 'living out the themes, engaging with the characters while associating their own experiences with it'. This encourages them to read the text in order to become acquainted with the characters. In a drama situation the children can hold in time the plots they discover in the stories, and reflect on and live through the key moments. It is within the drama experience that children create and inhabit their own fictional worlds beside those created by the authors. The settings are built for the characters to inhabit, but through drama become concrete settings in which the children can interact with the character in an atmosphere, which according to Ackroyd et al. (1998:vi) should be enjoyable and offer children a chance to establish links with their own cultural lives. Introducing a text by the writers of great literature such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Chaucer or Wilde through creative activity may give children a sense of shared ownership where they investigate and develop the characters, plots and settings. They can become co-authors and fill in the gaps left in the text to reveal the sub texts. The child 'will be fuelled by inquisitiveness and a desire to think about possibilities and concepts through the medium of action' (DES, 1999: 5).

Drama as a medium for literacy is becoming recognized worldwide. Responding to literature through drama involves children not only reading the lines but reading between the lines making inferences and deductions from what they read and sometimes reading beyond the lines, making evaluations and justifying their own personal views of what they read (Ackroyd, 2000; Baldwin, 2012 and Kelner and Flynn, 2006).

Fenwick (1990) states that oral work must involve dramatic approaches. Allowing children to act out and improvise scenes from books and placing them in the position of various characters will encourage greater understanding and develop a child's oral, reading and writing skills. Furner (1991:14) claims that literature helps children live and

shape their own life experiences, to pre live and anticipate events and to vicariously experience the lives of others'. It is through developing communication skills that effective drama teaching develops the four necessities in language: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Neelands, 2008). The literature supports drama as an effective and valuable teaching strategy to engage students' reflective, constructivist and active learning in reading and text exploration in the classroom. The importance of drama and literature in the acquisition of language skills will now be discussed.

4.3.2 Drama and Language Skills

Traditional early childhood curricula tend to separate the arts and literacy as different meaning-making systems. By adding drama to classroom practices, literacy moves beyond communication through reading, writing, listening and speaking. With drama, children can also express and create meaning through gesture, movement and language (Kerry-Moran and Meyer, 2009). According to Brown and Pleydell (1999) a child learns language by practice at a very early age, and drama can create a strong stimulus for the use and practice of that language in a natural environment. A fun and engaging way for children to practice their language is to listen to a good story and then have the opportunity to become a character in the story or related to it, because taking on the role of one of the characters and creating their own dialogue affords the child the opportunity to internalise both the characters and the story line. Evans (1984:16) recommends using drama as a means to contribute to a more 'meaningful interpretation of communication in the classroom' and sees it as a co-operative venture where pupils become involved in contributing, accepting, sharing and building on other pupils' ideas. This according to Evans (1984) will be achieved because children have the opportunity to communicate between themselves and arrive at decisions about what to do and how to do it in an atmosphere where the pupil is encouraged to contribute, thus returning the initiative to the pupil. This is an emphasis with which Kelner and Flynn (2006) concurs, recognising drama time as a time that children look forward to and where they get to know each other. The Bullock Report in 1975 found a distinction between the language children use in Improvised drama and that used in written work, the former being open-ended, volatile and incremental in structure and idiom, the latter being relatively closed and formalistic. The Bullock committee recognised that, in its close relation to literature and its inherent shaping powers for speech, drama is a powerful tool to develop the pupil's powers of communication. Courtney (1990) offers the formulation that imaginings and acting are a unity and

argues that all new information a child meets with needs to fit his existing personal knowledge in some way, before he can assimilate this knowledge. In his experience with drama this new information is assimilated and becomes part of his personal knowledge and developing vocabulary.

Drama can help students connect with language and literature in ways that can never happen with traditional teaching. Michael lo Monico (2002) encourages his readers to entice their pupils to engage with literature to make it come to life, while listening to the words and saying them. It advises teachers to demystify literature and to forget about endless lists of questions as it is more important to get children to like literature than to understand every word.

The significance of dramatic activities to early language development, where children are involved in reading and writing as a holistic and meaningful communication process is identified by Mc Namee et al. (1985:27) when they argue 'to develop children's speaking and listening skills drama gives authentic reasons to communicate fictional contexts'. It is in these contexts that children begin to understand the function and purpose of language. The revised curriculum for Irish primary schools acknowledges that one of the contributions of drama to the child's development is to give him a rich oral language experience. In many primary classrooms this experience is offered only through the medium of discussion, quite often with the teacher doing most of the talking. This approach to developing oral skills is criticized by Wells (1986) when he views whole class discussion periods as a time when some children choose not to speak at all. In Irish classrooms often with thirty or more children, discussion strategy denies many children the opportunity to express themselves. O'Sullivan (1999:172) argues that 'the reflective distance that critical dialogue can achieve is surpassed by the multi-layered opportunities for reflection contained in drama'. A similar belief is held by Byron (1986:133) who views language used in classroom discussion situations as 'overwhelmingly informational', when compared with that used in drama which is 'expressive, interaction and informational', offering the child greater opportunities for abstract thinking and more complex language use. The language used in good quality literature develops the child's vocabulary if he is afforded the opportunity to use it. Clipson-Boyle (1998) asserts that drama is an interesting way of allowing children to interact with texts, and to become proactive and responsive communicators as they listen to others express their opinions and share their own thoughts.

When children learn to first express their thoughts and imaginative ideas orally, they soon develop a cognitive, affective and social process to transfer the ideas to a written text. According to Erdogan (2013) games, role play and improvisation enable a flexible, enjoyable approach to learning that develops the child's vocabulary.

4.3.3 Drama and Writing

Graham and Sandmel (2011) commented that students who develop a positive attitude towards writing will have a desire to write and will enjoy the experience, while negative attitudes towards writing will draw students away from writing. According to Erdogan (2013) various student-centred, creative and enjoyable methods and techniques should be employed to make the students develop positive attitudes towards writing and help them express themselves freely. To achieve this, the topics of the writing activities should be interesting and create curiosity and excitement. Many educators claim that creative drama develops and sustains students' writing and improves their attitude (Macy, 2004; Cremin et al., 2008; Dickenson and Neelands, 2012).

Literature may help provide background knowledge and spark imagination because it contains many layers of meaning that encourages students to interact and share their feelings and opinions (Yopp and Yopp, 2013; Ryan and Koppenhaver, 2011). Research reveals that using quality literature increases a student's motivation and enthusiasm to write and that good quality literature serves as an exemplar of the six qualities of effective writing - ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions, and provides a model for students to incorporate these writing attributes in their original compositions (Conroy el al., 2009; Paquette, 2007). Through drama students investigate and develop these qualities and discover a meaningful context for writing, where children translate 'lived experiences into a variety of written representations' (Neelands 2008:34). When writing in role as a character in the text, the child can approach the context from different perspectives. Because the child has engaged emotionally with the characters, his imaginative thinking is motivated and he gains confidence to express himself with purpose. Drama provides the writing task with a real sense of purpose and develops an understanding of when and why to use particular skills. Clipson-Boyle (1998) says that story writing can develop from drama activities such as role play, improvisation, simulation and dynamic duos that may help the ideas to flow and develop. Stowe (2004) who conducted research to determine if using creative drama to explore text had impact on the writing skills of Year 5 children in a primary school in Middlesex, UK found that:

- Children's ability to sequence the events in a plot accurately improved when they had used the drama form.
- Drama developed pupils' critical analysis and creativity, and deepened their response to a text.
- Children were more likely to write imaginatively about a text when they had taken part in a physical activity centred on it.

In writing development, children who experience drama also appear to be more capable of making appropriate linguistic choices as well as expressing opinions or suggesting solutions. Exploring characters and themes through drama can lead to emotive writing from different stances and perspectives and can make a real contribution to children's development as writers (Mc Naughton, 1997; Grainger, 2001; Grainger and Pickard, 2004). Woolland (1993:144) argues that there is no motivation for children to produce meaningful and dynamic writing if there is no intended audience other than the teacher reading it as teacher, and demonstrates how drama provides the stimulating contexts, characters, settings and themes that give purpose for writing and also a variety of audiences. Booth and Neelands (1998:31) assert that 'when writing is embedded in a context that has personal significance for the writer, writing skills will be enhanced. When children feel successful exploring texts through oral language, reading and written activities their self image and confidence is enhanced. The role of creative drama to promote this confidence will now be explored further.

4.4 Drama, Literature and Social Development

As was stated in chapter three, individuals can come to understand and value themselves, their pasts and their place in society more fully when they explore good quality literature (Wallace, 2010) If this exploration consists of merely answering questions, the opportunity to empathise with the characters may be lost. Creative drama activities can encourage children to create their own reality from the themes in literature and bring their personal experiences into the classroom to explore through the characters in the texts. Individual perceptions and interpretations are promoted, approved, supported, and encouraged (McCaslin, 1985). A basic attribute of creative drama is self-expression which can strengthen positive self-concept and make the child feel successful. Providing students with an opportunity and support for success can help them develop self-esteem and improve affective development (Arieli, 2007).

Researchers argue that children and adults absorb literature in different ways. According to Nuba et al. (1999:7) 'message and meaning may be less conscious for a child who has yet to experience the array of situations that an adult has encountered' and therefore perhaps it is more difficult for the child to absorb the same understanding and value from literature. Children view experiences from a concrete perspective. Approaching an abstract situation encountered in the text through the medium of drama may bring meaning to the puzzled dilemma the child is experiencing and the concrete meaning of the situation to the surface of the child's mind. A hidden moral message in a story may be interpreted by the child literally by just reading and discussing the text but will become clear through creative activity. Through various drama processes the child will find himself in the centre of the learning process and by assuming the roles of various characters become more familiar with the thoughts and feelings of others, perceive his own feelings, and offer predictions on the outcome of his own and other's actions (Adiguzel, 2010). In the Primary School Curriculum document of 1971 (An Roinn Oideachais, 1971), dramatic activity was recognised as having a special value in that it enables the child to express externally his thoughts and feelings in different situations. Books are powerful tools for bringing out joy, sorrow, hate, love, fear, envy, anger, sorrow and enthusiasm, and through role play, improvisation or other drama techniques the child can enter the life of the characters and experience these emotions for herself.

Approaching the teaching of literature through the medium of drama may therefore give the child the ability to approach the text in a new and exciting manner. The content of the literature investigated through drama will stimulate the students 'to develop a thoughtful approach to human behaviour' (Rosenblatt, 1983:18). As teachers, we want to encourage children to consciously enjoy and reflect on what they read and the way they read it and to continuously compare and contrast their personal voices and various ways of expressing them with their peers. 'When reading literature, learners need to be fully engaged both in mind and body' (Probst, 1987:126). Koelling (2004) believes that when children are given an opportunity to role play through good quality literature they imagine how they might act if placed in a similar conflict or ethical predicament without requiring them to acquire immediate, practical knowledge beforehand. In this way great literature can partner with family and society in helping children define their own personal moral code and personal sense of safely, privately and hopefully before they are called upon to respond to difficult ethical situations in their own adolescence and adult life.

This literature search has highlighted the importance of literature in the child's life and education, and has been acknowledged by parents, teachers, psychologists, librarians, authors, educationalists and teachers for many centuries. Those involved in the social and educational development of the young child have recognised the value of drama in bringing literature alive for the child. The following values have been identified:

- Drama encourages and allows students to respond to literature by promoting the active construction of meaning (Martinez and Roser, 1991).
- It promotes personal engagement which is necessary as a prior condition to understanding and evaluating works of literature (Rogers, 1998).
- Drama is a source of knowledge and an insight into the Curriculum (O'Neill, 2007).
- Jett-Simpson (1989:91) recognises creative drama as an 'opportunity to participate in the story and sees the opportunity of stepping inside someone else's skin as 'the ultimate comprehension of character'.
- Baldwin and Fleming (2003) assure teachers that drama can provide a medium through which children's personal and interpersonal responses to literature can be explored and communicated.
- Gardner (1983) says that when children engage holistically affectively and cognitively with the meaning offered in a story they develop new ways of seeing the content at both the interpersonal and intrapersonal levels.
- Benton and Fox (1985) suggest interacting with literature through improvised drama and role play activities provide opportunities for children to put themselves into the action of a story.
- Booth and Barton (2000) tell us that through drama the child explores the themes and issues of a story, using her earlier experiences to analyse events and actions, while Jeffcoate (1992) claims that drama is simply by nature an active form of learning.

In the Primary School Curriculum document of 1971 (An Roinn Oideachais: 1971), we see the value of teaching literature through drama acknowledged, even though the potential for learning is underestimated: 'Like other forms of expression, drama caused to integrate various learning activities, and perhaps more than any other medium to make books spring to life before the child's eyes, helping him towards a better

understanding of his fellow man' (Department of Education, 1971:87). Acknowledging the value of active learning for the child was a breakthrough in Irish education. This acknowledgement was reinforced when drama was introduced as a subject in the revised curriculum for Irish primary schools in 1999.

Unfortunately, The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People in Ireland (Dept of Ed and Skills, 2011) fails to mention the value of drama in exploring literature to enhance a child's literacy skills. We have to ask if our education system for primary schools is becoming like our present day secondary education, and if drama and other art subjects will become a thing of the past.

Children are born with an innate playfulness and 'magic' in their blood and have the right to attend schools where it is cultivated and promoted, unfortunately in the 'muggle world' in which we live, anyone who happens to detect the workings of the imagination in any child will see to it that the Ministry of Magic (in our case the Department of Education) sends 'Obliviators' to cast memory charms upon such children-causing them to forget the wonderful gift they were displaying so naturally at the beginning of their school life (Hederman, 2012:27).

The literature search would suggest that creative drama activities in a primary school classroom increase students' motivation to learn by capturing their attention and by physically involving them in learning while reinforcing their positive self-concept. This worldwide recognition of the value of drama to enhance the learning opportunities for young children owes its origin to some wonderful creative and innovative educationalists in the early twentieth century.

4.5 Pioneers in the Field of Drama in Education

Harriet Finlay-Johnson, a head teacher in a small school in Sussex, England from 1897 until 1910 was the first to employ dramatic techniques in general education in the English-speaking world. Gavin Bolton (1999:5) acknowledges her pioneering methods in the field of classroom drama when he says:

> Harriet Finlay-Johnson, perhaps more than any other pioneer in classroom drama, can claim the right to the title, on the grounds that she appears to have no model to follow or surpass, no tradition to keep or break. She was the first in the field, or at least the first whose classroom drama practice was to be recorded.

In her book *Dramatic Methods of Teaching,* which she wrote after she retired from teaching in 1910, Finlay-Johnson describes the joy and satisfaction her pupils experienced from exploring Shakespeare, Dickens, Wordsworth, Tennyson and other great classical authors through active, original methods. Her theory was that in the years to come 'when lessons on vulgar fractions have been long forgotten' what they learned from playing with the works of these great writers would 'stand out in relief from the pages of memory' (Finlay-Johnson, 1912:120). She delights in recalling that Shakespeare was good for her pupils' improvement in English, while Dickens was 'their textbook for homely goodness'. Her pupils got to know the characters intimately and learned contentment and resignation from Bob Cratchit, cheerfulness and good will from Fred, and motivation to be sympathetic with all weak afflicted things from Tiny Tim. In the words of Finlay-Johnson 'I judged it of vital importance that every one of my pupils should be given opportunities for getting on good terms with our English authors' (Finlay-Johnson, 1912:121).

Henry Caldwell Cook, a contemporary of Finlay-Johnson, who taught at Perse School, Cambridge shared the innovative teaching methods of Finlay-Johnson, and his teaching method exerted a far-reaching influence on the subsequent educational scenes in many countries throughout the world. Caldwell Cook's belief, like that of many of the drama theorists since then, was that a 'natural education is by practice, by doing things, and not by instruction' (Caldwell Cook, 1917:13). Caldwell Cook favoured an active, practical and experiential education rather than the traditional education of his time in which the teacher forces students to read texts and do drills. He asserts that children should be at the core of their own education: an education which is student-cantered, attempting to stimulate the imagination through active experience, fostering verbal understanding and self-expression. Caldwell Cook asserts that through learning words at the desk students can acquire only knowing but no feeling for the reality behind the contents of the book. Learning to be active was to Caldwell Cook of greater importance than learning to sit still. Students come to appreciate Shakespeare's plays, as well as other literary works by acting them, and this active engagement with Shakespeare's plots and language provides them with ideas for writing their own plays (Caldwell Cook, 1917).

Winifred Ward, another great pioneer of the early twentieth century, influenced the growth of drama as a methodology in the United States, and subsequently worldwide. She was known as the mother of creative drama for her use of drama techniques to support learning in the classroom. By creative dramatics she meant a classroom teaching method that emphasises self-expression, training in spoken English and

literature appreciation. Many theorists in the last century recognised the value of drama in education as a teaching method to develop a love of literature in the child, and as a means of firstly attracting a child's attention to great literature and encouraging a growing interest in reading. These theorists developed techniques to elicit creative expression from children and to involve them in the creative process, recognising the fact that Drama as a teaching and learning methodology can achieve outcomes that cannot be attained as effectively in any other way. Winifred Ward in 1930:3) claimed that creative drama allows children to develop plays out of their own thoughts, imaginations and emotions. She encouraged her students to dramatise stories either from literature or original tales to develop their educational growth. Her creative dramatics classes were for the purpose of giving the children an opportunity for self-expression and training in oral English and literature appreciation. Her belief that the only teaching that really counts is that which gets over into the lives of children with the main aim of making them better people, is an objective which could be easily ignored by policy makers in an educational climate of panic concerning the literacy and numeracy skills of children in primary schools today. I believe that methods to increase children's literacy skills must focus on objectives that will make children, not only literate but encourage them to appreciate the world they live in and become 'people of finer sensitivities and attitudes' (Ward, 2000: 283). Ward argues that what a child learns should have a meaning for her. This will provide a purpose and an understanding of the reasons for learning. This according to Ward is best achieved when a child has an input in his own learning. The pioneering work of these great educationalists has been an inspiration to many researchers in the field of educational drama during the past century. The findings of some such researchers will now be explored to establish if their research strengthens the evidence for the value of drama in the teaching of quality literature to primary school children.

4.6 Drama and Literature: Evidence from the Academic Literature

Group work, co-operative undertaking, problem-posing and problem solving encompass a practice that drives the development of the learner forward to interact with the world they live in, in a new way. Freire (1998) believes this happens when teacher and students learn together as a team.

Studies have been carried out by researchers and practitioners throughout the world to establish the value of using drama in education as a teaching and learning methodology to explore literature with children in the primary school. The use of the

revolutionary practitioner, Paulo Freire's theory of co-operation between teacher and pupil is evident throughout these studies. The main aim of much of this research is to determine if drama as a teaching methodology develops the learning techniques of students in primary education and helps them express their ideas in curriculum areas including literature. 'The findings of the area of research which explored the benefits of drama in the teaching, exploration and appreciation of literature show that drama as a learning and teaching tool has much to offer in various areas of the child's development' (Kempe and Nicholson, 2007:52). In the United States in particular this form of research has been conducted with children from kindergarten to high school. An example is a short study by Lambirth (2005) who found that in the traditional classroom where teachers are the primary source of learning and students learn by memorising facts, students are given little opportunity to interact, inquire, reflect or become actively involved with constructing knowledge or meaning from what they read. The findings from this research show that in contrast to the traditional method of teaching literature, if children are intrinsically motivated through drama activities and allowed to become active learners, text comprehension and reading ability will be greatly enhanced.

A study conducted by Adomat (2012) with ten first graders in a rural elementary school outside a major city in the US focused on how young children build literary understanding through drama. This seven-month qualitative study shows how the participants, who had been attending supplemental reading instruction, were capable of demonstrating rich understandings of children's literature on multiple levels through drama. The children engaged in the drama activities, which were woven within the language arts activities approximately once a week. Adomat (2012) used the issues, themes, characters, mood and spirit of the story as a beginning for the dramatic exploration. He acknowledged that drama supports the idea of reading as an active process of meaning making, employing techniques such as role play, tableaux and hot seating to allow the children to move from surface and literal readings of children's literature to deeper understanding of the layers of meaning within the chosen texts. Through role play the children were challenged to work on a high level of critical thinking and problem solving, through exploring the drama technique of tableaux they were afforded the opportunity to express the key elements of the story in a visual representation, review the story, and decide which scenes would represent an important moment in the story, and through hot seating they developed complex understanding about characters. 'The students in the hot seat learned to assume the role of a character and respond to questions and situations in that role. In thinking

about solutions for the characters in the stories, children were thinking like authors as they weighed the possibilities for characters and made decisions about their actions' (Adamot, 2012:347). The findings from the study show that the drama techniques used helped the children to:

- become part of the story as they viewed the characters from different perspectives, viewed the story through the characters' eyes, and made decisions in role as the characters;
- respond and show their understanding of the literature through language, movement, gesture, and voice intonation;
- move beyond the literal meaning to explore the consequences and implications of the story and the characters in i, and then create their own stories;
- show a complex understanding of narrative meaning.

Children who were looked on as readers who struggle with comprehension of stories, showed significant improvement in all measures of reading and writing, and eight were released from the reading support programme. The children came to love reading, literature, discussing books, playing with stories through drama, and were able to develop complex and sophisticated understandings.

Adomat's research shows that drama activities enhanced the young children's engagement and deepened their understanding of literature. It builds on earlier research that was carried out in kindergarten and elementary classrooms in the US, which provide in-depth analysis of how drama is used in classroom literacy instruction to promote the development of literacy for young readers (Edmiston, 1993; Wilhelm, 2007; Crumpler, 2007). Crumpler (2007) found that children in a kindergarten classroom became more active and involved learners when they interacted in role with the text. Edmiston (1993:252) worked with seven year old children who adopted the roles of the characters in the stories they read, became personally involved in the world of the story and 'discovered new insights into the characters, the themes and themselves'. Wilhelm's (2007) research explored the possibility of using drama to help struggling ten year old readers to discover that reading is an active meaning making process. He discovered that by becoming kinaesthetically involved with the text these struggling readers experienced in role the meaning of the story, and by doing so were able to reflect on the characters' actions, and develop a greater understanding of the plot, which in turn encouraged them to read, not just as a decoding exercise but to

explore the world and the actions of the characters who inhabit that world of the imagination.

A study was conducted by a class teacher, Stacy Samuels (2011) to investigate the struggle children in an elementary school in the south eastern part of the United States were experiencing in understanding literacy texts. The study was conducted with her class of twenty four ten to eleven year olds. The research question focused on how those students used reading comprehension strategies such as building and activating schema, questioning and determining importance when creative drama and literacy were used side by side. Her findings show that drama helps struggling readers use comprehension strategies because it helps them make connections with the text by supplying background knowledge and linking the events in the text with events in their own lives. Her recommendation to fellow teachers was to engage their students in active learning process and her recommendations to the teaching authority included offering more courses to teachers on how to use creative drama to improve their students' reading comprehension.

Wilhelm (2007) observes that studies such as these have important implications for young readers. The researchers cited above agree that readers who struggle with literacy experience problems entering into the story world and find it difficult to maintain active meaning-making processes within it. The researchers concur that drama not only provides a motivational technique to pique student interest for understanding texts, but become physically involved in stories and fully immersed in the literature for sustained periods of time. Therefore, children are able to understand text and make them relevant to their own lives while they react as characters to the implications and deeper meaning of stories.

Jina de Blaise (2005) describes how two teachers used dramatic activities to help their students make connection with literature such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Lois Lowrey's novel *Wakin The Stars.* The teachers involved in this study taught eight and tenth grades in classrooms in the United States and had attended a one day workshop for English teachers on bringing literary texts to life by exploring language through drama. The teachers involved had felt intimidated at the idea of using dramatic activities, but afterwards were eager to try out the approaches they had explored in the workshop. The participating teachers wished to experiment with an alternative way of teaching literature rather than class discussion that resulted in the students 'sitting bleary- eyed with their chins propped on their hands' (de Blaise, 2005: 28), not seeing

any relevance or purpose in exploring the classics. The teachers' objectives for employing drama as a methodology were:

- to help the students learn about the elements of fiction;
- to help them develop empathy with the characters in the literature;
- to help them build an understanding of texts of various genres, of themselves, their culture and the wider world.

De Blaise observed that the drama experience in both classes was a success and resulted in the students becoming strongly motivated to learn and discover. Through their active involvement in the drama they learned about the characters, plot and themes of the literature, while they viewed the world and world events from different perspectives. 'The drama invited the students into the language of the text' (de Blaise, 2005:32). The students were not intimidated by the language but embraced it as they worked collaboratively to explore its meaning.

A study was evaluated by Dr D, A, Simpson (in the University of Brighton, School of Education) to explore how drama in education enhances teaching and learning within the classroom. The teachers involved were passionate about the children's learning and saw drama as an inclusive teaching method for the holistic development of children. The project investigated the capacity of whole class drama to motivate, develop and improve children's creativity and learning. It involved sixty schools in Norfolk during the academic year 2005/2006. There were fourteen schools at its centre, which were designated as research schools. In these primary, middle and secondary schools, teachers and visiting consultants worked together on a variety of whole class projects, which were designed to stimulate creativity through drama-based teaching and learning. Five types of behaviour were evaluated and assessed during the project to be exemplified by the processes and outcomes of the research schools' projects. They were:

- questioning and challenging;
- exploring ideas, keeping options open;
- making connections and seeing relationships;
- envisaging what might be;
- reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes.

Two sources of data were used, a questionnaire was completed at the beginning and end of the project by teachers and head teachers and the second source of data was an extensive sample of written materials collected from the research schools and

consultants. The findings show that there is extensive qualitative and quantitative evidence to show that using a drama methodology was definitely influencing learning in the classroom. As the teachers gained confidence in their ability to teach drama, they began to explore a broader range of drama conventions, and to view this method of teaching as important in the development of the pupils' cognitive and affective thinking. They found that drama gave the children the opportunity to question as well as explain their own and others' ideas. Analysis of the data showed that there was a measurable improvement in the children's writing which could be attributed to involvement in drama activities.

Two fourth grade classrooms from four Chicago public schools were selected to participate in research conducted by Rose et al. (2000) to investigate if drama technique could improve elementary students' reading comprehension. The classrooms were randomly chosen to represent either a control or experimental group. There were ninety four children in the experimental groups and eighty five in the control groups. During the project students in the control groups worked with read and drill exercises from classroom text books while the participants in the experimental groups experimented with reading stories and exploring the elements of the stories through drama techniques. Results were obtained using Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. This research was inspired by earlier research by Anderson (1990) which showed that memory in reading can be enhanced by vividly recreating the scene described in the text. Based on this research Rose et al. explored the theory that dramatic based instruction is likely to improve a child's recall and understanding of what they read when the child first visualises the scene and gains an understanding of the characters' motivation and emotions, thus enabling them to elaborate beyond the text. His findings reveal that drama based reading instruction can improve students' reading skills more than traditional approaches can.

In 2005 research was carried out in Singapore by Stinson and Freebody to investigate what impact, if any, a series of planned process drama lessons would have on the performance of students in their oral English examination. Classes in four schools in Singapore became the intervention classes. Two of the schools provided an additional class each at the same level to be used as comparison classes. The average number in each class was thirty six children. The comparison classes did not participate in the workshops but continued with their usual English lessons, including oral communication activities as planned by their regular English teacher. The researchers planned a series of ten one hour lessons comprising four process dramas. Students from the intervention and comparison classes were pre tested and tested again

immediately upon the conclusion of the intervention phase. Students were scored against the same criteria as prescribed by the examination syllabus. To minimise the impact of uncontrolled variables, the results were analysed using multivariate analysis. The researchers also interviewed randomly selected students from the intervention classes, the students' English teachers and the drama facilitators. The statistical analysis showed a robust and significant impact on the intervention classes while the comparison groups made no change. Students in the intervention classes performed significantly better in their overall scores and showed notable improvement in each of the criteria areas. In addition the students reported improved self confidence, improved use of language, enhanced vocabulary and a general capacity for cooperative work in the classroom. The teachers of the English classes unanimously supported the idea of a continuation of this kind of work.

A survey was carried out by Mc Naughton (1997) to establish if using a drama approach to teaching literature was beneficial to the writing skills of pupils. A series of twenty drama lessons and twenty parallel discussion lessons was devised and taught to two sets of children. At the end of each lesson the children were asked to produce a piece of writing, for instance a poem, a story or a report. After close analysis comparisons were made between the two sets of writing. Overall in seventeen out of twenty sets of writing, the drama group met the set task better or slightly better than the discussion group. Also the drama group wrote, on average, 24.5% more than the discussion group. In twelve sets of writing the drama group used more sets of words to describe events and settings, and were able to express the thoughts and feelings of characters more fully, while employing a greater variety of vocabulary. In five sets of writing the drama group understood the complexity of issues and expressed opinions and offered solutions. Mc Naughton claims that drama benefits aspects of cognitive development and spoken language skills and concludes her study by saying that drama had given the drama group increased vocabulary to improve their writing skills.

The above studies reflect that 'drama is an important part of the literature curriculum in many countries', and a powerful instrument for teaching and learning. Evidence is found that drama helps improve students' reading, speaking and vocabulary skills (Bolton, 1984 and Booth 1985). It provides opportunities for literary development, offering students a chance to decode meaning, understand others' feelings, develop vocabulary, generate feedback within context and think about their own learning (Mc Master, 1998). By using drama techniques such as tableau or character interview, drama helps children make sense of the world they read about in a text, and link it to experiences and happenings in their own lives (Booth, 1985). The characters they

meet in the texts come to life and the students actively explore their sorrows, joys and other emotions. In role as the characters they may experience and solve the same problems they encounter themselves each day or may encounter in later life. Miller (1996) refers to this as living the text and adds that these experiences reinforce the meaning and knowledge of what the child has read. Teachers can influence students' attitudes towards reading, depending on the teaching methods they employ, because 'if the child understands what she reads she will have a more positive attitude to reading in general, and even develop a love of reading in school which expands into a wish and desire to read more literature both at school and at home' (Kelner and Flynn, 2006:14).

4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the review of the literature in this chapter clearly reflects that drama has been successfully used for teaching literature in the primary school, and that this practice may have positive effect on student performance and academic achievement. The research is underpinned with the theories of Bruno and Vygotsky (Nicholson, 2000; O'Toole et al., 2009) on the relationship between thought, language and learning. Despite this evidence, and despite modern practitioners' (Neelands, 1992) support of the effective praxis of drama to enhance and compliment other creative forms such as reading and writing, Sun (2003) believes there still exists a gap between teachers' understanding of drama's worth and their actual use of it in the classroom, because they are not familiar with methods to facilitate dramatic activities. Catterall (2002) agrees and notes that although many teachers are supportive of drama as a learning method, they do not use it in their classrooms; some do not even know where to begin to incorporate this method of drama into their students' learning. Research carried out by The National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales (NFER) suggests that drama is the art form least taught in primary schools as a subject in its own right. Baldwin (2012: 26) reports that teachers feel threatened and emotionally vulnerable when teaching drama and suggests that the main reason for this insecurity is that 'teachers lack professional and personal confidence'.

The different studies cited in this chapter strongly support the benefits of using drama and show it as an active approach in teaching literature. The available literature would suggest that little research has been carried out in this area of education in Ireland and this study therefore hopes to examine the importance of good quality literature in the

education of pupils in primary schools, and to explore whether drama has any place in its teaching.

In the following chapter I will describe the methods used in a study designed to test out whether drama could be used in the study of literature, and whether good quality literature has any relevance for children in 5th and 6th class in Irish primary schools. The research was carried out in the academic year 2011-2012.

Chapter 5

Research Design and Methodology

5.1 Introduction

Practitioner inquiry is a term used to refer to the category of educational research where the practitioner is the researcher, the professional context is the research site, and practice itself is the nucleus of the study (Cochran-Smith and Donnell, cited in Green et al., 2006). Goodyear (2013) describe practitioner enquiry as a form of professional development which is both intentional and supportable. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000:504) argue that practitioner action research can 'connote any individual or joint effort to produce some kind of curricular or schooling change', while Mc Craig and Dahlberg (2010:2) simply define a practitioner researcher as 'anyone who combines her position with practice'. Fox et al. (2007:97) consider this form of research, like other forms, as a framework for generating new knowledge, but argue that the practitioner researcher differs from other researchers, and in general is more successful in so much as she 'embeds research within practice in ways that the academic researcher cannot'.

Practitioner research is a long established approach in education concerned with situation problems, and this small-scale research will attempt to explore a specific aspect of the researcher's work with the intention of making improvements. As a practitioner researcher I will observe, record and reflect on outcomes of change, not on my own, but in concert with other teachers. The focus of this research is an exploration of a credible teaching and learning intervention using a drama based approach, into the issue of whether quality literature can be taught successfully in the primary schools in Ireland. The study aims to explore if good quality literature taught in an age-appropriate and interactive manner can contribute to the academic and social development of senior primary school pupils. As a practitioner researcher, my objective is therefore to work towards enabling an attitude to research that is 'both critical and impartial' (Mc Craig and Dahlberg, 2010:4), acknowledging that there is not one single truth but many held by individuals and groups, and that the findings of this research are not presented as the only truth leading to a single inevitable solution (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011). The primary aim of this small-scale constructive examination of pedagogy is to examine claims in the literature that exposure to good quality literature in the primary school contributes to the academic and social development of education, and to evaluate the use of drama as a teaching and learning method for

such literature in the senior classes in the primary schools in Ireland. Cochran-Smith and Donnell (2006) include action research as a form of practitioner inquiry and maintain that under the umbrella of practitioner inquiry, action research is commonly used to describe collaboration between school based teachers and other educators, university based colleagues and parents. 'Research is a symbolic process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information in order to increase our understanding of a phenomenon about which we are interested or concerned' (Leedy and Ormrod, 2012:2). This action research is aimed at altering curriculum and challenging common school practice by engaging in a process of problem posing, data gathering, analysis and action (Clements, 2007).

The acquisition of language and literacy skills has been established as being the foundation of lifelong learning. Literacy skills according to Ruairí Quinn, TD and former Minister for Education and Skills are 'crucial to a person's ability to develop fully as an individual, to live a satisfying and rewarding life and to participate fully in our society' (Dept. of Ed. and Skills, 2011). These skills incorporate listening, speaking, reading and writing. From an extensive literature search in this area of pedagogy, it can be argued that although the topic of teaching literature at primary school level has been well researched internationally, few of the findings relate to the teaching methods used. It would also appear evident from the literature review that there is a dearth of research in this area in Ireland. To contribute to the research to date, it is the aim of this small-scale study to highlight, through appropriate methods of data collection and qualitative analysis, the importance of good quality literature (with special reference to the works of Shakespeare, Chaucer, Dickens and Wilde) in acquiring and enhancing teaching and learning skills in the primary school. Because drama stimulates belief in the unreal and helps children to ask 'what, where, why, the questions of the great philosophers' (Bond, 1998:261), and because it is my view that literature needs to be presented in a challenging and active way to engage children and develop learning, drama in education is employed as a teaching and learning method in this study.

Part one of the chapter will outline the nature and general aims of this research project. The methods of data collection used, both qualitative and quantitative, will be explored, giving a detailed description of each instrument and the implications of its use. Part two outlines the pilot process and the CPD (continuing professional development) programme in which the teachers engaged.

The theoretical framework of this study has implications for every decision made in the research process (Mertens, 2005), anchors the entire study, guides the logic of what I

as a researcher am doing and supplies a well supported rationale to support the study (Simon and Goes, 2013). It is essential when researchers undertake a research project to identify concepts, problems or issues, and then devise a research process that is appropriate to their purpose which appears most suitable to answer the research question. Leedy and Ormrod (2012) advise that the process of research which is cyclical in nature starts with a question or problem and requires an explanation of the goal and an outline plan of action. Through an extensive literature search, the key themes that underpin the study were identified and used to produce a theoretical framework on which the thematic analysis of the data was based.

5.2 Research Questions

Critical to the whole process of research are the research questions being posed. Research methods according to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) should follow research questions in a way that offers the best chance to obtain useful answers. Good research is always guided by a specific research question or hypothesis and accepts critical assumptions (Leedy and Ormrod, 2012). This project aims to establish a baseline utilising a mode of triangulation, employing quantitative and qualitative measures and qualitative data analysis to explore the attitudes, beliefs and ideas of teachers and their pupils to the value of teaching good quality literature in primary school, and their views on the advantages of using educational drama as pedagogy in this area of the curriculum. Being aware that research questions, whether fixed or flexible drive the design of a study (Robson, 2002) and with an aim to establish a baseline, a main overarching research question and four sub questions which help inform data analysis emerged, and are listed below:

Main overarching research question:

Does using a drama in education approach to the stories, language, characters and themes in the literature they explore enhance pupils' language proficiency and develop their written and creative skills?

Sub-questions

1. What benefits is exposure to good quality literature in the primary school to the academic and social values of education?
2. What is the attitude of pupils to literature in general and to the prospect of exploring good quality literature?

3. What methods are currently employed to teach literature in primary schools, are they sufficient to motivate pupils to read good quality literature, and is there a connection between the teaching methods employed and the response of children to literature?
4. What benefits can teaching literature through the medium of drama bring to the primary school pupil in her study and appreciation of literature?
5. How effective is an in-set model of continuous professional development (CPD) in motivating and instructing teachers in how to use a drama in education approach to teaching literature in their own classrooms?

5.3 The Nature of the Research

'Research is a combination of both experiences and reasoning and must be regarded as the most successful approach to the discovery of truth, particularly as far as the natural sciences are concerned' (Cohen and Manion, 1994:5). Trochim and Donnelly (2006) contend there are two spheres in research: theory and observation, a combination of what is going on inside the head of the researched and what is happening in the outside world. Yet there is no single definition of what exactly constitutes educational research. It is a broad and challenging process which the researcher critically explores. According to Wadsworth (1995) and Leedy and Ormrod (2012) the research process is not a circle but a cycle. All research goes through a number of cycles and processes before answering one's research question. It needs to be an integrated approach, with each stage a vital building block in the research process. 'Subjective belief must be checked against objective reality' (Kerlinger, 1973:63). Clough and Nutbrown (2007:x) claim that for successful research to take place there must be two components, a good research question and the means by which inquiry is conducted into this question. Practitioner research is a long established approach in education concerned with situated problem solving. This research explores a specific aspect of the researcher's work with the intention of making improvements and is conducted by observing, recording and reflecting on outcomes of change by the researcher in concert with other teachers. The focus of this practitioner research is an exploration of an intervention into the issue of teaching good quality literature in the primary school. It seeks to ascertain if quality literature is being taught in primary schools and if so how, and it will explore whether drama in education as a method of teaching and learning such literature can be used to address the issues of teaching literature by Irish teachers in primary school classrooms.

The two basic research paradigms used for educational research are positivism, the quantitative scientific approach, and interpretivism or the qualitative approach. Like many small-scale pieces of research undertaken by practitioner researchers worldwide I have combined elements of quantitative and qualitative techniques in my methodology, depending primarily on the latter. Yet to obtain a more valid, reliable and holistic answer to the research question, the use of a combination of both methodologies was employed (Patton, 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This, it was hoped would help to ascertain the educational advantages and disadvantages of using quality literature such as Chaucer and Shakespeare in the primary school. Acknowledging the purpose in both methodologies Wolcott (2001:40) says 'Piling the two in opposition does a great disservice by detracting from the contribution to be made by each, including what each can contribute to the other'.

In response to the question of what is qualitative and quantitative research, and why use one method rather than the other, it is pertinent to note that the type of research engaged in depended on the nature of the research question. Denzin and Lincoln (2011:5) inform us that 'qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artefacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives'. Schwandt (1994:118) states that 'to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it'. In this research the literature in the field of research methodology was reviewed and the most suitable methods to produce a valid and critical body of research were applied, acknowledging the constructivist's view that all 'knowledge is tentative, subjective and personal' (Airasian and Walsh, 1997). Since the qualitative researcher is concerned primarily with process, how people make sense of their lives and the structure of the world, and because this is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, data in this research are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires or machines. Qualitative research is descriptive in that the researcher is interested in meaning and understanding gained through word or picture. The main disadvantage with this approach is that the findings cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analyses can. This is because the findings are not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or due to chance.

According to Bell (1987:7) quantitative research collects facts and 'studies the relationship of one set of facts to another'. Denzin and Lincoln (2011:16) inform us that quantitative research designs are characterised by the assumption that 'human

behaviour can be explained by what may be termed social facts which can be investigated by methodologies'. Quantitative investigators look for 'distinguishing characteristics, elemental properties and empirical boundaries and tend to measure how much and how often' (Horna, 1994:121). Findings can be generalised to a large population and direct comparisons made so long as valid sampling and significance techniques have been used. The advantages of quantitative research are that variables can be identified and relationships measured. This allows comparison and replication. Reliability and validity may be determined more objectively than with the qualitative technique because 'researchers use mathematical models, statistical tables and graphs' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011:16). However the picture of the data that emerges is less rich. Creswell (2013:1) defines a quantitative research as 'an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory hold true' and a qualitative research as 'an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting'. Murray and Brubaker (2000: 141) do not believe that quantitative methods are in conflict with qualitative methods but instead merely extensions.

Patton (2003) advises the researcher that the choice of research design must be appropriate to the subject being investigated. As a researcher who values both methodologies I welcome Patton's (2003:1189) assertion that 'the important challenge is to match appropriately the methods to empirical questions and issues and not to universally put forward any single methodological approach for all problems', therefore I employed a range of methods that are deemed most suitable for the research project. Having briefly discussed the two approaches, I believe the qualitative research with quantitative elements can be productively used together in a mixed method design which will allow each to add to and strengthen the research process. Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses, but using a combination can help focus on their relevant strengths. Encouraged by Johnson and Turner (2003) I collected multiple data using different strategies, approaches and methods to compliment the research, which I believe increased the validity of the information I gathered. Because the enquiry was mainly conducted through the medium of drama in education, employing participant observation as one of the main data collection methods, the focus was mainly on the qualitative, humanistic paradigm of research. For triangulation purposes and to obtain comprehensive data from a sample of people involved in language and literature

education, the use of questionnaires featured as an important data collection method. Loxley (2006) advises that this mixed method approach can eventually lead to superior findings. Other researchers share a similar attitude; Greene et al. (1989:259) contend that the use of the mixed method approach 'seeks convergence, corroboration and correspondence of results from the different methods', while Cohen et al. (2007) believe that the qualitative and quantitative methods complement each other. For the purpose of this research combining methods is used mainly to strengthen the reliability of my findings, checking the findings from one method against the findings from another and exploring any misunderstandings that may have arisen between data collected in each method (Creswell, 2013; Thomas and Magilvy, 2011).

Denzin (1989:307) recommends combining methods as well as observers, data sources and theories as a means of reducing the intrinsic bias that comes from using 'single methods, single observers and single theory studies'. More than that, studies using mixed-methods have shown that integration of these traditions within the same study can be seen as complementary to each other (Greene and Caracelli, 1997; Cresswell and Plano Clarke, 2011). For this research which investigates pedagogy in the primary school classroom, I employed a mixed method data collection approach. To ensure that the voices of the participants were directly heard, this study involved pre and post semi-structured group interviews, teacher and pupil questionnaires, and teacher and pupil journals.

5.4 Model of Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Ong (2004) believes that CPD is an effective means to alter teachers' knowledge and beliefs and to bring about change in teachers' practice leading to improvement in student learning. A number of small-scale research studies in Ireland have pointed to the value of CPD for teacher practice and curriculum implementation (Murchan et al., 2005; Mooney-Simmie, 2007). The aim of the CPD model which was adopted for this research was to expand the participants' proficiency in teaching literature and strengthen their knowledge and skills in using drama as a teaching method. Details of the four two hour long proposed workshops each of which explored the place of quality literature in the upper primary classroom) was sent to all primary schools in Mayo by the Mayo Education Centre (see appendix 1). Seven primary teachers self-selected to do the workshops and participate in the research involving the children in their classes. (The criteria for selection are fully explained on page 133). The participants completed a questionnaire designed to elicit their previous experience of teaching literature in the

classroom (see appendix 2). The first night began with a pre-project information session where the format of the CPD was discussed and teachers' questions were answered. This was followed by a group interview to explore their views as expressed in the returned questionnaires (see appendix 3). A drama workshop followed, based on the story of *The Happy Prince* by Oscar Wilde which was explored using drama strategies. Knight (2002) advises that failure to provide follow-up for teachers who wish to try new strategies on return to their classrooms often results in failure for a CPD model, therefore the participants were provided with a lesson plan with follow up teaching ideas for teaching *The Happy Prince* though the medium of drama in their own classrooms (see appendix 4). They were also given a short pre-project questionnaire to administer to their class (see appendix 5), a short journal for each teacher to record their observations after teaching the lesson plans (see appendix 6) and a journal page for the pupils to record their views on their experience of the literature and drama class (see appendix 7). On the second night the teachers returned the completed pupils' questionnaires and the teachers' observation sheets and pupils' journals. A group interview provided an opportunity for the teachers to express their views on their experience of teaching the literature through drama. The content of this week's workshop was teaching Shakespeare in the primary school and the teachers actively participated in this workshop. They were given a lesson plan for teaching an extract from *Macbeth* (see appendix 4) and teachers' and pupils' journal pages similar to those received on the first night. The third and fourth sessions were conducted in a similar manner to this, using an extract from *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens on the third night and an extract from *The Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer on the fourth night. The following February (almost a year later) the participants completed a further follow-up post-project questionnaire (see appendix 8) which queried the sustainability of the CPD experienced and whether teachers were still using any of the approaches in their classroom teaching.

5.5 Overview of Research Methods

As with all action research, I was faced with a variety of options and alternatives which offer different priorities in the collection of data, and had to make strategic decisions about which to choose. After examining the different research perspectives I choose the following strategies of enquiry. The integrated data collection technique used was chosen because I considered it best fitted the goal of my study.

Table 5.1 An indicative time line of the research process and key phases of data collection

Date	Activity	Research Methods
Sept. '09-Jan.'12	Ongoing Review of literature	Literature search
Feb. '11-June '11	Pilot Project: Drafting and piloting of drama project, questionnaires and questions for focus group interview. Designing three lesson plans. Participants for pilot study consisted of four teachers from my school, two visiting teachers and my 5th and 6th class. The participating teachers completed a questionnaire prior to the CPD module, watched me teach a lesson on Romeo and Juliet employing drama in education as a teaching method and gave feed back in the form of a questionnaire. Using a lesson plan which I drafted they taught a similar lesson in their own class and reported the outcome to me. The children involved in the project completed questionnaires before and after the project on their views of quality literature and on drama in education as a learning method. A focus group interview with six of the children was held to triangulate data from questionnaires.	Observation Questionnaires Group interviews
July '11-Sept.'11	Analysis and coding of pilot study data	
Oct. '11-Feb. '12	Planning and preparing I liaised with Mayo Education Centre to recruit a self selecting sample of primary school teachers to participate in a CPD model. Participants completed a questionnaire designed to elicit their previous experience of teaching literature in the classroom. Four two hour workshops exploring the place of quality literature such as Shakespeare, Chaucer, Dickens and Wilde in the upper primary classroom were designed using data from the Pilot Study to improve the content. The course content focused on: The role and importance of literature in the primary school classroom. The power of literature to engage, entertain and educate in the primary school curriculum. To add a further dimension to the power of quality literature for children, drama was used as a teaching methodology to guide the participants to a greater appreciation of what they would encountered in the works of the great authors with a view to employing this method with their own students.	Questionnaires Lesson plans
Feb '12-April '12	CPD model took place in Hotel Ballina, Co Mayo. Group interviews were held with participating teachers each night. The participating sample administered a pre project questionnaire to their own pupils about their attitude to reading	Questionnaires Observation

	and their knowledge of literature. Teachers taught lessons and maintained a structured research journal to record their experiences of teaching literature using a drama methodology. Pupils were required to complete reflective journals during and after the project based on their experiences of the literature and drama project, and they completed age appropriate post project questionnaires. Parallel project conducted in my own class using the same lesson plans and pupil observation journals.	Participating teacher/ pupil journals Group interviews/ focus group interviews Drama as a research method
May '12-Sept. '12	Coding and analysis of data from participating teachers' and pupils' feedback.	Data analysis
Oct. '12-Dec. '13	Further review of literature and data analysis.	Data analysis Literature Search
Jan.'13-Feb. '13	Devised and administered a follow up questionnaire with participating teachers to ascertain if they were still using drama methods to teach literature. Established what resources or help they required to continue. Inquired if they have noticed any difference in children's learning.	Questionnaire
March'13-April '13	Analysis of pre and post-questionnaire data with teachers.	Data analysis
May '13-Sept. '13	Devised interview schedules for the key stakeholders-student teacher, primary school teacher, secondary school English teachers, English Officer for Primary Education in NCCA, senior civil servant with Dept. of Education and English pedagogy lecturers in teacher education colleges	Stakeholder semi-structured interviews
Oct.'13 – Feb. '14	Pilot and administer interview with stakeholders	Face to face/ phone semi-structured interviews
Feb'14-April '14	Analysis of data from stakeholders' interviews and comparison with data from teacher interviews and the literature.	Data analysis
May '04-June '04	Revised and updated literature.	Literature search
June '14-Oct. '14	Final preparation and presentation of thesis.	

5.5.1 Literature Review

The investigation into the overarching research question and related sub questions commenced by considering the considerable body of literature available, and by conducting a review of the national and international literature in the relevant areas of this research. According to Hart (1998) a literature review enables the researcher to relate her topic of inquiry within a theoretical framework and assess what contribution her research makes to the literature. Hart (1998) outlines the importance of a literature review which includes acquiring an understanding of the topic and the key issues in the research already done, and how this research was undertaken. Cresswell (2013:29) sees the researcher being prompted to 'extend the study that has gone before' and 'fill in the gaps' in the available literature as an important aspect of a literature review. A literature review is an 'account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers and a critique of the status of knowledge of a carefully defined topic' (Mc Millan and Schumacher, 1997:119). Through immersion in significant work carried out to date, I was enabled to gain a foundation and further insight into my particular study. Besides enlarging one's knowledge about the topic, writing a literature review shows ability to scan literature efficiently and then to apply principles of analysis to identify unbiased and valid studies. Cresswell (2013) describes two basic uses of literature review:

1. The literature is used to frame the problem.

2. The literature is presented in a separate section as a review of the literature.

The goal of the literature search in this study was to establish what previous research had uncovered, concerning teaching literature in the primary schools in Ireland and in primary schools in other countries. This enabled the formation of a critical understanding of the literature that exists in relation to this topic and also provided support for the qualitative inquiry during the stages of data collection and qualitative analyses. Because a major objective of this study was to explore the value of quality literature in a young child's academic, social and aesthetic development, the literature review investigated the area of children's reading habits both in and out of school, the history of teaching literature in primary schools, what literature is currently being taught and the methods employed to teach it. Research that examined the role of using drama as a teaching and learning tool for exploring literature in the classroom was accessed. In each area relevant researches were summarised, the contents evaluated and the relationships between different works defined, which enabled the identification

of themes and the ability to draw together the findings, to gain further insight into this particular study. To build a historical foundation for this study, a variety of sources including professional journal articles, education department reports, conference proceedings, published dissertations and electronic resources were included. To ensure the review was up to date the most recent reviews and articles published in this area were sourced and included. The literature review is an essential link in the research project, providing the basis and rationale for the direction which the research ultimately took. It served to place the study in a historical perspective, justifying the reasons for carrying out research in this field, and selecting methods to relate the findings to previous knowledge without replication. I have based my conclusions on the original work of scholars and researchers in this area, and I have explored the weaknesses, gaps, or areas needing further study with a view to contributing to the present literature, especially in the Irish context. Through an overview of the existing literature, the core themes that underpin the study were identified and used to produce an analytical theoretical framework on which the thematic analysis of the data was based.

5.5.2 Participant Observation

Observation has been characterised as 'the fundamental base of all research methods in the social and behavioural sciences' (Alder and Alder, 1994:389) and as 'the mainstay of the ethnographic enterprise' (Werner and Schoepfle, 1987: 257). The classic form of data collection is observation of participants in the context of a natural scene. Observational data are used for the purpose of description of settings, activities and people, and is considered by Robson (2002:190) to be a 'natural and obvious technique' since people's actions and behaviour is a central aspect in virtually any enquiry. Rossman and Rallis (1998:137) say that the most important contemporary use of the participant observation method is in classroom observational studies. Participant observation as a method of enquiry has advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage is its directness. 'In observation studies, investigators are able to discern ongoing behaviour as it occurs and make appropriate notes about the salient features' (Cohen et al., 2007:188). Bernard and Ryan (2009:41) claim that it puts the researcher where the action is and allows her to 'observe behaviour that might otherwise be missed in a natural context'. Guest et al. (2012) consider this method of data collection the most natural, yet challenging of all qualitative data collection methods because it unites the researcher with the most fundamental of human experiences as she

becomes immersed in the hows and whys of human behaviour. Other advantages are that it studies events as they unfold allowing for the collection of a wider range of data (Bernard and Ryan, 2009).

Dodia (2013) asserted that when observation as a data collection method is used researchers must have some idea of what they are looking for, when and where to observe, and in what form the observations will be recorded; in written, audio or visual recordings. Observation can be a daunting experience posing the question of how do I capture what is going on? In this study the practice of jotting down notes in a journal was used and served as a memory aid when analysing the data. This practice is recommended by Lofland and Lofland (1995) who acknowledge the difficulty of writing extensive field notes during an observation. Researchers often question the validity of using participant observation as a method of data collection as it may be prone to bias and interpretation. Because the observation in this study was carried out by teachers with their own pupils, they fitted into the scene 'well enough to be ignored' and because the researcher and teachers had an intimate knowledge of their area of study this increased the validity of the data recorded (Guest et al., 2012:79).

Participant observation was used as a data collection method for this enquiry during the school year 2011-2012. In my class, throughout the project I used a semi-structured participant observation approach to record the attitudes of pupils to the work in which they were involved, their interest in the literature, their participation or lack of participation in the drama activities and their interaction with other pupils. Taylor (1996:14) argues that classroom teachers can be just as objective as they observe their students at work, and are probably more reliable observers than external evaluators because they know the personal histories of the children. I conducted sustained observation in my class during this year, recording my students' questions, responses, comments and activities while involved in learning quality literature. During the year my 5th and 6th class pupils were introduced to the works of Shakespeare, Chaucer, Wilde, Dickens, Wordsworth, Yeats and Heaney. They also studied modern poets such as Shel Silverstein, Roger Mc Gough and Michael Rosen and popular fiction such as Eva Ibbotson, Michael Morpurgo and Lois Lowry. I recorded the observation in a narrative style by taking brief field notes during the activities, commenting on what took place, and if relevant, what didn't take place. A more detailed narrative account was written up at the end of each day. Both verbal and nonverbal cues were monitored during the observation. Data collection and analysis were done side by side. As soon as data was gathered from observation, initial analysis commenced in a concrete, unambiguous, unbiased and descriptive way in

order to select significant features for future focus. During the observation I paid attention to core skills exemplified in the English Curriculum:

- the pupils' ability to concentrate and listen attentively;
- their eagerness to express views and opinions and to contribute to discussion;
- their ability to read the text;
- their willingness to use the language in the texts both orally and written;
- their ability to use the cognitive skills of reasoning, perception, intuition and memory;
- their interest in the content of the work they were engaged in;
- their co-operative skills;
- their ability to use their imagination.

The teachers participating in the CPD module observed their pupils using similar criteria and recorded their findings in their observation sheets and reported their assessments on a regular basis to me. I am aware of the subjective nature of observation as a method of data collection and employed triangulation to ensure greater reliability.

5.5.3 Interviews

'We live in an interview society, where members seem to believe that interviews generate useful information about lived experience and its meaning' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011:47). Marshall and Rossman (2010) suggest that one of the most important aspects of the interview approach is conveying the attitude that the participant's views are valuable and useful. The success of the interview depends on both parties and their willingness to engage in an open discussion about the topic of interest. The interview is more powerful than is often credited. Kitchin and Tate (2000:213) write that an interview 'can provide rich sources of data on people's experiences, opinions, aspirations and feelings'. In the context of this educational research, the purpose of the interview was to obtain the perspectives of the participants and stakeholders on the value of literature in the primary school and the advantages and disadvantages of using drama as a teaching and learning methodology.

'What one seeks from a research interview in phenomenological research is as complete a description as possible of the experience that a participant has lived

through' (Giorgi, 2009:122). The type of interview a researcher uses depends on the nature of the research enquiry, the type of information they wish to obtain, and the amount of time and resources they can afford. Powney and Watts (1987:18) regard the purpose of the interview as a way of satisfying the researcher's questions. Semi-structured interviewing, where similar questions are asked of each participant but allowing for flexibility in the order, and giving 'the interviewee more scope to express his own views' (Woods, 2006) was the choice of interview format for this study. Semi-structured individual interviews were used with the key stakeholders identified for participation in the study to represent the different levels in the Irish education system, primary, secondary, third level and policy makers: namely, a student teacher, a primary school teacher, two secondary school English teachers, the English Officer for Primary Education in the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), a senior civil servant with the Dept. of Education and Skills and five English pedagogy lecturers in teacher education colleges. Once the initial list of stakeholders was drawn up, a purposive approach to sampling was used in this study. Some of these interviews were conducted face to face; others over the phone according to the preference of the respondent (see appendix 9 for the letter inviting respondents to participate in the study and Appendix 10 for the interview schedule).The questions posed to the stakeholders were similar to those discussed by the participating teachers. They were asked to express their views on the importance and value of teaching literature both at primary and secondary level, what literature they considered suitable for different age groups, the methods used to explore literature and methods they would recommend, if they saw any value in using drama as a teaching and learning methodology to explore literature, the use of basal readers in primary schools and the importance of teacher pre-service and in-service training and development in the area of teaching literature.

Since it is acknowledged that group interviews have greater potential than individual interview to develop discussion, and explore a range of responses, it was selected as the preferred method for interviewing the participant teachers. Since all the participants were known to me and to each other, it was felt a group discussion would yield richer data (Cohen et al., 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) advise the researcher that the group interview is fundamentally a qualitative data gathering technique that employs formal or informal questioning of a group of individuals. This type of interview helped determine the beliefs and values of the participant teachers with regards to the research questions and proved a good means of encouraging the participants 'to share social and educational experiences relating to the project and to develop their thinking' (Denzin and Lincoln 2011:70). Group interviewing involves interviewing a number of

people at the same time, the emphasis being on questions and responses between the researcher and participants (Morgan, 1997).These semi-structured group interviews were held prior to each of the four workshops during the CPD training. The seven participating teachers engaged well with this format of interview, expressing their views on the questions as posed to them. They spoke openly about their views on the importance of children reading for pleasure and on how teachers can encourage this habit of reading in their pupils by introducing them to a broad choice of reading material and by inspiring them to enjoy reading by using creative and inclusive teaching methods to explore literature. They also expressed their views on the value of drama as a teaching and learning methodology and on the importance of CPD for teachers, especially in the area of teaching literature (see Appendix 3). The data retrieved from these interviews were used to triangulate the data from the teacher questionnaires and journals.

The interviews in this research were audio-recorded and transcribed for future analyses. Many researchers believe in the merits of taping because it is impossible for an interviewer to record every word on a note-pad and audio recordings allow for careful review of data (Atkins and Wallace, 2012; Weiss, 1994), but Creswell (2013) advises researchers to take notes on their interview schedules in the event that the tape-recorder malfunctions.

The semi-structured individual and group interviews used in this research were kept simple and relatively brief in accordance with the requirements of the research questions. Individual interviews lasted for approximately 30-40 minutes, and the group interviews typically lasted for 30 minutes. The transcriptions and analysis of the data was undertaken as soon as possible after the interviews, taking Lofland and Lofland's (1995:7) advice that 'regardless of the circumstances, researchers ought to take notes regularly and promptly; write everything down no matter how unimportant it may seem at the time; try to be as inconspicuous as possible in note taking; and analyse notes frequently'. Analysis was ongoing; transcribing interviews, coding, categorising, reinterpreting and making sense of notes while including a justification for interpretations. To ensure that the ultimate value was gained from all interviews I was well prepared and always courteous to those interviewed, acknowledging Charmaz's (2006) suggestion that the responsibility to ensure the interview is a positive experience for the interviewee lies with the researcher. I piloted all instruments prior to carrying out the research to determine whether problems existed that needed to be addressed and minor modifications to the language and phrasing of questions on both instruments was incorporated as a result.

