



uOttawa

L'Université canadienne
Canada's university

**FACULTÉ DES ÉTUDES SUPÉRIEURES
ET POSTDOCTORALES**



uOttawa

L'Université canadienne
Canada's university

**FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND
POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES**

Veena Balsawer

AUTEUR DE LA THÈSE / AUTHOR OF THESIS

M.A. (Education)

GRADE / DEGREE

Faculty of Education

FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT / FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

***“Once Upon a Story:” Entering Into the World of Stories to Exp-Lore the Imaginary and (Re)Living-
Through Experiences of Children***

TITRE DE LA THÈSE / TITLE OF THESIS

Cynthia Morawski

DIRECTEUR (DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS SUPERVISOR

CO-DIRECTEUR (CO-DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS CO-SUPERVISOR

Raymond LeBlanc

Patricia Palulis

Gary W. Slater

Le Doyen de la Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales / Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

“Once upon a story:” Entering into the world of stories to explore the imaginary
and (re)living-through experiences of children

by

Veena Balsawer

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Education

University of Ottawa

June 2010

© Veena Balsawer, Ottawa, ON, Canada, 2010



Library and Archives
Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-73780-4
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-73780-4

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.


Canada

Abstract

Let us try to learn from children all they have to tell us
-- Anna Freud, as cited in Coles, 1986, p.15.

Reading is a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances (Rosenblatt, 1982). An interest in working with children, and an intrigue in the ways children transact with the stories they hear and/or read has turned me into a “Storycatcher” (Baldwin, 2005). As a storycatcher-researcher, I ventured into the world of stories at the Ottawa Public Library in order to explore the narrative transactions of children between the ages of 3 and 6 years old. My Storycatching is a narrative within a narrative because my focus is on the four (4) child-storytellers’ verbal and pictorial narratives, as they embody the literary transactions between themselves, their imaginations, and their live(d) experiences in response to the stories they hear during storytimes at the library.

Acknowledgement

I wish to thank everyone who made it possible for me to (ad)venture into Storyland for my Storycatching. Dr. Cynthia Morawski, my thesis supervisor, thank you for your loving guidance, encouragement, and inspiration throughout my Storycatching venture. Thank you for gently guiding me through all the turns and the speed bumps in my M.A. journey, and for never giving up on me even when I felt lost in Storyland.

My heartfelt thanks to my committee members who along with Prof. Morawski helped me fulfill my dream. Dr. Pat Palulis, thank you for sharing your books, insights and ideas with me along with the many cups of chai, and for encouraging me to finish this thesis for my mother. Dr. Raymond Leblanc, thank you for your insights, and for sharing in my joy and enthusiasm for Storycatching and for storylands.

I want to thank the Ottawa Public Library and the Library Management Board for giving me an opportunity to enter into the world of stories as a storycatcher-researcher. Thank you to all my friends at the Ottawa Public Library who have shared their stories with me. I am very grateful to Josephine Norton for always being there for me, to Linda Bonder for encouraging me to go Storycatching at the library, and to Jean McCarthy and Deborah Dearham, for supporting my Storycatching adventures.

Thank you Kathleen (Zelda) Moore, I couldn't have done this without your friendship and your passion, and enthusiasm for children and children's stories. A very special thanks to all the child-storytellers: LittleOne, BigSister, DW, TheAlien and to the moms for letting me enter into your Storyland space and for sharing your insightful stories, and your drawings with me. Your words, your whispers, your giggles, and your laughs will stay with me forever.

Thank you to all my friends (on and off the campus) for encouraging me through the many versions of my Storycatching. I would particularly like to thank Kristof Avramsson, Dale Crichton, Barbara Cuerden, Olga Fellus, Maria Gordon, Elizabeth Hauptmann-Rovers, Sanskruti Jogalekar, Sumedha Jogalekar, Donatille Mujawamariya, Ilafond Racine, Linda Radford, Claire Smith, Ross Valliant (my financial counselor), Diane Watt, and Gillian Williamson for looking out for me when I got lost in Storyland. Your friendship has meant a lot to me.

Thank you Dianne Tanner for always believing in me and for the emotional, spiritual, and moral support you have provided me throughout this journey.

I am very grateful to my brother Kishore Balsawer, and to my cousin Vasudha Kailaje for being a valuable part of *my life story*.

My pranaams and salutations to my parents and grandparents, and to all my gurus, teachers, and professors for guiding me through this journey called *Life*.

Finally, I wish to thank the administrative staff at the Faculty of Education, and at the University of Ottawa for patiently answering all my queries and for helping me in this venture.

In loving memory of the best Storytellers in my life

(My parents)

Sheetala & Gurudatt Balsawer

&

(My grandparents)

Krishnabai & Umanath Balsawer

Leela & Vaman Kailaje

To Leena-Rose

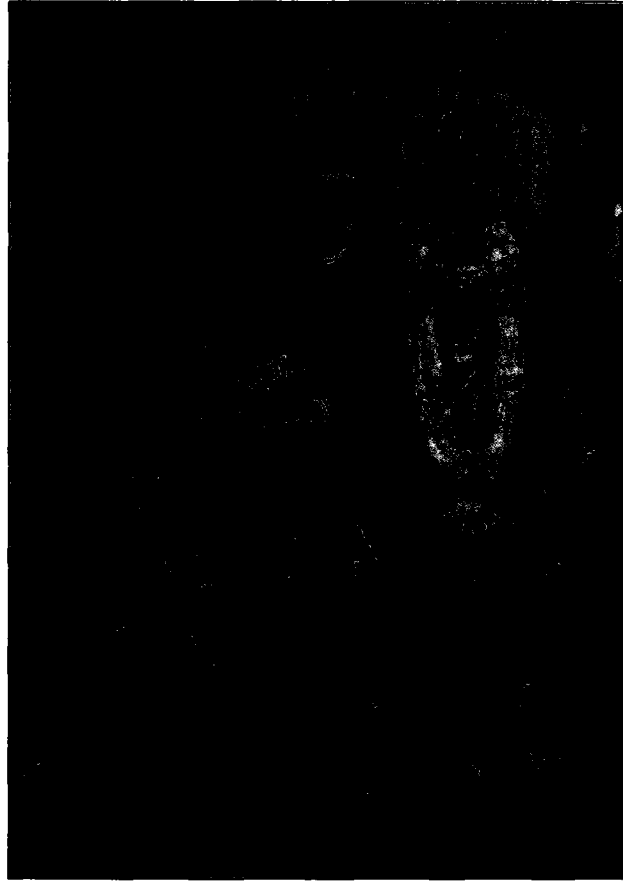
Our future storyteller

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
An Invocation.....	1
Storycatcher’s Story	2
Research Threads	4
Rationale.....	4
<i>From experience to inquiry</i>	4
<i>Exploring children’s literary transactions</i>	6
Literature Review	7
<i>Lore of Stories</i>	8
<i>Entry into the world of stories</i>	9
<i>Inhabiting (sub)liminal spaces through stories</i>	10
<i>Library as Storytime hub</i>	12
<i>Multimodal Transactions</i>	14
Methodology - Narrative Storycatching	16
<i>The path to Storyland (Choosing the Research Site)</i>	18
<i>Storycatching at the OPL (Research Steps, Recruiting Participant Storytellers, and Data Collection)</i>	19
<i>Storytellers-Participants</i>	20
<i>Stepping into a world of stories</i>	21
Storyland Transactions	26
<i>A typical Thursday afternoon storytime at OPL</i>	26
<i>Storyland session #1 Introductions</i>	27
<i>Storyland session #2</i>	31
<i>Storyland session #3</i>	35
<i>Storyland session #4</i>	41
<i>Storyland Session #5</i>	45
<i>Storyland session #6</i>	49
<i>Storyland Session #7</i>	55
<i>Storyland Session #8</i>	60
Conversation with Participants	66
<i>Zelda’s performance of reading (her stance in choosing the books to read during storytime)</i>	66
<i>Child-storytellers’ stances to the library and to stories</i>	69
<i>Parents’ narratives</i>	70

<i>Parents' insights about the library storytime</i>	70
<i>Parents' views on family storytimes</i>	72
Storycatcher's Musings	74
Emerging and Intertwining Themes	76
<i>Everyday performance of reading and storytelling</i>	76
<i>Inter-play (Intertextuality) between the world of stories and the lived world of experiences</i>	80
<i>Shifting positions of power in Storyland</i>	83
Unraveling and interweaving the storied threads	87
Challenges	91
Stories and Storytelling in Education	92
After Storycatching	94
References	96
Picture Books Read During Storycatching	104
Song CD's played during storytimes	105
Appendix A: Recruitment Text to participants	106
Appendix B: Verbal Assent Form	108
Appendix C: Consent Form and Information Letter for parents	109
Appendix D: Consent Form and Information Letter for librarians/storytellers	112
Appendix E: Questionnaire for children	115
Appendix F: Questionnaire for children's librarian	116
Appendix G: Questionnaire for Parents	117
Appendix H: Storytime Session weekly conversation Schedule	118
Appendix I: I went Storycatching and what did I hear?	123

An Invocation



*Fig.1 Dhruva (North Star) and Lord Vishnu
Painting by my mother Sheetala Balsawer (née Kailaje)*

This painting is an interpretation of the mythological story of Dhruva¹ or the North Star as seen through my mother's (Sheetala Balsawer) eyes. All through my childhood, I loved listening to stories; especially the story of the brave, determined, and fearless young Dhruva and of his fierce devotion to his goal. As I embark on my Storycatching venture, I invoke the blessings of Dhruva, my parents, and my teachers (gurus) to guide me through my journey.

¹ Story of Dhruva: <http://www.workingchild.org/Dhruva1.htm>

The individual reader has seldom been acknowledged as carrying on [the reader's] own special and peculiar activities. There is a great difference between the concept of the reader as a passive "audience" and the kind of visibility that I claim for the reader -- Rosenblatt, 1978, p.4.

Storycatcher's Story

I grew up in a family of story-tellers. As far as I can remember, my mother and grandmother always told us stories; sometimes in the form of poems, riddles, songs, chants, and nonsense rhymes. There was a story or poem for every occasion and for every event in our lives; There were stories for *Munch ~ Lunch ~ Crunch*.

Stories for

W
A
L
K
I
N
G...

Stories for sharing, stories about good and bad behaviour, family stories, and of course bed time stories. There were stories of mythological Gods, Goddesses and their Avatars (incarnations), of epic heroes and heroines, of kings and queens in faraway lands, of saints and sinners, stories with morals and stories of ordinary people who conquered their worlds through their daily struggles. Most of these stories were told during lunchtime or dinnertime so that we would sit in one place and eat our food. Even after we learned to read on our own, and borrowed story books from the library, or from our friends, we would insist on stories around the dining table. At times, we children would dress-up as our favourite characters in my mother's old sarees, and enact these epic stories to entertain ourselves, and others in the family.

This childhood enchantment of “falling into a book at every possible opportunity” (Spufford, 2002, p.10) has led me to a lifelong fascination for stories, books, literature, and libraries. For my M.A. thesis venture, I instinctively entered into a world of stories as a storycatcher-researcher, in order to exp-lore² and to catch the literary “transactions” (Rosenblatt, 1982) of children during storytimes held at the Ottawa Public Library (OPL).

According to Rosenblatt (1982):

Reading is a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances. I use John Dewey’s term, transaction, to emphasize the contribution of both reader and text. The words in their particular pattern stir up elements of memory, activate areas of consciousness. The reader, bringing past experience of language and of the world to the task sets up tentative notions of a subject, of some framework into which to fit the ideas as the words unfurl (p. 268).

As a teacher-librarian³, I am intrigued by how young children narratively transact with the stories they hear and/or read in order to create meaning(s), to form and define their own identities and their ‘realities’, and to make sense of the constantly evoking and evolving world(s) around them. My interest in working with children, literature, stories, and libraries has turned me into a “Storycatcher” (Baldwin, 2005). As a storycatcher-researcher, I went to the OPL where there are free weekly storytimes for children

Storycatchers entice our best tales out of us: they turn with a leading question, a waiting ear, and their full attention. In return, we speak...we write...and we are heard
-- Baldwin, 2005, p. xiv.

² I wanted to exp-lore: as in understand the *wisdom* or *teaching* through the children’s literary transactions.

³ For the purpose of this study, a librarian is one who works at the library, and may have a degree in any discipline, not necessarily a Masters in Library Science (MLIS).

between the ages of 3 and 6 years, to explore how encounters with literature during storytimes engaged the imaginations of young children, and evoked a narrative literary transaction or response from them. Any literary transaction is the result of the “reader’s stance or selective attention [in relation to the text, and] falls somewhere on the continuum between the aesthetic (sensory or lived-through experience) and the efferent (coming away with information) poles; between, for example, a lyric poem and a chemical formula” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 269). The act of catching the literary transactions, experiences, or narratives in their own words, and exploring the various stances of my participants in relation to the stories they heard during storytimes at the OPL, is what I describe as my Storycatching.

Research Threads

Life hangs on a narrative thread. This thread is a braid of stories that inform us about who we are, and where we come from, and where we might go. The thread is slender but strong: we trust it to hold us and allow us to swing over the edge of the known into a future we dream in words -- Baldwin, 2005, p. 3.

The two main threads that are interwoven through my Storycatching venture are:

- How do children, during storytelling sessions, narratively transact with the stories they hear and/or read?
- What insights can we glean by entering into children’s experiential and imaginative literary and narrative worlds in order to plan and organize future storytelling sessions?

Rationale

From experience to inquiry

As a teacher-librarian I have had many opportunities to work with children from different ethno-cultural backgrounds and to share my love for stories and books with them. At times, these



Fig 2 Story of
Prince Rama

children have also shared their experiences and stories with me. The seed for my research was planted while I was teaching in the International Languages Program of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. One day, as I was reading the epic story of Prince Rama⁴ in which his father, the King, has four wives, a 9-year old Indo-Canadian student in my class, raised his hand to tell me that it was “*illegal for a man in Canada to have four wives!*”

This led to a discussion about civic laws in the present times both in India and in Canada, the ‘verity’ behind the epic story, and the relevance of Indian epic stories in a Canadian setting. This made me conscious of the fact that the Indo-Canadian children who are born and raised in Canada, have a different transactional relationship and adopt a different stance in regard to the Indian stories that I read to them as compared to my transactions with the same stories as a youngster in India. I also thought of all the times we siblings and cousins, had *dared* to question my grandmother about the *authenticity* of her stories and the explanations she had given us.

I started to wonder about the literary transactions of the other children in the school and in the library to the stories I shared with them and this is how and why I decided to go Storycatching at one of the branches of the OPL, where I worked as an on-call librarian. Most of the children’s programs conducted at this branch follow a similar pattern to the programs at the other branches of the OPL therefore the research implications from this study would also be relevant to children’s programs in other OPL settings.

The reader has tended to remain in shadow, taken for granted, to all intents and purposes invisible
-- Rosenblatt, 1978, p.1.

⁴ Story of Prince Rama <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramayana>

Exploring children's literary transactions

Throughout the last century, social scientists, researchers, and parent-researchers have examined the reading habits or “reader responses” to literature of school-going children, in order to understand the relationship between the readers and literary texts, and/or to better understand the “construction of the reader” (Agosto, 1999; Lewis, 2001; Pantaleo, 2005; Rogers, 1999; Rosenblatt, 1978, 1982; Sipe, 1999, 2002; Tompkins, 1980; Wolf & Heath, 1992). Significant research has also been conducted by early childhood educators, teacher-researchers, and children's librarians on the role of school and public libraries in promoting emergent early literacy and reading through storytime activities for young children (Barton & Booth, 1990; Braxton, 2006; Collen, 2006; Ghoting & Martin-Diaz, 2006; Hamilton & Weiss, 1993; McKechnie 2006; McKenzie & Stooke, 1997; Ross, McKechnie, & Rothbauer, 2006).

In contrast to the above mentioned studies, which have focused more specifically on school-going children, and school-libraries, I situated my Storycatching at the OPL where there are free registered storytimes for children between the ages of 3-6 years old. As a precursor, and a complement to playschool, or kindergarten, the storytime activity not only helps in the social learning and the socialization processes of the child, but it also encourages early emergent literacy in young children. As a storycatcher-researcher, I focused on catching the literary transactions of the young children in their own voices and in their own words, thus making the “invisible readers” (Rosenblatt, 1978) *visible*, through their narratives and stories, their drawings, and actions as they embodied the “two-way transactional relationship” (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1982), with the stories, books, illustrations, and characters they encountered during storytimes at the library. The threshold for my Storycatching venture was a quotation by Anna Freud: “Let us try to learn from children all they have to tell us and let us sort out only later, how their ideas fit in

with our own...because there can be many clues in what a child chooses to say to an adult listener” (as cited in Coles, 1986, p.15). I hope that the insights and transactions of the child-storytellers will help librarians and other adults to plan and organize future storytelling sessions for children that “leave the children with words, images, and ideas to seed their imaginations” (Barton & Booth, 1990, p. 24) in a world that is just beginning to enchant them.

I agree with Sipe (1999) that “there is a paucity of research on children’s responses to literature outside the classroom: the public library, community centre, or among an informal circle of friends” (p. 126). Even though some studies have focused on primary-grade children’s responses to literature, Pantaleo (2005) claims that little research has examined the visual responses of young children to literature. Thacker (2000) argues that “while children as readers are frequently dismissed and children’s texts are ignored [by ‘adultist’ theorists], an awareness of both is crucial to an understanding of how very young readers engage creatively with any text” (p. 2).

Literature Review

According to O’Leary (2005) the literature review is “designed to inform your readers of your topic, establish your credibility as a researcher, and argue the need for and the relevance of your work” (p. 84). To help me in my Storycatching venture of exploring the ways in which children narratively transact with stories during storytimes at the library, I drew on these interweaving strands: The Lore of stories, children’s entry into the world of narratives, and their literary and multimodal transactions, and the importance of storytimes in school and public libraries.

Lore of Stories

People tell stories in order to understand their *real* or imagined experiences, to make sense of the transitions in their lives, and the construction of their identities. Personal narrative becomes a way of knowing, and “be/com/ing” (Leggo, 1995). Stories give meaning to our existence; without stories we would be “adrift in a sea of facts” (Postman, 1989). In the words of Rutherford (1990) “Identity marks the conjuncture of our past with the social, cultural, and economic relations we live within. Identity then is never a static location, it contains traces of its past and what it is to become -- it is the narrative of our own lives” (p.19-24). Thus we can say that our “life is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.17).

*Story -- the abundance of it, and the lack of it -- shapes us...
Story... connects us with the world and outlines our relationship with everything
-- Baldwin, 2005, p.3.*

Narratives and stories are an important part of the oral and verbal traditions of many cultures. Stories “nourish, inform, comfort, entertain, and teach” (King, 2007). They permeate childhoods, families, communities, and nations often shaping the worldviews of a person and the people. Wherever people live, stories grow and these form part of the culture and are often depicted through literature or art forms (cave paintings, books, drama, movies, paintings, photographs, and sculpture), and are transmitted to the next generation. But cultures, like identities, are not static; their boundaries are fluid, they migrate, and people and texts cross these boundaries. The stories carried in these migrations are shared, re-lived, re-told, re-modified, re-written, and constantly re-invented.

The fascination of a story may be explained by “its power both to give a vividly felt insight into the life of other people and to revive or keep alive the forgotten, dead-ended, turned-into-stone parts of ourselves” (Trinh, 1989, p.123). A story travels every time it is told, crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries; depending on the teller, the listener, their experiences and worldviews, the place, the time, the circumstance, and the context of the story. Every telling of the story brings new meaning and new life to the story, and every telling is a co-production between the storyteller and the audience (Baldwin, 2005; Barton & Booth, 1990; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Frye, 1988; Leggo, 2008; Pellowski, 1990; Postman, 1989; Ramanujan, 1991; Rosenblatt, 1982). It is while listening to stories that children learn to imagine and to visualize, to anticipate and to reflect, to make choices and to “walk in another’s shoes” (Braxton, 2006). By learning to tell stories, children develop a love of language, discover the power of words and also find an outlet for their own creative expression (Barton 1986; Bishop & Kimball, 2006).

The storyteller...makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what [the storyteller] relates is 'true'...You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside
 -- Tolkien, 1947/1965, p. 37.

Entry into the world of stories

Hearing stories, whether they are classics, family stories, folktales and fairytales, legends, and myths, is an essential part of a child’s education. Eakin (1999) believes that a child’s sense of self or identity emerges within a “crucible of family stories and cultural scripts - it is the primary subject of an autobiography” (p.117). Stories help children to understand themselves, to interpret their changing social and cultural world(s), and to see beyond the “horizon of [their] own circumstances” (Spufford, 2002) into a world of possibilities. Reading or hearing a story creates a notion of a “dynamic alternative reality” (Rosenblatt, 1978), or a “secondary world”

(Rogers, 1999), because it requires the active participation, and interaction, or a transaction, or interplay, between the reader and the text, both literary as well as *imagistically*.

Rosenblatt (1978) postulates that:

First the text is a stimulus activating elements of the reader's past experience ...both with literature and life. Second, the text serves as a blueprint, a guide for the selecting, rejecting, and ordering of what is being called forthThe poem, 'a literary work of art' happens during a coming together, a compenetration, of a reader and text. The reader brings to the text [the reader's] past experiences and present personality...This becomes part of the ongoing stream of [the reader's] life experience (p. 11-12).

Inhabiting (sub)liminal spaces through stories

Young children first experience literature through picture books. These picture books or "twice told tales" (Agosto, 1999), help young readers to evoke connections, and to "synthesize a new creation" (Barton & Booth, 1990) between what they hear (words) with what they see (illustrations), thus helping them to make sense of what is happening in the story (Braxton, 2007). At times these same picture books may be used to construct fluid and plural possibilities and to explore "the dance of meaning" and/or "the liminal spaces" (Mackey & McClay, 2000) between the words and the images thus helping to cultivate children's artistic, visual, creative, and critical thinking processes.

Children at play, sometimes use storybooks as material to create their own imaginary worlds or universes to navigate "reality" in their imaginations. They learn to weave literature and *reality* together through the use of images and words from many-voiced conversations or "dialogical discourses or intercoursures" (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986), the ways in which one speaker's

concrete utterances come into contact with or *interanimate* the utterances of another (Wertsch, 1991), with the characters and the authors of their books.

These are interwoven with the voices of their friends and family or their significant others, and the multiple voices they hear in their own thoughts. Children's play thus represents a temporary space of freedom for testing alternative identities, experimenting with autonomy, social expectations, and cultural values (Jenkins, 1998; Wolf & Heath, 1992).

Every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that [the child] creates a world of [it's] own, or rather rearranges the things of [it's] own world in a new way that pleases [the child]
-- Freud 1953/1973, p. 143-144.

Literature thus helps children to travel from the imaginary world of stories and books to the experiential world where they typically “integrate and enact favourite stories into their daily lives, using them as reference points for explaining their own experiences” (Jenkins, 1998, p.28). By imagining themselves as characters in stories and encountering other individuals, and experiences with which they are unfamiliar, children can gain insight into self and social situations by understanding how “choices and actions work together to influence the construction of identity” (Martin, 2007, p. 240). A story, says Postman (1989), gives us direction “by providing a kind of theory about how the world works and how we are to survive in it” (p. 123).

Children play out their life through story (Barton & Booth, 1990), and they are “born knowing how to put every thought and feeling into story form” (Paley, 1990, p. 4). Even at a very young age, “experience feeds into language” (White, 1956, p.13), making the story richer, and enriching the personal experiences of children thus demonstrating the transactional character of language. Acquiring and building language capacity helps children to make meaning of their wor(l)d(s) and to understand others by talking about and sharing their experiences (Rockman,

2001). In their narrative about the experience of reading and meaning making in young children, Wolf and Heath (1992) write:

The words, images, attitudes, norms, and contradictions of the text spring up far beyond the actual episode of reading in new shapes and in other contexts and readings of different books (*intertextuality*)...the initial reading of a literary text gives itself up to children's rereadings in the world. The experience of reading lives on far beyond the act of reading. Each return to literary language taps into an almost subliminal awareness of the recapitulation of rhythm, word choice, grammatical form and the dynamics of meaning (p. 4).

