

Doctoral Thesis

A Study on Picturebooks for Community Education

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Dedication

To my family.

Abstract

Picturebooks are a combination of verbal and visual narratives in a book format, aimed mainly at children. To determine how thematically selected picturebooks can help instill a stronger sense of belonging in young learners, especially in curriculums that lack lessons covering local living environments, a group of elementary students (1st - 4th grade) and a group of college students (1st and 2nd year) read five picturebooks featuring the theme of local living environment — *A Bus Called Heaven*, *Belonging*, *Tar Beach*, *The Streets Are Free* and *This Is Paris*. Qualitative methods based on reader response theories, as well as ecological and environmental system theories were employed in this study. This study included oral and written responses of students, teacher and student interviews, class observations, interviews with university professors, textbook publishers and other experts on education, student reading questionnaires in a table form (matrix), and responses in illustration form by elementary students. Responses were coded through the assignment of conceptual labels to respondents' statements and then grouping these conceptual labels into a manageable number of categories based both on reader response theories and environmental system theories in the proposed matrix. Results indicated that although the majority of respondents were familiar with the conventions of this literature genre and enjoyed reading the five books, this “sub-genre” of local living environment-themed picturebooks was new to them and showed them a novice way of seeing the importance of an individual's role in their local community. The matrix itself proved to be the central finding in this study, helping shed light on how and why local living environment picturebooks instill sense of belonging in readers. This new intermediary education tool is not only the unique finding in this study but also has the potential for further and deeper

understanding of the successful practice of picturebooks use for the specific purpose stated above. Also, through further (re-)readings of this multimodal genre readers acquire new knowledge, vital in the process of fostering a sense of belonging.

Evidence from this study supports the benefits of using picturebooks in the school curriculum, especially where there is lack of lessons and materials covering the area of local living environment.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The digital age has brought innovations in many aspects of life, including in that of literacy. As a result, there is a growing demand of pictorial instruction, signs and symbols. A literate person in the past was considered someone who could read and write printed text, although literacy is more complex today. According to Carter (2007) the definition of “text” nowadays is “anything in the surrounding world of the literate person” (p. 12) and “any communicative medium” (Moje, 2008). Moreover, Arizpe and Styles (2008) describe text as a different combination of print, images, sound, indication, and movement. This can be thought of as broadly as Chinese scrolls and Egyptian murals to digital text, film, music, television, theater, comic books and, of course, picturebooks and tells us that print has lost its eminence as the center of communications and the image has begun to replace the word. An example from our daily life would be the icons on the screen of our device that “speak” to us.

A better understanding and creation of different texts demands new literary skills and this authentic literacy is obtained through multiple approaches using multiple modalities (McPherson, 2006). Various national councils and ministries of education have proposed increased attention to multimodal literacies and instruction in use of various strategies to aid in the construction of meaning from multiple sites, texts, and media. “All the modes available and used in making meaning, in representation and communication” is how Kress (2008) refers to multimodality (p. 91).

The technology available today gives us the opportunity to create and share multimodal texts more than ever before. Both readers and writers are finding new

significance in multimodal texts “where print and image do the work of meaning together, where sound and music contribute to the perspective readers are asked to take, where bodily performance works in tandem with the written word, where print itself is animated and choreographed” (Bomer 2008, p. 354). We can see that today we are exposed to literacy that has become increasingly multimodal.

The example of a multimodal text that is studied here is the picturebook. The compound word “picturebook” is used here (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006; Salisbury & Styles, 2012; Sipe, 2015), since it identifies the fusion of art and words, the result of which exceeds what each form can accomplish separately. Although picturebooks have been mostly used as an educational tool, their potential has been largely underestimated. Multicultural contemporary picturebooks handling the theme of local living environments for example, can instill a stronger sense of identity and belonging during the fast development observed in young learners.

Below, I begin with describing picturebooks in greater detail, explain the background and purpose of this study, and provide a list of the research questions.