Bell (1987) warns of the danger of bias in interviews where the interviewee may be over eager to please the interviewer and answer accordingly. He identifies that this is likely to happen in solo interviews with children, so therefore I used a focus group interview approach with the pupil participants. Hennessy and Heary's (2005) research shows that using focus interviews in preference to individual interviews with children produces a greater elaboration of ideas. Focus group interviews were chosen in preference to group interviews because unlike group interviews where the emphasis is on questions and responses between the researcher and participant, the focus groups rely on interaction within the group based on topics that are supplied by the researcher (Morgan, 1997).

Focus group interviews

Researchers have defined focus group interviews as a discussion-based interview that produces verbal data generated through group interaction (Breakwell et al., 2012), 'a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research' (Powell and Single,1996:499). Focus groups are a form of group interviewing but it is important to distinguish between the two. According to Silverman (2013) in focus groups the researcher does not ask questions of each participant in turn but encourages them to interact with each other and have an informal discussion about a particular topic. Hence the key characteristic which distinguishes focus groups is the insight and data produced by the interaction between participants. The many benefits of using the focus group interview technique identified by Archer (1993) include the ability to gather data directly from the children to identify needs and constraints that might be missed through other methods of assessment and was a key focus of this research. Other benefits he cites provide high face validity results because the method is readily understood, and includes:

- gaining insight into the reactions of children about a new learning tool;
- Exposing a concept to determine how it might be used;
- Gaining insight into the appeal of a programme relative to other similar items;
- Generating new programme ideas from children based on their wants, needs and desires

In this study, for the purposes of obtaining the pupil participants' views and ideas on the teaching methods and learning of quality literature, focus group interviews, where participants interact with each other to answer questions, were selected above either

individual or group interviews to produce more reliable data. While conducting the focus group interview with the children participants, *the differences between children and adults were considered, and methods were adopted to match children's developing cognitive, linguistic, social, and psychological competencies as is recommended by Gibson (2012).* According to Gibbs (1997), who carried out a review of focus group methodology, the main purpose of focus group research is to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way which would not be feasible using other methods, for example, observation, one-to-one interviewing, or questionnaire surveys, but in this study they were used to compliment other methods, especially for triangulation and validity checking (Morgan, 1997; Guion et al., 2011; Breakwell et al, 2012). Ethical considerations for focus groups are the same as for most other methods of educational research (Homan, 1991), therefore when selecting and involving participants, I ensured that full information about the purpose and uses of participants' contributions was given and the participants were not pressurised to speak (Gibbs, 1997). In this research, eight children, four boys and four girls from my 5th and 6th class volunteered to take part in a focus group before the class was introduced to the selected literature and drama lessons (see appendix). I recorded the observation notes immediately after the focus group interview as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1989) in a reflective journal. An audio recording of the interview was used to check the details of the interview. Although the main source of data analysis was the recorded speech derived from the interview, a deeper and more valuable dimension was added to the analysis as I was also able to reflect on their responses during the interview through noting without bias the non-verbal communication expressed by the members of the group. Although a focus group interviews was used as a method of data collection in my own class, the participant teachers expressed a wish to obtain information from their own students through observation and short questionnaires as they thought focus groups were unsuitable in their individual contexts.

In designing the focus group interview Marshall and Rossman (2010:151) advise that groups compose of seven to ten people. These participants are chosen because they share certain characteristics relevant to the study's questions. In the case of this study the participants were all in the same class and had had experienced the same learning experiences. Much of the published material about using focus group interviews with children is written for councilors, psychologists, police or health care workers. However in recent years this method has become popular with practitioner researchers in the field of education. My reason for using focus group interviews with children was

because I felt that all too often those most affected by educational policy and programmatic decisions, namely the pupils are often absent from the inquiries. However, Freeman and Mathison (2008:196) warn that a researcher interviewing young people must always respect them and consider their feelings. I created an enabling environment in the focus group that encourages participants to share perceptions and points of view without pressuring them to vote or reach consensus (see Appendix 8 for a sample schedule of questions).

5.5.4 Questionnaires

My decision to use questionnaires reflects Wilson and McLean's (1994:39) analysis of the questionnaire as a 'widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher'. It would have been logistically challenging to interview the children in the classes of the participating teachers, so alternatively these pupils responded to a short pre-project questionnaire on their attitude to reading and knowledge of literature. Loxley (2006) explains points that the questionnaire is like an extension of the researcher, acting as a proxy.

As a research method, the self-administered questionnaire is structured, versatile and flexible in nature. It is employed as a quantitative research method to gather information about people's opinions, sometimes as a straightforward written question requiring an answer by ticking the appropriate box, while at other times asking respondents to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement given. Questionnaires often pose a question and give the respondent space in which to formulate her reply. Similar to other data collection methods, the quality of the data depends on how well the questionnaire is constructed. The self-administered questionnaire is most often used to gather structured data at a distance and was employed in this research to support findings recorded in my observation records, focus group and group interviews, and to triangulate the information received from participants. Open and closed questions were employed to add a qualitative flavour to this part of the research. Questionnaires for both teachers and children were prepared. A baseline questionnaire was completed by the 7 self selecting teachers to determine their views on what constitutes good quality literature, the value (if any) of teaching such literature in the primary schools, the literature they use in their classrooms, the methods employed to teach it, the effectiveness of drama as a teaching and learning methodology for literature and the need for CPD (continuous professional

development) in this area of the English curriculum. The pre-project children's questionnaire was administered to all the pupils in fifth and sixth class in my school (N=25) and also to the pupils in the classes of the teachers participating in the CPD training (n=103) to determine their views on literature and their reading habits and their knowledge, if any, of Shakespeare, Dickens, Wilde and Chaucer. The children's questionnaire was drafted using clear understandable language (Mc Millan and Schumacher, 1997:46) and a simple layout (see appendix 4) was used. This is imperative if it is to be completed successfully. All questionnaires were piloted: the teachers' instrument by the teachers who attended the CPD pilot training exercise and the children's by the children involved in the CPD pilot demonstration class. Suggested amendments, such as the realisation that the questionnaire was too long for the children, were incorporated into the final instrument. Drafting the teachers' pre-project questionnaire commenced in February 2011 and was piloted in June 2011. It was revised and piloted again in September by three teachers of senior classes who were not part of my final sample and the adjusted questionnaire was distributed in February 2012.

A follow up teacher questionnaire was drafted and piloted by the teachers who piloted the pre-project questionnaire, and the adjusted final questionnaire was administered online to ascertain if the participant teachers were still using drama methods to teach literature 10 months after the CPD had ended, and to inquire if they had noticed any change in their pupils' learning (see appendix 8). A short questionnaire was administered in March 2014 to 8 past pupils of mine who were preparing for their Leaving Certificate in 2014, to inquire if their exposure to Shakespeare while in 5th and 6th class had any impact on their study of Shakespeare in the secondary school (see appendix 12). Loxley (2006) advises researchers not to rush, as the quality and interpretation of the data you receive back depends on how well the questions and statements are constructed. The layout and presentation of a questionnaire is important to secure a good response, therefore a funnel sequence was used, beginning with simple questions and moving on to more complex ones. A questionnaire, like other methods, can produce large amounts of data, however its advantage to this research was that analysis, interpretation and managing of data was more straightforward. In style, the questionnaire is a quantitative method of data collection, structured to collect standardised data. In this study questionnaires were analysed to explore patterns of responses rather than highlighting individual responses.

5.5.5 Journals

Journal and diary accounts add an extra dimension to qualitative research. In this study journals provide a forum for the researcher and participants to record opinions and personal reflections on the project. Data journals may be kept by both teachers and pupils and provide valuable information into the working of a classroom (Mills, 2003). Students record their 'thoughts perceptions and experiences' while teachers record 'not only their observations but also the feelings and interpretations associated with those observations' (Mills, 2003:68). It is important that children be provided with an opportunity to contribute valuable information based on first-hand experience, therefore during the study all of the children participants kept a journal in which to write a reflection of some observation they made in relation to the literature and drama project work. On regular occasions the children were invited to record their 'emergent ideas, results and reflections on personal learning' (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008:152). The children were advised that these comments should be constructive. Thus they wrote their opinions on the lesson, noting ways in which it might have been improved and discussed what they enjoyed or did not enjoy, and why. This practice is in line with the Department of Education and Skills recommendations on self- assessment. The researcher in her classroom and the teachers participating in the CPD module encouraged the children as co-researchers to contribute, critically constructive comments on the new teaching and learning approach being experienced. Regular opportunities were provided in class to constructively share extracts and opinions which were recorded in their journals. The participating teachers returned their observation sheets and their pupils' journals to m at the end of the project. The journals only had the child's initial name and no school was identified. The journals which were used as data to support other methods were found important at the data analysis and writing up stage.

Easterby-Smith et al. (2008:152) advocate:

- a diary/ journal approach allows the perspectives of several different writers to be compared and contrasted simultaneously;
- the data is presented within the reference frame of the writer, whereas in observation the researcher cannot help imposing her own reference frame;
- the researcher has more time to analyse the data than she would have during observation.

The journals/observation sheets kept by the participating teachers and my own journal recorded critical incidents, notable classroom dialogue, personal frustration, perceived successes and interesting details about the children's work. Entries were completed after each session in his/ her role both as teacher and participant observer, and used to triangulate data from other methods. The decision to use journals as a method of data collection is reinforced by Woods (2006) who suggests that this source of data can provide personal insights not available by other means and can enhance or challenge data gained in other ways,

5.5.6 Drama in Education as a Research Tool

'Drama is a mode of learning. Through the pupils' active identification with imagined roles and situations in drama, they can learn to explore issues, events and relationships' (O'Neill and Lambert, 1990:11). Teachers have a keen interest in how their students learn and also in how to assess this learning. In the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy (Dept. of Education and Skills, 2011:77), teachers in Irish primary schools are advised to look for 'evidence of children's progress in developing dispositions to learning, in developing attitudes and values, and in acquiring knowledge and understanding'. Bolton (1999) claims that drama in education is an effective teaching method for engaging students in a diverse range of learning activities. In this project drama was used to engage pupils with the works of Shakespeare, Chaucer, Dickens and Wilde. Drama is a medium most children enjoy and are good at, offering a context and a powerful motivation for learning, while providing confidence and independence. The Primary School Curriculum highlights the contribution that drama makes to the intellectual, emotional and physical development of the child. According to Heinig (1993:6) the value of drama in teaching language arts comes from the fact that language becomes more meaningful when it is set alight by experiences in life. Drama provides students with the opportunity to use language to explore various emotions, to solve problems and to make decisions.

In addition to using drama as a learning medium, drama as a kinaesthetic mode of data collection for the research enquiry was employed. Dorothy Heathcote (1983:82) sees the value of drama as a research tool for the child. She sees the role of drama as giving an opportunity to children to look at problems from different viewpoints. Woolland (1993, 5) argues that children should be encouraged to work independently of their teachers. When students are working together in drama, the teacher can circulate, challenge, intervene and facilitate through the use of role, giving her the

opportunity to observe, monitor and assess students' work in a positive, exciting framework. In this study drama strategies such as teacher in role and hot seating served as techniques for informal and formal observation in the classroom. A purely scientific quantitative approach could not fully measure the range of learning that occurs in drama; therefore a qualitative approach with the researcher as a central agent in its process is the answer. According to Caldwell (2011) in an online article at *Teaching Through the Arts:*

> Participation in drama activities provides the teacher with another way to access the student. Through dramatic play, students reveal how they organise ideas, solve problems, work in groups, deal with conflict and use their imagination. Observing how students dramatise an event offers valuable insight into how they perceive, interpret, understand and analyse the material at the core of the lesson.

The pupils in this study approached the language, characters and themes of the literature being studied through drama, affording the researcher with the opportunity to record, document and assess their engagement, enjoyment and understanding.

5.6 The Pilot Process

A pilot study is an abbreviated version of a research project in which the researcher 'tests the procedures to be used in the subsequent full-scale project' (Dane, 1990:42). It is a preliminary or trial run investigation using similar questions and similar subjects as in the final survey to pre test and modify study design and procedures, or what Mc Burney and White (2012:209) call 'finding the bugs in the procedure'. Kidder and Judd (1986) state that the basic purpose of a pilot study is not merely to identify flaws, but to determine how the design of the subsequent study can be improved. According to Marshall and Rossman (2010) piloting can be useful not only for trying out strategies but also to support the argument for a genre and strategy. Sampson (2004) believes that while pilots can be used to refine research instruments such as questionnaires and interviews schedules, they have greater use still in ethnographic approaches to data collection in foreshadowing research problems and questions, in highlighting gaps and wastage in data collection and in considering broader and highly significant issues such as research validity, ethics representations and researcher health and safety, and the latter was the aim of the pilot process used in this study A small pilot study was conducted in advance of my planned project, specifically to test aspects of the research design. The main purpose of this pilot was to calculate the method of CPD training best suited to support my research questions, to develop, adapt, or check the

feasibility of the questionnaires for teachers and children and to determine the reliability of a focus group interview with children. Pre-testing of a particular research instrument, such as a questionnaire or interview schedule may help the researcher to make the necessary adjustment before final commitment to the design (Mc Burney and White, 2012).

The pilot study was in the form of a CPD module lasting two hours. Questionnaires were distributed to all participants, both children and adults. Adults completed a questionnaire before and after the training, while the children completed a questionnaire prior to the demonstration class and a sample of eight children took part in a focus group interview after the class. The participants consisted of my 5th and 6th class and four teachers from the school plus two teachers from a neighbouring school. After the teachers watched me teach a lesson based on Romeo and Juliet through the medium of drama, they agreed to do a similar class with their own pupils and report back to me on their observations on the benefits or otherwise of this model of instruction. I gave each teacher a lesson plan suited to their class level. Four of the six teachers returned feedback. Through the use of the pilot study as a pre-test I was satisfied that the design of the project complied adequately with the requirements of the study. When the data from the pilot was analysed, it revealed that changes to the structure of the CPD module were needed. The questionnaires for the teachers and the children were too long and the children's questionnaire needed to be simplified. The teachers involved in the pilot indicated that they would like to be actively involved in the workshop rather than being observers. The teachers reported that the lesson plans were too long. I had used some of them in my own class and had not thought them too long but I had failed to consider that other teachers and children were less familiar with drama as a teaching and learning method. Therefore the questionnaires and lesson plans were revised, making them simpler and shorter.

5.7 Determination of the Target Population

The purpose of sampling is to obtain a group of subjects who will represent the larger population and provide specific information needed. For the purpose of this research the population is the primary teachers in Ireland and pupils in senior classes in primary school. The sample is the participants, seven primary school teachers who self-selected to participate in this research and the students in those teachers' classes. The logic of my study is to make meaningful inferences or generalisations about the population based on what I find out from the sample. My goal was to select a sample

that would adequately represent the population within the parameters of a small scale study. Mc Millan (1996) says that when doing research in education the best procedure for selecting a sample that is representative of the population is to use random selection. The sample was obtained by advertising the CPD module through the Mayo Education Centre in the West of Ireland. All teachers in primary schools in County Mayo were notified about the training and seven teachers self-selected to attend. Cohen and Mannion (1994) advise that using volunteers may direct a sample towards those who are more confident. The teachers who self- selected for this research were not confident but were willing and keen to participate and experiment with their teaching pedagogy. They represented the broader population in that six were female and one male, which is representative of the proportion of male teachers who attend CPD in this area of the curriculum. All of the participants taught in a rural environment, one in a seven teacher school, two in three teacher schools and four in two teacher schools. Two teachers had between 5 and 10 years teaching experience, two between 10 and 15 years and three had between 30 and 35 years. McMillan (1996: 8) believes that a small sample is sufficient and will provide 'an accurate description of the entire population'. The commitment of all seven teachers is noteworthy, notwithstanding that they self-selected for the project. There was one hundred per cent attendance at all four workshops, they were punctual, enthusiastic, attentive and active participants.

5.8 The Inclusion of Pupil Voice in the Data

Children have a right to be involved in many aspects of the research process and their participation can enhance the quality of the research (Shaw et al., 2011). Jean Rudduck (Rudduck and Flutter, 2000), who campaigned for student voice in research and practice, criticises establishments and researchers who fail to acknowledge children's ability to comment on issues affecting their lives. Dr Colette Murphy acknowledges the contribution students can make to debates on their own education in her address to a symposium on *Student on Junior Cycle Reform* in Trinity College in 2014. She stated 'Young people often have a much more sophisticated understanding of the issues than they are given credit for, and raise issues which might be otherwise overlooked (Murphy, 2014). My belief is that pupil input into research concerning their education is invaluable because they personally experience what is happening in the classroom. In this research pupils from the teacher participants' classes and the pupils in my classroom expressed their views about exploring good quality literature and about participating actively in drama exercises to explore literature through answering

questionnaires, making journal entries and being involved in focus group interviews. The data collected from the children forms an important component of this study's analysis. I understand my responsibility to provide whatever assistance was needed to ensure the children's successful participation. Consent was obtained from the children's parents for their participation in the study. Shaw et al (2011) advise that good practice requires the child's agreement to participate; therefore participation in the study was optional for the children. The purpose of the research was explained to them (Wilkinson 2000; 9) and care was taken in the design of the appropriate methodology to elicit their comment and input at all stages of the design.

5.9 Analysis

The purpose of qualitative inquiry is to produce findings and I understand that the data collection process is not an end in itself but that the culminating activities of qualitative inquiry are analysis, interpretation, and presentation of findings. In order to gain optimal value from the data the researcher needs to organise and analyse the information collected (Merriam, 2009). As Maxwell (2005) indicates this is how researchers make sense of the data they collect and are able to apply their findings to interpret the meaning of that data. The remaining challenge in this study is to make sense of the data collected, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal.

According to Shamoo and Resnik (2003) various analytic procedures provide a way of drawing inductive inferences from data and distinguishing the important from the unimportant content in the data. Analysis is a search for meaning. 'It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others, a means of organising and interrogating in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques or generate theories' (Hatch 2002:148). Maykut and Morehouse (1994:121) make it clear that 'the process of qualitative data analysis takes many forms, but it is fundamentally a nonmathematical analytical procedure that involves examining the meaning of people's words and actions'. With the view of making sense of the qualitative and quantitative data which was collected from the participating teachers, the stakeholders and the children, I felt that the data analysis technique that best fitted my research method was that of thematic analysis. This technique has been described by Daly et al. in Fereday and Muir-Cochane (2006) as a

search for themes that emerge as being important to a description and understanding of the phenomenon and by Braun and Clarke (2006:79) as 'a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data and which helps one organise and describe data in a detailed way'. Before using a thematic approach to analysing the collected data in this research, I looked at thematic analysis through the work of authors such as Guest et al. (2012); Thomas (2006); Cresswell (2013); Maykut and Morehouse (1994) and Braun and Clarke (2006). Guest et al. (2012) suggest that data analyses should start with a statement of the analyses' objective which outlines what the research aims to achieve and then develop an analysis plan that will determine the coding process. For the purposes of this study, once the data gathering exercise was completed the analysis commenced with identifying aspects of the data of interest to me and which related to the research questions and the literature. These chunks of data were given codes to summarise their meaning and then grouped to form themes for analysis. Braun and Clarke's (2006) offer the following six phase plan of analysis which was adapted for use in this study:

- Familiarisation with the data
- Generating initial codes
- Searching for themes among codes
- Reviewing themes
- Defining and naming themes
- Producing the final report.

This procedure which offers a feasible and comprehensive framework for qualitative data analysis was adapted in this study, while acknowledging Cresswell's (2013:85) advice to the researcher that 'the various stages are interrelated and not always visited in the order presented'.

This process of analysing qualitative data is described by Jorgensen (1989:107) as:

> Breaking up, separating or disassembling of research material into pieces, parts, elements or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion.

For Charmaz (2006:112) this sorting and reconstruction should occur through a coding process: 'Codes serve to summarise, synthesise and sort the many observations made of the data'. Researchers use these codes to piece together and develop categories from the diverse statements they find or identify in the data, which may have at first

appeared unordered and unrelated. Lewins et al. (2010) argue that qualitative analysis is a range of procedures and processes by which we move from the qualitative data that have been collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations we are investigating. Patton (2003) describes this process as detective work and advises the researcher to hunt for themes and concepts that will best relate to what's going on in the inquiry. In my analysis I used a theoretical analytical framework which I developed from the important themes emerging from the literature search to discover what I wanted to know and this, I felt, helped patterns to emerge from the data. To develop this theoretical conceptual framework I identified seven core pillars that underpinned the study and these were used to help develop my themes when analysing the data. See table 5.2 below.

5.2 Table: Core Pillars that underpin the study

Literature should be of a high quality, and have a lasting impression on and encourage children in primary school to become lifelong readers.	Lukens (1982); Nuba et al. (1999); Carter (2000); La Monico (2002);
Teaching and learning literature in primacy school improves children's social and emotional skills.	Robert Penn Warren (1950); Bettelheim (2010); du Toit (2001); Alber et al. (2011)
Good literature develops a child's vocabulary and literacy skills.	Stoodt (1996); Yorke (2008); Fenwick (1990); Showalter (2003); Dickinson (2011); Bas (2012)
Teachers should choose good literature to encourage children to read.	Benton and Fox (1985); Carter (2000); Falconi (2011); Manzo and Manzo (1995); Thompson (2009); Wolf (2004)
Methods used to teach literature should stimulate the growth of the child's character, arouse his imagination and develop his language.	Fox et al. (2003); Protherough (1995); Longo (2006); Kelner and Flynn (2006); Squire (1977)
Drama brings the characters, themes and plot of good quality literature to life for pupils and helps them engage more fully with texts.	Ewing and Simons (2004); Ashton-Hay (2005); Courtney (2004)
Drama develops literacy skills.	Neelands (2008); Lawrence (2011); Mc Naughton (1997); Mc Master (1998); Kempe and Nicholson (2007)

The dominant themes which emerged from the theory were used as conceptual pillars to frame the study search through the data. This approach generated additional themes and ideas in the data which were not identified in the literature. I was aware of the relationship between what I was looking for in the data and the information that was emerging from the data, and used a thematic approach to pin point this information. Braun and Clarke (2006) advise that through a thematic approach a researcher can provide an adequate and detailed yet intricate representation of the data. The process involved preparing the data for analysis. Once all the interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, observation and journals were completed, the data was read and re-read three times to categorise the responses and to familiarise myself with the data set overall. Patton (2003) describes this as a way to check out the quality and the completeness of the information that has been collected. The information was analysed for categories, patterns, themes and issues and then compared for relationships and differences. Following this, it was coded and rearranged into categories that facilitate the comparison of data in and between the categories.

After the interviews with the participants, which were conducted prior to and following the CPD workshops, I transcribed each interview. I read the interviews and isolated the sections which seemed to describe distinct incidents or stated opinions about the relevant topics under discussion, and put them into initial categories. I examined the meaningful and symbolic content of this data and read the interviews again to test, revise and refine the initial classifications.

When examining the data my aims were:

- to make sense of each collection;
- look for patterns and relationships, both within a collection and across collections;
- to make discoveries about the questions I was researching;
- examine each piece to see how it fits together to form a shared or individual opinion;
- compare and contrast each of the items identified in order to discover similarities and differences and find sequences or patterns.

Since my research study was a small scale investigation into the teaching of good quality literature and the methods used to teach it in the primary school, I did not use an interpretative paradigm but rather a devised theoretical framework on how I was analysing the data.

A question I asked myself was, what descriptive and evaluative ideas and opinions are brought to bear when each participant talks about and thinks about the teaching of good quality literature in the primary classroom? Discoveries arose from sorting and sifting, but also from examining the coded transcripts carefully. I looked for threads and patterns that would bring the analysis together and I focused my attention on the interesting items which emerged and selected relevant extracts to highlight those features. The first thing I did was to look for patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest/conflict in the data. This process commenced when the data collection started and continued throughout the study. Braun and Clarke (2006) warn that analyses is not a linear process but a recursive process where the researcher moves back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data and the analyses of the data.

The analysis was carried out through multiple readings and interpretations of the data corpus (Thomas, 2006). Although the findings were influenced by the research questions, they came directly from the analysis of the raw data, not from personal beliefs or expectations or ideas from the literature. A rigorous and systematic reading and coding of the transcripts allowed major themes to emerge. An inductive approach to data coding and analysis was adopted whereby the themes emerged. The following steps as illustrated in table 5.3 were adopted.

Table 5.3 Identifying Cohorts

Cohort	Data Set
Participating Teachers	1 Baseline Questionnaire 2 Group Interviews 3 Teacher Observation Sheet 4 Post-project Questionnaire
Participating Teachers' Pupils	5 Baseline Questionnaire 6 Pupil Journal
My Class	7 Pre-project Focus Group 8 Pupil Journal
Stakeholders	9 Interview
Past Pupils	10 Questionnaire
Author	11 Interview

Table 5.4 What I Did with Each Data Set

Phase 1	Reading and re-reading of data
Phase 2	Annotation of key ideas for data across all data sets
Phase 3	Identification of themes and colour codes
Phase 4	Comparison of themes across data sets
Phase 5	Themes emerging from data

Table 5.5 Colour Coding: Linking Themes to Colours

Theme	**Colour Code**
Motivation and learning	**Blue**
Fun and enjoyment	**Red**
Literacy skills	**Green**
Text and language	**Yellow**
Social skills	**Purple**
Challenges	**Black**

Emerging themes were developed by studying the transcripts repeatedly and considering possible meanings and how these fitted with the major themes which emerged from the literature search. Towards the end of the study no new themes emerged, which suggested that the major themes had been identified (Marshall and Rossman, 2010). At the end of each data collection stage the transcripts were coded line by line, a process described by Corbin and Strauss (2008:160) as 'fracturing the data', in order to examine the words used by the participants to describe their views, experiences and feelings on teaching literature and the meanings and assumptions they attached to those experiences. Throughout the initial coding process I moved quickly through the data and constantly compared data with data. In doing so I was careful to apply what Henwood and Pidgeon (2003:138) describe as 'theoretical agnosticism' to the process in adopting an open, agnostic and critical stance towards the data and not the participants. I highlighted words and excerpts of interest to me and assigned initial short codes to them. Charmaz (2006) advises that analysis must be systematic and organised.

During my initial reading I started to take notes and began coding. When I had a general idea of what was in the data I began to notice what was interesting and

organised my data into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005). Themes are broader than codes, and Braun and Clark (2006) believe that equal attention should be given to each data item, identifying interesting aspects in the data items that will form the basis of the themes.

I approached the data with the themes I identified in the literature in mind. I started to code around these themes. All data extracts were coded and then collected together within each code. I noticed that some of the coded data fitted into a number of themes.

When the data from the interviews, questionnaires, journals and observations had been initially coded, I sorted the data into meaningful themes and sub themes. I organised the themes that emerged from the data using the table of the seven pillar themes from the literature and the organised sub themes that arose from the coded data but were not found in the literature. I combined, refined and separated themes, ensuring that the data within the themes fitted together meaningfully and that there were visible distinctions between the themes. I checked that the themes I had chosen represented the data set. When I felt additional coding was needed I returned to my coded data. I reviewed and fitted my themes together using the different layers of data which I had from the participants. At this stage I began to analyse the data within the themes, 'identifying what was interesting within each theme' (Braun and Clarke, 2006:22).

Through my thematic analyses I presented and commented on the story within each theme and related this story to the story that was emerging from the whole data set and the story emerging from the literature search. The analyses will now be presented in subsequent chapters in a report that will tell the story of the implication for both teachers and pupils in the primary school of teaching and learning good quality literature through the medium of drama. This story will be presented in a way which I hope will convince the reader of the validity of my analyses.

5.10 Triangulation

When referring to mixed-method evaluation design, Green et al. (1989) highlight triangulation for testing the consistency of findings obtained through different instruments. Guest et al. (2012) recommend that the researcher use different strategies to convince the reader of the validity of her research. Similarly, Creswell (2013) suggests that a qualitative researcher employ a variety of validation strategies to ensure a study's accuracy and relevance.

As the researcher, I understand that it is my duty to establish the confidence of the reader, and therefore, this study employs triangulation, which is described as 'combining methods and collecting a variety of data to ensure trustworthiness' (Cohen et al., 2007:112). Data triangulation involves collecting and assessing multiple sources of data (Patton, 2003). Triangulation is supposed to support a finding by showing that independent measures agree with it, or at least don't contradict it (Miles and Huberman, 1984), therefore triangulation is defined to be 'a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study' (Creswell and Miller, 2000:126). Although research can be greatly enhanced by triangulation, Patton (2003) warns the researcher not to expect the use of different methods to investigate the same programme to produce some nicely integrated answers and suggests that the main reason for triangulation is to help become aware of why there are differences. Triangular techniques 'attempt to map out, or explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint and, in so doing, by making use of both quantitative and qualitative data' (Cohen and Manion, 2000:112).

In this research study the research question was mapped out and explored by using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and by using a variety of data collection methods, sources and theories concurring with Webb et al. (1966:3), who suggested that 'once a proposition has been confirmed by two or more independent measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretation is greatly reduced'. However in line with Patton's theory the diversity of human nature was acknowledged in all findings. Knowledge was viewed as socially constructed and something that can change depending on the circumstances. Crotty (1998: 42) defined constructivism from the social perspectives as 'the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context'. By cross referencing data, the participants' responses were validated, and by using video recordings, observation was reinforced. Bloom (2012:76) observes that by 'combining multiple perspectives, social science researchers hope to overcome the limitations and intrinsic biases of any one perspective and thereby obtain confirmation of their findings'. To establish a baseline on their views of teaching quality literature in the primary school and of using drama as a teaching method, the participating teachers in the CPD training completed a questionnaire and engaged in a group interview prior to the CPD workshops. The

information they supplied in their observation journals after they taught each lesson plan was triangulated by a follow up group interview. All interviews were recorded and transcribed as soon as possible. Analysis of the data was carried out by cross-referencing the data. To ensure triangulation, I did not rely on one person's point of view but on the opinions of the seven participating teachers and their 103 pupils, and I also included the opinions of people outside the primary education system including secondary school teachers and the staff in Teacher Education Colleges.

5.11 Ethical Considerations

According to Cohen et al. (2007) ethical issues may be associated with the kind of problems investigated by researchers and the methods they employ to acquire valid and reliable data. In any research enquiry it is crucial that the researcher is clear about the agreement they enter into with their participants. Cohen et al. (2007: 61) advise the researcher that 'much social research necessitates obtaining the consent and co-operation of subjects who are to assist in investigations and of significant others in the institutions or organisations providing the research facilities'. The quality and quantity of the data collected is indeed important but the way in which it is obtained is equally important. I am aware of my responsibility to and my relationship with participants and I acknowledge that everyone who participates in this research study is entitled to confidentiality. The responsibility lies with me, the researcher to ensure that children involved are provided with a safe environment in which to contribute their point of view. Therefore, in order to maintain the integrity of this research, ethical practices were used to set up and conduct the project.

All research is based on informed consent. Blaxter et al. (2001) advise researchers that research ethics is mainly concerned with the type of contract, the agreement that has been made between the researcher and the research subjects. Every effort was made in this research project to take ethical consideration into account, from the planning stages to its completion (Mc Craig and Dahlberg, 2010:9), considering and respecting at all times the rights of those who helped to make this research possible.

In this research project all participants, including the pupils, their parents and the principals were informed about the purpose of the research and assured that disclosure of data would not refer directly to them. The vulnerability of the children was considered, as most of the research will pertain to them. As a school principal, I ensured that all activities were in line with the ethos of the school and its policies. At the beginning of the 2011-2112 academic year a letter was sent to parents informing

them of what was proposed during the course of the study, making them aware that the children would be interviewed and seeking permission from parents to involve their children as participants in my research (see appendix 13). This letter assured parents that if they did not wish to agree, alternative supervised activities would be provided for their children. A similar letter for parents was drafted for use by the teachers carrying out research in their own classrooms (see appendix 14). Permission was sought from all school principals where research was carried out (see appendix 15). The child's freedom to choose to participate or to opt out was respected at all times and permission was sought from the children and their parents to include their drawings, writings and photos in the research findings. All permission was in writing and a written guarantee was given that no child's name would be published in the research document or in subsequent publications. A guarantee was given to the teachers, and other educationalists participating in the questionnaire and interviews that neither they nor their school/institution would be identified in the findings. By following these guidelines it is hoped to obtain a healthy balance between 'the demands placed on the researcher to pursue the truth, and the inherent rights of the participant' (Cohen et al., 2007:49).

5.12 Reliability and Validity

Reliability is the level to which an assessment tool yields stable and coherent results. Validity refers to the 'credibility of our interpretations' (Silverman, 2013:285). For a test to be reliable, it also needs to be valid. Bernard and Ryan (2009:53) advise us that 'nothing in research is more important than validity'. Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend that qualitative researchers should use terms such as trustworthiness and credibility to infer the strength of a study, instead of quantitative terms like reliability or validity, but Sarantakos (1994:300) has asserted that validity is 'a methodological element not only of the quantitative but also of qualitative research'. Validity and reliability originated in quantitative research. Many qualitative researchers like Lincoln and Guba (1985) have refuted the use of these terms in qualitative research and have created various alternatives. This formal rejection has created an assumption that qualitative research cannot be properly valid and reliable. Baumgarten (2012) argues that reliability and validity are central elements of qualitative research which are equipped with a variety of methods to address challenges to reliability and validity, and by using these methods a researcher can produce valid and reliable qualitative research. Hammersley (1992:39) says that 'technically speaking reliability is concerned with the accuracy and

consistency in which instances, events or segments of data are assigned to the same category on different occasions'. In this study, the same group of teachers participated throughout the CPD training, and the same sample of children were observed, interviewed and asked to complete questionnaires, and the findings of the research are based on this sample. To assure reliability, the same texts and lesson plans were used by all teachers and the teachers returned data in the same semi-structured manner, namely journal accounts. Rigour in qualitative terms and reliability and validity in quantitative terms are ways to establish trust and confidence in the findings or results of a research study (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011). Attention was paid to the issue of reliability in the preparation, implementation and analysis of this research inquiry to give confidence to the reader that the findings are worth paying attention to. To ensure that this study is a believable and a valid account, the findings are presented following a rigorous thematic analysis of the data, using relevant references from the literature search to compare and contrast against the findings from this study.

5.13 Bias

The cause of the invalidity of research is often associated with bias, which is defined by Lansing et al. (1961:161) as 'a systematic or persistent tendency to make errors in the same direction that is to overstate or understate the true value of an attribute'. A biased study looses validity in relation to the degree of the bias. Hammersley and Gromm (1997) consider that the adoption of a particular outlook from which some things become conspicuous and others fade into the background can lead to bias. There are several reasons why bias may be found in a research enquiry, the characteristics of the researcher or the participants, or the content or interpretation of questions. Cohen et al. (2007:21) outline the following sources of bias which I took into consideration when conducting interviews, processing questionnaires, and observing pupils:

- the attitudes, opinions and expectations of the researcher;
- a tendency for the researcher to see the respondent in her own image;
- a tendency for the researcher to seek answers that support her preconceived notions;
- misconception on the part of the researcher of what the respondent is saying;
- misunderstandings on the part of the respondent of what is being asked.

As a teacher who has taught quality literature to my own students through the medium of drama for many years and who has a great interest in and love of the works of Shakespeare, Dickens and other classic writers, I was aware of my bias in this area and was vigilant at every stage of the enquiry not to let this bias influence either my questioning, observation or analysis. In the use of questionnaires, interviews, observations and sampling, areas such as attitude and expectations and a tendency to see participants as the researcher would like them to appear were all addressed through the design and selection of questions. Care was taken not to seek answers to support preconceived notions or misperceive what respondents were saying, and guide them to support predetermined views. Bias was also consciously avoided in areas such as race, religion, social class and age. During the process of analysis I was vigilant not to express personal bias by taking statements out of context for the purpose of persuasion, assuming too generous or too critical an attitude towards a person or idea. To address bias in research Denzin and Lincoln (2011), and other researchers have suggested using triangulation of data sources and methodologies to counter bias; an approach which was employed in this research enquiry. As a drama teacher I have a bias about how drama works, and in this study I was always aware of this bias when probing to see how it might work for other teachers in their classrooms. In order to assure that my personal enthusiasm for drama did not dominate, I actively listened to the participants' views, and never imposed my personal views about drama on them.

5.14 Concluding Comments

In this chapter I have identified and presented a detailed account of the research philosophy, strategy and methodology according to which this practitioner inquiry was conducted in pursuit of an answer to the research questions. The literature describing the data collection methods employed is important, not only in outlining the value of those methods in research but illustrating the weaknesses associated with them in research. Chapter 6 will present a write up of the findings, the final analyses of the fully worked out themes. Data extracts will be included to capture the essence of the point being made (Braun and Clarke, 2006). To increase the validity of my findings I will link the analysed data to the research questions.

Chapter 6

The Findings

> This, to me, is the real meaning of education: asking questions in a spirit of intellectual seriousness and genuine wonder and then putting the heart into enjoying the myriad playful possibilities of life.
>
> (Brendan Kennelly 1994:186).

6.1 Introduction

For action researchers, data is 'the material for their reflections' (Altrichter et al., 2008: 95). This chapter presents the results of the study on using a drama methodology to explore literature in primary schools. The data were critically examined and filtered for themes relevant to the research question. The fundamental goal that drove the collection of the data and its subsequent analysis was to examine whether an in-set model of continuing professional development over a period of time could motivate and guide primary school teachers in how to use a drama approach to teaching literature in their classrooms. The data are presented chronologically (before the project, during the project and after the project) and a narrative structure is used to interweave between four interrelated strands of research, involving the teacher participants, their students, the students in my classroom and outside stakeholders. This chapter presents the voice and perspective of the research participants and offers a range of empirical evidence in support of the findings. The data is discussed within the context of the literature in the following chapter.

6.2 Pre-Project Baseline Data

To establish participants' views in relation to the research questions before the intervention began, the following data collection methods were used:

- A baseline questionnaire was completed by the 7 self selecting teachers to determine their views on what constitutes good quality literature, the value (if any) of teaching such literature in the primary schools, the literature they use in their classrooms, the methods employed to teach it, the effectiveness of drama as a teaching and learning methodology for literature and the need for CPD (continuous professional development in this area of the English curriculum. (see appendix 2).

- Preliminary data from the results of the teachers' baseline questionnaire were used to formulate follow up questions and to facilitate further probing and exploration of teachers' opinions; attitudes and experiences of using good quality literature in a group interview which was conducted on the first night of the intervention (see appendix 3).
- An age-appropriate baseline questionnaire was completed by the 103 children in the 7 participating teacher's classes, and by 25 children in my 5th and 6th class, to determine if the children read, what literature they read, their views on good quality literature and what methods they considered would help them to explore literature in their classrooms (see appendix 5).
- A pre project focus group interview was conducted with 8 pupils from my class to establish their experiences of exploring literature (see appendix 11)

To track references, the pupil reference is matched with the teacher, i.e. P2, T6 indicating that pupil 2 was taught by teacher 6.

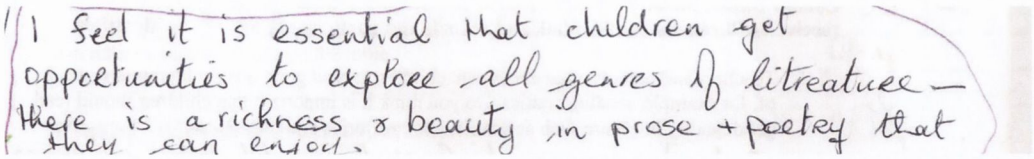
6.2.1 Results from the Teachers' Baseline Questionnaire

This data set was considered against variables such as the teachers' gender, age, level of experience, number of years teaching, class size and school type and no significant differences were found among respondents. Thus the sample is treated as a whole and not divided further, and the data are presented according to the dominant themes in the research questions.

6.2.1.1 Attributes and Choice of Literature

All 7 participating teachers agreed that studying and exploring good quality literature plays a major role in giving primary school children a desire to read and hopefully a lifelong enjoyment of reading. The teachers expressed various other reasons as to why exploring literature is important, with four teachers emphasising its role in assisting with pupils' transition to secondary school. Teacher 3 noted that it awakes an interest in literature before they go there. Teachers 5 and 7 suggested exploring stories in the infant classes to develop an inquiring mind and a lifelong love of literature; described by teacher 5 as providing 'a good foundation' for their later studies. The scope of the vocabulary, the challenge of the language and the exploration of character, theme and

setting were considered as valuable attributes of studying good quality literature by all the participants in comments such as:



T6, Pre- Project Questionnaire, February 2012

Teacher 2 was alone in citing the exploration of literature as a useful home school link since parents enjoy reading the class novel with their children. No other participant shared teacher 4's suggestion that literature develops the imagination and empathy of the child. The data revealed that all teachers were aware of the value of teaching literature for academic development and acknowledged its contribution to pupils' social and emotional skills.

The participants appeared satisfied with the literature they teach, teacher 3 being the exception saying, 'I only teach a very limited amount, a few poems and one novel each year, because of a lack of training and an overcrowded curriculum'. 5 of the 7 teachers strongly supported the idea of introducing classics as the class novel. 'I feel it is essential that children are exposed to the quality literature of the classics, and to the richness of poetry and plays which have as much relevance today as they had in the past' (T6, Pre- Project Questionnaire, February 2012). Teacher 1 suggests enjoyment is more important than the quality while teacher 2 argues that because of the difficult language, an introduction to classics too early might discourage children. Data revealed that there was greater focus on more contemporary authors such as Roald Dahl and Michael Morpurgo, who were cited as the preferred authors for class novels. Modern authors including John Boyne, Jacqueline Wilson, Anne Fine, Eoin Colfer and Nina Badwin were also cited as favourites. All 7 teachers encouraged their pupils to read poems by Yeats, Heaney and Robert Louis Stevenson as well as modern poets such as Jack Prelutsky, Alan Ahlberg and Shel Silverstein. Teacher 6 had taught poems by Wordsworth and Robert Frost. This emphasis on teaching poetry may be due to the fact that the revised curriculum contains exemplar lessons for poets such as Yeats. Teacher 7 was unique in expressing his opinion that play scripts were unsuitable literature for primary school children stating that 'this type of text is difficult to read and does not hold the child's attention'. 5 teachers have taught poems by Yeats, 3 have used extracts from novels by Dickens, teacher 5 has explored a mini

version of the *Merchant of Venice* and teacher 6 has explored a story by Wilde. It was noteworthy that no teacher had explored more than two of those authors.

6.2.1.2 The Teaching Methods Used

All participating teachers expressed the opinion that the method used to teach literature is important. It is evident from the data that they drew from a wide repertoire of approaches including whole class teaching and group discussion. Table 6.1 displays the preferred teaching methods of literature used by the respondents.

Table 6.1: Respondents' preferred teaching methods

Whole class teaching, reading the text and answering questions	7
Group teaching, discuss, analyse and respond	5
Individual reading aloud	6
Silent reading	6
Visualisation	3
Literature circles	0
Work book activities	4
Drama activities	2
Art activities	7
Music activities	1
Other	2

Teachers reported that they all use a whole class teaching approach with questions and answers, with strong reliance on silent reading and reading aloud in class. Similarly, all 7 teachers reported using art activities to explore literature, yet only 1 had used music and 2 had used drama. Teachers 6 and 3 reported using project work and internet research to explore the class novel, with teacher 3 adding that she has used the 'write a book project' to enhance literature appreciation and encourages her pupils to write poetry.

Teachers 5, 2 and 1 suggested using a variety of methods to make teaching more interesting, to develop a love of literature, and to provide a teaching environment conducive to learning. Teacher 7 agreed with the curriculum guidelines which encourage children's involvement in their own learning, yet felt that teacher directed approaches were better at times for teaching literacy in general but particularly for

exploring literature. Teacher 5 disagreed saying 'when children explore novels or poems actively in groups, their language skills develop and in turn their writing skills may improve' (Pre- Project Questionnaire, February 2012).

Teacher 4 was alone in commenting on the importance of methods to promote and stimulate the growth of a child's character saying:

> I have noticed when the children are actively engaged in the text of a novel, working in groups or writing in role as the characters, they begin to empathise with those characters and this I feel develops the children's own personality, whereas when they just read the novel or answer questions asked by the teacher all this exploration is lost.
>
> (T4, Pre- Project Questionnaire, February 2012).

This data provides evidence of some engagement with active teaching and learning methods but a heavy reliance on more traditional teacher led approaches.

6.2.1.3 The Curriculum

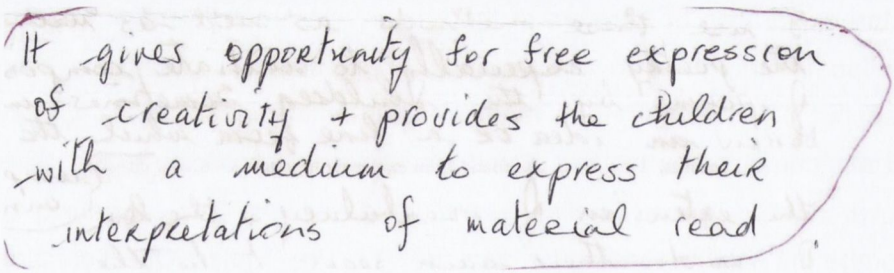
The respondents displayed an awareness of the influence of the revised English curriculum on the exploration of literature in the primary classroom, yet five felt that adequate attention is not given to the teaching of literature, a possible reason according to teacher 4 for the decline in reading habits among pupils today. Others suggested that this curriculum is too broad and leaves too much choice to the class teacher. 'The overcrowded revised English curriculum leaves very little opportunity to foster or encourage the habit of reading for pleasure' (T1, Pre- Project Questionnaire, February 2012). Teachers 3 and 5 disagreed and highlighted the fact that this curriculum recommends a range of texts in various genres, steering teachers away from the sole use of basal readers. 5 respondents would like the curriculum to identify specific literature for each age group in primary school. One teacher felt such recourse would 'reduce a teacher's workload' (T1). Teacher 7 and 2 commented that the same novel is being taught in 3rd and 6th class in some schools, a practice which could be avoided by the publication of a suggested list of novels for each grade. In contrast, teachers 4 and 5 said that they welcome the freedom of choice. Teacher 3 and 6 advocated the introduction of literature as a special strand within the English curriculum to expose children to the richness and beauty of literature and to 'achieve a uniformity of standards in language development' (T6, Pre- Project Questionnaire, February 2012). All others disagreed, underlining the significance of literature being

integrated and linked across all strands, 'addressed within the reading strand, explored in the oral language strand and developed through writing' (T 7).

It appears clear from the data above that all participants are aware of the importance of literature in the English curriculum and of the many benefits it brings to pupils' early learning. No consensus was reached on the most appropriate method of teaching literature and the teachers cited the related effectiveness of both active and teacher directed methods. Although it appears that they explore mainly modern children's fiction as class novels, they all recognise the value of good quality literature and have explored a reasonably wide range of poetry with their pupils, both modern and classic, Irish and international.

6.2.1.4 Drama as a Teaching Method

The data reveals that most participants were inexperienced and unfamiliar with drama pedagogy and that only two had used drama to explore literature previously, yet all participants were favourably disposed to trying it as they believed it would benefit the teaching of literature. Teachers 1, 4, 5 and 6 identified oral language development and self- confidence building as reasons to use drama. Teacher 6 explains:



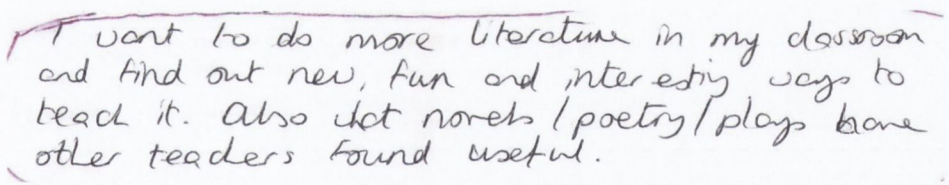
T6, Pre- Project Questionnaire, February 2012

Teacher 2, who had used drama before, stated that 'drama brings texts to life by helping children get a better understanding and insight of the story as well as of its characters and themes'. Teacher 1, who had also used drama previously, agreed and added that it encourages free expression and develops communication skills. Only one teacher included the word 'fun' in her list of benefits, 'Drama is fun, it gives confidence, self-esteem and reinforcement to children. It improves questioning and thinking skills and brings the text to life' (T3, Pre- Project Questionnaire, February 2012). It seems unusual then that this teacher had never used drama as a teaching and learning methodology for literature. Teacher 7 anticipated that drama could help increase a child's interest in the text but added 'I have never used it and that is why I am doing

this CPD course'. When asked if they felt drama would improve critical thinking skills 6 responded positively while teacher 7's reply was that he did not know. Data reveal that teachers' views were in accord in indicating that time constraints, lack of ideas, insufficient training in college and lack of CPD in this area were all challenges to using drama in the classroom

6.2.1.5 CPD Training

All respondents recurrently underlined the significance and value of CPD, and stated that they were looking forward to the CPD workshops, not surprisingly as they self selected for the project. Participants identified that their preferred model of CPD was attending a course given by an expert in the field, and participating actively. From attending CPD such as this training they reported that they aspired to broaden their knowledge of suitable texts, explore a new methodology for teaching literature, observe best practice and bring some new ideas to what teacher 3 called 'a most interesting and important area of the curriculum' (Pre-Project Questionnaire, February 2012). Teacher 4's aim was to teach more challenging literature and get some ideas to make such literature child friendly. Teacher 6 echoed these sentiments but added that she would like to make exploring literature in her class more fun. Teacher 7 supported this by saying 'I love to teach literature so I think this may be a new and exciting way to do it' (Pre-Project Questionnaire, February 2012). Teacher 2 wrote:



T2 Pre- Project Questionnaire, February 2012).

Overall, these preliminary data suggest that this cohort of teachers, representing seven different schools were eager to explore quality literature and experiment with drama as a teaching method, hoping to become more familiar with such texts and find an interesting and enjoyable method of exploring them with their students. Their receptivity to an active approach to engaging in CPD was welcome, as the workshops were planned on the basis of teachers' full involvement in all activities. Findings from the initial questionnaire were used to formulate follow-up and clarifying questions which participants responded to in a group interview which on the first night of the

project, prior to the teacher's active involvement in the workshop exploring *The Happy Prince*. The findings of the interview are presented below.

6.2.2 Data from the Group Interview

The interview stimulated the participants to develop their ideas expressed in the initial questionnaire and also afforded them an opportunity to discuss and respond to each other's ideas. All participants agreed on the importance of reading for children and acknowledged that it is getting increasingly difficult to encourage children to read regardless of the wealth of books and other reading material available at their fingertips. There was consensus about the teacher's role in encouraging her students to read and in introducing them to interesting literature, while allowing them to choose their own reading material. Teacher 1 said that a lot of material published today for children did little to encourage the child to read, a concern expressed by four others, one adding that her pupils get bored easily and rarely finish books. Although many of the participants had previously expressed the view in their questionnaires and at the start of the interview that it didn't matter what children read once they read, and also that the quality of the literature children read has no effect on the standard of their writing, after discussion, their ideas changed and they all agreed with teacher 3 that 'giving children a full diet of comics and rubbish novels does nothing to improve their oral language or writing skills' (Pre-Project Interview, February 2012). They spoke very passionately about including a varied diet of good comics, newspapers, online articles, good modern authors such as Roald Dahl, some classics like *Black Beauty* and *Heidi* and a selection of poetry. Teacher 4 who loves to read herself and shares her interest in literature with her class said that 'if the children see the teacher read it may encourage them to become avid readers' (Pre-Project Interview, February 2012). Teacher 5 was adamant that associating reading with pleasure aids enjoyment and develops the habit of reading. 6 respondents welcomed the idea of the teacher reading to all grades, but teacher 7 disagreed, noting, 'If a teacher or parent continues to read to their child after the child has mastered the skill of reading, the child won't bother to read himself and will become lazy' (Pre-Project Interview, February 2012). Most agreed that one of the reasons children become bored with a novel is the methods the teacher uses to explore it. All participants agreed with teacher 4 that teachers are using too much prediction, exploration, comprehension and other reading strategies, and should be allowed to read some books for enjoyment, and others, especially well written texts should be explored for character, themes, setting and wealth of language.

Although there was consensus among the group that it was the teacher's job to encourage reading the role of parents in encouraging their child to read from an early pre-school age was seen by all as essential, and all participants agreed that many parents today don't encourage their children to read. Stating that you Teacher 4 asserted that she can pick out the children at school who are encouraged to read at home and who see their parents reading because their imagination is already 'sparked and active'. Others agreed that these children have a head start on children coming from homes where there are few or no books. Teacher 4 described how her school held meetings to encourage parents to read with and take an interest in their child's reading, but they got little positive response.

As reflected in the questionnaire, all participants said that they liked to teach literature, even though most of them added that there are many barriers to exploring literature within their class. Table 6.2 displays the teachers' concerns and their recommendations from the interview session to overcome those barriers.

Table 6.2 Barriers to Teaching Literature

Barriers	**Teachers' Recommendations**
Time	Reduction in class sizes. Practical support for teachers in effective time management
Resources	Grants made available to all schools to buy an adequate supply of books. Lists and samples of literature suitable for each grade supplied by Dept. Of Education.
Expertise	More emphasis on this area in pre-service training. CPD training for all teachers in teaching literature.
An overcrowded curriculum	Introduction of a more teacher/pupil friendly English curriculum with more emphasis on reading and more exemplars for novels.

Teachers 2 and 6 questioned whether there was adequate time in the already crowded curriculum to introduce primary children to classics and suggested using authors such as Roald Dahl to encourage them to read and then introduce more difficult authors as the child matures. Some teachers were highly critical of the fact that the 2011 strategy to improve literacy in Irish classrooms does not promote the exploration of literature. The majority of the respondents felt a new English curriculum was needed with a greater emphasis on reading but teachers 1 and 5 disagreed and suggested that the

curriculum, as it stands, recommends an equal emphasis on oral language, reading and writing and on integrating these strands.

Data reveals a consensus among participants on the influence of television on children's reading habits, which they report results in some children only reading in school. Other participants argued that it was not television alone that distracted children from reading but sport, computer games and after school activities. Teacher 7 suggested that 'teachers are fighting a losing battle, as technology improves children will read less and less'. Others were more positive and indicated that teachers must continue to bring new and exciting methods to their classrooms and create a reading culture in their students.

The evidence from the group interview supports that of the questionnaire, revealing again that the participants are unanimous in their interest in literature and show enthusiasm for CPD in this area They discussed my choice of literature for the four workshops and the majority had reservations regarding their suitability for primary school pupils, yet they were all willing to experiment with this challenging literature. Ideas not evident in the questionnaire data surfaced here such as the negative influence of television and parents' lack of interest and input into their children's education. Topics already noted that militate against a greater exploration of literature were again highlighted, such as time, lack of teaching expertise and an overcrowded curriculum. Many reported teaching a wide range of poetry as had been recorded in the questionnaire, and explained during the interview that they followed curriculum guidelines with its emphasis on poetry, and used the poetry they remembered from their own days in primary school. Teacher 2 found the choice of suitable novels daunting and depended on colleagues' suggestions for novel choice. The participants reported only using play scripts for Christmas concerts.

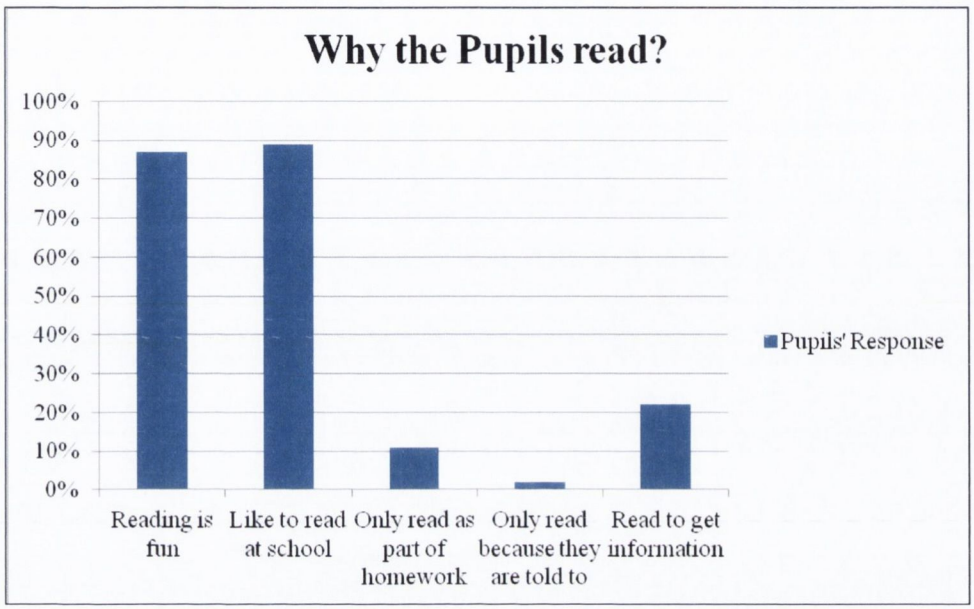
The following section will present data from a questionnaire completed by 103 pupils in the participants' classrooms which was designed to assess whether the participating children held similar or conflicting views on literature exploration and the approaches used to exploring it in the classroom.

6.2.3 The Pupils' Opinions

Data from the baseline questionnaire completed by the 103 children in the 7 participating teacher's classes (see appendix 5) reveal that in contrast to the teachers' concerns about their pupils' lack of interest in reading, 88% of the pupil participants

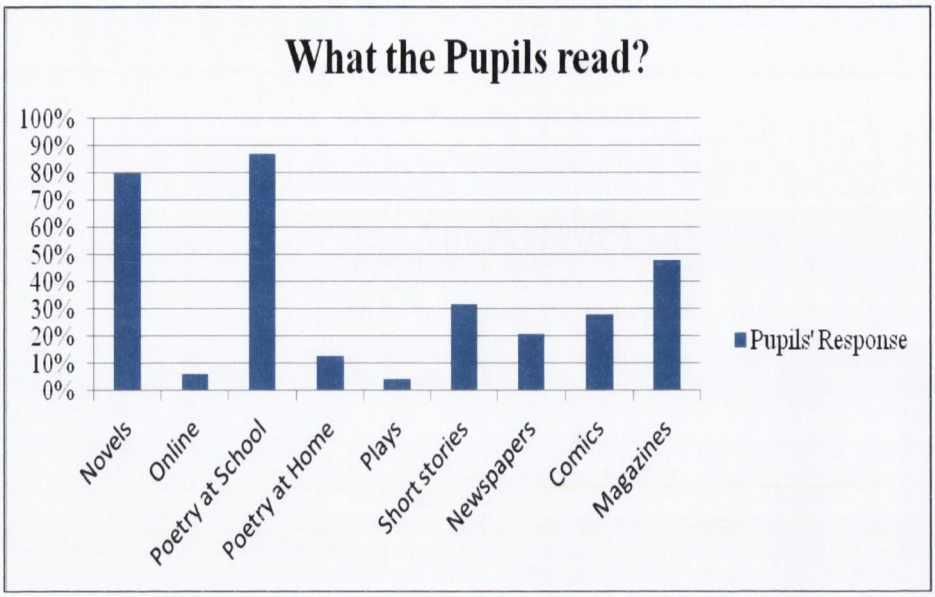
answered that they loved to read. Table 6.3 shows why they read and table 6.4 identifies what material they like to read.

Table 6.3: Why the Pupils Read?