Library as Storytime hub

Research emphasizes the importance of reading aloud to children: reading encourages early emergent literacy and social interaction in young children through role-modeling by people, who matter to us, our "significant others" (Meade, 1934), and it also develops language and knowledge which is required for success in school and in life (Chambers, 1985; Ross, McKechnie, Rothbauer, 2006). Librarians believe that their job is to create an interest in reading by choice rather than by requirement and storytelling is used to promote children's interest in reading. Storytimes at libraries have played a "key role in bringing books and children together and in developing language. For many young children, the public library is where the first contact with the world of books and reading takes place" (Ghoting & Martin-Diaz, 2006, p. ix).

Recent studies also indicate, that in this fast-paced electronic age where children are surrounded by electronic media, there is a renewed interest amongst parents, teachers, and librarians in stimulating children's interest in reading through narratively told stories (Bishop and Kimball, 2006; Braxton, 2006; McKechnie, 2006; Rockman, 2001). The storytime numbers at

the OPL are a testament to this fact because the storytimes sessions are extremely popular, and sometimes the registration is full on the very first day. Bishop and Kimball (2006) mention this interesting piece of information in their research about the history of storytelling in libraries:

The first systematic use of storytelling with children was not in libraries but in kindergartens.... When public libraries in North America began to flourish in the mid-1800s, most did not include children's books, much less allow children in the library. [It was only] in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, [that] service to children in public libraries developed as part of the social reforms initiated during the Progressive Era (p. 28-29).

Thus the public libraries seem to have come a long way from not allowing children in the library in the mid-1800s to treating children as a “very valuable patron group” (Marino, 2003) in the 21st century. Some libraries even have a special storytelling space set up complete with a soft carpet on the floor, “a magic carpet to Storyland” (Braxton, 2006), and a storyteller’s chair, so that young children do not feel intimidated by huge modern libraries and the presence of adults.

According to McKenzie & Stooke (2007) storytimes are “ritual events in the everyday life of the public library” (p. 3). The library storytime where “stories are treats to be savoured” (Ross et al., 2006) aims to inculcate a love of reading, to develop language, and to promote a positive attitude towards learning in children. Children have the pleasure of getting lost in a book (Spufford, 2002) or in some sense being “transfigured” (Thacker, 2000) by their literary transactions. Sipe (2002) states that it is “important to emphasize and rehabilitate the idea of literary pleasure and playfulness in the light of the massive overemphasis on competencies and drills that threaten to reduce the act of reading (and literature) to a dull and leaden experience

that could not be more antithetical to the exuberance children display when they are really learning” (p. 482).

Interactive storytimes at the library encourage children to “bring books to life” (Hamilton & Weiss, 1993) by asking them to re-tell the stories in their own words, or language by using art, or drawing, music, and drama. This social activity helps in the children’s socialization process where at times they encounter storybook characters who face issues similar to the ones they do (Braxton, 2007; Jenkins, 1998; Kline, 1993). Children typically develop their own interpretation in their oral retelling or “telling back” of stories (Chambers, 1996), and sometimes express their ideas through their visual drawings or “replication” (Weber & Mitchell, 1996). Researchers like Arizpe & Styles (2003) believe that even very young children can “interpret, comprehend, and communicate through their visual explorations --far beyond what they might be assumed to know” (p. 138).

Multimodal Transactions

Pantaleo (2005), states that in this world of multimodal representation and multiple sign systems, children need many ways of knowing, thinking, interpreting, and responding to literature in order for them to reflect on a story, and to gain new insights and understandings about literature and life. Children naturally move between “art, music, movement, mathematics, drama, and language as ways to think about the world” (Short, et al., 2000, p. 160). This

*Learners talk and write,
but they also sketch, sing,
play, solve problems, and
dance their way into new
insights
-- Short, Kaufmann, &
Kahn, 2000, p.160.*

highlights Gardner’s (1998, 2003) theory of multiple intelligences which advocates the importance of developing children’s literacies and intelligences using various sign systems.

Broadening our conceptions of meaning making from written language to include other forms

like music, art, math, and drama offer important insights into literacy, because they not only “inform our construction of meaning but they expand our understanding of the world and release our imaginations” (Albers, 1997, p. 338-339).

Studies have shown that after learning to speak, drawing is often the first mode of meaning making in children. This is because children create art from what they understand about their worlds (Albers, 1997; Bussert-Webb, 2001; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Leigh & Heid, 2008; Pantaleo, 2005; Short, et al, 2000). Most children love to draw pictures and they also like to talk about and “through their drawings which explore connections to their lives and their worlds” (Short, et al, 2000). Drawings also advance explorations of self, other, event, and circumstance and can sometimes give us a glimpse into the “complexities of their social worlds” (O’Leary, 2004). According to Weber & Mitchell (1996), “images can both hide and reveal and can express that which is not easily put into words: the not-yet-thought-through, the subconscious” (p. 110-111). Literacy in art means the ability to communicate and comprehend aesthetic responses to stories, knowledge, ideas and feelings. Art commands an immediate response because *a picture is worth a thousand words*; therefore children’s use of art should be valued as a means for understanding how children construct meaning and sometimes use art to mediate their understanding of literature and their wor(l)d(s) (Albers, 1997; Leigh & Heid, 2008; Pantaleo, 2005; Rosenblatt, 1978).

By involving children in, what Chambers (1996) calls as the “drama or performance of reading”, we encourage them to become a “dramatist (rewriter of the text), director (interpreter of the text), actor (performer of the text), audience (actively responsive recipient of the text), even critic (commentator and explicator and scholarly student of the text)” (p. 5). I entered into the world of stories and participated in this performance of reading or “parade” (Clandinin &

Connelly, 1998b) in order to catch the literary and narrative transactions and performances of the child-storytellers as they were engrossed in stories during storytimes at the Ottawa Public Library (OPL).

Methodology - Narrative Storycatching

*I went Storycatching
And what did I see?*

*Books Books everywhere
And they were all there for free!*

-- Storycatcher-researcher

I stepped into the narrative world of stories of the OPL, as a storycatcher-researcher, in order to explore the “two-way transactional relationship” (Rosenblatt, 1978), between the text (*picture books*), and the reader (*child*). I wanted to understand how encounters with literature during storytimes, evoked the children’s imagination, memory, creativity, and visualization and helped them to make sense of their world(s). I situated my Storycatching at a specific branch of the OPL, where there are weekly registered storytimes for children between the ages of 3-6 years old. The storytime lasts for 30 minutes and parents are encouraged to pre-register their children for the fall, winter and spring sessions. I chose this particular branch of the OPL, because as an on-call librarian, I had assisted the librarians here in organizing some of the children’s programs. I had also conducted storytimes in the past at other branches of the OPL, therefore, it was a new experience for me to enter into the world of stories as a storycatcher-researcher, in order to gain an “intimate understanding” (O’Leary, 2004) of the storytime sessions.

My Storycatching venture was within a narrative world where I narratively explored children’s experiences; therefore narrative was both the “phenomena under study and method of study” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.18). According to Creswell (2005), narrative research is

“a literary form of qualitative research with strong ties to literature” (p. 474) that focuses on individual stories or lived experiences. As a storycatcher-researcher, I observed “things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people [brought] to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Narrative inquirers, according to Clandinin & Connelly (2000), travel in a “*three-dimensional narrative inquiry space: personal and social (interaction/sociality), past, present and future (continuity/temporality) combined with the notion of place (situation)*” (p. 49-50) [italics in the original]. Therefore, even though narrative inquiry “shares features in common with other forms of qualitative inquiry such as emphasis on the social in ethnography and the use of story in phenomenology, [it is unique in the sense that] there is a simultaneous exploration of all the three dimensional spaces” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479).

The OPL was the *place* for my Storycatching where all the *(inter)action* took place, where the participant-storytellers came together during storytimes and performed their roles in the *past-present-future* through their transactions, inter-play, and intertextuality, with the picture/story books. I caught the children’s transactions by participating in the storytime sessions, and through individual and collective conversations with the child-storytellers, their parents, and the children’s librarian. I captured their literary transactions and narratives/responses and their stories in digital (audio recording), visual (drawings by participating children) and written formats (my narrative musings and the emails from parents about their child’s transactions at home).

The participant child-storytellers were all very young between the ages of 3 and 4 years, and “I did not know a priori” (Maxwell, 2005) what I would discover, or if they would even be willing to share their stories with me. According to Chase (2005):

Narrative is retrospective meaning making - the shaping or ordering of past experience. It is a way of understanding one's own and others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time...in addition to describing what happened, narratives also express emotions, thoughts, and interpretations (p. 656).

I wanted to catch and narrate my participants' (the child-storytellers, their parents, and the children's librarian) stories, "feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006), and transactions which were "rich in detail and embedded within the context" (Maxwell, 2005) of "an ever-shifting" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) storyland (OPL). As a storycatcher-researcher, I chose Narrative to narrate their experiences in storyland because I wanted to "narratively inquire into [known and familiar storytime] practices... [in order] to make the known and the familiar strange and open to new possibility" (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007, p. 33).

The path to Storyland (Choosing the Research Site)

When I first decided to go on my Storycatching venture, I realized that I would need a storyteller *accomplice* to help me. So, even before I approached the library management board to ask for their permission, I went to the OPL and discussed my idea with Zelda (*pseudonym*), the children's librarian, who works at the branch of the OPL, my intended storyland, where I planned to go as a storycatcher-researcher. Zelda and I have been colleagues for a long time; we both enjoy working with children and we both love to *fall into a storybook* at every opportunity. She was not only excited about the idea but she was thrilled to be a part of this venture. Zelda's supervisor, the children's supervising librarian, liked the idea of a Storycatching venture at the

branch and gave me her approval. So I applied to the OPL Management Board and asked for their permission to enter the world of stories as a storycatcher-researcher. The children's supervising librarian also convinced the Library Management Board that my Storycatching had the potential to contribute to the future planning of the OPL's storytimes. As soon as the OPL Management Board agreed for me to venture into Storyland, I applied to the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa seeking their permission to conduct my Storycatching at the OPL with this *vulnerable population* of 3-6 years old.

Storycatching at the OPL (Research Steps, Recruiting Participant Storytellers, and Data Collection)

In the summer of 2008, I received permission from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa to launch my Storycatching venture. But when I went to the library to discuss the plan of action (*modus operandi*) with Zelda, she told me that the storytime sessions would start only in the 2nd week of September. There were fourteen (14) storytimes during the fall session at the OPL. But the library had planned some other programs in conjunction with the storytimes, so I would be able to attend only nine (9) out of the fourteen (14) sessions. The first session would be an introductory session where Zelda would introduce me to the parents and the children before she started her storytime. Then in the remaining eight (8) sessions I would be able to do my Storycatching and catch the literary transactions and stories of the participants.

In the 2nd week of September, Zelda informed me that a very small group of about 7 - 8 children, instead of the usual 15 - 20 children, had registered for the fall storytime session. I had hoped to get at least six (6) participants, but in the end, only four (4) parents could commit to coming every week with their children *putting everything else on hold for about an hour after storytime*, to help me with my Storycatching.

Storytellers-Participants

The child-storytellers in my study were four (4) children between the ages of 3-4 years old who had registered for the fall 2008 storytime session at the OPL at the time of my Storycatching. The parents or rather, the mothers, volunteered to be part of my venture, and then both parents signed a consent form for the children to participate in my Storycatching (Appendix C). They represented a “purposeful sampling” (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Patton, 1990) in order to ensure that young children in particular age groups (3 to 6 year olds) who attended the free weekly storytime sessions at the library were included in my Storycatching. The focus was deliberate and intended to provide information about the two-way transactional relationship between literature and young children and to give a voice to individuals, in this case children, who may not normally be heard in institutional settings (Creswell, 2005; Maxwell, 2005).

To provide additional insight into my child-storytellers’ narratives and transactions, I also felt the need to hear stories from the parents, the participating moms who were the child-storytellers’ *significant others*, about their role in fostering their children’s transactions. The other strand of my Storycatching was Zelda, the storyteller, the *storymaker* who selected the picture books to read during storytimes in order to provide new transactions to the children on a weekly basis. As a storycatcher-researcher-participant, I was “part of the world” (Maxwell, 2005) that I explored, and because Zelda introduced me as her friend and as an on-call librarian, I felt that I was “a powerful influence” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 109) on my participant child-

We shall be especially concerned with the member of the cast who has hitherto been neglected -- the reader -- Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 5.

storytellers and their parents and my “presence” would influence their stories and transactions in “known and as yet unknown ways” (Clandinin, et al, 2007, p. 28) .

Stepping into a world of stories

*I went Storycatching
And what did I see?*

*A performance of reading:
Zelda reading stories
Children listening to stories
&
Storycatcher catching their stories
That's me!*

-- Storycatcher-researcher

My initial plan was to be a participant observer in the first four (4) of the eight storytime sessions that I would attend, thereby creating a rapport with the participants, and to do my Storycatching with the child-storytellers in the later 4 storytime sessions. According to Maxwell (2005), “in qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument of the research, and the research relationships are the means by which research gets done” (p. 83). But the parents were not sure if they would be able to attend all the eight (8) sessions. It was the fall season, and a beginning of a new school year, when the children are most susceptible to the seasonal colds and other viruses, so we, the participant parents and storycatcher-researcher, decided that I would do my Storycatching when the child-storytellers were available and willing to tell me their stories as long as I had at least four (4) Storycatching sessions with each of them. Thus it turned out that in seven (7) storytime sessions, I was able to catch all my participants’ narratives and transactions and finish this part of my Storycatching (Appendix H).

*The poem, then, must be
thought of as an event in
time...the experience shaped
by the reader under the
guidance of the text*

-- Rosenblatt, 1978, p.12.

As a storycatcher-researcher-participant in the weekly storytimes, I participated and recorded the seven (7) half-hour storytime sessions on my digital voice recorder. Zelda would read the picture books that she had selected for that session, and for half an hour every Thursday afternoon, I felt as if I had entered into the enchanted world of stories along with my participants, as we listened to picture book stories, songs, and rhymes. As Zelda read, I jotted down my musings of what transpired during the storytime sessions in terms of the physical transactions and verbal responses exhibited by the child-storytellers as they were engrossed in the act of listening to the stories. I discussed these transactions with Zelda and with the participating parents, and at times also with the children, after the storytimes.

In order to understand how literary language and its accompanying illustrations evoke,

The reading of a text is an event occurring at a particular time in a particular environment at a particular moment in the life history of the reader
-- Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 20.

initiate, and feed children's extensions of the act of reading into lived experiences (Jenkins, 1998; Rosenblatt, 1978, 1982; Wolf and Heath, 1992), I followed in Rosenblatt's footsteps, and turned the spotlight directly on the readers/listeners, my 3-4 years old child-storytellers. After each storytime session, I had one-on-one conversations, and one group conversation

(Appendix E) with them to talk about their transactions with the stories. These sessions lasted anywhere from half an hour to an hour because they all wanted to finish their drawings for me.

According to Manguel (2006) "the power of the readers" (p. 91), lies not only in their ability to gather information, but in their gift to evoke, interpret, associate, and transform their reading into experience. I wanted the child-storytellers' to narrate their literary transactions in their own voices, so I asked them to tell me the story that they liked in their own words, and to talk about their favourite and not-so-favourite books and/or characters. Chase (2005) says that

“narrative researchers highlight the versions of self, reality, and experience that the storyteller produces through the telling, and often treat narratives as lived experience...and are as interested in the hows of storytelling as they are in the whats of storytelling” (p. 656). I also asked them to draw me a picture of the story and tell me about their drawing. I wanted to explore how “as children embrace or resist texts through language and a variety of artistic modes, they are forging links between literature and their own lives -- developing a sense of themselves as individuals and members of society” (Sipe, 1999, p.127).

The nature of the reader's role may best be approached inductively, by looking at readers as they encounter an unfamiliar text
 -- Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 6.

After every session, I gathered their drawings and scanned them in colour as samples for my Storycatching. I promised the children that I would return these to them at the next storytime session. The participating mothers would often tell me to keep the drawings but I felt as if I was taking away the children's ‘poem’ so, I returned all the original drawings to them. I had one-on-one conversations with the participating mothers (Appendix G) for about 30 minutes on the last day of the Storycatching session to understand their role in encouraging and developing their children's reading interests and literary transactions. According to Peterson, Jesso, & McCabe (1999), children's narrative, vocabulary, and other skills are “affected by parental input, the sorts of parent-child conversational exchanges that are fostered by parents” (p. 51).

I had 5-10 minutes discussion with Zelda (Appendix F) after each storytime to talk about her selection of books for that particular session and to explore if she had followed a theme for that day. As Chambers (1996) posits “selection of a book to read is essential before ‘reading’ can begin ...reading is a dramatic performance composed of many interrelated scenes” (p. 5). On the

very last day of my Storycatching I had a formal 30 minutes discourse with Zelda regarding her view on the importance of storytimes at the library and the role of stories in the lives of children.

As I wished to explore the literary transactions of children through their narratives and their drawings, in my conversations with the participating children and their parents I was attentive to their feelings, their values and beliefs, and their comfort level. I collaborated with Zelda, the parents, and the child-storytellers, to create an open and safe environment for the child-storytellers to express and narrate their transactions with the stories. I analyzed the audio recordings after each Storycatching session and I transcribed the recordings by hand and then typed them on the computer. I collaborated with Zelda and the parents to make sure that my transcription and/or interpretation, was as close to the recorded speech and intentions as possible. Thus, data collection and interpretation of the participant-storytellers' narratives was concurrent and "iterative with a focus on story building" (O'Leary, 2004). When I had gathered all the stories and conversations (face-to-face, or through emails), drawings and transactions, I met with Zelda once again in order to collaborate and to verify my interpretation of her narrative. I have narrated my participants' stories in their own voice and I have used my voice only as a storycatcher-narrator of this interactive joint performance of reading. I had made copious notes but at times I felt like I was so "fully involved with my participants, I had fallen in love with them" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 81) which was *so easy to do* with the child-storytellers.

As Clandinin and Connelly (1994) have noted, narrative researchers, "describe people's storied lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience. They have *multiple researcher 'I's'*: the 'I' as researcher, teacher, man or woman, commentator, research participant, narrative critic, and theory builder" (p. 416). I agree with Chase (2005) when she writes that "Narrators are accountable for the credibility of their stories. Narrative researchers

treat credibility and believability as something that storytellers accomplish. They view stories as both enabled and constrained by a range of social resources and circumstances, and treat narratives as socially situated interactive performances -- a joint production of narrator and listener” (p. 657-658). As a narrative storycatcher-researcher-participant, I was aware that I was not only “experiencing the experience [but I was] also being a part of the experience itself” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000 p. 80).

My Storycatching vignettes comprise of my narrative musings as a storycatcher-researcher-participant, audio recordings of my conversations with the participant child-storytellers, and their parents, and with Zelda, the children’s librarian, emails from parents about their children’s transactions, and drawings or art work completed by the child-storytellers (Appendix H). Like a **Sutradhar**, (*Sutra* (sootra) is thread & *dhar* is one who holds, literal meaning holder-of-threads), a Sanskrit term for a narrator, a producer, or a director of a story, or drama, or theatre, I will now gather the threads, strings, strands, and vignettes of my Storycatching in order to weave a narrative yarn.

In my eight-week venture into the world of stories at the OPL, it was simply not possible to “predict the flow of events” so I had to “adjust my course of action based upon emerging [ever-shifting] conditions that could not have been anticipated” (Eisner, 1998, p.170) in terms of Zelda’s choice of stories for the day, the number of children being present and their willingness to narrate their stories. As in any qualitative inquiry “flexibility, adjustment, and iterativity were the hallmarks” (Eisner, 1998, p.170) of my (ad)venture into Storyland. My Storycatching was a narrative within the narrative world, and so, I used Narrative to braid all the interweaving narrative threads, stories, conversations and emerging themes from the storytime sessions. Eisner (1998) defines themes as “the recurring messages that pervade the situation about which the

critic [observer] writes...these themes are distillations of what has been encountered by the ‘connoisseur’/observer [and] provide a summary of the essential features” (p. 104).

I will begin my Storycatching yarn in Storyland where for eight-weeks as a storycatcher-researcher-participant, I caught the stories read by Zelda, which will be followed by the child-storytellers’ literary and narrative transactions, and their drawings. I will then weave in my conversations with Zelda (children’s librarian), the child-storytellers, and the participating mothers (in person and through emails). Finally I will interweave the recurring themes that emerged during our conversations and transactions with my musings, my re-telling and re-living of these narratives, and braid them with the two main threads or questions that held my Storycatching venture together.

Storyland Transactions

A typical Thursday afternoon storytime at OPL

*Wake up hair, wake up hair,
Wake up hair and wiggle, wiggle, wiggle
Wake up hair, wake up hair,
Wake up and wiggle in the afternoon*

-- Zelda, Children’s librarian, & storyteller

This is Zelda’s opening song for the Thursday afternoon storytime at the Ottawa Public Library (OPL) and for 30 minutes, I feel like I have been transported into storyland along with the children and their parents and/or caregivers. After we have “woken up” our hair, faces, eyes, mouth, feet, and other parts of the body, as per the children’s requests, (and sometimes even Zelda who pretends to fall asleep), we are ready to settle down and listen to some of her stories. She reads stories from picture books and at times tells stories with the help of puppets and felt characters. She plays music CD’s, sings songs, dances and uses other props like scarves, coloured construction paper and stick figures to the enjoyment of the 3 to 6 year old pre-

schoolers. She queries the children about the pictures and words in the books and answers any questions they might have. Children in turn participate in the interactive storytime activity by asking questions and shouting out their answers, singing songs, repeating after Zelda and commenting on images or words that *talk* to them. At the end of the storytime session, she hands out colouring sheets and stickers to the excited children.

Storyland session #1: Introductions

It is the middle of October and on a warm sunny day I am off to the library to be introduced as a Storycatcher-researcher. I am excited and apprehensive, and I wonder: *Will I be able to do this? Will I get any participants? Will the children talk to me and tell me their stories?* With all these questions buzzing in my head, and all my mother's stories of 'valour' echoing in my mind, I reach the library and start descending the stairs to Storyland. Zelda is waiting for me with a big bright smile, and seeing her, all my doubts seem to vanish. She welcomes me and introduces me to the children and their parents:

"Hello everyone, we have a visitor today. She is my friend Veena. She also works at the library. And guess what? Veena goes to school just like some of you do. How many of you go to school?" (Some children raise their hands but most of them only look at me. Is it surprise or disbelief? I wonder.)

"And she needs our help. Would you like to help her?" (Some nod and others just keep looking at me and Zelda.)

She then talks to them about my interest in Storycatching and tells them that I will be participating in the storytimes every Thursday in order to do some Storycatching. Then it is my turn to talk to the group. Tagging on to what Zelda has already told them, I tell them in brief about my venture and ask for their help. I hand out the information letter (Appendix A) to the

parents or caregivers and tell them about the consent forms (Appendix C) they will have to sign if they want their children to participate in my Storycatching venture. I explain that my Storycatching will only start from next week and they can ask me questions at the end of the storytime session. I also explain that I will record their conversations digitally and also collect drawings from the children. I assure them that in order to protect their confidentiality I will only use pseudonyms instead of their real names in my study. I also tell them that they can withdraw from my study at any time if they feel like it. I promise to send them a summary of my research findings if they are interested. The parents nod and smile but I have to wait till the end of the session to see if I have any volunteers. After the storytime, I talk to some parents who show some interest but I don't get any confirmation from anyone. I am only an observer at this session therefore I do not record any stories.

From storybook characters to real-life characters

Even though I did not meet my participant-storytellers - *the characters in my story*, on the very first day, I would like to introduce them here. In order to protect their confidentiality, I have used pseudonyms instead of their real names and I call three (3) of my child-storytellers by the names of their favourite characters.

