Reader Response in Elementary Classrooms: Quest and Discovery

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Drama and Response to Literature: Reading the Story, Re-Reading "the Truth"

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EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

The children of Peter Spiegel's third grade class were challenged to deepen their literary experience with The True Story of the Three Little Pigs. Together with their teacher, Peter Spiegel, Brian Edmiston and Patricia Enciso involved the children in a "story drama" that took the children into the world of the story. The children become investigative defense attorneys intent on discovering "the Truth," as well as taking on roles as family, witnesses, police officers, and court personnel.

The story drama process requires role playing strategies. Everyone participates, the children and teachers taking on the roles of a variety of characters. Likely situations are created in which to play out encounters in and around the text, an "imaginary drama world." Through interviews, confrontations, considerations of evidence, and enacting a trial, the children create "stories within stories."

The processing of story drama takes these readers well beyond comprehension of the text, beyond, too, their immediate experiencing of it. Their investigations require scrutiny of the text, understanding and balancing of opposing points of view, and consideration of both the dynamics of decisions and the nature of truth.

Consider the following:

1. Ultimately, what is the effect on readers of this response approach—role-play encounters with the story of the text and the stories within the text?
2. Establish the reading strategies and understandings that are potentially being developed through story drama with these students.
3. The authors indicate that, given more time, they would have incorporated writing strategies. What value, what additional learnings, might writing strategies have engendered? What types would you consider and at what junctures?

Brian/teacher (to group of children): Can I help you?
Chris: We’re lawyers and we want to see the scene of the crime.
Brian: Oh. You’re representing that wolf who’s guilty.
Adam: He’s not guilty.
Brian: Well we say guilty.
James: Well he might be guilty.
Anton: Who knows. We’re not sure yet.
Chris: We just want to get more evidence.

The children and teacher quoted here had read and reread The True Story of the Three Little Pigs (1989), Scieszka and Smith’s parody of the well-known folk story, The Three Little Pigs. In Scieszka and Smith’s story, Alexander T. Wolf proclaims his innocence and testifies that, due to a bad cold, he merely sneezed when he arrived at the homes of the first two pigs. He found, each time, to his surprise, that the houses had collapsed and the pigs had died—so he ate them. As he explains, “Now you know food will spoil if you just leave it out in the open. So I did the only thing there was to do. I had dinner again. Think of it as a second helping” (n.p.). The story and illustrations are highly suggestive and full of innuendo, awaiting the careful reader’s judgment. Indeed, the text and illustrations invite the reader to examine the wolf’s confession for distortions and improbabilities.

We planned to use this story as the basis for a literature and drama workshop with Peter Spiegel’s class of 8- and 9-year old children. We assumed they would be appropriately suspicious of A. Wolf’s testimony. However, we wanted them to become engaged with the story in a way that would not only give voice to their disbelief, but also require them to examine the effect of point of view on the creation and interpretation of stories. Of the 17 children in the class, 6 were involved in additional tutoring and special classes for reading, and/or oral and written language development. We chose to work through drama so that all of the children could find a way into the world of the story and find purposes and contexts for questioning the text. We began our work by using story drama (Booth, 1995)—drama that is generally focused on a single encounter or several brief encounters, drawn from a story, that are elaborated on and interpreted over time. Story drama and the more complex process drama are ways of “dramatizing at the edge of a text”

1We would like to express our gratitude to Peter and his students for their willingness to participate in this drama and to be the subject of this chapter.
where the students do not use a script but rather “improvise encounters which enable them to explore the ambiguities and possibilities of a text.” (Wolf, Edmiston, & Enciso, in press). In our case, we used The True Story... as our starting text and developed encounters with A. Wolf and many other implied characters to extend our experiences of the roles of power and perspective in the construction of “the truth.” Our work together extended over two, hour-long sessions with the whole class of third-grade students.

Drama, Literature, and Reader Response

Story drama’s reliance on a text allows the teacher to explore with the students the problems and viewpoints inherent in the story. “Story - drama occurs when the teacher uses the issues, themes, characters, mood, conflict, or spirit of a story as a beginning for dramatic exploration . . . of the meanings of the story” (Booth, 1985, p. 196). In doing so, the students and teacher adopt the perspectives or roles of specific or implicit characters in a story. In addition, the setting of a story enables students and the teacher to more readily place the dramatic encounters in a shared, imaginary drama world. Although the original story is read and woven into the drama experience, students’ interpretations through drama may alter the story (e.g., the ending) in significant ways. The pressing concerns of the drama world legitimate students’ selective reading of a text. They may productively ignore textual details that they find confusing; equally, they may begin to delve into the implication of a few words that ordinarily they might skip over. Students are also encouraged to draw on their own life experiences and related reading experiences to help them interpret the events and actions arising through the drama. In short, story drama brings the story and the children’s interpretations to life: Children meet and interact with characters in an imagined world that is built as much by the text as by their own perspectives, experiences, and ideas.

A teacher can adopt multiple roles within this form of drama. She organizes and facilitates the introduction of and interactions with characters, she considers what encounters might lend depth and breadth to children’s interpretations, and she listens to children’s interests and concerns so encounters can be created that will challenge assumptions and invite further inquiry (Edmiston, 1993). Often the teacher is in the world of the drama alongside the students. She may adopt the role of one of the characters who will enter into a dialogue with the students, or she may act as a colleague, working equally with the children, wondering what to do and say in response to a new situation. Clearly, this form of drama requires a flexible view of the teacher’s relationships with children and stories. At its heart, the teacher is a player alongside the children, exploring perspectives and human dilemmas in the serious domain of make-believe. In our teaching, Brian was the lead teacher who facilitated the drama and also took on the roles of a defense lawyer,
A. Wolf, and a police officer. Pat video recorded the drama and occasionally interjected with a suggestion or question. Peter worked with the children primarily as a peer/defense lawyer; but he also took on the role of the wolf and a bus driver (who drove us to the scene of the crime).

Typically, with this book, children would be asked to discuss the credibility of the wolf’s testimony. However, book discussions tend to be detached conversations where we stand back and look at events that happened to other people. In contrast, in drama “we can feel in the middle of events that concern us or are happening to us because in role we are in the same world as the story” (Edmiston, 1993). The drama offers students a primary viewpoint and purpose for reading while they encounter other viewpoints (Booth, 1994; Wolf et al., in press).