It is interesting that reading to get information is ranked so lowly, which supports the evidence that this sample of children are reading for fun. The data was supported by a number of positive qualitative comments such as 'I love reading when I go to bed. I get books in the library and I buy the ones I like to keep' (P15, T7), and negative comments such as 'I don't like reading and I'm bad at it so mammy makes me read to get better' (P14, T3).

Table 6.4 What the Pupils Read?



The emphasis on poetry and novels is in keeping with the practice reported by teachers, but it is surprising that so few report reading online or reading comics. The former however may be influenced to a degree by the relatively young age range of these children.

Despite the fact that only one teacher reported using the works of Shakespeare in her classroom, 76 pupils had heard of Shakespeare, 60 of whom could name some of his plays, including *Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. One child wrote:

I love reading Shakespeare plays as my dad read some to me when I was small. I got this set of books about the plays and I read them. I saw Romeo and Juliet in Dublin. and Macbeth and Hamlet on T.V.

P3, T1, Pre-Project Questionnaire, February 2012

Almost half of the participants in every school had heard of Charles Dickens and Oscar Wilde, while 75% had heard of W. B. Yeats. It is interesting to note that in the category of favourite authors, 44% chose Roald Dahl and 42% chose Michael Morpurgo. The

majority in 5 of the 7 schools chose one of those two authors as their favourite, saying the books were easy to read, exciting, fun, action packed and good stories. In school 2, half of the participants chose Louis Sachar as their favourite. In all schools at least one child chose Jacqueline Wilson, Judi Curtin, Jeff Kemmy, Francesca Simon or John Boyne. An interesting finding revealed that 7 children, from 3 different schools chose Shakespeare as their favourite author, even though 6 of those had heard of only one play by this author, revealing perhaps that Shakespeare may not be their favourite author and that their response may have been prompted either by a desire to please the teacher or by the fact they may not have been able to recall the name of another author when filling in the questionnaire. Although there was agreement among the respondents in their choice of author, there was no little consistency in their choice of the best book they ever read. 64 different books were named, many from authors not included in their author choice. 98% of the books named were modern novels. When asked to choose methods that they considered would enhance their enjoyment of reading in school the respondents offered a variety of suggestions. Those choices are displayed in table 6.5.

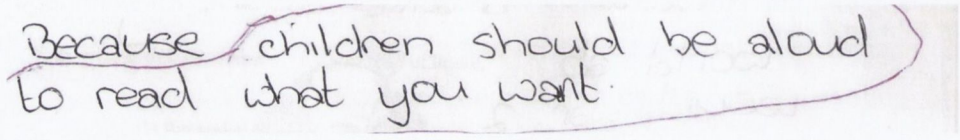
Table 6.5 Methods to increase enjoyment in reading

Reading parts aloud	Reading silently	Discussion in groups	Children choose the book	Listening to teacher read	Using visual art	Using creative drama
18%	50%	11%	50%	30%	44%	36%

In light of the teachers' data which highlights silent reading and the use of art as dominant methods in use in their classrooms, it is not surprising that these feature strongly also in the children's responses. However 36% reported using drama to investigate the books they read, which included all participants in school 1 and 2 thus concurring with the teachers' data. Teacher 6 had reported not using drama as a teaching method to explore literature, yet half of her students said they had used drama to investigate books, which may therefore have referred to a previous teacher in the same school. It is noteworthy that some children who had not used the method recommended it to add enjoyment to their reading experience in school. 'I think it would be cool to have drama and we could act out what happens in our readers' (P4 T7, Pre-Project Questionnaire, February 2012). 80% of the children agreed that it is important for children to read books, poems and plays rather than comics, because 'reading books is fun and helps you learn more', acquire 'a better vocabulary and more

information' and 'improves reading and writing skills' (P 2 T2, Pre-project Questionnaire, February 2012).

Although almost a quarter of the participating pupils had said they read comics, 80% agree that 'this type of reading material has very little interesting words and makes little sense'. One child who agreed said 'I like to read comics but teachers are right to get us to read poems and Shakespeare and things like that because you don't really learn the right things from comics' (P3, T1, Pre-Project Questionnaire, February 2012). A number of children in 6 of the 7 schools (14%) argued that 'comics were best', as 'they are fun and make you enjoy reading, unlike boring books and poems'. Representative comments from comic lovers were 'I think children should read what they like and not what teachers and parents think they should read' (P1, T1, Pre-Project Questionnaire, February 2012) and 'parents and teachers should be glad that we read for them at all and not ask us to read boring things like plays and books and poems' (P22, T6, Pre-Project Questionnaire, February 2012) and:



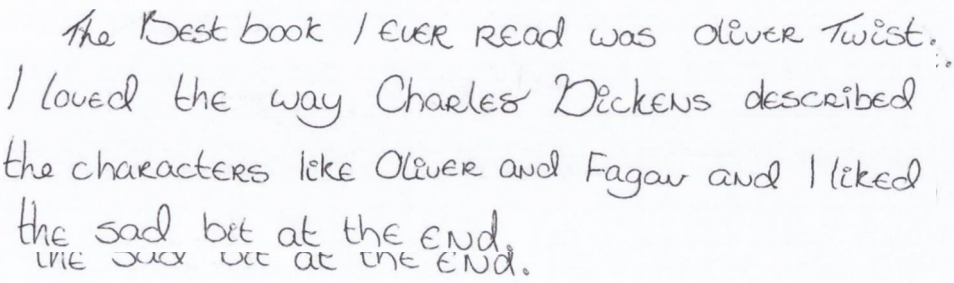
P20, T7, Pre-Project Questionnaire, February 2012

Overall it appears that the majority of the participating children enjoy reading and have explored a variety of genres of literature in their schools. The majority of respondents prefer to read novels by modern children's writers than any other genre of literature. Both children who have used drama before to explore literature and those who have not, reported their eagerness to do so. As a validating instrument this data will now be compared and contrasted with the opinions of the pupils in my classroom.

6.2.4 The Opinion of My Class

The data provided by the 25 respondents in my own 5th and 6th class, who answered the same questionnaire as the other 103 children were similar with some noteworthy differences to some questions. All pupils said that they liked to read in school and at home and agreed that although reading is fun it can be boring at times. All 25 had heard of Shakespeare, Dickens, Wilde and Yeats and could name more than 2 or 3 works by all four authors. As their favourite authors they choose Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Louisa May Alcott, George Orwell, C.S. Lewis, Charles Kingsley, Lewis Carroll, Nina Bawden, Beatrix Potter and Philippa Pearce, as well as similar modern

authors chosen by the participating teachers' pupils. This can be attributed to the fact that there is a policy in the school I teach in to introduce children to a varied diet of authors, including an author who has stood the test of time in each class from 1st class upwards. It was interesting to note that although all respondents in my class included a classic writer in their list of favourite authors, only 7 children choose a book by one of these authors as the best book they ever read. The reasons they gave for choosing the books were that they were full of suspense, had very interesting characters and great plots. One child said:



P15, My class, Pre-project Questionnaire, February 2012

In line with the choices of the children in the participating teachers' classes the majority choose books written by modern authors and gave similar reasons for their choices.

When this cohort was asked which methods they thought would make reading more enjoyable, the majority favoured using all the suggested methods. These pupils had used such methods before and the data displayed in table 6.6 suggests that they enjoyed them, especially drama which they had engaged in regularly to explore literature.

Table 6.6 Methods to increase enjoyment in reading (My class)

Reading parts aloud	Reading silently	Discussion in groups	Children choose the book	Listening to teacher read	Using visual art	Using creative drama
84%	80%	72%	76%	84%	80%	96%

A focus group interview was held with 8 children in my classroom to further probe and triangulate the findings from their class questionnaire.

Pre Project Focus Group with Children in My Class

7 of the 8 children present agreed that they enjoyed reading in school, with only 1 child saying he would rather use the computer. Yet all agreed that it's important to be able to

read well as there are lots of times you have to read. When asked what is literature, their answers included all the books they read, poems and plays including Shakespeare and short stories, and 'things we read online'. They discussed their experience of reading extracts from plays by Shakespeare such as *Romeo and Juliet*, and said that at first they thought they were difficult, but it was really exciting when they became the characters like Samson or Gregory or the Prince ordering fighting to stop. The majority agreed that it was nice to read old books like *A Christmas Carol* and *Oliver Twist* because 'although they are difficult they have new words and interesting characters'. 2 children said they only liked to act them out and would not like to read books like these on their own. When asked to compare the approaches of using drama to explore literature or reading texts and answering questions on them in class, the children discussed this together and came up with suggestions such as, 'when we act out the scenes or have improvisation the characters are real and you think you are in the place' and 'when I do drama on a story or a play I remember the story and the new words' (P 2 and P 6, Pre-Project Focus Group Interview, February 2012). They all agreed that everyone gets a chance to talk and most of all 'it's fun and the time goes really fast'. One child said that you can't have drama for every book and that she loved just reading books as well, but she didn't like answering questions. The other 7 agreed with this.

The following is a short extract from the transcript of the focus group interview.

Teacher: What is the difference in using drama to explore literature and just reading texts and answering questions in class?

The children respond after discussing the questions

Child 1: The drama is more fun.

Child 3: Yes, we always have fun in the hall when we do drama.

Child 7: It's not really fun just, we read the stories and then we do the drama, but it's not the same as reading in class.

Child 1: No it's not boring like in class and everyone gets a chance to say something.

Child 7: I hate writing down answers in class.

Teacher: What do the others think?

Child 5: I like reading in class too.

Child 3: But in the hall we get to be the characters and that makes the reading better.

Teacher: What is your favourite drama activity?

They all agreed that Hot Seating was the best because they could even do that in class when they are reading and want to interview the characters.

(Focus Group Interview, My Class, 23rd February 2012)

With regards to material they like to read, pupils indicated reading a diverse range of material, many reporting novels as their favourite genre, adding that they enjoyed fantasy, detective, comedy, adventure, mystery books and sometimes realistic or information books. Two of the children said they liked comics best as they were really funny and one boy said reading football magazines was interesting. One child interjected 'I prefer short stories, as books are very long and I sometimes can't understand them' (P 4, Pre Project Focus Group Interview, February 2012). They said they never read newspapers except in school. When asked about reading online an example of their comments was 'I think reading online is great because you can find out everything about football and countries but it's not as good as reading a book' (P 8, Pre-Project Focus Group Interview, February 2012). Among the group there was disagreement on reading books that the teacher suggested, most children preferring to choose what they read, and 1 child saying that adults don't know what children like. Others agreed and 1 child added 'I think it's better if the teacher reads the difficult books and explains them and then we can choose ourselves because I have re-read some of the books teacher read for us' (P 6, Pre-Project Focus Group Interview, February 2012) .

When asked what would encourage them to read more at home the following suggestions were given:

- If they had more time and less homework
- If the public library was nearer or if there were more books in the school library
- If they could meet the authors
- If books were easier to read and not so long
- If they could do drama on every story they read.

They discussed reading at home and 3 out of the 8 children said that they were encouraged to read, mostly by their mother. The same 3 children went to the library every week. Only 1 child said that she reads with her mother, but 4 of the others stated

that they were read to when they were younger. It is interesting to note that although all of the children said they liked to read at home, 6 indicated that they would prefer to watch television or play computer games than read in their leisure time.

6.2.5 Summary

Significant evidence emerged from this data to suggest that both teachers and pupils were enthusiastic about the teaching and learning of literature in the primary school. Teachers considered it important to explore a wide range of genres of literature, yet mostly choose mostly on modern day authors for literature exploration. The majority of the children considered it imperative that the child reads literature rather than comics and expressed positive comments regarding reading and enjoying poetry in school. This is in line with the significance the teacher respondents placed on exposure to both well acclaimed poets and modern children's poetry. Both children and teachers identified the importance of active learning methods being used to teach literature, but due to the barriers noted by the teacher respondents, a lack of this type of approach presents in the classroom. It is interesting to note that the word fun is quoted 73 times in the children's data in comparison to only 3 times in the teachers' data, indicating perhaps a lack of awareness of the importance of fun in the exploration of literature by teachers. The pupils in my classroom displayed a broader knowledge of classical literature and have used creative drama more frequently, which they report has improved both their understanding of the literature being read, and their academic and social development. The teachers who had signed up for the CPD workshops all displayed interest and enthusiasm in exploring good quality literature through the medium of drama and expressed a personal wish to introduce this method of learning to their classrooms.

The following section investigates the data received from the participating teachers and children during the drama intervention

6.3 Teachers' Data during the Drama Intervention

Following each of the four weekly CPD workshops, the teacher participants taught the lesson to their pupils and returned completed observations sheets to me (see sample in appendix 6). The CPD workshop on the second, third and fourth nights commenced with semi structured group interviews to allow further probing for detail and to validate the data derived from the observation journals relating to their experiences of engaging

with the lesson during the week before. This section presents data from their journal and weekly interview responses. The data were coded, analysed and interrogated against variables such as gender, age, level of experience, number of years teaching, location, type of school and class size and no significant difference between data sets was found. In the case of the first two authors, the data will be presented using the headings motivation and learning experience, text and challenges. I introduced a new heading called linkage and integration for the last two authors because at this stage of the project the participants were reporting integrating subjects.

6.3.1 Oscar Wilde

After teaching the lesson based on *The Happy Prince* by Oscar Wilde the participants, all of whom had expressed some reservations about using drama as a medium to teach literature (Baseline Questionnaire, February 2012), were predominately positive in relating that they and their pupils enjoyed the literature and the drama, with teacher 1 describing it as 'a rewarding experience' (Group Interview, 7th March 2012).

Motivation and Learning Experience

There was agreement among the participants that exploring literature through drama motivated the children to develop an interest and learn more about the characters and themes in the story. 6 teachers report fun and enjoyment as the main ingredients which aroused interest, although only 2 had associated fun with learning in the baseline study. Drama techniques such as Freeze Frame, Thought Tracking, Role Play, Music and Movement, and Improvisation were recorded as 'invaluable motivators' (see lesson plans, appendix 4). Four teachers especially mentioned the Improvisation when the children as town's people and a reporter attended the unveiling of a statue of a famous local person (see lesson plans, appendix 4). The teachers' comments such as 'a shy child came up to me on the way home and said "thank you miss that was great fun"' (T 3, Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012) show that they were aware of the fun and enjoyment the children experienced while engaged in learning. In the group interview all teachers on this occasion acknowledged the value of the fun aspect in motivating their pupils.

During the baseline interview 6 of the participants said that using drama may develop their pupils' self-confidence, and after experimenting with drama all 7 acknowledged that it did. Teacher 7's hope in the base line questionnaire that drama would increase his pupils' interest in the text appears to have materialised as he reports 'Being active

participants in the story increased the children's confidence and they became motivated and anxious to learn' (Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012). Teacher 3 reported that her children developed confidence as they worked in groups and pointed out that the children gained a perspective of what the story was about by being active learners, experimenting with their own interpretations, 'something impossible to achieve with classroom reading and discussion' (Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012. Participants' views in the interview support the above journal data. Teacher 2 told how a girl who rarely spoke in class became very articulate and confident during an improvisation based on the theme of poverty. Teacher 7 said 'I felt everyone got a chance to express themselves in the drama, whereas in class discussion a few dominate while the majority rarely answer in case they are wrong' (Group Interview, 7th March 2012). Teacher 6, who had noted in her journal that the drama activities had developed a deeper understanding of the story, reinforced that comment when she explained. 'One child in my class said *The Happy Prince* was a stupid story because birds don't talk to statues. Later, after being in role as the swallow he thought it was a super story' (Group Interview, 7th March 2012). Although some teachers were strongly of the opinion that the drama improved listening skills, others were less convinced. Teachers 1 and 2 reported pupils listening attentively and getting stuck in because the drama created a listening environment, but Teacher 6 disagreed, saying that listening to others in the drama activities would be unlikely to improve listening skills. The assumption of teachers 5 and 7 was that it was too early to make this observation, as they felt this skill would develop with practice. There was a consensus among all the participants that although the theme was a new concept to their pupils, its importance in the story was realised by the teachers when the pupils identified poverty, unselfishness and faithfulness, and related these themes to their own lives during the drama activities. Teacher 5 pointed out that when her class acted out the characters this brought them to life, and transformed an uneventful story to one full of exciting themes (Group Interview, 7th March, 2012). Teacher 1 added that she used her SPHE time to explore the themes of love, care, shallowness and unselfishness through drama.

Text

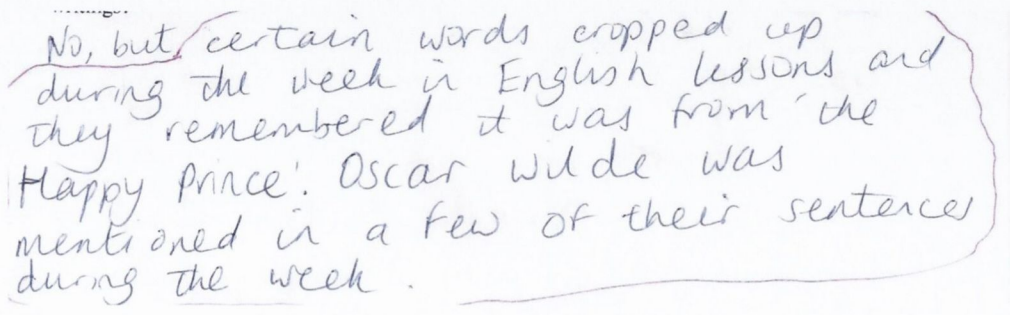
The data revealed some positive comments from the participating teachers, who up to this point mainly had used mainly modern children's literature (Baseline Questionnaire, February 2012), and now appear to be positively disposed towards good quality literature after their experience with Wilde. 'The story of *The Happy Prince* was really suitable for character, theme and especially language from a lot of different angles'

(Teacher 1, Journal, March 2012). Although teacher 7 expressed the view that his pupils disliked the story and added that he did not like the work of Oscar Wilde personally, he wrote of the momentum that developed as the children enjoyed exploring the characters through drama after they read the story. Teacher 3 in contrast said 'I love this story and my pupils thought it was great, and enjoyed using the language as they expressed the characters' thoughts in the freeze frames'. (Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012). She added 'like all of Wilde's stories this is a magical tale and I was delighted my class got a flavour of great writing'. (Group Interview, 7th March 2012

The following is an example of the language in the text:

> He passed over the river, and saw the lanterns hanging to the masts of the ships. He passed over the Ghetto, and saw the old Jews bargaining with each other, and weighing out money in copper scales. At last he came to the poor house and looked in. The boy was tossing feverishly on his bed, and the mother had fallen asleep, she was so tired. In he hopped, and laid the great ruby on the table beside the woman's thimble. Then he flew gently round the bed, fanning the boy's forehead with his wings. 'How cool I feel,' said the boy, 'I must be getting better;' and he sank into a delicious slumber. Then the Swallow flew back to the Happy Prince, and told him what he had done. 'It is curious,' he remarked, 'but I feel quite warm now, although it is so cold.'
>
> 'That is because you have done a good action,' said the Prince. And the little Swallow began to think, and then he fell asleep. Thinking always made him sleepy.
>
> When day broke he flew down to the river and had a bath.

Data reveal that the language in this text proved challenging for some pupils and forced them to analyse and deduce, but the teachers agreed it was this challenge that made the children love the story. Teacher 7 disagrees that the quality of language in a story is important and claimed that it was the drama the children enjoyed and not the actual story. The majority of the teachers stated that the children used some of the new vocabulary such as 'sapphire' and 'gilded' several times during Improvisation and discussion stages of the lesson, but they needed prompting and encouragement to use it in their writing. Teacher 2 explains:

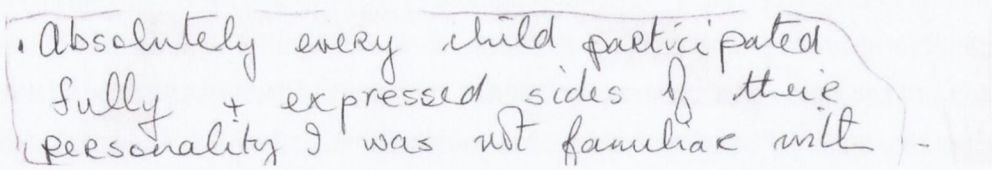


T 2, Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012

The group interview revealed that all participants agreed with Teacher 7 that the archaic language would have been difficult for the children if they had not explored the story through drama.

Challenges

The participants had anticipated challenges in teaching this lesson and now agreed that some difficulties had arisen. Teacher 1 said she was self-conscious and had problems with discipline during the lesson. All teachers agreed both in their journal observations and in the subsequent group interview that the lesson took more time than anticipated, and regretted that there was not more time available for activity such as discussion, art and writing, but added that the children were fully engaged all throughout the lesson, and it was time well spent. 'My class, the majority of whom do not like writing stories were enthusiastic to write the report on a 'Ruby Stolen from a Famous Statue'(see children's work, appendix 16) as they associated the writing with the drama and I regretted not having more time to listen to their stories' (T 2, Group Interview, 7th March 2012). Teacher 6 said she thought the lesson plans were too long to complete in one week and hoped to return to them and break them up into three or four weeks work. The participants had anticipated drama being a medium for oral language development (Baseline Questionnaire, February 2012), and despite finding time a challenge the majority reported the value of the drama activities and the discussion periods for developing the child's imaginative and vocal skills. Teacher 6 reported:



T 6, Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012

Teacher 7 was alone in questioning if this type of lesson is feasible in a busy and overcrowded curriculum despite the benefits the children derive from it.

All of the teachers agreed that there were both advantages and disadvantages in using drama as a method to teach literature in this lesson. A range of advantages were recorded such as the excitement and fun the drama brought to the learning, the motivation and interest it evoked, the understanding it brought to the text, the involvement of the children and the freedom of expression offered to them. The

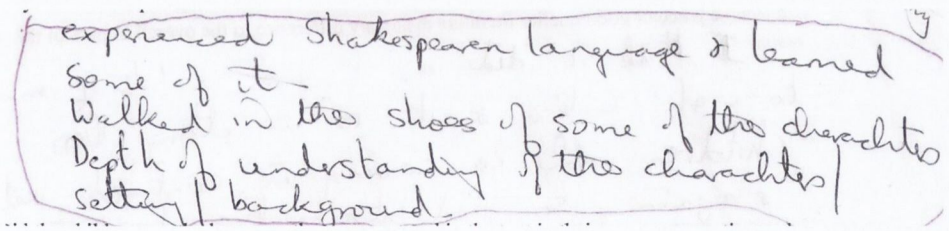
teachers unanimously acknowledged that the drama techniques developed self-esteem and a deeper understanding of the literature. Despite a lack of expertise in this area of teaching, the participants found it relatively easy from using the lesson plans and having participated in the workshop. This was a constructive beginning to the project considering that many initial problems could be caused by both the teachers' and the pupils' lack of confidence in and experience of drama in education conventions and strategies.

6.3.2 Shakespeare

On the second night of the CPD training, the participants reported enjoying a workshop based on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and agreed that they were looking forward to using the supplied lesson plans to explore this lesson with their pupils, despite earlier apprehension about the suitability of Shakespearean language in the primary school (Baseline Interview, February 2012). Journal and group interview data reflect their enjoyment and satisfaction of teaching extracts from Act 1 *Macbeth* by Shakespeare through the medium of drama.

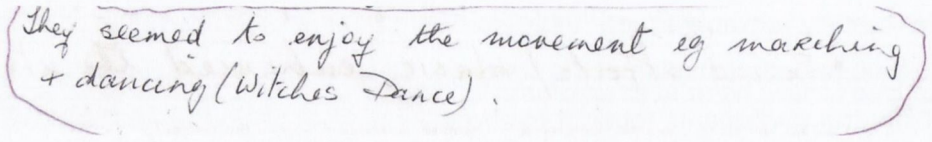
Motivation and Learning Experiences

Evidence from the baseline data shows that all of the teachers thought it imperative that their pupils would enjoy whatever literature they explored, and after teaching the lesson on *Macbeth* all 7 reported that their pupils enjoyed exploring the characters, themes and settings, and were again motivated by the drama strategies, the fun element and the 'freedom from desk learning'. Teacher 1 reported that her class:



T 1, Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012

Many teachers enthusiastically reported that the active introduction to the lesson, where their students were physically involved in the scene, moving to music and chanting, set the atmosphere and motivated the children to become interested in the story and the unfamiliar Shakespearean language, and later improved their recall of the language.



T 7, Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012

Teacher 5 described her pupils gliding as witches to the music of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor and marching as soldiers returning from battle to Schubert's March Militaire. A variety of drama techniques were incorporated into the lesson, including Improvisation, Freeze Frame, Thought Tracking, and Conscience Alley (see lesson plans, appendix 4). According to the teacher participants the effective outcomes of these activities included enjoyment, understanding, inclusion, interest , developing listening skills, confidence and self esteem, attention to text, exploring characters and themes, introduction to difficult literature and creating a non-threatening atmosphere. 'By exposing children to a variety of dramatic techniques and allowing them to take on the role of an active text participant in preference to class reading, my pupils gained an insight into the literature' (T 7, Journal, March 2012). This view was echoed in the interview when there was an overwhelming sense of agreement among the participants that this lesson addressed all areas of the English curriculum and was an ideal approach to improving literacy standards in the classroom (Group Interview, 14th March 2012). Commenting on the drama activity when three children became the witches on the heath in black attire and the other children walked around them reading Banquo's words (see lesson plans, appendix 4), teacher 1 explained 'My pupils experienced a flavour of Shakespeare's language as they asked "what are these so withered and so wild in their attire" and got an insight into the characters that could only be gained by exploring their lives through drama' (Group Interview, 14th March 2012). Teacher 1 had earlier reported in her journal that: 'My pupils had walked in the shoes of some of Shakespeare's great characters and gained a depth of understanding of the themes, settings and background in a short time' (Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012).

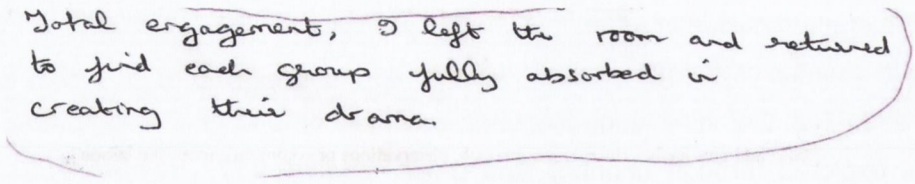
Text

This set of data revealed that the drama strategies motivated the children to develop an interest in the story and also in the language used in the text, although many of the participants had thought the language would pose a problem for the pupils. A typical statement was that the language and especially the witches' chant had fascinated the pupils because it was introduced in a fun way, without which the children would have found the language boring and difficult to comprehend (T5, Journal, March 2012).

Teacher 7 was alone in anticipating *Macbeth* would be a suitable choice for 5th and 6th classes due to its themes of the supernatural, witches and magic and now agreed with teachers 2, 3, and 5 that the challenging language was overcome when the quality and musicality was explored through chanting and group readings (T7, Journal, March 2012). In the group interview, the teachers shared their amazement at their pupils' enthusiasm about a Shakespearean text as 6 of them reported personally hating Shakespeare in secondary school in comments such as 'I was amazed that my pupils liked the extract from *Macbeth* so much because I remember how we all hated that play in secondary school' (T 3 Group Interview, 14th March 2012). Teacher 2 was alone in saying that she enjoyed Shakespeare in Secondary school and attributed this to a teacher who encouraged the active involvement of students with the text. Teacher 1 suggested that extracts from Shakespeare's plays should be recommended on the 5th and 6th class syllabus but teacher 7 strongly argued that this would have a detrimental effect unless teachers were given in-service training on how to teach such literature using methods such as drama (Group Interview, 14th March 2012). Data reveals that due to the pupils' enjoyment of exploring the Shakespearean scripts such as Act 1 Scene 3 when the witches speak to Macbeth and Banquo, many pupils subsequently engaged in further reading such as simple versions of the play, a synopsis, online character descriptions, a comic version of the play, while teacher 1 told of a very bright student who had started to read the full version of the play which she had found at home and Teacher 4 noted that her class had started a project on Shakespeare as a result and were enjoying reading about his life and times (Group Interview,14th March 2012).. Because their pupils had requested more extracts from other Shakespearean plays the teachers asked for guidance in selecting suitable extracts and agreed that they could explore such extracts using the *Macbeth* lesson plans as a template, a request not made after exploring the Oscar Wilde story.

Challenges

Data indicate that the teachers recorded experiencing less challenges in teaching this lesson than they did the previous week. There was unanimous agreement that class management was not a challenge because all of the children loved this lesson and this left more time to devote to discussion in which all pupils, even the very shy ones participated. Teacher 5's experience was:



T 5, Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012

This would suggest that perhaps the teachers are becoming more familiar with using drama as a teaching method or, as reported the children enjoyed this lesson better owing to its more dramatic story line and characters who are full of intrigue, mystery and the supernatural. Teacher 1 found, as she had reported previously, that her own found her own lack of confidence in using drama was a challenge, but she reported coping a little better this week. As with lesson 1, the majority of teachers again reported that they would have liked to have given the lesson more time. Teacher 2 explains 'My pupils enjoyed the lesson so much they asked to spend more time on it, but due to an overcrowded curriculum the amount of time for the lesson had to be limited (Group Interview, 14th March 2012). Most of the teachers revealed that their pupils used the language they encountered in the *Macbeth* script in conversation because they liked the sound of the words and transferred what they had read and discussed to their writing (Teacher Observation Sheets, March 2012). Teacher 5 enthusiastically reported in the interview that her class had experimented with all of the writing exercises this week because she managed her time better, and Teacher 6 noticed an improvement in her children's creative writing.

It is evident from the above data that there was an expressed interest and enjoyment by both teacher and pupil participants in extracts from *Macbeth* such as the following:

Extract 3

Act 1 Scene 3 (edited):

(Thunder: Enter the three Witches).

First Witch:	Where hast thou been, sister?
Second Witch:	Sister,where thou?
Third Witch:	A drum, A drum, Macbeth doth come.
All:	Thrice to thine and thrice to mind
	And thrice again, to make up nine.
	Peace, the charm's wound up.
	(Enter Macbeth and Banquo.)
Macbeth:	So foul and fair a day I have not seen.
Banquo:	What are these,
	So withered and so wild in their attire,
	That look not like th'inhabitants o'th'earth
	And yet are on't ?— Live you, or are you aught
	That man may question?

The teachers provided a positive response and noted numerous attributes of the drama activities. This degree of satisfaction and enthusiasm was not evident to the same degree in the findings from *The Happy Prince* lesson. The teachers reported finding this experience rewarding and less challenging and expressed a wish to explore more of Shakespeare's work using this method. All of the teachers made reference to the enjoyment the children gleaned from the lesson and indicated that it was a lovely introduction to Shakespeare.

6.3.3 Charles Dickens

In the baseline interview the teachers unanimously questioned the suitability of a literature lesson based on the work of Charles Dickens at primary school level, and anticipated it to be a major challenge for both teacher and pupils. After teaching the lesson which was based on an extract from *Great Expectations* (see lesson plans, appendix 4) and which also explored Victorian times in London, they expressed a quite different perception, agreeing that it was a very enjoyable experience and recording their amazement at how easily their pupils adapted to the difficult vocabulary.

Motivation and Learning Experience

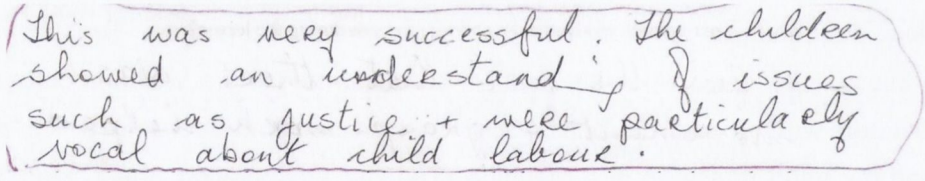
The teacher participants again agreed that the drama activities motivated the children to develop an interest in the literature. Whereas previously the music and movement activity was highlighted, this data indicates the pupils were initially motivated in this lesson by linking the setting of the story with the history of the Victorian era. Teacher 7 reported that this was achieved when his room was transformed into a Victorian cotton mill where children worked and his pupils acted out an accident scene in which a young boy had his hand mutilated in a machine (Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012).

The following eye witness report was used as stimulus for the drama:

> 'When I went to the spinning mill I was about seven. The whole place was strange to me, the dust, the hissing and roaring, the bad language. One boy sat down to rest and in moments he was fast asleep. The master happened to pass. Without warning he gave the boy a violent slap which stunned him. Half asleep he ran to the machine and in two minutes his left hand got tangled with the machinery. Two of his fingers were crushed to a jelly'.

The other 6 participants agreed that the children were active and learning in a fun way, even though the literature was challenging and the subject matter was sombre (Teacher Observation Sheets, March 2012). All participants concurred that their pupils' confidence increased week on week. Unlike their observations in the baseline data, all participants at this stage of the intervention highlighted the importance of making learning fun and interesting for the children in comments such as 'it was rewarding to see the children enjoying their learning' (T 4, Journal, March, 2012). Strategies which made the most impact on the learning, such as Improvisation, Freeze Frame and Script Writing were positively acclaimed by all teachers. 5 teachers commented in the interview not only on the insight into the story attained, but the thrill the children got from re-acting the scene where Pip meets the convict Able, and how they lived Pip's fear as he heard him say 'Hold your noise you little devil, or I'll cut your throat'.

In both their journals and in the interview the participants reported an increased amount of advantages in using drama as a method to teach literature, citing motivation as the main advantage, while teachers 1, 2, 5 and 6 agreed that the children got a deeper understanding of the characters, themes, language and setting as well as developing communication skills and a rapport between teacher and pupils (Teacher Observation Sheets, March 2012). All of the teachers reported improvement in the children's participation in the discussion sessions, commenting on the input of all pupils in the discussion and their understanding of issues such as justice and child labour (Teacher Observation Sheets, March 2012).


This was very successful. The children showed an understanding of issues such as justice + were particularly vocal about child labour.

Benefits of using drama noted by Teacher 1: journal observation March 23rd 2012

Teacher 1 was alone in citing the discussion period as an opportunity for assessment. 'As I observed the children during the discussion, I could see that they expressed their opinions and had a great understanding of what they had read and explored (Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012). A minority of teachers commented on the enthusiasm of pupils for creative writing, especially for group script writing when they composed and acted out a conversation between Pip and the convict and later compared it to this conversation as written by Charles Dickens (see children's work, appendix 16). Teacher 1 said that some of her pupils were lazy and didn't want to

engage in the written activities. She added that this was perhaps because the literature she had used with her class before this contained only vocabulary the children already knew (T1, Observation Sheet, March 2012). Attention was focused in the interview on this lesson's contribution to developing literacy skills and the general view recorded was that it would be difficult to assess this at this early stage. However all teachers felt that teaching literature in this manner had definitely improved the oral language skills of the pupils who were inspired and motivated by the drama to read more in order to find out about the story, the author and the Victorian era and discuss this information later in class. Teacher 1 suggested that the students got a chance to form a visual picture of the story they were reading and this helped their comprehension skills (Group Interview, 21st March 2012).

Text

The suitability of the text for primary school children was discussed in both their observation sheet entries and during the interview discussion, and the strong emerging consensus was that the story was within the children's reading ability, with the drama activities removing any challenge there might have been otherwise.

Here is a sample of the text:

> Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!"
>
> A fearful man, all in coarse gray, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared, and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin.
>
> "Oh! Don't cut my throat, sir," I pleaded in terror. "Pray don't do it, sir."
>
> "Tell us your name!" said the man. "Quick!"
>
> "Pip, sir."
>
> "Once more," said the man, staring at me. "Give it mouth!"
>
> "Pip. Pip, sir."
>
> "Show us where you live," said the man. "Pint out the place!"
>
> I pointed to where our village lay, on the flat in-shore among the alder-trees and pollards, a mile or more from the church.

Teachers 1, 2 and 5 reported that they found teaching this lesson a greater challenge than the Shakespearean or Wilde texts, mostly because of the difficult vocabulary (Teacher Observation Sheets, March 2012). In the interview all of the participants agreed that the challenge was worthwhile as it introduced children to a rich vocabulary.

The added value of the drama was recognised by teacher 5 who said her class had previously read extracts from Oliver Twist and A Christmas Carol, which the children liked, but failed to get the same understanding of the language, characters and plot as they had from this lesson (Group Interview, 21st March 2012). The interview provided the teachers with an opportunity to discuss how this difficult text was introduced when the children drew the setting on large sheets of paper which they laid on the floor and then walked through the graveyard, through the marsh and towards the river creating the sounds they heard in this lonely place. This according to all of the participants stimulated the children and drew their attention to the detailed description in the text.

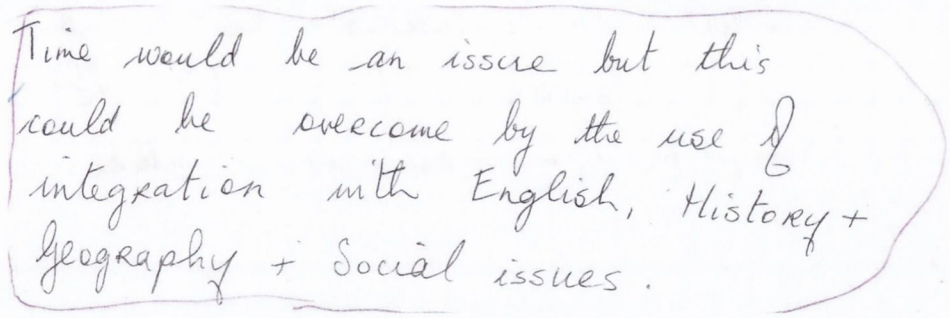
Challenges

As in lesson 2 the teachers reported that the challenges they found in using drama are becoming less of an issue. A shortage of time is again recorded in both the observation sheets and interview data. Teacher 7 is still adamant that only a limited selection of literature is suitable to use in this manner. The majority agreed that it requires a lot of preparation and organisation in an already overcrowded curriculum, but argued that the quality of learning derived from this approach compensates for the time spent (Group Interview, 21st March 2012). Teacher 1 again reported feeling insecure when teaching drama, especially using Teacher in Role, but said she had become more confident from practice and from the in-service training and lesson plans (Teacher Observation Sheets, March 2012). The observation sheet data revealed that six of the seven teachers found some difficulty in using the drama technique Teacher in Role, while teacher 6 reporting it as a great way to create rapport between children and teacher (Teacher Observation Sheets, March 2012). Although the teachers didn't report class management and discipline as challenges this week, teacher 4 reported that her pupils were giggling when she entered in role as Charles Dickens (Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012). Teachers 1, 3, 5, and 6 reported seeing some of the language from the three texts studied appearing in their pupils' subsequent writing and hoped this skill might develop when the children have explored more literature in this manner (Group Interview, March 2012). Teacher 3 reported that she saw a great improvement as her pupils were fascinated by the language of Dickens and introduced it into their oral language and also into their writing (Group Interview, 21st March 2012).

Linkage and integration

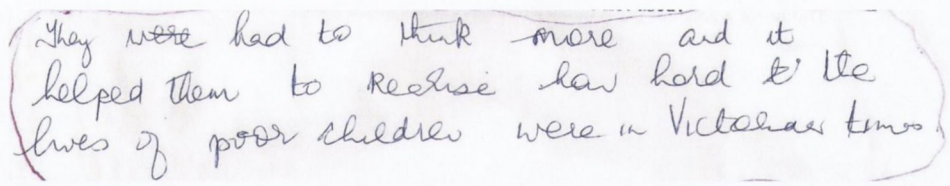
Although the participants had made slight references in previous lessons to integrating the literature with other areas in the curriculum, there is evidence in this set of data that this was a successful venture. All of the participants agreed that this was the best

lesson plan in this regard, and the link with History made it more interesting and allowed more time for teaching it as this quote from Teacher 3 explained:



T 3, Teacher Observation Sheeet, March 2012

They reported that it enhanced the children's ability to discuss important issues, which they could see were as relevant today as they were in the Victorian age, a theme teacher 6 had explored in History class (Group Interview, 21st March 2012). Teacher 1 also explained that her pupils really enjoyed linking the events in *Great Expectations* with events from their own lives and acting out those scenarios during SPHE class. Teacher 2 reported that her pupils had learned to listen to each other's views, and transfer that skill of listening and discussion to other areas of the curriculum, especially History and oral English (Group Interview, 21st March 2012), and teacher 5 reported that her pupils had to think more:



T 5, Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012

An air of positivism and enthusiasm is evident in the findings from this data set regarding the impact of the lesson on pupils' learning, with all participants agreeing that this lesson was much more enjoyable and successful than the previous two, despite the difficulty of the language. It is evident that the children got an insight into the Victorian time and the writings of Charles Dickens. All participants agreed that this was a clever way to introduce the classics to young children. The data clearly supports the fact that both the teachers and the children are becoming more familiar with drama as a teaching method for literature.

6.3.4 Chaucer

Although the participants viewed Chaucer as an unsuitable author for 5th and 6th classes (Baseline Interview, 28th February 2012), they participated enthusiastically in the workshop, and all agreed that they enjoyed the experience and were looking forward to sharing this work with their pupils, even though teacher 5 still expressed the opinion that the language would be challenging for 5th and 6th class pupils. The data from their observation sheets after teaching the lesson are now presented below. Unfortunately it wasn't possible to have a group interview to further probe and validate the findings after completion of the lesson plan in teachers' classrooms. After teaching lesson 4 the consensus was that although this was possibly the least favourite lesson with the pupils or the teachers, the children enjoyed exploring Chaucer's poetry and benefited from the learning experience.

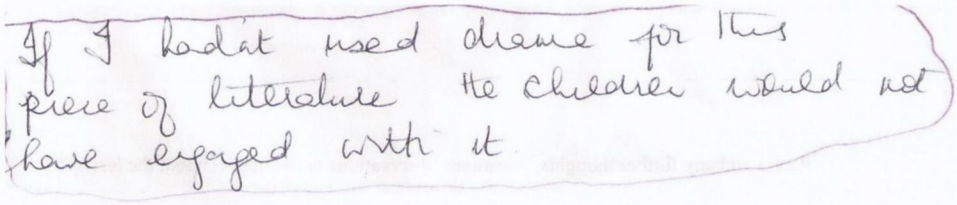
Motivation and Learning Experience

The fun and enjoyment the children experienced was again reported as the principal motivators for learning. This enjoyment, according to the data sprung from the pupils' active participation in all of the drama activities such as Freeze Frame, Thought Tracking, Conscience Alley, status group Improvisation and especially Hot-seating, described by one teacher as 'a drama technique used to great effect to explore the characters' lives' (T 6, Observation Sheet, April 2012). 5 of the participants remarked on how much the children loved sitting in the middle of the circle and answering the other children's questions in role as Chanticleer the proud rooster or as Pertelote his devoted wife. 4 teachers again report not really enjoying Teacher in Role as they felt self-conscious entering in role as Harry Bailey to welcome the pilgrims to his inn. Teacher 5 said the opening activity was a great motivator when the children prepared for the journey and decided what items to bring and added that this exercise could be used again, as the theme of journeys is in lots of stories. Many teachers found the drama activities a fun way to introduce pupils to an author they had never heard of and give them an opportunity to explore a little of *The Canterbury Tales*. Teachers 5 stated 'because the language in the text was difficult the discussion provided an opportunity for explanation' (Teacher Observation Sheet, April 2012). The teachers have now been using drama as a teaching and learning method for four weeks and each week they reported on its contribution to learning. Although the data verifies that this was not their favourite lesson, the benefits derived by the pupils in studying Chaucer are clearly outlined by all participants and include the following:

- The children acquired a better understanding of character, plot and settings and a clear perspective of the story.
- The children developed oral language skills.
- Shy children had an equal opportunity to express their ideas.
- The children explored different forms of English writing and acquired an understanding of how the language has changed

Teachers 1, 2, 3, and 4 concurred that their pupils were given an opportunity to explore and maintain interest in authors and literature they could not have comprehended by just reading in class because the characters became real and the children empathised with them when the drama turned a reading lesson into a positive encounter with the words of Chaucer.

Teacher 4 observed:



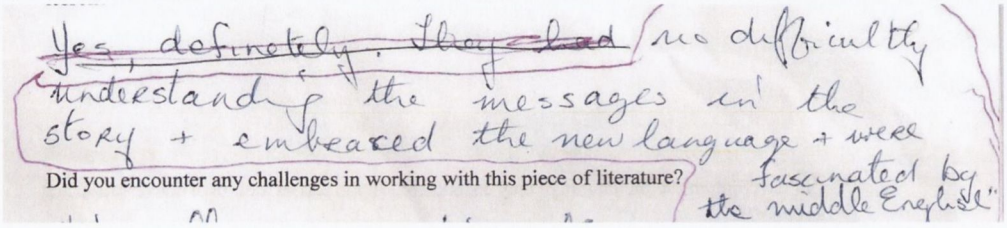
T 4, Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012

Text

The data revealed that there was a positive consensus among the participants on the value of exploring Chaucer as an example of quality literature in the classroom. This is evident in comments such as 'this was a piece of literature with depth of character and theme that opened up many aspects to explore'. (T1, Observation Sheet, April 2012). Teachers 3, 4, 6 and 7 agreed that although they would have thought work by Chaucer far too difficult for primary school the story held the children's attention as it was written in a style the children loved and a language they embraced and the pupils were fascinated with the Middle English language and its modern translation:

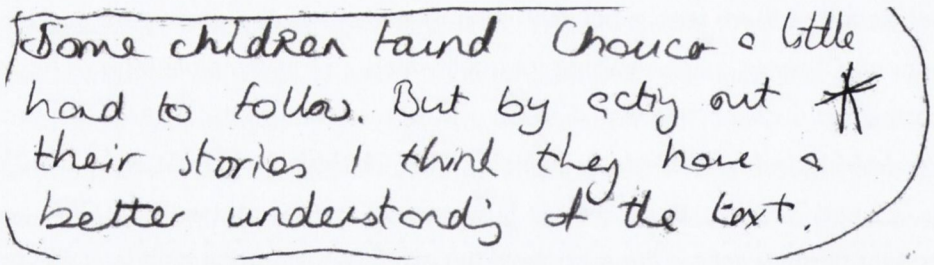
Middle English	Modern Translation
Whan that april with his shoures soote The droghte of March hath perced to the root	When April with his showers sweet with fruit The drought of March has pierced to the root

Teacher 3 reported that the children had:



T 3, Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012

Teacher 5, who had previously expressed that she did not think this literature was appropriate for this age group (Baseline Interview, 28th February 2012), said her pupils, even very bright children found the language difficult and the story to be quite slow and uninviting at the start, but added that she had to admit they enjoyed the drama exercises because when they were away from desk learning their imagination seemed to be more active. Teacher 2 explained:



T 2, Teacher Observation Sheet, March 2012

Most teachers commented positively on the quality of the language in comments such as 'I identified quality in this piece of literature and high quality is good for a challenge as the children usually read modern authors who would not use the same scope of language' (T 2, Observation Sheet, April 2012). Teacher 7 remarked even though very little of *The Canterbury Tales* would be suitable for primary school as the language is bawdy, this was a great learning experience for the children as it exposed them to writing from another era and they had read a little Middle English.

Below is an extract from the story The Nun's Priest's Tale: Chanticleer and the Fox:

> In a yard which she kept, enclosed all around with palings and with a ditch outside it, she had a cock called Chanticleer, who was peerless in his crowing. Chanticleer was beautifully coloured, with a comb redder than coral, and a beak as black as jet and toes and legs like azure. His nails were whiter than a lily and his feathers were like burnished gold. His voice was merrier than a merry organ that plays in church and his crowing was more trustworthy than a clock. He had under his government seven chickens all coloured exceedingly like him, who walked behind him in the yard, of which his favourite was Dame Pertelote.

.Challenges

The data verified that 3 of the teachers found no specific challenge in teaching this lesson and teacher 6 felt she was getting more confident each week. In contrast, teacher 5 found that it was the most difficult lesson to sustain interest in as some of the pupils found the story line too simple and the language too difficult. This teacher, who from the baseline interview clearly stated that she did not like Chaucer herself, said that this lesson produced less feedback from her pupils than the other three and she would prefer to explore other authors, perhaps Irish poets through drama. Teacher 7 agreed that the language was difficult and felt you would need more than one week to teach a lesson such as this. Teacher 2 recounts 'Some children found the language a little difficult and it didn't have the same appeal as Shakespeare, but by taking part in the drama they got a better understanding' (Teacher Observation Sheet, April 2012).

Teachers 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 reported that because of time constraints their pupils did not get much opportunity to use the language they encountered in this script. Teacher 1 reported that her pupils used the language both in their writing and drama activities and that she was beginning to feel more confident when using drama to teach literature, although she still would like more training. As in the other lessons all seven teachers reported time constraints as a disadvantage to using drama and the data suggests they were unable to manage the time as they had done in the previous two lessons. Teachers 3, 5, and 7 said they did not finish the lesson, with teacher 7 adding that her class were preparing for Confirmation at the same time which was an added factor re time constraints.

Linkage and Integration

As part of this lesson the children explored the life and times of Chaucer. Teacher 7 reported that his class enjoyed a history lesson when they compared life in London in the late 14th century (Chaucer) with the 16th century (Shakespeare) and the Victorian era (Dickens), and also investigated what was happening in Ireland at these times. Teacher 4 reported linking her SPHE lesson with the drama lesson when she explored

the themes of flattery and lies, which had the additional benefit of allowing for more time for the drama lesson. Teacher 6 stated that she based the children's creative writing that week on the story, such as diary entries for the different characters and a report on the fox in court on charge of kidnapping (see children's work, appendix 16). Teacher 6 reported that during the exercise Role on the Wall her children used their thesaurus to find adjectives to describe Chanticleer and the fox, which was a great language development exercise.

The data from this lesson suggests that although some participants considered this the least interesting lesson, the majority agree that it had a positive impact on their pupils' learning. They concurred that the quality of the language, reinforced by the drama activities brought meaning to a difficult text. The teachers' comments reflect their experience, not alone during this lesson, but over the four weeks of CPD which had 'opened up a new world for the children and a new way of teaching for me' (T 6, Observation Sheet, April 2012).

6.3.5 Summary

The consensus was that after using drama as a teaching method for literature for four weeks, the teacher participants observed an improvement in their pupils' interest in literature, oral language skills and writing. Despite this, they acknowledged that it would not be possible to teach all literature in this manner and agreed they would like to continue teaching both classic and modern writers using a combination of teaching methods, including drama They all agreed that they would have liked to have given more time to the lessons, especially the writing activities, but due to an already busy curriculum this was not feasible. Yet by the end of the lessons the data points to the fact that the teachers were becoming more adept at time management by linking drama with other subjects such as Geography, History, SPHE, Music and with the Literature class. All of the participants expressed that they would like more CPD in this area. Although class management problems were evident during the early lessons the teachers did not continue to report this as a challenge. It appears from the data that participation in the workshop, being provided with lesson plans and using a DIE methodology to teach literature worked for this sample of teachers.

6.4 Overarching Themes

Although the participating teachers reported various experiences and preferences working better in one text above another, certain themes and issues are reported on with equal attention throughout the four weeks. These overarching themes will now be discussed in detail.

Learning Abilities and an Inclusive Classroom

There appears to be little evidence in this data set to suggest that this intervention worked better or worse with specific types of learners. This is evident in numerous remarks by the participants over the four week period of the drama intervention. Typical remarks which appeared in the data each week commented on the inclusivity of the teaching and learning methods, for example, 'Absolutely every child participated and found a medium to express themselves freely and without inhibition' (T 6 Journal, March 2012). Many teachers reported each week that shy children and children with special needs in their classes became involved in the activities and discussion, and benefited more from this type of learning than from traditional class learning. Teacher 5 found the group work helped 'timid children' gain confidence to express their opinions and helped everyone express their feelings', while teacher 6 commented that the experience had a calming effect on children who experience behaviour management issues. On the fourth night of the in-service all the participants agreed that self-confidence and self-esteem grew in all children and teacher 5 added that this was especially evident in a special needs child in her class who felt included and therefore developed confidence and improved her listening skills. Despite teacher 5 reporting that she found differentiation a problem when teaching the Shakespearean lesson, as the less able pupils were unable to grasp some aspects of the plot, and 4 teachers found the language in Chaucer's text difficult, this cohort of teachers appear to agree that all of their pupils, regardless of ability, embraced this method of learning and benefited from the experience in some way.

Drama techniques

A variety of drama techniques and conventions were incorporated into all four lessons. In the lesson plans some techniques were used more frequently than others, depending on their suitability to the literature being explored. The teachers regarded all of the activities as essential in motivating the children's interest in the literature. The data reveal that there was no obvious preference for one technique above another. Most were responded to positively across the sample of respondents. The exception was Teacher in Role, when 6 out of the 7 respondents reported feeling self-conscious

using this technique while teaching lesson 3, while only 4 reported this after teaching lesson 4. Although the techniques of Freeze Frame and Group Improvisation were referred to more frequently than other activities, any technique in which the children were actively involved was ranked positively in the data as a learning experience for the child. Teacher 7 referred to the value of 'introducing the children to a variety of drama techniques' (Teacher Observation Sheet, April 2012). An interesting finding was that in the lesson based on *Macbeth* all 7 teachers reported the value of the introductory activities such Movement to Music to create atmosphere which developed an interest in the Shakespearean language.

Lesson Plans and CPD

The 7 teachers who had self selected for this in-service training, participated enthusiastically in the four workshops, and attributed the success of the lessons partly to active participation in the workshops, and to a large extent on having the lesson plans which I provided. The baseline data revealed that only 2 of the participants had used drama to teach literature prior to the study, but both they and the other 5 participants felt a sense of nervousness in using this pedagogy because they received insufficient training in the area in both their initial teaching education and in-service. Overwhelmingly they reported a range of positive outcomes both in terms of their students' literacy development and their own professional learning. The data verifies that their own active engagement in the CPD workshops where they were learners themselves, and the clearly outlined lesson plans, sustained the teachers during the intervention. Teacher 3 who like the majority of the participants hadn't used drama to teach literature before said:

> The workshop gave me confidence because we, the teachers had enjoyed the games and drama aspect so much I hoped the children would do likewise. From my own participation I understood the children taking time to get settled in and the drama bringing the story to life, invoking interest in the characters such as The Happy Prince.
>
> Group Interview, 21st March 2012

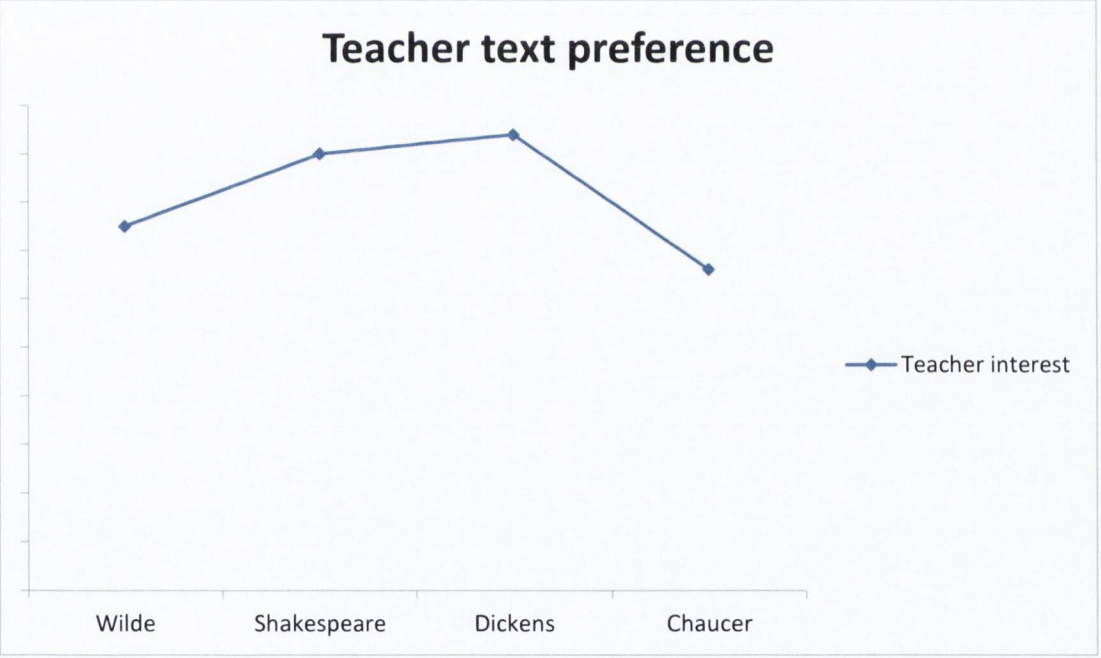
Each week the teachers echoed these sentiments. Being an active participant, according to teacher 6 (Interview March 14th 2012) gave her a feeling of the fun the children would get from the drama. Teacher 7 (Group Interview March 7th 2012) said that he was a little reluctant to get up and try out the activities initially, but was glad that he did because it was the best way to understand how to go about teaching the literature. The participants had no hesitation in saying that they would employ this method and use the lesson plans to explore further literature but they all agreed that

they needed more in-service training and guidelines for selecting suitable quality literature. Teacher 1 reported throughout the project that she lacked confidence, but that having the training and the ready to use lesson plans supported her. After teaching the 4 lessons there was a consensus that the discussion each night at the workshop was a great benefit, as they learned from others and were able to share their ideas and ask for guidance and support. Teacher 5 suggested that in-service of this nature was preferable to in-service during the summer as she was able to try out the lessons herself, teach them to her class and return and discuss what worked and what didn't with her peers and the researcher.

Text

There is evidence of influence of text type both for teaching and learning during the project. Table 6.7 displays the teachers' preferences for the four text types explored during the project.

Table 6.7 Teachers' text preference



Both before and after teaching *The Happy Prince* all of the respondents (except teacher 7) considered it suitable literature for a child in 5th or 6th class. In relation to the Shakespearean text, prior to exploring the lesson with their students, all of the teachers except Teacher 7 had reservations that the language in *Macbeth* may not be suitable for primary school children. Later the teachers stated unanimously that they experienced little challenges as both they and their pupils really enjoyed the experience of exploring the characters, themes and settings in this text, and requested

guidance in choosing other suitable extracts from Shakespeare's plays. As with *Macbeth* the participants again anticipated the lesson on *Great Expectations* to be beyond their pupils' learning ability, yet all participants enthusiastically recorded this lesson as the most successful and enjoyable of the lessons. The teachers all agreed that they would like to explore more of Dickens' writing in this manner. When I first mentioned exploring some of *The Canterbury Tales* with 5th and 6th class it was perceivable that the teachers had an anxiety or concern when Chaucer was mentioned that was not observable with Wilde, Shakespeare or Dickens. During the workshop all of the teachers were to a degree intimidated by the language themselves, and did not display the motivation or enthusiasm they displayed on the other three nights. Table 6.7 reveals that the teachers were in agreement that this was their least favourite lesson, although 6 respondents agreed that the literature had a positive impact on the children's learning. The unanimous belief was that some of the literature written by authors such as Wilde, Chaucer, Dickens or Shakespeare is suitable for exploring in primary school but that such literature would be difficult to explore with this age group if drama was not employed as pedagogy.

6.5 Teacher Post-Project Questionnaire

Ten months after they completed the project, I contacted the 7 participating teachers to establish if they had continued to use drama as a method to teach literature with their classes and what literature if any, they had explored since completing the project. The following data were supplied through an online questionnaire (see appendix 8).