My participants (*They all speak English as their first-language*)

Zelda is the children's librarian at the OPL, and is also my friend and colleague. We met through our common interest of working with children and our love for children's books. She has worked at the OPL for 4 years. Before that, she worked in a bookstore as a storyteller. She loves children and with her big bright smile, she makes them feel very welcome in the library. She makes it a point to know all the children's names and also remembers some of their likes and dislikes. She also greets non-English speaking patrons in their

mother tongue. She is an animated storyteller and really gets into the storybook characters when she reads the stories. She is not afraid to be silly or wiggle her curly hair or to have lots of fun with the children because as she says: *I love them and I want them to love the library.*

Child-Storytellers:

LittleOne just turned three (3) before the storytime session. She is the youngest at home and has two older brothers. She is also the youngest amongst my participants. She is very observant and is not hesitant to voice her opinions. During storytimes, she will often sit next to the older girls and imitate them. She looks forward to the library storytimes because she loves the librarians. If the other participants hesitate to tell me their story, she goes to them, gives them the voice recorder and encourages them to talk by asking them the same questions that I have asked them, which makes all of us (adults) smile.

DW is 3 ½ years old and is an only child. She is not shy at all; she speaks in a clear voice and is very articulate. She talks about all her favourite Arthur and D.W. books by Marc Brown and lists all her favourite activities. She loves to go swimming on the beach and make sandcastles. She has a best friend who lives across the street from her who is always featured in her conversations and she loves to play with him. She can understand a little Spanish too. She loves coming to the library but unfortunately the storytime schedule conflicts with her naptime, so I only meet DW twice during my venture.

BigSister is 3 ½ years old and goes to preschool. She is extremely shy and does not participate in any activity at the library with Zelda and with the other children because *there are too many children*. She sits very close to her mother during storytimes and only whispers her stories to her mother. She likes to hear stories about girls because she can relate to them

and she also loves Dinosaurs. She is very protective of her LittleSister who features in all her drawings. Her grandparents speak to her in Italian.

TheAlien is 4 years old and goes to school. He is an only child and the first grandchild. He loves to draw or rather invent and seems to have an amazing sense of humour for his age. He is initially very shy but after the first session, he is willing to tell me all his stories instead of whispering them into his mom's ears. He loves books and puppets and his favourite alien is Nick Butterworth's *Q-Pootle-5*.

Parents: All four mothers have been extremely helpful and conscientious about their role in my venture. My Storycatching would not have been possible without their support.

LittleOne_mom [LOM] volunteers for my Storycatching venture because she *knows how hard it is to find participants*. She is very involved with the activities of her three children and tries to attend all the storytime sessions so that I can talk to the LittleOne. She emails me if they cannot make it to storytime and again when her daughter has a lived-through experience with any of the stories. She helps Zelda by handing out colouring sheets or stickers to the children at the end of the storytime sessions.

DW_mom [DWM] used to work as an adult literacy educator but has decided to be a stay-at-home mom. She is the first one to volunteer for my venture. She and her husband believe in surrounding their daughter with books and like to involve her in a lot of activities. She is very articulate and even though she likes coming to the storytime sessions, she attends only two storytime sessions because she does not want to disrupt DW's nap-time.

BigSister_mama [BSM] is interested in my Storycatching but is not sure at first if BigSister will be a good participant due to her shyness. But when I show her my questionnaire, she says that they will participate because BigSister loves to draw. Even though she has a full-time

job, she makes sure that they come to storytime. She takes my questionnaire home, and diligently emails me after each storytime to tell me about her daughter's literary transactions and evocations because BigSister will only discuss the books with her mama.

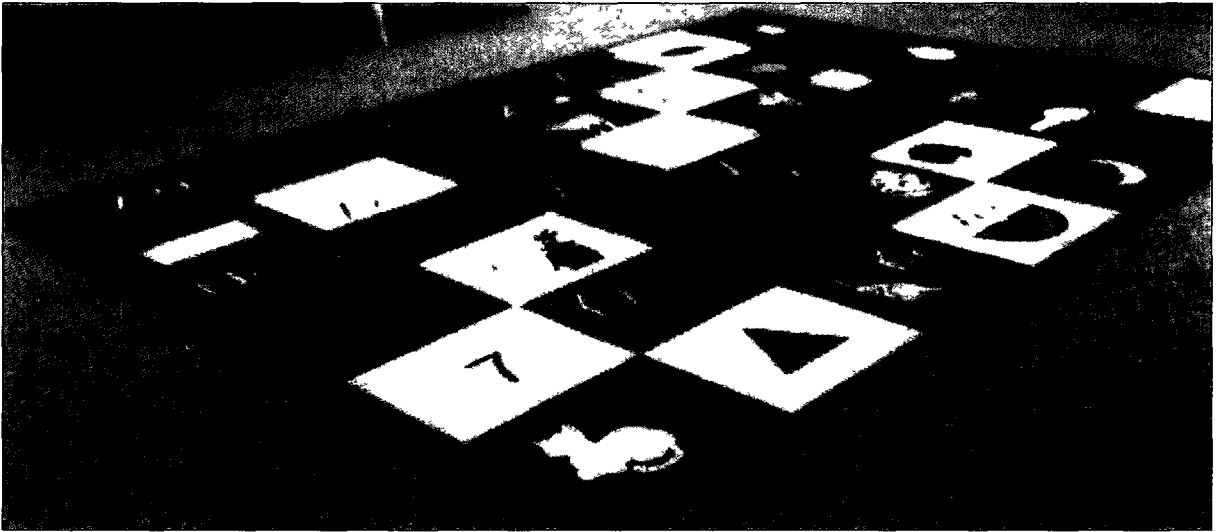
TheAlien_mom [TAM] is the youngest of all the participating moms and always has a big smile on her face. She loves to read and tells me that her favourite children's author is Robert Munsch. She also likes doing arts and crafts. She seems to enjoy the storytime sessions as much as TheAlien. She watches him indulgently when he runs around the room like the wind or when he starts hopping around like a frog as he is talking to me. She says that they both love coming to storytimes because it gives them a chance to hang out together at the library.

Storycatcher-researcher-Sutradhar My passion for stories and for storylands (libraries) has turned me into a storycatcher-researcher. I listen to children's voices as they make transactions between the world of stories and the lived world of their experiences. I explore how children create their own meanings and sometimes even seem to (re)write the texts they read according to their understanding, and how stories come to life as children shape their thoughts, their 'real' and imaginary worlds, their actions, and their *subliminal* spaces.

Storyland session #2

It is a week before Halloween and it is raining outside when, armed with my voice recorder and my storycatcher-notepad, I leave for my first real Storycatching venture. I have no idea whether there will be any participant-storytellers. I wander into Storyland and there are only five (5) children present today and two of them were not there last week. So, Zelda introduces me again and then she starts to sing the *Wake up* song and we start by waking up our toes. There

are two talkative girls with purple pants who cannot seem to settle down so Zelda requests them to find a spot on the “magic carpet” and to settle down. The magic carpet in this branch is a colourful rectangular A to Z alphabet carpet. Sometimes the children prefer to sit on *their* letter or the alphabet that starts with their name. Most of the parents and caregivers also attend storytime. They not only enjoy the performance of reading but they also make sure that their children behave during storytimes.



Picture of the carpet in Storyland

Zelda starts this story session with *The Deep Blue Sea: A Book of Colors* by Audrey Wood. The book introduces various colours by presenting a colourful scene on a rock in the deep blue sea. One child starts by saying that she does not like colours but as Zelda turns the colourful pages, the children start to get interested in the book. They all seem to know the different colours and the book unfolds into a beautiful rainbow. Then comes the story of *Grumpy Bird* by Jeremy Tankard, where feeling too grumpy to fly, Bird begins to walk and finds that his mood changes as other animals join him. When Bird begins to eat worms with his friends, the children make faces saying that they don't like to eat worms and one child says that she only eats *people food*.

After that, we hear the story of *Bernard the Angry Rooster* by Mary Wormell where Bernard the rooster becomes unusually grumpy one day when he thinks that he has been usurped by a new weather vane, causing the other animals to be concerned about his behaviour. This book is read to the accompaniment of a lot of *Cock-a-doodle-doos and clucking* sounds echoing around the room. Zelda also has a stuffed rooster and the children take turns holding it in their hands after she finishes the story.

Now it is time for some songs and rhymes and we all sing “*If you are happy and you know it clap your hands*”, “*The Eensy weensy spider*” and “*Roly-poly roly-poly up and down.*” Then one child says that her hair has fallen asleep again so we all *wake up* our hair once more. It is getting late but there is just enough time to squeeze in another story and we hear *I Saw an Ant on the Railroad Track* by Joshua Prince where Jack, a railroad switchman, frantically tries to save an ant who is heading east on a westbound track, straight into the path of an oncoming freight train. There is a hushed silence in the room as Zelda reads this rhythmic story to the *Tickety-Tack* of the ant walking on the railroad track as the oncoming train approaches with a *Clickety-Clack*.

Zelda ends this session with another song “*Clap your hands, clap your hands everybody clap your hands*” and finally it is time for the goodbye song “*It’s time to say goodbye to all my friends, make a smile and wink your eye, its time to say goodbye to all my friends.*”

Storycatcher-researcher

I am in storyland to explore the two-way transactional relationship between literature and young children. As Zelda reads the storybooks, I am ready with my storycatcher-notepad to catch any transactions from my participant-storytellers. After Zelda finishes reading her stories, I ask the child-storytellers to retell one of the stories in their own words or to express their feelings

about the stories in words or through their drawings. This helps me as a storycatcher to understand how they perceive narratives, themselves, and others, and how they understand and inter-connect with the social world in which they participate daily. When I ask the children to retell a story, I also invite them to share their drawings in order to explore their experiential worlds, worlds that may elude words.

By the end of the story session, more clouds have gathered in the sky and it looks really dark and gloomy outside. The parents seem eager to go home with their children and I am anxious to get at least one or two participant-storytellers. So, I ask the parents if they would like to stay and participate in my Storycatching venture. DW's mom says that she would like to participate although she cannot promise that they will be there for all the sessions because DW normally naps in the afternoon. Since I have no other participants that day, I tell her that we'll just give it a try.

DW's Transaction-1

I ask DW for her favourite story from the ones that Zelda has just read. She says that she likes *I Saw an Ant on the Railroad Track* by Joshua Prince. When she hesitates to say more, I give her the voice recorder to hold in her hands. DW_mom tells her that she can talk into it as if she is speaking to her dad on the phone. Her version of the story: "*Train comes with the wheels [and after some coaxing from her mom] but the ant was not going to be squished. The ant stepped off the train track so he could eat the man's sandwich and they ate together.*"

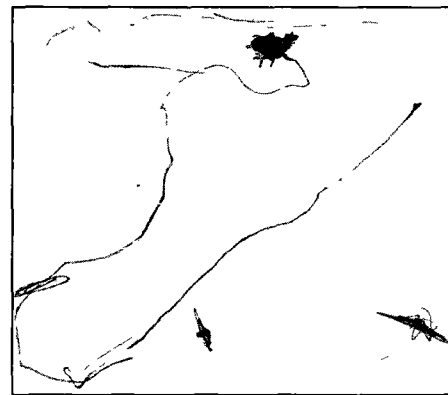


Fig. 4 Bernard the angry rooster

When I ask her if she will draw me a picture she tells me that she is “drawing [Fig. 4] the rooster story and they hang [the rooster] up at a height. There was [sic] two roosters” and when I ask her if that is the rooster on the top of the tree, she ignores my question and introduces me to her best friend who has accompanied her to the library. She starts to share some crayons with him and tells him to draw something for me as well. Then when I ask her about her picture again, she tells me that “the rooster went mad and the others had to

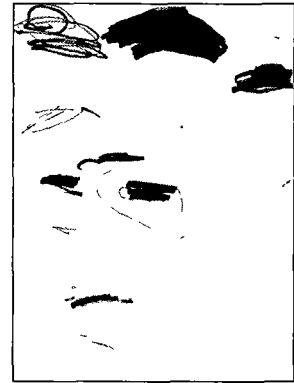


Fig 5 DW's Rainbow

keep an eye on him” and “the rooster has a brown tail”. And then she declares “I am going to draw a rainbow” [Fig. 5] and names the colours of the crayons as she draws her rainbow. I meet DW only twice during my 8 weeks’ sojourn into storyland because DW_mom tells me that the storytime schedule interferes with her daughter’s nap time.

Storyland session #3

It is a day before Halloween and unlike last week when there were only five children; Storyland is packed today because the children from the neighbourhood daycare have decided to attend this session. Once everyone settles down, we start with *Wake up toes* then we *wake up our hair and our hands*. Zelda starts with the book *Ten in the Bed* by Jane Cabrera. She first sings the nursery rhyme “*There were ten in the bed and the little one said ‘Roll Over’*” which many of the children seem to know and then starts to read the book. In this version of the traditional nursery rhyme, each of the stuffed animal sleepers who fall, leap, bounce, or wobble out of bed when the little one says “*Move over*” represents a different profession. When the snorer falls out of bed Zelda pretends to close her eyes and snore and all the children get very excited and start shouting “*Wake up! Wake up!*” The next to fall out of bed is a cook, then out leaps a trumpeter to the

sounds of Zelda and the children pretending to play a trumpet, followed by a pirate, a doctor, a ballerina, a pilot, a princess, an astronaut and finally the Little One. In the end they all climb back into bed and fall fast asleep. At this, Zelda pretends to fall asleep too and all the children shout “*Wake up!*” again. I realize that this act of *falling asleep* is a little antic of Zelda’s where she pretends to fall asleep sometimes if it gets very noisy or if the children don’t settle down and then they all start to shout “Wake up” because they want her to read more stories.

Next she reads *The Story of Little Pea* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and tells us that she really “*loves this book*”. She starts by asking the children “*What is a vegetable?*” and they all shout out their answers. She asks them if chocolate and candy are vegetables too and some of them tell her that they are treats. In this book, Little pea hates eating candy for dinner every night, but his parents will not let him have his spinach dessert until he cleans his plate. The children are very quiet as she reads the book because they have already told Zelda how much they all like candy. She imitates Little pea making faces while eating the candies on his plate and all the children laugh and imitate her. To Zelda’s question as to what Little pea will get for dessert, the children still say that Little pea will get some candy for dessert but when they see that he has spinach for dessert and that he really loves it, there is a pin-drop silence and I wonder if they are just shocked or if they are too young to appreciate the irony and humour in this book. When Zelda asks them if they love spinach they all shout out saying that they don’t like spinach.

The next book for today is *Beasty Bath* by Robert Neubecker where a young child’s wild imagination as a unicorn girl transforms her bath time into a monster-filled adventure until she is lovingly tucked into bed with a pile of stuffed toys. As Zelda reads this book and asks the children if they also clean their claws and fangs they all start out by saying that they don’t have

claws and fangs until one child notices the toothbrush on the page and says that she brushes her teeth too and the others catch on to what is really happening in this book.

Then Zelda introduces a new song and asks me to be her assistant by holding out the different coloured papers as she performs the actions to the song: "*Put your finger on your head, on your head, and point to something red...put your finger on your nose and your elbow on your toes*" where we point to different colours that rhyme with different parts of the body. Children like the song and demand an encore so we all perform it twice.

Zelda has a magician's hat and a stuffed toy rabbit on the table and one child asks her if she is going to do some magic tricks. She laughs at this and tells them that she does not know any magic tricks but that the Rabbit has a special song and starts to sing *Little Peter Rabbit had a bug upon his nose* much to the amusement of the children and tells them that the Rabbit is a little shy around Halloween. Then it is time for a special book that has libraries and storytimes in it called *Littlebat's Halloween Story* by Diane Mayr. Littlebat loves to listen to the stories being told in the library below the attic where he sleeps, but his mother tells him never to get close to the library because it can be dangerous. But Littlebat wants to see the pictures in the book and his mother tells him that he has to wait until just the right time to get close enough to see the pictures. Littlebat is very excited and keeps waiting. Then one day Littlebat's mother tells him it is time [Halloween] and he flies down to see the pictures. While Zelda is reading, one child notices the felt bat that Zelda has on the felt board behind her and another one says that the librarian in the book is reading books like Zelda is reading to them. By the end of this story some children are lying down on the carpet and Zelda sings the goodbye song. Then one child wants to *wake up her hands* again so as the children from the daycare start to wear their jackets and get

ready to leave, we all wake up our hands. Then Zelda starts to distribute colouring sheets and stickers to the children and LittleOne's mom helps her to hand these out.

Storycatcher-researcher

DW is not here today but I have three other participant-storytellers - a very eager LittleOne, and two shy ones BigSister and TheAlien. This is exciting. As the other children are getting ready to leave Storyland my participant-storytellers and I move to a quieter spot on the magic carpet so that we can all get down to business of storytelling and Storycatching. We start by introducing ourselves and the child-storytellers hold the voice-recorder in their hands while they tell me their names. I talk about my interest in Storycatching as I hand out the consent forms to the parents and I request them to please email me if their children have any literary transactions at home.

LittleOne's transaction-1

LittleOne who is not shy at all seems very excited and tells me that she likes *Littlebat's Halloween Story*. LittleOne is the youngest of all my participants and even though she seems to know for sure what she likes or does not like, she is too young to give me a reason. She keeps repeating that she loves the bat and beastly book. Then she shows me the stickers on her dress of "*the fishy and the frog*" and says, "*My mom (who was helping Zelda hand out the stickers) gave them to me.*"

When I ask her if she will draw something for me, I realize that I have forgotten to bring in the crayons. I get up to go and get the crayons and she starts to sing "*She is bringing the crayons.*" At this, everyone in the room starts to smile. Then we notice Zelda coming in with the crayons and LittleOne tells

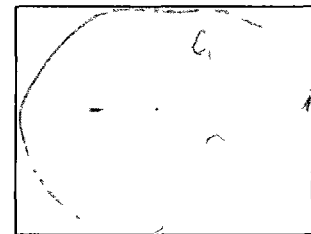


Fig 6 LittleOne's portrait

Zelda that she is going to draw “a portrait” [Fig. 6]. She starts on a second drawing and she hears BigSister say that she has not finished her drawing yet and repeats the same sentence and starts to sing “*I am not finished too*” on a high note. Then she says that she is drawing a picture for her brother but does not finish it. LittleOne is very friendly and talks to everyone in the room and is very observant. She wants to take home her portrait but her mother convinces her to leave it with me for this week. At this point she notices BigSister’s drawing and says “*Hey what did you draw?*” BigSister displays her picture wordlessly [Fig.8]. Then LittleOne starts to hum and giggle and then tells me “*this is fun*” as she gives me a high five and turns to leave.

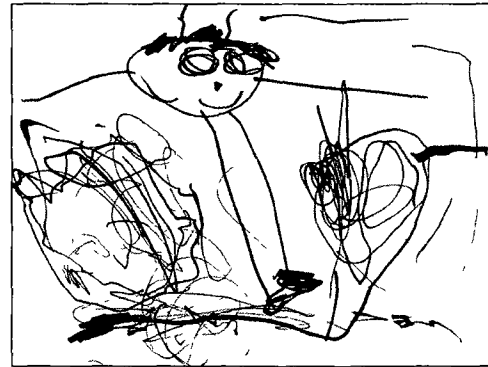


Fig.8 LittleSister crawling

TheAlien’s transaction-1

TheAlien likes *Littlebat’s Halloween Story* too. “*I like the fireworks in the bat story (and after some prompting): Bat wanted to look closer to the stories, because it couldn’t see the stories very well. Bat got to be in the story in the fall.*” He draws “*brown, green and orange leaves*” with both his hands and also draws the wind. To our amusement he runs around the room like the *crazy wind* while stomping his feet. In this picture [Fig. 7] “*the bat is hiding behind all these fall trees.*”

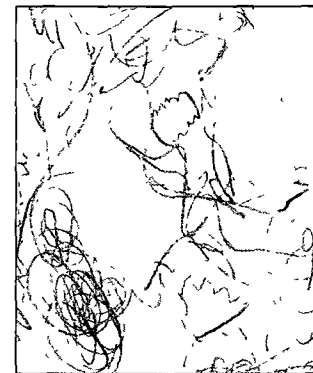


Fig. 7 Littlebat is hiding among the fall leaves

BigSister’s transaction-1

BigSister is extremely shy but is very engaged in the storytimes and keeps watching Zelda intently as she reads the books. BigSister whispers to her mother that she also likes *Littlebat’s*

Halloween Story the best but she does not provide any further details. She prefers to draw rather than answer any questions and only talks when her mother prompts her to answer my questions. When I ask her what she is drawing, she says “*I don’t know yet, because I am not finished.*” Then she draws [Fig. 8] “*my LittleSister who is crawling.*” Her mother, who is concerned about her daughter’s shyness, takes my questionnaire and asks her daughter some of the questions.

LittleSister who is only a few months old is awake by now and is excited with all the activity around her.

LittleOne goes and says hello to the baby before she leaves. When BigSister_mama asks BigSister if LittleSister listens to the stories too, she says “*No.*”

Then BigSister_mama explains to me that BigSister feels that the Thursday storytime is her turn to come to the library with her mama. And on Tuesdays when

there is a Babytime at the library, it is LittleSister’s turn with her mama. Thus LittleSister does not (*or perhaps should not*) listen to the stories on Thursdays. BigSister still does not know what her purple drawing [Fig. 9] represents but she says she is done for today and after writing her name on the two drawings, she hands them to me still hesitant to give me a smile.

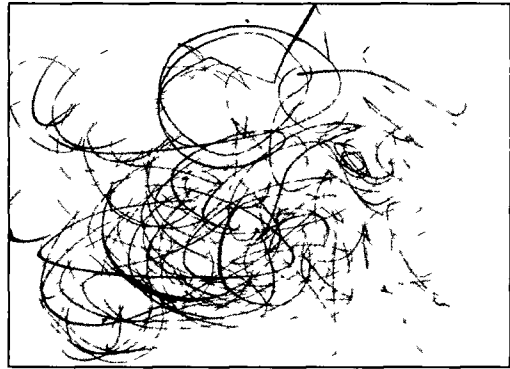


Fig 9 ‘Untitled’ by BigSister

LittleOne_mom’s email

Later that night, I receive an email from LittleOne_mom:

Hi Storycatcher,

When you said today to e-mail you if LittleOne said anything more I thought that wouldn't happen. Well tonight @ 7:30 she started singing "Roll over, roll over"

and said something about a mouse. I asked her where she heard that and she said

today in a book "Ten in the Bed". I asked her who read the book and she said Zelda and that there was an old mouse on the bed. Is that the stuff you're looking for? She then continued to sing the song for a few minutes.

LittleOne_mom

LittleOne has merged the words from the old nursery rhyme 'Roll Over' with the words in this book 'Move over' thus re-creating her own version of the story.

Storyland session #4

Last week, there was no storytime due to some OPL programming schedule and I kept wondering if the child-storytellers would return. When I reach Storyland after a week, the room is full with children from the daycare, the regular storytime children and a couple of drop-ins, parents and caregivers. The children are very talkative today and have a lot of things to say to each other and to Zelda, who takes such an interest in the children that she knows most of them by their first names and also knows their likes and dislikes. She has to remind them to make sure that they are not sitting directly in front of other children on the Storyland carpet. There is also a little baby crawling and toddling around and Zelda tells the children to be mindful around the baby. Due to the cold rainy weather Zelda has "*a little bit of a cold*" and tells all of us that she has taken her medications and that she is not "*contagious.*"

We start with the "*Wake up*" song by waking up our toes, then at LittleOne's request we wake up our faces and finally we all wake up our hair. Zelda starts reading the book *Jamberry* by Bruce Degen where we follow a little boy walking in the forest who then meets a big lovable bear that takes him on a delicious berry-picking adventure in the magical world of Berryland. Zelda announces that she loves this book because there is a toast tree in it. One child starts to say that they don't have a toast tree in their yard but then everyone gets engrossed in Berryland. As

she is reading, the little baby starts to wander around and some children gently pat the baby as she goes on her way.