Picturebooks

The true origins of the picturebook are debatable but this literary form is in fact comparatively new. It was not until late in the twentieth century when the picturebook became an object of academic study (Lewis 2001, Salisbury & Styles, 2012). In the type of picturebooks introduced and studied here the role of the image in the narrative, as Randolph Caldecott set to advance not more than 130 years ago, is not secondary but rather conveys the meaning of the story. To tell a story, the picturebook today uses sequential imagery alongside limited text.

Picturebooks combine visual and verbal narratives in a book form, mostly aimed at children. A variety of media is used in picturebook images — water colors,

pencil, acrylics, oil paints, etc. Heinrich Hoffmann's "Struwwelpeter" (1845) and Beatrix Potter's "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" (1902) are two early examples of the modern picturebook format. Picturebooks usually are written with children as their audience in mind, thus having easily accessible vocabulary level to help them develop their reading skills. Picturebooks have two functions: they are first read to young children by adults, to be read later by children themselves once they begin learning to read.



Fig. 1 Heinrich Hoffmann, Struwwelpeter, Routledge (1845)

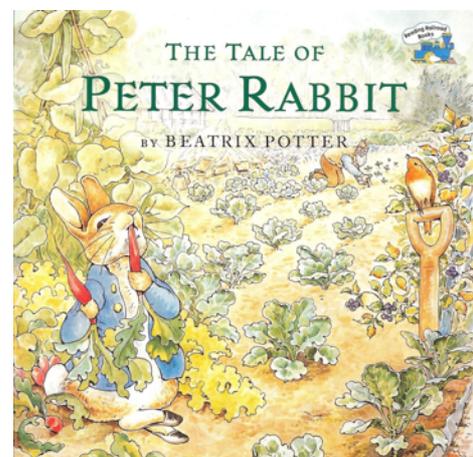


Fig. 2 Beatrix Potter, The Tale of Peter Rabbit, Frederick Warne & Co., London (1902)

The present time picturebook as a form is something that is evolving constantly, as picturebook creators constantly redefine and bend its use and contents. Additionally, a clear line must be drawn between books that feature illustrations (usually added later to enhance text) and picturebooks. "In contrast to the illustrated book, where pictures enhance, decorate and amplify, in the picturebook the visual text will often carry much of the narrative responsibility. In most cases, the meaning emerges through the interplay of word and image, neither of which would make sense when experienced independently of the other" (Salisbury

& Styles, 2012, p. 7). The power of picturebooks lies in the instantaneous surprise, the uniqueness of the story, the poetic expression of words, the aesthetic power of pictures and the amusement and relaxation from the humor found in this genre (Endoh, 2015). Nikolajeva and Scott, in their seminal work *How Picturebooks Work* (2006), stated that picturebooks are considered “educational vehicles, [that] includ[e] aspects such as socialization” (p. 2), that “picturebooks are examined in connection with developmental psychology” and that they belong to a genre “containing pedagogical applications” (p. 3). Picturebooks are regarded as a literature and culture genre that prepares young learners for other communication media.

One thing to note here is what David Lewis puts forward in his seminal work, *Reading Contemporary Picturebooks: Picturing Text* (2001) when speaking about the picturebook as a process and specifically about genre incorporation. He says that the picturebook is

“...not a genre, despite the fact that it is frequently referred to as such. Rather than confining itself to exploring the byways of any one particular type of text, verbal or pictorial, it *exploits* genres. Nor the picturebook is a format, a template that can be dropped over any suitable material, providing it with new clothes in the form of illustrations. If this were the case then all picturebooks would more or less the same way. What we find in the picturebook is a form that incorporates, or ingests, genres, forms of language and forms of illustration, then accommodates itself to what it has swallowed, taking on something of the character of the ingested matter, but always inflected through the interanimation of the words and pictures. The immediate result of this ability to ingest and incorporate pre-existent genres is that already existing forms are

represented — that is, re-represented — and in the process re-made” (p. 65).