Teacher Confidence

The evidence from this data set suggests that in general the CPD had provided the participating teachers with the confidence and the resources which changed their attitude, motivation and belief as regards the teaching of literature in senior classes in primary school. It suggests that they have all embraced drama in education as a teaching method and have continued to use this strategy to teach literature. Teacher 6 reported that:

> The four workshops I attended last year encouraged me to reflect on my choice of literature and my teaching style. By extending the range of literature I used with my class and by changing the style of my teaching, the quality of my deliverance and the children's learning and achievements have greatly improved.
>
> (Post-Project Questionnaire, 8th February 2013)

In the baseline study all of the participant teachers had reported exploring mainly modern children's authors with their pupils, but by the end of the project they agreed that there was a place in the primary curriculum for authors such as Shakespeare, if introduced and explored through active methods. Now after almost a year this cohort of teachers still agreed that good quality literature has a place in primary school and can be taught to good effect using a drama methodology. As they did during the project, teachers reiterated several times that they needed guidance, recommendations and training regarding both the choice of literature and the methods of exploring it. Teachers 5 and 7 were alone in suggesting that the new English curriculum should include a list of literature, including classics for each class to benefit from, and advocated a whole school approach to drafting a literature policy. Reflecting on the value of the literature she had explored with her pupils, teacher 6 said that it gave them access to a more elaborate and higher code of language than the restricted code they were used to. Teacher 7 claims that participating in the workshop has not changed his view that authors such as Shakespeare and Dickens wrote great stories but the language is difficult to read and understand and children will not read such literature of their own volition. He added that he is delighted to have found a medium to simplify these texts and make them accessible for his pupils as he had always wanted to explore such literature. Teacher 4 was equally delighted to have learned a new way to make literature exciting, and said she now had a new outlook on what is suitable literature for her class, and last September she included extracts from *A Christmas Carol, Oliver Twist, the Wind in the Willows and The Iron Man* and decided to re-use the Chaucer and Shakespeare lessons as part of her English yearly plan. In the baseline interview the participants cited reasons why they taught literature such as developing a desire to read, improving imaginative powers and vocabulary and aiding the transition from primary to secondary school. Having extended their experience with literature through exposure to good quality literature during the intervention, it is noteworthy that they hold mainly the same opinions ten months later, but add that by exploring literature with the child the teacher offers him/her a novel and engaging experience where he can explore other worlds and other times in history and empathies with the characters and themes in the stories. From their comments it is evident that the participants still display the enthusiasm they expressed during the project for using drama to explore literature because all teachers agreed that 'when they used this method their pupils 'interacted with the literature in a fun way where their vocabulary was stretched and their experiences broadened' (T 4, Post-Project Questionnaire, February 3rd 2013). Teacher 7 who had hoped drama would bring new life to teaching literature in his class (Baseline questionnaire , February 2012) was not

disappointed, and reported finding all of the drama activities an excellent way of exploring the richness of the material in literature. His final comments in the post-project questionnaire include:

> The children enjoyed the lessons and so did I. I found drama an excellent way of exploring literature, and as stated previously without drama I would not have taught any of the lessons. The richness of material in literature gives plenty of opportunity to do drama. The children enjoyed it and benefited from it as it provided interest, confidence and understanding.
>
> (Post-Project Questionnaire, March 2013)

Resources

Teachers 3, 4, and 5 agreed that using drama as a teaching method broadens the repertoire of literature suitable for primary school and 'makes the exploration of *Macbeth* as much fun as exploring *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*' (T 3, Post-Project questionnaire, February 2012).

The teachers continue to report that the lesson plans provided a coherent framework for the smooth and effective teaching of the four texts through the medium of drama. 'Having well laid out lesson plans helped my confidence when I was teaching the lessons and have helped me since to explore other literature through drama as well as being an excellent set of resources for the school to use in the future' (T 6, Post-Project Questionnaire, February 2013). All of the participants welcomed that there were no major challenges experienced subsequently as the lesson plans were easy to understand and well structured, and by following them they could teach any drama technique. Teacher 1 described the lesson plans as 'transferable and useful when exploring other literature' and added that having them and taking part in the workshops gave her the confidence to use drama as a teaching method for literature. This teacher, who had expressed a lack of confidence while teaching the lessons now reports being surprised at the success of her own teaching which she assessed through the children's engagement in the lessons. Teacher 3 explains that some teachers shy away from using drama as a methodology because of behaviour management problems: 'I feel they don't know where to start' she adds, 'but having the step by step lesson plans and trying out the techniques in the workshop assured me that I knew exactly what I was doing, and because the children were active and involved at all times I experienced very little discipline problems'. All of the teachers agreed that before the project they would not have attempted anything as challenging as Shakespeare but now enjoy exploring such literature with their class. Teacher 4

concluded 'The only thing I lacked, having participated in the workshops and having ready-to-use lesson plans at my fingertips was adequate time to spend on teaching the literature', a view expressed often during the project. This data set reveals that this problem still exists, with all participants regretting that the drama in education method takes more time than the curriculum allows. Although they have overcome this problem to a degree by integrating other curriculum areas with literature the participants still agree that drama is time consuming.

Extending Practice

There is evidence in the data to suggest that there was a development of the participants' practice after the project. They reported that since the project they had used drama to teach literature, the majority re-using the original texts and all reporting that they were experimenting with new literature. Teachers 1, 3, and 4 reported using all of the drama techniques from the lesson plans. Teacher 5 had used Role Play, Freeze Frame and Role on the Wall, teacher 6 used Conscience Alley, Role Play, Role on the Wall and writing exercises from the lesson plans. Teachers 2 and 7 didn't specify any strategies but stated they had continued using the drama method. No teacher reported using Teacher in Role, which perhaps may be explained by the fact that this drama technique is the one which requires the most confidence on behalf of the teacher. Teacher 1 re-used the *Story of Chanticleer* as well as extracts from *Oliver, Matilda, War Horse* and 'tried to write a lesson plan for an extract from *Mid Summer Night's Dream'*. Teacher 2 reported going back to finish the lessons on *Macbeth* and *Great Expectations* and also using drama to explore a poem by Ian Serraillier called *The Visitor*. She added that she would have explored the class novel *Kensuke's Kingdom* [Michael Morpurgo] through drama if she had lesson plans. Teacher 3, who in the base line was not satisfied with either the quality or quantity of the literature she explored with her class, reported feeling confident to explore the chapter in Great Expectations when Pip meets Miss Havisham and Estella using the original lesson plan for Great Expectations provided, and she re-used *The Happy Prince*. Teacher 4 reported how drama had brought the story of *The Little Match Girl* [Hans Christian Andersen] to life for her class and had also used an extract from *The Tempest* and *The Iron Man* [Ted Hughes] and was planning some drama based on *The Wind in the Willows* [Kenneth Grahame] using the lesson plans she had used to teach *The Happy Prince* and *Chanticleer*. Teacher 5 taught an extract from *Oliver* and brought her class to Dublin to see a stage production of the musical and had also explored some chapters from her class novel, *Goodnight Mr Tom* [Michelle Magorian], writing her own lesson plans. Teacher 6 reports that her class really enjoyed exploring a short scene

from *Julius Cesar* and she also reused *Macbeth.* Teacher 7 used the drama method to teach a chapter from *A Christmas Carol*, *Treasure Island* [Robert Louis Stevenson] and *Jimmie Mháire Thaidhg* and hoped to return to *Great Expectations* before the end of year. He reported that his pupils wrote scripts from *A Christmas Carol* and acted them at the Christmas concert and also acted out the witches' scene they had explored in *Macbeth.* Table 6.8 displays a summary of the development of the participants' practice.

Table 6.8 Development of the participants' practice 10 months after the intervention

Teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Re-used the lesson plans	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Developed the lesson plans further using your own ideas	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X
Written your own lesson plans	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	X
Shared the lesson plans with other teachers	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X
Had positive feedback from parents	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X

All teachers were re-using the lesson plans with new classes, except for teacher 5 who said she was writing her own plans. An interesting finding from the above table is that even though teacher 1 spoke about a lack of confidence all throughout the intervention, she answered positively to all questions.

Positive Outcomes

All 7 participants were confident in reporting positive pupil and teacher outcomes from participating in the project and their continued use of drama in education to teach literature. Table 6.9 displays those outcomes.

Table 6.9 Positive outcomes for teachers and pupils

Pupils' benefits	Teachers' Benefits
Self esteem	Enjoyment in teaching literature
Self confidence	Developing a rapport with pupils
Oral Language	Feeling more empowered to teach
Motivation	Seeing shy children gain confidence
Writing skills	A means of assessing pupils
Interest	Improving pupils' literacy skills
Vocabulary	Aware of the divergence of views in the classroom
Reading skills	A means of stimulating the pupils
Pleasure in reading	The satisfaction of seeing the pupils enjoy learning in an active and creative environment
Understanding of what they read	
Meaning to life	
Understanding of themes and content	
Ability to express themselves clearly	

Teacher 1 said she is enjoying teaching literature more this year than she did since she started teaching, but added that she would like more training and more suggestions for suitable literature to enable her to experiment further with good quality literature and drama. Teacher 2 said she was beginning to feel confident using drama and would feel more confident to try out more literature in the future if she had more training and lesson plans or advice on how to write the lesson plans. Individual participants suggested they required more help in the following areas:

- A workshop on how to make literature more child friendly (T 3)
- Guidelines on selecting literature (teachers 1,2 4, 5, 7)
- A demonstration class by an expert practitioner (T6)
- A book of lesson plans along the same lines as those provided during the intervention (T 7)
- More workshops like the four they attended (all teachers)

The evidence from this data set shows that the participating teachers continued to explore quality literature with their classes and were using strategies and techniques they acquired during the four-week CPD workshops. It is also evident that they are re-using and developing the lesson plans from the project. Although they have used this

approach to teaching literature for almost a year, data suggests that they still feel they require guidance and recourses to assist them in choosing and exploring quality literature.

6.6 The Teacher Participants' Pupils' Opinions

Following each of the four weekly CPD workshops, the teacher participants taught the lesson to their pupils who subsequently completed structured feedback journal expressing their views of the literature and drama lesson which the teachers returned to me each week. This section of the chapter presents data from the pupils in the participating teachers' classes. As with the teachers' data, this data were analysed in order of whether there were specific differences in each class relating to such factors as gender, type of school attended, class type and size and experience in learning through drama. However it was found, following a systematic analysis of each individual class that there were no significant differences between the responses, and therefore they are presented as a cohort below. The data is this section is presented under similar heading to the participating teachers' data. Each week the data are presented under the headings motivation and learning, text and language, drama and challenges.

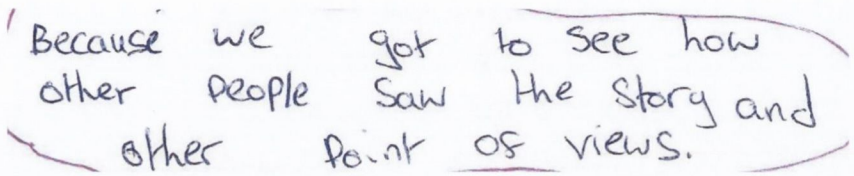
6.6.1 Oscar Wilde (n=103 pupils)

After exploring the lesson based on *The Happy Prince*, the majority of the pupils, few of whom had either explored quality literature or drama in class prior to this lesson (Baseline Questionnaire, February 2012) reported in their feedback journals that they had enjoyed and benefited from the experience.

Motivation and Learning

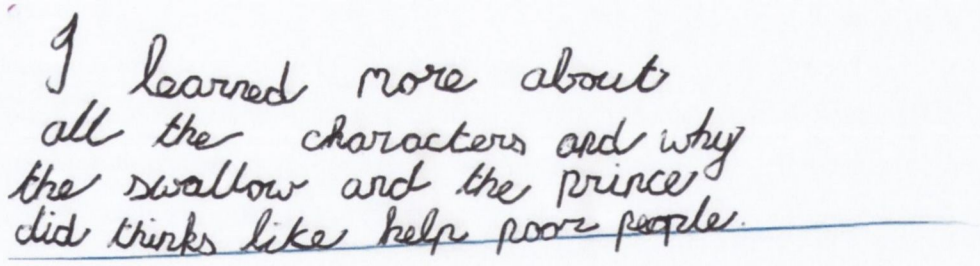
The teachers indicated that their pupils were motivated to learn primarily because of the fun aspect of the lesson, a finding verified by the pupils' data. The word fun is quoted eighty five times in relation to this lesson, with 76% of the participants making reference to the word at least once. Although the teachers referred to the pupils enjoying all drama techniques equally, this is not evident in the pupils' data, which indicates Freeze Frame and Improvisation as their preferred activities, the other techniques being mentioned rarely by pupils. 19% of pupil respondents referred to enjoying the activity where they improvised unveiling a statue of a famous person in

their locality and using the technique of interviewing. Pupils in school 4 (taught by teacher 4) reported having linked this activity with their local History study. Combining Freeze Frame and group reading to explore the story was a big favourite with the majority of the pupils. The baseline data verifies that the majority of this cohort of pupils was unfamiliar with an active approach to learning; therefore it is surprising to find the majority (91%) reporting that they were motivated to learn when they worked in groups, discussing the literature with their peers and working co-operatively to pool ideas for their drama. P13, T5 stated:



P13, T5, Journal, March 2012

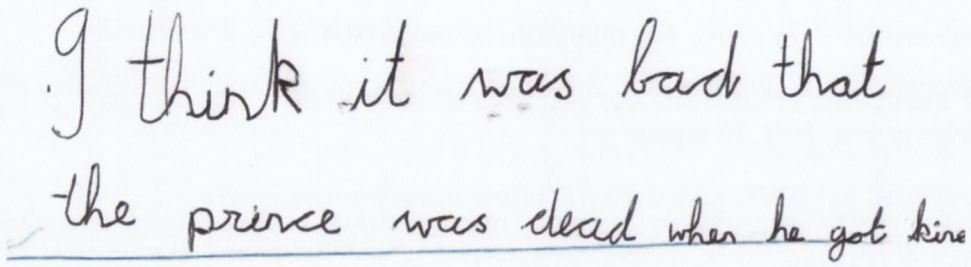
Although the participants highlighted the fun experience in the lesson, 96% also included their learning experiences. Their views are summed up by P12, T7 (Pupil Journal, March 2012) when he refers to drama as 'a fun way to make learning fun'. More than half of the participating pupils stated that this lesson helped their understanding of the characters' lives and emotions, and helped them to realise the intention behind their actions.



P5, T4, Journal, March 2012

Having established the academic value of the lesson, the data reveal that the pupils were also influenced by the moral and social aspects of the story and 74% reported learning that the world one hundred years ago was the same as today because there are still people who need help and people who only care about money, and that outward appearances can be deceiving, because the Prince who looked happy but was sad inside.

P15, T4 expressed the opinion that 'the characters in this story were just like us, the Prince was sad, the swallow was kind and the seamstress was really poor, and bad people can become kind if they get a chance'(Pupil Journal, March 2012). Pupil 2, (T1) was alone in suggesting that it was a pity the Prince was dead when he became kind.



P2, T1, Journal, March 2012

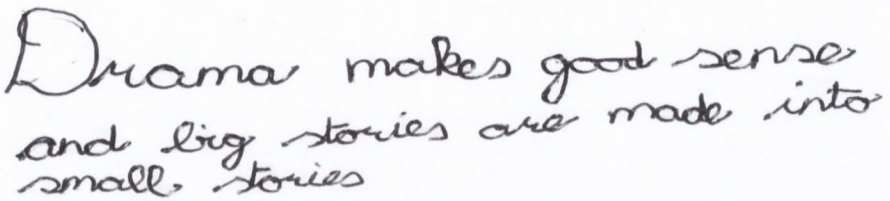
Text and Language

Pupils from all seven schools agreed that exploring a piece of quality literature such as *The Happy Prince* by Oscar Wilde posed very few problems, with only 4% stating that they disliked the story and 8% reporting that they found the language difficult. Teacher 7 reported that his pupils disliked the story of *The Happy Prince,* yet in their journals there is evidence that only two of the pupils in school 7 disliked it. 80% of pupils reported enjoying the story, learning about the author and characters, and discovering words they had never seen before. P9, (T4) wrote 'I never heard of *The Happy Prince* and it was very nice to read a different author and I would like to read more stories by Oscar Wilde' (Pupil Journal, March 2012). P3, (T6) wrote that she liked reading the story because 'even though the story was not funny it was still fun'. A typical comment was 'I loved the story because the characters, themes and language were really good' (P16, T6, Journal, March 2012). 96% of the pupils recorded learning new vocabulary such as 'seamstress' and 'pedestal'. P18, (T7) thought that even though the idea of a swallow falling in love with a reed was silly, she still loved it.

Drama

It is evident from the positive comments of more than 90% of this cohort of pupils, the majority of whom were unfamiliar with this method of exploring literature, that they had become aware of the benefits of learning through drama very quickly. They appreciated that drama led to an understanding of the language and vocabulary and many pupils agreed that in order to act out the story they had to know the meaning of the words, and 'could not pass over them like they do in class' (P3, T4, Journal, March 2012). The majority (82%) agreed that through drama they got more time to consider

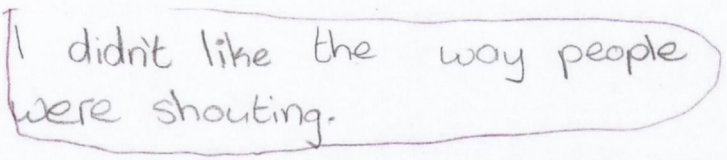
what was happening to the characters in the story. P14, (T4), told how he realised when in role how unhappy the prince must have felt as he looked down on all the poor people in the city. Many participants expressed the idea that drama is a different way of learning and 60% agreed that they enjoyed reading during the drama better than they did in class:



P6, T5, Journal, March 2012

Challenges

Although 96% of the participants reported enjoying the lesson based on *The Happy Prince*, yet only 60% reported enjoying everything in the lesson, and data shows that some pupils from all 7 schools experienced problems. 14% reported not having sufficient time to finish the story, try out techniques such as Freeze Frame and Thought Tracking, or have a good discussion. This evidence correlates with the findings from the participating teachers' data, as does a pupil's report regarding finding it difficult to hear and participate in the activities because of noise. P22, T 6 quotes



P9, T7, Journal, March 2012

Although the majority of the participants reported loving the drama techniques, two stated that they didn't like Freeze Frame and two others complained that they had to use their thesaurus during Role on the Wall. Two children reported feeling self - conscious acting in front of their peers. Only 10% of the respondents reported using the new words they learned when they engaged in conversation within their groups, and a mere 2% reported getting ideas from the story for their writing. Four children from school 4 reported their dislike in having to do homework based on the story. 8% of all the respondents found the language and the story difficult, but 3% added that exploring it through drama helped. 'The story was difficult at first, but when we did drama I understood it better' (P8, T4, Journal, March 2012). A very small percentage

(4%) of the respondents expressed negative comments, some answering negatively to all questions, expressing such views as 'I did not like the drama or the story and I learned nothing' (P4, T3) and 'I didn't understand any of the stupid story and I learned nothing but it was better than sitting at your desk'(P11, T3). Others who reported positively in general had supplied isolated comments such as 'I felt stupid running around like a baby' (P4, T6) and two others said they would rather do PE.

Based on the above data it appears evident that the majority of the pupil participants in this project enjoyed the first lesson, and have responded reasonably well to this method of learning.

6.6.2 Shakespeare (n=100 pupils)

For the majority of the pupils participating in this project it was their first introduction to Shakespeare's characters and language. The teachers in all 7 participating schools had expressed the view in their baseline interview that this literature may be too difficult for 5th and 6th classes. The following data from the pupils' feedback journals reveal that the majority of the pupils enjoyed and benefited from the experience, many of them requesting further exploration of this play and other plays by Shakespeare.

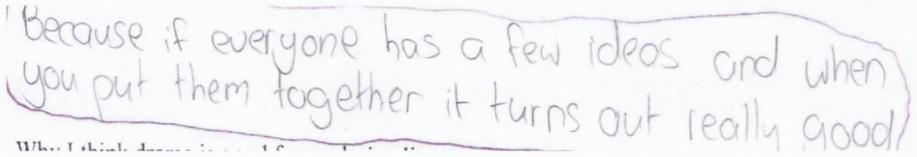
Motivation and Learning

As in lesson one, the majority of the pupils were motivated to develop interest in the literature due to the enjoyment they derived from the drama activities, the word fun appearing 58 times in their journal entries about this lesson. 72% reported enjoying reading the text in role as Macbeth, Banquo and the witches.

Macbeth:	Speak if you can: What are you?
First Witch:	All hail, Macbeth: hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!
Second Witch:	All hail, Macbeth: hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!
Third Witch:	All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!
Banquo:	Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear Your favours nor your hate.
First Witch:	Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.
Second Witch:	Not so happy, yet much happier.
Third Witch:	Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.
All:	Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!
	The Witches vanish.
Macbeth:	Your children shall be kings.
Banquo:	You shall be king.

Although the teachers had reported that their pupils' interest had been stimulated by the music and movement activities, only 21% of the students refer to this, with 63%

recording Conscience Alley (when they advised Macbeth whether he should listen to the witches' prophesy or not) as their favourite activity (see lesson plans, appendix 4). P3, T1 wrote 'I was really excited when Macbeth decided to take my advice not to listen to the weird sisters'. The drama activities according to 92% of the respondents helped them to understand the themes, characters and language in the extracts they read. There was no substantial difference in the pupils' choice of activity across the 7 schools, with some children liking several activities while others chose one or two. The participants again comment on their experience of working in groups. Many of them report that it was a new and enjoyable experience to be with friends and share ideas and express thoughts without fear of being wrong. P4, (T7), wrote that:

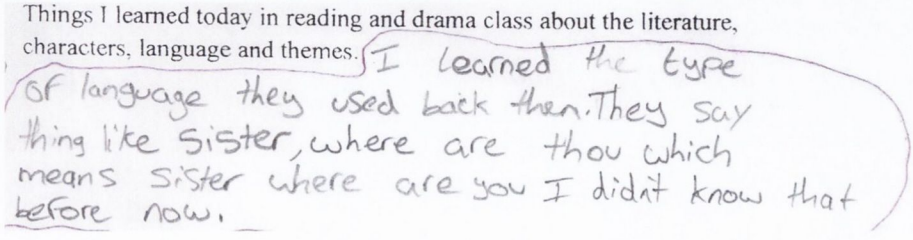


P4, T7, Journal March 2012)

56% of the hundred children who participated in this week's lesson reported that there was nothing about the lesson they disliked and agreed with P4, (T4) who stated 'it was great to act in a tragedy like *Macbeth* and be one of the characters, especially a witch'(Journal, March 2012). A minority (12%) of the pupils became emotionally involved in the story and empathised with the characters, some reporting being scared of the witches and hating the contents in the spell. It is evident that the witches became real for some 'even though the weird sisters were evil guys I was angry when my friends called them rude names'(P9, T7), and Macbeth was a hero in the eyes of several who stated 'I didn't like when the witches made fun of poor Macbeth' (P4, T2).

Text and Language

Although the majority of the participants reported learning new vocabulary, when asked to quote the words, they recorded fewer words than in the first lesson, yet they made several references to language, characters and themes. P14, (T4) reported learning that the language today is very different to Shakespeare's time:



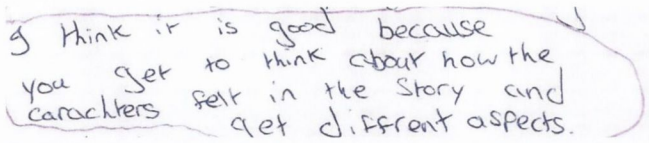
P14, T4, Journal, March 2012

The data reveals that 88% of respondents embraced the Shakespearean text and language. A small minority (18%) loved it from the start, but in general the pupils found the language more difficult than that used by Wilde. There is evidence that the pupils became familiar with the text by exploring the meaning through drama activities such as Role on the Wall and through discussion. Representative minority views such as 'the extracts were really good and I loved the story and the kind of language from the start' (P8, T1), compared with more typical statements such as: 'I loved the beginning when we marched to music and had sword fights, but I found the extracts difficult until we did our drama and found out what it meant, and now I love saying things like he unseamed him from the nave to the chops' (P1, T3). Although they found the language difficult the children seemed to be fascinated by the sound of the words and by the idea that they were speaking words that were written more than four hundred years ago. P4, (T4) stated that she liked 'reading the extracts because she never heard of the play before and she really enjoyed the old talk' (Pupil Journal, March 2012). The majority agreed that they enjoyed learning the names of the characters, and pupils in every school reported that they liked the witches' chant the best. P 4, (T2) said it was exciting to say the real words of Shakespeare even though they were a bit funny and P18, (T7) stated that 'I never thought *Macbeth* was so much fun to read and I loved the unusual words'(Pupil Journal, March 2012). Overall the pupils' comments about their introduction to Shakespearean language concurred with the teacher participants' views that any difficulty experienced with the language was overcome by exploring the text in a fun way through drama.

Drama

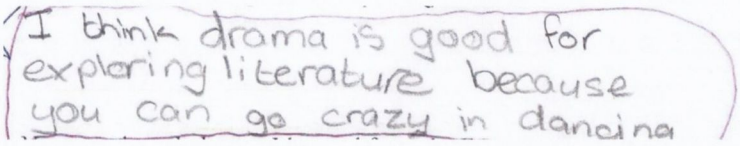
As already established, the participants agreed that Macbeth would have been boring if they had just read it, but by exploring it through drama 76% agree that they got a chance to experience what the characters were thinking and how they felt. P2, (T1) stated that 'Drama made the learning a bit easier and we understood what was happening' (Pupil Journal, March 2012). P3,(T1) agreed and added 'Macbeth is an old play that some people say is only for adults but children can really enjoy it if they understand the words, and drama like Conscience Alley helps you understand what is happening'(Pupil Journal, March 2012). P17, (T7) said that drama gives the children a chance to explore difficult literature, but P5, (T7) said 'I don't think drama is good for exploring literature because you can only do drama on a little bit of the story'(Pupil Journal, March 2012). This is a view expressed by his teacher (T 7, Questionnaire,

March 2012). The majority (90%) of the pupils stated that drama brought the story to life, helped them express themselves and was much more fun than just reading. P2, (T2) wrote:



P2, T2, Journal, March 2012

P8, (T6) expressed a unique idea when he stated:



P8, T6, Journal, March 2012

Challenges

It emerged from the teachers' data that they would have given the Macbeth lesson more time if the curriculum was not so crowded and a small minority of the pupils reported similarly, stating they would have liked more time to delve further into the story. 'It was too short and I would have liked to have read more of the play to see what happened to Macbeth' (P5, T4, Journal, March 2012). Though no pupil reported discipline problems in the class, individual children (44%) expressed their own dislikes of various things such as marching, walking around, being beside boys, consulting a thesaurus when doing Role on the Wall and discussion. P11, T7, stated 'I didn't like dancing around nothing that was supposed to be a cauldron', relaying his dissatisfaction that there was nothing there and he had to use his imagination only during this activity. Although 15% reported finding the language difficult to understand, 40% reported using the language when they were discussing in groups, 13% enjoyed the whole class discussion and 7% stated they used some of the new vocabulary when writing a report on the battle. This is an improvement in the use of language from lesson 1. There was a modest decrease of 2% during the second week, with P4, (T3) and P21, (T7) still persisting that they learned nothing and hated everything about the lesson while P11, (T3) who last week reported understanding nothing stated 'I understood everything better this week and I liked saying the witches' spell and all the other drama' (Pupil Journals, March 2012).

Overall this lesson proved a success, 66% of the participants expressing the wish to explore more of Shakespeare's works through drama.

6.6.3 Charles Dickens (n=100 pupils)

To introduce the participants to the story and the Victorian age in which Dickens wrote, they engaged in a drama set in a Victorian mill where a child worker is injured. It is evident from the data that the vast majority of the pupils participated enthusiastically in the lesson.

Motivation and Learning

97% of the pupils who were present for this lesson reported on their involvement in and enjoyment of both aspects of this lesson: child labour during Victorian times and exploring the first chapter of *Great Expectations.* The evidence appears to suggest that the pupils were motivated because they empathised with the boy working in the factory and with Pip the hero of *Great Expectations* who were of a similar age to themselves. The pupils commented on all aspects of the lesson, and although the teachers reported having insufficient time, this data set suggests that the pupils explored a wide variety of reading. 56% reported enjoying all of the reading as is evident in statements such as 'I really enjoyed the story about Pip in the graveyard and all the difficult language and I want to read the rest of the story' (P2, T4), and 'reading about the life of Charles Dickens was class because we acted out scenes in his life' (P8, T5, Journal, March 2012).

A sample of the text used:

"Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!"

A fearful man, all in coarse gray, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared, and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin.

"Oh! Don't cut my throat, sir," I pleaded in terror. "Pray don't do it, sir."

"Tell us your name!" said the man. "Quick!"

"Pip, sir."

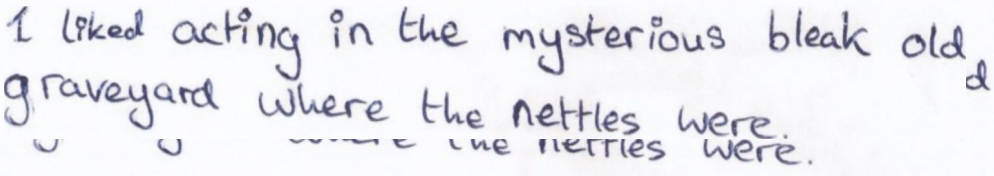
"Once more," said the man, staring at me. "Give it mouth!"

"Pip. Pip, sir."

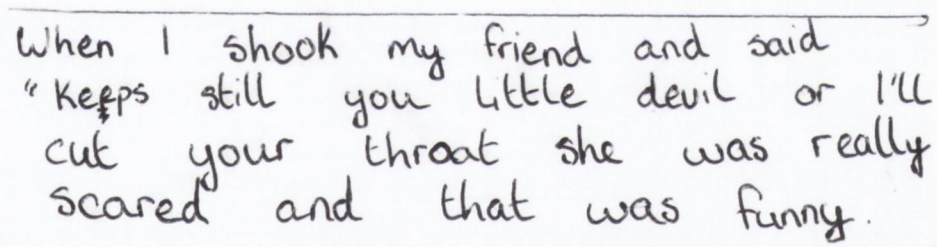
"Show us where you live," said the man. "Pint out the place!"

I pointed to where our village lay, on the flat in-shore among the alder-trees and pollards, a mile or more from the church.

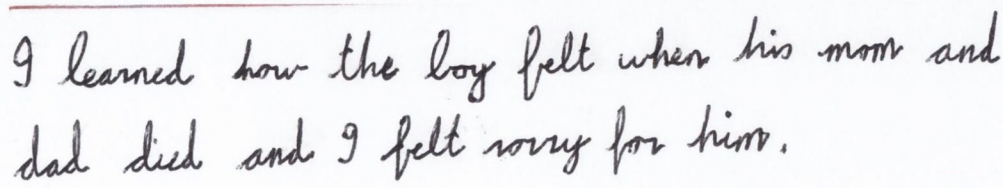
The teachers reported linking History with this lesson and its success is verified in pupils' journal entries such as 'I enjoyed reading and acting out about the accident in the mill because this is History and these things really did happen' (P3, T1, Journal, March 2012). Evidence of the participants' enjoyment in exploring a range of drama techniques is shown in statements such as 'I liked the Freeze Frames because I felt I was part of the story and it made me think I was Charles Dickens' (P7, T3, Journal, March 2012). In this lesson it appears that improvising scenes such as the accident at the mill, the graveyard scene and a visit to Queen Victoria was the most popular activity. The level of detail and language used in the following descriptions is representative of the impact of the rich language, facilitated through Improvisation on some of the pupils:

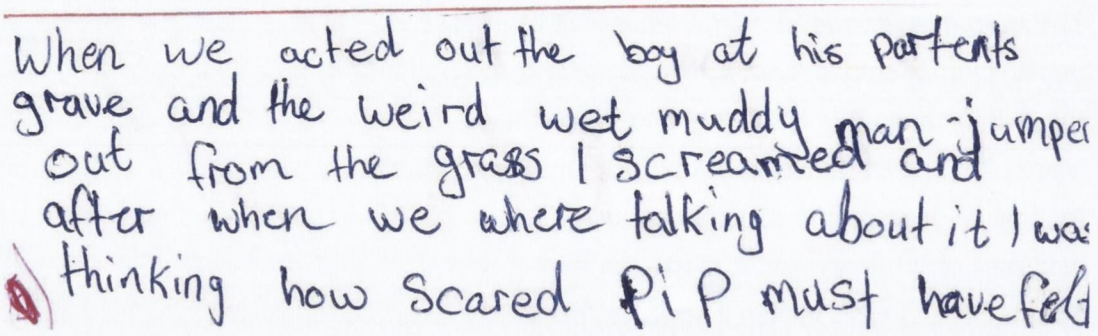


P18, T6, Journal, March 2012 and P7, T7, Journal, March 2012



Other activities such as Hot Seating, Freeze Frame and Script Writing were also popular. When the children explored the story of The Happy Prince in the first lesson many of them appear never to have heard of themes, however by lesson three, 52% of pupils refer to themes such as: sadness, fear, poverty, loneliness. The pupils' statements point to their level of engagement and commitment to the text facilitated through drama.



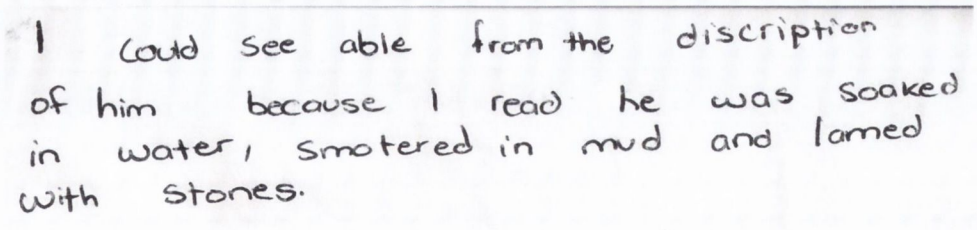


P12, T4, Journal, March 2012 and P6, T1, Journal, March 2012.

The baseline data showed that 50% of pupils had heard of Dickens before the intervention. After exploring *Great Expectations* 72% commented on learning about this author and the Victorian age he wrote in. Many wrote that they admired his writing and considered him 'a very clever writer' (P6, T4), who created characters such as Pip and Able. P13, (T3) stated that it was a good idea to learn about the Victorian age before reading Great Expectations because: 'we found out about the Victorian age and the customs they had and we could see the clothes Pip was wearing'. According to 84% of the respondents, learning was made easier when they worked in groups to explore themes, share ideas and listen to each other in a situation where nobody laughed at your ideas. P11, (T4) summed up the value of group learning. 'Working in a group teaches you how to pick the best ideas and you have to learn to compromise'.

Text and Language

92% reported positively on the story and on the language Dickens used to tell it. It appears evident that they embraced Dickens's language more than that of Shakespeare or Wilde. Their journals displayed evidence that participants quoted twice as many new words as they did for either Wilde or Shakespeare, and used words such as 'posh', and 'brilliant' to describe the language they were experiencing. One child spoke of being excited when she read a story by one of the world's best writers. Several pupils commenting on the author's wonderful character descriptions and agreed with P4, (T2) who said 'I loved the way Dickens described Pip as a bundle of shivers'. It was evident from many entries from all 7 schools that the pupils were using the language of the text to express their views, in statements such as:

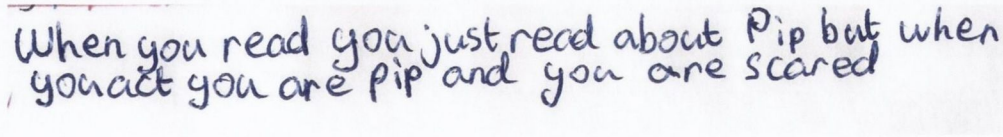


P8, T1, Journal, March 2012.

This is incredibly rich, sophisticated and beautiful use of language, and an appropriate response to Dickens' prose. You would expect such responses from students much older than these students were, but it reveals that contrary to teachers' concerns about the level and challenge implicit in Dickens' language, most or many of the students were able for it and responded well. P2, (T2) stated that he 'would like to write like Dickens and become famous like him or Shakespeare someday'. P4, (T2) reported that as well as increasing her vocabulary 'the literature this week taught me how to speak Victorian language like whittles and pollard'. P3, (T7) said by using direct speech Dickens brought the characters to life. Several pupils stated that they wanted to finish the story and read other books by Dickens. This is the result after one lesson, it bodes well for more lessons adopting this methodology.

Drama

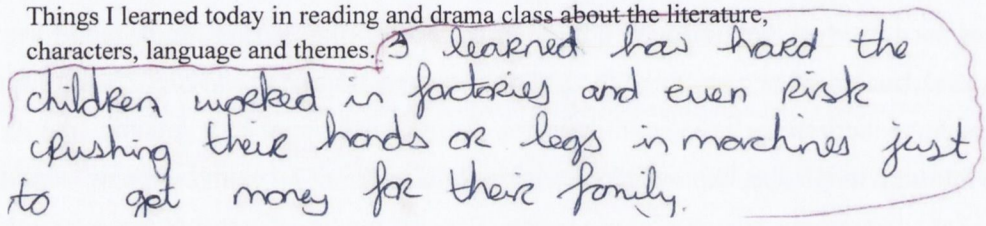
90% of pupils agreed that *Great Expectations* is a great story but the general view among the participants was that 'to understand a difficult story like this and feel what the characters are feeling you need to do drama' (P8, T1, Journal, March 2012). The pupils agreed that exploring literature through drama made it not just interesting but helped understand the language, characters, themes and plot. 32% agreed that the drama gave them a better idea about the characters' lives and actions. P1, (T3) explained:



P1, T3, Journal, March 2012.

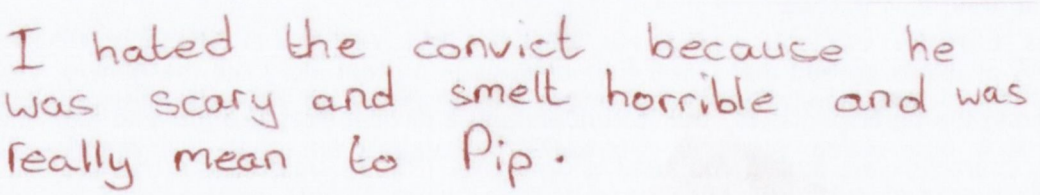
This heightened tension in an experiential mode of teaching and learning was regularly reported by pupils, and appears to have piqued their curiosity, and sustained their interest, and facilitated their engagement with challenging prose. It is acknowledged

that people learn best when they are emotionally as well as cognitively engaged. This appears to have been the case in relation to all four texts explore, but particularly evident in the data about the Dickens' lesson. The 43% of the participants who reported drama improving their understating and memory of new vocabulary are represented by this comment 'old books are hard to understand, but drama makes the words clear and just simple' (P7, (T7). P2, (T1) equated exploring literature through drama with watching a film where 'you are the actors'. This 'living through' perspective features regularly in the pupils' data, and is highlighted in relation to most of the texts studied. Many pupils stated that drama made literature fun and encouraged children to read the story. Referring to the exploration of life in Victorian times P5, (T7) wrote:


Things I learned today in reading and drama class ~~about the literature,~~
characters, language and themes. I learned how hard the children worked in factories and even risk crushing their hands or legs in machines just to get money for their family.

P5, T7, Journal, March 2012.

The depth of emotion is again seen in this comment:


I hated the convict because he was scary and smelt horrible and was really mean to Pip.

P7, T5, Journal, March 2012.

Challenges

Although 58% of pupils reported that they liked everything about lesson 3 and 16% stated that it was the best lesson of the three they had done, 42% wrote about some problems they experienced while exploring the literature; notably 8% found the language difficult to pronounce, 3% disliked Role on the Wall, 3% disliked reading and 6% disliked Script Writing, while 13% reported not having enough time for drama or discussion. Pupils from school 5 and school 6 reported some possible discipline problems in their class. P8, (T6) recorded 'I hate when people are talking when others are showing their Freeze Frames' and P5, (T6) said he was fed up with Freeze Frame.

Three pupils (P4T3, P21T7, and P13T6) were again adamant that they disliked the lesson and learned nothing.

From this data set it appears evident that the pupils enjoyed and benefited from the lessons and embraced the language of Dickens more than that of Shakespeare or Wilde.

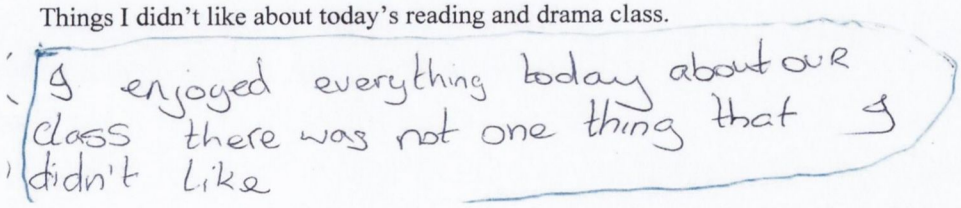
6.6.4 Chaucer (n=94 pupils)

The final lesson was based on Chaucer and explored *The Nun's Priest's Tale* from The Canterbury Tales (see appendix 4 for copy of the tale). The data from the pupils' feedback journals verify that the pupils in 6 of the 7 schools remain enthusiastic about using drama as a method to explore literature. The pupils in school 7 reported that this week they read the literature but were afforded only a brief period of drama for exploration or discussion. For this reason the findings from school 7 will be presented separately.

Schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6: The percentages are based on the 75 pupils.

Motivation and Learning

The pupils had become motivated to learn through the fun element of the literature lesson and their involvement in active learning and group work over the past 3 weeks, and this data set suggests that they now anticipate enjoying the lesson and getting to know new authors while exploring literature through involvement in drama activities and discussion. 74% of this cohort of pupils representing 6 schools reported enjoying everything in the Chaucer lesson:

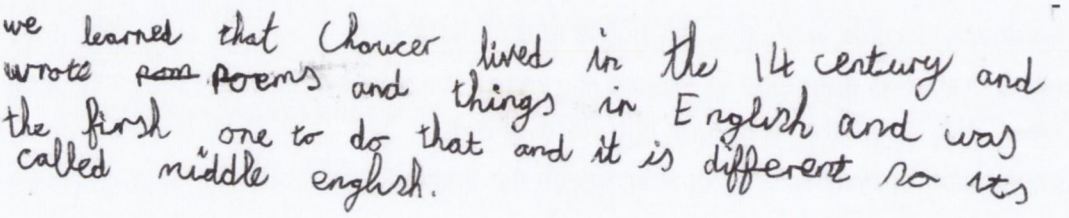

Things I didn't like about today's reading and drama class.

I enjoyed everything today about our class there was not one thing that I didn't like

P1, T3, Journal, April 2012

This evidence concurs with their teachers' data which verifies that their pupils benefited in many ways from exploring this text. The majority enjoyed learning about Chaucer and all about the unusual characters in The Canterbury Tales. Their interest was motivated by an early introduction to the characters when the pupils in role as the

characters in The Canterbury Tales prepared and set off for a pilgrimage to Canterbury. They learned the names of the pilgrims, such as the clerk, the friar, the shipman, the physician and the haberdashery as they and their friends became the pilgrims. P12, (T5) reported 'I never heard of Chaucer before so I googled him and found out that he really lived'. The pupils displayed their fascination in Chaucer who lived so long ago and wrote in Middle English in statements such as 'It was exciting to hear about an author I never heard of before, who wrote a very long story which he never finished about strange people going on a pilgrimage' (P3,T2, Journal, April 2012). 23% of this cohort of pupils referred to learning about authors chronologically and about associating the different authors with different periods of history, such as:

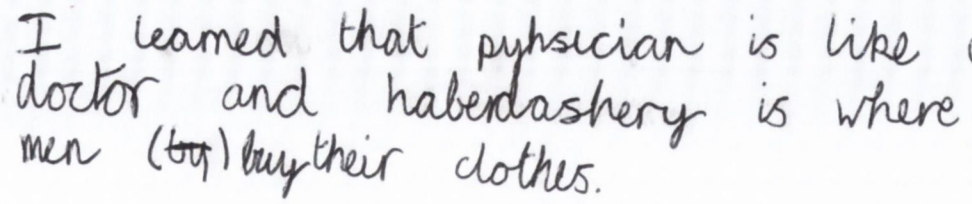


P3, T5, Journal, April 2012).

65% made reference to the moral in the story which warns people to beware of those who flatter you and 82% mentioned the themes of flattery, trickery, wisdom and storytelling.

Text and Language

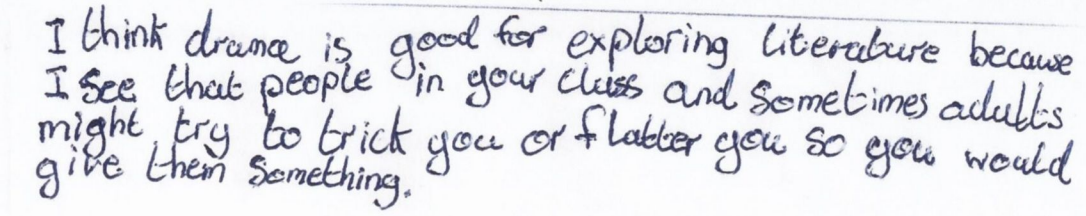
As part of this lesson the pupils read an extract from The Canterbury Tales in Middle English and afterwards read the modern translation (see texts, appendix 4). 27% enjoyed the experience and 'the funny words which were a bit like our spellings when we get them wrong' (P4, T4). A minority of pupils thought it was a clever idea to translate The Canterbury Tales into modern English so we could read it. Although the majority of the respondents found the language and story line about Chanticleer and the Fox difficult to understand at first this problem appears to have been overcome for most by exploring it through drama. This would suggest that the emotional involvement they experienced through active participation in the drama activities made them forget that they disliked the story initially. Learning new phrases and vocabulary was recorded by 90% in their diaries and 84% recorded at least learning five new words which many used while reporting in their journals. The respondents appeared fascinated by the old trade names such as physician and haberdashery:



P22, T6, Journal, April 2012).

Drama

The data suggests that more than any other week the pupils became very involved in all the drama activities; Deadly Handshake being the favourite. According to 96% of pupils the drama activities such as Deadly Handshake, Freeze Frames and Conscience Alley helped to explain what was happening in the story and to experience what the characters were thinking. A typical comment was 'the drama made me understand the story and helped me use my imagination'. The fact that the pupils were aware that they were using their imagination shows that they are engaging in a form of self assessment. (P15, T4, Journal, April 2012). The pupils' interest was aroused from the very start of the lesson when they walked around greeting each other as people in the fourteenth century, and this is evidenced in comments such as 'we got to know what life was like more than six hundred years ago' (P15, T4), which represents the experience of three quarters of the participants. Many of the pupils felt that the drama gave them an opportunity to use the characters' names as reported by P15, (T6). 'These words all stayed in my mind and I used them in my writing'. Teacher 5 had reported that the children found the story dull and uninviting and the majority of her pupils and the pupils in the other schools agreed with this but added that they enjoyed the story when they explored it through drama. P12, (T5) explained 'I thought the story was boring and the characters were mostly hens but after we did Freeze Frame I could see the characters and understand the lesson Chaucer was trying to teach us'. P13, (T6) expressed a unique view stating that when they transferred the themes to events in their own lives, like being tricked through flattery by a friend, it showed her that six hundred years later people are just the same.



P13, T6, Journal, April 2012).

It is evident from journal entries that the pupils have now become used to discussing and planning drama activities in groups and continue to see value in this method of learning. It is noteworthy that only 1 child in the 6 schools disliked working in groups and explained why 'I never get in a group with my friends and I didn't like the girls bossing me in the group I was in' (P13, T6, Journal, April 2012). Unlike this pupil, the majority agreed that in groups they could express and share ideas and hear what the others thought and learn to listen to other people's point of view.

Challenges

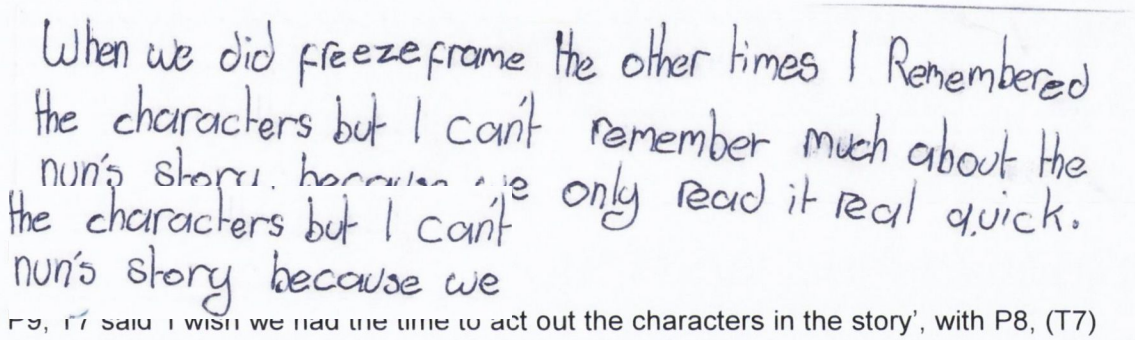
It is noteworthy that that although the majority of the participating teachers said that this was the least favourite and least successful lesson of the 4, there is little evidence to prove that the pupils thought likewise, except in school 7. It is true that more than half of the respondents wrote that they found the language difficult to read and the characters dissimilar to people today because 'they had different clothes, spoke in a different language and had no cars' (P1, T4, Journal, April 2012). Yet more than with the previous lessons the majority of the pupils stated that because of exploring the language and the characters through drama they became to understand the language and see that the characters, although in different garb and travelling on horseback were similar in many ways to people in the twenty first century: they went on pilgrimage, told stories, drank and ate in pubs, were competitive, worked on farms and in different trades (although recognising that our work today may be different) and were victims of flattery and trickery. As with school 7 but to a lesser degree, 32% of the pupils in those 6 schools reported not having enough time and rushing through some of the drama. Others reported not having enough time for discussion and having written stories that they were not allowed to read to the class. There were no reports from the children in this data set of discipline problems in their class. Only one pupil (P4, T3) from the 6 schools expressed totally negative views such as: 'I learned nothing today in the drama or the reading'.

School 7: the percentages here are based on 19 pupils.

From scrutinising the data from the journals of the pupils in school 7, it is evident that this lesson was an anticlimax for the majority of pupils because 75% report not enjoying the lesson as much as the previous three, although 80% stated they found activities such as the exploration of Chaucer and The Canterbury Tales, reading middle English and acting out being pilgrims and choosing five items to bring on the journey an interesting and worthwhile experience (see lesson plans, appendix 4). P2,

T7 related 'I really enjoyed reading about Chaucer and all the characters such as the yeoman ,the knight, the clerk and the friar going to Canterbury on a pilgrimage and telling stories to win a meal in Harry Bailey's Inn'. 25% stated they enjoyed acting out being the characters getting ready for the journey and one pupil said 'the nun's story was brilliant' (P11, T7).

Despite this evidence and that of teacher 7 who had reported that his pupils enjoyed the experience of reading literature from another era and a little middle English (Teacher Observation Sheet, April 2012), 68% of these pupils included comments regarding such things as not having enough time to discuss the story, only spending a few minutes doing drama and not doing fun things such as Conscience Alley and Freeze Frame that they had enjoyed in the last three lessons.



P9, T7 said 'I wish we had the time to act out the characters in the story', with P8, (T7) noting that 'We learned a lot more last time and today we had no time to share our ideas'. Although the word fun appears three times in their journals this week, the word was used by the pupils in this school on average twelve times in their feedback journals for each of the other lessons. It is also noteworthy that 58% of pupils in school 7 said they learned no new vocabulary in this lesson, the other 42% on average named 2 new words each, in comparison to the other 6 schools where 92% of the pupils could name 6 words each. There was no substantial difference in responses from school 7 to the other 6 schools on any other week. Teacher 7 (Teacher Observation Sheet, April 2012) had recorded not finishing this lesson because of a lack of time as his class were preparing for Confirmation, and made very little comment about drama in his journal entry. It would appear from his data that teacher 7 prioritised the children learning about the different writers and what era they wrote in and giving them the opportunity to read Middle English, over exploring one of the stories from *The Canterbury Tales* through drama. Based on this experience, it highlights the significance of the role of drama as a teaching and learning strategy amongst pupils when experiencing literature.

6.7 Anomalies During the Four Weeks

It is evident that the pupil participants enjoyed and benefited from this type of learning and responded to the challenge of exploring unfamiliar language and vocabulary through a methodology new to the majority of them. They reported liking the freedom of expression, active participation and sharing of ideas in groups. Similar to the evidence from the teachers' data, the pupils would have liked more time to explore the characters and themes of the stories in more depth.

Notwithstanding a very high degree of positive reporting by pupils the data from the feedback journal of P4, T3 testify that all comments in this pupil's journals were negative; he consistently reported doing nothing, learning nothing and liking nothing each week . After he explored Chaucer he relented slightly, stating that he liked the games but added 'I didn't like being in the groups because nobody listened to me and I never got a chance to speak'. In a similar vein P19; (T7) was another pupil who recorded negative comments throughout the intervention. Both of these pupils and 8 other pupils had reported not liking to read in school or at home in their baseline questionnaire. However, whereas the 8 others stated that they enjoyed reading the stories when they did drama and 6 commented after each lesson that there was nothing they did not enjoy, there was little or no evidence of growth or change in attitude amongst the former 2 pupils. This would suggest that any potential correlation with not liking reading initially and therefore not enjoying this intervention did not stack up, and that there may be other underlying reasons behind their responses. One pupil who had complained after lesson 1 that she was forced to read a boring story and dance around like a silly bird, wrote after lesson 3 'I don't like reading but I do like playing games and when you do drama you kind of read without thinking it is reading'.

Despite clear evidence that almost all pupils enjoyed the lessons, and reported openly those aspects they liked and those they didn't, journal entries from P13 (T6), reveal a uniquely uneven path: he loved everything about lesson 1, was absent for lesson 2, was totally negative in lesson 3, disliking the whole lesson and commenting 'if you want to explore literature, buy a book and read it', and changed his attitude again in lesson 4 stating 'today I enjoyed everything, especially Deadly Handshake and Conscience Alley and I even enjoyed reading the story about Chanticleer and the Fox'. This pupil had recorded liking to read at home and at school and thought reading was fun when he completed the baseline questionnaire. Such examples serve to highlight pupils' honest and reflective reporting on their four week experiences of drama intervention.

In the following section, data is presented from a group of 5th and 6th class pupils who participated in a similar experience of exploring literature through drama, but who have considerable prior experience of working in this way in their school. It is presented below as a way to facilitate a degree of comparison between those new to working in this way and for whom the novelty factor may be a consideration in their responses, and those who have been working in this way for two or more years in school.

6.8 Data from My Pupils about Exploring Literature through Drama

This data set represents the opinions and ideas of the 25 pupils in my own classroom who participated in a parallel project in a similar school type, a similar geographical location, using the same text types and lesson plans and using a similar method of data collection. This cohort of participating pupils were in an environment where literature taught through drama permeates the curriculum and the school culture and has done so for many years under my leadership. The reasons why the responses from this class are qualitatively different may be time related and reflect the children's growing experience and confidence in handling material of this nature. A culture of exposing children to quality literature has been developed in the school where the children, the staff, the parents and indeed the wider community are excited about the children's immersion in culture and in the literary tradition From 2nd class upwards the children are introduced to the works of Shakespeare and every child in the school joins in a production of an edited Shakespearian play or a dramatisation of a story by authors such as Dickens or Wilde.

The following are pictures taken during a performance of *The Tempest* in June 2014:





The younger pupils in the school look forward to this experience and ask when they can be the main characters in the play. Each year the senior (5th and 6th class) pupils

visit Stratford upon Avon or Shakespeare's Globe in London, and take part in workshops directed by The Royal Shakespeare Company.



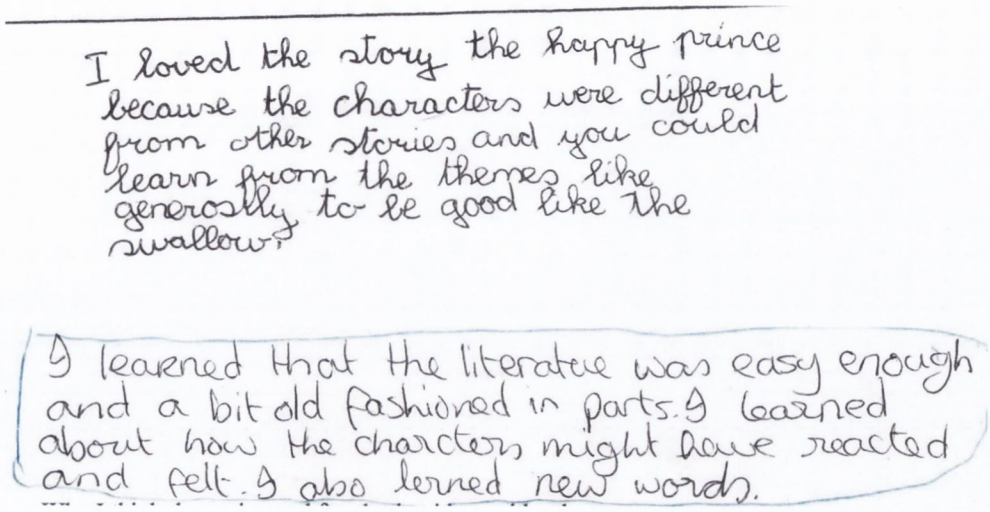


It is against this background, an environment where the children are exposed to quality literature using Drama in Education and Performance to explore what the school policy labels 'authors who have stood the test of time' and good quality modern literature, that this comparison took place. Although it has emerged from the data that the respondents in my classroom in general had a deeper appreciation of the literature and a greater depth of awareness was evident in their data, it was very evident that the other pupil participants had acquired enthusiasm for exploring literature through drama even after the first lesson. The responses across a number of areas are not qualitatively very different, but quite similar to the findings in my classroom. After each lesson the majority of pupils (over 80%) in each group displayed a comparable level appreciation for the value of drama to explore characters' life, their emotions and actions. Similarity are again evident when they reported on the value of working in groups to explore the literature through drama in statements such as: 'when you all think together you come up with real good ideas' (P 23 My class, Journal, March 2012) and 'when everyone has ideas and you put them together it turns out really good' (P1, T7, Journal, March 2012). Another similarity between both groups' data sets was their affirmation that drama helped them to understand the difficult texts such as *Macbeth* and *The Canterbury Tales* with which they had difficulty when reading initially. Over 80% of each group are recorded as making similar comments to the following:

A play like macbeth would be diffiault for people in primary school without drama, like freeze frama and consience alley to get to Really know the characters.

P 4 My class, Journal, March 2012

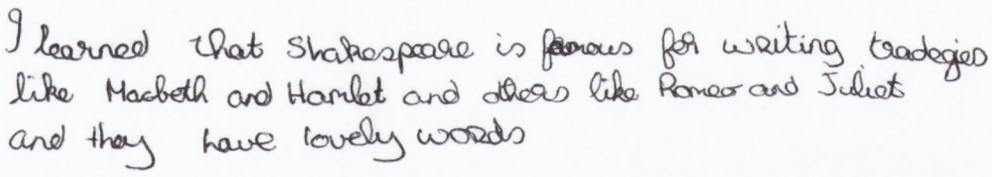
A noteworthy difference was that my pupils made reference more frequently to the quality of the literature, with 44% describing *The Happy Prince* as a good or interesting story with lovely, kind characters in descriptions such as the following:


I loved the story the Happy prince because the characters were different from other stories and you could learn from the themes like generosity to be good like the swallow.

I learned that the literature was easy enough and a bit old fashioned in parts. I learned about how the charcters might have reacted and felt. I also lerned new words.

Pupils 2 and 19 my class, Journal, March 2012

68% referred to Shakespeare as a famous writer who wrote tragedies such as Macbeth.