**Transforming Texts and Readers: Preparing for Drama**

The children in Peter’s class had never worked through drama to interpret or develop stories but were part of a classroom community that valued cooperative learning and expression of ideas through art and extended personal writing. Based on our previous experiences with children, particularly those labelled learning disabled, we knew that the story drama would be an engaging, even empowering experience for many of the children in Peter Spiegel’s class. [Research conducted by Wolf (1993), Wilhelm (in press) and others (Kelley, 1992; Rogers & O’Neill, 1993) also supports the use of various forms of drama to create a more complex context for reading and responding to literature for students who may, otherwise, take very limited interest in or ownership of their own involvement in the world of a story.]

The text of Scieszka and Smith’s story had been typed and presented to the students as A. Wolf’s signed statement to the police. The same statement was also read aloud by A. Wolf, as if he were on video. The video convention was set up by Brian, who appeared as A. Wolf, actually reading live to the children. However, because the event of reading aloud was seen by the viewers as video, they could rewind and fast forward the tape to review key statements and associated mannerisms. In her research, Wolf (1993) argued that it is as much the gesture and tone of voice that signals changes in meaning for children engaged in dramatic interpretations of literature as it is the words themselves. As children develop their own gestures, they interpret the text in complex ways; conversely, as they view and critique others’ enactments of texts, they begin to explore the possible meanings a text implies; thus, children begin to regard text as more open to interpretation. [The True Story of the Three Little Pigs could be read as a straightforward, uncomplicated truth. However, Brian’s dramatized video reading carried with it a pleading tone and in some instances dismissive gestures and facial expressions when references were made to the pigs. Given these significations alongside the text, children were encouraged to interpret more than words alone.
In addition to the multiple signals of intent and perspective offered through Brian's reading, we gave the students a particular perspective and purpose from which to interpret and organize their readings. The students were asked to work together as though they were A. Wolf's lawyers. The task of the lawyers was to determine not if but how they would defend their client. In drama terms, they were "framed" (Heathcote, 1984) as defense lawyers, so that they would have a specific relationship to the text that carried with it certain responsibilities for the ways their interpretations might be viewed and construed. Developing this relationship with the text is a crucial first step in beginning a story drama because it enables students to establish social, emotional, and intellectual engagements with the imaginary world of the drama. In short, they begin to care about the characters, their own responsibilities to the characters and one another, and to the outcome of their situation. As Heathcote (1984), a leading drama educator stated, "I take it as a general rule that people . . . become involved at a caring and urgently involved level if they are placed in a quite specific relationship with the action [story], because this brings with it inevitably the responsibility, and, more particularly, the viewpoint which gets them into effective involvement" (p. 168). The students' relationship with the text was a professional one—they had to read the statement carefully because their client's very life depended on how a jury would interpret what he had said to the police. Their sense of responsibility was developed and sustained through a variety of situations that required them to investigate and interpret multiple versions of "the truth"—on behalf of A. Wolf.

Their first assignment was to listen to A. Wolf's testimony (Sieszka text) and then to mark their own copies of the text for indications of weaknesses and gaps in his story. They scrutinized the meaning of the truth as told and expressed by the wolf and as implied by the perspective of the wolf's jailors—the pigs. Even though the wolf claimed that he was telling the true story, they realized that he had reasons for not telling the whole truth—he had been charged with murder. As one student reasoned, "If he's lied before, maybe this might be one of his lies." However, that did not mean that the surviving pig could be relied on to tell the truth either, especially given the ongoing feud between the wolves and pigs, implied by images and headlines in The Daily Pig (a newspaper frontpage created by Smith for an illustration). Moreover, the police and news reporters were pigs and were unlikely to be sympathetic to the wolf's story; they might even be engaged in a conspiracy to charge him with murder.

Their underlined copies of the text showed further attention to the possible incriminating pieces in A. Wolf's story. In his statement, A. Wolf argues, "It seemed like a shame to leave a perfectly good ham dinner lying there in the straw. So I ate it up" (n.p.). One child underlined this statement and wrote in the margin: "He should have tried to help." In this case, the defense lawyer/child had to begin to reconcile two strong
points of view of what constitutes appropriate action. She knew, despite her own convictions, that she would have to convince a jury that the wolf acted reasonably. Several children underlined his argument that he had a terrible cold and commented, as one child did, that "Even if he had a bad cold, it's just a cold. How could that make him blow the whole house down?" Although the wolf's arguments on his own behalf were questionable, the children/lawyers had to begin to develop a credible defense, using his story, reliable witnesses, and evidence. And throughout this work, they would come face to face with truths constructed from different viewpoints, experiences, and positions of power.

**Invitation 4.1**

Type out an extract from a version of the original story and introduce this as a piece of evidence from the third pig. Write a diary for the wolf in which he confesses to the crime. Have this sent anonymously to the lawyers and discuss if they should still defend the wolf.

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**Extending the Text: Encounters with the Truth**

After this first close reading and exploratory dialogue about the wolf's statement, we worked with the students to designate potential witnesses—friends and relatives who might speak on behalf of the wolf and his testimony. This inquiry into other, related stories enabled the children to begin to expand the text in a way that allowed them to simultaneously create and investigate "stories within stories." Our list included the wolf's granny, the wolf's mother, his brother, neighbors, an uncle, and the grocer from whom the wolf bought cake ingredients. We then asked all of the students to work in pairs or threesomes and to select one of the characters on the list whom they would like to interview. Students were told to give themselves the letter A or B. After they had assigned themselves letters, we told them that A would be the interviewer/lawyer and B would be the interviewee. Students worked for 10 minutes describing and probing the details and events described by A. Wolf. The following are several children's accounts of their interviews. All of the children read and interpreted notes they had recorded during their interview:

I talked to his wife.

[Question asked by lawyer] Is her husband on a diet?

She said no.

I [lawyer] said if he was baking a cake for grandma. She said probably.
I asked had her husband ever got a cold. She said only sometimes around spring.

* * *

I talked to the wolf's other brother.

He told me that he sometimes has colds and he told me that when he sees a pig, he's going to eat it. And his brother... he [A. Wolf] wasn't just making a cake... his brother was making one, too. He did definitely go and ask for sugar.

* * *

[I talked to ] The first little pig.

He had two bags of sugar and he got mad at him [the wolf] because he was watching his favorite show, Miss Piggy and the Muppets.