This is to say that picturebook creators use a variety of writing and illustrative styles, manners and modes, applying techniques both from ancient and modern traditions and methods, none of which are deemed unsuitable or unfit for use.

Picturebooks are often placed in the Children’s Literature category and are thought of as a mean, a stepping stone, for young learners to develop the necessary literacy skills needed to understand “regular books.” Thus, while picturebooks are an essential step toward literacy, they are not seen as worthy to return to once readers have passed this developmental stage; that they are of little literary quality. It is erroneous to think that picturebooks are only for children and Endoh (2015) goes at length to provide evidence. He says that “the busy and exhausted adult of today can be revived through the ‘*power of picturebooks*’ to find their own content way of existence in their local living environment. Why would the free flow of ideas help the modern adult think more about an improved local living environment? Well, it is an adult’s duty to love and to work. What gently embraces these two is what the place we live in. To love better and to work better, inevitably the place we live in comes into play” (Endoh 2015, p. 9). Certainly, as picturebooks’ audience and influence increasingly broaden, this hybrid type of literature is receiving new understanding and attention.

While picturebooks designate both a genre and a format, they can also be described as a medium combining written text and visual art. A wide array of studies looks at length at the visual part of picturebooks only — the art — while ignoring the text and the fact that picturebooks have educational value only through the unique

combination of written text and visual images. In fact, some of the best books in this genre are both written and illustrated either by the same person, or in a close collaboration (ex. a long professional relationship between a husband and wife, etc.). Lewis (2001) and Salisbury and Styles (2012) call this experimental body picturebook “makers,” since “a suitable term for the artist-author of the picturebook has yet to be found” (p. 7). While in this study I am mainly looking at educational theory and the practical application of picturebooks, their art and design cannot be ignored because, in a smooth interplay with text, it is where the uniqueness of this *visual literature* lies.

Although any book that combines narrative format with pictures might be categorized as a picture book, Kiefer (2010) explains that, “In the best picture books, the illustrations are as much a part of the experience with the book as the written text” (p.156). “[A picturebook is] defined by its narrative framework of sequential imagery and minimalist text to convey meaning or tell a story and [is] different from the illustrated book in which pictures play a secondary narrative part, enhancing and decorating the narrative” (Popova, 2014). In the words of semiotic terminology Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) further add that “[p]ictures in picturebooks are complex iconic signs, and words in picturebooks are complex conventional signs; however, the basic relationship between the two levels is the same” (p. 1). Thus far it was discussed that picturebooks combine visual and verbal narratives in a book form, mostly aimed at children; picturebooks usually are written with children as their audience in mind, accordingly having easily accessible vocabulary level to help them develop their reading skills; picturebooks function two-ways: they are first read to young children by adults, to be read later by children themselves once they begin learning to read.

Here is a pertinent observation about visual narration attributed to fifteen-century painter and sculptor Leonardo Da Vinci:

And you who wish to represent by words the form of man and all the aspects of his membrification, relinquish that idea. For the more minutely you describe the more you will confine the mind of the reader, and the more you will keep him from the knowledge of the thing described. And so it is necessary to draw and to describe.

Because cartoons, comics and graphic novels also make use of the interplay of words and images on a page, it will be useful to distinguish them from picturebooks. Generally, cartoons are single panel images that are not sequential and do not unfold over multiple frames as do comics (Chute, 2008; McCloud, 1993). Comic books first appeared in the 1930s as reprints of newspaper strips and as original stories about superheroes (Weiner, 2003). Graphic novels in turn have evolved from comic books. Hammond (2009) suggests that all graphic novels are comic books but not all comic books are graphic novels. Both types use a comic format — sequential art — a combination of text, images and panels that tell a story (Brenner, 2006). The main difference between comic books and graphic novels is their length. Graphic novels are longer, are issued an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and can be defined as original, book-length stories in a comic book form.