The next book is called *Say Hello* by Jack Foreman & Michael Foreman. This book was written by the author Jack when he was ten years old, and it tells of a dog and a boy who are both lonely until others invite them to play. The story is mostly illustrated through charcoal, colored-pencil, and pastel drawings and makes scant use of colour and words. Zelda introduces this book by asking the children “*What do you say when you when you meet someone?*” and all around the room we hear children saying: “*Good Morning, Give them kisses and hugs, hi, hello, Ola, Bonjour, comme ça va, shalom, bonjour mes amies, Nǐ hǎo (Mandarin).*” After she applauds all of them, Zelda starts to read the book.

This is the only book that I suggested she read to the children and she was hesitant at first because she thought that the book was very depressing and there were not many words in it. So, when she starts to read it, I am a little surprised because she has told me many times before that she never reads a book that does not appeal to her. But when she starts to read the book, the children are engrossed in the illustrations and some of them repeat the simple sentences after her. When she comes to the end of the book, she asks them: “*Do you know what it is to be lonely?*” They all nod and one of them says “*to be lonely is to be sad.*” Then she shows them the back cover of the book where the word *hello* is displayed in many languages some of which the children have already mentioned.

Now it is time for another song and Zelda asks everyone to clear their throats to help her sing and we all start to sing and perform “*Put your finger on your head...and point to something red.*” The next book for this session is a rhyming book called *The Magic Hat* by Mem Fox where a wizard's hat blows into town one fine day with *Oh, the magic hat, the magic hat; It moved like*

this, it moved like that, It spun through the air, changing people into different animals when it lands on their heads. Zelda wears a hat on her head and tells everyone that she has an enormous head and that her hat is going to fly off in a minute. She also tells them that Mem Fox is one of her favourite authors. LittleOne who seems to love rhymes shouts out the names of animals that rhyme with the last word of the previous sentence that Zelda reads. Children from the daycare who know how to read are reading the book along with Zelda. Then it is time to sing “*Shake my sillies out, I’ve gotta shake shake my sillies out Wiggle my waggles away.*”

Even though it is getting late, Zelda has a book of colours called *Blue Goose* by Nancy Tafuri. In this book, when Farmer Gray goes away, Blue Goose, Red Hen, Yellow Chick, and White Duck decide to paint their barnyard. They work together to mix their paints and add color everywhere. But can they finish before Farmer Gray returns? To Farmer Gray’s surprise, the barnyard is filled with colour before he arrives. Blue goose paints everything blue before bedtime except for the moon and some children notice the *face* in the moon. Finally it is time to say goodbye and we all sing “*It’s time to say goodbye to all my friends.*” Then she hands out stickers and colouring sheets to the children.

Storycatcher-researcher

DW and BigSister have a cold and have not come to Storyland, and TheAlien_Mom has some errands to run therefore TheAlien will not be able to stay for Storycatching today.

LittleOne is the only child-storyteller and her mom tells me that even though she has been fighting a cold she came so that I could do some Storycatching.

LittleOne’s transaction-2

LittleOne is as usual bubbling with songs and talking non-stop though sometimes she talks so fast that it is not possible to make out what she is saying. When I ask her which stories

she enjoyed, she first says that she likes them all then she tells me that she likes the book *Say Hello* by Jack and Michael Foreman. *"I like the white book with the girl, and the girl and the dog brought the ball to the boy. It's French and I liked the French Bonjour."* When I ask her to tell me more she says: *"In the white book, there is a boy and a girl. I liked it because he gave the ball to the boy. I said bonjour to Zelda."*

She wants to lie down on her stomach and talk into the Voice Recorder. She says: *"I also liked the Magic in the Magic Hat. Magic hat went up and up and up and up on to people's head."* Then on a different note: *"I have a monster storybook at home. I remember the stories*

from the library when I go home...I have a library story

[book] and my mom reads them to me". Then she spots the book *Jamerry* and says: *"I like blue berries and I went walking for blueberries and (when her mom asks her where she found blueberries)... I found blueberries on the bushes. I go to collect strawberries in the*



Fig. 10 Kitty cats with polka dots

summer with my mom." When I ask her to draw, she

draws [Fig.10] a 'kitty cat' with polka dots, a long tail, with no whiskers, and with eyes on the back of the body. She also draws a big ball of cats and a purple cat. She asks her mom to draw the cat's face, but her mom says *"I don't think I am allowed to draw on your paper so I will draw my own picture"* and she draws a picture of a house. Then she gives a suggestion to LittleOne to do a *"wiggle wiggle wiggle"* on the cat. Then LittleOne says she wants to draw *legs, clouds, and ducks* all in the same picture with the purple kitty cats. All this time she is talking to herself, naming the colours and asking her mom to draw something as well and her mom keeps telling her that she is doing her own drawing and that she cannot draw on LittleOne's paper. This

dialogue goes on until she says she wants to draw a bed for her dad [Fig. 11]. When I ask her who else is in her family, she starts to tell me about her aunt. Then her mom prompts her “*Who sleeps in your house?*” and LittleOne starts to say “*Mom, dad, aunt and Sandra*” and her mom asks her “*Who is Sandra?*” LittleOne has gone back to her drawing and there is no answer. Then she wants her mom to draw a bed and she tells me about jumping “*up down in the bed*” and starts to sing “*move over.*” She tells me that she fell off the couch that morning and shows me where it hurt her and tells me that she started to “*cry like a monkey - o-ah-o-ah!*” Then I ask her if she is like the monkey in “*5 little monkeys jumping on the bed*” and we start to sing the nursery rhyme. Then she tells her mom that she wants to *buy* the two books that Zelda read and her mom tells her “*we borrow from the library because everyone needs to share.*”

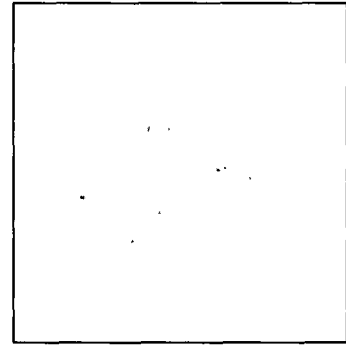


Fig. 11 Bed for LittleOne's dad

Storyland Session #5

In the morning there is an email from LittleOne's mom:

Hi Storycatcher,

LittleOne is sick today and is not going to Storytime. I'm not sure how many more weeks are left, but wanted to make sure you get your 4 days with her. We'll be there next week, unless you hear otherwise.

LittleOne_mom

I go to Storyland hoping that at least the other child-storytellers will show up. I can hear children's voices as I descend the stairs to Storyland. The daycare is attending today and there are a few of the regulars but none of my child-storytellers. There are also some new children in

the room so Zelda introduces me once again. Then we start singing the “*Wake up*” song by waking up our toes, then our hair, then our eyes. Then Zelda pretends to fall asleep and the children shout “*wake up*” until she opens her eyes and gives them a big smile.

She tells us that she is going to start this session with a “*stinky book*” called *Smelly Bill* by Daniel Postgate and gets the children all excited when she holds the book away from her saying that the book is really smelly. The children all make faces and sounds when she starts to read the rhyming book. “Bill the dog loved smelly things like muddy ponds and rubbish bins. Disgusting stuff he'd stick his snout in, sniff and snort and roll about in. Will the arrival of cleaning fanatic Aunt Bleach put an end to his smelly ways or will Bill live to stink another day?” And so Zelda reads with an affected voice imitating Aunt Bleach and the children roar with laughter. They just cannot contain themselves when in the end Smelly Bill is clean and it is Aunt Bleach who needs a bleach bath. By this time, TheAlien arrives with his mom and gives me a shy smile as he settles down on the Storyland carpet and I heave a sigh of relief because I know there will be some stories to catch today.

Zelda wears a shower cap before she starts reading the next book *Estelle Takes a Bath* by Jill Esbaum. She gives me a shower cap as well and when I just hold it in my hand without wearing it, she looks at me in mock disapproval insisting that I wear it before she starts reading the story! The children are watching this *mock conflict* between Zelda and me, so I wear the cap and everyone seems to settle down. In this rhythmic book pandemonium results when a field mouse sneaks into a warm kitchen to escape a blizzard and startles Estelle who is enjoying her bubble bath. The story is about a startled Estelle trying to chase an equally startled mouse with a broom in all her nakedness with bubbles flowing all over her kitchen and how she finally

surrenders and lets the mouse enjoy her warm bubble bath. The children laugh and comment on the pictures and the actions in the book.

Now it is time for a song and we sing “*Put your finger on your head, and point to something red.*” The children have become experts at performing this song now and perform the actions without any prompting and they always ask for an encore. The next book on Zelda’s list is *Mortimer Mooner Stopped Taking a Bath* by Frank B. Edward & John Bianchi. She starts to read: “*On Monday Mortimer Mooner stopped wearing his neck tie; On Tuesday he stopped cleaning his room.*” This ‘*slippery slope*’ continues until finally he just stops taking a bath. With exclamations of “*yuck and phew*” from the children, we hear the story of the “*Messy, Grimy, Scruffy, and Stinky Mortimer Mooner.*” Luckily for him (and for us), his grandmother comes for a visit and instead of hugging him, she holds back, sniffs the air and refuses to hug him because “*if I did, I would surely faint!*” To the amusement of everyone in the room, Zelda imitates the grandmother in a loud booming *British* accent. The children ask for another story but it is late and “*It’s Time to say goodbye*” but they get some stickers and colouring sheets.

Storycatcher-researcher

After all the goodbyes are said, I sit down with TheAlien and his mom to do some Storycatching. Since the other child-storytellers are not here today, he is extremely shy and only whispers his answers in his mom’s ears and she repeats them into the voice recorder.

TheAlien’s transaction-2

TheAlien says that he likes “*the Pig one. The pig didn’t take a bath, he didn’t brush his teeth, and he got all stinky. Then his grandmother came and did not hug him. He had to take a bath because he was stinky. He had to brush his teeth too and then his grandmother hugged him.*” Today his mom has to prompt him with all the questions because he is overcome with

shyness. When we ask him if he would like to be like Mortimer one day, he says: *“I always take a bath and brush my teeth. I would not like to be stinky.”* His favourite character in the story: *“I like the pig’s grandmother because she made him take a bath first and she didn’t hug or kiss him before.”* At this TheAlien_mom tells me that TheAlien is the only grandchild in their family (at least for now) and loves his grandmothers who dote on him.

He starts to draw sideways with both hands, and TheAlien_mom says *“TheAlien is ambidextrous and has not decided whether he is right-handed or left-handed.”* He wants her to open the book so he can see the pictures in the book before he draws anything. She tells him that he does not have to copy the exact drawings from the book and he can draw the best part of the book from his imagination. He prefers crayons to coloured pencils and I have forgotten to bring crayons so Zelda gets them from her office. He first draws the grandmother [Fig.12]. He also likes to draw inventions at home so he is going to invent something for Mortimer. He invents a bath [Fig.13] *“which washes you itself.”* Then he draws a snake that *“brushes his [Mortimer’s] hair.”* [Fig.14]. He also draws a lawnmower and tells his mother that *“it mows the grass itself and Mortimer would need that to mow the grass.”* [Fig.15]. Then he draws *“a book that puts soap on you”*

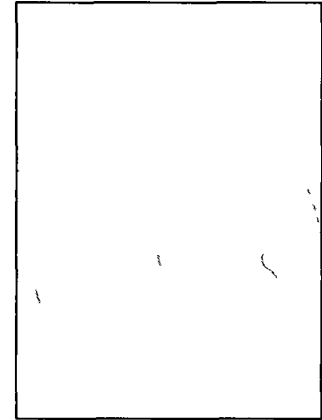


Fig 12 Mortimer Mooner's grandmother

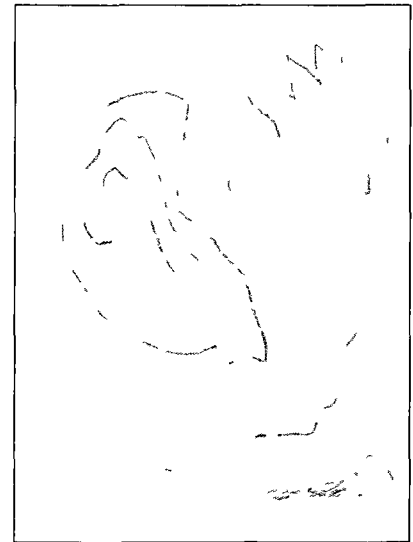


Fig 14 Snake to brush pig's hair

[Fig.16] “you take the book in the bath tub and it turns on like a machine. [It] squirts bar soap and rubs all over you. You can also read this book and it is a book about the Pig (and with a giggle) Mortimer gets to read a book about himself. The book reminds him to take a bath.”

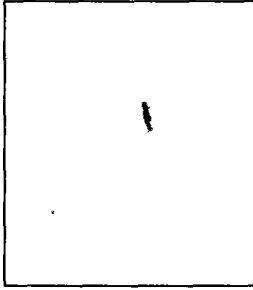


Fig.13 automatic bath for Mortimer

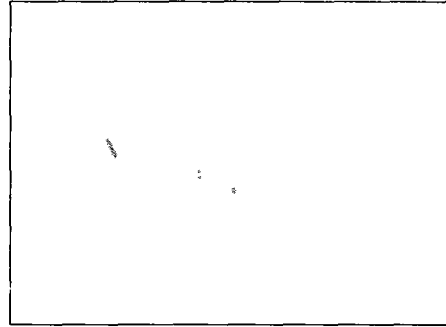


Fig. 15 automatic lawnmower

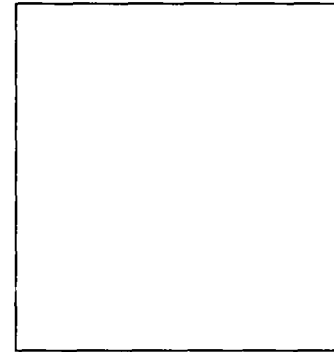


Fig. 16 Book that puts soap on you

Storyland session #6

When I reach Storyland today, there are only five girls all dressed in pink and waiting for Zelda. It is starting to get pretty cold outside though there is still no sign of snow. Zelda says that the daycare will not be attending any more of the storytime sessions due to the weather.

BigSister is in Storyland, and as usual she is very quiet and sits close to her mama. LittleOne is there too and she is very excited and says that her arm is itchy because she has a mosquito bite. I notice that when she is with other girls who are older than her, she watches them intently and tries to imitate them. Three of the girls are so chatty and giggly that Zelda has to remind them to be quiet during storytime.

We begin today’s session with a rhyming story that has a lot of sound effects *Hilda Must Be Dancing* by Karma Wilson “*Hilda Hippo loved to dance and everyday she practised hard and danced in her leotard...And while she danced in utter bliss, it sounded quite a lot like this:*

Ka-Bump! Ka-Bump! CRASH! CRASH! SMASH!" Hilda Hippo tries other quieter activities when her jungle friends are disturbed by her dancing, but nothing else makes her and the others happy until Water Buffalo suggests swimming and she finds a new way to express herself; water ballet dancing and *"best of all the ground stayed still."*

In *Peanut* by Linas Alsenas, Mildred is very lonely until she finds a stray animal and takes him home as her pet dog and calls him Peanut. The pet dog is not a dog at all but an elephant and the children start to shout saying *"that is not a puppy that it is an elephant."* When Mildred has to return her puppy to the zoo, she is lonely again and she goes and finds a kitten. At this the children literally start to scream and shout saying *"that is not a kitten but a camel."* LittleOne says *"Camel belongs in the desert."* Zelda asks them if they know what being lonely means and one girl says *"being lonely is not having anyone to talk to."* TheAlien walks in at this point and they all say hello to him, and he smiles back. Then one girl points out to him and tells Zelda *"now there is one boy."*

The next book on Zelda's list is *We Share Everything* by Robert Munsch. Zelda has a giant-sized copy of the book and they are all excited by it and there are loud whispers in the room from some of them saying that they have read the story before. As Zelda starts to read, LittleOne says *"my mom shares, my mom shares"* and then she starts telling the story before Zelda has a chance to turn the page forcing LittleOne_mom to have a word with her.

In this story, on the first day of school, when they didn't know what to do, Amanda and Jeremiah walk into the kindergarten classroom and Amanda picks up a book and Jeremiah says *"give me that book."* When she does not oblige, a fight ensues and Jeremiah screams. Their kindergarten teacher tells them *"this is kindergarten and in kindergarten we share everything!"* The story continues on with Amanda and Jeremiah fighting over books, blocks, and paints, and

every time the teacher reminds them to share everything until they take her message literally and share their clothes. The children in Storyland enjoy the rendition of the story and they repeat after Zelda: “*you can share everything but not your clothes!*”

Then we hear *Just the Thing* by Damian Harvey. In this book when Big Gorilla gets a pesky itch in the middle of his back, he wiggles and he squirms and he itches and he scratches but he just cannot reach it. He is hard-pressed to find just the thing to scratch it and goes around asking all the other animals in the forest. None of their suggestions seem to work for his itch until he returns home and Baby Gorilla jumps on Daddy’s back and he says “*son you are just the thing for a gorilla with a scratch.*” LittleOne who has an itch today gets up and shows everyone where it itches and her mom has to scratch her back in the middle of the story (her mosquito bite seems to have shifted from her arm to her back).

While You Were Sleeping by John Butler is a bedtime counting book. In this book, Daisy's mother tells her of the many animals in the world who swim and play and fly while Daisy is asleep, from one stuffed tiger hunting in the jungle to ten stuffed penguins jumping out of the icy sea. Then it is “*Time to say goodbye*” and time to hand out stickers and colouring sheets.

Storycatcher-researcher

The small group of five girls and one boy has been so responsive that Zelda has read five books in this session.

LittleOne’s transaction-3

I start by asking LittleOne which stories she liked and with an “*um...um*” she says “*I like that one*” pointing to the book *While You Were Sleeping*. “*I like the owl in the story* (pause)...*also like the grass, and the gorilla and he was sleeping and he was asking the animals*

questions. He has the itch and then at the end he going [sic] home, baby gorilla jumps and scratches it. Gorilla is scratching the itch. I like that” Then she starts singing like a little chipmunk “Gorilla itchy and I am itchy and mom can scratch my back.”

TheAlien’s transaction-3

TheAlien is watching the two girls while waiting for his turn to hold the voice recorder in his hands and tell me his story.

“I like the one about sharing. I liked the part where they share their shoes and I also liked the part where they shared their shirts.”

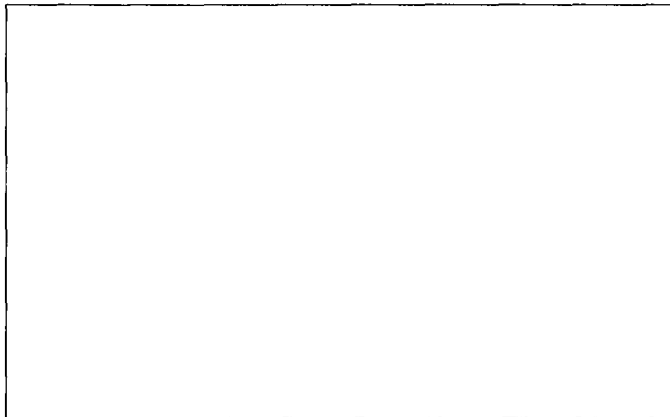


Fig. 17 Gorilla and other animals

His mother tells me that his favourite author is Robert Munsch and that he has a whole collection of Munsch books. I ask him if he shares his shirts with his friends and he replies “no”. So then what does he share with other people? *“I share my toys with friends and blocks at school.”* Do you scream like the kids in the story? He starts to giggle and says “No.”

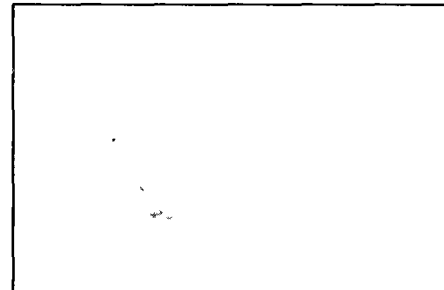


Fig.18 Gorilla in the grass

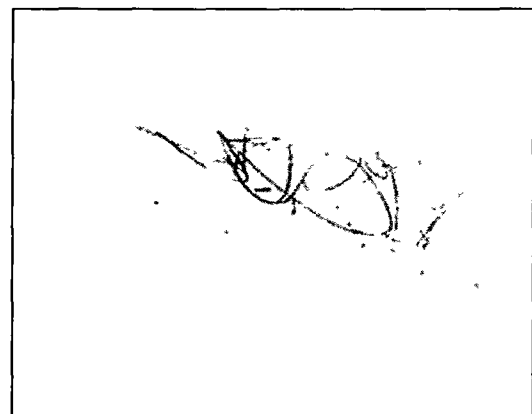


Fig. 19 Snake and gorilla in the grass

When he starts to draw LittleOne asks him: “*What are you doing?*” TheAlien draws animals and a gorilla [Fig.17-18]: “*ants are crawling all over gorilla...itchy itchy itch, scratchy [sic]and scratching his back. Monkey is in the grass and mud and is itching his back. There is also a snake in the grass hiding behind the gorilla.*” [Fig. 19]

I ask him if he has seen a gorilla and he says “Yes.” His mom asks him about the red colour all over his drawing and he explains that the red means that “*the itch is going away forever.*” He has also seen a snake in a pet store. He tells me that there is a “*termite*” on his T-shirt today and his favourite colour is orange.

LittleOne starts to talk again and her mom tells her to finish her drawing because it is time to go home and she starts to whine and say “*I am drawing a big big grass. And I want to draw a gorilla too who is sleeping (because she has seen TheAlien’s drawing). I got to finish I am almost done mom, I am not ready yet, I will write my name on it*” [Fig. 20].

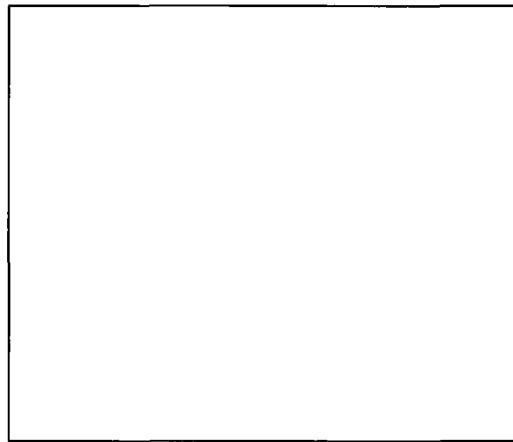


Fig. 20 LittleOne’s gorilla

BigSister’s transaction-2

BigSister does not want to say anything but she is willing to draw. When I ask BigSister about her drawing she says “*I am not done yet.*” She is wearing a beautiful butterfly hairclip and when I admire her hairclip, she only looks at me. She will not tell me what she has drawn but she spells out her name. When her mama asks her if she will tell her about the stories and drawings at home, she nods her head. So, I give BigSister_mama (BSM) my questionnaire and she says that she will ask BigSister about her transactions and email me. BSM also tells me that since I

began Storycatching at the library, she has started to go home and do some Storycatching herself. "I just used to let BigSister play by herself when we got home or when I was busy, but now I watch to see what she does and I am amazed by her imagination. Thanks for coming by and Storycatching." By now LittleSister is awake and squirming in her little seat so they all get up to go home.

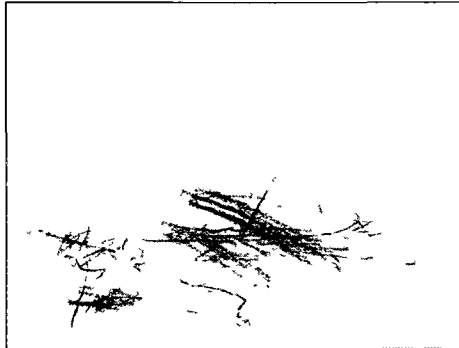


Fig. 21 BigSister's purple picture



Fig.22 Snow and Rainbow

BigSister_mama's email

Hi Storycatcher,

When we got home I asked BigSister what her picture was about as it was fresh in her mind, she said she is not sure what the purple one was [Fig.21], but the big picture on the other side [Fig. 22] is "about snow and a rainbow, a colourful snow and a different kind of rainbow actually."