I learned that Shakespeare is famous for writing tradegies like Macbeth and Hamlet and others like Romeo and Juliet and they have lovely words

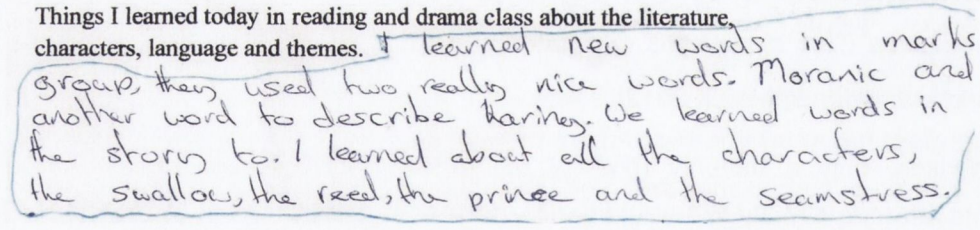
P 16 My class, Journal, March 2012

In comparison, only a minority (8%) of the other cohort of pupils made similar comments referring directly to the text and evidence suggests that some pupils (2%) in the participating teachers' classrooms enjoyed the lesson primarily for the drama and didn't equate it with exploring the literature, but rather as a release from class work. There appears to be two other noteworthy differences between the two sets of data. Firstly the depth of detail used by my pupils to report on the activities during the lesson, for example:

Table 6.10 Comparing Two Sets of Data

A typical pupil in the my classroom	A typical pupils in a participant teacher's class
We heard about Chaucer who lived in the fourteenth century and how he wrote *The Canterbury Tales.* We learned about the different status of the characters in the story. We read the story told by the nun's priest. Then we acted out the characters preparing for the journey who were met in The Tabard Inn by Harry Bailey, who was our teacher in role. We used hot seating and improvisation to understand the story of *Chanticleer and the Fox* and we discussed what we thought of everything. Then we read the story in groups again. (P1, My class, Journal, April 2012)	We played games and pretended to be going on a journey and had to walk like we were really posh. We read a story about a cock that was tricked by a fox and we did hot seating. (P3 4, Journal, April 2012)

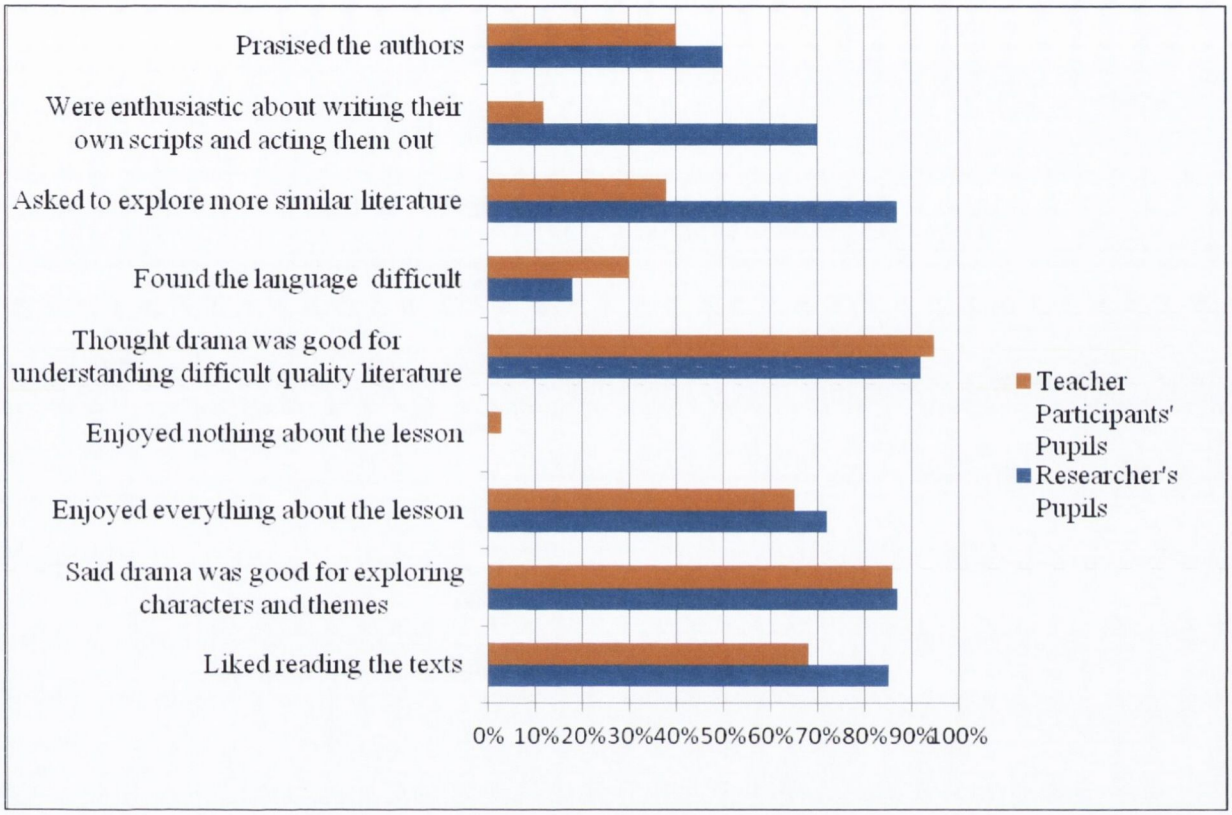
The second noteworthy difference which emerged was when asked what language they had learned: my class quoted more than twice as many words as the other pupils and also quoted many phrases and descriptions in comparison to the majority of the participating teachers' pupils who only quoted words.


Things I learned today in reading and drama class about the literature, characters, language and themes. I learned new words in marks group, they used two really nice words. Moranic and another word to describe Haring. We learned words in the story to. I learned about all the characters, the swallow, the reed, the prince and the seamstress.

P 21 my class, Journal, March 2012

It is interesting to note that there is no evidence in my pupils' data to suggest that they experienced discipline problems or a lack of time to finish activities during the lessons. This may be due to my experience with this method of teaching. They used the word fun 97 times in their journal observations, an average of just under four times per pupil, whereas the teacher participants' pupils used the word 213 times, an average of just over twice per pupil. **Table 6** displays an overview of some differences and similarities between the findings of the two cohorts of pupils. The percentages were calculated by finding the average percentage across the four lessons.

Table 6.11 Similarities and differences of opinion about drama and literature



It is evident from the findings of the baseline children's questionnaire that the pupils in the my classroom had a broader knowledge of classical literature and of creative drama than the other pupils had. However, despite hypothesising that there would be considerable difference between pupils' responses during the drama intervention, the differences are not as evident when the two sets of data during the project are compared. Collectively the findings from m pupils and the participating teachers' pupils reveal that this approach of exploring literature through drama is an effective method of teaching and learning, irrespective of levels of prior experience. The parallel findings from both sets of data suggests that an in-set model of continuous professional development may be used effectively to motivate and concretely instruct teachers in how to use a drama in education approach to teaching literature in their classrooms, and more significantly, that the effects are sustainable across a longer time span, thereby reducing concerns about the novelty factor. In contrast, the evidence points to an enriching and more literary based engagement by my pupils, where drama as a

teaching and learning strategy acts as a vehicle to nurture and facilitate their engagement with good literature, year on year.

6.9 Relevant Stakeholders' Opinions

As part of my study eleven representatives from various branches of the education system in Ireland were interviewed, including a student primary teacher, one primary and two secondary school teachers, a senior civil servant with the Department of Education, a representative from the NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment), and five representatives from teacher education colleges, including secondary and primary experts (see permission letter for stakeholders, appendix 9). The data were organised according to the research question. Eight of the stakeholders were emphatic in their view that exposure to good quality literature such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Wilde and Chaucer in the primary school benefited the social and academic education of the child and improved his/her reading interest and literacy skills. However stakeholders 1 (secondary teacher), 9 (teacher ed.) and 10 (NCCA) questioned the suitability of such material at primary school level and my view of good quality literature, which to stakeholder 10 (NCCA) seemed to equate quality with classic literary texts and male authors only with the exclusion of good quality modern and international literature and famous female authors (see stakeholders' interview transcripts, appendix 10). Despite their reservations and concerns they were not conclusive in their viewpoint and acknowledged that classic authors together with a wide and varied selection of modern authors could have a place in the Primary School Curriculum.

Values of Good Quality Literature

Nine of the eleven stakeholders stated that the quality of the reading material used in the classroom is of paramount importance, because the more engaging, interesting and entertaining the material, the more children of all literary levels get from it. SH 10 (NCCA) argued that any text if introduced properly would have a similar effect and that 'frequency of exposure to a variety of texts is as important as exposure to texts deemed high quality by adults' (Interview, 16th December 2013). SH 9 (teacher ed.) held a similar view, stating 'whatever text gets a child reading and is age appropriate is the right text to use' (Interview, 5th November 2013). This was the view of some of the participating teachers at the pre-project stage of the drama intervention, but after the intervention they had changed this view. Various values gleaned from choosing texts such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Wilde and Chaucer, combined with a wide variety of

modern children's literature senior pupils in primary school were outlined by the stakeholders. Stakeholders 2 (secondary teacher), 4 (student teacher), 6 (teacher ed.) and 11 (teacher ed.) saw exposure to literature in primary school as a foundation for secondary school. 'Literature is the base of culture in our world and a primary school pupil should have experience of both modern and classic authors before they go to secondary school' (Interview, SH2 Secondary teacher, November 10th 2013), a view expressed by some of the participating teachers (Pre-project Questionnaire, February 2012). The importance of including classic authors to widen the child's experience of literature for its literary and cultural value and to help children become storytellers, performers and interpreters of the writing of some of the world's greatest authors is outlined in statements such as 'this literature has great value and potential for vocabulary and language development and arousing interest in more challenging texts' (SH 7 civil servant, Interview, October 29th 2013). All stakeholders agreed with SH 8 (teacher ed.) who said 'exploring literature is not just reading a text. The exploration has to be done in an accessible, creative manner making the text interactive and relevant' (Interview, April 22nd 2014). SH 6 (teacher ed.) added that if teachers want to foster a love of authors such as Shakespeare in the primary school they must go about it properly: 'It's the way you hook them, you can turn them on or you can turn them off '(Interview, November 6th 2013) she added.

Choosing the Literature

A suggestion that a list of suitable authors and titles be available in the primary school curriculum for each class was made by SH 2 (secondary teacher) and SH 5 (teacher ed.), which echoes calls made by participating teachers in this study, but all eleven stakeholders were adamant that it would not enhance the teaching of literature if this list was merely prescribed and taught without passion. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents reported that if taught passionately and creatively by a teacher who themselves valued this literature, authors such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Wilde or Chaucer would be very suitable for primary school children. Four of the stakeholders [3 (primary teacher), 5 (teacher ed.), 9 (teacher ed.) and 10 (NCCA)] recommended suitably comprehendible and enjoyable adaptations of the original texts which were chosen carefully and relevant to the child, while stakeholders [2 (secondary teacher), 7 (civil servant) and 8 (teacher ed.)] saw value in exploring the original language in these texts because the vocabulary is not off putting for the child and could be used for modelling language. Stakeholders 2 (secondary teacher) and 8 (teacher ed.) concurred that by introducing children to the work of such authors, they get an opportunity to explore the links between them and modern author, and see how

authors such as Michael Morpurgo have been influenced by their language and writing styles. SH 1 (secondary teacher) was alone in regarding those authors as unsuitable for primary school children, stating that she could not think of any text by Shakespeare, Dickens or Chaucer that would interest a primary school child but she suggested that Wilde's children's stories may be suitable. Again this was a view recorded by many of the participating teachers prior to the drama intervention.

Writing

Seven stakeholders agreed that being exposed to high quality texts in primary school results in an investigative, creative and vocabulary rich writing style and 'develops the child's imagination resulting in better character descriptions, grammar and plot lay out' (SH 9, teacher educator Interview, November 5th 2013). Stakeholder 7 (civil servant) reported that from visiting classrooms where senior primary school pupils are exposed only to poor quality modern writers, she has observed that the child's oral language development remains static and their creative writing is of a similar standard to that of a second class pupil. Others [3 (primary teacher), 10 (NCCA) and 11 (teacher ed.)] argued that it is not necessarily the quality of a text that influences a child's writing, but being exposed to a wide range of different writing styles and reading regularly. SH 1 (secondary teacher) expressed a unique comment, stating that secondary school pupils are indeed influenced by what they read, but 'primary school children would not relate to the language or vocabulary of authors such as Shakespeare, Dickens or Chaucer, and therefore their writing could not reflect any influence from it' (Interview, November 9th 2013) .

Methods

Although the minority [SH 3 (primary teacher), 9 (teacher ed.), 10 (NCCA)] claimed that primary school teachers in Ireland are teaching age and content appropriate literature and are using teaching methods that comply with curriculum guidelines, other stakeholders suggested that literature is being taught passively by merely reading the texts and answering questions. Many agree that the main reasons why teachers do not explore more challenging literature through active and enjoyable methods are that the teachers lack training and resources in this area [SH 2 (secondary teacher) and 4 (student teacher)], and that teachers teach the way they were taught despite training, and fall back on whole class teaching because they are not secure in their own creative knowledge [SH 5 (teacher ed.), 6 (teacher ed.), 7 (civil servant), 11 (teacher ed.), (Interviews, November 2012- February 2013)]. SH 7 (civil servant) reported that when she visits primary schools she sees far less creative teaching of literature than

she did prior to the introduction of the Revised Curriculum in 1999, and in many senior classes the pupils' only experience of literature is reading one novel a year, a class reader and answering questions in workbooks. She added that on the other hand she has seen wonderful creative work in classrooms where the teacher is not afraid of a challenge. SH 6 (teacher ed.) said she had seen a lot of linear teaching in secondary and primary school classrooms and recommended substituting this type of teaching by exploration and discussion. Other methods recommended by stakeholders Teachers reading to the pupils at a level above the child's ability

- Paired reading
- Character analyses
- Debates
- Comprehension exercises including prediction and analyses
- Art, writing and drama activities

SH 5 (teacher ed.) stressed that drama should be used to enhance literature and not as a reward as she had seen it used for in many classrooms. SH 9 (teacher ed.) had the opinion that literature is taught creatively in primary school but this creativity 'is educated out of them in secondary school by rote learning'. SH 7 (civil servant) added that novels should be taught for pleasure but teachers use so much analyses and prediction and writing strategies that they 'rob the child of the pleasure in the book' (Interview, October 29th 2013).

Drama

By the end of the 4 week intervention in their classrooms the participating teachers reported that they valued drama as a method to explore literature to such a degree that they intended to continue using it, and the follow-up analysis revealed that they were still doing so almost a year later. The value of drama as a teaching method for literature was also highlighted by all of the stakeholders. The importance of understanding the emotions and actions of the characters in both modern and classic texts was emphasised by Stakeholders 2 (secondary teacher), 4 (student teacher), 5 (teacher ed.), 6 (teacher ed.), 7 (civil servant) and 11 (teacher ed.) who agreed that using drama as a methodology to explore texts was the best way to understand the characters, make them real and intimately connected to the reader, explore their motivations and 'give the reader time to reflect on the personalities they encounter in books' (Interview SH 11 teacher ed., December 11th 2013). Both teacher and pupil respondents provided almost identical reports about their experiences of participating in the drama intervention, which testifies to its role as identified by the stakeholders

above. The fun element that drama brings to exploring literature was accredited 221 times in the teacher participants' pupils' journals, 95 times in the journal observations of my class, and was also acknowledged frequently by the participating teachers. Stakeholders 1 (secondary teacher), 3 (primary teacher) and 7 (civil servant) concurred with these participants and highlighted the fun element which drama can bring to exploring literature: 'Literature must be enjoyable, and be presented as something to be enjoyed' (SH 3 primary teacher, Interview, February 10th 2014). Stakeholder 2, a secondary school teacher reported having used drama to teach texts and agreed that when the pupils used strategies such as Hot Seating and Interviewing they 'lived the life of the character which helped them answer questions in their Junior and Leaving Cert examinations on character analyses and using drama also helps a pupil's recall of detail and storage of facts' (Interview, November 10th 2013). Stakeholder 1, another secondary school teacher agreed and also commented on how time consuming drama could be, but added a view not stated but inferred in the teacher and pupil participants' data that 'although time is scarce there is always time to make learning memorable' (Interview, November 9th 2013). The majority of the stakeholders expressed the opinion that literature especially that written hundreds of years ago can present as dull and uninviting to the modern child whose life revolves around technology and social networking, and therefore needs to be presented in a manner that links it to contemporary living. All of the stakeholders agreed that drama brings texts to life, making them meaningful, understandable and relevant in the child's own life. Stakeholders 9 (teacher ed.), 10 (NCCA) and 11 (teacher ed.) expressed the idea that drama is a gateway into texts that brings a live element into the teaching and learning environment, making even the stories of Shakespeare and Chaucer contemporary, and teaching children about the morals and the social connotations not only of today but of life down through the centuries.

Continuous Personal Development

The teachers participating in this research unanimously contributed the success of the intervention to the CPD and the ready to use lesson plans they received. The stakeholders' views were sought on the importance and need for CPD for teachers in the area of selecting and exploring literature in the classroom, and data suggests that their views concur with those of the teachers. All eleven stakeholders recommended that teachers require CPD in all areas of the curriculum but especially in the area of exploring literature, regardless of experience. Stakeholder 8 (teacher ed.) refers to this as part of a teacher's personal and professional education and adds that the education teachers get in college is only the starter course on their professional journey. The

majority of the stakeholders agreed that teachers should always continue to be students and believed that teachers can get complacent and teach the same text year on year using passive methods only. SH 9 (teacher ed.) added that 'teachers should not be afraid of change and should avail of CPD to help change often' (Interview, November 5th 2013). SH 2 feels that secondary school teachers are not offered CPD regularly enough and would like in service training on using drama in education as a method to explore junior and leaving cert texts. The majority of the respondents suggested that teachers should avail of online CPD to keep abreast of changing trends in text and methodologies, but SH 7 (civil servant) suggested that some CPD be done within the school. SH 5 (teacher ed.) recommended hands on workshops led by an expert as her preferred method of CPD where 'teachers explore texts and active methods of teaching and exchange views with other literature teachers'(interview, February 8th 2014). SH 8 (teacher ed.) was adamant that teachers need CPD in teaching literature because they can't be relying on the 1999 curriculum in 2015 but need to engage with contemporary authors and learn how views on classics authors are changing because 'literature enriches all aspects of a person and teachers need to feel confident around literature and not just pass it on without thinking' (Interview, April 22nd 2013).

Basal Readers

Seven stakeholders recommended using basal readers in primary school classrooms to acquire basic literacy skills, to arouse interest and as a link to quality literature. 'Class readers should be used in the specific teaching of literacy, while quality literature is an invaluable part of the human experience' (SH 3 primary teacher, Interview, February 10th 2014). Stakeholders 7 (civil servant) and 8 (teacher ed.) disagreed with using basal readers at all in upper primary school classrooms arguing that 1 basal reader does not fit a variety of abilities and gives the child only a shallow view of literature.

Teacher Training

SH 4 (student teacher) related that she had received no training as yet in College on how to choose or teach literature, and would like to see the Colleges of Education encouraging students to explore good literature and advising them on ways to do this in preparation for teaching. SH 2 (secondary teacher) echoed the same sentiments and said that when he did his H Dip in College, literature studies consisted merely of reading texts, therefore he received no training in 'teaching' literature. In contrast, SH 8, a lecturer in English literature to student teachers noted that her Department aims to

support students to be prepared, knowledgeable and confident to teach literature. SH 6 (teacher ed.) reported that she had worked with student teachers and had guided them to move away from linear teaching. It was her view that this type of teaching was the easy way out, but suggested that if teachers were encouraged and given ideas and resources they would embrace methods such as drama. SH 7 (civil servant) said the authorities in Colleges of Education need to link literature with literacy because 'literature has high potential to improve literacy skills' (Interview, October 29th 2013), a view suggested by the participating teachers after they exploring the literature through drama during the intervention.

The responses of the stakeholders were varied based on their experience with the different levels of the education system, but the clear majority advocate the benefits of exposure to good quality literature in the primary school, provided the texts are age and content appropriate, explored creatively, and taught as part of a varied diet including contemporary and classical texts. The participants unanimously supported the idea that using drama as a methodology to explore literature makes the content of the texts meaningful, understandable and relevant in the child's own life. All stakeholders agreed upon the importance and necessity of CPD to motivate and support teachers, both at primary and secondary school level in teaching literature especially in using creative methods such as drama in education.

6.10 Interview with Siobhán Parkinson

In an interview with me in September 2011, children's author and Laureate na n-Óg (2010-2012) Siobhán Parkinson expressed her views on introducing primary school children to authors such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Wilde and Chaucer and also on using drama as a teaching and learning methodology for both modern and classic literature. Siobhán was enthusiastic about the idea of introducing young children to the works of renowned authors, especially Shakespeare. Her comment 'I don't think many teachers use Shakespeare in the primary school' concurred with data from the participating teachers, their pupils and the chosen stakeholders. The author described this as a great shame because she reported having observed on visiting primary school classrooms that young children are fascinated by exotic language. She stated that reading Shakespeare in modern translation looses the charm of the atmosphere. Her own son read *Macbeth* at a very young age and enjoyed the language and the gory bits, because that's what children love. She reported being aware that children in both primary and secondary schools in Ireland are introduced to a very narrow diet of

literature and recommended a wide variety of classic and modern literature for all children and young adults to develop their creative and imaginative skills. 'They are all stories and stories grab the attention and arouse the curiosity of children and adults'. She stressed the importance of teachers being lovers of literature and knowledgeable about all kinds of texts, because children need role models and if teachers know what is good they will pass this knowledge and love of literature onto their pupils. She expressed a similar view to the participating teachers when she said that although teachers play a major role in encouraging children to read, parents should develop a love for books in their children even before they come to school and should read to their child 'not till he/she is four but fourteen'. Her expressed opinion that drama is a wonderful way to get children interested in the characters in a book is in accord with the views of all the participants in this project. She added that she would love to see her books explored through drama in the primary school classroom. 'Drama is a sure way to develop a child's interest in literature and once the interest has been developed children will begin to discover books for themselves. (Interview with author, September 28th 2011).

6.11 My Past Pupils' Questionnaire

A short questionnaire was sent to 8 of my past pupils to establish if studying Shakespeare had a positive effect on their attitude to and learning of Shakespeare in secondary school (see appendix 12). 5 questionnaires were returned. All 5 respondents had studied two Shakespearean plays since they left primary school, one for their Junior Certificate and one for their Leaving Certificate. Two had been involved in a school production of *The Tempest* which they had encouraged their English teacher to produce in Transition Year. All 5 reported that they enjoyed studying Shakespeare in secondary school and found the language easy to understand. All 5 again recalled the experience of exploring Shakespeare as a positive memory, and all could recall the three plays they explored in 5th and 6th class and said that having had an introduction to Shakespeare in primary school made the language easier to understand, but added that studying Shakespeare was a very different experience in secondary school because none of their teachers had ever used drama to explore issues or characters, so although they liked the language they felt they were just learning off answers and lines to use in their exams. Respondent 1 said: 'Little did I think when I was in primary school that having spoken the language and learned so much about Shakespeare and the Globe and everything could have such a huge

impact on Shakespeare in the secondary school'. Respondent 2 agreed and added 'I found the language came to me a lot easier than it did to my peers'. Respondent 2 and 4 agreed that having had the experience of visiting Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford upon Avon and having attended a workshop and a performance in The Globe made them more aware of the background and the history of Shakespeare and his plays (R 2) and 'it was great to see actors on stage in the Globe and I learned a lot about Shakespeare's background'.

There was evidence from this data that being introduced to Shakespeare in primary school was a rewarding experience for the pupils, not only at the time but continued to help their appreciation and understanding of Shakespeare's plays. It is regrettable that their active exploration of Shakespeare's text ending in primary school and became a mere passive experience in secondary school. However the love and interest developed in the primary school still exists and hopefully will be re kindled in these young people as adults.

6.12 Conclusion

The data presented here support the use of good quality literature in primary school classrooms, where teachers and pupils are scaffolded into a rich and challenging learning environment through the guided and appropriate use of an active and creative teaching and learning methodology, namely drama in education in this study. The data raised a number of issues and related themes which will be discussed and considered in light of evidence from the available literature in the field in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Discussion of Findings

7.1 Introduction

This study is an investigation into aspects of the value of exploring good quality literature in the upper primary school, using drama as teaching and learning methodology. This chapter will seek to discuss the findings presented in chapter 6, keeping in mind the research problem, which led to the research questions (see p. 113).The discussion will focus on:

- the key area of the research, which is the participants' experience of using drama as a teaching and learning method to explore what was considered by all the participants as challenging literature.
- the value and importance of exposing children to quality literature outlined and demonstrated by the participants will also be discussed
- the evidence that emerged in regards to minor brief research into the importance of initial teacher education and subsequent in-service training for all teachers in the area of choosing appropriate literature, and methods to explore literature in the primary classroom will also be included.

Many international experts in the field of primary school education have emphasised the value of literature in primary school and have carried out research with teachers and pupils in this area, but yet it remains an area of the curriculum largely unexplored by Irish educationalists.

The major findings will now be discussed, considering the literature in this field. The themes of the major findings were derived when the data from the interviews, questionnaires, journals and observations had been initially coded and were organised using the table of the seven pillar themes from the literature and sub themes that arose from the coded data but were not found in the literature. The following themes give an explanation, understanding and interpretation of the people and situations I investigated in this research and tell the story of the implication for both teacher and pupil participants of teaching and learning good quality literature in the Irish primary school through the medium of drama.

7.2 The Importance of Good Quality Literature

'Literature can broaden perspectives for all readers and create classrooms where all, including those with disabilities, are accepted' (Miller, 2012).

All of the participant teachers recognised the value and the relevance of exposing children in primary school to literature. The seven participating teachers displayed this awareness by firstly self selecting to participate in this project. The common reason for participating among the group was a desire to access suitable literature for their students and to find a new and exciting method through which to teach it. The majority of participating teachers' pupils displayed knowledge of literature and an awareness of the value of reading despite their teachers reporting a decline in reading habits among their pupils. The participating pupils in my own classroom showed a deeper knowledge and awareness of a wider repertoire of authors and texts and evidence of their enjoyment of reading those authors. As established in chapter 6 this is due to a culture of exploring literature in this school from an early age. The stakeholders who represent various interested bodies in the primary and secondary school sectors for teaching language and literacy in Irish schools unanimously agree that exposure to good quality literature improves a child's literacy and language skills even though some of this cohort argued that exploring the classics should be postponed until secondary school. Siobhan Parkinson, a children's writer agrees with the importance of exploring literature with children and feels that it is regrettable that teachers in primary school do not introduce Shakespeare and his rich language to their pupils, arguing that since pupils at this age love rhythm and exotic language. The data of this study conducted in the Irish context is in keeping with Miller's (2012) view and with the general thrust of the literature which argues that exposure to good quality literature in primary school is considered beneficial. 'Children who have a rich variety of literary experiences become literate, caring, cultured, humanised and informed people' (Livington, 1988:123).

David J. Rostron (cited in Chapman, 1976) expressed an opinion that children who become avid readers while in primary school are likely to remain readers for their lifetime, while those who fail are deprived of a valuable academic skill and access to a depository of pleasure and happiness. The participating teachers at the pre-project stage of the research all agreed with the view that once a child becomes a reader this skill remains with her, but all except one failed to acknowledge the loss in happiness for a child who does not acquire this skill. This loss is described by Thompson (2009: 3) as 'a deprivation of joy and enlightenment, a loss of the brightness of life'. In the pre-project children's data it is evident that the pupils like to read for pleasure. The

teacher participants and the stakeholders viewed an introduction to good quality literature in the primary school as a foundation for their study of literature in the secondary school, a view adopted by Cremin et al. (2008) in the literature when he advised teachers to foster enthusiasm for literature in the primary school to insure that children will become committed readers when they transfer to secondary school. The participating teachers also considered the scope of the vocabulary, the challenge of the language and the exploration of character, theme and setting as reasons why exploring literature was important. The pupils on the other hand like to read mainly because it is fun but acknowledged the importance of reading good books and poems rather than comics to acquire a better vocabulary and improve reading and writing skills. Hirsch (1987) believes that a child should acquire a broad vocabulary, and all the participating teachers agreed that they would like their pupils to acquire what Knapp (2006: 14) claims quality literature can offer which is 'a rich tapestry from which to learn vocabulary, grammar and word usage and sets an example for good writing skills and strategies'. The data reveal that the teachers who expressed that they liked reading were transferring this love and interest to their pupils, fulfilling the role of teacher, as seen by Lo Monico (2002), to change students' perceptions about the value of literature and to encourage them to love literature. Pollock (2007: 54) recognises the importance of such enthusiastic teachers and sees their role in teaching literature as extremely important: 'Teaching literature is simple if the teacher is excited about the literature he wants his students to read'. Stoodt (1996:16) believes 'teachers can develop children who value and enjoy reading by sharing their own pleasure in literature, thus helping children to recognise the meaning and value that books can have in their lives'. Stoodt's view was upheld by the majority of the stakeholders who saw literature as vital for a young child's literary and cultural development. All the participating teachers expressed an interest in their pupils' reading habits and an understanding of the importance of literature in their pupils' lives, and from the evidence in the data, this and the teachers' own reading habits played an important role in developing the pupils' interest in literature.

The findings from this project show that the participating teachers embraced the teaching of quality literature and the method of using drama to explore it over the four week intervention period and during the following year. Their enthusiasm and excitement in exploring the literature with their students resulted in the pupils becoming motivated to learn and enjoying and embracing the literature and also, what was to most of them, a new method of learning. The data gathered from the participating teachers' post-project questionnaires reveal that the teachers have extended the range

of literature they use and have embraced drama as a method to teach literature. Having explored more challenging texts side by side with modern children's literature they can now see additional value to exploring literature, namely that their pupils have the opportunity to explore other worlds and other times and empathise with the characters and themes in stories.

It is evident from the findings of the study that the participants in this study who represent the teachers, pupils and educators at primary school level in Ireland agree with the general thrust of the literature in valuing the role of literature in the Irish child's early education. Although they were mostly of this opinion from the outset, this was a rhetorical position, and when probed a little further, very few of them actually explored much literature at all in their classes. However their opinions were solidified, both in theory and in practice following the intervention, to the extent that there was substance and significance in their post intervention comments which differed from their initial responses almost a year earlier. This demonstrates the impact of the structured CPD on their practice and thinking about literature in the primary school.

7.3 The Choice of Literature

Wray and Medwell (2000) believe that the language of the stories we offer to children needs to be of an appropriate quality. They stress that there is nothing to be gained, but a lot to lose by attempting to simplify this rich language. As Nodelman (1996:80) shares this view 'The more we believe that children are limited in various ways, the more we deprive them of experiences that might make them less limited.'

The evidence from the data reveals that although all of the participating teachers recognised the value and the relevance of literature in the primary school and a minority supported the idea of introducing a classic as the class novel, yet when asked what literature they taught their pupils, the findings reveal that they relied on a narrow diet of modern authors and put a lot of emphasis on reading poetry. The evidence from their pupils verified this fact when they reported reading mainly modern children's novels. Although these teachers had volunteered to participate in a four week CPD on teaching good quality literature such as Shakespeare, in the pre-project questionnaires the majority of the participants reported modern contemporary authors as the most suitable and only suitable literature for pupils in primary school, some arguing that enjoyment was more important than quality and that the quality of a book didn't matter once the child read. This debate was evident also in the literature. Bullock (1975) argues for the consideration of quality as opposed to non quality while Whitehead

(1968) says there must be a balance. Others such as Ingham (1982) and Dickinson (1976) argue that non quality literature plays an important part is acquiring the reading habit and that as long as children are reading and showing some personal development in their choice of literature, then quality learning is taking place and it does not matter what is read just as long as the children are engaged in reading. However Huus (1973) advises teachers that when teaching literature, following known or expressed interests of children is not enough, teachers have a responsibility to provide a literature programme which creates new interests in topics that pupils did not know existed. According to Nelms (1966:11) 'the selected pieces of literature must be of the highest literary standard and more challenging than books they read on their own'.

The teachers felt there were no guidelines, and reported that in the experience of teaching in schools a novel explored in second class would sometimes be of the same standard as one used in sixth and would e explored in a similar manner. Cullinan and Galda (1994) state that all teachers should be exposed to literature suitable for their students and should learn to analyse books using definitive criteria. Teachers should know how to develop a literature based curriculum, one where all children will love to learn and read from books. Nuba et al. (1999:69) believe that the choice of literature for primary school children should relate to their psychological development. They see the first three to four years in primary school as a time when the inner workings of the child's mind are rich with fantasy, wonderment and bewilderment and at this stage books of fantasy provide timeless joy. Literature for the child from third to sixth grades should reflect the transition of children from a period where the world of the imagination often governs their thinking and behaviour to one where children have an acute awareness of the real world and the people in it as they actually exist.

It has been established that the participating teachers were enthusiastic about exploring literature with their pupils so it was reasonable to probe why they were using a narrow diet of modern novels with their pupils in 5th and 6th class. This cohort of teachers believed the adequate attention is not given to the teaching of literature in the revised curriculum and that it is too broad and leaves too much choice to the class teacher, and being overcrowded, leaves very little opportunity to encourage the habit of reading for pleasure. Although the majority were satisfied with the literature they were using, all welcomed the idea of a list of prescribed authors for each class. Some stakeholders concurred with this idea but others felt a prescribed list would dampen the creativity and favoured a suggestion list. It was evident from the data, pre-project, during the project and post- project that the participant teachers were insecure in

choosing literature for their pupils. They were asking for further guidance in choosing suitable literature, a prescribed list of authors and novels suitable for each class and a book of accompanying lesson plans.

Ten months after the intervention, many of them were reusing the texts explored during the intervention with their new class. It was encouraging to see that many had explored a variety of texts, both modern and classics, whereas before the project they considered modern authors such as Michael Morphorgu and Roald Dahl as the only suitable literature for their class. This change had taken place due to a short in-service training and the availability of well structured lesson plans. I suggest that if teachers were given guidance in this area of choosing suitable literature and of employing active and creative methods to teach it in teacher education colleges and in compulsory CPD, would their pupils come to enjoy the experience of exploring literature, their oral language, writing and reading standards would improve, and they would also improve their social, emotional and cultural skills, and teachers' confidence would improve and their professionalism would be enhanced. Kolczynski (1989) encourages teachers to guide their students in listening to and reading good stories, poems and books to enable them to 'develop a store of knowledge and experiences that will guide them as they discover the means to express their own ideas'.

From the data it is evident that many teachers are dependent on the advice of other teachers as to what literature to explore with their class. Many have never developed a love of literature and have not immersed themselves in suitable texts for their pupils. They refer to web sites for suggestions and then pick a novel and read it with their class, or are influenced by publishers who supply an accompanying work book with a suggested novel. Flannagan and Cregan (cited in Shiel et al., 2000:44) acknowledge the decline in the quality of literature which is published today for children and warn that 'there is a vast array of mediocre literature published today under the umbrella of children's literature and it is important that teachers ensure that pupils are introduced to quality literature such as the classics'. On the web site for primary school principals (IPPN) there is a blog for teachers' questions which are usually answered by other teachers and the most common request is 'has anyone got a suggestion for a suitable novel for 6th class?' This mentality pervades the professionalism of teachers currently. They become reliant on second hand information. This is not sharing of ideas per se but the tone of such requests reflects more of a 'give me something so I won't have to read books to find a suitable one myself'. While there is nothing wrong in communicating with ones colleagues in such a manner, and it is very desirable for teachers to have communities of practice and to share ideas and resources, it needs to

be at a leadership level, sharing ideas, not a dependency model as the language of such requests would infer.

This dependency and lack of confidence all throw light on the reasons why the culture in primary schools is not ambitious. Despite the teachers agreeing that exposure to literature is important in the primary school, the evidence in this study suggests that this is not happening to any realistic extent. Teachers cover one or at best two novels each year and use the basal reader. This is not sufficient, as they are not extending or stretching the young people to any great extent in contrast to the view of the literature which suggests that teachers need to broaden their choice of literature for children because literature written specifically for children is not enough, as it provides 'an insufficient experience of the world past, present and future' and fails to 'reach the full heights of excellence which our children deserve' (Carter, 2000:78). Carter agrees that it is important that children engage with the full range of literature written specifically for them but as noted earlier, they also deserve access to 'great works which have become pillars of the culture, not only Roald Dahl but also Charles Dickens, not only *Tom's Midnight Garden* but also *The Tempest*' (Carter, 2000:78). The practice of relying upon extracts downloaded or purchased as part of publisher's packages has been criticised by researchers such as Frater (2002) and Cremin et al. (2008). Dunaway (2010) warns teachers that by choosing the wrong literature in school they can make reading a torture for their pupils. For Dunaway (2010) choosing the right literature is the key to arousing a child's excitement about books. He recommends that teachers should teach books they enjoyed themselves and books that that child will relate to. Wolf (2004:14) sums up the importance of the correct choice of literature for the primary school child 'If we want our children to engage with literature, we have to give them something to think about'.

A recent study by Cremin et al. (2008) in the UK explored teachers' knowledge of the literature most suitable for young children and reveals that primary professionals rely on a narrow repertoire of authors. They suggest that knowledge of children's literature is a pre-requisite if teachers wish to nurture positive attitudes and develop young readers. From the data and the earlier discussion, it is evident that teachers in this study are receptive, but there is a blockage, and the study revealed that these teachers need:

- to develop a culture of exploring a variety of literature within the school, which would include good modern authors, tried and tested class favourites, poems and a selection of play scripts

- resources, including a good supply of the above literature
- in service training in this area of the curriculum
- confidence in their own ability
- enthusiasm to teach literature passionately.

In the study sample the teachers claim to have lost some enthusiasm and interest in their profession because of an overload of DES policies, and report that they have no time for engaging in CPD or for reading literature in order to find an exciting novel for their class. Due to the financial recession teachers' salaries have been reduced and they have to work extra hours each week. This has all impeded on their sense of teacher identity, on their autonomy and professionalism. Teachers need encouragement to engage in their own CPD. An NCCA representative in this study stated that teachers were teaching literature according to the curriculum guidelines, although a review of the English curriculum conducted by the NCCA in 2008 found that teachers reported finding difficulty in navigating or accessing the curriculum (NCCA, 2008). A senior civil servant with the DES reported that there is a huge lack of awareness among teachers on what literature to teach and how to teach it, and that on visits to classrooms she sees very few teachers reading to children, and the class novels that are used are of a very poor standard. She reported that she has seen far less literature is being taught since the introduction of the revised curriculum. She agrees that in general teachers are enthusiastic but young teachers have no guidance, they are afraid to be creative and depend on abridged versions of literature in the basal reader, they want a pack from the publisher and use little of their own creativity to teach literature. This would suggest that teachers' professionalism is being restrained, constrained and undermined by a curriculum that is not challenging enough. The revised English curriculum for primary schools in Ireland acknowledges the value of literature in a child's social and educational development from infants to sixth class when it states that a child should be given access to a wide range of texts from an early age. It outlines the many attributes that stories and literature can bring to the child's emotional and academic development, including enjoyment of language, exploring the imagination and a better understanding of human motivation and feelings and advises the teacher to use a rich selection of the best literature appropriate to the stage of development of the pupils. This is very commendable but in a review of the English curriculum in 2008 teachers were critical of the sheer breadth and depth of the curriculum and reported finding it 'difficult to navigate and to access across subjects and levels', and although they considered textbooks insufficiently challenging for pupils they used them as they found them more helpful than the curriculum for planning and

they fulfilled the parents expectations for their children's learning as they saw them progress from page to page.

After exploring challenging literature such as Dickens and Chaucer in this study, it is evident that the pupils and the participating teachers enjoyed this challenge and asked to explore more similar texts. The participants in this research initially reported teaching only modern authors, before embarking on the intervention. This type of limited exposure to literature is insufficient to develop a richness of language and an awareness of character, theme and setting that a balanced diet of classic authors such as Dickens and modern writers such as Roald Dahl and Michael Morgurgo, explored in an active manner where pupils take ownership of their own learning can give. Falconi (2011) says teachers need to seek ways to interest students in reading classics so that they will firstly understand, and then be able to identify with the story and its characters. It is true to say that the teachers who participated in this project were enthusiastic and eager to bring new ideas and methods into teaching literature to their classes. After a short four week period of CPD they embraced good quality literature and explored it with their pupils and reported being surprised and pleased with the positive improvements they saw in their pupils. If this intervention worked with this cohort of teachers it is likely to work with other teachers. Teachers' creativity and enthusiasm needs to be encouraged and fostered. During my experience of this study, based on the evidence of working with this group of teachers, there were three factors restraining them:

- The English curriculum because it sets minimum standards and people in general won't exceed them.
- They are working in overcrowded classrooms trying to follow an overcrowded curriculum of twelve subjects with insufficient resources.
- They lack initial training in the area of literature teaching and are not supported through high quality CPD in the area.

Over the course of the four weeks intervention the participant teachers expressed concern about having to sacrifice depth when teaching in order to follow an overcrowded curriculum and reported having insufficient time to devote to exploring literature. As time went by they learned to integrate subjects such as History and SPHE with their literature exploration, thus allowing more time to explore the literature through drama.

The data supports the argument that there is an over reliance on modern literature and also on poetry possible because of the available exemplars. Teachers repeated the

same novels year on year. This contrasts starkly with my class who last year alone explored ten novels (some of which were picture books), two edited plays by Shakespeare and extracts from authors such as Dickens, Chaucer, Wilde, Poe, Austin, Twain and Kipling. A basal reader was not used. This literature was seen as quite a manageable task across the ability levels in a rural location. It is part of the expectations in the school that a teacher raises the bar for her pupils. This evidence suggests that teachers need guidance, CPD and resources because knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers cannot be underestimated.

Analyses only, without enjoyment is not a productive engagement with quality literature and is not desirable. It is not surprising then that respondents were not using much literature in their classrooms, as prior to the intervention their dominant approach to teaching literature was through reading and teacher questioning. As Wells (1990) indicates, children and young adults develop literacy by experiencing and getting support from adults or peers. To awaken this enthusiasm in children Pollock (2007) claims that the presence of books in schools is not adequate; children must be taught literature with enthusiasm by teachers because even very attractive books might not appeal to children in comparison to computers and video games. The provided drama lesson plans and the supported CPD workshops where the participating teachers tried out the methods proved to be a lynchpin in this study and led to the overwhelming success of this intervention in a very short space of time.

7.4 The Four Texts

Wray and Medwell (2000) argue that children are most attracted to stories with strong action packed plots containing quality language, and that it is of the utmost importance to the child to be able to identify with characters. Over the course of the four week intervention some of the participating teachers expressed the view that the pupils were responding to the drama rather than to the literature. Two teachers initially argued that the quality of the literature didn't matter and that the children would have got the same value from studying any piece of literature. After teaching the second lesson, the participants all agreed that it was evident from this project that the drama enriched the literature and the quality of the literature enriched the drama in a productive creative symbiotic relationship. A minority of the stakeholders also argued that any text that was introduced properly would have the same effect as regards language and vocabulary development and moral and social awareness. They claimed that it was the frequency of exposure and not the quality of the literature that mattered. This idea was

refuted by the majority who listed the benefits of including a mixture of both modern and classic writers to broaden the experience of the cultural value of literature and the potential for language and vocabulary development. It was evident from the children's data that they enjoyed the drama, but they also welcomed, embraced and used the language of the chosen texts and enjoyed the challenge. They reported extending their vocabulary and their communication skills, and learning about authors and periods in History previously unknown to them. While having fun and enjoying the drama they reported that through the drama activities they began to understand the themes, characters and language of the texts which was the overall aim of the approach.

Lo Monico (2002) says that quality literature is the best tool for developing genuine literacy, as being a work of art it pleases the author and the reader because the words are chosen with skill to create wonderful stories, and she advises teachers to encourage their pupils to appreciate the aesthetic beauty of quality literature, which is found in the wonderful sound of the words and the flow of the well structured sentences, and the marvellous way authors such as Twain, Dickens and Shakespeare choose the right words. The findings from this project suggest that the teachers succeeded in doing what Lo Monico had advised. Yet even though the pupil participants enjoyed all four texts, they reported liking *Macbeth* and *Great Expectations* the best. Basically the same drama techniques were employed to explore all four texts, yet some texts appealed more to the children than others. Since Dickens and Shakespeare were the favourites with most pupils, (mainly because of their enjoyment of them) they became the favourites with the teachers also. From the evidence it would appear that the pupils favoured the language in Dickens and Shakespeare and this was evident in their use of it, but the characters in Dickens especially Pip, whom they viewed as being of a similar age to themselves, and the convict (because of Dickens wonderful description of him) were the features that instantly appealed to all pupils. Wray and Medwell (2000) advise that it of the utmost importance when choosing literature for children to choose texts where the child will be able to identify with the characters. Likewise the pupils reported that they were drawn to *Macbeth* because it is full of murder, intrigue, the supernatural and mystery. Bagdanof's (2008) theory may help explain this preference for Shakespeare when he explains that Shakespeare deals with familiar and abiding concerns and that his characters, stories and themes have been, and still are a source of meaning and significance for every generation.

The introductory activity also appears to have influenced their preference as the majority of the pupils commented on enjoying the movement, dancing and music used to introduce the lesson, even though music was also used in the beginning of *The*

Happy Prince lesson. The interest and enjoyment in the dance and movement is noteworthy since the participating teachers reported in the group interview that pupils were not familiar with this technique. I have observed from my experience of teaching and attending in-service that dance, even though it is a strand of the P E curriculum is not taught regularly in the primary school. Considering the value of dance as a means of communication and expression, especially for shy children or children with special needs, it is regrettable that it is not used more regularly in the primary classroom. For the pupil participants in this project, as well as being a means of expression and communication, it was noted to be a motivating technique which gave pupils a sense of living in the setting of the literature. Perhaps one of the reasons why *The Happy Prince* and *The Nun's Priest's Tale* were less popular may be the presence of birds and animals as characters, making it a little more difficult to relate to and empathise with. One of the features which the majority of the pupils commented on was that they did not like the idea of the characters being animals or birds as they appeared to equate this with the story being more suitable for younger children. It is important that teachers have read the literature they explore with their class. All the participating teachers in this study were aware of the importance of becoming familiar with the vast selection of literature, both classic and modern, suitable for their pupil and of sharing their enthusiasm for literature with their pupils. Mc Garrell (1995) says that the best teachers of literature to young children are those who have been encouraged to fall in love with great writing themselves at an early age. With a vast array of literature available for children and with numerous classic stories suitable for children it seems regrettable that principal teachers are asking 'what novel should I teach to 6th class'?

The majority of the educational stakeholders reported that if taught passionately and creatively by a teacher who valued literature then the experience and activity would be very suitable for primary school. This opinion is supported by Fenwick's (1990:64) idea that 'unless the literature that is being taught excites and attracts the teacher, it will have little effect on the child'. However this view was not fully confirmed in this research. It is evident that the teachers were excited about participating in the project but many of them were sceptical about exploring literature such as Shakespeare and Dickens with their pupils. After attending the workshop and participating actively in the activities they felt more empowered to explore this literature with their pupils. On each of the four nights the majority of the teachers were positively disposed towards good quality literature. One teacher said his pupils disliked the story of *The Happy Prince* and added that he disliked Wilde himself, yet reported that as the children explored the characters and themes through drama they began to enjoy the story. There was no

evidence in his pupils' data that they disliked the *Happy Prince*. Before they taught the lesson based on *Macbeth,* six of the teachers expressed their dislike of Shakespeare and reported hating it in school, yet their attitude did not lessen the pupils' enjoyment of the lesson which was one of their favourite lessons. The children did report that they would not have understood some of the text if they had not explored it through drama. Similarly another teacher was adamant through the fourth lesson that both she and her pupils disliked the story from *The Canterbury Tales* and argued that Chaucer was unsuitable literature for this age group. She reported finding it difficult to sustain interest, yet it was interesting to find that her pupils reported enjoying the experience of exploring Chaucer through drama. It appears that the reason the findings do not concur with the view of Fenwick (1990) or the stakeholders is that although the teacher was not enthusiastic about teaching the literature, exploring the characters and themes through drama appears to have compensated for the teacher's lack of enthusiasm. The potential influence of the teachers' personal attitudes was avoided because they employed highly effective teaching methods when teaching the literature to ensure that the child would enjoy the experience of reading and interpreting the texts (Longo, 2006). The teachers themselves indicated that the strongest predictor of change in the study was related to the quality and accessibility of the lesson plans provided, the extracts selected and the active participation in the workshops.

7.5 Teaching Methods

Whitehead (1968) notes that one factor that goes a long way in determining students' lifelong learning towards reading is how the teacher approaches the teaching of literature.

The literature research asks if there is a connection between the teaching methods employed and the response of the children to literature. Stoodt (1996) advises teachers to introduce pupils to literature that will develop social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, and physical skills. Yet if a child is only introduced to modern literature with restricted vocabulary and similar themes in many texts these skills are unlikely to develop. On the other hand if teachers explore more challenging texts in a passive manner by merely reading through the text and asking pupils to answer written questions, there will not be deep understanding, the pupils will fail to develop empathy with the characters and all the skills noted by Stoodt will remain undeveloped. One of the participating teachers who had read an extract from *Oliver Twist* in this passive manner with her class prior to the intervention and then explored the extract from

Great Expectations through drama, compared her pupils' learning experience on both occasions. She reported that her pupils had little interest in the earlier text, were bored and failed to demonstrate any skills learned, whereas when *Great Expectations* was explored through drama a radically altered learning experienced was evident. A majority of pupils studying Shakespeare for Junior and Leaving Cert in Irish secondary schools commonly report 'I hate Shakespeare and I don't understand the language', yet the pupil participants in this study, who were much younger and had no previous experience of Shakespearean texts embraced the language and almost unanimously reported loving the story and the language, and displayed an eagerness to read the rest of the play and to get to know the characters. Evidence from my former pupils' questionnaires reveal that the experience of exploring Shakespeare through the medium of drama in primary school had a huge impact on their enjoyment of the plays they studied for Junior and Leaving Cert and they reported that the language was familiar to them. One past pupil reported that studying *Macbeth* for Leaving Cert was more like what they had done in primary school because the teacher let them act out the parts and be the characters in the difficult situations and explore the themes, whereas he was disappointed in Junior Cert because they just read the play and answered the questions that the teacher thought would be on the exam paper. The value of drama was evident by its absence for one set of pupil participants during the exploration of the story from *The Canterbury Tales*. The teacher reported only having time to read the story that week and his pupils separately reported their disappointment, noting that they had not enjoyed this lesson as much as the other three. Evidence from their data reveals that they did not have the same learning experience as they previously reported in other lessons and they could not remember the storyline or the characters in the story.

Fox et al. (2003:17) considers the most suitable methods for teaching literature and recommends one that invites personal responses from her students as the teacher helps them 'build new understandings, construct new interpretations, gain new insights, and view the literary text from multiple perspectives as they enter into it together and explore its meanings'. I acknowledge that there are many ways for a teacher to bring the world of literature to her class. She also agrees that teachers need to employ many methods as certain methods may not suit the literature being explored or appeal to the students. Whitehead (1968) says that one of the principles of a successful literature programme is that the teacher must be acquainted with a variety of techniques and activities so as to stimulate and develop students' interest and knowledge of literature. In the pre-Project questionnaire the teachers reported that they

all use a whole class teaching approach with questions and answers, with a strong reliance on silent reading and reading aloud in class. Similarly, all 7 teachers reported using art activities to explore literature, yet only 1 had used music and 2 had used drama. By the end of the four week intervention in their classrooms the participants reported that they valued drama as a method to explore literature and reported that they were still using the method almost a year later. Three of the educational stakeholders who visited primary and secondary classrooms reported seeing a lot of linear and passive teaching of literature but also remarked seeing wonderfully creative work. They all considered more active methods for teaching literature, including debates, paired reading, art and drama. Protherough (1995:55) believes that 'the activities teachers devise should bring in to play the faculties of imagination, emotion and thought which will later make up the active process of reading'.

7.6 Modern and Classic Literature

Teachers report enjoying using a mixture of modern and classic texts in their class and exploring them through drama. All participants, including teachers, pupils and stakeholders maintained, as does Nell (1988:2) that enthusiastic readers have the desire to enjoy 'deeply felt and delicately wrought' literature but also continue to delight in 'less intellectually inclined texts' from time to time. Evidence from the teachers' follow up questionnaire reveals that they have a new outlook on literature for their class, they continue to use the popular modern material such as *Matilda* by Roald Dahl and *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo, but include extracts from more challenging literature such as *Oliver Twist* and *A Mid Summer Night's Dream.*

The importance of exploring a variety of modern and classics texts with both primary and secondary level students has been stressed by many educationalists in the literature. Tucker (1991) agrees that children should be exposed to the best in literature but suggests that there is a place for literature that is popular with, and appeals to the child. Others stress the importance of the quality which of course can be found in both modern and classic texts. For Koelling (2004:9) good quality is 'the cream of the literary crop, words of magnificence and meaning, lovingly woven by men and women who possess the drive and talent to express with depth and beauty both the real and imagined stories of tantamount importance to us all. The stakeholders referred to the advantages of introducing children to texts such as Dickens and Chaucer so that they can explore the links between modern authors and famous authors from the past, and see how authors like Michael Morpurgo or Louis Sachar

have been influenced by these authors. Michael Morpurgo (2007: viii) contributes his success as a writer to having read 'widely and deeply'. He explains that 'to have read the work of the masters must be a help for any writer discovering his own technique, her own voice'. The secondary school teachers among the stakeholders noted that exploring both modern and classic authors in primary school would be a valuable introduction to the comparative question on the secondary school system The children in my classroom were very aware of the link between modern and classic texts and the influence of the classic writers on today's authors, for example a child said to me when we started to read *Great Expectations* 'I like how Dickens has Pip telling the story from inside Pip's head, that's the way Michael Morpurgo does it in War Horse when Joey tells the story from inside the horse's head' (P22).

Squire (1977:168) understands quality literature as a balance between old and new, and recommends that teachers present both to their students:

> Old to establish the richness of our heritage and our continuity with the past, and contemporary to establish students' relationship with their world today and tomorrow and the joys and sorrows and stresses that are a part of contemporary literature and life.

Although this research focuses on teaching classic literature through drama, it was not my intention to equate quality with classic literature texts and male authors only to the exclusion of good modern literature as was conceived by one of the stakeholders. Rather the intentions was to test if good quality literature such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Wilde and Chaucer could be included in the literature taught to 5th and 6th classes in primary schools in Ireland, and elicit what benefits if any, exploring this literature would be to the academic and social values of the child's education.

7.7 Teachers' Development over the Ten Months

The intervention worked reasonably well with all of the participants. Considering that only two of them had used this method prior to the intervention, and all had expressed reservations about using drama as a method to teach literature, all 7 embraced it and considered it a rewarding experience. During the project there was little difference in the teachers' enthusiasm, all attending the workshops punctually, becoming actively involved in the activities, participating in the discussion, teaching the lessons as outlined in the lesson plans and reporting back to me. It is true that individual participants expressed their opinion as to not liking certain literature, but this did not affect their enthusiasm for teaching it, which was evident from their own and their

pupils' observations. All 7 participants reported on their pupils' progress and acceptance of the literature and agreed that their pupils enjoyed and benefited in many ways from the experience. They also agreed they enjoyed the experience of teaching literature through drama and would continue to teach in this way. The only difference was that teacher one commented each week on her own lack of self confidence when teaching through drama, and teacher 7 did not use the drama activities to explore the Chaucer lesson, reporting that he had no time which is quite understandable.

It is in the findings from the post-project teacher questionnaire that evidence is shown of various stages of development in the participants. Evidence from the data suggested that the CPD training had provided all 7 teachers with the confidence and resources which changed their attitude towards teaching literature in the primary school and that they now embraced drama as a teaching method for literature and had continued to do so after the intervention. Nevertheless there is also +evidence that they did not develop or progress to the same extent and that reliance on lesson plans and support varies from teacher to teacher. Teacher 1, who had reported all through the intervention of feeling a lack of self confidence when teaching through drama appeared to have developed confidence, and ten months later reported being surprised at the success of her own teaching, which she assessed through her pupils' improvement in oral language, reading and the vocabulary development in their writing. She had re-used the original lesson plans, developed them further, written her own lesson plans, shared these lesson plans with other teachers and received positive feedback from parents. Teacher 5 appeared to be one of the most self confident of the participants. She had not re-used or developed the original lesson plans, but had the creativity to develop her own lesson plans for exploring the class novel *Goodnight Mr Tom* through drama. Teachers 4 and 7 displayed less development than the other teachers, and had just re-used the lesson plans given, with no effort to develop them further or write their own. It is also interesting to note that neither of those teachers had received positive feedback from parents which may imply that teachers are nervous about parents' opinions and that this impacts on their teaching and learning decisions. Although teacher 2 reported developing the lesson plans further using her own ideas, she also stated that she would have taught the class novel through drama if she had suitable lesson plans, whereas teacher 3 reported exploring other extracts from *Great Expectations* by adapting the original lesson plans. It is evident that some teachers adopted the lesson plans themselves, others wrote their own and some re-used the original plans. It is arguable that teachers develop at different rates and one could not expect them all to be the same after ten months. But the question must be asked, why

do some teachers lack the self confidence or skills to write their own lesson plans? Some may have received more training in this area in their initial teacher education. Some may have engaged in CPD, or perhaps some have a more creative mind than others, or may have acquired expertise in this area through reading books or online articles on the topic. All the participants expressed the opinion that they would welcome more resources and CPD in this area. Some asked for ready to use lesson plans while others requested advice on how to write their own lesson plans, again showing the different stages of development and degree of confidence in the participants. Regardless of their stage of development, it is reassuring to see that this cohort of teachers have changed their attitude towards choosing literature for their class and have embraced drama as a teaching methodology after just a brief but successful in-service training. This is a strong indication that the lesson plans worked and successfully reflects the many years of experience I have invested in learning how to use drama in the study of literary texts. This indicates that the lesson plans are transferrable to other teaching and learning contexts, without a subsequent loss of impact.

7.8 Teaching Literature through Drama

> We must look for a way to teach literature that will engage students and will permit them to examine and evaluate their own responses to literature without responding in purely egocentric terms.
>
> Squire (1977:133)

This section will explore the claim made by Ewing and Simons (2004) that one of the areas where the benefits of using a drama methodology are evident is in the teaching of literature. At the baseline the participant agreed with this statement, and outlined the reasons why they thought drama would aid the exploration of literature, which included the many attributes of drama for the child's social and academic development, yet only two of those teachers had previously used drama as a methodology. This seems somewhat of a contradiction, but teachers explained their reasons for not using this method of teaching:

- lack of initial training in college
- lack of CPD in the area
- lack of ideas
- lack of time in an overcrowded classroom
- a weighed down curriculum

- lack of encouragement by inspectors or policy makers.

Some of the stakeholders agree that the main reasons why teachers do not explore more challenging literature through active and enjoyable methods are that they lack training and resources in this area.

The participating pupils, those who had used drama before to explore literature and those who had not, reported their eagerness to use this method. All participants, teachers, pupils, stakeholders and the children's author agreed that drama was an accessible, creative and interactive way to explore literature, and make it relevant to the child's life, a way to hook the pupils' interest and turn him on to literature. Many of the participants expressed that they observed that drama had the ability to enhance the child's commitment to learning and the advantages of using drama as a teaching and learning methodology were highlighted on each night of the intervention during the group interviews and feedback sessions. Although some lessons proved more popular than others the same advantages were recorded each night:

- excitement and fun
- motivation and interest
- literacy development
- social, co- operative and emotional skills
- understanding of character and theme.

All of the stakeholders agreed that teachers should present literature as something to be enjoyed and relevant to the child's own life, while one acknowledged that novels should be taught for pleasure, but they noted that teachers use so much analyses and prediction and writing strategies that they rob the child of the pleasure in the book. Wallace (2010) suggests that if a child's exploration of literature consists of merely answering questions, the opportunity to empathise with the characters will be lost. Although most of the participating teachers didn't acknowledge the value of fun and excitement in the study of literature or the fun and excitement drama can bring to learning, when they participated in the first workshop this important aspect of learning became clear and they all enjoyed the fun that the drama exercises brought for them as learners on the night. As the children were to experience and report on later, the story was sad with very little opportunity for excitement, yet exploring the themes through drama made the learning invigorating for the teachers. The teachers subsequently reported that each lesson was fun and exciting for both the teacher and pupils, and attributed the pupils' motivation to learn to the enjoyment of the lesson. There is no doubt that the participating pupils enjoyed all four lessons and this is

evident from the presence of the word fun in the pupils' data hundreds of times. Some teachers may argue that drama is merely fun without learning, but this is strongly refuted by evidence from both the teacher and pupil data in this study which concurs with the view of Kelner and Flynn (2006) that creative drama allows children to move, listen, speak and have fun as they learn Flennoy (1992) suggests using drama to help build interest and motivation because it brings fun and pleasure to the learning experience which leads to success.