“Historically, picture book illustrations simply reinforced the text narrative. More and more modern picturebooks use illustrations to enhance the story, even to convey the plot” (Hammond, 2006, p. 3). Sabin (1993) refers to the

unique combination of images and words as “the marriage of text and image” to suggest a more complete integration. From its birth, the picturebook has always had an educational role to play. For example, in introducing children to the visual art and language, as well as in assisting foreign language and math teachers explain subject matter easier.

The big truth about picture books ... is that they are an interweaving of word and pictures. You don't have to tell the story in the words. You can come out of the words and into the pictures and you get this nice and kind of antiphonal fugue effect.

Picturebook text is a blend, “an interweaving of words and pictures” as Allan Ahlberg puts it in the quotation above. When one reads a picturebook there is a sensation of alternating two different mediums. A text (semantically and etymologically close to *textile*) in a sense is the words and text woven together, a product that is much more than just an amassment of different parts. Meek (1992, p. 176-178) on the other hand says that “pictures and words on a page *interanimate* each other.” This is a vivid suggestion of how the two modes build upon each other. Nodelman (1988, p. 195) explains the process as that “... the pictures themselves can imply narrative information only in a relationship to a verbal context; if none is actually provided, we tend to find one in our memories.” Also, “Words can make pictures into rich narrative resources — but only because they communicate so differently from pictures that they change the meaning pictures. For the same reason, also, pictures can change the narrative thrust of words” (p. 196). This brings our attention to the fact that while image and text in the picturebook influence each other, this

relationship is not reciprocal. We have to remember that throughout the picturebook the relationship between word and image is not maintained the same way but it tends to shift. While a great oversimplification, we can say that “What the words do to the pictures is not the same as what the pictures do to the words. Roughly speaking, the words in a picturebook tend to draw attention to the parts of the pictures we should attend to, whereas the pictures provide the words with a specificity — colour, shape and form — that they would otherwise lack” (Lewis 2001, p. 35). Seeing language and image building upon each other provides us with a realistic perspective.

Background of Study

What brought my attention to picturebooks was my desire to contribute to the country where I was born and raised — Bulgaria. Since I had left the motherland right after high school at the age of 18 to pursue higher education in the US, and to later settle down in Japan, there was a growing feeling in me to give back to Bulgaria. By then I was a lecturer at Toyo University’s Faculty of Regional Development Studies and the more I observed my students working to empower local communities in various parts of the world, the more I realized that I can and should focus my research on improving education in communities back home. There are two reasons why I decided to focus my research at the target age group of elementary school children (first to fourth grade in Bulgaria). First, elementary school is the primary step in compulsory, formal education and second, this is a stage when children develop rapidly and in a variety of ways. Unfortunately, lessons in the elementary school curriculum about students’ hometown, neighborhood, local community, or the street they

live and play — students' immediate surroundings — are very few and lack frequency (once or twice during the school year at most). This is where local living environment picturebooks can come into play as supplementary educational material .

Since my own background was in education (I had been teaching for about ten years then) and my PhD advisor, Dr. Toshinobu Fujii, had extensive experience in community development, I decided to look at supplementary educational materials as a community development tool, specifically “quality multicultural” picturebooks, exploring and discussing ecological, placed-based, intercultural, etc. themes (Reisberg, 2008). My advisor had a very good idea that picturebooks had been in practice used as an educational tool for young and old in town planning, architecture, community empowerment, informal education, to mention a few. The role of my study was to look at picturebooks from an academic point of view and explain why and how they actually work in community development and education. Further, I wanted to both theoretically and empirically decipher “the power of the picturebook” that researchers and practitioners frequently talk about.