He said, I love kool-aid.

Evident in these three reports was a concern for corroboration of the facts that were part of A Wolf's testimony. In terms of response to literature, however, these reports also reflect the children's pleasure in elaborating on the characters and relationships implied by the text. Often, such elaborations are mentioned by children in discussions, but rarely are they allowed to develop into an adjacent text. The story-drama interviews gave the children an opportunity to revel in the possibilities - additional characters' perspectives might pose. At the same time, the overall drama frame made the children accountable to the original text and to their peers' interpretations of the truths being constructed.

The wolf's granny was a favorite interviewee. To the delight of her peers, a student, who had been in role as the wolf's granny, agreed to be interviewed by the whole class. It was this whole group storytelling, modeled in many respects after A. Wolf's video, that heightened their scrutiny of the truth and their concern for placing details and perspectives in relation to one another.

During the session, several questions were asked that might confirm the relationship between the granny and the wolf and, at the same time, provide evidence for his "truthful" character. The children asked, "When is your birthday? Does he usually take care of you and bake you cakes?" [A. Wolf explained that he had needed a cup of sugar to bake a cake for his granny's birthday.]

"Has he had colds before?"
"Have you ever known him to lie?"
"Is he usually friendly?"
"Does he get along with pigs?"

The young girl who performed as the wolf's grandmother extended the story and the difficulties of discerning and judging the truth through several thoughtful, yet deliberately contradictory responses to her peers' questions. She was clearly fragile in her physical demeanor and indicated both through gesture and dialogue that she required her grandson's assistance. Her story, at this point, fit with the facts of the wolf's testimony. When asked to verify that A. Wolf had a cold at the time of
her birthday, she could not recall that he was ill then or that he had ever been ill. The young actor had made a decision to play with the truth; to make fact-finding a more complex enterprise than it might have been. And her classmates, in turn, relished the opportunity to construct and deconstruct a tale full of conflicting details.

A. Wolf’s grandmother had already implied that her grandson had lied about having a cold. But rather than appear to be aware of this lie, she proceeded to describe her grandson’s loving ways and his difficulties since childhood with the other pig children. Her story of a young wolf who rarely played or had friendships created sympathies for him and insights into his psychology that had to be reconciled with the events and viewpoints, particularly the pigs’ viewpoints, that landed him in jail.

The interview closed as the grandmother feigned tiredness and had to be taken home. All of the children gathered again, to relate the findings from their other interviews and to compare those findings with the interview they had just heard. We knew, at this point, 40 minutes from the time we had introduced A. Wolf’s statement, that the children had more stories than they could manage to hold and compare by memory alone. We reminded them that, as A. Wolf’s lawyers, they would have to defend him but that the jury and judge would have to decide if his story was believable. Rather than have the children retell all of the stories they had gathered through their interviews, we asked them to think of one statement or mannerism they had heard or seen so far that they thought would make anyone wonder about the truth of A. Wolf’s statement.

The following excerpt from a 10-minute discussion exemplifies the kinds of questions raised by all of the children.

Tina: [holding the wolf’s statement in her hand] Why is it the only time he sneezes is when he’s by the little pigs’ houses? He don’t sneeze when he’s by his house or nothing.

Christina: We should ask the grandma again if maybe he’s allergic to pigs.

Tina: If he had a cold he would be sneezing all the way down. If you had a cold would you sneeze all the time? No. A couple of times a minute. It’s very strange because it does not show him sneezing earlier in the story.

James: But we don’t know how long it took him to eat the pig.

Aaron: She said her birthday was 25 days ago. The cake was for the other granny.

Lynn: Why did he eat up the two dead pigs if he only wanted sugar?

As can be seen, the wolf’s story that his sneezes were the result of cold was regarded with considerable suspicion. In reference to the sneeze, the children directly questioned the wolf’s version of the truth while also creating hypotheses that might render his tale more believable. Significantly, the children also questioned the limits of their own
perspectives and knowledge about the events of the story ("But we don’t know how long it took him to eat the pig."). Other children drew on the stories within stories generated by their interviews to open up and interrogate A. Wolf’s story even further ("She [the granny] said her birthday was 25 days ago. The cake was for the other granny.") Through their interviews and rereadings of the testimony, they were beginning to situate A. Wolf’s story in relation to others’ perspective, including their own.

It should be noted that the first two girls in this excerpt were involved in special reading and learning disabilities programs in the school. Neither Pat nor Brian was aware of the difficulties they had with print; in fact, we assumed that they were two of the more involved, insightful readers among their peers. They regularly contributed elaborate arguments, drawing on finer details of interviews and other evidence to support or challenge their client’s testimony. Through the story drama, the girls’ reading and interpretations had a purpose and relationship with the characters that gave them the authority to work as very astute readers, who could imagine and critique multiple, intersecting stories and points of view. In addition, the story drama, being a live, immediate context for reading and interpretation, gave all of the children a chance to develop perspectives and arguments from more sources than print. Thus, those children who are often lost in a discussion were included as active participants who were as able as everyone else to read the meanings of gesture and vocal intonation, alongside spoken and written words. In this sense, the drama context gave all of the children more meaning to create and interpret and therefore more possibility for offering their own ideas and suggestions.

**Invitation 4.2**

In small groups, create television news coverage of the trial for pig, wolf, and human television companies, complete with graphs depicting audience opinions, sound bites, and an anchor person/animal.

**Concluding Day One: Taking a Stand on “the Truth”**

Our purpose as defense lawyers was to work as a team to create a case for A. Wolf. They were not convinced, following our interviews, that we could build a coherent case. So, we decided to take a survey of the group to see who believed in the wolf’s guilt or innocence. We asked the children to place themselves along a continuum, located along a line stretching from one end of the meeting area to the other, to indicate whether they
were fully or partially convinced of his guilt or innocence. Once they had lined up, they presented their rationale for believing or not believing the wolf's testimony.

Our survey results were recorded under the three headings of guilty, innocent and not sure so we could refer to these arguments as we constructed our final case. Although half of the students did not offer extended explanations, it was important that they claimed an opinion, or took a stand, so they could begin to critique all of the information they had gathered and would continue to collect. Further, the standpoint could give them additional ownership of their work within the drama. Following are some of the reasons they gave for believing in his innocence or guilt or for feeling undecided one way or the other.