She likes the hippo book because she was a girl.

(8 p.m. at bedtime after our story time BigSister decided to tell me that "animals don't wear bathing suits, just people, but some swim like the hippo from the library!")

Talk to you later.

BigSister_mama

Storyland Session #7

It is 3 weeks (22 days) to Christmas and there is still no sign of snow outside.

BigSister_mama has emailed me to let me know that they will not be coming to storytime today because BigSister has a play date with a friend from her preschool. I walk into Storyland and there are about seven children but no sign of DW, or TheAlien. Once everyone settles down, Zelda starts to sing the “*Wake up*” song and we first wake up our head, and then our tongue. One child says that her eyes are still asleep and Zelda says that by waking up our heads, we have woken up our eyes too. The group is rambunctious again today and Zelda asks them “*What do we need to do in order to read a book?*” Some of them start to answer by saying: “*sit still*”, “*play music*”, “*be quiet*”. Zelda reminds them to be quiet, to choose a spot on the Storyland carpet and to listen to the story.

Hatch Egg Hatch by Shen Roddie is a Touch-and-Feel action flap book in which Mother hen has laid an egg but she has no idea how to hatch it and so she tries different things every three days to make the egg hatch “*even then the egg does not hatch.*” Finally she is so tired that she puts the egg on her bed and sits on it for three days and then it hatches. As Zelda is reading, one girl says “*you have to sit on it to make it hatch.*” Zelda asks her how she knows this and the girl replies: “*I know someone who lives on a farm.*”

As Zelda is finishing her first book, TheAlien walks in with his mom. Unlike the girls who like to sit very close to Zelda, TheAlien prefers to sit at the far end of the storyland carpet. Today he has the whole side to himself and as he is listening to the stories, he starts to move or rather slide back and forth from one colourful square on the carpet to the other square. His mom and I just look at each other and smile; he seems to be in a kind of trance listening to the stories.

The next book is *Froggy Gets Dressed* by Jonathan London. “*I wait all year to read this and since there is no snow outside, we have to pretend that there is snow outside*” says Zelda.

In this story, rambunctious Froggy hops out into the snow for a winter frolic but his mother tells him to go back to sleep. But Froggy insists on going out to play and starts getting dressed putting on his socks -“zoop,” his boots -“zup,” his hat -“zat,” and his scarf -“zwit.” By this time the kids are either laughing loudly or if they already know the story, they are imitating Zelda as she does all the sound effects. In his rush to get dressed, Froggy always forgets something: first his coat, then his shirt, then his pants and is called back by his mother to put on the necessary articles of clothing until finally:

FRROGGY!

“*Wha-a-a-a-t?*”

“*Did you forget to put something on?*”

“*Wha-a-a-a-t?*”

“*Your underwear!*”

That’s it for Froggy. After these repeated attempts, he is so tired that he finally goes back to bed. As Zelda is reading with full gusto, one child reminds her that “*we are not supposed to yell in the library.*” Children also notice the different fonts used for the word Froggy. One child says that frogs are supposed to hibernate and then they all go on to name other animals that hibernate in the winter like bears, beavers, hedgehog, skunks and ladybugs, even chipmunks says one child.

After we hear about Froggy’s antics, we experience Canadian activities through a book called *I am Canada* by Heather Patterson. Through its vivid photographs, the book showcases the many faces and activities of Canada’s children as they celebrate the different seasons across Canada.

Zelda starts by asking “*Does anybody here live in Canada?*” The children trying to show off their geographical knowledge start to shout out their answers “*I live on Merivale Road*” says one, “*in Nepean*” says another, “*I was born in Ottawa*” says the third “*my grandmother lives in Calgary*” says yet another one. The children’s interest is piqued because Zelda has asked them to pay attention to certain things in the book as she reads it. She wants them to “*find a perogie, a bike helmet, and a horse in the book.*” As Zelda turns the pages and reads the simple text, children start to point out the Canadian objects they see, and recognize in the book like *the Senators, the Leafs, an RCMP officer on his horse* and one child who is visiting with her grandmother says “*I eat perogies*” as soon as we see a picture of a child eating perogies. This book ends with everyone repeating “*We live in Canada!*”

The last story for today is the classic Jewish folktale called *Something from Nothing* by Phoebe Gilman. In this version of the book, a poor tailor makes a wonderful blanket to keep his grandson, Joseph warm. As Joseph gets older, the blanket gets older too. When the blanket become a little tattered, his mother says “*Joseph look at your blanket, it’s frazzled, it’s torn it’s time to throw it out.*” But Joseph says, “*Grandpa can fix it.*” And as Joseph grows, Grandpa fixes and sews and “*as Grandpa turned it round and round, and his scissors went snip, snip, snip and his needle flew in and out*” and the blanket becomes a jacket, then it becomes a vest. (Zelda points to my vest and says “*Veena is wearing a vest today.*”) The tattered vest becomes a tie, then a handkerchief and finally a button. This book is a story within a story because as Grandpa snips and sews the little family of mice who live under the floorboards also prosper from the remnants of the cloth. Zelda has a big book and she distributes multiple copies of the same book to the children so that we can all read it together and they can see the simultaneous stories unfolding in front of their eyes. In the end even the button is gone and Joseph’s mother says to

him “*even your grandfather can’t make something from nothing!*” But next day in school Joseph’s pen goes *scritch, scritch, scritch* and he knows that even though his button is gone, he has just enough material to make a wonderful story – thus the title ‘Something from Nothing.’

Then it is time for a song and we all listen to the Fireman song on the CD “*Take me for a ride in the Fire truck.*” Finally, “*it is time to say goodbye to all my friends.*” Zelda has forgotten the colouring sheets today but the other librarian brings in some sheets and the children run to her to get them.

Storycatcher-researcher

LittleOne can’t stay for Storycatching today so TheAlien is the only storyteller. By this time in our Storycatching journey together, he is not shy at all.

TheAlien’s transaction-4

He is coughing a little bit so his mom gets him his water bottle and tells him to cover his mouth when he is coughing. He points to the book *Froggy Gets Dressed* and says “*I like Froggy because he forgot everything.*”

“What was your favourite part in the story?” asks his mom and he flips through the book and turns to the page where Froggy’s mom calls him and he imitates the way Zelda calls out to Froggy...

ABROGGY!

“*Wha-a-a-a-t?*”

And he starts to hop around like a frog. When I ask him if his mom helps him to get dressed he says “*I do it myself. Froggy’s mom calls him because he forgot his underwear.*” Then again, “*I like Froggy because he forgot everything (and again) because he is forgetful.*” “What happened when he forgot his underwear? How do you think he felt? Was he happy?” asks

TheAlien_mom *"No, he was sad."* says TheAlien hopping around and not wanting to sit still. *"Froggy is sad when his mom calls him for the third time reminding him to wear his underwear"* he says.

TheAlien_mom asks him: "What happens to you when you are sad?" TheAlien replies *"I am not sure"*. So his mom says "Perhaps Froggy is embarrassed and not sad?" because he forgot his underwear. *"One question"* says TheAlien and then announces *"I can hop."* (What is his question? No one knows.)

Do you ever feel embarrassed? What is it to feel embarrassed? I ask him.

To this, TheAlien answers: *"I have not felt embarrassed. I don't know."* So we ask him

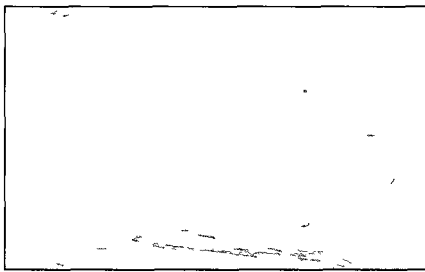


Fig 23 Froggy on spaceship

how he would feel if his mom called after him to remind him to wear his underwear. *"I would feel 'disturbed' if my mom called or screamed after me."* And both his mom and I laugh at his choice of words. He is only 4-years old. "Where does he get these words from?" I ask his mother and she says that she has no idea.

He is drawing a giant monster. The inventor that he is, TheAlien, draws a spaceship [Fig.23] and puts Froggy in it. *"Froggy does not want to play in the snow anymore and he does not have to wear any clothes on the spaceship."* As he is drawing, I decide to talk to his mom and ask her some questions and he keeps telling us the things that he is drawing. In this picture, there is *"an invisible alien head, an acorn, volcano, lava, monster, robot, laser, alien spaceship, robot planet."*

BigSister's transaction-3

Even though BigSister can't be here today, her mama, who has taken on the role of a *Storycatcher*, emails me one of BigSister's literary transactions:

Hi Storycatcher,

We read every night and one of the story books that we borrowed from the library was "Dinosaur Train" about a young boy that loves dinosaurs and trains and always plays and draws pictures of his two favourite things, he than escapes on a journey by train with a bunch of dinosaurs who appear in his room before bedtime.

Well BigSister loves that book out of three that we picked. She wants it read to her every night and during playtime she took out her Christmas express train asked me to help her put the tracks together so she could play with her dinosaurs. She keeps replaying the part when the train tips over and then takes the dinosaurs and pushes it back onto the track.

She says: "I love dinosaurs, they're my favourite because they're big, and I like the museum, and they're strong."

Yesterday during playtime I pretended to be a library storyteller and BigSister likes the part when Zelda reads the books and then falls asleep, so she asked me to be Zelda when reading her books and to pretend to fall asleep so she could shout "Wake up." She doesn't like shouting "wake up" at the library because "there are too many kids!"

Hope this is useful.

BigSister_mama

Storyland Session #8

LittleOne and BigSister are already there when I reach Storyland and I get a big hug from LittleOne and *I-see-you-yet-I-don't-want-to-see-you* kind of response from BigSister. The few

other girls waiting for storytime to begin are lying on the carpet and they really need to *wake up*. Zelda starts the song and we all start by waking up our toes and then our noses. *"I brought a stinky book"* says Zelda. It is called *Big Smelly Bear* by Britta Teckuntrup. Bear is so smelly that flies come around him. *"I hate flies"* says one little girl and LittleOne repeats the same thing. Zelda then asks them to smell the book and they all just look at her without moving from the Storyland carpet. *Big smelly bear never washed, never brushed, never took a bath, he was followed by a big smelly stink*. Then she asks them to sound like flies which were all around the stinky bear and there is a buzz and hum in the room. Bear is itchy. What should Bear do? *"Take a bath"* suggests one girl. *"I don't need a bath"* says Big Smelly Bear when Big Fluffy Bear insists that he visit the pond for a bath before she will scratch the itch on his back that he cannot reach. Luckily for Big Fluffy Bear and unfortunately for the flies, Big Smelly Bear visits the pond and comes out clean.

LittleOne wants to share something with Zelda and is constantly interrupting her until Zelda tells her that she will listen to her after storytime.

Next on Zelda's list is a story of a bear who worries for his friend the caterpillar *Don't Worry Bear* by Greg E. Foley. Late one afternoon a little bear finds a caterpillar hard at work. *"What are you doing?"* asks bear. I am making a cocoon says caterpillar. Bear looks worried so caterpillar reassures bear that they will see each other again when it will emerge from its cocoon. Bear comes and checks on the cocoon through all the seasons and one day when he finds the cocoon empty, he is worried all over again until a silk moth lands right on him. Then Zelda asks the children to show her how they look when they are worried and all the children make faces to show her. *"I wanted to read you that book because it happens in the summer time mostly"* says Zelda to the children. She hands out scarves and the girls really like them. We all listen to the

Scarf Song and perform with our scarves. “*Scarves up, Scarves down, shake your scarves all around. Scarves in, scarves out, shake your scarves all around*” goes the song and we all have a great time. BigSister takes a scarf but will not stand up to dance with the others.

“*The next book has a garden in it*” says Zelda. It is called *Scarlette Beane* by Karen Wallace. Zelda loves books about summer. “*Are you afraid of any vegetables?*” she asks the children, and they all start to shout out names of different vegetables: *cucumbers, pickles, carrots*. “I know this book” says one child and Little One repeats after the girl saying that she has also seen this book before. When Mrs. Beane first saw her daughter’s face, her face was red as a beet and the ends of her fingers were green. *Let’s call her Scarlette* says Mrs. Beane. Scarlette dreams of doing something wonderful. When family members give five-year-old Scarlette a garden, her mother gives her a set of tools to tend to the garden and her father makes a fence and she succeeds in growing gigantic vegetables and creating something wonderful. She makes a castle out of the vegetables which is the house of her father’s dreams. *I knew you would do something wonderful* says her father and the ends of Scarlette’s fingers sparkle like fireworks.

The last book for today is called *A Pocket Can Have a Treasure in It* by Kathy Stinson. In this, a little girl discovers many things that can be found inside other things. *A barn can have a horse in it, and a house can have me in it and a bowl can have cherries in it. A sock can have a foot in it, a window can have the sun in it, a basket can have a puppy in it, and so goes the rhyming book where in the end a pocket can have a treasure in it: a flower.* “*That’s what it was?*” asks a young girl in the group and Zelda just smiles. Then “*It’s time to say goodbye to all my friends.*”

Storycatcher-researcher

This is my fourth and final Storycatching session with LittleOne and BigSister. DW and her mom will be here later in the afternoon so that I can do some Storycatching with them. So, even though there is another storytime session next week, this will be my last Storycatching session. After catching the child-storytellers' stories, I get together with LittleOne_mom and BigSister_mama to catch their stories as well.

LittleOne's transaction-4

LittleOne tells me that "*I like it, I like it actually, the duck story*" in *A Pocket Can Have a Treasure in It*. Why does she like it? "*Because I like it I said. The Duck story.*" She is drawing a colouring game today that she saw in this book [Fig. 24].

Then LittleOne comes and shows her mom how to hold the voice recorder. She sits right next to us and keeps prompting or repeating after her mom. Simultaneously, she is also talking to BigSister as they are drawing and sharing crayons, and the best part is that the two of them are chatting. (*How I wish I had a second voice recorder!*).

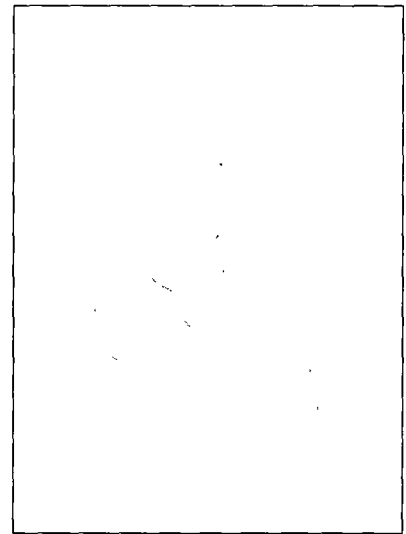


Fig. 24 Colouring Game

BigSister's transaction-4

BigSister does not want to answer any questions but I had noticed her interest in the Scarlett Beane story, so I ask her if she has a garden at home like Scarlett's and she *answers* that her grandfather has a garden. Then her mama asks her to tell me the different plants that he has in the garden, and that is when she becomes reticent again and says that she will go home and tell her mama. Then it is BigSister_mama's turn to tell me her stories. BigSister sits right

next to us with her drawings and keeps LittleSister occupied as she is wide awake and babbling away.

BigSister_mama's email:

Hi Storycatcher,

After storytime on Thursday I asked BigSister which story book she liked the best and she said "The garden story, because it's funny."

"I liked the castle because it had all the things on the top and corn on the sides and that is why I liked it."

Which book did you not like? Why?

"The Smelly Bear."

Not sure why she doesn't like it.

What was your picture that you drew about?

"A rainbow with Santa, [Fig. 25] and a tree with snowflakes [Fig. 26] and I drew Mama and your tea pots that Zia (Aunt) gave you [Fig.27]. And my picture is a story, Rainbow story and LittleSister."

BigSister_mama

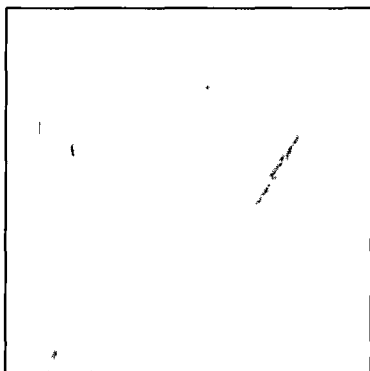


Fig. 25 Rainbow with Santa

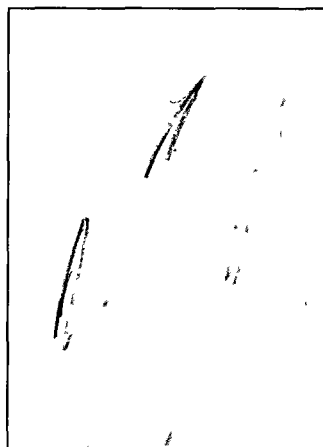


Fig. 26 Tree with snowflakes

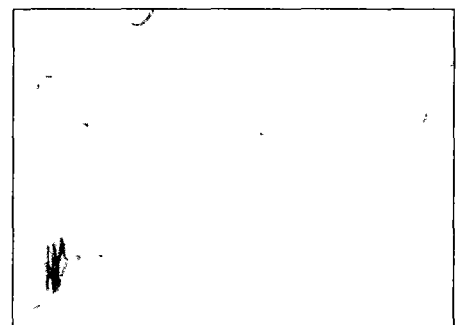


Fig. 27 Mama and her teapots

DW's transaction-2

I ask DW to tell me her favourite story. She says that she likes Marc Brown's storybook *D.W. Gets All Wet*. "Arthur takes her on his shoulder but D.W. (character in the book) does not want to go into the water. She wants to go to the ice cream parlour and not into the water. Then they splash into the water and she learns how to swim."

She draws a picture of when she was on the beach in Cuba [Fig.28] and of a beach with sandcastles [Fig. 29] and a store that sells eye-glasses that her mom wears [Fig.30]. She also tells me a story that her mom has read to her: "Bargain bear is lost. She belongs to a little girl and they find the bear when she (the little girl) grows up (at her mom's prompting) in an antique store. Bargain bear remembers the girl."

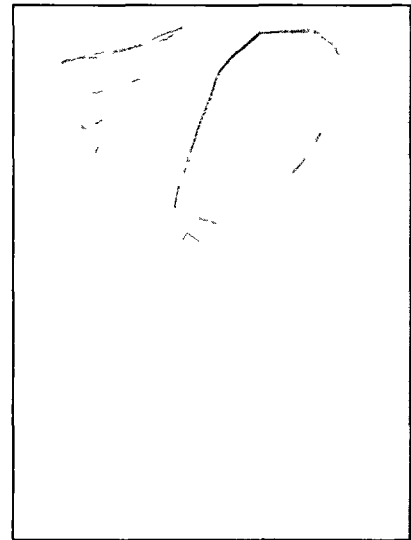


Fig 28 DW on the Cuban beach

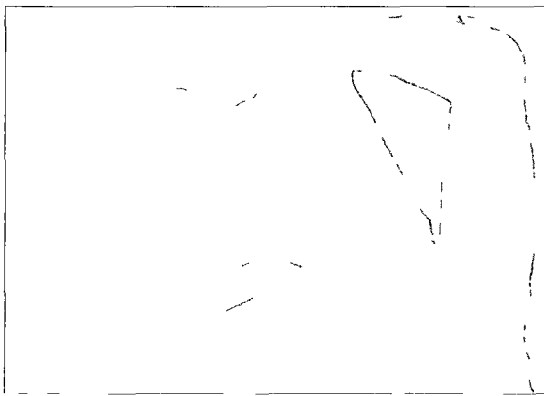


Fig 29 Beach with sand castles

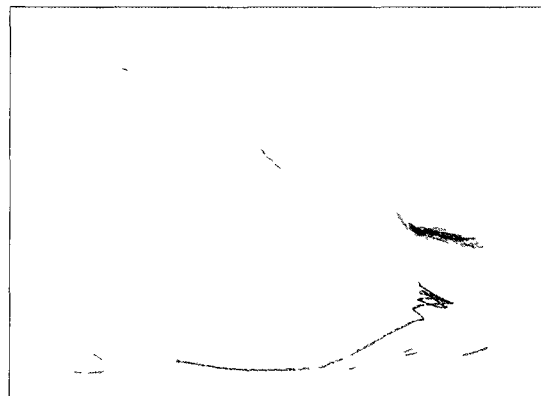


Fig 30 Eye-glass store

Conversation with Participants

Zelda's performance of reading (her stance in choosing the books to read during storytime)

After my conversations with the participating moms, I meet with Zelda for about 30 minutes to help me understand the importance of the library storytimes for children from her point of view, and her role in facilitating the children's literary transactions. I have met with Zelda after every storytime session for 5-10 minutes, to talk about her choice of books for that particular day. Our conversation is semi-structured and is based on the questionnaire that has been approved by The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board (Appendix F).

I want to explore her two-way transactional relationship with the stories she chose to read to the children and to see if she had themes for every session. According to Chambers, (1996) "choosing a book is a high-value activity -- the book contains the subject matter, language, image, provocation to memory and so on and they who choose are exercising power" (p. 54). Jenkins (1998) maintains that librarians and educators "shape children's access to books and other resources" (p. 26), resulting in different reading interests among children.

Snippets from my conversation with Zelda:

i. Purpose of storytimes

The purpose of storytime is to introduce young children to the library, and to make them feel special; to show the children that the library is a happy place; a place for and about children. The whole repetitiveness of it, this is where we go on Thursdays, Zelda sits facing this way, this is the carpet, to introduce them to the routine and repetition of storytime and to let them get a mastery over words, language, and books. Part of storytime is also learning not to blurt out what you are thinking whenever you are thinking it. Storytime is all about them (the kids).

The best things that happen are when they surprise you; when they see and say something that you've missed or when they relate the story to something that happened in their lives.

ii. Storytime themes:

I don't often do themes for storytimes. At the beginning of the session, I order a whole lot of books and then I select them on the basis of when they come in and what appeals to me the most. I have to love the books. They have to be a certain length. Size is also a determinant sometime. I like rhyming books. I have some books in my repertoire that I read every session.

iii. Favourite books read during storytimes:

I saw an ant on the railroad track: I love the rhythm, vocabulary and beauty of the words in this book because the vocabulary is not regular vocabulary and it stands out.

Little pea: I love this book where pea is forced to eat candy and I think it is funny because Dad pea makes the baby pea fly through the air -- makes me laugh because it has no intrinsic value.

Peanut: I love reading this book where the elephant/camel is called puppy/cat respectively. I wonder if it upsets the children because they show their 'mastery' and point out the ridiculousness of the story by almost telling me '*Don't mess with me, that is a not a cat, it is a camel.*'

There are always books I like to do in every session like *Something from Nothing*, and *Hatch egg hatch*. I like to do *Froggy gets dressed* when it starts to snow.

iv. Books that surprise:

The book *Say hello* was a 'surprise. It was in a different language. I don't know but I got interested in that after you asked me to read it. Did you hear they were repeating after me? The red ball really stands out. If it were up to me, I would never have chosen to read this book but I am glad that I had the courage to read it.

v. Storytime stances over the years:

I have modified my storytimes over the years. I have learned to listen to the kids. I used to be very *stiff* before, but over the years, you learn what works. I listen to children more. Now, I am not afraid to be very very silly, or wiggle my hair, or to have lots of fun. I love kids and I want them to love the library.

I sometimes pull back if I'm being too sad or if noise level goes up in the room, I get quieter. I will put down a book if it does not work for me that day or I will skip over pages if I feel that the pictures are too frightening. I feel that it is my job to do it (in my previous job, I had no freedom to skip over pages). If it is a longer book then time permits, then I just tell the story and show the pictures.