From the very beginning of my study, Dr. Yasuhiro Endoh has been my external advisor. Dr. Endoh is well known in and outside Japan for his practical use of picturebooks in areas such as architecture, town planning, community empowerment and revival, etc. Among his many publications, there are books, research papers, magazine and newspaper articles on the subject. When I visited his office in Nagoya, I was astounded by his vast collection of picturebooks, thematically selected in the areas mentioned above. In his office

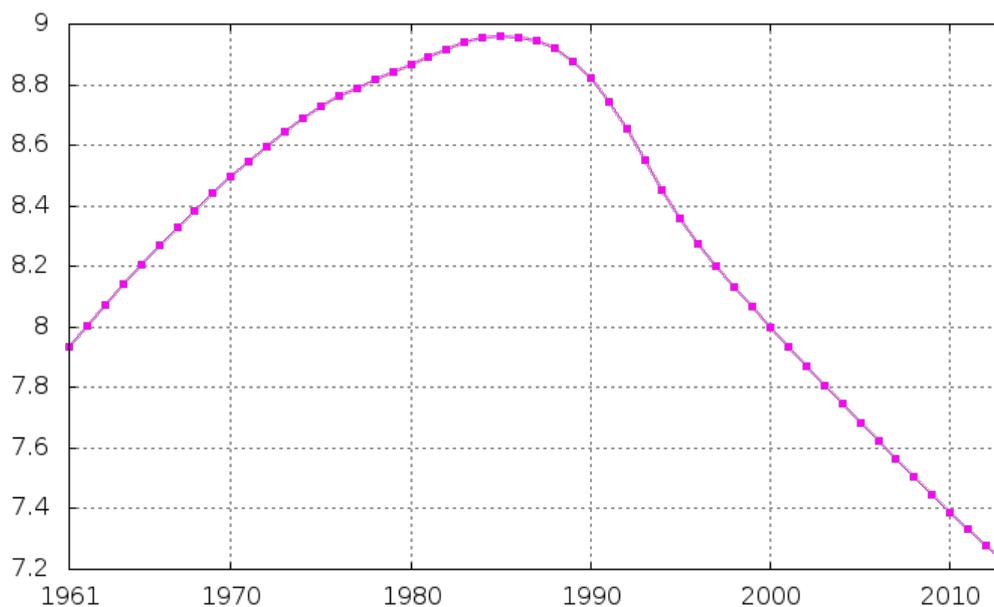


Fig. 3 Population of Bulgaria 1961 - 2010

Year	Population
2015	7,159,819
2020	6,950,436
2025	6,734,989
2030	6,519,217
2035	6,311,454
2040	6,115,526
2045	5,929,267
2050	5,748,061
2055	5,567,060
2060	5,384,040

Table 1. Future population forecast according to the National Statistics Institute, Bulgaria

he had over 2,000 carefully selected titles in different sizes and formats, collected in a period of time of over 20 years. It is an understatement to say that his experience and advice were useful, inspiring and motivating throughout.