Innocent—
He was hungry.
His grandma said the same thing he said.
He does have a cold but he can't be allergic to straw.
I believe his story.

Not sure—
He ate the pigs. And how could a pig die just because of a sneeze from the wolf?
He couldn't resist the pigs—He's a wolf.
He didn't sneeze on the way to the pigs' house.
Maybe the pigs weren't dead and he said, "What a perfectly good ham."

Guilty—
I think he's guilty of two murders... In the beginning, he wasn't sneezing at all, so I think the cold stuff is fake and the big bad wolf stuff is really true because he's not sneezing at all and if he had a cold he'd be coughing and sneezing.
A pig wouldn't just die from a sneeze.
His granny said he never gets sick.

As lawyers, they had to prepare for A. Wolf's defense at his upcoming trial. Some of the children immediately wanted to believe his story and thus his innocence. Some were ready to assume his guilt because of who he was; one student argued, "He couldn't resist [eating] the pigs—he's a wolf.” However, most wanted to question his version of events. The drama supported delaying judgement and thus promoted detailed interpretations of the text. Preparations for the trial entailed reading and rereading his statement, gathering and interpreting multiple perspectives, and sorting through the corroborating and contradictory evidence. From the point of view of lawyers, they needed to be skeptical of their client's interpretations. The prosecution would ask penetrating ques
tions that the defense would have to anticipate. As the drama progressed, the students continued to explore their judgments as they dialogued with each other and with us about his possible guilt or innocence. Most important, at this point, the students did not assume that any one person possessed a complete truth.

Brian closed the first session with a reminder to the group that, regardless of their belief in the wolf’s guilt or innocence, we would have to defend him.

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**Invitation 4.3**

_Brainstorm with your group or class about what influences our interpretations of the truth. Ideas can be written on index cards and then categorized as personal, social, or cultural._

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**Day Two: Collecting Evidence**

Our second session with the children built on the story’s ending and overall framework as much as it did on the wolf’s testimony. The ending of the story leaves the reader with an illustration of a front page from _The Daily Pig_, featuring the headline “Big Bad Wolf!” and a silhouette of the wolf blowing or sneezing, with a cup falling from his hand; the “photograph” is subtitled “A.T. Wolf Big and Bad.” Also on the front page is a close-up, technical picture of the mouth and teeth of a wolf subtitled “Canis lupus. Seen as Menace.” A. Wolf’s opinion of the news reporters is telling: “They figured a sick guy going to borrow a cup of sugar didn’t sound very exciting. So they jazzed up the story with all of that ‘Huff and puff and blow your house down.’ And they made me the Big Bad Wolf.” He concludes, “That’s it. The real story. I was framed. But maybe you could loan me a cup of sugar.” We decided, in the next session, to visit the scene of the crime, in hopes of finding evidence for building a strong case for A. Wolf. But we also wanted to make the pigs’ viewpoint and statements strongly biased against A. Wolf (and wolves in general) to see how the children would grapple with the different parties’ versions of the truth.

The closing illustration of the book shows a much older, graying A. Wolf behind bars, guarded by a pig/police officer. Implicit in the image is the fact of a guilty verdict at his trial. Despite this implied ending, we knew the children wanted to have a trial and to be responsible for A. Wolf’s fate. Working as lawyers, judge, and jury, they could imagine and experience multiple interpretations of different, conflicting versions of the truth during the trial.
Thus, our second day involved a sequence of events that began with a pretend bus ride to the scene of the crime, followed by several encounters with police officers guarding the scene of the crime, collection of evidence, an interview with A. Wolf himself while heavily guarded in prison, a discussion of lab results and possible conclusions to be drawn from the evidence, and a final trial that required the services of several defense and prosecuting lawyers. Across these episodes we hoped to actively engage children in an imagined, "lived through" experience (Rosenblatt, 1978) of A. Wolf's story as well as the stories they had created together through interviews and their own conjectures and hypotheses. In addition, we hoped to create a purpose for critiquing the interpretations and evidence they gathered.

Our bus ride was a raucous 30 seconds of bumping and jostling and shouting directions. The children's teacher, Peter, was the driver and was reminded more than once to watch the road. This shift in relationship between the children and Peter was important because it allowed the children to begin to engage with him on terms other than child and teacher. Soon he would take the role of A. Wolf and be closely questioned, his every word scrutinized by the lawyers and police officers. On our arrival at the scene of the crime, the children were met by a police officer, Brian, who briefly stepped out of role to show them the final page of the book that features A. Wolf guarded by a pig police officer. Brian set the scene:

Brian: We have stopped at Pig Lane. I'm the police officer (Holding up the book); what can you tell from the picture in the book about the police officers?

Children (as a group respond): They're pigs!

Brian: And who am I?

Children (as a group): A pig officer.

Brian: I'm guarding where the crime took place. When you get off the bus, you'll have to talk to me.

It was at this point in the drama that the children's investment in being lawyers was actually put to the test. They had to confront an authority figure and maintain their own authority as lawyers if they were to continue their pursuit of evidence and a case. The children stood slightly back from Brian, appraising him.

Brian (to group of children): Can I help you?

Boy 1: We're lawyers and we want to see the scene of the crime.

Brian: Oh. You're representing that wolf who's guilty.

Boy 2: He's not guilty.

Brian: Well we say guilty.

Boy 3: Well he might be guilty.

Boy 4: Who knows. We're not sure yet.
Boy 1: We just want to get more evidence.
Boy 2 (hand raised, finger pointing to draw attention to his statement): We need to gather blood samples.
Boy 3: And we need to take pictures.

Their commitment to the frame of defense lawyer is indicated by the excerpt quoted in which the children challenged the authority of the police officer who assumed the wolf's guilt. The children paused following his statement but then, referring to their own authority as defense lawyers, reminded him that the wolf's guilt had not yet been determined. The statement, "We're not sure yet" is suggestive of one child's identification with his role; in addition, it reflects the tentative stance he had adopted toward the truth.

Brian agreed to show them the outside of the houses and led them to the crime sites. He stood next to the imagined site and declared: "This is where a poor innocent pig was eaten by a wolf." He added, "And you can see the blood on the ground. You can take samples if you wish. Don't touch anything. You can take pictures." In this exchange, the children not only heard a pig's point of view, they also heard their own ideas being incorporated into the world of the drama (they wanted to take blood samples and photographs). Unlike discussions of literature, the drama places children's responses to a story into an active encounter.