Storycatcher-researcher

Even though she tells me that she does not use any themes I find that there are underlying themes within the stories, for e.g. on the first day, she read books on emotion, where there were *grumpy* and *angry* birds and a *concerned* workman. For Halloween, she read *Littlebat's Halloween story* and the humorous story of *Little pea* who is forced to eat candy if he wants to get his spinach dessert. Then one day she read books on bath, cleaning, and being dirty.

She says that she only reads the books that she loves. By reading the book 'Say Hello', she not only surprises me (because she had reservations about reading it at first) and surprises herself too (because she says that she got interested in it and thought that it was a great book). It

is the only book that I had suggested she read during storytime. I tell her how I really liked the way she introduced the book, and got all the children to say Hello in different languages.

Child-storytellers' stances to the library and to stories

Apart from asking them to tell me the story that they liked in their own words, I also had a few questions for the child-storytellers regarding their own insights about stories, and storytimes at the library. The children were only between the ages of 3-4 years old, so I had to simplify my already simple questions (Appendix E) when I was talking to the LittleOne and to DW.

LittleOne, DW and TheAlien answered my questions by themselves but BigSister seemed “reticent” (Coplan & Arbeau, 2008), and only replied to her mama who sent me emails after each storytime session. One day when LittleOne, BigSister, and TheAlien were all present we also had a group conversation where I asked them the “General Questions” from my questionnaire. Their replies were almost similar to their replies from our individual conversations. The only extra bit of information I got from LittleOne was about the book that her mom had read to her the night before. They each wanted to hold the voice recorder in their hand when they answered so they waited patiently until the other person had finished replying, and if LittleOne seemed a little impatient, her mom was there to remind her to wait her turn.

LittleOne: I like to come to the library. Zelda reads books in the library and mom reads at

bedtime and my brother reads to me at home. Last night, mom read the crocodile story and there were lots of animals in the story.

DW: I like reading, Mommy and Daddy read to me; I read when they are busy.

BigSister: I like to come to the library for storytime and mom and dad read stories to me at

home. Papa and Mama do better ones than I do because I don't know how to read, I just

know some words I just look at them. I like going to the library because I get my turn during storytime and LittleSister gets her turn during babytime. I like the storybooks and songs. I don't want to sing because I'm tired. I borrow books from the library. Mama and I pick them together.

TheAlien: I like to come to the library for storytimes and I also borrow books every week. I choose books with my mother. We both choose books. (*This he repeats after his mother*). My mom and dad read to me at night and sometimes also during the day. I read books on my own sometimes when my mom is busy.

Parents' narratives

Parents' insights about the library storytime

The one-on-one conversation I had with the participating mothers was based on the open-ended questionnaire (Appendix G), and the questions were all related to their role as parents in promoting their children's literary transactions and their thoughts about storytimes. The interesting part was that none of the four mothers who participated in my Storycatching or for that matter the other parents and/or caregivers who attended storytimes seemed to resent my presence in Storyland. It made me conscious of the *implicit* trust parents and caregivers instill in librarians and teachers, and how sometimes some teachers and librarians misuse that trust. My experience was similar to Pushor and Orr's who "came to know and care deeply for each individual engaged in their narrative inquiries. Relationships developed, trust formed, experiences were shared, stories were told, the way lives became connected with one another evoked an 'ethic of care' (Nodding, 1992) well beyond the ethical considerations called for in formal processes and in signed commitments to protect participants from harm" (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2006, p. 30).

LittleOne_mom [LOM]: Storytime is an activity for them to do. It is a way to get out of the house and to teach LittleOne to socialize and to fit in. It gets the children interested in books. It is an occasion to socialize and to pick up books.

LittleOne likes Zelda and the other librarian. She likes to see her friends and the librarians. I don't have to drag her here, she comes running to the library. She gets to participate in things that I wouldn't have thought of doing I guess.

Storytime helps LittleOne to learn about letter recognition. She was very interested in all things that started with the letter L (her name). Then one day she (LittleOne) asked me what rhymes with the letter K and before I could say anything she asked me 'is it kangaroo?' My boys never did that so I think it is also a girl thing to be so interested in language.

DW_mom [DWM]: I like to think of storytimes as offering children the power of reading, not only vocabulary; it develops imagination, reasoning, and thinking. Librarians are animated, they use puppets, and incorporate music and we like it. DW likes to take books home after storytime and she reads them once or twice. She remembers even if it is a story that she has not heard in a long time.

BigSister_mama [BSM]: I like coming to the library and listening to stories read by other people because there are lots of stories and information. Also for pre-reading, early literacy reasons, where BigSister can learn that books are important in life. I like the music and songs played at these storytimes, librarians are enthusiastic, lots of new material. It's great! I like it because my daughter [BigSister] is around other children. BigSister expects to come to the library for every storytime. She likes stories, but is very shy and does not want to participate.

TheAlien_mom [TAM]: Storytimes are great! TheAlien really likes storytimes and talks about stories. We both pick up books when we come to the library. He talks about stories in the car; and if he likes it (storytime), I like it too. Storytime schedule fits in well with our schedule. TheAlien likes coming to storytimes and he likes listening to stories. It is a chance to hang out together and read stories. We make an event out of it.

Parents' views on family storytimes

LOM: We read everyday; whatever she finds or chooses. LittleOne is pretending to read but wants me to read the books to her. We read books like Dora, Diego, Scooby-doo, and Caillou. The book *Monkey Game* reminded her of *Ten in the Bed* and she started to sing 'Move Over' again. She even remembers things that she has not read in months. She has 2 older brothers and they are reading Harry Potter right now. She hears a lot of other things from them too. She hears her brothers practice French and has her own version of French. She wants to borrow all the books that Zelda reads during storytime. She doesn't like to read the same book over and over again.

DWM: We read all the time. Daily at bedtime and then we read 3 or more books through the day. DW tries and likes to read books on her own and reads her 'own' stories to us (*her parents*). If we skip a page or something, she corrects us and remembers the stories as read/narrated by the first person who reads it to her (*mom/dad*). DW likes to pick books on her own and she chooses books with lots of pictures. If books are not pleasant, we don't read them. But now DW sits down to listen to stories that are longer as long as there are pictures. DW likes stories

about when she was little or when we were little, so we make-up stories. Books become a playtime situation, and she uses words from books for everyday situations.

BSM: We read stories everyday at bedtime and then throughout the day when BigSister feels like it. She will choose the books both in English and French. She loves dinosaurs and historical, informative books. She likes books about girls; stories that she (BigSister) can relate to, stories that have a moral and stories on sharing, first day of school, shyness. BigSister re-enacts or replays the stories a lot, pretend play where zebra will become a dinosaur and this play goes on for days. She reads 'Hooked on phonics' and can spell three-letter words like dog, cat, etc.

TAM: We read every night at bedtime. My husband and I take turns reading on alternate nights and we read about 2 books during the day. TheAlien knows nursery rhymes by heart so he'll follow along with nursery rhymes. He is into aliens and robots; his favourite author is Robert Munsch. He has a story-reader which reads to him. He tells his own stories sometimes. He always corrects us if we skip over a page and he has a photographic memory. He likes aliens, robots, spaceships, rockets, and monsters especially Q-Pootle-5. He loves stories and remembers minute details about every story. He plays with his puppets. Sometimes we hear things when he plays with his puppets; it gives him an opportunity to not be himself but be a puppet. He lives via his puppets and loves his fish puppet. (At this, TheAlien puckers up his face and starts to blow imaginary bubbles like a fish).

Storycatcher's Musings

My foray into the world of stories was to explore how young children during storytime sessions narratively transact with the stories they hear and/or read. As I sat listening to the stories and making notes of the transactions, I realized that the children were also watching me. I also thought of all the stories -- my mother's and my grandmother's, I had caught since my childhood. As a participant, storyteller, storycatcher and story-lover, teacher, librarian, researcher I had "multiple vantage points" (Clandinin, et al, 2007, p. 28) which kept shifting throughout my Storycatching, and I was aware that I needed to be "wakeful" (Clandinin, et al, 2007) of my mission in Storyland. I participated in eight (8) half-hour storytime sessions and I jotted down my musings of what transpired during each of the sessions. After each session, I had a one-on-one conversation with the child-storytellers, and I asked them to narrate one of the stories they had heard in their own words. I caught their stories in their own voices as they created their own meanings, lores, and sometimes even seemed to (re)write the texts they read based on their own experience and understanding.

Each reader was active...[and] was actively involved in building up a poem...out of [the reader's] responses to the text...[and] was not only paying attention to what the words pointed to in the external world, to their referents; [but] was also paying attention to the images, feelings, attitudes, associations, and ideas that the words and their referents evoked in [the reader] (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 10).

The 10-20 minute conversations with the child-storytellers helped me to understand how the transactional process is demonstrated in very young children while reading and listening to stories (Rosenblatt, 1982; White, 1956; Wolf & Heath, 1992), and to see what the children took from the stories. "The author may plan a particular book but we cannot plan what the child

actually makes of it...It may be that the particular experience or preoccupations the child brings to the spoken or printed text permits some one part (*and not the total text*) to come most intensely alive” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 272). Sipe (1999) reiterates that “a reader may manifest a matrix of responses that are specific and unique to [the reader]” (p. 123), however this “engagement [or response] can also be expressive and Performative” (Sipe, 2002, p. 476).

Apart from asking the child-storytellers to narrate their stories, I also asked them to draw or sketch me their stories. As Rosenblatt (1978) states:

“the evocation of a work of art is itself a form of experience in the real world, one that can be related to the other forms of experience” (p.32). Albers (1997) postulates that art as a communication system has an even greater power to inform the meaning making of

*In the midst of information overload
it is even more essential that we sit
down with children and read and
talk, that we interview and are
interviewed*

-- Baldwin, 2005, p. 32.

others than written language. The conclusion from Arizpe & Styles’ (2003) research shows that children’s drawings communicate the emotional and personal responses that children are unable to express verbally. The child-storytellers were expressing more of their “values and contexts” (Bussert-Webb, 2001) through their drawings than they were through their stories.

The parents, the four mothers who diligently attended the storytime sessions were part of

*Story told, story heard,
story written, story read
create the web of life in
words
-- Baldwin, 2005, p. 27.*

the performance of reading and were a great help right from the beginning of my Storycatching venture. Even though a couple of them implied how much they enjoyed the performance of reading of other storyteller-librarians at the OPL, they collaborated with Zelda and me to create an open and welcoming environment where the

child-storytellers could narrate their stories. They encouraged their children to answer my

questions, and waited patiently for me to finish my Storycatching even when they were juggling with other activities. They emailed me if their children had a literary transaction at home. I had one-on-one conversations with the participating mothers for about 15-30 minutes once on the last day of the Storycatching session. They all were very engaged with their children's literacy and learning development. They borrowed books from the library and they also had their own books to read to their children. Reading books and stories was an important activity of the day for all the participating moms.

My Storycatching was a narrative inquiry of the child-storytellers' lived/ (re)living-through experiences of storytimes at the OPL. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) state that "Narrative inquiry is a kind of inquiry that necessitates ongoing reflection, what we have called as wakefulness" (p. 184). On reflecting back on my Storycatching and re-telling and re-living the storytime sessions, I realize that my yarn had many interweaving threads, strands, and themes and some have recurred throughout my venture. I will now draw on some of these recurring themes or threads.

Emerging and Intertwining Themes

Everyday performance of reading and storytelling

"Storying (Storytelling) is an essential element in consciousness -- indeed it is part of what it means to be human" write Barton & Booth (1990, p. 12). Therefore, they suggest that parents who wish to help their children make books and reading a part of their lives should continue a daily habit of reading aloud, or of storytelling. Talking to the parents and the child-storytellers, I realized that Storytime and storytelling is not only "a ritual event in the everyday life of the public library" (McKenzie & Stooke, 2007, p. 3) but that it is also an everyday performance in the lives of the participants (*myself included*).

All the parents said that they read at least 3-4 books at home on a daily basis. They seem to be following Braxton's (2006) notion that "A child needs to hear 1,000 stories before learning to read, and this can be easily accomplished in 1 year if parents adhere to the formula of at least three stories a day -- one favourite, one familiar, and one first-read -- starting from the day the baby is born" (p. 2). If they teach their children to fall into books at a very young age then when the children start kindergarten, they will "remember that the dominant sensation of reading was excited delight [which] freed [them] from the limitations of having just one limited life with one point of view" (Spufford, 2002, p. 10-11).

Reading, and engaging in the "dramatic performance of reading" (Chambers, 1996, p. 5), seems to be a family affair with both the parents and even siblings (*LittleOne's brother*) reading to the child-storytellers, and helping the child-storytellers to become dramatists, directors, actors, and even critics. The child-storytellers are encouraged to read on their own and tell their own stories either through pretend play with toys or with puppets, story-readers, or through books like 'Hooked on phonics'. DW_mom also said that they make-up stories of when DW was a baby because DW likes to listen to them.

The moms told me that they come to the library at least once a week for storytime. They also came regularly to borrow books when the storytime sessions were over. As Ghoting & Martin-Diaz (2005) state, "the library's role in preschool and early childhood education has long been established...storytime has been seen as a way to help children on the path of reading" (p. ix). For LittleOne_mom the library storytime is an activity for them to do, an occasion to socialize, to teach LittleOne to socialize and to fit in, and to pick up books. DW_mom believes in the power of reading, not only for developing vocabulary for developing imagination, reasoning, and thinking. BigSister_mama likes to come to the library because she enjoys listening to other

people read, and tell stories, she likes the music and songs played at these storytimes; she also likes the new books and resources that she can see. TheAlien_mom comes to storytime because the schedule suits them well. It also gives the two of them (TheAlien and her), a chance to hang out and read stories so they make an event out of it. McKenzie & Stooke (2007) contend that “the literacy work carried out during the storytime program is often conjoined with information work and/or caring work and...this creates a fertile ground in which caregivers and children can cultivate family literacy practices conducive to children’s future success in school” (p. 17).

Sipe (2002) says that children’s “expressive performative engagement” or response to stories can be categorized into five parts: “dramatizing (verbal or nonverbal ways), talking back (to the story or the characters), critiquing/controlling (suggest alternatives in plots, characters, or settings), inserting (oneself or friends in the story), and taking over (the text and manipulating it for one’s purposes)” (p. 476-477). The child-storytellers demonstrated these various responses/transactions as they participated in the performance of reading during storytimes (*bringing back memories of my own childhood transactions*).

LittleOne seemed to love all the stories read by Zelda. She tried to imitate all the older girls who attended storytime in terms of lying down on her stomach on the magic carpet, and repeating their words and sentences, even though she had her own opinions on most things. She loved the librarians, loved coming to storytime, and she demonstrated her feelings openly. She was very social and always wanted to sit close to Zelda

Each participant in the landscape [of storytelling], in the parade, has a particular place and a particular set of stories being lived out at any particular time

-- Clandinin & Connelly, 1998b, p.161.

and the other children. She would notice minute things in the books and comment on them. She would *dramatize* and even *insert* herself into the story by bringing in personal references to the

stories like going to the strawberry farm, falling off the bed and sensing the gorilla's itch. She loved stories that rhymed and was quick to pick up on the rhyming words. She would also say a sentence and break out into a song by repeating the same line over and over again. She would try to borrow all the books that Zelda had read during the storytime sessions so that she could go home and re-read them with her brothers or her mother. On the first day, she drew a portrait and then she went around the room to see what BigSister and TheAlien were doing. If LittleSister was awake, she would go and say hello to her.

BigSister on the other hand was very shy and quiet but seemed to be very engaged in the storytimes. She loved to draw, and she preferred to express herself through her drawings. As Leigh & Heid (2008) have postulated, "children often resort to drawing when they want to move to a more comfortable method of communication" (p. 4). The only person who seemed to be able to make BigSister talk in the library was the LittleOne. BigSister would reply to all the questions that LittleOne had for her. (*In hindsight I wonder if I should have let LittleOne be the storycatcher-researcher*).

BigSister never left her mother's side during storytime, and never took her eyes off of Zelda. Unlike the other mothers who sat on the chairs outside the magic carpet, BigSister_mama always sat with her daughter, with her protective arm around her. BigSister was very shy, and she never participated in any of the activities like dancing with scarves or calling out to Zelda to wake up.

TheAlien seemed to be very independent and self-contained. Even though he was present and engaged during storytime, he seemed to be in his own little world. He seemed content to be by himself. He would sit at the end of the magic carpet closer to where his mom sat on the chairs beyond the carpet, and not right in front of Zelda. He seemed to enjoy having a side of the carpet

all to himself. All the girls and LittleOne sat right in front of Zelda so that they could see all the pictures in the book, and comment on them and at times they even *talked back* to the characters. All his drawings were meant to help the story characters with the problems they were facing. His engagement with the stories can be categorized as *critiquing/controlling* and *taking over* because he invented things to help the story characters with their dilemmas, and he also sent Froggy on the alien spaceship because *Froggy does not want to wear any clothes any more*. The Alien was very mature for his age and seemed to understand the humour and irony in the stories and he would giggle as he narrated them to me.

I met DW on the very first day of my Storycatching, and she was sitting on the storyland carpet with her friend and was intent on the stories that Zelda was reading. Her mom was sitting on one of the chairs beyond the carpet watching DW and the other children. Like LittleOne, DW was also very observant about the happenings in the storybook and was very articulate in her replies. She loved Marc Brown's story characters and could relate to their predicaments and she *inserted* herself in their story.

Inter-play (Intertextuality) between the world of stories and the lived world of experiences

Rosenblatt (1982) describes "reading as basically a transaction between the reader and the text [and] in most reading there is not only the stream of choices and syntheses that construct meaning; there is also a stream of accompanying reactions to the very meaning being constructed....In order to shape the work, we draw on our reservoir of past experience with people and the world, our inner linkage of words and things, our past encounters with spoken or written texts" (p. 270). In my Storycatching venture, even though Zelda read about 3 to 4 stories in each session, the child-storytellers personalized and identified with the actions or feelings of some of the storybook characters, they remembered stories and books that they had read a long

time ago, drew connections (inter-textuality) between books, the environment, and with things and concepts that they were familiar with. As Rosenblatt (1982), explains “words are primarily aspects of sensed, felt, lived-through experiences” (p. 271).

According to Sipe (2000), “The term *intertextuality* was coined by Kristeva (1980) who used the term to refer not only to the ways in which written and visual texts were interrelated, but also to the text of one’s own life as a collection of various overlapping experiences (p. 256). LittleOne had come to Storyland one day and announced to Zelda that she had been bitten by a mosquito on her hand. On that same day, Zelda had planned on reading the book *Just the thing* where papa gorilla has an itch. As soon as she heard the words ‘*papa gorilla has an itch*’ LittleOne jumped up (*dramatizing response*) and showed everyone her mosquito bite and asked her mom to scratch her back. That day, she liked that book because she could identify (*inserting herself in the story*) with gorilla’s itch and she wanted to draw the gorilla with the itch.

She was reminded of the time she went strawberry picking when Zelda started to read *Jamberry*. She seemed to really like the book *Ten in the Bed* and the phrase “Roll Over” and/or “Move Over” stayed with her throughout the four sessions when I saw her. When she fell off her bed at home, she started to sing Roll Over and she also started to imitate a monkey’s cry because the last one to Move Over from the bed was a monkey. A Monkey Game in the store, reminded her of the book again and it seems she started to sing *Move Over* again. The firecrackers in the bat story reminded her of firecrackers on Canada Day.

Intertextuality as a form of dialogue can occur between texts produced through writing, reading, speaking, watching, and listening
-- Cairney, 1990, p. 480.

The blue and brown towels on the bed reminded DW of the beach and of the time she was in Cuba, and of Marc Brown’s *Arthur* and *D.W.* story characters. Reading about her

favourite character who is scared to swim reminded DW of learning to swim in the ocean, building sandcastles and catching snails and this manifested in her drawings as well.

BigSister was reminded of her grandfather's garden when she saw *Scarlette Beane's* garden. She pretended (*controlling response*) that her toy-train was the *Dinosaur Train* (just like in the book), and her stuffed zebra was a dinosaur because she likes dinosaurs. She would go

Story is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful

-- Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p.477.

home and re-enact the stories she had heard during storytimes. After reading the book *It's Not a Box*,

BigSister tossed a few cushions on the sofa, took a blanket, and a few toys, put on her snow pants, and

climbing on to the sofa, and told her mama that she was

going on a trip in her space shuttle, like the bear in the

book (*inserting herself into the story*). She also remarked to her mama that "*animals don't wear bathing suits, only people wear them, though some people swim like (Hilda) the hippo from the book.*" Even though she did not want to talk to me, she communicated through her pictures and drew a lot of pictures of her LittleSister, and she seemed to like to draw pictures of rainbows.

Just like the protagonists in Wolf & Heath's (1992) research, the child-storytellers also demonstrated how:

"Literary language releases imagery and memory and calls up connections to set the mind in motion, imparting a movement that is at once pleasing and restless or seeking. It is possible to return again and again to literary language for aesthetic effects and multiple interpretations....the possibility of multifarious links -- to sense perceptions, other voices, different settings, and a host of other sources for building literary worlds" (p. 4).

The Alien started to hop around like Froggy (*dramatizing response*) and started to imitate the way Zelda had called out to Froggy. He wanted to rescue Froggy from his costume mis-adventures so he drew a spaceship with his favourite aliens and sent Froggy on the spaceship saying that “*Froggy does not want to play in the snow anymore and he does not have to wear anything on the spaceship.*” Being the only grandchild and his grandma’s favourite he could not bear the thought of not getting a hug from his grandma. So, he invented an automatic shower and a soap dispenser for Mortimer to be ready for his grandma’s next visit. Thus the child-storytellers’ proved that even very young children can enter into the world of stories and draw personal transactions, and create meanings according to their experiences, and also move forward and backward between the two ‘worlds’. Thus meaning is not found in the texts but constructed by the readers who sometimes use the story as a launching pad for their creativity (Chambers, 1996; Rosenblatt, 1982; Sipe, 2000, 2002).

Shifting positions of power in Storyland

The OPL has adopted the Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR)⁵ early literacy initiative to promote emergent reading skills in young children.

With this initiative in mind, the storyteller-librarian’s role can also extend to that of an early literacy educator. McKenzie and Stooke (2007), argue that “storytime is not only the work carried out by librarians but also of work carried out by adult and child participants ...

Building a strong Ottawa community by supporting literacy and life-long learning, fostering inspiration and enjoyment, and connecting people to each other and the world
 -- Mission Statement, OPL

[and] both librarians and caregivers work to assess and maximize children’s engagement in stories and rhymes” (p. 4-5). Parents are encouraged to attend the storytimes along with their

⁵ Every Child Ready to Read: <http://24369.vws.magma.ca/kids/every_child_e.html>

children in order for them to obtain some useful tips and strategies that might assist them in preparing their children to be successful readers. They also get to see and to hear a wide range of storybooks and other materials that they can borrow to re-read at their leisure. Their attendance also ensures that the children will stay in the room and behave during storytimes. This sometimes does not bode well with all the parents who want to think of the half-hour library storytime as *their* time away from their children. Even though they can leave the children in the story room by themselves, the parents are supposed to stay close-by in case of any emergency.

According to McKenzie and Stooke (2007) “Storytimes come into being against a backdrop of staffing schedules, room bookings, fire regulations, and the like. The very existence of storytime therefore depends on decisions made earlier and elsewhere” (p. 5). When I asked for permission to enter into the world of stories, I had to approach the Library Management Board. It was a new experience for the OPL, for the branch that Zelda works in, for Zelda and for me to go in as a storycatcher-researcher. I had to assure the Library Management Board that I would only be a passive observer and that I would not interfere in Zelda’s choice of storybooks, or her way of presenting and performing the storytime sessions. I had to assure Zelda and the supervising librarian that inspite of my previous experience as a storyteller I would participate in storytimes only as a storycatcher-researcher-participant.

(It was with a lot of trepidation therefore, that I had suggested the book “Say Hello” by Jack and Michael Foreman, to Zelda to read. Initially she hesitated because it is almost a wordless book with pencil drawings. So when she started to read the book one day, I was really surprised and we were both surprised by the children’s positive reaction to the book.)