Motivation and Interest

In the base line questionnaire only one teacher acknowledged that reading literature could develop the imagination and empathy of children. The motivating power of literature when explored in an active way was evident during the four weeks intervention period and the participating teachers reported this as one of the reasons why they have continued to use drama to teach literature ten months after the intervention. Clipson-Boyle (1998, 61) suggests harnessing the positive attitude that children have towards drama to deliver an exciting and productive approach to reading. The participating teachers recorded that the positive attitude their pupils had to drama motivated them to develop an interest in and learn more about the characters and the themes in the stories which infused an interest into reading the texts. After teaching the second lesson the teachers noted that the children were easier to motivate as they were used to the drama activities and also showed more interest in the Shakespearean language, as they were fascinated by the sound and strange words. What the teachers expected to be too difficult for the pupils became a fascination and a challenge for them and they were motivated not only by the drama activities but by the intrigue of the story, to the extent that they asked to read more of the play. This motivation to learn increased as the children read about Dickens and the Victorian Era. Integration, which is recommended strongly in the revised curriculum, became possible. Being motivated by the literature and drama and especially by the improvisation and by Dickens' language, the children became deeply interested in a period of History that would (according to teachers' observation) have been of little interest to them without the literature and drama.

Language development

Mc Master (1998) claims that drama is an important tool for teaching in general, but particularly for teaching the language arts and supporting literacy development. Although the participating teachers only began to see the potential for developing literacy skills after the fourth lesson, they recognised from the first lesson the value of

the discussion periods and the drama activities to the child's imaginative and vocal skills. Every child had an opportunity to speak and express themselves freely and without inhibition. The children spoke the lines of Shakespeare and were fascinated by the musicality of the words in the witches' chant and the sound of Middle English as they compared it to modern language. Baldwin and Fleming (2003) see the power of drama to allow children to delve deeply into the texts to discover the characters that are embedded there. This according to Baldwin and Fleming enhances their comprehension of the story they are reading. The development of language skills was particularly evident during the Dickens lesson and the power of drama as a tool to delve deeply was evident as was its power to help the pupils comprehend the story and the language. Children reported in their journals on the language in Dickens and called it brilliant. They were not just studying the text or learning about it, they were actively and robustly experiencing it. This was a highly effective form of experiential learning. The children used an incredibly rich, sophisticated and beautiful use of language and an appropriate response to Dickens prose that you might expect to get from students much older than these. It reveals that contrary to teachers concerns about the level and challenge implicit in Dickens language, most of the students were able for it and responded well. The children's journal entries reveal that they were motivated by the drama but they were also motivated by studying good literature. The amount of language they used after one extended lesson bodes well for other lessons adopting this methodology. The pupils acknowledged that exploring literature through Freeze Frame and Improvisation and other drama activities helped them to appreciate the language and to understand the difficult words.

Writing skills

The value of drama to improve the child's writing skills has been widely researched and many educators claim that creative drama develops and sustains students' writings and improves their attitude (Macy, 2004; Stowe, 2004; Cremin et al., 2008; Dickenson and Neelands, 2012). In this project writing activities accompanied each lesson but many of the teachers reported that they did not have adequate time for the written activities. Evidence from my class shows that the drama activities motivated the pupils to write diary entries, menus, reports, accounts and scripts and there is evidence of the language explored in the text in those writings. There was a positive attitude to writing in the class and Graham and Sandmel (2011) comment that students who develop a positive attitude towards writing will have a desire to write and will enjoy the experience. There was a limited response by the participants as regards the effects of the drama on their pupils' writing. The participants reported that their pupils used

some of the language in discussion but needed prompting to use it in their writing .This is not surprising as this is a new idea and I found it took some time before my own pupils became good at using the language from the literature in their reports and stories After teaching the third lesson the participants saw an improvement in the writing and agreed that when the children had a purpose to write and an audience, they wrote better. They commented on the quality of the group writing and on how co-operatively all pupils worked to produce scripts. From the pupils' observations it was evident that they understood the language and used the language of the texts to report on their activities and involvement in the drama.

Reading Skills

All of the stakeholders agreed that drama brings texts to life, making them meaningful, understandable and relevant in the child's own life and that when a child has explored a situation from a novel through drama, they have a more intimate knowledge of the characters and are motivated to read the full story to follow the adventures of those characters. Siobhan Parkinson, a well known children's author expressed the opinion that drama is a wonderful way to arouse a child's interest in a book and once the interest is there the child will begin to read independently. This view is expressed by many writers in the literature such as Ashton-Hay (2005:9) who affirms that drama helps pupils engage more fully with text and encourages them to read more because it is 'a powerful motivating tool for learning, developing children's understanding of themselves and the world'.

Reading took on a new dimension for the children and the teachers report on their pupils reading to accompany the Freeze Frames, enjoying reading the Shakespearean scripts and asking to read more Shakespeare and Dickens. They enjoyed the reading, especially when they read in character and that encouraged them to read more. The teachers did not report seeing an improvement in the pupils' reading ability but commented on the enthusiasm to read that developed among the pupils. The pupils verified this by saying that reading in drama class was not boring like reading in class. Considering the short time span of this intervention, a noted change in pupil attitude to reading is a welcome outcome.

Social and emotional and co-operative skills

After the first week of the intervention the participating teachers agree that working actively in groups encouraged all of the children to speak, even the very shy children. They were given freedom to experiment with their own ideas and became aware of their self identity. Through Improvisation the pupils learned to link events in their own

lives with those of the characters and experience the emotions of the characters in various situations. Davis (2014) points out that the main objective of drama is to give the child an opportunity to pursue an understanding of the society he lives in. The pupils discussed issues of justice and child labour which existed during the Victoria's reign and still exist today. They worked co-operatively in groups to prepare Improvisations, reading and writing activities. The depth of the children's engagement was a related feature which appears to create an effective connection between drama and the literature they were studying. They developed empathy with the characters and became emotionally involved. They were scared in character as Pip and sad when as the Happy Prince they looked down on the poverty in the city because they were emotionally and cognitively engaged. This is part of the value of teaching and learning through drama. It involves most of the senses and in a holistic experience rather than a cognitive one (Needlands, 2008). In most of the texts the pupils highlight a 'living through experience' that had power to engage and educate. This shows the efficiency of drama to turn the children on to literature. The pupils reported that learning was made easier when they worked in groups to explore themes, share ideas and listen to each other in a situation where nobody laughed at your ideas. This according to Evans (1984) was achieved because the children had the opportunity to communicate between themselves and arrive at decisions about what to do and how to do it in an atmosphere where the pupil was encouraged to contribute. The stakeholders saw drama as a way to teach children about the morals and the social connotations not only of today, but of life down through the centuries that are discussed in novels, This theme is related to Bolton's (2010) view that drama activity is a way of drawing meaning and sense from the world around us, and a way of understanding abstract, social, moral and ethical concepts through experiencing them in a dramatic context.

Exploring character

Whirlwind, a voluntary group of artists who worked with children in Chicago schools (Rose et al., 2000) developed the assumption that drama could be an effective medium for exploring the characters in texts and encouraging a child's interest in reading.

The pupils in both my class and the participating teachers' classrooms stated that when they acted out the characters in the stories they became real for them. The teachers identified Freeze Frame, Hot Seating and Conscience Alley as wonderful opportunities for their pupils to investigate characters and to discover reasons for their actions in the story. This empathy with character is difficult to achieve without

exploration through drama which leads the child to a more critical investigation of the text, looking at events in the story from different perspectives and examining the characters' motives for certain actions (Ewing and Simons, 2004). This point was acknowledged by the participants as they weighed the advantage of this method against passive reading and discussion in class. The importance of understanding the emotions and actions of the characters in both modern and classic texts was emphasised by the stakeholders who favoured drama as the best methodology for character analyses. The value of drama for character analysis was recognised almost a hundred years ago by Piaget (cited in Wadsworth, 1979) who observed that interpretation of character begins with the student becoming aware of the character's observable behaviours and gradually moving to understanding the psychological interior. The pupils agreed that to understand the characters in all of the texts they had to explore and 'be them' in the drama. They noted that the drama gave them a better idea about the characters' lives and actions.

Understanding Theme

Most of the participant teachers reported that their pupils were not familiar with the term theme in literature prior to the intervention, but after teaching the first lesson the pupils could identify themes such as poverty and unselfishness in the story and they related these themes to experiences in their own lives though improvised situations. Booth and Barton (2000) tell us that through drama the child explores the themes and issues of a story, using her earlier experiences to analyse events and actions, They reported that this trend continued and developed over the course of the four lessons and in the post-project assessment referred to the social and emotional value of transferring situations in the literature to their own lives. It is noteworthy that although the teachers had reported exploring quite a lot of literature, (contemporary children's literature, poetry and a little classic literature) with their pupils prior to the intervention, the children had not explored relating themes in those books to their own lives. The participants agree that drama highlighted themes that could be explored in other areas of the curriculum as well, such as in SPHE. The pupils claimed that exploring literature through drama made it not just interesting but helped them to understand the language, characters, themes and plot. It was obvious from the data that teaching and learning through drama is a holistic rather than a cognitive experience for the pupils and their teachers. Participating teachers and the stakeholders all agreed that drama was an accessible, creative and interactive way to explore literature and make it relevant to a child's life, a way to hook pupils' interest and turn them on to literature.

The pupils who participated in the project acknowledged the value of drama in making literature accessible, real and fun for them.

7.9 Implications for Practise

This research seeks to establish if an inset model of in-service education could be used effectively to motivate and concretely instruct teachers in how to use a drama in education approach to teaching literature in their own classrooms? Although the majority of the participating teachers reported being happy with the literature they were exploring with their classes which were following the guidelines of the revised English curriculum, they volunteered to take part in this intervention to find new ideas for teaching literature in an accessible, creative manner to make literature relevant and interactive for their pupils. They were aware that the literature they were teaching and the methods they were employing, which were mainly passive and teacher-led were inadequate and their pupils were not developing a love of literature as a result. This was evident as they were aware that their pupils got bored easily in the literature class and rarely finished library books. The participating teachers were all aware, as were their pupils, the pupils in my class and the stakeholders that quality did matter. Although the guidelines in the revised English curriculum and in the strategy for improving literacy issued to primary schools in 2011 do not mention introducing classic authors in the Irish primary school, the teachers initially suggested that exploring these authors by using a method that would motivate and interest their pupils could raise literacy standards for the senior pupil. The literature search in this project verifies these beliefs. A majority of Irish primary school teachers consider the works of Shakespeare and other classic authors too difficult and unsuitable material in the primary school. Evidence from a national survey carried out for my Masters study (O Shaughnessy, 2007) showed this, and the evidence of the stakeholders in this project who regularly visit primary classrooms added verification. Siobhan Parkinson, regrets the fact that so little Shakespeare is explored in Irish schools. In a context where teachers don't consider classic authors suitable and believe that they are following the Department of Education's guidelines, it was surprising to find seven enthusiastic teachers eager to take part in the CPD. They, like other teachers considered the suggested texts for exploring literature too difficult for their pupils but because they were aware that their pupils needed to be challenged and to enjoy literature they volunteered to take part in the intervention. I welcomed the small number of participants because this type of work, where the teachers are nervous and require resources needs to have small

numbers and be workshop based. The timing of the CPD was considered by all of the participants to be suitable as they could explore the lessons actively during the workshop, return to their classrooms the following day and teach the lesson, bring comments about challenges and achievements for discussion back to the group the following week and receive, if necessary, additional support from me and their colleagues. If a bigger group had enrolled for the CPD it could have affected the results of this research.

During the intervention the participants reported on the value the workshops brought to their teaching each week. They agreed that having actively explored the language, themes and characters in each text helped understand the children's experience of exploring literature in this manner. They reported that having the step by step easy to understand and well structured lesson plans provided a coherent framework for the smooth and effective teaching of the four texts. The evidence from the teacher data during the intervention shows that this model of CPD training provided the participants with the confidence to use a new method of teaching which changed their attitude, motivation and belief as regards the teaching of literature in senior classes in the primary school and the resources to do so. One teacher explained that the intervention had opened up a whole new world for the pupils and a new and exciting way of teaching for her.

The teachers agreed that it would be impossible to teach all literature in this manner and expressed that they would like to continue teaching both classic and modern writers using a combination of teaching methods, including drama. This evidence clearly shows that it was the resources and CPD training that supported the delivery of the project. The participants needed concrete resources, clearly outlined lesson plans and clear direction.

At time of writing a colleague of mine was observed teaching a class using the lesson plans she had used in the pilot project for this research and who reported generating much use out of the lesson plans with each new class she teaches. All but one of the participating teachers continued to use the lesson plans to repeat the lessons or to develop new lessons. One teacher reported on the value of the lesson plans as a future teaching resource in her school. All those examples highlight the value of the lesson plans, they also show a teacher dependency on ready to use resources. The evidence from the post –project questionnaire reveal that although the teachers had maintained the confidence, motivation and belief to teach challenging literature through the medium of drama, they were calling for additional training and more suggestions

for suitable literature, more workshops like the four they attended during the intervention, a book of lesson plans and advice on writing similar lesson plans to the ones used during the intervention, and demonstration classes from experts on teaching literature using methods to motivate and interest pupils. Overall this was a successful intervention in terms of responding to and answering the main overarching question and the sub questions which guided this study:

Main overarching research question:

Does using a drama in education approach to the stories, language, characters and themes in the literature they explore enhance pupils' language proficiency and develop their written and creative skills?

Sub-questions

1. What benefits is exposure to good quality literature in the primary school to the academic and social values of education?
2. What is the attitude of pupils to literature in general and to the prospect of exploring good quality literature?
3. What methods are currently employed to teach literature in primary schools, are they sufficient to motivate pupils to read good quality literature, and is there a connection between the teaching methods employed and the response of children to literature?
4. What benefits can teaching literature through the medium of drama bring to the primary school pupil in her study and appreciation of literature?
5. How effective is an in-set model of continuous professional development (CPD) in motivating and instructing teachers in how to use a drama in education approach to teaching literature in their own classrooms?

These questions will be focused on again in the final chapter.

Chapter 8

Summary and Recommendations

8.1 Summary of the Study:

This chapter contains a summary of the research project, the major findings and my recommendations and suggestions for opportunities for further study in this area, based on the results of the study.

This research project was an exploration of a teaching and learning intervention using drama as a methodology, into the issue of whether quality literature can be taught successfully in the upper primary school classroom. It examined the relative literature in the field to establish the views of educationalists and writers on introducing children in primary school to good quality literature, the reading habits of children in upper primary school, the role the teacher plays in developing reading skills and a love of literature in children, the methods used by teachers to achieve this and the views of the revised Primary School Curriculum on the value of good quality literature to a child's social and academic development. Since drama was employed as a teaching and learning method, literature exploring the advantages and disadvantages of using drama to explore literature was also included. This project aimed to establish a baseline utilising a mode of triangulation, employing quantitative and qualitative measures and qualitative data analysis to explore the attitudes, beliefs and ideas of teachers and their pupils on the value of teaching good quality literature in primary school.

The findings of the study are summarised below.

8.2 Major Findings

Although the literature was inconclusive in its definition of good quality literature and some writers suggested that the quality of the literature which a child reads is of little importance once a child is involved in reading, it was evident that the majority of writers over the last hundred years considered an early introduction to literature to be of paramount importance to a child's academic and social development, and encouraged teachers to use a wide range of quality writing, both modern and classic with young pupils.

The literature search was conclusive in the following points:

- literature explored with primary school pupils should be of a high quality, challenging the child to develop literary, social and emotional skills;
- good quality literature develops the child's interest in vocabulary, language, comprehension, oral language, reading and writing skills while encouraging them to become lifelong readers;
- methods used to teach literature in primary school should stimulate the child's imagination, arouse his interest and involve him in his own learning in an active, enjoyable manner;
- using drama as a teaching and learning methodology brings the characters, themes and storyline of good quality literature to life and helps the child engage more fully with the text and the language.

The findings of this research concur with the findings from the literature and signify the value of teaching quality literature in the primary school and the usefulness and rewards of employing drama as a method to approach the teaching of literature such as Shakespeare, Wilde, Chaucer and Dickens to enhance the language and literacy skills of pupils in the primary school. The major findings were:

- All of the teachers involved in the study acknowledged the value of teaching quality literature to their pupils, citing the scope of the vocabulary, the challenge of the language and the exploration of character, theme and setting among its values. The pupil participants included the same values but made special reference to the enjoyment they experienced.
- This small scale research project demonstrates that drama has much to contribute to the area of evoking interest in children in quality literature in primary school. The depth of the children's engagement in a relatively short time frame was a feature which appears to create an effective connection between drama and the literature they were studying, which led to a development of oral language, listening, reading and writing skills, and offered the pupils opportunities for social interaction, helped them express their feelings and verbalise their thoughts in the improvised activities. The teachers also remarked that it was a new learning experience for the pupils because they developed self confidence and came to think of themselves as capable of learning.
- The pupils reported that they were inspired to read more to discover additional information about the characters, themes and background to the stories. When they explored the themes through the techniques of improvisation, hot seating

and conscience alley they acknowledged that the meaning of the words became clear to them and that they understood the characters' actions and thoughts better.

- All of the teachers agreed that the high quality content of the literature combined with the drama increased the pupils' motivation to learn and their own motivation to teach.
- The pupils enjoyed the work because they had a purpose for doing it and an audience to appreciate it, and the teachers enjoyed seeing their pupils being anxious to participate, reading voluntarily and experiencing success. The teachers observed that drama had the ability to enhance the child's commitment to learning.
- The teachers acknowledged that being involved in a four week CPD project and having easy to follow lesson plans was essential to the success of the intervention.
- Teachers continued to use drama to explore literature with their pupils almost one year after the intervention had stopped, but requested further training and more resources on follow-up.

The drama curriculum for primary schools (DES, 1999:5) acknowledges that 'the field that drama can explore is as wide as life itself'. After employing drama as a teaching method to explore the literature, the participants all agreed that using drama as a teaching tool enabled the children to:

- become receptive to a piece of quality literature
- understand and engage with the literature;
- use high level thinking skills;
- empathise with the characters and their actions;
- develop oral language skills;
- become familiar with the new and challenging vocabulary and use it in their written work;
- and read the text to acquire knowledge of the characters and plot.

The teachers who participated in the project expressed their enjoyment and rewards in teaching the literature through drama but also expressed their lack of expertise in the area and requested more CPD in using drama as a teaching method, suggestions on choosing suitable good quality literature for their class, and more resources such as the lesson plans provided during the intervention.

8.3 Recommendations

Arising from the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. *Change of culture in schools*

Carter (2000:78) feels the need to broaden the definition from children's literature to literature for children. He argues that although it is essential for children to engage with the full range of good quality literature written specially for them, they need access to great works of literature 'that reach the full heights of excellence that children deserve'.

Teachers' expectations of what children are capable of learning needs to change. In the pre-project interview and questionnaire the majority of the participating teachers questioned the suitability of authors such as Chaucer and Shakespeare for primary school children, yet the evidence from the post-project stage reveals that the teachers all agreed that if explored in an active enjoyable way there is a place for such literature in the primary school and all of the participants continued to explore this type of literature. The exploration of extensive literature with the children in my own class reveals the interest levels of children in this work and highlights what can be achieved when a whole school culture fosters a love of quality literature across the school. Children are capable of being challenged much more than is currently happening in many schools, and they welcome this challenge. They are bored studying basal readers and perhaps one novel and a few poems each year, they are not being exposed to a rich culture of literature, and therefore lose interest in reading.

I recommend that the English Curriculum offers advice to teachers on literature suitable for each class in the primary school and that classic authors would be included in suggested lists. The curriculum should advise teachers on how much literature to explore and make teachers aware that reading\ exploring one modern children's novel, using the basal reader and reading two poems by Yeats is not sufficient exposure to literature for a child in 5th or 6th class in primary schools. Student teachers' enthusiasm for literature should be nurtured and developed in teacher education college and the student teacher encouraged to use his creativity to explore good quality literature for himself and future pupils. Principal teachers should also look for and welcome enthusiasm for teaching among the staff members and encourage creativity and initiative in this and in all areas of the curriculum. Inspectors should commend teachers who do not stick rigidly to the curriculum but employ creative and intuitive methods of teaching literature in their classrooms. 'A curriculum has to be flexible enough to allow teachers with different skills and interests to make different contributions rather than

assuming that they all should offer the same second hand diet' (Protherough, 1995:15).

2. *CPD for all teachers*

Although the results of this small scale research project are positive and promising, it reveals clearly that to achieve this degree of success in primary schools throughout Ireland teachers need training, resources and support to become familiar with and confident in choosing good quality literature and in the methodology of drama in education as an approach to exploring such literature. 5 of the 7 teachers in this study had never used drama to teach literature and were resistant to using the literature suggested and to using drama as a method to teach it. From the results of the teacher post-project questionnaire I gleaned that the majority of teachers consider literature such as Shakespeare suitable literature for pupils in the senior classes in primary school and considered drama, which they continued to employ to be an effective and rewarding methodology, yet many requested further training and resources. I recommend that, arising from the success of this project which was a short four week intervention, serving teachers would be given the appropriate training and resources to upgrade their pupils' language and literacy skills through employing drama in education to teach literature. Baldwin and Fleming (2003:6) support this recommendation by assuring teachers that 'drama can provide forms through which children's personal and interpersonal collective responses to literature can be explored and communicated'.

John Coolahan (2002) suggests that if teachers are to drive a lifelong learning agenda in schools, then they should be lifelong learners themselves. Based on the evidence of the participating teachers in this study, I would recommend a shift in the focus of professional development for primary school teachers in Ireland. This is essential if teachers are to become lifelong learners and enthusiastic about exploring new teaching and learning methodologies with their pupils. In recent years, apart from attending summer CPD courses, mainly online, the main professional development opportunities offered to teachers were incidental days training on drafting an improvement plan to develop the school self evaluation in literacy and numeracy learning. These induction days are essential but a teacher needs more than this if they wish to alter the learning experiences of their children in their care. CPD for primary school teachers needs to focus more on teachers' classroom practice and less on national policy initiatives. Findings from the study suggest that teachers are struggling with management issues due to an overcrowded curriculum yet are disposed to

change in teaching methods and asking for CPD to guide them in this change. To improve the literacy standards of pupils, teachers need CPD in the area of choosing suitable, challenging and age appropriate literature and ideas for using drama or similar active methodologies to teach it. To achieve this teachers need substitute covered, release time from class to attend workshops given by experts in the area of teaching literature (and of course in other areas of the curriculum), in order to become actively involved in the activities in the workshop, return to their schools and try out the activities and have an opportunity to discuss their achievements and problems the following week with their peers and the workshop facilitator.

3. *Student teachers*

I recommend that student teachers would be encouraged and guided by their tutors in teacher education colleges to employ drama as a teaching and learning method to explore a variety of quality literature, including modern novels and classic authors with pupils when on teaching practice, and with their own class when they qualify as teachers. This would be an opportunity for these students to familiarise the teachers in whose classes they do their placement in with new ideas, (a form of co-teaching advocated by Colette Murphy in Trinity College (Murphy and Scantebury, 2012). Teacher education in the subject of drama needs to be improved in the Colleges of Education throughout Ireland. As a primary teacher with many years teaching experience I have watched many young trainee and probationary teachers in the classroom. Their attitude enthusiasm and interest in drama displays a lack of knowledge about the value of drama as a teaching and learning methodology. This statement is reinforced by the views of a stakeholder in this study who is a young student teacher.

4. *Literature to improve literacy skills*

In the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy issued by the Dept. of Education and Skills (2011), it is noted that one of the rights of children is to participate as an active and informed citizen in society. The document reveals the alarming fact that one in ten children in Irish schools has serious difficulty with reading and writing and that in disadvantaged areas the number can be as high as one in three. A target set out in the document is that in the period 2011-2020 an enjoyment of reading among young people would be fostered in schools throughout Ireland. Among the numerous ways recommended for achieving this target is the suggestion that the curriculum should provide for the development of literacy through engagement with a

range of literary and non literary texts, a recommendation included in the Revised English Curriculum since 1999. The document fails to acknowledge the importance of quality literature for a child's social and academic development, and there is no reference in it to using drama as a teaching and learning methodology to enhance literacy skills. From the findings of this study there is evidence that after a short intervention of using drama to explore good quality literature, both teachers and pupils acknowledged its potential as a learning tool to improve literacy skills in primary school pupils. I recommend that in the new English curriculum the teachers' overload of work would be acknowledged, that the curriculum would be easy to understand and navigate, and would promote the importance of quality literature in developing literacy skills, outlining suitable active methods such as drama for exploring this literature. To address the problem of time management in schools, the curriculum would acknowledge the potential for using drama as a valuable resource for teachers to use for linking subjects. The importance of drama, both as a subject in its own right and a means of motivating and enhancing learning in other curriculum areas is highlighted by many theorists including Woolland (1993) and Bolton (1992).

I suggest that both educationists and teachers consider the works of Shakespeare, described by Gibson (1998: iv) as a 'major resource for empowering all pupils' and also authors such as Wilde, Dickens, Chaucer and modern writers of quality literature when choosing literature for senior class pupils in primary school. This research shows the value of employing drama to teach literature and advocates for its use throughout the primary school to raise the standard of literacy among all pupils. I recommend the dissemination of this study in journals such as the Irish Education Journal to target an Irish readership, and a presentation of the results at The Reading Association of Ireland annual conference.

8.4 Limitations of the Study

This was a small scale study which was conducted with a limited sample of participants. It was located in one region. All 7 schools involved were small rural schools with multiple classes, similar the school I teach in. The majority of the schools do not have a hall or general purpose room, so the activities were conducted in the classroom. Although there was a culture of exposing pupils to literature such as Shakespeare or Dickens in my school, no such culture existed in the other schools prior to the intervention. This study was bounded in time and space. It took place in a particular area, and school size within a regional basis and therefore is subject to

limitations. The results of the study are indicative only, and if the study was repeated in an urban area with larger schools I acknowledge that the results could be different.

8.5 Areas for Further Study

Due to the limitations of this small scale study a number of topics on which further research would be beneficial are now highlighted. Study into these topics has been undertaken in UK and in other countries but there is little evidence in the literature of study in these areas taking place in an Irish context. These topics include:

- a study on the role the parent plays on encouraging their children to read and on selecting suitable literature with their children;
- a study on the benefits of exploring poetry using drama as a teaching and learning methodology;
- a comparative study of a sample of pupils in secondary school who have explored Shakespeare in primary school with a sample who encounter Shakespeare for the first time in secondary school.

8.6 Personal Reflection

> 'Drama makes more sense and big stories get made into small ones'.
>
> (P6, T5, Journal, March 2012)

As I reflect over the years I spent doing this research work, I can honestly say it was a rewarding experience. I have always held a keen interest in literature and in drama, and during the forty years of my teaching career I have shared my interest in both these areas with hundreds of children. During the research for my Masters degree seven years ago I began to introduce the pupils in my class to more challenging literature such as the works of Shakespeare and Chaucer which they explored through the medium of drama. In 2007 I first brought my 5th and 6th class pupils on a visit to Stratford upon Avon where they attended a production of *The Comedy of Errors*. The trip proved so successful that the following year the class visited the Globe in London. I have continued to take my class on such trips since then.

Exploring quality literature through drama proved so beneficial for my pupils that I was delighted to have the opportunity through this research to motivate and instruct 7 teachers from Co. Mayo in how to use a drama in education approach to teaching

literature in their own classrooms. My literature search confirms that I was not alone in my belief that quality literature has a place in the primary school classroom and that if explored in an active enjoyable manner can enhance the academic and social development of primary school pupils. The teachers who participated in the project were enthusiastic and reported positively on the benefits that exploring Wilde, Shakespeare, Dickens and Chaucer brought to their pupils' learning. They reported that their pupils were motivated to learn because they were actively involved and enjoying the experience which led to an improvement in oral language, reading and writing skills and also developed self confidence and self esteem in their pupils. More importantly it was encouraging for me as a researcher to discover that almost a year later the teachers continued to use this method of teaching and learning. The one area of concern for me was that only a minority of the teachers had acquired enough confidence to write their own lesson plans while the majority requested more training and resources.

It is my hope that my doctorate study offers a contribution to the literature already available in this field and to further research in this area.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

CPD Course Flyer and Information for Teachers

Teaching Good Quality LITERATURE in the Primary School

Continuous Professional Development for teachers in the primary school.

A series of four two hour WORKSHOPS exploring the place of quality literature, such as Shakespeare, Dickens Chaucer and Wilde in the primary classroom (3rd to 6th). Participants will be introduced to TEXTS that will broaden their students' experience of classical literature. The approach will be very PRACTICAL AND INVOLVE ACTIVE AND FUN LEARNING APPROACHES, and will focus on the concerns expressed by the participants with regard to the teaching of literature. PARTICIPANTS will be provided with lesson plans that may be used to teach EXTRACTS FROM THESE LITERARY TEXTS in their classes.

The programme will focus on:



- The role and importance of literature in the primary school classroom.
- The power of literature to entertain and educate in the primary school curriculum.

To add a further dimension to the power of quality literature for children, drama will be used as a teaching methodology to guide the participants to a greater appreciation of what they encounter in the works of the great authors with a view to employing this method with their own students.

Venue : Hotel Ballina Foxford Rd. Ballina

Workshop 1	**Wednesday 29th February 2012**
Workshop 2	**Wednesday 7th March 2012**
Workshop 3	**Wednesday 14th March 2012**
Workshop 4	**Wednesday 21st March 2012**

7.30 P.M. to 9.30 P.M. each night

The course will be led by **Martha O Shaughnessy,** who is a principal of a small school near Ballina, Co. Mayo. Martha has many years experience of using active teaching and learning methods in the delivery of the curriculum, and she has a particular interest in using extracts from literary texts such as Shakespeare with her pupils.
There is **no charge** for attending these workshops which are being delivered as part of Martha's doctoral research in the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. Participants will be asked to provide feedback on how well or otherwise these practical ideas and lesson plans worked with the pupils in their own schools.

This promises to be a fun and valuable series of workshops. Lesson plans for using drama to teach literature in junior classes will be supplied if the whole staff from a school would like to attend and use the course for Croke Park Agreement hours

Free to teachers & Refreshments will be served
To book for these workshops, please contact
Martha O Shaughnessy at 0879582854 or email marthaginty@gmail.com

Information for Teachers

There will be four sessions.

1st Night

The first night will start with an information session where the format of the CPD project will be discussed and teachers' questions answered. This will be followed by a focus group interview to explore their views expressed in the returned questionnaire.

A drama workshop for the participants will follow (content: The Happy Prince by Oscar Wilde).

The participants will then be given the following:

a) A lesson plan with follow up teaching ideas for teaching The Happy Prince through the medium of drama which they will use in their own classrooms
b) a short pre project questionnaire to administer to their class,
c) a short journal for each teacher in which they will record their observations after teaching the lesson plan,
d) a journal page for the pupils to record their views on their experiences in the drama class.

I would be grateful if the participants would explain the aim of the project to their students and seek their opinions and feedback throughout.

2nd Night

Teachers will return completed pupils' questionnaires, teacher observation sheets and pupils' journals. The second night will start with a group interview where teachers will be encouraged to express their views on their experience of teaching the literature through drama.

This will be followed by a drama workshop (content: Teaching Shakespeare in the Primary School).

The teachers will be given a lesson plan with follow up teaching ideas for teaching an extract from Macbeth to their class and teachers' and children's journal pages similar to those received the first night.

3rd and 4th Nights

The third and fourth sessions will be conducted in a similar manner to those on the second night except the literature used on the 3rd night will be an extract from Great Expectations by Charles Dickens and a story from The Canterbury Tales by Chaucer on the 4th night. Teachers will return teacher observation sheets and pupils' journal entries from the second week on the third night and observation sheets from the third week on the fourth night. The feedback from the fourth week will be posted to me in envelopes provided.

A follow up session may be offered in April/May 2012, if demand exists to explore poetry in the primary school in a similar manner.

If the participants agree they will be asked to fill in a questionnaire towards the end of the school year to establish what benefit the CPD training was to their classroom teaching.

Appendix 2

Pre-project Teacher Questionnaire

Thank you for expressing an interest in attending the forthcoming CPD workshops. I would be grateful if you would complete the following questionnaire and return it to me by November 14th. The information from this questionnaire will be used as a basis for a short focus group interview at the first CPD session. This project is being conducted as part of my PhD studies in Trinity College Dublin under the supervision of Dr. Carmel O'Sullivan. All information received will remain confidential, and schools and participants will not be identified.

1. Teachers and parents often encourage children to read good quality literature instead of, for example, reading comics. Do you think it is important that children should read good quality literature such as novels, poetry, stories and plays?

2. In your opinion does the revised primary school curriculum give adequate attention to the teaching of literature in the primary school? Yes □ No □

   Please comment.

3. Should literature be a special strand within the English curriculum in primary school?

   Yes □ No □

   Please comment.

4. Should the curriculum identify and suggest specific novels, poems, plays, authors, etc to be taught at each stage of the curriculum? Yes □ No □
   Please comment.

5. Do you think exploring literature with children in the primary school is important?
   Yes □ No □

   Please give reasons for your answer.

6. Do you explore literature with your pupils?
   Yes □ No □

   If yes, what literature do you explore in your class?

If no, please tick all the reasons which affect your decision not to explore literature with your class. Please number in order of priority, with1 being your main reason.

Lack of resources □

Large class size □

Lack of training □

Lack of time □

Other □

Please comment

If you answered yes to question 6 please answer questions 7, 8,9,10, and 11, if you answered no please go to question 12.

7 What methods do you employ when exploring literature with your class?

Whole class teaching, reading the text and answering questions □

Group teaching, discuss, analyse and respond □

Individuals reading aloud □

Silent reading □

Visualisation □

Literature circles □

Work book activities □

Drama activities □

Music activities □

Art activities □

Others □

Please comment

7. What benefits, if any, have you found from exploring literature with your class?

8. Have you used creative drama to explore literature in your class?

Yes □ No □

If yes, please comment on the experience.

9. Have you included the works of any of these authors in your literature choice for your class?

Shakespeare □

Yeats □

Dickens □

Wilde □

10. Please list the names of other authors you have used in your class.

11. What benefits, if any, do you think drama as a methodology could bring to the teaching of literature?

12. Exploring literature should typically start in the infant classroom and should be progressive and systematic throughout the primary school curriculum.

I agree □ I disagree □ Don't know □

Please comment

13. Drama, as a teaching methodology for literature stimulates thinking beyond the literal meaning of the passage.

I agree □ I disagree □ Don't know □

Please comment

14. Drama helps with critical thinking.

I agree □ I disagree □ Don't know □

Please comment.

15. Continuous Professional Development can be shown to have a positive impact on staff development.

I agree □ I disagree □ Don't know □

Please comment

16. Which of the following models of Continuous Professional Development would you consider most helpful to increase your understanding and enthusiasm for teaching literature? Please number the following suggestions **1** to 5 in order of your preference, with 1 being your preferred approach.

Attending a formal lecture on the topic

□

Watching a colleague teach a class (peer observation)

□

Attending a course given by an expert in the area and participating in workshop activities □

Doing an online course related to the topic

□

Participating in projects in a group with fellow professionals

□

17. What benefits do you hope to obtain from this CPD on teaching good quality literature in the primary school through the medium of drama?

Thank you for answering this questionnaire.

Thank you for expressing an interest in attending the forthcoming CPD workshops. I would be grateful if you would complete the following questionnaire and return it to me by February 20th in the stamped addressed envelope provided. The information from this questionnaire will be used as a basis for a short focus group interview at the first CPD session. This project is being conducted as part of my PhD studies in Trinity College Dublin under the supervision of Dr. Carmel O'Sullivan. All information received will remain confidential, and schools and participants will not be identified.

1. Teachers and parents often encourage children to read good quality literature instead of, for example, reading comics. Do you think it is important that children should read good quality literature such as novels, poetry, stories and plays?

Yes it is – but any reading is better than none I think!

2. In your opinion does the revised primary school curriculum give adequate attention to the teaching of literature in the primary school? Yes ☑ No ☐

Please comment.

Much better than old way of using readers – over & over!
Children more interested & progress at their own pace.

3. Should literature be a special strand within the English curriculum in primary school?

Yes ☐ No ☑

Please comment.

Its good that it can be integrated & linked across strands

4. Should the curriculum identify and suggest specific novels, poems, plays, authors, etc to be taught at each stage of the curriculum? Yes ☐ No ☑

Please comment. Think it's good teachers can choose & use a variety.

5. Do you think exploring literature with children in the primary school is important?

Yes ☑ No ☐

Please give reasons for your answer.

1. Spark the interest
2. Engage at deeper level
3. Continue to want more & want to read.

6. Do you explore literature with your pupils?

Yes ☑ No ☐

If yes, what literature do you explore in your class?

Variety of Novels, Poems.....
Picture books, Newspapers....
Nursery Rhymes. Traditional Tales.

If no, please tick all the reasons which affect your decision not to explore literature with your class. Please number in order of priority, with1 being your main reason.

Lack of resources ☐

Large class size ☐

Lack of training ☐

Lack of time ☐

Other ☐

Please comment

If you answered yes to question 6 please answer questions 7, 8,9,10, and 11, if you answered no please go to question 12.

7. What methods do you employ when exploring literature with your class?

Whole class teaching, reading the text and answering questions	☑
Group teaching, discuss, analyse and respond	☑
Individuals reading aloud	☑
Silent reading	☑
Visualisation	☑
Literature circles	☐
Work book activities	☐
Drama activities	☑
Music activities	☑
Art activities	☑
Others	☐

Please comment

8. What benefits, if any, have you found from exploring literature with your class?

Much more interesting for teacher & pupils.
Greater interest in literature.
Better writing

9. Have you used creative drama to explore literature in your class?

Yes ☑ No ☐

If yes, please comment on the experience.

It gives the children a greater connection with the literature.
They come up with things I wouldn't think of!

10. Have you included the works of any of these authors in your literature choice for your class?

Shakespeare ☐

Yeats ☐

Dickens ☐

Wilde ☐

11. Please list the names of other authors you have used in your class.

Julia Donaldson
Roald Dahl.
Anthony Browne
Colin & Jacqui Hawkins.
Martin Waddel
Debi Gliori
Jill Tomlinson
Helen Cooper
John Burningham

12. What benefits, if any, do you think drama as a methodology could bring to the teaching of literature?

It brings it to life
Better understanding
The children enjoy it & want more.
Vocabulary extended
Confidence - -

13. Exploring literature should typically start in the infant classroom and should be progressive and systematic throughout the primary school curriculum.

I agree ☑ I disagree ☐ Don't know ☐

Please comment

That way progress & interest can be developed & observed.

14. Drama, as a teaching methodology for literature stimulates thinking beyond the literal meaning of the passage.

I agree ☑ I disagree ☐ Don't know ☐

Please comment

15. Drama helps with critical thinking.

I agree ☑ I disagree ☐ Don't know ☐

Please comment.

Lots of problems to solve!

16. Continuous Professional Development can be shown to have a positive impact on staff development.

I agree ☑ I disagree ☐ Don't know ☐

Please comment

Wouldn't have attempted Drama except for Professional Development. The the students want more as they go through the school.

17. Which of the following models of Continuous Professional Development would you consider most helpful to increase your understanding and enthusiasm for teaching literature? Please number the following suggestions **1** to 5 in order of your preference, with 1 being your preferred approach.

Attending a formal lecture on the topic [5]

Watching a colleague teach a class (peer observation) [2]

Attending a course given by an expert in the area and participating in workshop activities [1]

Doing an online course related to the topic [4]

Participating in projects in a group with fellow professionals [3]

18. What benefits do you hope to obtain from this CPD on teaching good quality literature in the primary school through the medium of drama?

More ideas & resources of teaching Drama.

Thank you for answering this questionnaire.

Appendix 3

Teacher Group Interview

Questions for Teacher Group Interview (Night 1)

Q 1 Why is it important for children to read?

Q2 Is what they read important?

Q3 How can we teachers encourage children to choose good quality literature?

Q4 Would you agree that English Curriculum should be revised?

Q5 What changes would you like to see in this revised Curriculum?

Q6 What does exploring literature mean to you?

Q7 Are the children in your class interested in reading?

Q 8 Where do you find suggestions for the literature you use?

Q9 Do you agree that the quality of literature which children read or are exposed to effects there writing?

Q10 Can you see that drama has a place in the area of exploring literature?

Q11 Could drama, as a teaching method, stimulates children's thinking skills and critical thinking?

Q12 Do teachers need CPD and why?

Q13 Was the training for the new curriculum in English adequate?

Q14 What areas in the English curriculum would you like CPD training in?

Content of Teacher Interview

The results of the group interview conducted with the participants on the 1st night

Q 1 Why is it important for children to read?

The participants all acknowledged the importance of reading for children and they all admitted that it is getting increasingly more difficult to encourage children to read even though there is a wealth of books and other reading material at their fingertips. Teacher 2 said she loves to read herself and feels that she is never lonely when she has a book to read. She said she would love all the children in her class to become avid readers so that when they become adults, they, like her would never be lonely. Teacher 3 said she always tries to associate reading with pleasure in her class. This participant thinks that it is not just the teacher's job to encourage reading but parents should encourage children to read from the time they are babies and the children should see their parents read. Teacher 5 said you can pick out the children at school who are encouraged to read at home. Teacher 4 added that you can identify the children who read and are read to because their imagination is sparked. Teacher 7 said reading is important for all areas of the curriculum as children need to be able to read to obtain facts in areas such as History.

Q2 Is the quality of what they read important?

The initial answer from everyone showed that the teachers were in favour of children reading comics and simple stories than not reading at all. After a lively discussion teacher 3 said she felt a lot of the literature published for children today does little to encourage children to read and many children in her class don't finish books and get bored easily. Teacher 1 said a mixture is good, comics, modern literature and old classics like Black Beauty and of course internet sites. Teacher 5 felt that giving children a full diet of comics and rubbish novels will do nothing for their vocabulary. Teacher 3 said that most of what children read today is forgotten immediately. Teacher 2 said it is very important to give boys reading material that will interest them such as war books. Teacher 7 said children should be allowed to choose at least some of the material they read but they also need guidance

Q3 How can teachers encourage children to choose good quality literature?

Teacher 2 said she reads to the children and that encourages them to take the book home to read. Teacher 3 thinks if you show them the film they will want to read the book. Teacher 7 disagreed and said they should read the book first because once they know the story they won't read the book. Teacher 5 and 1 think the extracts in the class reader encourage the children to go to the library and read the full book. Teacher 4 feels if teacher reads the book first and tell the children about good books they will then want to read the books.

Q4 Would you agree that the English Curriculum should be revised?

The participants all agreed that the English curriculum was too broad and vague and needed to be revised and that teachers should be asked for suggestions.

Q5 What changes would you like to see in this revised Curriculum?

All the participants suggested more time for reading. Teacher 3 would welcome an emphasis on silent reading. Teacher 6 recommends that grants be made available to buy more books. Teacher 4 would like more guidelines for selecting literature for the various classes.

Q6 What does exploring literature mean to you?

This question led to a lively discussion. Teacher 3 said it was better not to explore literature, just to let the children read it and take whatever they wanted from it. Teacher 5 said that a novel should be just read and that too much investigation into the characters actions and over analysis distroys the pleasure of story. Teacher 1 said exploring to her meant reading and responding both orally and written to the text. Teacher 5 said that the children should read some books just for the enjoyment they get from the story but that exploring a well written novel, like looking at the characters and the relationships and the problems and language in it was very important to her.

Q7 Are the children in your class interested in reading?

The teachers said that they all found it difficult to encourage children to read on their own. Teacher 1 said that some pupils only wanted to read a few pages and then other distractions would take over. Teacher 6 felt that a child is born a reader and if not it is difficult to instil the habit. Teacher 3 said that there are many other things like computer games, sport and television that come before reading for today's children. Teacher 5 said we are fighting a losing battle that she thinks reading is getting less important every year for children.

Q 8 Where do you find suggestions for the literature you use?

Teacher 2 said she looks for suggestions on internet sites such as Seomra Ranga or Scoilnet. Teacher 5 looks for novel with teacher notes. Teacher 7 contacts the local library for suggestions. Teacher 4 likes to read a selection of children's books and then choose a suitable one to explore with her class. Teacher 1 says that she uses two novels only because they work with 5th and 6th class, *Holes* by Louis Sachar and the following year *Under The Hawthorn Tree* by Marita Conlon Mc Kenna. All the participants agreed that the important thing is that the children enjoy the novel and understand the story.

Q9 Do you agree that the quality of literature which children read or are exposed to effects there writing?

The participants felt that the quality of the children's writing depends on many factors, and that one of them is the material they read. Teacher 2 said she had a pupil who reads a lot and has a poor standard of writing. Teacher 7 believes that the child's imagination has a stronger influence on his writing than his reading material. Teacher 3 said that the imagination is enhanced by reading and in turn this influences the quality of the child's writing. Teacher 4 thinks that by reading information, a child acquires facts about the world and regardless of whether the child reads online or from a book the amount of reading a child does increases its store of knowledge and the child is then able to reproduce this information in his own writing. Teacher 3 agreed and said this is a gradual process over the child's years in school.

Q10 Can you see that drama has a place in the area of exploring literature?

All the participants agreed that drama has a place in exploring literature, and that was why they had decided to do this CPD. Teacher 7 said he taught a lot of literature, short stories, poems and novels and he thought drama would be a new way of approaching it. Teacher 3 said she felt drama could be used at times, depending on the type of literature being taught, but she also felt that drama would not be suitable for lyrical poetry. Teacher 5 said that it takes a lot of time to teach a novel and using drama would add to that. Teacher 3 said that it was difficult to motivate children to get interested in the story of a novel and she felt drama could draw them in but other methods would be used as well. Teacher 1 and 2 said they had never tried this method so couldn't really comment. Teacher 4 said anything that would encourage the children to take an interest in literature was worth trying.

Q11 Could drama, as a teaching method, stimulates children's thinking skills and critical thinking?

There was a general agreement among the participants that in order to continue raising academic standards a teacher needs to constantly examine and explore their methods of teaching and they considered that drama as a teaching method could win the attention and interest of students and stimulate their thinking skills. Teacher 7 said that critical thinking is linked to reasoning abilities and that he could see that drama would help children's reasoning. Teacher 4 said that abstract concepts could become much more meaningful to children in a dramatic situation. Teacher 3 said that sometimes we don't consider the child's limited mind but expect them to think as adults. She felt that observing children work in a drama situation would give the teacher an insight into the way the child was thinking. Teacher 1 said that sometimes teachers do not give the child time to use critical thinking skills but in a drama situation the child would have more time to reason things out.

Q12 Do teachers need CPD and why?

The participants all agreed that teachers need CPD in all areas of the curriculum on a regular basis. Teacher 3 said CPD, especially in Maths and Literacy should be mandatory for all teachers and should be paid for by the department. Teacher 4 felt that once off training in an area, such as teachers got when the revised curriculum was adopted was of little use, training should be done over a period of at least a few weeks. Teacher 2 said that this would give teachers a chance to try out the ideas in class. Teacher 6 felt that teachers doing CPD should be able to contact the facilitators when they needed help after completing the training. Teacher 3 cited another benefit of CPD which was that teachers could discuss what went well or what they found difficult while trying out the new ideas with other teachers at the next session of the training. Teacher 1 said she felt summer in-service courses were of little use as you were not able to try out ideas in class while the course was in progress, and the information was forgotten by September. All the participants agreed that face to face courses were far more beneficial than online courses.

Q13 Was the training for the new curriculum in English adequate?

There was a general consensus that the in-service training was inadequate and that the content of the original curriculum was overloaded and difficult to follow but the changes that were made after the NCCA assessment helped.

Q14 What areas in the English curriculum would you like CPD training in?

Because they had chosen to attend this CPD, all the teachers said they welcomed the opportunity to partake in CPD in the area of using drama as a teaching and learning methodology for teaching literature but also expressed preferences in other areas of the English curriculum.

Teacher 1 said she would be interested in CPD in comprehension strategies for reading.

Teacher 2 would welcome help on choosing and teaching a novel in the senior class.

Teacher 3 would like CPD in the area of teaching methodology to encourage children to read independently.

Teacher 4 would like CPD in using the novel to help improve oral language, reading and writing.

Teacher 5 would like CPD in literacy in general to help with strategies to improve the general standard of literacy in her classroom.

Teacher 6 preferences would be CPD on children's writing.

Teacher 7 would like CPD in the area of oral language and linking it with reading and writing

Appendix 4

Lesson Plans

Week 1 Lesson Plan

Drama Based on the Happy Prince by Oscar Wilde

In this lesson the children are introduced to Oscar Wilde's story The Happy Prince. They will read part of the story in groups and establish key events of this part of the story. These events will be explored through the medium of drama. The children will later finish reading the story.

Aims

- To work in small groups to read a passage of literature and identify the key events and the main characters in the story.
- To explore the technique of freeze frame and thought tracking
- To create and take part in improvised scenes in order to explore issues
- To work with others and respect and listen to their views.

Objectives

At the end of the lesson the students will have:

- worked in groups to read and comprehend a piece of text
- exercised their imaginations to improvise situations
- and explored some of the themes of poverty, wealth, kindness, outside appearance and unselfishness which are found in the story

Resources

Copies of the story, a copy of the text to describe each freeze frame, markers and paper.

Opening Activity

Play some music and ask children to move to the music in role as the prince walking through the streets when he was alive. Change the music and now the children become the swallows darting in and out through the reeds.

Introduction

Divide the class into six groups and distribute the scene descriptions from the text (Appendix 1). Each group will show a scene from the story as a freeze frame. One child will read the description. Thought tracking the characters may follow.

Main activity

Distribute copies of part 1 of the text and read it with the class. In a circle the class will discuss the main characters in the story.

Hot Seating

One child sits in the centre of the group and become the prince. The teacher will encourage the others to ask this character questions (have a brainstorming session first to fuel ideas). Repeat this technique asking other children to become the swallow, the seamstress or perhaps one of the people from this town, while the other pupils ask questions. Encourage the children to recall details from the script they have read.

The children will form three groups, the prince group, the swallow group and the seamstress group. One child in each group will become the character after which the group is named. The character will stand in the centre and the other children will come forward and explain how they know this character.

Role on the wall

Each group will draw an outline of their character and will use words to describe him/her. Each group will then present their character to the rest of the class.

Improvisation

a) Working with a partner

A and B. A asks B for a favour, B does not really want to do this favour but A is a friend.

b) Group Improvisation

In groups the children improvise a scene where a statue is about to be erected to a local hero (Footballer, artist, musician, politician). One person from each group is a reporter from the local paper; the others are the locals who will talk to the reporter about this hero. They must decide beforehand on the attributes of this hero and consider why a statue is erected.

Introducing Theme

The children will mill about, then the teacher will ask them to form groups and to show in the group, using facial expression and body shape the different themes in the story. For instance the teacher will say 'groups of 4 show me poverty, groups of 5 show me unselfishness'. If time permits some of these scenes can be improvised.

Game

The children will play a game. Divide the class into two. The group must secretly decide whether they are princes, swallows or seamstresses
Prince beats swallow, Swallow beats seamstress and Seamstress beats prince.
The group confer secretly and come forward to face the other group. Teacher count one, two, three and the groups simultaneously make the appropriate noise and action.
The princes brandish an imaginary sword and shout 'happy'
The swallows flutter their 'wings' and say 'Egypt"
The seamstresses hold put their hands to their heads and cry 'poverty'
Play best of three. They will then form a circle and the teacher will conduct a sound collage of the city as the swallow flies off over the roofs of the town.

Discussion and reflection

In the circle the children will a discuss what they have learned from the drama session and the characters and themes in the story. The teacher will draw their attention to the swallow's words 'what, is he not solid gold?' and the class will discuss the idea that outer appearances can often be misleading. They will think about sayings such as 'all that glitters is not gold' and never judge a book by its cover'. The children will then offer predictions on what they believe will happen in the next part of the story.

Back in class part 2 of the text may be explored.

Writing, IT and art suggestions

- The children will research famous statues including statues of famous animals such as Hachiko, the Akita dog in Japan, the she wolf in Rome and Arkle the famous Irish race horse.
- Design an invitation or the dress for the royal wedding
- The swallow writes a poem about the reed or the reed writes a note to the swallow giving reasons why she cannot go with him to Egypt.
- Newspaper article- **Swallow Spotted in November** or **Ruby Stolen from Statue**

Appendix 1 For use with freeze frame

Group One

High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold, for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword-hilt.

He was very much admired indeed. 'He is as beautiful as a weathercock,' remarked one of the Town Councillors who wished to gain a reputation for having artistic taste; 'only not quite so useful,' he added, fearing lest people should think him unpractical, which he really was not.

'Why can't you be like the Happy Prince?' asked a sensible mother of her little boy who was crying for the moon. 'The Happy Prince never dreams of crying for anything.'

'I am glad there is someone in the world who is quite happy', muttered a disappointed man as he gazed at the wonderful statue.

Group 2

One night there flew over the city a little Swallow. His friends had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but he had stayed behind, for he was in love with the most beautiful Reed. He had met her early in the spring as he was flying down the river after a big yellow moth, and had been so attracted by her slender waist that he had stopped to talk to her.

'Shall I love you said the Swallow', who liked to come to the point at once, and the Reed made him a low bow. So he flew round and round her, touching the water with his wings, and making silver ripples. This was his courtship, and it lasted all through the summer.

'Will you come away with me?' he said finally to her; but the Reed shook her head, she was so attached to her home.

'You have been trifling with me,' he cried, 'I am off to the Pyramids. Good-bye!' and he flew away.

Group 3

Then he saw the statue on the tall column. 'I will put up there,' he cried; 'it is a fine position with plenty of fresh air.' So he alighted just between the feet of the Happy Prince.

'I have a golden bedroom,' he said softly to himself as he looked round, and he prepared to go to sleep; but just as he was putting his head under his wing, a large drop of water fell on him. 'What a curious thing!' he cried, 'there is not a single cloud in the sky, the stars are quite clear and bright, and yet it is raining. The climate in the north of Europe is really dreadful. The Reed used to like the rain, but that was merely her selfishness. Then another drop fell.

'What is the use of a statue if it cannot keep the rain off?' he said; 'I must look for a good chimney-pot,' and he determined to fly away. But before he had opened his wings, a third drop fell, and he looked up, and saw - Ah! what did he see?

The eyes of the Happy Prince were filled with tears, and tears were running down his golden cheeks. His face was so beautiful in the moonlight that the little Swallow was filled with pity. 'Who are you?' he said. 'I am the Happy Prince.'

'Why are you weeping then?' asked the Swallow; 'you have quite drenched me.'

Group 4

'When I was alive and had a human heart,' answered the statue, 'I did not know what tears were, for I lived in the Palace of Sans-Souci where sorrow is not allowed to enter. In the daytime I played with my companions in the garden, and in the evening I led the dance in the Great Hall. Round the garden ran a very lofty wall, but I never cared to ask what lay beyond it, everything about me was so beautiful. My courtiers called me the Happy Prince, and happy indeed I was, if pleasure be happiness.

Group 5

Far away in a little street there is a poor house. One of the windows is open, and through it I can see a woman seated at a table. Her face is thin and worn, and she has coarse, red hands, all pricked by the needle, for she is a seamstress. She is embroidering passion-flowers on a satin gown for the loveliest of the Queen's maids-of-honour to wear at the next Court-ball. In a bed in the corner of the room her little boy is lying ill. He has a fever, and is asking for oranges. His mother has nothing to give him but river water, so he is crying.

Group 6

My friends are flying up and down the Nile, and talking to the large lotus flowers. Soon they will go to sleep in the tomb of the great King. The King is there himself in his painted coffin. He is wrapped in yellow linen, and embalmed with spices. Round his neck is a chain of pale green jade, and his hands are like withered leaves.'

Appendix 2 The Text Part 1 : The Happy Prince by **Oscar Wilde**

High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold, for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword-hilt.

He was very much admired indeed. 'He is as beautiful as a weathercock,' remarked one of the Town Councillors who wished to gain a reputation for having artistic taste; 'only not quite so useful,' he added, fearing lest people should think him unpractical, which he really was not.

'Why can't you be like the Happy Prince?' asked a sensible mother of her little boy who was crying for the moon. 'The Happy Prince never dreams of crying for anything.'

'I am glad there is someone in the world who is quite happy', muttered a disappointed man as he gazed at the wonderful statue.

'He looks just like an angel,' said the Charity Children as they came out of the cathedral in their bright scarlet cloaks, and their clean white pinafores.

'How do you know?' said the Mathematical Master, 'you have never seen one.'

'Ah! but we have, in our dreams,' answered the children; and the Mathematical Master frowned and looked very severe, for he did not approve of children dreaming.

One night there flew over the city a little Swallow. His friends had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but he had stayed behind, for he was in love with the most beautiful Reed. He had met her early in the spring as he was flying down the river after a big yellow moth, and had been so attracted by her slender waist that he had stopped to talk to her.

'Shall I love you said the Swallow', who liked to come to the point at once, and the Reed made him a low bow. So he flew round and round her, touching the water with his wings, and making silver ripples. This was his courtship, and it lasted all through the summer.

'It is a ridiculous attachment,' twittered the other Swallows, 'she has no money, and far too many relations;' and indeed the river was quite full of Reeds. Then, when the autumn came, they all flew away.

After they had gone he felt lonely, and began to tire of his lady-love. 'She has no conversation,' he said, 'and I am afraid that she is a coquette, for she is always flirting with the wind.' And certainly, whenever the wind blew, the Reed made the most graceful curtsies. I admit that she is domestic,' he continued, 'but I love travelling, and my wife, consequently, should love travelling also.'

'Will you come away with me?' he said finally to her; but the Reed shook her head, she was so attached to her home.

'You have been trifling with me,' he cried, 'I am off to the Pyramids. Good-bye!' and he flew away.

All day long he flew, and at night-time he arrived at the city. 'Where shall I put up?' he said 'I hope the town has made preparations.'

Then he saw the statue on the tall column. 'I will put up there,' he cried; 'it is a fine position with plenty of fresh air.' So he alighted just between the feet of the Happy Prince.

'I have a golden bedroom,' he said softly to himself as he looked round, and he prepared to go to sleep; but just as he was putting his head under his wing, a large drop of water fell on him. 'What a curious thing!' he cried, 'there is not a single cloud in the sky, the stars are quite clear and bright, and yet it is raining. The climate in the north of Europe is really dreadful. The Reed used to like the rain, but that was merely her selfishness.'

Then another drop fell.

'What is the use of a statue if it cannot keep the rain off?' he said; 'I must look for a good chimney-pot,' and he determined to fly away.

But before he had opened his wings, a third drop fell, and he looked up, and saw - Ah! What did he see?

The eyes of the Happy Prince were filled with tears, and tears were running down his golden cheeks. His face was so beautiful in the moonlight that the little Swallow was filled with pity.

'Who are you?' he said.

'I am the Happy Prince.'

'Why are you weeping then?' asked the Swallow; 'you have quite drenched me.'

'When I was alive and had a human heart,' answered the statue, 'I did not know what tears were, for I lived in the Palace of Sans-Souci where sorrow is not allowed to enter. In the daytime I played with my companions in the garden, and in the evening I led the dance in the Great Hall. Round the garden ran a very lofty wall, but I never cared to ask what lay beyond it, everything about me was so beautiful. My courtiers called me the Happy Prince, and happy indeed I was, if pleasure be happiness. So I lived, and so I died. And now that I am dead they have set me up here so high that I can see all the ugliness and all the misery of my city, and though my heart is made of lead yet I cannot choose but weep.'