**Back to the Scene of the Crime**

They were eager to begin the pretend play of gathering evidence. Almost everyone started clicking a pretend camera as they huddled over the imaginary collapsed building. Several children exclaimed about all the blood on the ground. And again, Brian foregrounded their talk but placed it in relation to the pigs' perspective. He agreed that, yes, there was blood everywhere and that it was terribly gruesome.

After taking pictures and gathering evidence near the remains of the second pig's house, the children began taking blood and wood samples to the lab. Tina, described earlier, who had been engrossed in reading and interpreting the wolf's testimony, collected blood samples from the two pigs and found that, "The first brother's blood is 'A' but the second pig's is 'A and B'. They both have different blood." Pat engaged in a discussion with her about the significance of her finding:

Pat: Isn't that possible? I thought you could have two different blood types in one family.
Tina: They might not be related.
Pat: You'll have to ask forensics about that.
Tina: Where is he?
Pat: So you think the pigs might be lying?
Tina: Yes.
Pat: You'll have to take it back to the department and have the lab check that they are related.

At this point, Tina packed up her pretend samples and enacted placing them in a bag that she lifted on her shoulder. As she walked away she instructed Pat, "Tell them that I left early. I have to go to forensics." And she strode across the room (but not out the door!). Tina's experience, like that of other children within the drama, was a full-bodied response to literature. Tina stepped into the world of the drama to create a space that held the evidence she needed to work as a lawyer and a serious reader. Drawing on her knowledge of blood types and images of laboratory language and practices, she became, in Vygotsky's (1966/1976) words, "a head taller", more able to control her knowledge and language than she would in real life because play demands greater attention to significations and meaning. As Wolf, et al. stated, "In... action, students not only discover new possibilities, they also transform themselves in the process of transforming the words or situations of a text" (in press). Thus, as a response to literature, Tina's dramatizing allowed her to enter the implied world of the text with greater control of and attention to meaning. And the meanings she made within the drama were borrowed from her own life experiences while incorporating the premises and characters of the original text.

Our next stop (after another bus ride, of course) was the lab, where we gathered to discuss our findings. Once again, new stories and surprising evidence were uncovered. In addition to Tina's report on the pigs' blood types and her conclusion that they were, in fact, brothers, Christina reported that they reviewed photographs of A. Wolf's hands and found an open wound. Peter asked, "Why would there be any blood on Alex T. Wolf?"

Christina: I found a scratch. The pig bit him.
Peter: The pig bit him? So the pig must have been alive [implying the wolf was acting in self defense].
Christina: The [first] pig bit Alex.

This latter finding was added to the not guilty list of arguments and evidence, to be used later during the trial. Our time was running out quickly, as it always seems to do in extended work with children, so we moved from the lab to the next encounter. This was an encounter the children had been awaiting—the meeting with A. Wolf in his cell.

**A Meeting with Power and Truth**

Brian told the children that they needed to decide who would act as police officers and who would continue to be lawyers. Those who would be police officers were to stand by him (12 children, about three quarter:
of the class). The others were to gather in the carpeted meeting area and consider what questions they wanted to pose to A. Wolf. The police officers then gathered with Brian in the back of the room to rearrange the chairs to create a cell. Brian decided to place their teacher, Peter, in the cell as A. Wolf. He knew that Peter would work with the original story's tone and viewpoint but be responsive to the children's inquiries. The police officers were instructed to take their places near the prisoner and in the jail. On the count of three, the police officers froze in place; they were asked to tell what was on their minds:

The wolf is guilty.
He's a murderer.
We don't trust the lawyers.
I'm going to stop them.
I'm staying right here. No one will get past me.
He killed my friends.
All the wolves are killers.

As with the police officers, the lawyers stood and stated what was on their minds as they were about to enter the jail:

I'm nervous.
The pigs look dangerous.
I hope I can get in to talk to him.
I believe Alex T. Wolf.

This experience of freezing time and speaking thoughts out loud enabled all the participants to know what kind of situation they had created and what attitudes they might encounter. Clearly, in this case, the children were involved in their roles and in the world of the drama. Although their teacher was acting as A. Wolf, many of them were willing to accuse him of murder. They had moved into the world of the drama to explore their own perspectives and the possibilities implied by this tense encounter.

Brian unfroze the moment and directed the lawyers to request entry to the jail. (At this point, he was acting as a facilitator of the drama rather than as a member of the defense lawyer team). At once, a child acting as a police officer yelled out, "One at a time! One at a time!" while a child/police officer standing closest to the lawyers stepped in front of their path.

Greg: We're defense lawyers and we want to talk to Alex T. Wolf.
Child/Officer: One by one. One by one.
Chris: And we want to take pictures.
Child/Officer: Only one at a time. No pictures.
The children were creating the tension in this exchange entirely on their own. They recognized the rivalry between the two groups and worked to sustain it. Their command, “One by one!” was heard several times as the lawyers huddled together as a group to gain access to A. Wolf. In a sense, this was a game between the lawyers and the officers, one that the children understood immediately and enjoyed playing out. But it was not only a game, it was also a metaphor for the relationships implied by the text and final illustrations of the book. The police officer, foregrounded in Smith’s illustration, holds considerable power over his prisoner; it was this same officer, representing all of the pigs, who had, for so long, been the purveyor of truth. The children created and met the power that could obstruct alternative versions of the truth.

Chris was escorted to A. Wolf by an officer who held an imagined bayonet or gun to his back. Both walked deliberately and seriously toward the prisoner.

A. Wolf/Peter exclaimed to the lawyer in a way that added to the authenticity of the moment:

A. Wolf/Peter: Where have you been? I’ve been waiting so long to talk to you.
Chris: What do you want?
A. Wolf/Peter: What do I want? I’m innocent. Let me be free. Help me be free. Help me. This is terrible.
A. Wolf/Peter: They won’t feed me.
Police Officer: He said he wasn’t hungry. (To Chris)

Chris looked at the officers then asked to leave. He was escorted again to the lawyer’s group, while Alex/Peter called, “Come back, come back.” Brian urged Chris to report on his meeting:

Brian: Come tell us what you found out.
Chris: He said he was hungry and he hasn’t been fed.
Tina: I’ll go and see him.

The same boy who had shown such seriousness as he accompanied Chris also escorted Tina her meeting with A. Wolf. The police officers raised their chant as she came forward, “One by one. One by one.”