Planning a library program involves a lot of administrative work for librarians, but once the storytime is in progress, “the form and tempo of the storytime are given an ongoing shape

through countless negotiations among participants” (McKenzie & Stooke, 2007, p.11). Most often storytimes are held in rooms designated by “administrators as multipurpose spaces” (McKenzie & Stooke, 2007), thus for every storytime, Zelda set up the room and created a *storytime space* because as she mentioned, she wanted “*to introduce young children to the library, and to make them feel special.*” The adults and the children who came to storytime also maintained the storytime space. The children were expected to sit on the multicoloured carpet, some parents sat with their children on the carpet whereas others preferred to sit on chairs around the carpet. This also ensured that children would stay safe within the *invisible* circle, and not run out of the room into the library. Most children in this session were well behaved and they seemed to know the rules and regulations of storytimes.

Chambers (1996) states that “reading is a dramatic performance composed of many interrelated scenes” (p. 5). Zelda selected the books to read for the reading performance. A book contains within it the potentialities for evoking a transaction therefore, “they who choose are exercising power” says Chambers (1996, p. 5). It may seem that she was exercising power because she did not ask the children or the mothers if there was a book that they would recommend. But on the other hand Zelda told me that “*over the years I have learnt to listen to the children and I will put down a book if it does not work for me that day.*”

As a storyteller myself, I wonder what would happen if for every storytime, we let the parents or the children choose/request their favourite books to read. When I ask for volunteers some parents hesitate because they feel that they don’t have enough experience to read or ‘*perform*’ in front of others. Some parents like BigSister_mama just want to come and experience the different selections and new books that are available at the library. Zelda was the sole performer when she read the books and the children sometimes participated by shouting out

their responses. But when she asked all the participants to dance and sing with her they too became the performers. As a storycatcher-researcher-participant I felt that we were all participant-performers in the storytime.

Zelda also told me that “*I will skip over pages if I feel that the pictures are too frightening. I feel that it is my job to do it*” and yet, she sings ‘frightening’ nursery rhymes in her sessions. This makes me wonder if my grandmother ever thought of omitting any of the gory details from the mythological stories she told us, or if my parents thought of censoring some of the mythological books, with all their religious wars, we read as children. In this age of ‘political correctness’, it seems rather ‘cruel’ to think that they may not have considered how frightening the story of Dhruva (with the classic elements of a fairy tale), might seem to a young child. On the other hand, some of the Indo-Canadian children in the International Languages program would take great pleasure in comparing the religious wars in these mythological stories to Star Wars and other Science Fiction books and/or movies. So by skipping over pages or by withholding information are we as teacher-librarian-adults, really exercising power, or are we denying the children the experience of a transaction is a question that may be worth considering. As Jenkins (1998) and Thacker (2000) have pointed out that the layers of adult authority or mediation over children leaves hardly any space for thinking about children’s own desires and fantasies.

The parents drove or walked their children to the library. Thus they had power in terms of their children coming (or not coming) to the library. Some parents also confessed that they would not attend storytime sessions if their *favourite* storyteller was not the one telling stories. This would result in their children being denied the pleasure of attending storytimes.

When I asked the child-storytellers to tell me the story in their own words, I gave them the power *to write or to re-create* their own story or to demonstrate their “expressive performative engagement” (Sipe, 2002). BigSister pretended that her toy zebra was a dinosaur that went on a dinosaur train and she pretended that the sofa was a spaceship. TheAlien came up with interesting ideas and inventions to solve the story characters’ problems. The child-storytellers’ stories and inventions are an example of how “children resist, transform or redefine adult prerogatives, making their own uses of cultural materials and enacting their own fantasies through play” (Jenkins, 1998, p. 29). They also demonstrate how “children view stories as an invitation to participate or to perform, and actively engage with stories to make them their own” (Sipe, 2002, p. 479). Thus we can say that children’s play represents a space of freedom for children to forge links between literature and their own lives and to experiment with their roles as individuals, and as members of society.

Even though I participated in eight (8) half-hour storytime sessions, I somehow never asked Zelda, or the child-storytellers, or the participating moms if my presence and my Storycatching had any effect on their performance and enjoyment of the storytime session. Zelda was always welcoming and so were the parents. The only thing I was anxious about was the reaction of the child-storytellers. Luckily, the children did not seem to resist me, I got smiles and high-fives from most of them. And I *know* that they were all watching me especially when Zelda asked us to participate in the dancing or singing activity.

Unraveling and interweaving the storied threads

I went Storycatching in Storyland at the OPL where there are free scheduled storytimes for children between the ages of 3-6 years old. These storytimes are free and voluntary, yet, children and parents attend these on a regular basis. As a storycatcher-researcher, I wanted to

catch the narrative “transactions” (Rosenblatt, 1982) of young children as they were engaged in the weekly performance of reading.

These two threads were interwoven throughout my Storycatching venture:

- How do children, during storytelling sessions, narratively transact with the stories they hear and/or read?
- What insights can we glean by entering into the children’s experiential and imaginative literary and narrative worlds in order to plan and organize future storytelling sessions?

My Storycatching was unique in the sense that it was situated in a public library, a non-school setting. As Sipe (1999) states, “non-school contexts would provide additional knowledge about the range of literary response and influence of social context on response” (p. 126).

Library storytimes encourage emergent literacy in young children and can serve as a precursor and a complement to playschool or kindergarten. Even though the child-storytellers were between the ages of 3-4 years old they were an *active audience*, and did not disappoint me. They responded in their own *way/stance* to all my questions and narrated their stories to me.

The three themes that emerged from my narrative Storycatching reflect “the temporal unfolding of people, places and things within the inquiry, the personal and social aspects of inquirer’s and participants’ lives, and the places in the inquiry” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p.481). These themes also helped me to unravel and to answer my research threads. By participating in the everyday performance of reading and storytelling, through intertextual transactions, and by understanding their ‘limited’ yet ever-shifting positions of power, the child-storytellers are learning to join in the parade of Storyland, and to transact with the stories and with the world around them.

My Storytelling spotlight was on the 3-4 years old child-storytellers because children have “tended to remain in the shadow, taken for granted, to all intents and purposes invisible” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 1). LittleOne, DW, BigSister, and TheAlien through their narratives and their pictures proved how even very young children transact with literature, and art to create meanings, and make connections with their lived experiences. The intensity of the gorilla’s itch

The child’s early achievement of narrative competence in preschool years ushers in a decisive phase of identity formation
 -- Eakin, 1999, p.117.

transcends from the page to LittleOne who needs her mom to scratch her back. The sadness behind Mortimer’s grandmother not hugging Mortimer is felt by TheAlien who invents an automatic shower for Mortimer. DW remembers swimming in the ocean when she listens to the story of her favourite characters. BigSister draws her mom’s tea cups and

pots when she hears Scarlett Beane’s story. My Storycatching confirmed what other early literacy experts, researchers, social scientists, teachers, and gurus in the fields of reader-response theories have been saying all along that reading and telling stories to children even at a young age is the best gift we (as adults) can offer them in their lifetime.

As Chambers (1996) states:

Children know a lot about the world in which they live... We often underestimate their reading and critical capabilities ...Literature is a linguistic event, a metaphoric construct, a “made” object which creates the illusion of life, and we want children to discover it and narrate it. Children are potentially all that we are ourselves, and in telling their own stories and their readings of other people’s stories they talk themselves into being. (p. 34 - 37).

I also realized how as young children experience literature through their reading of picture books: “they integrate visual and verbal sign systems to make meaning and engage in literary interpretation” (Sipe, 1999, p. 122). They also use multiple literacies or intelligences to transact and interpret the world they live in. As a storycatcher-researcher, I entered into the world of stories to explore the narrative transactions between the stories, and the children, their literary evocations, and their artistic drawings in response to the stories, their memories, perceptions, realities, and imagination that they brought with them into their drawings and their stories. The children’s drawings were a form of knowing how they “express their knowledge, understanding, and ultimately, their own selves” (Leigh & Heid, 2008, p. 5).

The child-storytellers chose their own books to take home when they were at the library and this probably added to their pleasurable storytelling and reading experiences. Chambers (1995), says that the richness of the reading environment and the richness of the literary response can be enhanced when “children are surrounded by a well-displayed stock of appropriate and knowledgeably chosen books, are read aloud to every day, are expected to read for themselves just as often and are encouraged to talk about their reading” (p. 3). This branch of the OPL is called the ‘district branch’ and has a wider selection of books as compared to the smaller branches. The book shelves are also at a level where the children can easily reach them. Zelda and the other librarians make full use of this set-up at the branch when they conduct their programs. The pleasure that the child-storytellers experienced as Zelda was reading the books reiterated the fact that children love to fall into stories and get lost in a book. So, as long as the storyteller librarians take into consideration the needs of the children and they have the resources to keep providing for more pleasurable ‘falling into book’ moments at the library, they can foster children’s literary transactions.

Challenges

The beginning of a school year proved to be a challenge in terms of finding child-storytellers to participate in my Storycatching. It was a new experience for all of us, storycatcher-researcher, child-storytellers and their parents, and also for Zelda. No one had gone Storycatching to OPL before and we were not sure what surprises were in store for us. The parents who came for the 2 o'clock storytime were also juggling other responsibilities like having to pick up older children after school, the cold and flu bugs, and the persistent rain in October and November.

A very small group had registered for this session and children from the daycare or the ones who came with their caregivers could not participate. The children who did participate were very young between the ages of 3 and 4 years old. Initially a couple of them were very shy to tell me their stories, and they only whispered in their mothers' ears or like BigSister, they only talked after they left the library. So the parents had to repeat what the child-storytellers were saying or email me their transactions. LittleOne who was the youngest could only say whether she liked the story or not and could not really give me any reasons. They were more interested in drawing and playing with the crayons than talking about the different scenarios or characters in the book. TheAlien who was four, and who went to junior kindergarten was the only one who was able to elaborate his answers. I only met DW twice because of her afternoon naptimes. I also had to simplify my already simple questionnaire for them. So, in some ways, the parents became Storycatchers too.

The challenge for me as a storycatcher-researcher was to gently step into the imaginative world of children as an adult (*who loves children*) in order to explore their literary narrative transactions without distorting their 'real' meanings. As much as I enjoyed going to Storyland

every week, it was difficult at times to be a passive participant (*almost like a backseat driver*) and at times, I wished I had some say in the choice of storybooks for at least a couple of sessions. I also realized that one voice recorder was not enough to capture all the conversations happening around the room at the same time. When I was having conversations with the parents, the children were busy sharing stories with each other as they were drawing but unfortunately, I could not catch all their stories. I also wished I had more sessions to spend with my child-storytellers and to get to know them better because by the fourth Storycatching session they had started to share more insights. But like all the other storytimes it was “*Time to say goodbye*”, it was time to pack in my voice recorder, fold my storycatcher-notepad, put my pen away, and all I had were the memories and the recordings of my Storycatching that I have been returning to over and over to re-live the Storycatching moments. Trying to re-create these moments in my writing has at times made me wonder if I would be able to fully depict the pleasure I had of *stepping into Storyland* as a storycatcher-researcher-Sutradhar.

Stories and Storytelling in Education

I went Storycatching to the library and I experienced that “the ‘poem’ comes into being in the live circuit set up between the reader and the text” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 14). How can the storied threads from my Storycatching transfer to an educational setting? The library is a complement to preschool or kindergarten and with the emphasis on Every Child Ready to Read, the library programs are all geared towards developing pre-reading or emergent literacy skills in children. Therefore any programs conducted at the library could be easily transferred to an educational setting.

Braxton (2006) states an already known truth that hearing stories is an essential part of every child’s education. Literature helps us in understanding ourselves and others; it has the

potential “to widen our horizons to include temperaments and cultures different than our own, for helping us to clarify our conflicts in values, and for illuminating our world” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 276). Educational and early literacy researchers like Ghoting & Martin-Diaz (2006)

Story is a search for a community. As we tell each other who we really are, we find the people with whom we really belong. Story brings us home
 --Baldwin, 2005, p.219.

stress the fact that storytimes not only bring books and children together but also help in developing language and emergent literacy skills in children. Literature helps us to understand ourselves and others because “the world of story is a world of wonder and wisdom, connecting the world inside us with the world outside” (King, 2007). Engaging children in the performance of

reading and storytelling reinforces their oral as well as listening skills, increases vocabulary, and develops language (Bishop & Kimball, 2006; Braxton, 2006). Re-telling or re-storying offers children a chance to imagine, and to use the story as a platform to express their own creativity. Egan (1989) urges teachers to incorporate narrative stories as a way to create interest in different subjects. Storytelling is a dynamic form of communication and by engaging young children in storytelling or retelling will deepen their literary experiences and transactions, and help them build memories and stories.

The child-storytellers in my Storycatching were also very interested in drawing their stories which was their way of meaning-making. Drawing and writing are complementary modes of expression (Harste, et al., 1984). Children use multiple sign systems: art, music, movement, mathematics, drama, and language, to express their transactions with literature. “They talk and write, but they also sketch, sing, play, solve problems, and dance their way to new insights” (Short, et al, 2000, p.160). Educators should therefore encourage art and other multimodal sign systems as a form of knowing that helps learners to express their knowledge, understanding, and

ultimately their own selves (Leigh & Heid, 2008). In conclusion, realizing the impact of literature on young children, educators can open up dialogic spaces or classroom communities for learning that encourage “expressive performative engagement” (Sipe, 2002) so that students can imaginatively enter text worlds and create worlds that exist on the edges (*liminal spaces*) of those texts. As Rogers (1999) says, “It is only by drawing on literature as art can we help children to know in new ways, read the world in new ways, and evoke and negotiate their responses about literature and life” (p.144).

After Storycatching

People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do.

But what they do not know is what what they do does

-- Michel Foucault in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p.189.

I went Storycatching because as a teacher-librarian, I have always wondered (*and will continue to wonder*) how young children, who come to storytelling sessions, narratively transact with the stories they hear and/or read in order to create meaning(s), to form and to define their own identities. My Storycatching venture has made me realize that as a novice storycatcher-researcher, I have only just skimmed the surface of the branch of research which studies young children’s responses to literature. It has made me conscious of the fact that as a teacher-librarian I am a *significant other* in the lives of many children who I meet, and I hope I have instilled a love of stories in their lives just the way my mother and teachers have done for me.

As a storycatcher-researcher, it would be interesting to explore how the other branches of the Ottawa Public Library (OPL) conduct their storytime sessions, and how they encourage children’s narrative transactions. I am also curious to see how the child-storytellers in my Storycatching venture transact with stories as they grow older. With full-time kindergarten being

introduced in schools, I wonder if that will have an impact on the library storytimes, or if schools will now have more time to devote to storytelling. The OPL branches do a lot of outreach services to daycares and other non-profit agencies where the children do not have easy access to the library. It would be interesting to catch the literary transactions of the children who cannot come to the library on a regular basis and compare them with the transactions of children who are regulars at the storytime sessions.

I hope that my Storycatching yarn will help other storycatcher-researchers who regard storytimes and libraries as a much needed resource in this fast-paced digital world, and that it will spark an interest amongst parents, teachers, and librarians to the art of Storycatching and storytelling. As Baldwin (2005) states “In the midst of overwhelming stimulation, when we turn off the technology, and turn to one another, story still has the potential to calm us, to call us back into ourselves, to remind us of the length and breadth of the journey from which we come” (p.93). It is my hope that these narratives and lores will help libraries and schools to plan and organize future storytelling sessions that will “leave the children with words, images, and ideas to seed their imaginations” (Barton & Booth, 1990, p.24), and to perform their transactions in a world that is just beginning to enchant them.

References

- Agosto, D. E. (1999). One and inseparable: Interdependent storytelling in picture story books. *Children's Literature in Education*, 30(4), p. 267-280.
- Albers, P. (1997). Art as literacy. *Language Arts*, 74(5), p. 338-350.
- Arizpe, E., & Styles, M. (2003). *Children reading pictures: Interpreting visual texts*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays*. C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Eds.), V. W. McGee (Trans). Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Baldwin, C. (2005). *Storycatcher: Making sense of our lives through the power and practice of story*. Novato, CA: New World Library.
- Barton, B. (1986). *Tell me another: Storytelling and reading aloud at home, at school and in the community*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers Ltd.
- Barton, B., & Booth, D. (1990). *Stories in the classroom: Storytelling, reading aloud and roleplaying with children*. New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc.
- Bishop, K., & Kimball, M.A. (2006). Engaging students in storytelling. *Teacher Librarian*, 33(4), p. 28-31.
- Braxton, B. (2006). Read me a story. *Teacher Librarian*, 34(2), p. 53-54.
- Braxton, B. (2007). Read-alouds: Choosing the right book. *Teacher Librarian*, 34(3), p. 52-53.
- Bussert-Webb, K. (2001). I won't tell you about myself, but I will draw my story. *Language Arts*, 78(6), p. 511-519.
- Cairney, T. (1999). Intertextuality: Infectious echoes from the past. *The Reading Teacher*, 43(7), p. 478-484.

- Chambers, A. (1996). *Tell me: children, reading and talk*. York: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative Inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., p. 651-679). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F.M. (1994). Personal experience methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed., p. 413-427). London: Sage Publications.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F.M. (1998b). Stories to live by: Narrative understandings of school reform. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 28(2), p. 149-164.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F.M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Clandinin, D. J. (Ed.). (2006). *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Clandinin, D. J., Pushor, D., & Orr, A. M. (2007). Navigating sites for Narrative Inquiry. *Journal of Teacher Education*. 58(1), p. 21-35.
- Coles, R. (1986). *The moral life of children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Collen, L. (2006). The digital and traditional storytimes research project: Using digitized picture books for preschool group storytimes. *Children and Libraries*, Winter 2006.
- Connelly, F.M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J.L. Green, G. Camilli, & P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (3rd ed., p. 477-487). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Coplan, R. J., & Arbeau, K.A. (2008). The stresses of a “Brave New World”: Shyness and school adjustment in kindergarten. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 22 (4), p. 377-389.
- Creswell, J.W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (2nd ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, Merrill, Prentice Hall.
- Creswell, J.W. (2005). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, Merrill, Prentice Hall.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed). London: Sage Publications.
- Dreyfus, H., and Rabinow, P. (1982). *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*. Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Eakin, P. J. (1999). *How our lives become stories: Making selves*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Egan, K. (1989). *Teaching as story telling: An alternative approach to teaching and curriculum in the elementary school*. University of Chicago Press.
- Eisner, E. W. (1998). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Freud, S. (1908/1953). Creative writers and day-dreaming. In J. Strachey (Ed. & Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 9). London: Hogarth Press.
- Frye, N. (1988). *On Education*. Markham, Ont: Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

- Gardner, H. (1998). Reflections on Multiple Intelligences: Myths and messages. In A. E. Woolfolk (ed.), *Readings in educational psychology* (p. 61-67). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Gardner, H. E. (2003). *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons in Theory and Practice*. USA: Basic Books.
- Ghoting, S. N., & Martin-Díaz, P. (2006). *Early literacy storytimes @ your library: Partnering with caregivers for success*. Washington: American Library Association.
- Hamilton M., & Weiss, M. (1993). Children as storytellers: Teaching the basic tools. *School Library Journal*, 39(4), p. 30-33.
- Harste, J., Woodward, V., & Burke, C. (1984). *Language stories and literacy lessons*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Jenkins, H. (Ed.). (1998). *The children's culture reader* (p. 1-37). New York, NY: New York University Press.
- King, N. (2007). Developing imagination, creativity, and literacy through collaborative storymaking: A way of knowing. *Harvard Educational Review*, 77(2), p. 204-227.
- Kline, S. (1993). The making of children's culture. In H. Jenkins (Ed.), *The children's culture reader* (p. 95-109). New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Kristeva, J. (1980). The bounded text. In T. Gora, A. Jardine, & L.S. Roudiez (Trans.), *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art* (p. 36-63). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Leggo, C. (1995). Storing the Word/Storying the World. *English Quarterly*, 28(1), p. 5-11.

- Leggo, C. (2008). Narrative inquiry: Attending to the art of discourse. *Language and Literacy*, 10(1). Retrieved December 1, 2009, from <http://www.langandlit.ualberta.ca/Spring2008/Leggo.htm>
- Leigh, R. S., & Heid, K. A. (2008). First graders constructing meaning through drawing and writing. *Journal for learning through the arts: A research journal on arts integration in schools and communities*: 4(1), Article 3. Retrieved June 20, 2009, from <http://repositories.cdlib.org/elta/lta/vol4/iss1/art3>.
- Lewis, D. (2001). *Reading contemporary picturebooks: Picturing text*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Mackey, M., & McClay, J. K. (2000). Graphic routes to electronic literacy: polysemy and picture books. *Changing English*, 7(2), p. 191-201.
- Manguel, A. (2006). *The library at night*. Albert A. Knopf. Canada.
- Marino, J. (2003). *Babies in the library*. Oxford: Scarecrow Press.
- Martin, J. F. (2007). Children's attitudes toward superheroes as a potential indicator of their moral understanding. *Journal of Moral Education*, 36(2), p. 239-250.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- McKechnie, L. (E.F.) (2006). Observations of babies and toddlers in library settings. *Library Trends*, 55(1), p. 190-201.
- McKenzie, P.J., & Stooke, R.K. (2007). Producing storytime: A collectivist analysis of work in a complex communicative space. *Library Quarterly*, 77(1), p. 3-20.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

- Meade, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*.
New York: Teachers College Press.
- O'Leary, Z. (2004). *The essential guide to doing research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Ottawa Public Library http://www.biblioottawalibrary.ca/index_e.html.
- Paley, V.G. (1990). *The boy who would be a helicopter*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Pantaleo, S. (2005). "Reading" young children's visual texts. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 7(1), p. 1-16.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Pellowski, A. (1990). *The world of storytelling*. New York: The H.W. Wilson Company.
- Peterson, C., Jesso, B., & McCabe, A. (1999). Encouraging narratives in preschoolers: An intervention study. *Journal of Child Language*, 26(1), p. 49-67.
- Postman, N. (1989). Learning by story. *The Atlantic*, 264(6), p. 119-124.
- Ramanujan, A. K. (Ed.). (1991). *Folktales from India*. New Delhi, India: Penguin Books.
- Rockman, C. (2001). Tell me a story. *School Library Journal*, 47(8), p. 46-50.
- Rogers, T. (1999). Literary Theory and children's literature: interpreting ourselves and our worlds. *Theory into Practice*, 38(3), p. 138-146.
- Rosenblatt, L. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of literary work*.
Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press.
- Rosenblatt, L. (1982). The literary transaction: Evocation and response. *Theory into Practice*, 14(4), p. 268-277.

- Ross, C., McKechnie, L., Rothbauer, P. (2006). *Reading matters: What research reveals about reading, libraries, and community*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.
- Rutherford, J. (1990). A place called home: Identity and the cultural politics of difference. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (p. 9-27). London: Laurence and Wishart
- Short, K.G., Kauffman, G., & Kahn, L.H. (2000). "I just need to draw": Responding to literature across multiple sign systems. *Reading Teacher*, 54(2), p.160-171.
- Sipe, L.R. (1999). Children's response to literature: Author, text, reader, context. *Theory into practice*, 38(3), p. 120-129.
- Sipe, L.R. (2000). The construction of literary understanding by first and second graders in oral response to picture storybook read-alouds. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(2), p. 252-275.
- Sipe, L.R. (2002). Talking back and taking over: Young children's expressive engagement during storybook read-alouds. *The Reading Teacher*, 55(5), p. 476-483.
- Spufford, F. (2002). *The child that books built*. London: Faber and Faber Limited.
- Thacker, D. (2000). Disdain or ignorance? Literary theory and the absence of children's literature. *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 24(1), p. 1-17.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. (1965). On fairy-stories. In *Tree and leaf* (p. 3-84). London: Allen & Unwin. (Original work published 1947).
- Tompkins, J. P. (1980). *Reader-response criticism: From formalism to post-structuralism*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press.
- Trinh, M. (1989). *Woman, native, other*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

- Weber, S. J., & Mitchell, C. (1996). Using drawings to interrogate professional identity and the popular culture of teaching. In I. Goodson & A. Hargreaves (Eds.), *Teacher's Professional Lives* (p. 109–126). London: Falmer Press.
- Wertsch, J. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- White, D.N. (1956). *Books before five*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wolf, S. A. & Heath, S. B. (1992). *The braid of literature: Children's worlds of reading*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Picture Books Read During Storycatching

Alsenas, Linas. (2007). *Peanut*. New York: Scholastic Press.