'What, is he not solid gold?' said the Swallow to himself. He was too polite to make any personal remarks out loud.

'Far away,' continued the statue in a low musical voice, 'far away in a little street there is a poor house. One of the windows is open, and through it I can see a woman seated at a table. Her face is thin and worn, and she has coarse, red hands, all pricked by the needle, for she is a seamstress. She is embroidering passion-fowers on a satin gown for the loveliest of the Queen's maids-of-honour to wear at the next Court-ball. In a bed in the corner of the room her little boy is lying ill. He has a fever, and is asking for oranges. His mother has nothing to give him but river water, so he is crying. Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, will you not bring her the ruby out of my sword-hilt? My feet are fastened to this pedestal and I cannot move'.

'I am waited for in Egypt,' said the Swallow. 'My friends are flying up and down the Nile, and talking to the large lotus flowers. Soon they will go to sleep in the tomb of the great King. The King is there himself in his painted coffin. He is wrapped in yellow linen, and embalmed with spices. Round his neck is a chain of pale green jade, and his hands are like withered leaves.'

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'will you not stay with me for one night, and be my messenger? The boy is so thirsty, and the mother so sad.

'I don't think I like boys,' answered the Swallow. 'Last summer, when I was staying on the river, there were two rude boys, the miller's sons, who were always throwing stones at me. They never hit me, of course; we swallows fly far too well for that, and besides, I come of a family famous for its agility; but still, it was a mark of disrespect.'

But the Happy Prince looked so sad that the little Swallow was sorry. 'It is very cold here,' he said 'but I will stay with you for one night, and be your messenger.'

'Thank you, little Swallow,' said the Prince.

So the Swallow picked out the great ruby from the Prince's sword, and flew away with it in his beak over the roofs of the town.

He passed by the cathedral tower, where the white marble angels were sculptured. He passed by the palace and heard the sound of dancing. A beautiful girl came out on the balcony with her lover. 'How wonderful the stars are,' he said to her,'and how wonderful is the power of love!' 'I hope my dress will be ready in time for the State-ball,' she answered; 'I have ordered passion-flowers to be embroidered on it; but the seamstresses are so lazy.'

He passed over the river, and saw the lanterns hanging to the masts of the ships. He passed over the Ghetto, and saw the old Jews bargaining with each other, and weighing out money in copper scales. At last he came to the poor house and looked in. The boy was tossing feverishly on his bed, and the mother had fallen asleep, she was so tired. In he hopped, and laid the great ruby on the table beside the woman's thimble. Then he flew gently round the bed, fanning the boy's forehead with his wings. 'How cool I feel,' said the boy, 'I must be getting better;' and he sank into a delicious slumber.

Appendix 3 The Text Part 2

Then the Swallow flew back to the Happy Prince, and told him what he had done. 'It is curious,' he remarked, 'but I feel quite warm now, although it is so cold.'

'That is because you have done a good action,' said the Prince. And the little Swallow began to think, and then he fell asleep. Thinking always made him sleepy.

When day broke he flew down to the river and had a bath.

'What a remarkable phenomenon,' said the Professor of Omithology as he was passing over the bridge. 'A swallow in winter!' And he wrote a long letter about it to the local newspaper. Every one quoted it, it was full of so many words that they could not understand.

'To-night I go to Egypt,' said the Swallow, and he was in high spirits at the prospect. He visited all the public monuments, and sat a long time on top of the church steeple. Wherever he went the Sparrows chirruped, and said to each other, 'What a distinguished stranger!' so he enjoyed himself very much.

When the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince. 'Have you any commissions for Egypt?' he cried; 'I am just starting.'

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'will you not stay with me one night longer?'

'I am waited for in Egypt,' answered the Swallow. To-morrow my friends will fly up to the Second Cataract. The river-horse couches there among the bulrushes, and on a great granite throne sits the God Memnon. All night long he watches the stars, and when the morning star shines he utters one cry of joy, and then he is silent. At noon the yellow lions come down to the water's edge to drink. They have eyes like green beryls, and their roar is louder than the roar of the cataract.'

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' said the Prince,'far away across the city I see a young man in a garret. He is leaning over a desk covered with papers, and in a tumbler by his side there is a bunch of withered violets. His hair is brown and crisp, and his lips are red as a pomegranate, and he has large and dreamy eyes. He is trying to finish a play for the Director of the Theatre, but he is too cold to write any more. There is no fire in the grate, and hunger has made him faint.'

'I will wait with you one night longer,' said the Swallow, who really had a good heart. 'Shall I take him another ruby?'

'Alas! I have no ruby now,' said the Prince; 'my eyes are all that I have left. They are made of rare sapphires, which were brought out of India a thousand years ago. Pluck out one of them and take it to him. He will sell it to the jeweller, and buy food and firewood, and finish his play.'

'Dear Prince,' said the Swallow,'I cannot do that;' and he began to weep.

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'do as I command you.'

So the Swallow plucked out the Prince's eye, and flew away to the student's garret. It was easy enough to get in, as there was a hole in the roof. Through this he darted, and came into the room. The young man had his head buried in his hands, so he did not hear the flutter of the bird's wings, and when he looked up he found the beautiful sapphire lying on the withered violets.

'I am beginning to be appreciated,' he cried; 'this is from some great admirer. Now I can finish my play,' and he looked quite happy.

The next day the Swallow flew down to the harbour. He sat on the mast of a large vessel and watched the sailors hauling big chests out of the hold with ropes. 'Heave a-hoy!' they shouted as each chest came up. 'I am going to Egypt!' cried the Swallow, but nobody minded, and when the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince.

'I am come to bid you good-bye,' he cried.

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' said the Prince,'will you not stay with me one night longer?'

'It is winter,' answered the Swallow, and the chill snow will soon be here. In Egypt the sun is warm on the green palm-trees, and the crocodiles lie in the mud and look lazily about them. My companions are building a nest in the Temple of Baalbec, and the pink and white doves are watching them, and cooing to each other. Dear Prince, I must leave you, but I will never forget you, and next spring I will bring you back two beautiful jewels in place of those you have given away. The ruby shall be redder than a red rose, and the sapphire shall be as blue as the great sea.

'In the square below,' said the Happy Prince, 'there stands a little match-girl. She has let her matches fall in the gutter, and they are all spoiled. Her father will beat her if she does not bring home some money, and she is crying. She has no shoes or stockings, and her little head is bare. Pluck out my other eye, and give it to her, and her father will not beat her.

'I will stay with you one night longer,' said the Swallow,'but I cannot pluck out your eye. You would be quite blind then.'

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'do as I command you.'

So he plucked out the Prince's other eye, and darted down with it. He swooped past the match-girl, and slipped the jewel into the palm of her hand. 'What a lovely bit of glass,' cried the little girl; and she ran home, laughing.

Then the Swallow came back to the Prince. 'You are blind now,' he said, 'so I will stay with you always.'

'No, little Swallow,' said the poor Prince, 'you must go away to Egypt.'

'I will stay with you always,' said the Swallow, and he slept at the Prince's feet.

All the next day he sat on the Prince's shoulder, and told him stories of what he had seen in strange lands. He told him of the red ibises, who stand in long rows on the banks of the Nile, and catch gold fish in their beaks; of the Sphinx, who is as old as the world itself, and lives in the desert, and knows everything; of the merchants, who walk slowly by the side of their camels, and carry amber beads in their hands; of the King of the Mountains of the Moon, who is as black as ebony, and worships a large crystal; of the great green snake that sleeps in a palm-tree, and has twenty priests to feed it with honey-cakes; and of the pygmies who sail over a big lake on large flat leaves, and are always at war with the butterflies.

'Dear little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'you tell me of marvellous things, but more marvellous than anything is the suffering of men and of women. There is no Mystery so great as Misery. Fly over my city, little Swallow, and tell me what you see there.'

So the Swallow flew over the great city, and saw the rich making merry in their beautiful houses, while the beggars were sitting at the gates. He flew into dark lanes, and saw the white faces of starving children looking out listlessly at the black streets. Under the archway of a bridge two little boys were lying in one another's arms to try and keep themselves warm. 'How hungry we are' they said. 'You must not lie here,' shouted the Watchman, and they wandered out into the rain.

Then he flew back and told the Prince what he had seen.

'I am covered with fine gold,' said the Prince, 'you must take it off, leaf by leaf, and give it to my poor; the living always think that gold can make them happy.'

Leaf after leaf of the fine gold the Swallow picked off, till the Happy Prince looked quite dull and grey. Leaf after leaf of the fine gold he brought to the poor, and the children's faces grew rosier, and they laughed and played games in the street. 'We have bread nod' they cried.

Then the snow came, and after the snow came the frost. The streets looked as if they were made of silver, they were so bright and glistening; long icicles like crystal daggers hung down from the eaves of the houses, everybody went about in furs, and the little boys wore scarlet caps and skated on the ice.

The poor little Swallow grew colder and colder, but he would not leave the Prince, he loved him too well. He picked up crumbs outside the baker's door when the baker was not looking, and tried to keep himself warm by flapping his wings.

But at last he knew that he was going to die. He had just strength to fly up to the Prince's shoulder once more. 'Good-bye, dear Prince!' he murmured, 'will you let me kiss your hand?'

'I am glad that you are going to Egypt at last, little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'you have stayed too long here; but you must kiss me on the lips, for I love you.'

'It is not to Egypt that I am going,' said the Swallow. I am going to the House of Death. Death is the brother of Sleep, is he not?'

And he kissed the Happy Prince on the lips, and fell down dead at his feet.

At that moment a curious crack sounded inside the statue, as if something had broken. The fact is that the leaden heart had snapped right in two. It certainly was a dreadfully hard frost.

Early the next morning the Mayor was walking in the square below in company with the Town Councillors. As they passed the column he looked up at the statue: 'Dear me! how shabby the Happy Prince looks!' he said.

'How shabby indeed!' cried the Town Councillors, who always agreed with the Mayor, and they went up to look at it.

'The ruby has fallen out of his sword, his eyes are gone, and he is golden no longer,' said the Mayor; 'in fact, he is little better than a beggar!'

'Little better than a beggar,' said the Town Councillors.

'And there is actually a dead bird at his feet,' continued the Mayor. 'We must really issue a proclamation that birds are not to be allowed to die here.' And the Town Clerk made a note of the suggestion.

So they pulled down the statue of the Happy Prince. 'As he is no longer beautiful he is no longer useful,' said the Art Professor at the University.

Then they melted the statue in a furnace, and the Mayor held a meeting of the Corporation to decide what was to be done with the metal. 'We must have another statue, of course,' he said, 'and it shall be a statue of myself.'

'Of myself,' said each of the Town Councillors, and they quarrelled. When I last heard of them they were quarrelling still.

'What a strange thing!' said the overseer of the workmen at the foundry. 'This broken lead heart will not melt in the furnace. We must throw it away.' So they threw it on a dust-heap where the dead Swallow was also lying.

'Bring me the two most precious things in the city,' said God to one of His Angels; and the Angel brought Him the leaden heart and the dead bird.

'You have rightly chosen,' said God, 'for in my garden of Paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me.'

Week 2 Lesson Plan

Drama Based on an Extract from Macbeth by Shakespeare

Key Objective

- To introduce the children to the works of Shakespeare in an active and exciting way

- To contribute constructively to shared discussion about literature, responding to the views of others
- To provide opportunities to explore language, character, setting and plot
- To explore the meeting between Macbeth, Banquo and the Witches
- To use creative drama as a positive way to teach good quality literature
- To develop active listening strategies and skills
- To articulate personal responses to literature

Resources

Copies of extracts 1, 2, 3, and 4. Paper and markers, Black cloth or bags to cover witches.

Marching music, eerie music and CD player. A drum and other percussion instruments.

Warm Up

Play some marching music, the children, as Scottish soldiers march around, but when teacher beats a drum they stop and 'sword fight' with an imaginary Norwegian soldier. On the second drum beat they march off the battle field victorious.
Then the children form a circle. The teacher will ask for a volunteer to carry in a big cauldron to the centre of the circle (mime). Each child will come to the centre and drop an ingredient into the pot while saying what he/she is placing there, i.e. ' Into this boiling , bubbling cauldron I place a slithering, slimy snake' (Get the children to suggest other adjectives).

Voice warm up

Distribute copies of Extract 1 -The Witches' Spell and get the children to read in groups of 3, thinking about the rhythm of the words and the evil cackle of the witches. Play around with volume, would it all be said at the same volume? What pitch would they use?
Each group will explore how they can make it sound creepy and mysterious. Tell them to use sounds to introduce the spell, the sound of thunder and storm (They can use their voices or percussion instruments). Each group will perform their chant.
The children will now form a circle around the 'cauldron' they have filled with ingredients and chant the spell while moving in and out of the circle. Use gestures and facial expression. Now say the chant secretly, then calling witches from afar, like angry witches. Add a witches' dance. Add spooky music if you wish.

Opening Discussion

Tell the children that today they are going to learn a little about a great play that Shakespeare wrote more than 400 years ago but which people today still love to go to see. (It would be a good idea to have told the class something about the life and times of Shakespeare).

In the beginning of the play we meet two of the main characters Macbeth and Banquo, soldiers and friends who are returning home to Scotland after winning a battle against Norway.

Starter Activity

Pupils explore the meeting between Macbeth, Banquo and the witches on a heath.
In 2's they make a **freeze frame** of Macbeth and Banquo as friends leaving the battlefield.
When the teacher **Thought Tracks** them they bring the scene to life, (what might they say to each other as they leave the scene of battle).
Distribute extract 2 (Appendix 2) to the class and explain that these are Shakespeare's words to describe how Macbeth fought in the battle. Explain the words and read the extract with them a few times explaining that this is the way people spoke in Shakespeare's time. The children walk around the room reading the extract as a town crier.

Pupils sit on the floor in a circle and explain that in this lesson they will find out about a secret the two men are about to share.
Explain that as Macbeth and Banquo are leaving the heath after the battle they meet three witches. Invite pupils to share images of witches. Ask; what do witches look like? Think of three words that describe what a witch might look like. Share these with a partner.
Ask three children to become the three witches on the heath, put black cloth around them. Now distribute a copy of Extract 3 to the other children. Tell them that these are the words Banquo uses to describe the witches when he first sees them. Read through the words. Now ask the rest of the class to walk around the 'witches' saying those words and gesturing towards them.

Role on the Wall

In groups the children draw the three witches on large sheets of paper and use the words from the sheet to describe them and then add their own words.

Reading a Script

Appendix 4: Act 1 Scene 3 (edit)
Distribute the worksheet and explain that it is an edited version of Act 1 Scene 3 of the play Macbeth. The words in italics are stage directions, and you, the teacher will read those. Ask confident readers to take parts as Macbeth, Banquo, first, second and third witch. Read aloud, and explain unusual words and explore the prophecies.
The children will now read the scene in groups of 5's (the three witches , Banquo and Macbeth). Every group will perform their work for the class.

Conscience Alley

One child is Macbeth. The rest make two lines facing each other. Macbeth will walk between the two lines, while the children in one line will advise him not to heed what the witches have told him and the other side encourage him to believe them. Macbeth must decide which advice to accept.

Final Discussion and Reflection

Discuss the key moments in today's drama with the children.
How might Macbeth and Banquo have become friends? How long might they have known each other? For example, did they meet in King Duncan's court? Or have they known each other since they were children?
How might they be feeling as they walk away from the battle? For example, are they injured, proud, exhausted, excited?
What might the witches do to get their attention? For example, do they whisper from a distance, or surround them so they cannot escape?
Why do you think Macbeth asks the witches to speak?
What do you think the witches are trying to achieve in giving Macbeth his titles? Are they mocking him, honouring him or tempting him?
How does Macbeth react to each part of the prophecy? What does he do?
How does Banquo react to what he hears and sees?
What do they think Banquo and Macbeth will do now? Will we meet the witches in the play again?
Did you enjoy the class and why? Would you like to do more work like this?
Would you like to know if Macbeth did become king?

Suggested Writing, art and SPHE activities

- Write an entry in their journal about their drama.

- Write a letter from Macbeth to his wife telling her about the witches.
- Write a report of the battle for the local paper
- Write a script for the conversation between Macbeth and Banquo as they leave the battle field

- Draw the scene of the battle or the meeting with the witches
- Design an outfit for any of the characters
- Design a castle for Macbeth
- Learn about Scotland
- The history of witches

Appendix 1 Extract 1: The Witches' Spell

Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and caldron bubble.
Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the caldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg, and owlet's wing,—
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.
Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and caldron bubble.

Appendix 2 Extract 2

For brave Macbeth – well he deserves that name –
Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel
Which smoked with bloody execution,
Like valour's minion carved out his passage
Till he faced the slave,
Till he unseamed him from the nave to th'chops
And fixed his head upon our battlements.

'Disdaining Fortune': ignoring fate
'brandished steel': sword ready to use
'valour's minion': bravery's favourite
'unseamed': ripped in two
'nave to th'chops': navel to the jaw

Appendix 3 Extract 3

BANQUO: What are these,
So withered and so wild in their attire,
That look not like th'inhabitants o'th'earth
And yet are on't? — live you, or are you aught
That man may question?

Appendix 4 Extract 4

Act 1 Scene 3 (edited):

Thunder: Enter the three Witches.
FIRST WITCH: Where hast thou been, sister?
SECOND WITCH: Sister, where thou?
THIRD WITCH: A drum, A drum, Macbeth doth come.
ALL: Thrice to thine and thrice to mine
And thrice again, to make up nine.
Peace, the charm's wound up.
(Enter Macbeth and Banquo).
MACBETH: So foul and fair a day I have not seen.
BANQUO: What are these,that look not like the
inhabitants o'the earth. And yet are on't?
MACBETH: Speak if you can: What are you?
FIRST WITCH: All hail, Macbeth: hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!
SECOND WITCH: All hail,
Macbeth: hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!
THIRD WITCH: All hail, Macbeth that shalt be king hereafter!
BANQUO: Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear
Your favours nor your hate.
FIRST WITCH: Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.
SECOND WITCH: Not so happy, yet much happier.
THIRD WITCH: Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.
ALL: Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!
(The Witches vanish).
MACBETH: Your children shall be kings.
BANQUO: You shall be king.

Week 3: Lesson Plan

Drama based on:

- the life of Charles Dickens
- A Victorian Cotton Mill
- Great Expectations :Chapter 1

The children will read about the life of Charles Dickens and also a little about life in Victorian times.

Objectives

- To explore good quality literature through the medium of drama
- To understand and use drama strategies to explore characters and plot in literature
- To gain insight into the life and times of an author
- To act out portions of a story,
- To empathise with the experiences of children in the Victorian age

- Explore familiar themes and characters through still image, improvisation and hot seating
- To explore the language used by Dickens
- To experiment with simple script writing

Resources

Copies of The life of Charles Dickens, Life in Victorian times, Chapter 1 Great Expectations, photo of a scene in a Victorian mill and a picture of Pip's encounter with the convict.
Large sheets of paper and markers

Warm up

Children walk around the room as if they are poor rich people walking through London in 1861. Meet each other and greet.

Hot Seating and Teacher in Role

The teacher will take the role of Charles Dickens and the children will ask him questions. (Prepare questions in advance using the fact sheet on the author's life).

Still Images

In groups the children will show events in the author's life in still images
a) Charles is born b) He goes to school c) His father is arrested d)Charles in the factory e) Charles as a journalist f) Charles dies
They show the images one after the other to create the life of Charles Dickens.

Using a photograph as stimulus for drama: A Victorian cotton mill

Group Tableau

Ask the children to look at the picture (Appendix 5) and consider what the boys are saying to each other. Then the children close their eyes and speak in role as if they were present in the picture and thinking about what they hear, see or smell e.g. 'I can hear the sound of the machines'; 'I can feel the wooden floors beneath my feet'; 'I can smell oil.'
Gradually, in turn, children enter an acting space as people in the picture, stating who they are and teacher encourages them to add a few details, Teacher could lead and say 'I am the man with the whip. I own this mill and think the workers are lazy'. The whole class help to create a tableau, stating who or what they are.

Discussion
The teacher tells the class that accidents would have happened in this mill. Talk about what type of accident might happen. Discuss accidents in work places today (on the farm, in factories etc.), and about how they can be avoided. Talk about health and safety laws today and ask the children if there were laws like those when Charles Dickens lived. Teacher reads out an account of a real mill accident, as told by a child mill worker in Victorian times.

"When I went to the spinning mill I was about seven. The whole place was strange to me. The dust, the hissing and roaring, the bad language. One boy sat down to rest. In moments he was fast asleep. The master happened to pass. Without warning he gave the boy a violent slap, which stunned him. Half asleep he ran to the machine and in five minutes his left hand got tangled with the machinery. Two of his fingers were crushed to a jelly.'

Improvisation

In groups of fours or fives the children improvise the following scenes.
(Each group a different scene)

- The child is taken home to his parents.
- The master being questioned by the police perhaps two witnesses are also there.
- Queen Victoria is told about the accident.
- Other children talk in fear about what happened and are afraid the same might happen to them.
- The mayor of the town and the councillors discuss the problems in the mill.

Discussion
The children discuss the drama done today. What did the drama teach about the Victorian age? Teacher asks questions such as- 'would you like to have been a child at that time?'

Writing and art activities

- Drama diary entry
- A report on the accident on the mill in a Victorian Newspaper
- Charles Dickens writes a diary entry after a day in the Blacking Factory
- A letter to Queen Victoria asking her to put a stop to child labour
- Cartoon pictures from a newspaper showing life in a factory

The children read the chapter from Great expectations as far as 'Hold your noise, keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat'.

Lesson 2

Introduction

Using big sheets of paper they create the setting –the marsh country, the blacksmith's house, the churchyard, the tombstone, the five little graves, the dark flat wilderness beyond the church yard intersected with dykes and mounds of grass, the scattered cattle feeding on it , the river and the distant sea. The children walk through the scene and recreate the noises they think Pip might have heard that day.
A child, as Pip takes up a position standing beside the grave crying and the teacher enters as the convict and says 'Hold your noise, keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat'.

Discussion
How did Pip feel? What might he have answered? Would you have been afraid? Who is this man? Tell them that later in the novel we will learn that he is an escaped convict or prisoner and that his name is Able Magwitch.

Role on the Wall
Distribute the description of the man (appendix 4) and ask the children to work in groups to complete a role on the wall for this character.)

Script Writing
Ask the children to work in twos to create a written conversation between Pip and the man. Groups can perform their scripts.

Improvisation:

- In groups they improvise a situation where they are in a lonely place when they are approached by a strange person who makes a demand and threatens to kill them if they don't agree.

- The convict returns to his cave and tells another man what he has discovered, This other man wants to kill Pip when he comes with the food but the first convict tries to persuade him not to.

The class read the rest of chapter

Acting out part of a story
After reading it they fill in any more details they have discovered about the convict.
They could act out the dialogue between Pip and the man as told by Dickens

Discussion
Discuss what they have learned from today's drama. Would they like to read more of this novel?
They can discuss how their writing of the conversation compared with that of Dickens.

Writing and art activities

- A death cert for any of the Pirrip family
- A story: It was then I saw the man
- Drawing a portrait of Pip or the convict
- Drawing the churchyard and tombstone

Appendix 1 Great Expectations Chapter 1

My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.

I give Pirrip as my father's family name, on the authority of his tombstone an my sister -- Mrs Joe Gargery, who married the blacksmith. As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them, my first fancies regarding what they were like, were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, `*Also Georgiana Wife of the Above,*' I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. To five little stone lozenges, each about a foot and a half long which were arranged in a neat row beside their grave, and were sacred to the memory of five little brothers of mine -- who gave up trying to get a living, exceedingly early in that universal struggle.

Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within, as the river wound, twenty miles of the sea. My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain, that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried; and that Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond, was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip.

`Hold your noisel' cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. `Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throa

`O! Don't cut my throat, sir,' I pleaded in terror. `Pray don't do it, sir.'

`Tell us your name' said the man. `Quickly'

`Pip, sir.'

`Show us where you live,' said the man. `Pint out the place!'

I pointed to where our village lay, on the flat in-shore among the alder-trees and pollards, a mile or more from the church.

The man, after looking at me for a moment, turned me upside down, and emptied my pockets. There was nothing in them but a piece of bread. When the church came to itself-- for he was so sudden and strong that he made it go head over heels before me, and I saw the steeple under my feet -- when the church came to itself, I say, I was seated on a high tombstone, trembling, while he ate the bread ravenously.

`You young dog,' said the man, licking his lips, `what fat cheeks you ha' got.'

I believe they were fat, though I was at that time undersized for my years, and not strong.

`Darn Me if I couldn't eat em,' said the man, with a threatening shake of his head, `and if I han't half a mind to'tl'

I earnestly expressed my hope that he wouldn't, and held tighter to the tombstone on which he had put me; partly, to keep myself upon it; partly, to keep myself from crying.

`Now lookee here!' said the man. `Where's your mother?'

`There, sir!' said I.

He started, made a short run, and stopped and looked over his shoulder.

`There, sir!' I timidly explained. `Also Georgiana. That's my mother.'

`Oh!' said he, coming back. `And is that your father alonger your mother?'

`Yes, sir,' said I; `him too; late of this parish.'

`Ha!' he muttered then, considering. `Who d'ye live with -- supposin' you're kindly let to live, which I han't made up my mind about?'

`My sister, sir -- Mrs Joe Gargery -- wife of Joe Gargery, the blacksmith, sir.'

`Blacksmith, eh?' said he, and looked down at his leg.

After darkly looking at his leg and me several times, he came closer to my tombstone, took me by both arms, and tilted me back as far as he could hold me; so that his eyes looked most powerfully down into mine, and mine looked most helplessly up into his.

`Now lookee here,' he said, ` You know what a file is?'

`Yes, sir.'

`And you know what wittles is?'

`Yes, sir.'

`You get me a file,and you get me wittles and you bring 'em both to me.' `Or I'll have your heart and liver out, you bring me, to-morrow morning early, that file and them wittles. You bring the lot to me, at that old Battery over yonder. You do it, and you never dare to say a word or dare to make a sign concerning your having seen such a person as me, and you shall be let to live. You fail, and your heart and your liver shall be tore out, roasted and ate. Now, what do you say?'

I said that I would get him the file, and I would get him what broken bits of food I could, and I would come to him at the Battery early in the morning.

`Say Lord strike you dead if you don't!' said the man.

I said so, and he took me down.

`Goo-good night, sir,' I faltered.

` At the same time, he hugged his shuddering body in both his arms -- clasping himself, as if to hold himself together -- and limped towards the low Church wall. As I saw him go, picking his way among the nettles, and among the brambles that bound the green mounds, he looked in my young eyes as if he were eluding the hands of the dead people, stretching up cautiously out of their graves, to get a twist upon his ankle and pull him in.

The marshes were just a long black horizontal line then, as I stopped to look after him; and the river was just another horizontal line, not nearly so broad nor yet so black; and the sky was just a row of long angry red lines and dense black lines intermixed. But, now I was frightened again, and ran home without stopping.

Appendix 2 Charles Dickens



Charles John Huffham Dickens was born on 7th February 1812 in Portsmouth about 100 km from London. The second of eight children, Charles was a delicate, sensitive child, unable to join in the play of other children and he withdrew into books. At the age of 12, the childhood of Dickens came to a sudden and dramatic end. His father, unable to pay his large debts, was packed off to a Debtors' Prison in London. Within a few days, the rest of the family were to join him there, except Charles, whose education was cut short and who was made to earn his living, washing bottles at Warren's Blacking Factory. He was soon re-united with his family, but at the age of 14 his schooling ended and he began work as a clerk in a lawyer's office in London. Charles then became a journalist. He soon started to write his famous books. In April 1836, he married Catherine Hogarth and they had ten children. Throughout his life, Charles enjoyed travelling. In the 1840s he journeyed to Scotland, America, France, Switzerland and Italy. He wrote novels such as Oliver Twist, A Christmas Carol, *A Tale of Two Cities, Great Expectations* Dickens gave many dramatic public readings of his works to packed houses in both Britain and the United States. In June 1870 he suffered a stroke and the next day, Charles Dickens died at the age of 58.

Two days after his death, Queen Victoria wrote in her Diary, "Charles Dickens is a very great loss'. On 14 June, he was buried in the Poet's corner, Westminster Abbey, close to the monuments of Chaucer and Shakespeare.

Appendix 3 What kind of world did Charles Dickens live in?

Charles Dickens lived during the Victorian age in Britain which is named after Queen Victoria, who was Britain's queen from 1837 until 1901. There were big differences in homes, schools, toys and entertainment at thet time. No TV, no computers, no central heating, no cars (until the last few years of Victoria's reign). No air travel! Many children went to work, not to school.

In Victorian times, many families had 10 or more children. Sadly, many children died as babies, or from diseases such as smallpox and diphtheria. Child-death struck rich and poor families.

In a Victorian town, it was easy to tell who was rich and who was poor. Children from richer homes were well fed, wore warm clothes and had shoes on their feet. They did not work, but went to school or had lessons at home. Poor children looked thin and hungry, wore ragged clothes, and some had no shoes.

During the 19th century, factory-made toys, including tin toys and clockwork toys. Rich children had more toys to choose from: train sets, toy soldiers, rocking horses, dolls and doll's houses, tea-sets and toy shops with toy fruit, vegetables, meat, hats and medicines. Other popular toys were alphabet bricks, sailing boats, jigsaw puzzles and Noah's Arks. In many homes, children were not allowed toys on Sundays - except Noah's Ark, because that was in the bible.

Factories: Britain was the first country in the world to have lots of factories. Factory machines made all kinds of things. Machines did jobs, such as spinning, previously been done by families at home.Factories were noisy. People had to shout above the rattle and hiss of machinery. They breathed air full of dust, oil and soot. Iron and steel works got so hot that workers dripped with sweat. Factory owners employed children because they were cheap, did not complain, had nimble fingers, and could crawl about under machines.

Many poor children lived in tiny country cottages or in city slums. There was no money for toys, nowhere to play except alleys and yards. Many children had to work, while others were too sick and hungry to play. Yet most poor children still managed to make some fun. They played with whatever they could find, perhaps dancing to the music of a hurdy-gurdy man, paddling in a

stream, or climbing trees and lamp-posts. We meet many of these children in the novels written by Charles Dickens.

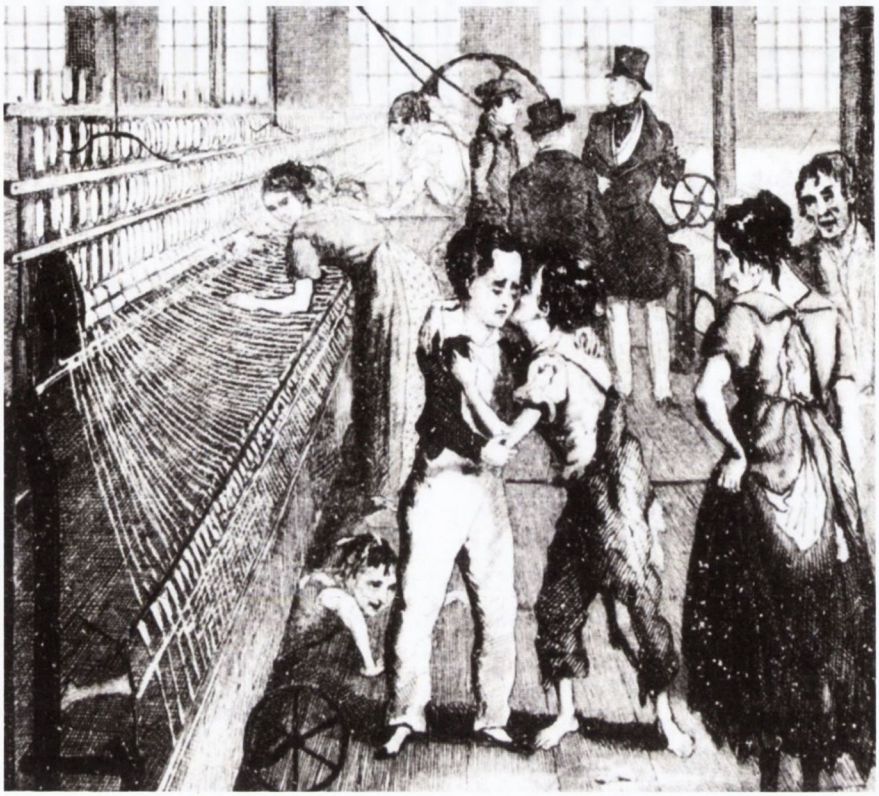
People called reformers, such as Lord Shaftesbury (1801-1885), argued in Parliament for laws to stop child-work. Inspectors, called Commissioners, went into factories and mines. They talked to working children to find out the facts. These are three of the new laws passed by Parliament.

Appendix 4 How Charles Dickens describes Abel Magwitch

A fearful man, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin.



Appendix 5 A Victorian Cotton Mill



Week 4: Lesson Plan

Drama based on a story from the Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer:

Aims

- To explore good quality literature through the medium of creative drama
- To empathise with the experiences and feelings of people in another age
- To present the viewpoints of different characters through dialogue, role-play and writing
- To understand and use drama strategies to explore issues
- To use language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences
- To Explore familiar themes and characters through improvisation and role play
- To build self-discipline, confidence and communication skills to achieve their unique potential
- To appreciate the benefits of group work

Resources

Paper and markers, Music, Copies of a modern translation of the story such as *Chanticleer and the Fox* by Geoffrey Chaucer (Author), Barbara Cooney (Author, Illustrator). Name tags for different characters. Information on Chaucer.

Discuss the following with the children first

The Canterbury Tales is a collection of stories written in Middle English by Geoffrey Chaucer at the end of the 14th century. The tales (mostly written in verse although some are in prose) are told as part of a story-telling contest by a group of pilgrims as they travel together on a journey from Southwark to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. This

was a plan devised by Harry Bailey , the owner of the Inn from which the pilgrims set out to keep the pilgrims merry on the journey, The idea was that each pilgrim would tell a story and the teller of the best story would receive a free meal at the Tabard Inn at Southwark on their return. The travellers included Chaucer himself, Harry Bailly (The inn keeper), a knight and his son who was a squire , a yeoman (who was the knight's servant), nuns, priests, monks, a cook, a shipman, a franklin (land owner) , a physician, a clerk, a lawyer, a merchant and tradesmen (a weaver, a dyer, a haberdasher and a carpenter). (Explain that a haberdasher was a dealer in men's clothing). The first part of the Canterbury Tales is called The Prologue and here we are introduced to all the characters. Among the travellers was a cheerful, kindly priest and when it came to his turn he told the tale of Chanticleer and the Fox.

Setting the atmosphere for The Canterbury Tales

Children walk around the room. As the teacher calls a number, 10 being the highest status, 1 the lowest) the children continue to walk in the manner of a person of that status. Encourage the children to think who this person might be. Is he/she important proud, cheeky? Does he/she swagger, boss others grovel when he meets others who are more important than himself, boast, complain, tell jokes?

Whole Group Activity

The children become people who are getting ready to go on a journey. The journey will take a few days and the only way of travel is on horseback or on foot. They will pack a back pack to take with them. They may only bring 5 items. In groups of six the children will discuss what items they have brought and why they choose these. They then decide on ways they might entertain themselves on this journey, remembering that they are living in the 14th century. The teacher will give them a sticker with their character written on it and they will enter the Inn as that person, where they are met by Harry Bailey (**Teacher in Role)** who will welcome them and tell them of his storytelling competition plan. They are now ready to set out on their journey. Play some music and the children set out on their journey. They have to travel over different terrain –through a dangerous forest, up a steep hill, through swampy ground.
The children form a circle and the teacher tells the pupils that they will now listen to one of the stories The Nun's Priest's Tale. The teacher reminds the pupils that this was written in the 14th century and that the English they used at the time was known as Middle English. The children compare a short sample of Middle English from the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales with the modern translation. Today many of the stories have been translated into modern prose, so that people can read them, and that is what the class will be reading today. Te class will read the story or listen to the teacher read it.

Activities Based on the Story
Hot Seating the characters
A child will volunteer to take the role of the widow, Chanticleer, Pertelote or the fox. And the others will ask questions (As in week one brainstorm to fuel ideas and use the script for details).
Or
A group of children become the character, the teacher asks a question, the group decide on an answer and one child as the mouth of the character gives the answer.

Improvisation based on the themes

Act out the scene where the fox tricks the cock.
In twos, A flatters B to get something from him. Will B fall for the flattery?
Theme: Silence is golden but sometimes we must tell. The children can experiment with situations where they should tell (RSE) ad other times when it is better to say nothing.

Dreams
In groups of five or six, one is sleeping and the others act out a dream, this could be developed into a dance.

Conscience Alley
One side tells Chanticleer to heed the dream and be really careful; the other tells him dreams are stupid.

Interviews
The fox, Chanticleer, the widow can be interview after Chanticleer's return home

A court Case
The fox is charged with kidnapping Chanticleer. Set up the court, the Judge, the prosecuting Council, council for the defence, witnesses and the jury .

Cool down
The Deadly Handshake
Pick a child to be the fox, explain that the children will move around and shake hands. The fox can say to others 'Chanticleer' as he shakes hands and if he does that person dies. The detective tries to discover who the murderer is.

Writing and art activities
A dream I had. Drama Diary. A report on the court case.
Write a description of the characters. An interview with Chanticleer after his escape published in a newspaper. A menu for lunch in The Tabard Inn.
Drawing the characters. A model of the farm build with boxes etc.

Appendix 1

Geoffrey Chaucer,



Geoffrey Chaucer, one of England's greatest poets, was born in London about 1340, the son of a wine merchant and deputy to the king's butler. Not much is known of Chaucer's early life and education, other than he learned to read French, Latin, and Italian. His experiences as a civil servant and diplomat are said to have developed his fascination with people and his knowledge of English life. In 1359-1360 Chaucer travelled with King Edward III's army to France during the Hundred Years' War and was captured in Ardennes. He returned to England after the Treaty of

Bretigny when the King paid his ransom. In 1366 he married Philippa Roet and they had two sons and two daughters. Chaucer remained in royal service travelling to Flanders, Italy, and Spain. These travels would all have a great influence on his work. Chaucer wrote in Middle English, the form of English used from 1100 to about 1485. He is given the designation of the first English poet to use rhymed couplets in iambic pentameter and to compose successfully in the vernacular. Chaucer's Canterbury Tales is a collection of humorous and poignant stories told by a group of fictional pilgrims travelling to the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket. It is considered to be among the masterpieces of literature. His works also include Chaucer died in London on October 25, 1400. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, in what is now called Poet's Corner

Appendix 2 Example of Middle English and modern translation

Middle English	**Modern Translation**
Whan that april with his shoures soote The droghte of March hath perced to the root	When April with his showers sweet with fruit The drought of March has pierced to the root

Appendix 5

Pre-project Pupil Questionnaire



Pupils' Questionnaire

1. Do you like to read? Yes □ No □

2. If yes, please tick the reading material you like to read?

Novels □ Short stories □

Comics □ Information books□

Newspapers □ Magazines □

Online articles □ Class readers □

Which is your favourite ? _____



3. Do you think reading is fun? Yes □ No □

4. Do you enjoy reading in school? Yes □ No □

5. Tick the approaches you think would make reading more enjoyable in school.

- Reading the parts aloud. □
- Reading silently. □
- Reading and discussing what you have read in groups. □
- Being able to choose which books you read. □
- Listening to the teacher reading. □
- Becoming the characters you have read about and acting out the story you have read. □

- Doing drama based on the characters, themes and situations you discover in your reading. □

6. Do you enjoy reading at home? Yes □ No □

7. If yes, please tick the reasons why you read at home.

- I think it's fun and enjoyable . □
- I am told to read. □



- I want to find out more information. □
- It is part of my homework. □

8. Do you read poems as part of your school work? Yes □ No □

8. Do you read poems as part of your own leisure time? Yes □ No □

9. Do you read plays as part of your own leisure time? Yes □ No □

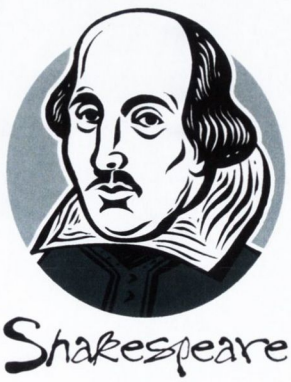
10. Do you read short stories as part of your own leisure time? Yes □ No □

11. Name your favourite author.

---

12. What is the best book you have read? _____

Why?



13. Have you heard of Shakespeare?

Yes □ No □

If so please name a play he has written.

_____

14. Have you heard of the following authors?

W B. Yeats Yes □ No □

Charles Dickens Yes □ No □

Oscar Wilde Yes □ No □



15. Teachers and parents often encourage children and young people to read good quality literature instead of reading comics. Do you think it is important that children should read such books, poems, stories and plays?

Yes □ No □

Please give a reason for your answer

16. Do you use drama in school to investigate the themes and characters in the books you read?
Yes □ No □

Thank You



Pupils' Questionnaire

1. Do you like to read? Yes ☑ No ☐

2. If yes, please tick the reading material you like to read?

9

Novels ☑ Short stories ☑

Comics ☑ Information books ☐

Newspapers ☐ Magazines ☑

Online articles ☐ Class readers ☐

Which is your favourite ? Novels



3. Do you think reading is fun? Yes ☑ No ☐

1

4. Do you enjoy reading in school? Yes ☑ No ☐

5. Tick the approaches you think would make reading more enjoyable in school.

- Reading the parts aloud. ☐
- Reading silently. ☑
- Reading and discussing what you have read in groups. ☑
- Being able to choose which books you read. ☑
- Listening to the teacher reading. ☑
- Becoming the characters you have read about and acting out the story you have read. ☑
- Doing drama based on the characters, themes and situations you discover in your reading. ☑

6. Do you enjoy reading at home? Yes ☑ No ☐

7. If yes, please tick the reasons why you read at home.

- I think it's fun and enjoyable . ☑
- I am told to read. ☐



- I want to find out more information. ☑
- It is part of my homework. ☐

8. Do you read poems as part of your school work? Yes ☑ No ☐

8. Do you read poems as part of your own leisure time? Yes ☑ No ☐

9. Do you read plays as part of your own leisure time? Yes ☑ No ☐

10. Do you read short stories as part of your own leisure time? Yes ☑ No ☐

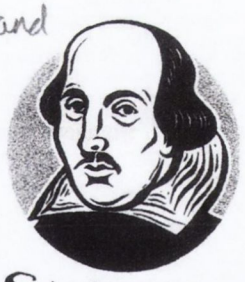
11. Name your favourite author.

Eoin Colfer

12. What is the best book you have read? Artemis Fowl

Why?

Because the stories are very gripping and interesting



Shakespeare

13. Have you heard of Shakespeare?

Yes ☑ No ☐

If so please name a play he has written.

Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet

14. Have you heard of the following authors?

W B. Yeats Yes ☑ No ☐

Charles Dickens Yes ☑ No ☐

Oscar Wilde Yes ☑ No ☐

9



15. Teachers and parents often encourage children and young people to read good quality literature instead of reading comics. Do you think it is important that children should read such books, poems, stories and plays?

Yes ☑ No ☐

Please give a reason for your answer

note 2/ Because it is important that children encounter and learn new words. And also because they will learn new styles of writing.

16. Do you use drama in school to investigate the themes and characters in the books you read? Yes ☐ No ☑



Appendix 6

Teacher Observation Sheet

Sample Teacher Observation Sheet

Observation Sheet for Teachers Date:_____

What did the children enjoy most during the lesson?

What in your opinion motivated the children to learn during the lesson?

Did using a piece of good quality literature make any difference to the overall impact of the lesson?

Did you encounter any challenges in working with this piece of literature?

What advantages did you experience in using drama as a teaching method?

What disadvantages did you experience in using drama as a teaching method?

What in your opinion worked well in the drama lesson?

Did all children benefit from the discussion session that followed the lesson?

At the end of the lesson what in your opinion had the children experienced or learnt that they may not have experienced in a literature lesson where drama was not used?

Did the children use the language they encountered in the text in their own conversation and writings?

Please add any further thoughts, questions, observations or comments about the lesson?

Observation Sheet for Teachers Date: June '12

What did the children enjoy most during the lesson?

Hot seating of character.
Improvisation — fox tricks the cock.
Conscience Alley

What in your opinion motivated the children to learn during the lesson?

Active participation
Fun
Drama makes the story real.

Did using a piece of good quality literature make any difference to the overall impact of the lesson?

Many angles to explore with depth of characters, themes, ...

Did you encounter any challenges in working with this piece of literature?

To maintain interest during reading of the story. Some children had difficulty following the story but got it through discussions - group

What advantages did you experience in using drama as a teaching method?

- Gives the story depth. Better understanding of setting, characters, plot, themes.
- The children really understood the story & had no difficulty discussing it.
- Leads on to discussion around other areas (right & wrong, S.P.H.E, confidence building, History (era & setting))

What disadvantages did you experience in using drama as a teaching method?

- Time to get through it.
- Children in Senior end of school would prefer to do the drama than written activities around it but I think this will improve with exposure.
- Some children try to out do each other with rude/silly behaviour.

What in your opinion worked well in the drama lesson?

Improvisation, Conscience Alley
Discussion around story
Presenting viewpoint of another & exploring issues raised in story

Did all children benefit from the discussion session that followed the lesson?

Yes they did - some contribute more but all had a good grasp of story

At the end of the lesson what in your opinion had the children experienced or learnt that they may not have experienced in a literature lesson where drama was not used?

- They remembered the characters & the story.
- They would all say that they would like to hear more of the stories
- Positive encounter with work of Chaucer.

Recall

Did the children use the language they encountered in the text in their own conversation and writings?

Yes they did in the drama.

Teacher 4

Please add any further thoughts, questions, observations or comments about the lesson?

- Slower children had no difficulty engaging with the drama activities.
- One child who is almost "mute" had begun to speak without anxiety in the drama activities.

I learned a lot also about Dickens & Chaucer. Wish I had the opportunity to engage with them like this at an earlier stage.

Appendix 7

Pupil Journal Sheet

Sample Pupil Journal Sheet

Journal sheet for pupils
Date_____

Describe what you did today in reading and drama class.

Things I liked about today's reading and drama class.

Things I didn't like about today's reading and drama class.

Things I learned today in reading and drama class about the literature, characters, language and themes.

Why I think drama is good for sharing ideas with others.

Why I think drama is good for exploring literature.

New words and phrases I learned from the literature.

Journal sheet for pupils **Date** 23/2/12

Describe what you did today in reading and drama class.

Today we were doing drama based on the Happy Prince. We read about it first and then we got into groups and got a sheet and then acted it out and learned more about the characters

Things I liked about today's reading and drama class.

The things I liked were playing the game at the end, and I enjoyed when we had to make the statue and someone from Western People had to pretend to interview us and ask us lots of questions.

Things I didn't like about today's reading and drama class.

The thing I didn't like was when we had to read it in the classroom.

Things I learned today in reading and drama class about the literature, characters, language and themes.

I learned that just because the title is called the Happy Prince doesn't mean that the Prince was always very happy and the reed is not even a person even though it has a big part. I learned a lot more about the charcters and some of the words were interesting

Why I think drama is good for sharing ideas with others.

I think its good to share ideas because it let you know what other peoples ideas of the story are.

Why I think drama is good for exploring literature.

I think it is good because it helps your brain and it is much easier to understand whats going on in the story

New words and phrases I learned from the literature.

trifling
agility
pedestal
embarrassed
domestic
alighted

He is as beautiful as a weathercock
He just looks like an angel
Tears were running down his golden cheeks

Appendix 8

Post-project Teacher Questionnaire

Post –Project Questionnaire for Teachers

Dear,

This project focused specifically on exploring whether;

(a.) Good quality literature has any place in the primary school classroom, and

(b.) Whether it can be taught to good effect using a drama in education methodology.

As almost a year has passed since you first began your participation in this project, your response to the questions below in light of yours and your pupils' experience of the work we planned and shared together, would be extremely valuable. I would greatly appreciate your honest and open response to the questions in the questionnaire, as you represent a good cross section of our teaching profession, and your informed opinion and experience will assist in responding to the research question above. I would be particularly interested in hearing from you which areas and aspects of the literature through drama project worked and those which didn't, and whether an approach such as this is practically realisable and/or desirable in the mainstream classroom or not.

Sincere thanks for your help, and please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or queries. Your support and feedback throughout the project is a valuable asset to my research.

Name_____**Date**_____

Indicate if you are currently teaching the same or some of the same children this year as you taught in the year 2011/2012 when we were doing the literature through drama project.

_____

_

1(a) Having participated in the literature through drama project, do you now think exploring literature with primary school children is important? Yes □ No □

Please give reasons for your answer.

_____

____

1(b) Has your opinion of the place of literature in the primary classroom changed or stayed the same as a consequence of doing this project? Please state why.

_____

____

2 Did the children in your class ask to do more literature after you had finished the lessons on Shakespeare etc.? Yes □ No □

Please comment_____

3 Reflecting back on the experience, did the children who participated in the project subsequently report that they enjoyed the literature they explored during the project?

Yes □ No □

4 (a) Again reflecting back on the experience several months ago, in your opinion, was the literature used too much of a challenge for the children? Yes □ No □

Please comment

_____

OR

4 (b) Was it beneficial for them? Yes □ No □

If yes, in what ways?_____

5 Having completed the project with me, in your opinion is there anything unique that literature brings to the Curriculum for primary school children? Yes □ No □

If yes, please state what?_____

6 What do you now consider the benefits, or disadvantages, of using good quality literature rather than using the traditional basal reader?

_____

7(a) Does good quality literature have a place in the English curriculum for primary schools? Yes □ No □

7(b) Would you like more training in the field of teaching literature in primary school?

Yes □ No □

Please comment briefly:_____

8(a) Have you taught any literature to your class since the training? Yes □ No □

8(b) If so, what literature did you use and what methods did you employ to teach it?

_____

_____

_____

_____

9 Did you feel more empowered to teach literature through drama following the CPD you received? Yes □ No □

Please comment

_____

10(a) As a result of having participated in the project have you:

a) re-used the lesson plans I gave you ? Yes □ No □

b) developed the lesson plans further using your own ideas? Yes □ No □

c) written your own lesson plans using drama in the teaching of literature? Yes □ No □

d) had positive feedback from the parents about the literature through drama project?

Yes □ No □

e) shared the lesson plans with any other teachers in your school ? Yes □ No □

10(b) If you answered no, was it because:

a) the CPD training provided during the project was too short? Yes □ No □

b) a lack of time to do these classes ? Yes □ No □?

c) your own approach to studying literature elicited the same or better results?

Yes□ No □

d) you lack confidence to teach in this way? Yes □ No □

e) you don't see the value of teaching in this way? Yes □ No □

f) this approach results in behaviour management issues in your classroom?

Yes □ No □

g) you need more support with planning this type of teaching approach before you can do it on your own? Yes □ No □

h) this type of teaching does not fit into the plan to improve literacy standards in your school? Yes □ No □

i) you tried, but you were discouraged with the results? Yes □ No □

j) other reason, please indicate_____

11 Several months after the completion of the project, can you reflect on the process, and comment on whether the literature through drama experience improved the children's:

Self esteem? Yes □ No □

Self confidence? Yes □ No □

Oral Language? Yes □ No □

Desire to read? Yes □ No □

Motivation ? Yes □ No □

Writing skills? Yes □ No □

Understanding of themes and content? Yes □ No □

Reconstruction of their own knowledge? Yes □ No □

Ability to express themselves clearly? Yes □ No □

Interest? Yes □ No □

Vocabulary? Yes □ No □

Reading skills? Yes □ No □

Pleasure in reading? Yes □ No □

Understanding OF what they read? Yes □ No □

Meaning to life? Yes □ No □

Identifying with the characters? Yes □ No □

12 Did the drama activities provided during the project enhance your teaching of literature?

Yes □ No □

Please comment briefly_____

13 Finally, I would welcome any final comments, criticism and recommendations from you in relation to your and your pupils' participation in this project and specifically in relation to your opinion of its two principal research questions as stated on page 1.

Many thanks,

Martha

Dear

This project was focused specifically on exploring whether

(a.) Good quality literature has any place in the primary school classroom and

(b.) Whether it can be taught to good effect using a drama in education methodology.

As almost a year has passed since you first began your participation in this project, your response to the questions below in light of your and your pupils' experience of the work we planned and shared together, would be extremely valuable. I would greatly appreciate your honest and open response to the questions in the questionnaire, as you represent a good cross section of our teaching profession, and your informed opinion and experience will assist in responding to the research question above. I would be particularly interested in hearing from you which areas and aspects of the literature through drama project worked and those which didn't, and whether an approach such as this is practically realisable and/or desirable in the mainstream classroom or not.

Sincere thanks for your help, and please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or queries. Your support and feedback throughout the project is a valuable asset to my research.

Name: (_____ **Date:** 18th Feb. 2013

Indicate if you are currently teaching the same or some of the same children this year as you taught in the year 2011/2012 when we were doing the literature through drama project.

Most of the same children

1(a) Having participated in the literature through drama project, do you now think exploring literature with primary school children is important?

Yes ■ No □

Please give reasons for your answer.

Engaging and memorable teaching method

1(b) Has your opinion of the place of literature in the primary classroom changed as a consequence of doing this project?

Yes □ No ■

Please state why.

Always interested in literature in the classroom, delighted to have learned how to handle it.

2 Did the children in your class ask to do more literature after you had finished the lessons on Shakespeare etc.?

Yes ■ No ☐

Please comment.

Asked for further drama related to Dickens in particular.

3 Reflecting back on the experience, did the children who participated in the project subsequently report that they enjoyed the literature they explored during the project?

Yes ■ No ☐

4 (a) Again reflecting back on the experience several months ago, in your opinion, was the literature used too much of a challenge for the children?

Yes ☐ No ■

Please comment

Lesson plans enabled content to be delivered appropriately.

OR

4 (b) Was it beneficial for them?

Yes ■ No ☐

If yes, in what ways?

Exposing them to famous authors

5 Having completed the project with me, in your opinion is there anything unique that literature brings to the Curriculum for primary school children?

Yes ■ No ☐

If yes, please state what?

new and sometimes unusual/archaic language

6 What do you now consider the benefits, or disadvantages, of using good quality literature rather than using the traditional basal reader?

Benefit; famous literature will always be known

Disadvantage; requires more advance teacher preparation.

7(a) Does good quality literature have a place in the English curriculum for primary schools? Yes ■ No ☐

7(b) Would you like more training in the field of teaching literature in primary school?

Yes ■ No ☐

Please comment briefly:

Guidelines relating to selected pieces.

8(a) Have you taught any literature to your class since the training?

Yes ■ No ☐

8(b) If so, what literature did you use and what methods did you employ to teach it?

Oliver Twist; read and dramatised prior to seeing the stage musical in Dublin 20/12/12. DVD watched in January.

Goodnight Mister Tom, read, watched dvd, using drama to re enact it, roleplay, freezeframes.

9 Did you feel more empowered to teach literature through drama following the CPD you received?

Yes ■ No ☐

Please comment

Children very open and lacking in inhibitions, makes teaching easier.

10(a) As a result of having participated in the project have you:

a) re-used the lesson plans I gave you ?
Yes ☐ No ■

b) developed the lesson plans further using your own ideas?
Yes ☐ No ■

c) written your own lesson plans using drama in the teaching of literature?
Yes ■ No ☐

d) had positive feedback from the parents about the literature through drama project?
Yes ■ No ☐

e) shared the lesson plans with any other teachers in your school ?
Yes ☐ No ■

10(b) If you answered no, was it because:

a) the CPD training provided during the project was too short?
Yes ☐ No ■

b) a lack of time to do these classes ?
Yes ■ No ☐

c) your own approach to studying literature elicited the same or better results?
Yes ☐ No ■

d) you lack confidence to teach in this way?
Yes ☐ No ■

e) you don't see the value of teaching in this way?
Yes ☐ No ■

f) this approach results in behaviour management issues in your classroom?
Yes ☐ No ■

g) you need more support with planning this type of teaching approach before you can do it on your own?
Yes ■ No ☐

h) this type of teaching does not fit into the plan to improve literacy standards in your school?
Yes ☐ No ■

i) you tried, but you were discouraged with the results?
Yes ☐ No ■

j) other reason, please indicate

Same group of children so need new material and haven't had time to research this.

11 Several months after the completion of the project, can you reflect on the process, and comment on whether the literature through drama experience improved the children's:

Self esteem?	Yes ■ No ☐
Self confidence?	Yes ■ No ☐
Oral Language?	Yes ■ No ☐
Desire to read?	Yes ■ No ☐
Motivation ?	Yes ☐ No ■
Writing skills?	Yes ☐ No ■
Understanding of themes and content?	Yes ■ No ☐
Reconstruction of their own knowledge?	Yes ■ No ☐
Ability to express themselves clearly?	Yes ■ No ☐
Interest?	Yes ■ No ☐
Vocabulary?	Yes ■ No ☐
Reading skills?	Yes ☐ No ■
Pleasure in reading?	Yes ■ No ☐
Understanding OF what they read?	Yes ■ No ☐
Meaning to life?	Yes ■ No ☐
Identifying with the characters?	Yes ■ No ☐

12 Did the drama activities provided during the project enhance your teaching of literature?

Yes ■ No ☐

Please comment briefly

Very enjoyable. From personally taking part in acting out during the project inservice, it served as a great reminder when it came to teaching the children.

13 Finally, I would welcome any final comments, criticism and recommendations from you in relation to your and your pupils' participation in this project and specifically in relation to your opinion of its two principal research questions as stated on page 1.

Yes to both research questions. I feel childrens' basals have improved with their selected literature. However, giving children the actual book is far better as in Oliver Twist, David Copperfield...

Sourcing pupil texts of this quality is difficult. Well done Martha on the relaxed, enjoyable way in which the inservice was conducted.

MANY THANKS,

MARTHA

Appendix 9

Letter to Stakeholders

Letter and Agreement to Participate

Dear ,

I am a primary school principal teacher and currently doing a doctoral study in the School of Education in Trinity College Dublin under the supervision of Dr Carmel O'Sullivan. My research aims to explore the value of teaching good quality literature, including such works as those of Shakespeare, Wilde, Dickens and Chaucer, in primary school children's education. I am also examining the role of drama as a potential teaching and learning methodology in the study of literature in primary schools. As part of this research I would value your opinion on these and related issues. I would be grateful if you would agree to a short semi-structured interview (approximately 20-25 minutes duration) which can be conducted either on a face to face basis or over the telephone, and which would be arranged at a time/date as convenient to you. I attach a copy of the interview brief which outlines the areas around which I will base my questions.

To assist in the process of speed and accuracy in recording your comments, I would like to record the interview. All data will be held securely and all information will be anonymously reported in the dissertation (unless you specifically indicate that you wish to be identified), and will only be used for the purpose of this PhD dissertation and any subsequent publications. Any material cited from your interview will be sent back to you in advance for verification before it is included in my final study.

I would be extremely grateful for your participation in this study as your professional and personal insights into this area would enhance the study considerably.

Please sign the attached sheet and return it to me in the enclosed SAE, if you agreeable to be interviewed.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Martha O'Shaughnessy

Permission to participate

I agree to be interviewed as part of this study on good quality literature in the classroom and I understand that the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate the transcription of data.

Signed: _____Date: _____

Phone no. or email address at which you may be contacted:

_____

Please let me know a date, time and place that would be convenient for you to meet with me or if you would prefer a phone interview.

Appendix 10

Transcript of Stakeholder Interview

Stakeholder Interview Questions

Areas of Discussion for Stakeholder Interview

1. The value of good quality literature such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Wilde, Chaucer in the primary school? If primary school children were introduced to more quality literature would it improve their reading interest and literary skills?

Follow-up question: Would studying more quality literature improve children's writing skills?