A. Wolf/Peter was clearly distraught as Tina approached him. She was carrying a copy of his testimony in her hands.

A. Wolf/Peter: Are you going to help me?
Tina: Yes. We’re trying hard. I have to ask you some questions.
A. Wolf/Peter: Ok. Any questions at all.
Tina: Have you read your testimony?
A. Wolf/Peter: Yes. I told that to them. It’s the truth.
Tina: Calm down. Calm down. Are you really on a diet? It says here, pigs are part of your diet.
A. Wolf/Peter: My diet? My diet is I love pigs.
Tina: Can I ask you another question? How did you know the pigs were dead?
A. Wolf/Peter: They were lying on the ground. They were roasts and they were so beautiful. They were dead. I'm sure they were dead.
Tina: No further questions.

After being ceremoniously escorted away, Tina reported to the group of lawyers that, "He can't eat." [Isn't allowed to eat]. Immediately a group of children decided that he needed a ham and that it would be delivered by his grandma. (The same girl who had enacted the role of his grandma stated, however, that she was not the grandma, but a friend who was delivering a ham that his grandma had prepared for him. Unfortunately, no one seemed to have heard her, so all the participants in the exchange assumed she was the wolf's grandma.

She gave the pretend package to A. Wolf saying, "We have a ham. This is a package from your grandma."

A. Wolf/Peter replied, "I can't have anything. The guards take everything away."

However, their exchange continued, as the wolf pleaded again that he was innocent:

A. Wolf/Peter: I'm so glad to see you. I'm innocent. Those pigs wouldn't give me any sugar. They were dead.
Grandma/friend: It is so good to see you. What are you doing in here?
A. Wolf/Peter: I was making you a cake that's all and I needed sugar. I'm innocent.

A police officer interjected at this point and stated unequivocally: "He's a murderer."
A. Wolf retorted, "They were already dead."

In the interest of time, Brian interrupted this exchange and pronounced, "Your case is to be heard in the morning." As a transition to the trial and as a way of reflecting on this series of encounters, Pat asked the children to freeze where they were and to consider what they were thinking and feeling about the police officers or the lawyers. Several children from both groups offered their perceptions:

Lawyers: Too many people [police officers]. (Tina, a lawyer, said this and crossed her arms to punctuate her point.) I think that they're thinking about him running away. I think there's way too many of them. They don't trust us.
Police officers: I think there's way too many of you coming to the door. This wolf murdered our friends. Why should we feed him?

Invocation 4.4

_Invitation 4.4_

*Have each student write a few sentences on truth from their own perspective or from the point of view of a character. After circling a key phrase, all can share these as a group poem._

Throughout this episode, children formulated their own texts—extensions of the original story—and responded to them in role. Often children imagine scenes and dialogue as they read (Enciso, 1996) but rarely share these elaborations with others. Through the drama, these narrative possibilities, what Bruner (1986) refers to as the landscape of consciousness and the landscape of action, could be brought to life and enacted. Further, the drama invited the children to work with several kinds of texts and performances: a written testimony, a delivered testimony, their interpretations of the testimony, interviewees' testimonies, evidence they had collected, theories generated by the evidence, the police officers' commands and statements, the lawyers' questions, and A. Wolf's responses.

In our final episode, we brought these multiple texts and performances to bear on the fate of A. Wolf.

_"Th Truth" at Last_

_"Order in the court!"_ called out one child in the midst of a flurry of chairs and congregating groups of children. The children had been instructed to set up the courtroom in preparation for the trial of A. Wolf. While some students moved chairs to accommodate the jury, witnesses, judge, and defendant, others began to clamber for the privilege of serving as judge, A. Wolf, a witness, or a member of the jury. The excitement was high as we entered the final episode of our work with the class.

Brian interrupted the calls for various roles, requesting that everyone sit down near the chairs they had placed in the courtroom. Then he calmly asked who would be judge. One child raised his hand. Six members of the jury had taken their seats (Tina and Christina were members of the jury). Four police/pig officers stood outside the courtroom holding A. Wolf, played again by Peter Spiegel. And three girls sat in the chairs designated for family members and witnesses (one of these was the wolf's Granny who had been interviewed by the class). Last, two children raised their hands and stated that they wanted to be lawyers.
for the defense; one child agreed to serve as prosecuting lawyer. We were
in our places, with testimonies and notes in hand and lists of arguments
posted above the judge's head.

The judge took his seat in front of the jury and proclaimed, "Order in
the court. Order in the court." As Peter/A. Wolf was escorted in, the judge
commanded, "Everybody stand." Looking at his teacher/A. Wolf, the
judge asked, "Do you swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth?"
Peter replied, "I do." and took his seat.

The children who wanted to be lawyers had reviewed the list of
arguments in favor of A. Wolf's guilt and innocence and had decided to
begin with testimony regarding A. Wolf's motive. Although we would
have liked to engage all of the children in a review and discussion of the
arguments and evidence, our time constraints urged us on to the
courtroom encounter itself. Fortunately, the children's involvement in
the story drama was high and they were willing to listen carefully to the
unfolding arguments and refer to testimony, evidence, and questions
that were already familiar to everyone.

Anton, the defense lawyer, striding back and forth in front of the
defendant, began his inquiry. "When you were going to get a cake and
get some sugar, did you need the sugar or did you ask... did you call
on purpose or did you not call on purpose?"

Through this question, Anton expressed all of the children's skepti-
cism regarding the wolf's motives. Had the trial been our first and only
episode in response to the story, it would have been doubtful that the
lawyer's question would have carried such weight and ownership.
Through our story drama encounters, the children knew not only that
the wolf's testimony was questionable, but that certain questions were
more relevant than others. They had wondered about his sneezing, his
cake baking enterprise, and his relationship with the pigs. Anton's
question brought these encounters into a new context where competing
versions of the truth mattered more than ever.

A. Wolf/Peter responded to the question with a pleading tone. "I
needed sugar. I was making a cake. The rabbit was already in the pot
and I just needed sugar. That was the ingredient I needed. And as I said
before, I had a cold. I'm sorry for blowing down the house but I had a
cold."

Anton listened closely to A. Wolf's response but led his client to
another account of events, an account that the children had constructed
in their earlier interviews with witnesses. He probed, "But your wife
said you only have colds in the spring."