Brown, Marc. (1991). *D.W. all wet*. Little Brown Young Readers.

Butler, John. (1996). *While you were sleeping*. Atlanta: Peachtree.

Cabrera, Jane. (2006). *Ten in the bed*. New York: Holiday House.

Degen, Bruce. (1995). *Jamberry*. New York: HarperFestival.

Edwards, Frank B. (1990). *Mortimer Mooner stopped taking a bath*. Newburgh, Ont.: Bungalow Books.

Esbaum, Jill. (2006). *Estelle Takes a Bath*. New York: Henry Holt.

Foley, Greg E. (2008). *Don't worry Bear*. New York: Viking.

Foreman, Jack, & Foreman, Michael. (2008). *Say Hello*. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press.

Fox, Mem. (2002). *The Magic Hat*. San Diego: Harcourt.

Gilman, Phoebe. (1992). *Something from nothing: Adapted from a Jewish folktale*. Richmond Hill, Ont.: North Winds Press.

Gurney, John Steven. (2002). *Dinosaur train*. New York: HarperCollins.

Harvey, Damian. (2005). *Just the thing*. Columbus, Ohio: Gingham Dog Press.

London, Jonathan. (1992). *Froggy gets dressed*. New York: Viking.

Mayr, Diane. (2001). *Littlebat's Halloween story*. Morton Grove, Illinois: Albert Whitman & Company.

Munsch, Robert. (1999). *We share everything!* Markham, ON: Scholastic.

Neubecker, Robert. (2005). *Beasty Bath*. New York: Orchard Books.

Patterson, Heather. (2006). *I am Canada*. Toronto: North Winds Press.

Portis, Antoinette. (2006). *Not a box*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

- Postgate, Daniel. (2007). *Smelly Bill*. New York: North-South Books.
- Prince, Joshua. (2006). *I saw an ant on the Railroad Track*. New York: Sterling.
- Roddie, Shen. (2006). *Hatch egg hatch*. London: Tango.
- Rosenthal, Amy Krouse. (2005). *Little pea*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.
- Stinson, Kathy. (2008). *A Pocket can have a treasure in it*. Toronto: Annick Press.
- Tafari, Nancy. (2008). *Blue Goose*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.
- Tankard, Jeremy. (2007). *Grumpy Bird*. New York: Scholastic Press.
- Teckuntrup, Britta. (2007). *Big Smelly Bear*. New York: Boxer Books Ltd.
- Wallace, Karen. (1999). *Scarlette Beane*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.
- Wilson, Karma. (2004). *Hilda must be dancing*. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books.
- Wood, Audrey. (2005). *The deep blue sea: a book of colors*. New York: Blue Sky Press.
- Wormell, Mary. (2001). *Bernard the Angry Rooster*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Song CD's played during storytimes

- Downing, Johnette. (2003). *The second line*. [sound recording]: scarf activity songs. New Orleans: LA.
- McGrath, Bob. (1996). *Sing along with Bob # 2*. [sound recording]. Teaneck, N.J.: Bob's Kids Music.

Appendix A: Recruitment Text to participants

Hello,

My name is Veena Balsawer. I am a graduate student at the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education. Some of you may have seen me at this branch before when I have come to work as an on-call librarian. Today I am here as a student-researcher and I want to ask you and your child for help with my research project.

The title of my research study is "*Once upon a story:*" Entering into the world of stories to explore the imaginary and lived-through experiences of children.

I am conducting this research study to fulfill one of the requirements for my M.A. (Ed.) degree. I am interested in exploring how stories help children to understand themselves and the world around them.

Your participation in this study will help me understand the different ways in which you support and develop your child's reading interests in order for them to understand themselves and the world.

I will conduct this study after regular storytimes at the library in July 2008

- I will observe four of the registered storytime sessions for children between the ages of 3 and 6 years old.
- The children's librarian will read the storybooks to the children.
- After the books have been read, there will be individual and collective conversations/interviews with the children and this will take about 15 – 30 minutes after each storytime.
- I will encourage the children to respond/react to the stories in a group.
- Then I will ask them individually to tell me the story in their own words.
- I will also ask them to draw a picture of the story and describe it in their own words.
- I will take notes and audiotape the stories as they are being read and the discussions that will follow.
- I will also collect the drawings and copy them in colour as data for my thesis and I will return them to the children at the next storytime session.
- The audio recordings, my notes and the drawings will be the data for my study.
- I will conduct individual interviews with you (the parents) at the end of the storytime session.

Benefits: The purpose of this study is to help adults to hear the voices of children in Ottawa as they express what is important *to them* in describing themselves as people, as participants and as learners in social and cultural settings. I hope that this knowledge will also help libraries and schools in planning future programs for children.

Confidentiality and anonymity: The information that you and the children share with me will be held in strict confidence. All the data that I collect for my research will be kept in a locked

cabinet in my study for five years and a copy will be kept in my supervisor's office at the University of Ottawa. Your confidentiality will be protected in both the coding and reporting of data by using pseudonyms.

This study has been approved by The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board. The Ottawa Public Library Senior Management Team has given me permission to conduct my study in this branch of the Ottawa Public Library.

Voluntary Participation: You and your child are under no obligation to participate in this study. You and your child may withdraw from the study at any time, without giving any reasons, simply by notifying the researcher of your decision.

You and your child may participate in the storytime session without participating in the study.

I have an information sheet and a consent form for you to fill out if you feel like participating in my study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Thanking you in advance.

Sincerely,

Veena Balsawer

Appendix B: Verbal Assent Form

(Required of all participating children)

Title: *“Once upon a story:”* Entering into the world of stories to explore the imaginary and lived-through experiences of children.

Researcher: Veena Balsawer

Supervisor: Dr. Cynthia Morawski

Dear Participant,

I am inviting you to participate in my study

- After the librarian reads the story books, I will ask you to tell me the story in your own words.
- I will also ask you to draw a picture of the story and to describe it in your own words.
- This interview will take about 15 – 30 minutes after each storytime.
- I will take notes and audiotape your stories
- I will also collect your drawings and copy them in colour and I will return them to you at the next storytime session.
- You are not being forced to participate in this study. But I hope you will help me with my school project.

Name of the Child:

This verbal consent was obtained on this (date) at (place) by (name of person obtaining the consent)

Appendix C: Consent Form and Information Letter for parents

(Required of all parents or guardians of participating children)

Title of the research study: *“Once upon a story:”* Entering into the world of stories to explore the imaginary and lived-through experiences of children.

Researcher: Veena Balsawer, Graduate student, University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education
vbalsawer@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Cynthia Morawski, University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education
morawski@uottawa.ca

Dear Parent/Guardian/Caregiver,

You and your child are invited to participate in my research study entitled: *“Once upon a story:”* Entering into the world of stories to explore the imaginary and lived-through experiences of children.

I am conducting this research study to fulfill one of the requirements for my M.A. (Ed.) degree. The study is being supervised by Dr. Cynthia Morawski, University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education.

I am interested in exploring how stories spark children’s imagination to expand their understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Participation: Your participation in this study will help me understand the different ways in which you support and develop your child’s or children’s reading interests.

I will conduct this study after regular storytimes at the library in July 2008

- I will observe the registered storytime sessions for children between the ages of 3 and 6 years old.
- The children’s librarian will read the storybooks to the children.
- After the books have been read, there will be individual and collective conversations/interviews with the children and this will take about 15 – 30 minutes after each storytime.
- I will encourage the children to respond/react to the stories in a group.
- Then I will ask them individually to tell me the story in their own words.
- I will also ask them to draw a picture of the story and describe it in their own words.
- I will take notes and audiotape the stories as they are being read and the discussions that will follow.
- I will also collect the drawings and copy them in colour as data for my thesis and I will return them to the children at the next storytime session.
- I will conduct individual interviews (about 10-15 minutes) with the parents *once* at the end of the four storytime sessions. This will help me understand the different ways in

which you (the parents), encourage and develop your child's or children's reading interests.

- The participating parents and children *may* have to wait for about 1 to 1½ hours after the storytime sessions.
- The audio recordings, my notes, and the drawings will be the data for my study.
- I will discuss the audio recordings, my notes, and the drawings with the children's librarian and the participating parents and the participating children.

Benefits: The purpose of this study is to help adults (specially researchers like me) to hear the voices of children in Ottawa as they express what is important *to them* in describing themselves as people, as participants and as learners in social and cultural settings. I hope that this knowledge will also help libraries and schools in planning future programs for children.

Confidentiality and anonymity: The information that you and the children share with me will be held in strict confidence. All the data that I collect for my research will be kept in a locked cabinet in my study for five years and a copy will be kept in my supervisor's office at the University of Ottawa. The children's librarian will also have access to my data while I am conducting my research at the library. Your confidentiality will be protected in both the coding and reporting of data by using pseudonyms.

This study has been approved by The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board. The Ottawa Public Library Senior Management Team has given me permission to conduct my study in this branch of the Ottawa Public Library.

Voluntary Participation: You and your child are under no obligation to participate in this study. You and your child may withdraw from the study at any time, without giving any reasons, simply by notifying the researcher of your decision.

You and your child may participate in the storytime session without participating in the study.

Copy of results: Would you like me to send you a copy of the results of this study. **Y N**

If you would like a copy, please indicate where I should send it (mailing address or email).

Acceptance:

I/we, _____ agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Veena Balsawer of the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education.

I/we, _____ also permit my/our child, _____ to participate in the above research study conducted by Veena Balsawer of the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education.

I/we understand that by accepting to participate, we retain in full our rights to withdraw from the study.

If I/we have any questions about the study, I/we may contact the researcher or the supervisor at the emails mentioned above.

If I/we have any ethical concerns regarding our participation in this study, I/we may contact the Protocol Officer at The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, 613-562-5841 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

There are two copies of this form, one of which is mine/ours to keep.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D: Consent Form and Information Letter for librarians/storytellers

(Required of all librarians/storytellers)

Title of the research study: *“Once upon a story:”* Entering into the world of stories to explore the imaginary and lived-through experiences of children.

Researcher: Veena Balsawer, Graduate student, University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education
vbalsawer@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Cynthia Morawski, University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education
morawski@uottawa.ca

Dear Librarian,

You are invited to participate in my research study entitled: *“Once upon a story:”* Entering into the world of stories to explore the imaginary and lived-through experiences of children.

I am conducting this research study to fulfill one of the requirements for my M.A. (Ed.) degree. The study is being supervised by Dr. Cynthia Morawski, University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education.

I am interested in exploring how stories spark children’s imagination to expand their understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Participation: I will conduct this study after the regular storytimes at the library in July 2008

- I will observe the registered storytime sessions for children between the ages of 3 and 6 years old.
- The children’s librarian will read the storybooks to the children.
- After the books have been read, there will be individual and collective conversations/interviews with the children and this will take about 15 – 30 minutes after each storytime.
- I will encourage the children to respond/react to the stories in a group.
- Then I will ask them individually to tell me the story in their own words.
- I will also ask them to draw a picture of the story and describe it in their own words.
- I will take notes and audiotape the stories as they are being read and the discussions that will follow.
- I will also collect the drawings and copy them in colour as data for my thesis and I will return them to the children at the next storytime session.
- I will conduct individual interviews (about 10-15 minutes) with the parents *once* at the end of the four storytime sessions. This will help me understand the different ways in which the parents encourage and develop their child’s or children’s reading interests.
- The audio recordings, my notes and the drawings will be the data for my study.
- I will discuss the audio recordings, my notes, and the drawings with the children’s librarian and the participating parents and the participating children.

You will be permitted to observe all the group and individual interviews/dialogues that I conduct with the participants. You will also be asked to give your opinion on the importance of the library storytimes and the reasons for your choice of books/readings for each storytime.

Benefits: The purpose of this study is to help adults (specially researchers like me) to hear the voices of children in Ottawa as they express what is important *to them* in describing themselves as people, as participants and as learners in social and cultural settings. I hope that this knowledge will also help libraries and schools in planning future programs for children.

Confidentiality and anonymity: The information that you share with me will be held in strict confidence. All the data that I collect as part of my research will be kept for five years in a locked cabinet in my study and a copy will be kept in my supervisor's office at the University of Ottawa. Your confidentiality will be protected in both the coding and reporting of data by using pseudonyms.

This study has been approved by The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board. The Ottawa Public Library Senior Management Team has given me permission to conduct my study in this branch of the Ottawa Public Library.

Voluntary Participation: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You may withdraw from the study at any time, without giving any reasons, simply by notifying the researcher of your decision.

Copy of results: Would you like me to send you a copy of the results of this study. **Y N**

If you would like a copy, please indicate where I should send it (mailing address or email).

Acceptance:

I _____ agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Veena Balsawer of the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education.

I understand that by accepting to participate, I retain in full my rights to withdraw from the study.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or the supervisor at the emails mentioned above.

If I have any ethical concerns regarding our participation in this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer at The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, 613-562-5841 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

There are two copies of this form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature:

Date:

Researcher's signature:

Date:

Appendix E: Questionnaire for children

Questions specifically related to the stories read

- Can you tell me about the story in your own words?
- Did you like the story?
- What did you like about the story?
- Were there things that you didn't like in the story? What were they?
- How did the story make you feel? What in the story made you feel this way?
- Which characters in the story did you like? Why?
- Which characters did you dislike? Why?
- Can you draw a picture of the story you just heard? Can you tell me about your picture/drawing?

General questions

- Do you like to listen to stories?
- Do you read on your own? How many books did you read last week?
- What kind of stories do you like to hear and/or read?
- Do you read stories at home? Does someone read stories to you at home? Who reads them to you?
- What do you know about the library?
- Do you like coming here for storytimes? Why? Why not?
- What do you like most about storytimes?
- How often do you come here?
- Who usually comes here with you?
- What do you do when you come here?
- Do you borrow storybooks to take home?
- How do you pick the books you take home?
- Is there anything else that you would like to ask or tell me?

Appendix F: Questionnaire for children's librarian

Questions specific to each storytime

- Which themes did you seek to include in this particular module of storytimes? Why did you include these themes? Were there other themes that you thought about including?
- Why did you choose today's readings?

General questions

- What, in your view, is the purpose of storytime at the library?
- What criteria do you use to select themes and books for storytime?
- Do you think about the likely cultural backgrounds of storytime participants when you select themes and stories?
- Have you ever focused specifically on issues of diversity, difference, and inclusion? Could you tell me more about this?
- Do you discuss the books that you have read with the children who come for storytime? Why do you feel that such a discussion is (or, is not) important.
- How do you decide what approach to take to the story and what things to discuss with the children?
- Do you intentionally select the voice in which the story will be read? What determines this selection?
- How long have you been a children's librarian?
- Would you read the story differently to a group of adults or to a different group of children?
- Have you changed or modified your storytimes in these years? If so, how?

Appendix G: Questionnaire for Parents

- Do you have a library card?
- Does your child have a library card?
- How often do you come to the library?
- How often do you borrow books for your reading from the library?
- How often do you borrow books for your child or children from the library?
- How often do you read or tell stories to your child?
- What kind of books do you read to your child and/or with your child?
- What kind of books does your child like to hear/read?
- Do you discuss the books/stories after you have read them?
- Why did you decide to register your child for storytime?
- Is this the first storytime in which you have enrolled your child or children?
- What do you think of the storytimes at the library?
- What does your child like about storytimes at the library?
- What does your child dislike about storytimes at the library?
- Have you or are you planning to take part in other library sponsored activities and programs? If so, which?

Appendix H: Storytime Session weekly conversation Schedule

Session 1

Introductions

Zelda introduced me as her friend and a colleague to the Thursday afternoon storytime group. I talked about my Storycatching, and asked for volunteers.

Session 2

Stories read:

- *The Deep Blue Sea* by Audrey Wood
- *Grumpy Bird* by Jeremy Tankard
- *Bernard the Angry Rooster* by Mary Wormell
- *I saw an ant on the Railroad Track* by Joshua Prince

Conversations:

DW's transaction-1: She liked *I saw an ant on the Railroad Track* and *Grumpy Bird* (Fig. 4-5).

Zelda (5-10 minutes discussion about the theme for the day): "*I normally don't do themes, but today it seems like the books were on emotions and grumpy angry birds. If I had really thought about it, I would have read a book about a happy bird too.*"

Session 3

Stories read:

- *Ten in the bed* by Jane Cabrera
- *Little Pea* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal
- *Beasty Bath* by Robert Neubecker
- *Littlebat's Halloween story* by Diane Mayr

Conversations:

LittleOne's transaction-1: She liked *Littlebat's Halloween story* (Fig. 6).

BigSister's transaction-1 She liked *Littlebat's Halloween story* too (Fig. 8-9).

TheAlien's transaction-1 He liked *Littlebat's Halloween story* too (Fig. 7).

Zelda (5-10 minutes discussion about the theme for the day): *"Today it's a day before Halloween. Though I am not a big fan of Halloween or of trick-or-treat, I read two Halloween books Littlebat's Halloween story and Beasty. I love the book LittlePea where pea is forced to eat candy and I think it is funny because Dad pea makes the baby pea fly through the air - makes me laugh because it has no intrinsic value."*

LittleOne_mom's email about LittleOne's transaction.

Session 4

Stories read:

- *Jamberry* by Bruce Degen
- *Say Hello* by Jack and Michael Foreman
- *The Magic Hat* by Mem Fox
- *Blue Goose* by Nancy Tafuri

Conversations:

LittleOne's transaction-2: She liked *Say Hello, The Magic Hat, and Jamberry* (Fig.10-11).

Zelda (5-10 minutes discussion about the theme for the day): *"The books that I read today are from my repertoire of books that I always keep on my desk so that worse comes to worst, I have something to read. The book 'Say hello', I am shocked that it is a good book. I don't know but I got interested in that."*

Session 5

Stories read:

- *Smelly Bill* by Daniel Postgate
- *Estelle takes a bath* by Jill Esbaum
- *Mortimer Mooner stopped taking a bath* by Frank B. Edward & John Bianchi

Conversations:

LittleOne_mom's email – LittleOne is sick

TheAlien's transaction-2: Liked *Mortimer Mooner's* story (Fig. 12-16).

Zelda (5-10 minutes discussion about the theme for the day): *"I did books that I like that had bath as the theme: bathing and being dirty, and cleaning. I only had about 20 minutes to prepare for the storytime session today."*

Session 6

Stories read:

- *Hilda must be dancing* by Karma Wilson
- *Peanut* by Linas Alsenas
- *We share everything* by Robert Munsch
- *Just the thing* by Damian's Harvey
- *While you were sleeping* by John Butler

Conversations:

LittleOne's transaction-3: She liked *While you were sleeping*, and *Just the thing* (Fig. 20).

BigSister's transaction-2: She liked *Hilda must be dancing* (Fig. 21-22).

TheAlien's transaction-3: He liked *We share everything* (Fig. 17-19).

Zelda (5-10 minutes discussion after each session): *“There was no theme today. I found a bunch of books I liked and I just read them. The kids just wanted books so that’s all I gave them. I was happy with today except that they were a little bit rambunctious but they were very receptive and answered all the questions.”*

BigSister_mama’s email – BigSister’s transaction

Session 7

Stories read:

- *Hatch Egg Hatch Shen Roddie*
- *Froggy gets dressed Jonathan London*
- *I am Canada Heather Paterson*
- *Something from Nothing Phoebe Gilman*

Conversations:

BigSister_mama’s email – BigSister’s transaction

TheAlien’s transaction-4: He liked *Froggy gets dressed* (Fig. 23).

TheAlien_mom: Since this was the last session with TheAlien, I talked to his mom for about 30 minutes to understand her role in encouraging his reading interests, and his literary transactions.

Zelda (5-10 minutes discussion after each session): *“There was no theme to the storytime today. There are always books I like to do in every session. ‘Something from nothing’ was one of those. Froggy gets dressed I like to do it when it starts to snow and the same with Hatch egg hatch. I just love these books.”*

Session 8

Stories read:

- *Big Smelly Bear* by Britta Teckuntrup
- *Don't worry Bear* by Greg E. Foley
- *Scarlette Beane* by Karen Wallace
- *A Pocket can have a treasure in it* by Kathy Stinson

Conversations:

LittleOne's transaction-4: She liked *A Pocket can have a treasure in it* (Fig. 24)

DW's transaction-2: Talked about the books that she read at home (Fig. 28-30).

BigSister's transaction-4: She liked *Scarlette Beane's* story (Fig. 26-27).

(This was my last Storycatching session therefore I had a formal 30-minutes conversation with Zelda about her view on the importance of storytimes at the library and the role of stories in the lives of children. I also talked to the participating moms about their role in facilitating their child's literary interests and reading habits).

Zelda (formal conversation after the last session)

LittleOne_mom

DW_mom

BigSister_mama

BigSister_mama's email – BigSister's transaction

Appendix I: I went Storycatching and what did I hear?

Storycatcher: Day 1

Introductions

Storycatcher: Day 2

I went Storycatching

And what did I hear?

Zelda reading:

Audrey Wood's The Deep Blue Sea

Jeremy Tankard's Grumpy Bird

Mary Wormell's Bernard the Angry Rooster

Joshua Prince's I Saw an Ant on the Railroad Track

Storycatcher: Day 3

I went Storycatching

And what did I hear?

Zelda reading:

Jane Cabrera's Ten in the bed

Amy Krouse Rosenthal's Little Pea

Robert Neubecker's Beasty Bath

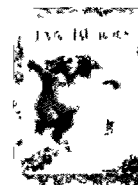
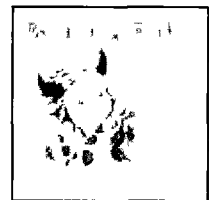
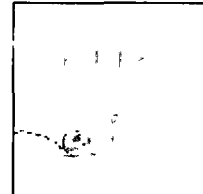
Diane Mayr's Littlebat's Halloween story

Storycatcher: Day 4

I went Storycatching

And what did I hear?

Zelda reading:

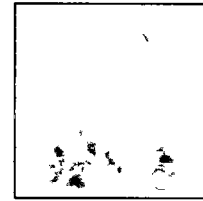


Bruce Degen's Jamberry

Jack and Michael Foreman's Say Hello

Mem Fox's The Magic Hat

Nancy Tafurt's Blue Goose



Storycatcher: Day 5

I went Storycatching

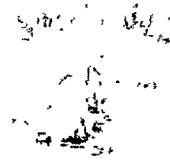
And what did I hear?

Zelda reading:

Daniel Postgate's Smelly Bill

Jill Esbaum's Estelle Takes a Bath

Frank B. Edward & John Bianchi's Mortimer Mooner stopped taking a bath



Storycatcher: Day 6

I went Storycatching

And what did I hear?

Zelda reading:

Karma Wilson's Hilda must be dancing

Linas Alsenas' Peanut

Robert Munsch's We share everything

Damian's Harvey's Just the thing

John Butler's While You Were Sleeping



Storycatcher: Day 7

I went Storycatching

And what did I hear?

Zelda reading:

Shen Roddie's Hatch Egg Hatch

Jonathan London's Froggy gets dressed

Heather Paterson's I am Canada

Phoebe Gilman's Something from Nothing



Storycatcher: Day 8

I went Storycatching

And what did I hear?

Zelda reading:

Britta Teckuntrup's Big Smelly Bear

Greg E. Foley's Don't worry Bear

Karen Wallace's Scarlette Beane

Kathy Stinson's A Pocket can have a treasure in it