2 The place of good quality literature on the English curriculum for primary schools. The methods that should be used to teach literature? When teaching novels or Shakespeare what methods are employed currently in your experience?

Follow-up question: Could you see any value in using drama as a teaching and learning method to teach literature?

3 Do you consider the works of Shakespeare etc. suitable material for primary school pupils? Yes / No, please discuss.

If yes, why in your opinion, does the curriculum currently not recommend using literature such as Shakespeare, Dickens or Wilde?

4 Should there be a place for such literature on a new English curriculum in primary schools?

5 What if anything, prevents a teacher from using good quality literature in the primary classroom?

6 Basal readers versus quality literature? Or should there be a balance?

7 From your experience what type of literature is currently being used in classrooms? What types of teaching and learning approaches are used to explore it through?

8 What literature would you suggest a primary school teacher should/could teach, and what methods do you think he/she should/could use?

9 What literature should be on the new Junior Certificate Curriculum and should literature be a separate subject for the Junior Certificate?

10 Do teachers need specific CPD in this area, and/or what could be done in the Teacher Education Departments and Colleges to help?

Sample Transcripts of Stakeholder interviews

1: Telephone Interview with Stakeholder (Teacher College of Education)

This stakeholder has been teaching methodology in English for the teacher diploma for some years. He encourages me in my research. He thinks it is a great idea to introduce young people to texts such as *The Happy Prince* and to writers such as Shakespeare. He started his career teaching English in a secondary school but has spent the last seven years working in a college of education teaching student teachers. In recent years he has seen great reform with regards to the breath of the Curriculum for Junior and Leaving Cert pupils. For too long young people were engaged with a limited set of texts, a lot to do with literary criticism and literary theory. A certain set of writers were held up as the base of culture in our world so he welcomes that young people engage with a contemporary culture, modern songs and lyrics , song writers and critics but equally believes that we should balance that with their engagement with writers such as Shakespeare . He suggests there may be a gender issue with my four chosen authors and suggests including a female author such as Mary Shelly. He asked why a closed set of writers, why males? One of his favourite is Frankenstein, not necessary for young children but for adults. Western cannon? We need to include writers from across the world like Derek Walcote and be careful that young people are not engaged with one set of literature to the exclusion of other kinds. He is a huge Shakespeare fan and always believed in the importance of Shakespeare for young people and of pointing out the connection with modern writers, most of whom have been influenced by Dickens, and Shakespeare. Every human emotion has been explored through Shakespeare's work. The connection between contemporary artists and what Shakespeare undertook should be explored.

Methods

He is at the moment taking a course in Warwick, the methodology of the course is a process, which is wonderful even though he agrees that a text heavy approach to literature has to be there as well for examinations and to get the full value of the language. Mark Rylance says the only thing you need for Shakespeare is the text, so text needs to be explored, but the philosophy of the course he is doing is to put Shakespeare on his feet. Students can't learn about the characters and the social conventions in Romeo and Juliet or Othello by merely reading the plays, they learn about this and things like iambic pentameter by acting Shakespeare. You try to turn your class into a troop of

actors where the teacher is the director (and not necessary the teacher) and works to the notion of an ensemble like the Kings' Men. The class becomes a troop of actors exploring the text. Professor James Shapiro writing about the people who came to the Globe in Shakespeare's time and says that except for the gentry most were actually illiterate, they would never have understood anything Shakespeare was writing if it was just the text they were reading. You get so much more from performing any of the writers. You can actually understand the text by performing it.

Drama

He can see great value in using drama to teach literature and he recommends reading Tim Minchin the comedian who has done work with the RSE.

When he first encountered Shakespeare when he was in Secondary school he was alienated by the language – why was he talking in this way. What is it about? Henry 4 and Richard 3 are his favourite. He suggests teachers should read a great book by Fintan O'Toole on teaching Shakespeare who says Shakespeare is hard but then again life is hard get over it, even though life is hard we keep going. Teachers should give young people a way in to the language of Shakespeare.

Once people have the basic of literacy you can teach them anything. We sometimes eulogise Shakespeare, we should as the works are incredible. Once you get people into the works it gives them so much pleasure. He would be worried if Shakespeare was not taught and thinks it is a great idea to introduce Shakespeare to primary school children. Something that affects children from disadvantaged areas is the lack of immersion in literature. You are immersed in a language and a culture, and Shakespeare invented English language. Like Mozart writing Opera in German. Shakespeare drew on French and Latin, he is alive, and not the tired old writer that people say he is. The themes and the way he deals with them. Maybe some plays such as *Henry 8* don't jump off the page like Macbeth. Young people are fascinated by facts such as the reason for Hamlet's procrastinating, perhaps it was because he was so young like the students themselves.

What would prevent teachers from teaching literature?

People trace it back unkindly to the Victorians era. Shakespeare was interested in the complexity of the human condition reduced down to the tragic low. Teachers reduce the characters down. They have been told 'this is the way you are meant to interpret Shakespeare and to teach it'. They are influenced by the teachers they had and the way they taught, but he had a brilliant teacher. For some teachers their experience of Literature is very sparse and they were given the idea that Shakespeare is difficult.

It comes back to CPD. Some only get one day CPD for junior cycle which is not enough

Exam pressure is one of the difficulties of teaching English and trying to be creative, bringing in drama and ensemble approaches to the classroom, when you teach English to Leaving Cert may be tricky, you have to teach 48 poems and the comparative section. You have to prepare students for the composition aspect of the exam. So the workload is intense.

He thinks the use of ICT to go with ensemble is the way to go. There is a need for teachers' reflective practice. Show students good film versions of the films.

What literature for Junior? He suggests Tracey Chapman, Bob Dylan and of course Shakespeare.

2 Face to Face Interview with Stakeholder (Senior Civil Servant with Dept. Of Education)

Q 1: The value of good quality literature such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Wilde, Chaucer in the primary school?

She expressed the opinion that there is great value in this type (good quality) of literature. The problem is ever since the change in the primary curriculum far less quality literature, not even going to the standard of Shakespeare, is being used in primary school classrooms from her experience of visiting them. With the curriculum there has been so much choice given to teachers and yet they are now afraid of being creative, afraid of using something that is seen as being challenging, afraid to break the mould. Some of the children are not reading books per say but abridged versions; don't go for quality at all. The publishers are having a great time. Teachers want something in a pack, all laid out and very little creativity around it. To teach quality literature is a difficult thing, but she think there is great potential for quality literature.

Q 2: The place of good quality literature on the English curriculum for primary schools?

When she started teaching in late 1990 s her principal was an amazing educationalist, his approach to exploring literature was that you introduced good quality literature to children by reading literature to them at a level above what they were reading themselves to improve their vocabulary. This entailed a lot of preparation. You prepared a novel you were going to read to them. She was asked by her principal to read *The Hobbit* to 4th class and thought that was crazy, that there was no way they would be able, yet the effect it had on their own reading , encouraged them to read other books such as *Lord of the Rings* which they would not have

done otherwise. It influenced their writing as well as she choose writing linked to that topic. She thought it was pitched much too high when she was asked to read it but she was completely converted, after one year she said, 'this works'. She is a great advocate for using high quality literature but says it is hard work.

Q 3: Does it matter what methods you use?

She believes that it definitely does and thinks the teaching methods are important.

She views reading aloud as a great because children don't have the pressure trying to read through the words and therefore they can enjoy the literature which is very important. She thinks teachers should use various methods to teach literature but as regards good quality literature , reading aloud and letting them enjoy it is the key. It is so important that the teacher prepares and reads the book herself to decide on the vocabulary they were going to emphasise, or descriptions they intend calling their attention to .The teacher needs to know the book intimately herself. Other methods she recommends to improve interest in quality literature include art exercised, writing exercises and drama exercises-- all of which have to be prepared.

Q.4: Could you see value in using drama as a teaching method?

She was using drama before it was formally introduced in the 1999 curriculum, using novels and with history mostly. Drama is very effective when exploring novels or history because it can internalise the emotion that goes with literature, it makes the reader intimately connected to a novel, it explores the characters' motivations and you get a feel of how they think . By reading a book to them they get a certain amount of this as they are not concentrating on trying to read the words. Drama gives them time to reflect on the personalities in books.

Q5: Do you consider Shakespeare suitable for Primary?

Yes but it comes down to the skill of the teacher, like teaching Irish grammar. If Shakespeare became prescriptive you would see the most awful teaching of it and if you were to introduce something like Shakespeare a lot of parents would say 'that old thing and that old language in it', like they do for Irish.

Shakespeare etc not 'not recommended', she likes this, it leaves it up to teachers who have a strength in it to follow it and this is wonderful. Even to explore through Lamb or some of his poetry is good. It would be good to bring it in that way even oral story in junior classes, even showing a few pictures and when they come on it later they say' oh we did that before'. This would bring them over the language part of it.

Q6: Should there be a place for this literature on English Curriculum in primary?

We have established that there is a place for it, Oscar Wilde and children's stories really great for primary. There is great scope through the history curriculum for introducing and exploring these really important historical figures like Shakespeare etc. Regarding culture they are all very important including our own writers. Some people think when they hear about doing these writers 'oh God that is very heavy and I wouldn't know how to go about it'. **Q7**: **Literature for vocabulary and literacy skills**?

She really believes children develop language from reading good quality. The curriculum talks about modelling language. Teachers get used to using simpler language around children but if children are introduced to quality texts they remember the words and young children love big words and lap it up so language development is enhanced. Then teachers need to explore the new vocabulary and allow their pupils to use it in different contexts. When children hear GQ they are eager to read some of those books themselves .They are not put off by language or vocabulary but will ask for more, therefore they are getting into genres.

Q8: What would prevent young teachers or student teachers from using this literature?

The vast majority have not experienced an education like that themselves, most young teachers teach the way they were taught despite all the training, they fall back to whole class teaching depending on the context they are in. If they are subbing they are not going to break the mould as they are afraid they will be judged on it. There is also a huge lack of awareness, how this is necessary, so even if I would prompt and say what other reading do they do?, a teacher might say well they pick a library book, very few teachers read to children and the class novels that are used are very poor standard. Another reason, older teachers put young teachers saying you are full of your big ideas but you will learn. She emphasised that it is so necessary that the importance of literature is instilled into student teachers in training colleges while they are still full of enthusiasm. On her visits to classrooms she sees very little reading to infants in a pleasurable way and disagrees with the way big books are taught, predicting the life out of them. A teacher said to her 'I am following my timetable so rigidly I am afraid I won't get things done, so I am not enjoying teaching anymore' – the pressure is not coming from department but from the teachers themselves. If the curriculum became prescriptive it would be worse teachers would lose their creativity and teaching profession would not attract creative teachers.

Q 9: Basal Reader verses Literature?

She believes we would have better teaching if we did not have the basal , no way is one book suitable for a class, learning specific literacy skills. She visited a disadvantaged class. The children were using 3 novels which led to great discussion, the results were great. She saw great things. They were enjoying the reading they wanted to read, they enjoyed the

experience. Teachers need to inspire children to read and there is a place for Shakespeare here. The children need to see there is a place for all good writers.

What authors? She suggests Morpurgo, Dahl, Hughes's *The Iron Man* and some of Hughes's poetry once because it's age appropriate and some Shakespeare taught properly.

Teachers don't seem to realise that you can just do a novel for sheer pleasure. Too much analysing takes the good out of it. This turns children off literature. Teachers need to take books out of the library model.

For **junior cert** students she suggests reading a wide blend and not just studying one novel for two years as is the practice now.

Both primary and secondary teachers should realise the amount of freedom they have. The extra year for the primary teacher training may help? This is very positive but the emphasis will be on literacy not literature, literature is not valued. In post grad, far less exploration of children's literature in college now, in older B Ed. a lot of emphasis on children's literature and projects were done on books. Maybe with new course there will be more emphasis on Literature but with post graduate the authorities may not link with literature and literature has high potential to improve literacy standards

Q 10: CPD for teachers?

She emphasises that it all comes down to CPD. She learned to teach literature by being modelled by her principal. CFD could be done within schools, older teachers to model younger, like her principal modelled her when she was younger.

Appendix 11

Pupil Focus Group Interview

Questions for Focus Group (My Class)

1 Do you enjoy reading at school? What about at home?

2 What advantages are there in being a good reader?

3 What in your opinion in literature?

4 What do you think of Shakespeare and what plays can you name?

5 Which is your favourite?

6 What kind of books do you like to read?

7 Which do you prefer, to read books in class or at home?

8 When you are reading a book what advantage is using drama?

9 What is your favourite drama activity and why?

10 If I asked you to recommend a book to a friend, what book would it be?

11 Do you ever read online?

12 What would encourage you to read more?

13 Which do you prefer to do, choose your own books to read or to read books suggested by teacher?

14 Tell me about reading at home.

Pre Project Focus Group with Children in my class (content of interview)

7 of the 8 children present agreed that they enjoyed reading in school, with only 1 child saying he would rather use the computer. Yet all agreed that it's important to be able to read well, as there aremany times you have to read. When asked what literature is, their answers included -all the books they read, poems and plays including Shakespeare and short stories, and 'things we read online'. They discussed their experience of reading extracts from plays by Shakespeare such as *Romeo and Juliet*, and said that at first they thought they were difficult, but it was really exciting when they became the characters like Samson or Gregory or the Prince ordering fighting to stop. The majority agreed that it was nice to read old books like *A Christmas Carol* and *Oliver Twist* because 'although they are difficult they have new words and interesting characters'. 2 children said they only liked to act them out and would not like to read books like these on their own. When asked to compare the approaches of using drama to explore literature or reading texts and answering questions on them in class, the children discussed this together and came up with suggestions such as, 'when we act out the scenes or have improvisation the characters are real and you think you are in the place' and 'when I do drama on a story or a play I remember the story and the new words' (P 2 and P 6, Pre-Project Focus Group Interview, February 2012). They all agreed that everyone gets a chance to talk and most of all 'it's fun and the time goes really fast'. One child said that you can't have drama for every book and that she loved just reading books as well, but she didn't like answering questions. The other 7 agreed with this.

With regards to material they like to read, pupils indicated reading a diverse range of material, many reporting novels as their favourite genre, adding that they enjoyed fantasy, detective, comedy, adventure, mystery books and sometimes realistic or information books. Two of the children said they liked comics best as they were really funny and one boy said that reading football magazines was interesting. One child interjected 'I prefer short stories, as books are very long and I sometimes can't understand them' (P 4, Pre Project Focus Group Interview, February 2012). They said they never read newspapers except in school. When asked about reading online an example of their comments was 'I think reading online is great because you can find out everything about football and countries but it's not as good as reading a book' (P 8, Pre-Project Focus Group Interview, February 2012). Among the group there was disagreement on reading books that the teacher suggested, most children preferring to choose what they read, and 1 child saying that adults don't know what children like.

Others agreed and 1 child added 'I think it's better if the teacher reads the difficult books and explains them and then we can choose ourselves because I have re-read some of the books teacher read for us' (P 6, Pre-Project Focus Group Interview, February 2012) .

When asked what would encourage them to read more at home the following suggestions were given:

- If they had more time and less homework
- If the public library was nearer or if there were more books in the school library
- If they could meet the authors
- If books were easier to read and not so long
- If they could do drama on every story they read

They discussed reading at home and 3 out of the 8 children said that they were encouraged to read, mostly by their mother. The same 3 children went to the library every week. Only 1 child said that she reads with her mother, but 4 of the others stated that they were read to when they were younger. It is interesting to note that although all of the children said they liked to read at home, 6 indicated that they would prefer to watch television or play computer games than read in their leisure time.

Appendix 12

Past Pupil Questionnaire

I would be very grateful if you would fill in this questionnaire for me. I just want to know how you got on with Mr Shakespeare in secondary school and if having studied some of his work in Cooneal helped.

1 What Shakespeare play did you study for Junior Cert?

Romeo and Juliet

2 What play are you studying for your Leaving Cert?

Macbeth

3 Did you enjoy studying Shakespeare in secondary school?

Yes ☑ No ☐

Give reasons for your answer

I found it easy to understand, the themes appeal to modern audiences and it is a very powerful and exciting play.

4 Do you remember studying Shakespeare in primary school?

Yes ☑ No ☐

If you answered yes to question 5 please answer the following questions

5 What plays did you study in primary school?

The Tempest, Midsummers Night Dream

6 Did you enjoy studying Shakespeare in primary school?

Yes ☑ No ☐

7 Did your experience of studying Shakespeare in primary school help you understand his plays in secondary school better?

Yes ☑ No ☐

Please comment

I found the language easier to understand as I was familiar with it from primary school

8 Did you use drama to explore any of the plays you did in secondary school?

Yes ☐ No ☑

9 Did you take part in any Shakespearean performance since you left Cooneal N.S.

Yes ☐ No ☑

---

10 If you visited Stratford or The Globe when you were in primary school, did that experience help you develop a better interest in the work of Shakespeare in secondary school?

Yes ☑ No ☐

It was a very helpful experience, It was great to see actors on stage in The Globe and I learnt a lot about Shakespeares background.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. May I take this opportunity to wish you the best of luck in your Leaving Cert.

Martha

Appendix 13

Letter to My Pupils' Parents

.....N.S.

12-9-2012

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As part of my PhD study in Trinity College, I am conducting a research project on the benefits of using drama to teach literature to primary school children. I request permission from you as parent/guardian for your child to participate. Participation in this study will consists of:

- Your child will be asked to complete a short questionnaire on his/her views of the benefits of literature and on how drama helped develop interest and enjoyment of the literature studied.
- Your child may take part in a focus group interview on the same theme and his/her answers and opinions may be recorded for use in the results of my research.
- During the course of the academic year 2011-2012 the class will take part in a study on teaching quality literature through drama and your child will be asked to record his//her views on the drama and literature classes. Quotations from these journals may be included in the results of my research.

The project will be explained in terms that your child can understand, and your child will participate only if he or she is willing to do so. At the conclusion of the study, children's responses will be reported as group results only and no reference will be made to any individual. If a child's written work or art is displayed it will not include the child's name. Group photographs of the children may be included in the results of the research. Activities may be audio- or videotaped or digitally recorded but no names will accompany images.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not wish your child to participate alternative supervision arrangements will be made for him/her. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect the teaching normally provided to your child

Should you have any questions or desire further information, please call me 0879582854.

Thank you for your co-operation,

Yours sincerely,

Martha O Shaughnessy

Please indicate whether or not you wish to allow your child to participate in this project by checking one of the statements below, signing your name and *returning the permission slip to me before Sept 30th.* 2011

---------- I grant permission for my child to participate in Martha O Shaughnessy's study on the use of drama to teach good quality literature in primary school.

_____ I do not grant permission for my child to participate in Martha O Shaughnessy's study on the use of drama to teach good quality literature in primary school.

_____ _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian Printed Parent/Guardian Name

_____ _____

Name of Child Date

Appendix 14

Letter to Participating Teachers' Pupils' Parents

..... N.S.

24-2-2012

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As part of my PhD study in Trinity College, your child's class teacher has volunteered to become a participant in the study. I am conducting a research project on the benefits of using drama to teach literature to primary school children and your child's teacher will be a co-researcher. I request permission from you as parent/guardian for your child to participate. Participation in this study will consist of:

- Your child will be asked to complete a short questionnaire on his/her views of the benefits of literature and on how drama helped develop interest and enjoyment of the literature studied.

- From February to April 2012 your child will take part in a study on teaching quality literature through drama and he/she will be asked to record his//her views on the drama and literature classes in an observation journal. Quotations from these journals may be included in the results of my research.

The project will be explained in terms that your child can understand, and your child will participate only if he or she is willing to do so. At the conclusion of the study, children's responses will be reported as group results only and no reference will be made to any individual. If a child's written work or art is displayed it will not include the child's name. Group photographs of the children may be included in the results of the research. Activities may be audio- or videotaped or digitally recorded but no names will accompany images.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not wish your child to participate alternative supervision arrangements will be made for him/her. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect the teaching normally provided to your child

Should you have any questions or desire further information, please contact your child's teacher or call me 0879582854.

Thank you for your co-operation,

Yours sincerely,

Martha O Shaughnessy

Please indicate whether or not you wish to allow your child to participate in this project by checking one of the statements below, signing your name and *returning the permission slip to me before February 29th 2012*

---------- I grant permission for my child to participate in Martha O Shaughnessy's study on the use of drama to teach good quality literature in primary school.

_____ I do not grant permission for my child to participate in Martha O Shaughnessy's pstudy on the use of drama to teach good quality literature in primary school.

_____ _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

Name of Child

_____

Appendix 15

Letter to Principals in Participating Schools

..... N.S.

17-2-2012 ,

As part of my PhD study in Trinity College, one of the teachers in your school has volunteered to become a participant in the study. I am conducting a research project on the benefits of using drama to teach literature to primary school children and (name of teacher) will be a co-researcher. I request permission from you as principal of the school to allow this research to take place in (name of teacher) 's class over a period of four weeks. The children in the class will be asked to:

- complete a short questionnaire on their views of the benefits of literature and on how drama helps develop interest and enjoyment of the literature studied.

- take part in a study on teaching quality literature through drama and he/she will be asked to record his//her views on the drama and literature classes in a journal. Quotations from these journals may be included in the results of my research.

The project will be explained in terms that your child can understand, and a child will participate only if he or she is willing to do so. At the conclusion of the study, children's responses will be reported as group results only and no reference will be made to any individual. If a child's written work or art is displayed it will not include the child's name. Group photographs of the children may be included in the results of the research. Activities may be audio- or videotaped or digitally recorded but no names will accompany images.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Parents will be asked to give permission for their child to participate and informed that If they do not wish their child to participate alternative supervision arrangements will be made for him/her. A copy of the letter for parents is enclosed and will only be sent out when your permission is given.

Thank you and if you do agree, I hope that participating in the project will benefit the pupils in your school.

Should you have any questions or desire further information, please call me 0879582854.

Thank you for your co-operation,

Yours sincerely,

Martha O Shaughnessy

Please indicate whether or not you wish to allow your school to participate in this project by checking one of the statements below, signing your name and *returning the permission slip to me before February 24th 2012*

---------- I grant permission for the pupils in (name of teacher)'s class to participate in Martha O Shaughnessy's study on the use of drama to teach good quality literature in primary school.

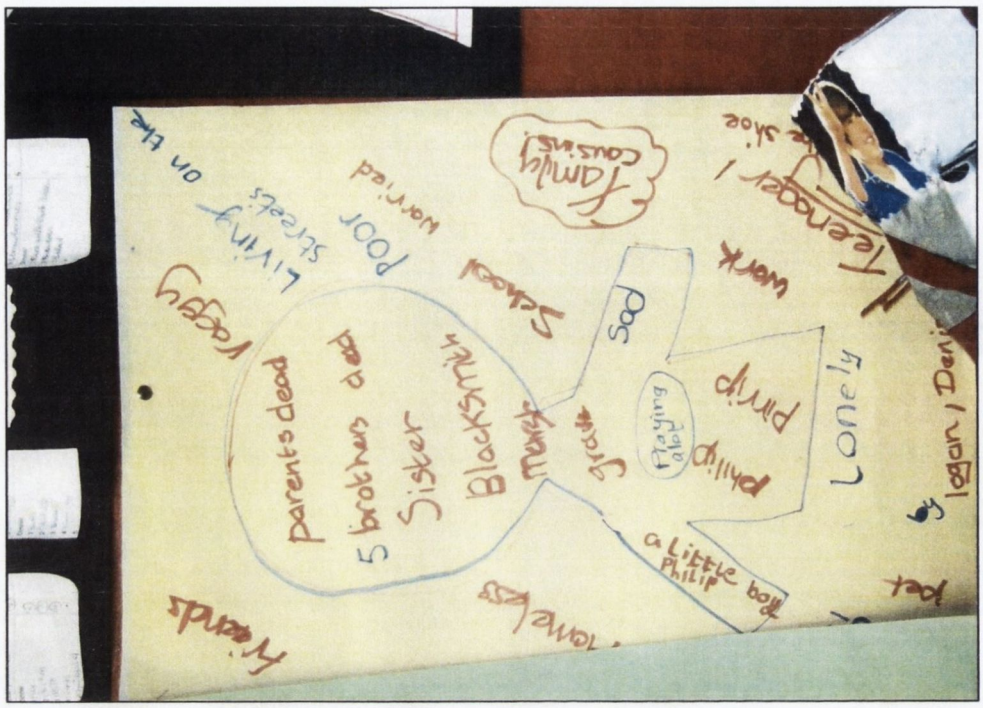
_____ I do not grant permission for the pupils in (name of teacher)'s class to participate in Martha O Shaughnessy's study on the use of drama to teach good quality literature in primary school.

_____ _____

Signature of Principal Date

Appendix 16

Participant Pupils' Work


parents dead
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Friends
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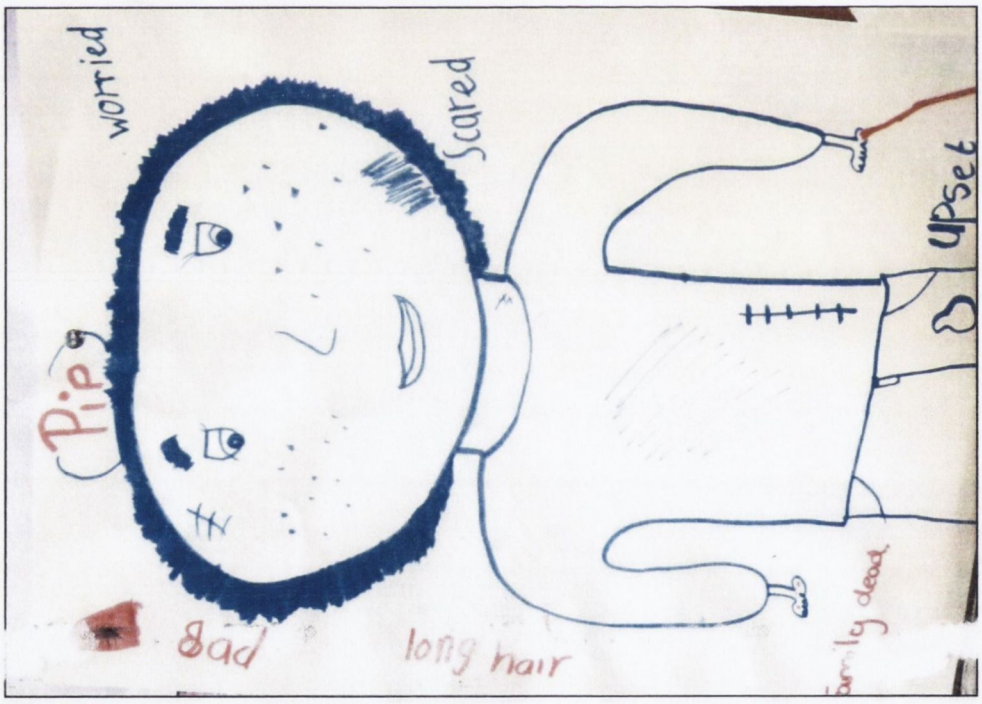
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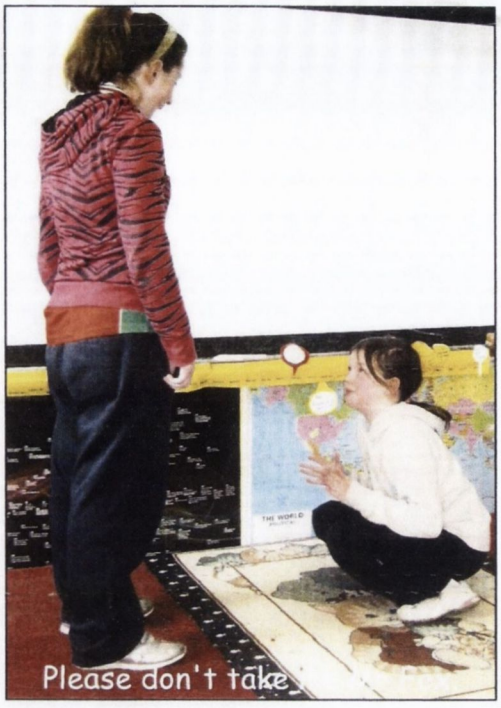
Now I have you.


Please don't take

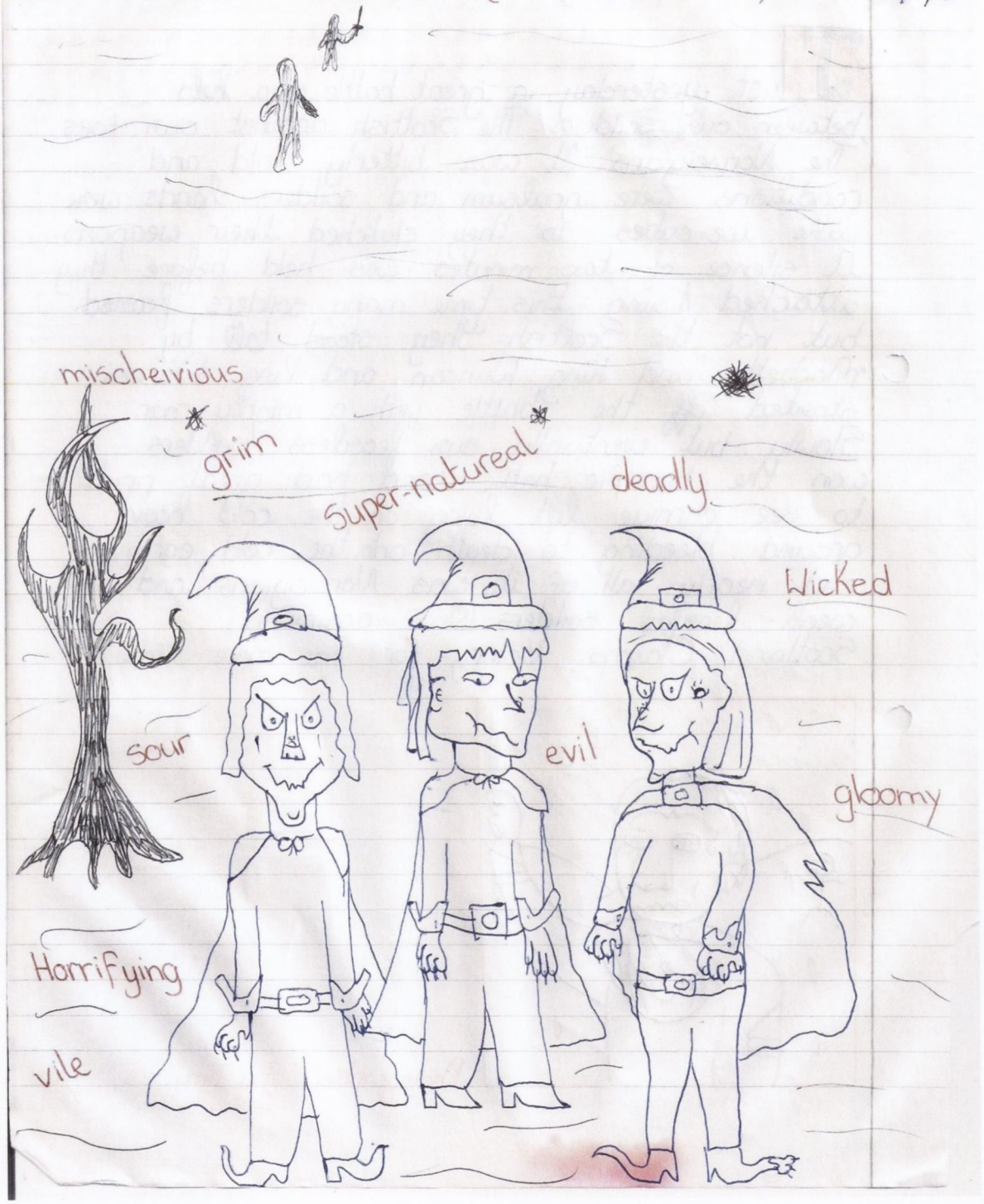

Conscience alley follow the stream....

An extract from "Crashed" by

His eyes wandered to the wreck of his plane. It was a shadow of what it once was. The shrapnel that had not long ago been an LKH1V lay in the remnants of a buckthorn grove not far away. A pleasant zephyr blew through the air and brought with it the smell of food. He sniffed. "Yes", he thought. "Definitely some rabbits around. With the slightest hint of pheasant".

Gun in hand, he set off. Weaving intricately between the gnarled yews, he reached the path that he took regularly for hunting. He dared not to get too close to the warren, for the rabbits would pick up his scent and evacuate. He trained his gun on a plump and juicy looking buck lying on a bed of ferns. Squinting his eye, he counted down from three and fired.

Barron Heath - 3 witches (THE SUPERNATUREAL) 1/2/12



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31/1/12

'The Glamis News'

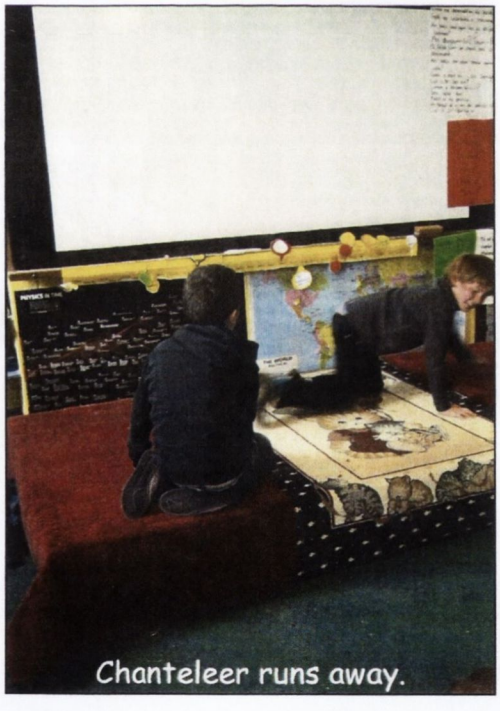
Just yesterday, a great battle was held between our soildesr. The Scottish against our foe's The Norweigians. It was bitterly cold and conditions were grulsum and soilders hands were like ice-cubes as they clutched their weapons. A silence of two minutes was held before they attacked. During this time, many soilders feared but not the Scottish. They stood tall by Macbeth and King Duncan, and King Duncan started off the battle with a mighty roar. Slowly, but eventually our fearless soilders won the horrific battle, and had great pride to see carnige left lying on the cold, hard ground, bleeding to death onto the cold earth, and nearly all of it was Norweigians and weak, fearful soilders. Once again, Scotland Claims Victory for one more time.



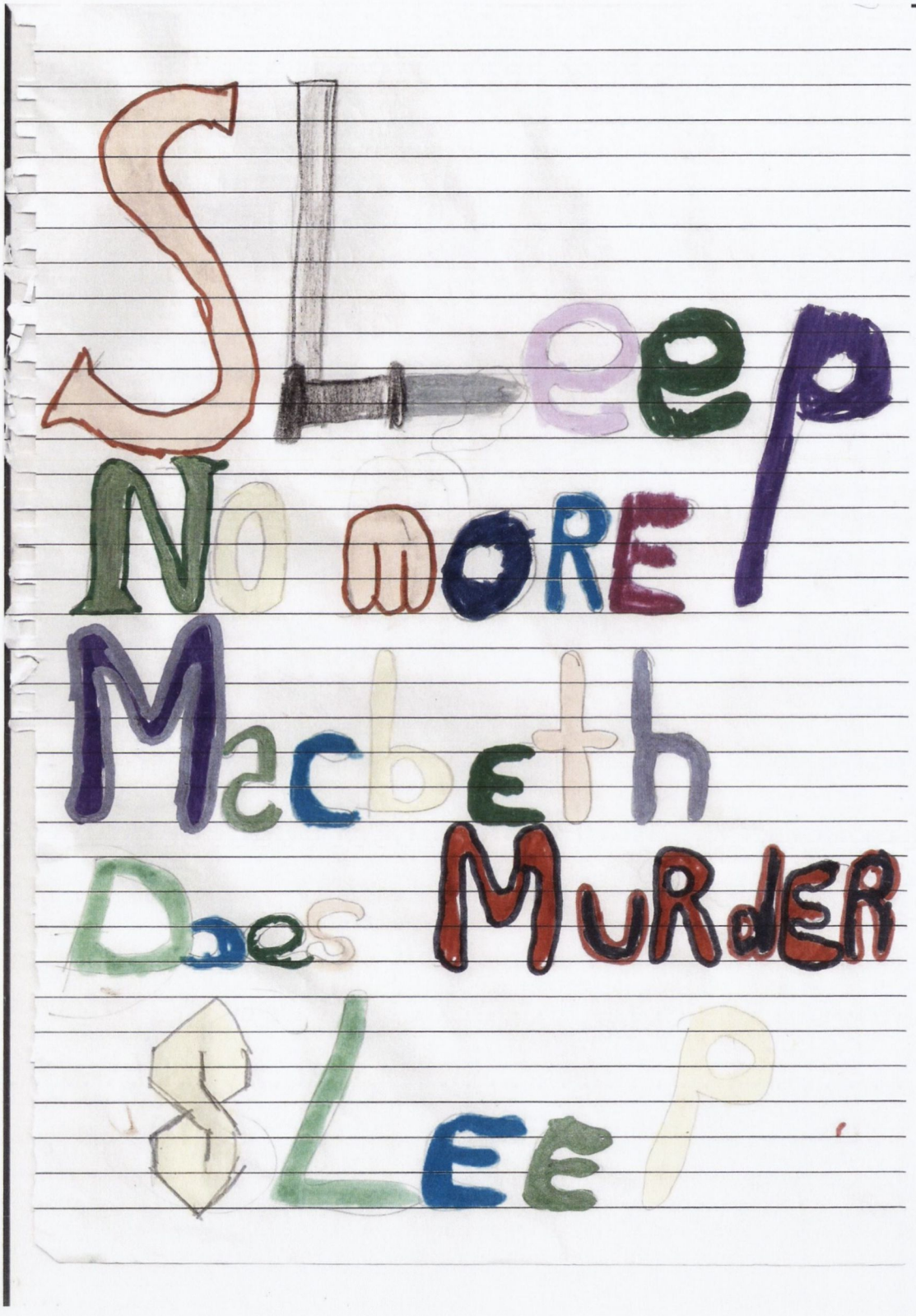
Photographer: Jim Tim

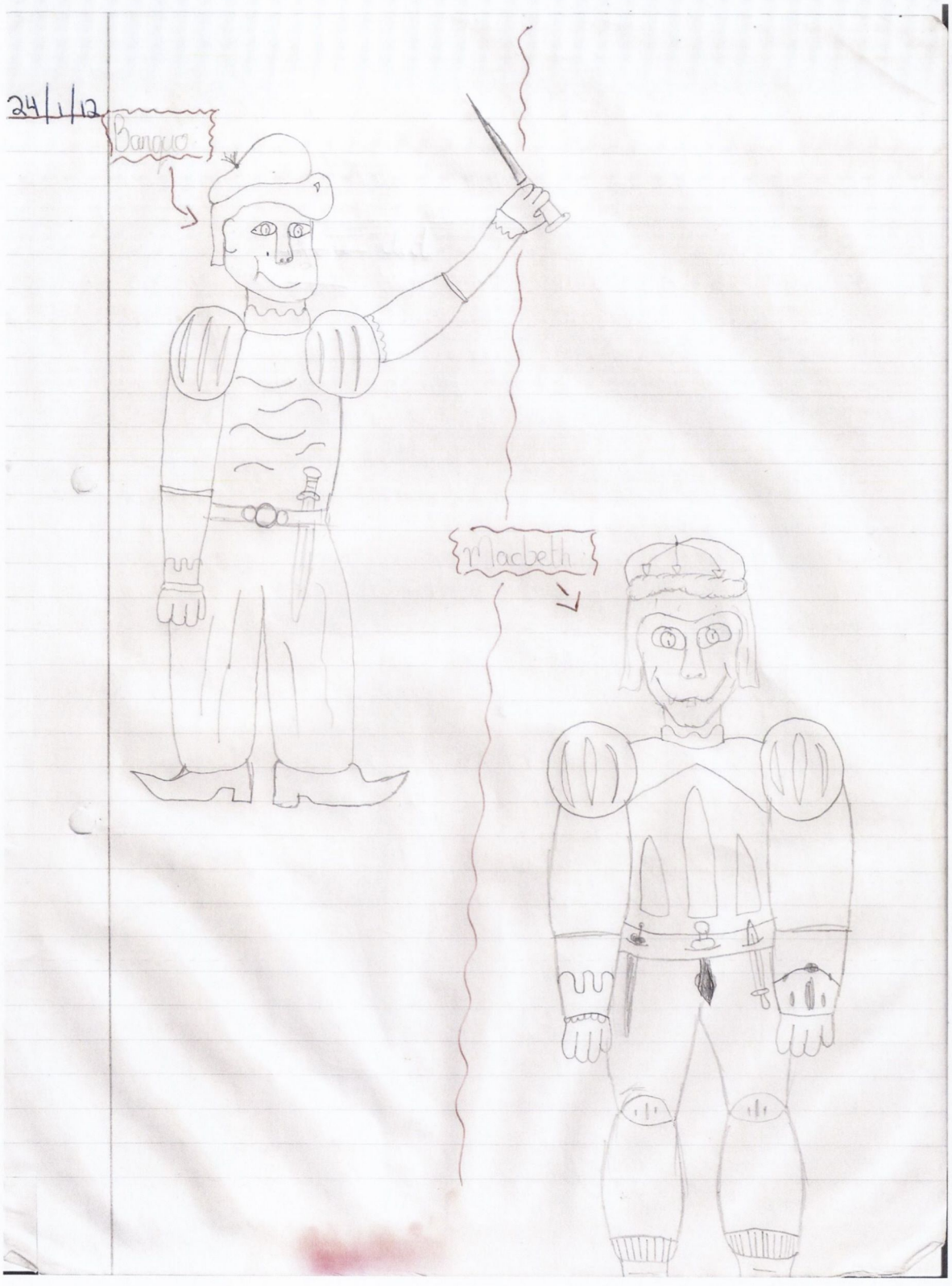

Chant


The fox carries away Chantaleer


Chanteleer runs away.


You have a lovely voice, just like your father.


Sleep
No more!
Macbeth
Does Murder
Sleep

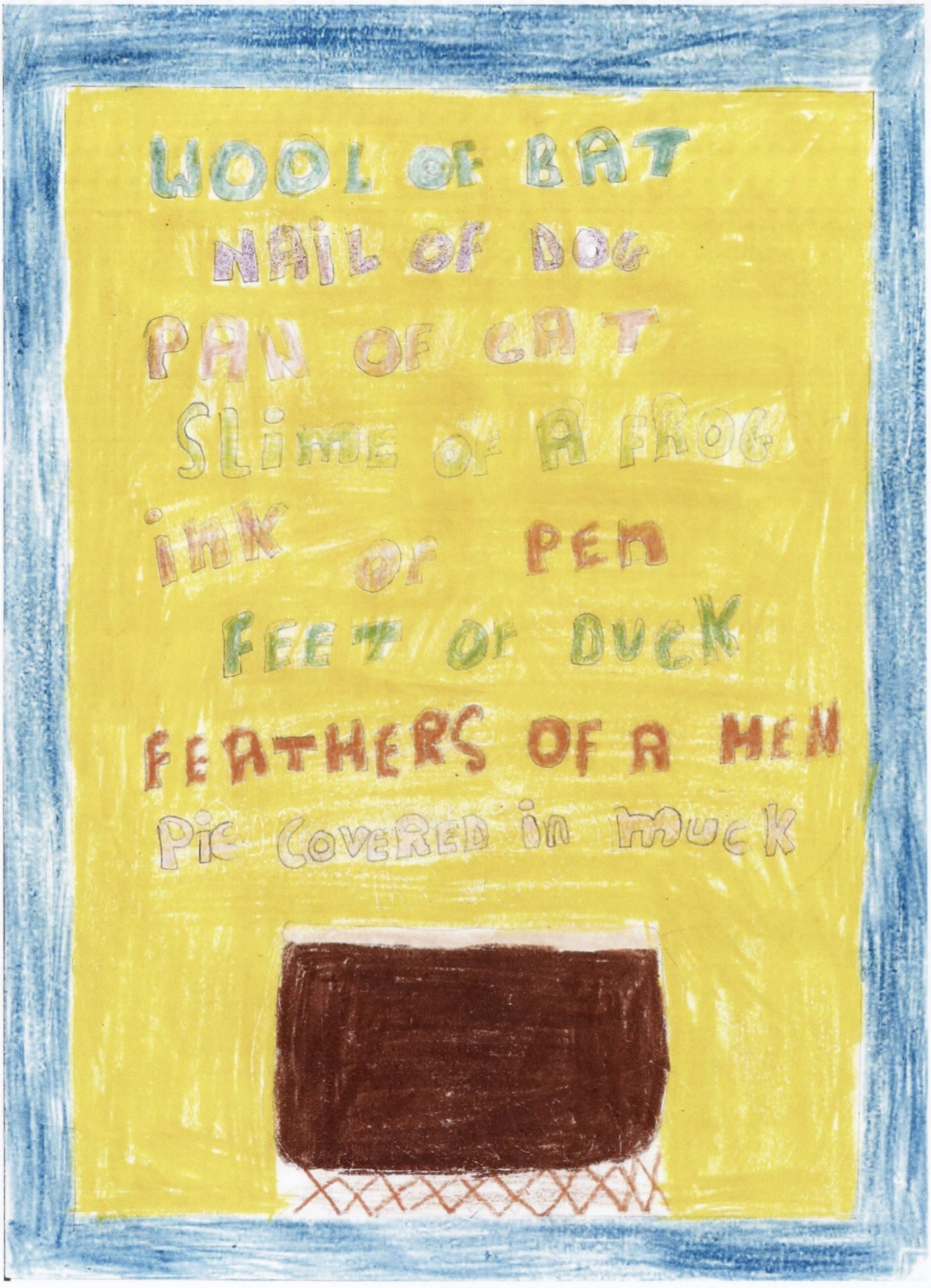

24/1/12
Banquo
Macbeth

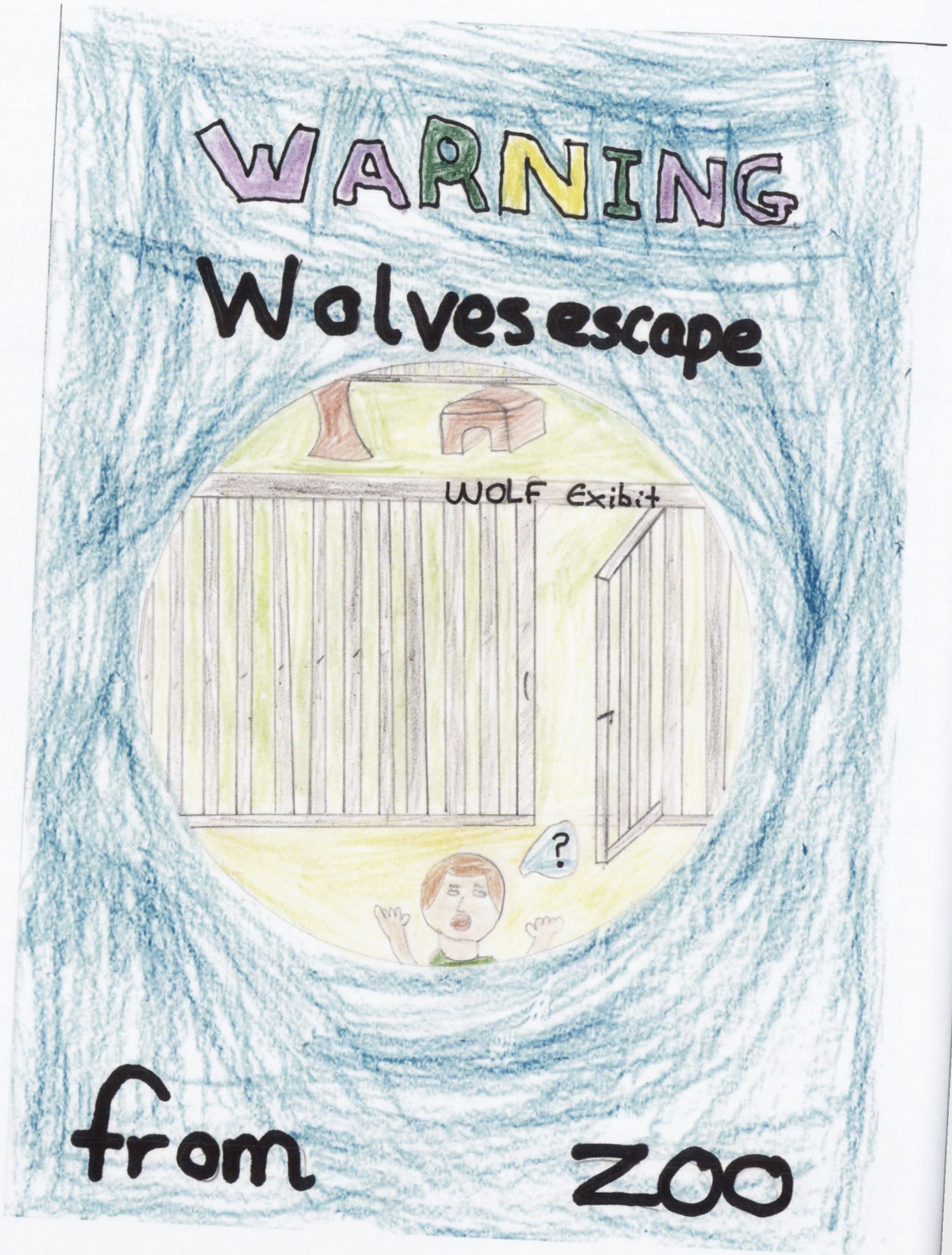
The battle

Ciara Langan reporting for the Glamis news:
The great armies of Scoland and Norway were all ready in their posicions on the battle field. The wind whisled through the sourrending. Holding a grip on their wepons was their cold blistered. There was dreadful moment of silence and every one stod still and held their breaths just waiting for that call for the battle to begin. Then King Duncan of Scotland let out a great roar

After all the gun fire ended Soldiers suddenly became awar of what was going on across the battle field there were injured and dieing friends and enemies alike bleeding out on to the cold earth They once again felt that cold gust of air again




WOOL OF BAT
NAIL OF DOG
PAW OF CAT
SLIME OF A FROG
INK OF PEN
FEET OF DUCK
FEATHERS OF A HEN
PIG COVERED IN MUCK


WARNING
Wolves escape
WOLF Exibit
?
from
ZOO

Mr Fox's Diary

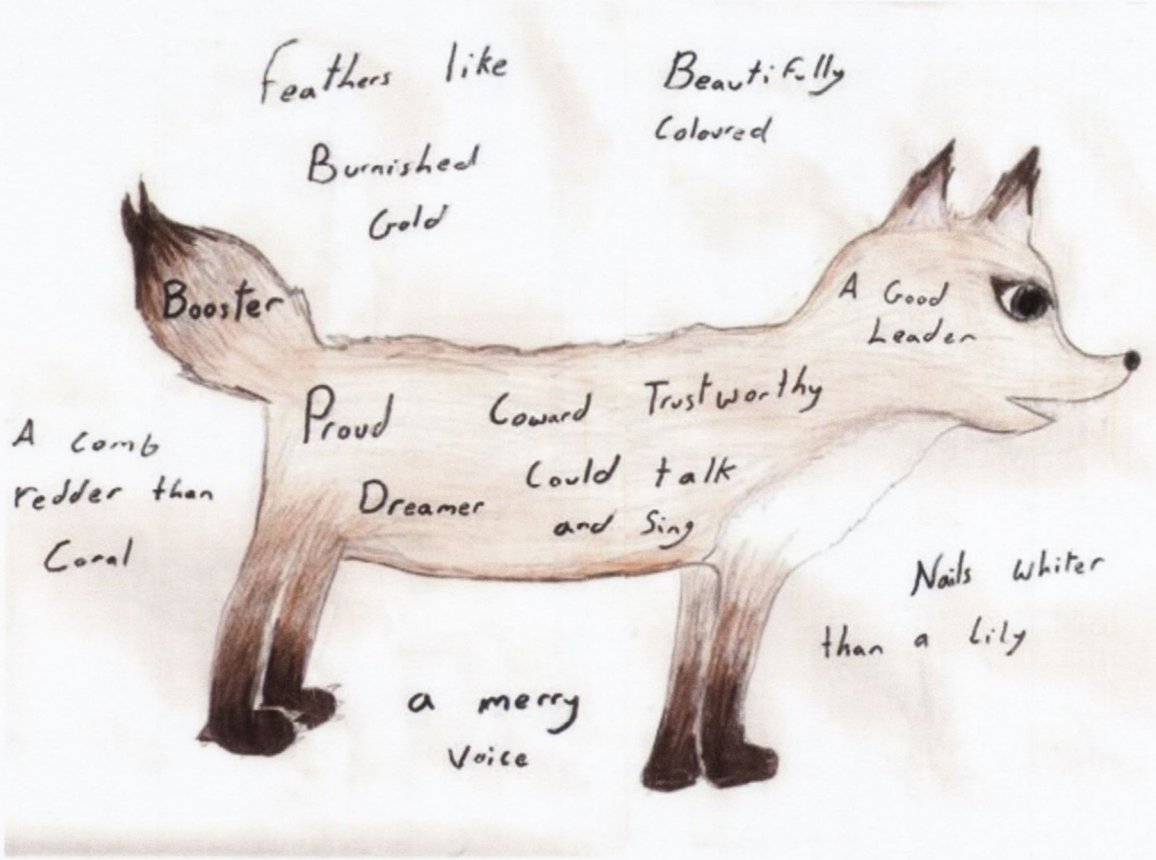
Today I am going to catch a fox for my dinner I saw one with burnished feathers in the farm and I heard him talking to his wife Petticote. I don't like her because she is a hen and has not fast like azure. I can't wait to get my teeth into him and his shining feathers.

Yum Yum

Here I come

My Diary

I am Chanticleer the fox and I had a dream about a big huge monster like a big red hound. He jumped at me and tried to seize me and eat me up with my beautiful wealthers and all. I saw his eyes glowed like a big fire. I fully got a fright but I woke up and it was all a dream.


Feathers like
Burnished
Gold
Beautifully
Coloured
Booster
A Good
Leader
Proud
Coward
Trustworthy
A comb
redder than
Coral
Dreamer
Could talk
and Sing
Nails whiter
than a Lily
a merry
Voice

The Canterbury People

23rd June
1390

Mr Reddy Fox appeared in court today because he tried to kidnap a very special fox called Charticker on O hara's farm. After an ordeal of about half an hour the fox escaped uninjured. The judge praised this fox for his courage but warned all present in the court not to be taken by flattery. The fox was charged with illegally entering the private farm and with disturbing all the hens and also with cheating the fox The fox apologised to the cock. To punish him the judge said he would cut off his tail. But Petelote the cocks wife – well one of his wives said she forgave him and to give him another chance. Everyone left the court very happy.

Dear Lord
Watch over us as we travel
Keep us safe wherever we go
Especially on the roads
During tough journys
Through hail and snow
Amen

Soldier 1: Ahhhh that was great

Soldier 2: It feels so good to have destroyed your bigest enemys whole army

Soldier 1: tell me about it! you should have seen the look on his face When he saw he was about to lose.

Soldier 2: He went screaming like a little girl waving a white flag when he saw me charge at him

Soldier 1: See here? This is the place I was slashed with a knife. And I still carried on with the battle!

Soldier 2: Ha! that tiny scrape! Check this

I got sliced about five times there

Soldier 1: Ha! by a cat!?

Soldier 2: Well anyway I am wrecked!

Soldier 1: Same here. See you later.

Soldier 2: Bye

Parisian Menu

First Coarse

Miniature Pastries filled either with Cod Liver or Beef Marrow.
A Cameline meat "Brewel" (Peices of meat in a thin Cinamin Sauce)
Beef Marrow fritters
Eeals in a thick spicey Puree
Loch in a Cold green Sauce flavoured with Spices and sage
Large Cuts of roast or Boiled meat
Saltwater Fish.

Second Course

"The Best Roast that may be had"
Freshwater fish
Broth with Bacon.
A meat title (Peices of chicken or veal, Simmered, Sauteed Served in a Spiced Sauce of Pounded Crayfish tails, almond and toasted Bread and Garnished with whole Crayfish tails.)
Capon Pasties and Crisps
Breem and eel Pasties
Blang Mang

Third Course

Frumenty
Venison
Lampreys with hot Sauce
Fritters
Roast Bream and Darioles
Sturgeon
Jellies!

Boys finger's Gets Caught In machine and gets Ripped off. Master Gives No Pity

In a blacking factory last week a young boy was caught asleep on the job and when his master came along he got whipped so hard he must have jumpid a metre off his chair.



But Sadly when he finally got back to work the machine took two of his fingers with it. The man who owns the factory should have been very sorry for the child and helped his poor hand but instead he whipped him again and told him to: "get back to work or I'll Kill you!"



Report

Ruby Stolen from Sword Hilt of famous statue.

A Ruby has been stolen from the sword hilt of famous statue. It suspected that a robber or one of the poor have taken it. Its a massive shock that some one would accualy commit a crime like this. Some people have been interviewed. But some locals are saying they saw a little swallow take it. Police don't belive them. This Ruby is said to be worth thousands or even millions. Top detectives our still working on the case. Thats all from Olivia Gray Sky News.

Dear queen Victoria.

Hellooo mam, I would like to bring to your atention that child labour is at its worst, there was a number of insidients that happend in coal mines and factorys. For instant a young boy was working in a cotton mill, he was working for 14 hours solid and was very tired. He sat down and in a blink he was fast asleep, his two fingers got stuck and are badly damaged they may never grow back. When his parent told the manager he said he could do nothing about it. The little boy cant not work, his parents are very poor and need the money. The damage is being done and its child labour. You need to do something about it, little children that are working dont get paid much at all. Please do something.

Yours Sincerly

Miss. Bonalumbercalls

16th of April Year 1840

Tragedy in cotton mill

There was a terrible tragedy in a cotton mill somewhere in the west.
A tired boy was taking a rest. The boy feel asleep straight away.
The owner of the mill slapped the boy. The boy woke up and got to work.
Soon the man hit a boy for not working fast enough.
The boy was so confused and tired from the beatings that he got his fingers crushed. The owner didn't care as long as he made money. The boy continued to work he was afraid to tell the owner of the mill what happened. The boys leg soon got caught in a machine. His leg broke and he was stuck under the machine.
A kind boy helped him to get out.
The boy helped him get home too.
He got home safely. His Mother and father were astonished. His parents were robbed a day after and they could not afford to pay for their house anymore.
Now the family have to fend for themselves on the streets of Nottingham.

Diary:

Monday:

Well the factory was a complete MESS! I heard that a boy in a cotton Mill lost two fingers in a tragic accident. Well he was lucky. In a nail factory the master put nails their EARS!!

Tuesday:

I hate the stupid master! He clogged (whipped) three workers! I managed to escape this punishment.

Wednesday:

When I was on my way home it rained and all the dirt, filth and sewage formed a gooey river of sludge.
Horrible!

Victorian Independent.

Yesterday I witnessed a child lying on the ground at the cotton mill around 10am. The master came in with a whip and hit him hard and he ran over to the machine half asleep. I heard the master saying "these kids are not working hard enough". He told the child to work harder. The childs hand got caught in a machine and his two fingers got chopped off. The master still forced him to work.

Later on two kid's brought him home. The parents were terrified. "I want to see the master right now" the childs Mum said. The parents wrapped his hand in cloth.

Around 1pm the master came. The parents shouted at the master and said "Children should not be working this hard. Children have a right to a ten-hour sleep. The master went back to the cotton Mill

29/3/12 Macbeth

Dear Lady Macbeth,

They met me after our glorious battle. They had great news for me. Before I could question them any deeper they instantly vanished. As I was in awe at what had just happend, the King arrived who called by the name of "Thane of Caydor". This was exactly what the three witches had told me, that I was going to be the Thane of Caydor and soon will be King.
But it is important that this shall be a secret between us. My lips are sealed and I hope yours are too!

Farwell,
Macbeth