Peter replied, "Sometimes these colds just, usually it is the spring.
But something in the air... I'd been having sniffles. I felt a cold coming
on."

The jury and judge heard, once again, that the wolf's cold was not
fabricated. Anton had realized that even though his questions could be
potentially incriminating, they served the purpose of presenting the
wolf's point of view. He pursued the wolf's motive when he turned to the
part of the testimony that alludes to the relationship between the wolf and pigs. A. Wolf had previously testified (in the original story) that the third little pig had insulted his granny, an act that made him go crazy.

Anton inquired, “When that pig said something, that made you really mad didn’t it?” And A. Wolf, using a high pitched, offended tone, offered his perspective again; at the same time, he directly sought the lawyer’s and jury’s sympathies, “Oh yes! The pig said he hopes my grandma sat on a pin. Can you believe that?”

Our courtroom scene continued with a pig as witness (who refused to say anything due to possible incriminations), family members who corroborated A. Wolf’s story, and police officers who reported what they had observed on the arrest of A. Wolf. As the interrogation of witnesses concluded for both defense and prosecuting lawyers, it was evident that either pigs or wolves would be outraged by the verdict.

Rather than conclude the trial simply to have an answer, and an ending, Brian urged the children to consider, again, the ways a particular perspective contributes to the construction of truth... and justice. Brian asked, “Is anyone who is sitting on the jury a pig?” Several hands went up. He continued, “Would it make a difference if the jury were made up of pigs or wolves?”

One child suggested, “We should make it [a jury member] a regular person [neither pig nor wolf].”

Brian posed the question, “Is this a fair trial?” A number of children shook their heads no, and the defense lawyer, Anton, summarized the dilemma by stating, “All the pigs will vote for the pigs and all the wolves will vote for the wolves.” Brian turned to the students and asked if they agreed. Everyone was nodding in agreement. It appeared, now, that despite the authority of a court of law, “the truth” would always be created and limited by those participants who have something at stake around the interpretation of events.

Brian suggested that instead of moving immediately to a final decision, that the children meet with reporters (Pat and Peter) who were waiting outside the courtroom to write the story of the trial for their respective newspapers, The Daily Pig and The Daily Wolf. Brian instructed those members of the courtroom who wanted to speak with the pig reporter to meet at one side of the room, and those who wanted to speak with the wolf reporter to meet at the other side of the room.

Again, due to time constraints, the adults, Peter and Pat, took notes and constructed stories based on the ideas offered by the children. It would have been much more valuable an experience for us all to have the children write and report back to one another. On the other hand, the adults listened carefully to the children and elevated their ideas by recording their thoughts and sometimes employing more sophisticated language. Peter’s report included children’s awareness of unfair practices within the courtroom and arguments that could be used to persuade readers of his innocence.

A. Wolf cannot be fairly tried in the current legal system:
1. All of the police are pigs.
2. Juries are almost always made up of pigs, even when the case concerns a wolf.
3. Wolves are carnivores. They should be able to eat meat when they need to eat it.
4. The whole wolf family has been treated roughly and unfairly.
5. The pig didn't even speak when he had a chance. That could mean that he is guilty.
6. We really haven't heard all sides.

The Daily Pig, held a strong opposing viewpoint:

A. Wolf is guilty of the brutal slaying of two brothers at their homes. A. Wolf claims that he had a cold and sneezed the pigs' houses down. That's impossible. No one could sneeze a house down, even if it is made of straw. Besides, we have seen A. Wolf in our neighborhood many times and he has stood around looking at the pigs. Everyone knows he eats pigs. The pigs were not dead: He murdered them. Why are we even having a trial?

Whereas the wolves questioned the legitimacy of the trial and implied that changes could be made to promote greater justice, the pigs assumed that the wolf was not even deserving of a trial. Their view of him as a predator made it impossible for them to even listen to his story, let alone provide for a hearing within the context of a trial.

After each report was completed, the children asked that each statement be read to the judge, who would have to make a final decision (the jury could not be trusted). Interestingly, no one asked whether the judge was a pig or a wolf! The judge listened solemnly to the reports offered by representatives of the wolves and pigs. He turned to A. Wolf/Peter and pronounced him not guilty. Even the wolves were surprised by the announcement, but accepted the judge's verdict. Given this surprise judgment, the children were able to see how capricious many of our decisions might be. When all perspectives and evidence are questioned, it is difficult to settle on the truth. In this regard, the "true story" will never be finished.

Returning to Reader-Response Theory

Reading literature is too often solely for efferent purposes—we want students to gain information from their reading; yet we often neglect the importance of students' aesthetic experiences—they need imaginatively to enter into a story world. Rosenblatt (1978) argued that readers must have aesthetic experiences out of which any efferent rereadings for information and reflections for interpretations can take place. Story drama is an aesthetic experience because it places the reader in the story—as if it is happening now. As Booth (1995) put it, the students
"enter the story cave" in story drama (p. 31). Once they enter the cave they can begin to interpret what they find there.

The students' relationship with and responsibility for A. Wolf create a kind of reading that, we would argue, was often simultaneous aesthetic and efferent. Peter's students did not act out the story in chronological fashion but placed themselves in related encounters within an imaginary drama world that was implied by the original story. The "as if" world of the story became the pre-text or launching point (Boot 1995; O'Neill, 1995) for the "as if" world of the drama so that the student were in the midst of the problems and possibilities posed by the characters and their predicaments.

The imagined, immediate context of the drama provided student with the range of experiences and perspectives through which they could raise questions, explore specific meanings and inferences, and place parts of the text in relation to the whole. In other words, their efferent reading was made more powerful and possible as they became increasingly more involved in the aesthetic world of the story.

The multiple texts and points of view that were brought together for these students through story drama created a dynamic, aesthetic, and critical space for reading and rereading of the text. In the excerpt that opens this chapter, Brian, working in role as a pig/polic officer, embodied the implied meanings of the original story: Without doubt, the pigs presumed the wolf's guilt. The children, on the other hand, working from the perspectives of defense lawyers and others embodied the extended texts and perspectives that had evolved through their participation in the drama.

Through drama work, the students discovered that there are always multiple ways to read and comprehend a text—multiple meanings, texts, and truths are generated as we read and reread. "The truth" is subject to interpretation and reinterpretation as we revisit a text. Even factual truths, they discovered, are bound by the perspective or consciousness of the reader. As Bakhtin (1986) noted "with comprehension there are at least two consciousnesses and two subjects" (p. 111). There is never a single way to comprehend a text—understanding can always be contested and truth is always slippery. The drama enabled the students to comprehend the text by entering into more than one consciousness or point of view. This made them more critical in their reading and they began to critique the original text.

Bakhtin (1986) noted that "there never can be a first nor a last meaning; [the truth of one meaning] always exists among other meanings as a link in the chain of meaning, which in its totality is the only thing that can be real" (p. 146). We offer this chapter as a link in the chain of reader-response theory and hope that reader forge their own links as they use drama to explore literature with their students.
Invitation 4.5

Consider the impact of these extended responses to this picture-story book on the response experiences of these students. Discuss with your group or class and then write or use art to express your understanding of the development of the experience.

APPENDIX

Using Drama to Respond to Other Stories

Any piece of literature can be a springboard into story drama. The Invitation sidebars in this chapter contain suggestions for further drama activities with The True Story of the Three Little Pigs. We will now consider how you could use drama in ways similar to each of the invitations with the following four picture-story books:


Reading A Text In Drama

Some or all of the words in a book can provide you with a text to read in a story drama. You, or your students, need to think of who would need to read the text and where they would be. These are possible beginning roles, situations, and frames—a perspective, a purpose, and a need to read and interpret information. Students will read text from a book if it is presented as a coherent part of the drama world. Students will also read texts they have written or those prepared by the teacher.

Little Red Riding Hood. Frame the students as park rangers who have been asked to trap all wolves in the forest. Read the story as a record of what has happened in these woods in order to determine some of the difficulties for wolves and humans co-existing in the forest. Ask students to write other records of encounters between wolves and humans in the woods.

Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe. Frame the students as naturalists who are planning wilderness canoe trips. Read the book as a child's diary in order to determine potential dangers on such trips. Ask students to write and draw picture extracts from another child's diary.

Jim and the Beanstalk. Frame the students as social workers. Read about Jim and the giant as they plan their encounters with other giants who are old and infirm and who may need help. Ask the students to write something that the giant would need to read.

Nettie's Trip South. Frame the students as abolitionists in the pre-Civil War North. Read the book as Nettie's letter as they plan an incognito trip to the South in order to gather information about the
difficulties faced by those who work on the Underground Railroad. Ask the students to write a reply by Nettie’s friend Addie or some of the not that her brother took on his trip to the South.

**Other Ways to Extend the Text**

In a drama, teachers and students can use any of the ways people everyday life create and share the many stories that lie within or behind every other story. For example, they may talk to people, listen to gossip, read newspapers, watch television, analyze videotapes, or draw pictures. Each of these activities can involve preexisting written text and images, or ones that the students create in class.

_Little Red Riding Hood._ In pairs, the park rangers could interview the little girl, her mother, neighbors, wolves, and other animals in the forest in order to discover their attitudes. They could write short reports of their findings to present to the Department of Natural Resources.

_Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe._ In small groups, one student is a naturalist talking to those who have important information; for example, parents who have taken their children camping in wilderness areas, children who have been canoeing, or animals who live in natural areas. The small groups could use their bodies to depict photographs of their experiences; the whole group interprets the photographs. They write accompanying guidelines for wilderness camping.

_Jim and the Beanstalk._ In pairs, one student as a social worker interviews a giant neighbor for his/her views on older giants. Pairs share their findings by making documents, for example, a map of the giant castle, giant food stamps, or a giant bill.

_Nettie’s Trip South._ In pairs, one student as an abolitionist secret contact, for example, enslaved people and people in Underground Railroad safe houses to discover the dangers they face. Groups then create 10-second scenes of danger that at first are observed. The observers as abolitionists plan precisely what they will say or do if the choose to interact with the people.

**Classifying Information and Interpretations**

You can help students classify whatever information and interpretations they share. Classification helps students to analyze and further interpret their understandings.

_Little Red Riding Hood._ As park rangers, they write key words on the chalkboard to summarize the attitudes of the people they interview. They look for similarities.

_Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe._ Small groups draw possible ways of dealing with bears. The drawings are placed in three categories: Those that would/might/would not hurt the bear.

_Jim and the Beanstalk._ The social workers draw or write down what the giant may be doing when they arrive at the door; these are classified according to whether the giant will/might/will not want to be disturbed.
Nettie’s Trip South. Abolitionists physically place the people who they found were taking risks along a continuum between what they thought were the most difficult and least difficult contexts.

Other Ways To Shape and Share New Understandings

Many students will orally share their ideas as they interact in drama. However, the arts provide us with many ways to shape and share our developing understandings.

Little Red Riding Hood. Make animal tracks out of Play-doh. Draw food webs that show how forest animals and plants are interconnected.

Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe. Make a tape recording of wilderness sounds. Write and draw warning signs to be placed at the entrance to parks.

Jim and the Beanstalk. Make giant-sized drawings of objects in the giant’s house. Label these for potential danger spots for older giants.

Nettie’s Trip South. Using their bodies, students can sculpt a contemporary statue entitled Slavery. They speak and then write the thoughts of several figures.

Exploring Questions

One of the questions that was implicitly explored in The True Story... was “How can we know the truth?” In order to avoid simplistic or merely factual interpretations of stories, it was critical that the drama explored a complex social question. The drama discussed in this chapter was sustained for so long because the question was not easily answered. This would not have been the case if we had simply asked, “Is he guilty?” Instead, we wondered about whether we could believe the wolf, and thus pondered on the nature of truth and how it is affected by perspective.

Little Red Riding Hood. Rather than ask, “What did the wolf do?” explore a question like “Can wolves co-exist with humans?”

Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe. Rather than ask, “Where could we go on a canoe trip?” explore a question like “How can naturalists lead safe canoe trips with children?”

Jim and the Beanstalk. Rather than ask, “What can old giants not do?” explore a question like “How can social workers help old giants live their lives in a dignified way?”

Nettie’s Trip South. Rather than ask, “What was life like as an enslaved person?” explore a question like “What were people prepared to risk in their opposition to a society that promoted inhumane relationships?”

Resource Books

Readers who are interested in experimenting with the use of drama in their classrooms will find useful texts published by Heinemann in their series on drama education. In particular, the following are recommended:

REFERENCES


CHILDREN’S TEXTS