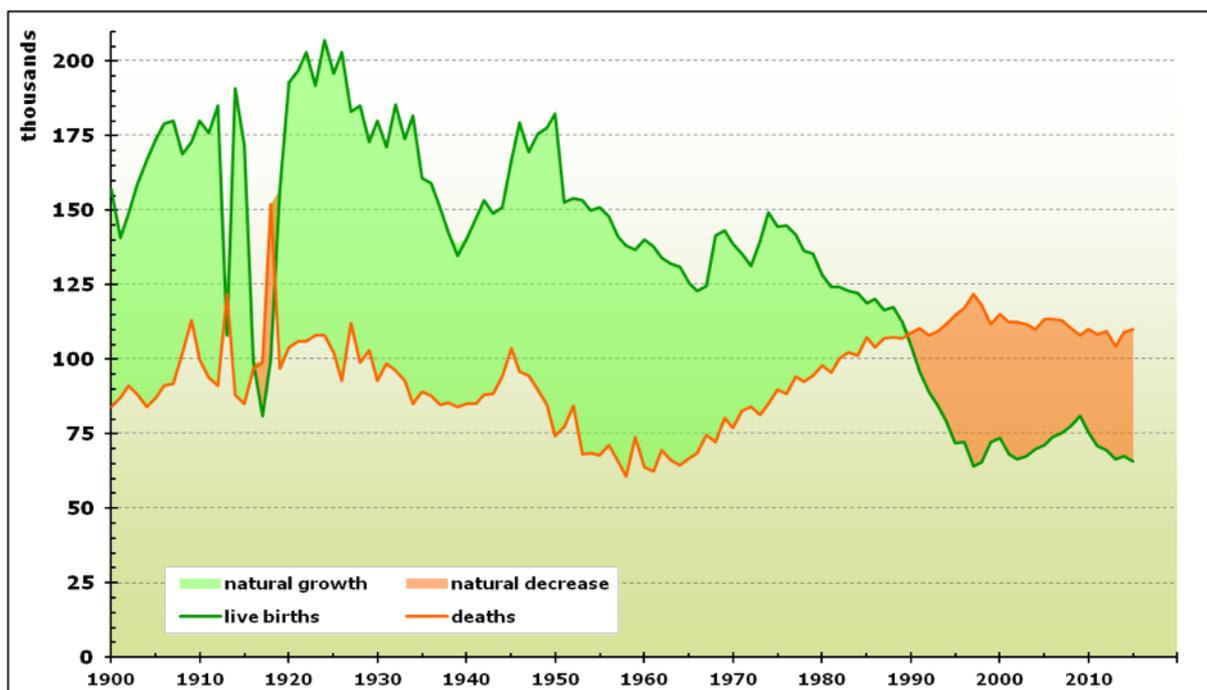


Fig. 4 Vital Statistics of Bulgaria's Population

To return to the topic of Bulgaria, the country has gone through a long period of changes. In 1991, after about 45 years in power, the Communist regime fell and gave way to democracy. The economy was in shock, while at the same time travel outside of the country became much easier. This led to the departure of many young and able people in pursuit of better lives abroad and, unfortunately, the so-called “muscle-drain” and “brain-drain” are still visible today. The State Agency of Bulgarians Abroad estimates that between two and

four million Bulgarians are living outside their country. Right before the changes in 1991, population was at its peak in the country's modern history at about nine million people. Currently (2016), it is at around seven million with forecast to decrease to around five million by 2050 and to around three million by 2100 (Figures 3 and 4; Table 1; Appendix 18). While we can argue that these are natural changes taking their course, I personally felt a need to do something to at least slow down these negative processes, starting at a community level; one place at a time.

To possess a strong sense of belonging to a certain community, town or area it is important to have pride in your roots; where you come from. We have all heard how Italians, Germans, Austrians and the British, for example, speak of themselves — as belonging or coming from a specific geographical area in their country, which is “the best in the world” to them. In Italy for example, people talk about how their area of residence is the best one in all of the country. A list of reasons and facts would follow their statement. Perhaps the fact that what we now think of Italy used to be fragmented into smaller kingdoms in this case has been fostering such a strong sense of belonging in Italians for decades. In Vienna, Austria, there is a subject in elementary school called “Vienna.” In it students learn about the history of buildings and parts of the city, historical figures and events, which makes them become particularly good guides of their city. The lack of such sense of belonging, on the other hand, shows a lack of understanding of one's locality and its history, historical figures, geographical peculiarities and many more. This in turn, shows lack of frequency and educational materials about the specific locality within the formal school curriculum. That is exactly where thematically selected quality

picturebooks come into play in the classroom as supplementary educational materials. While lessons on students' local living environment lack frequency (once or twice during the school year in elementary school), lessons in textbook are generic (the same lesson for schools around the country), and materials scarce (motivated teachers find ways to involve students into making such), thematically selected picturebooks embodying elements such as people, neighborhood, community, town/city, and environment can cover the gap and be the necessary educational tool to foster in young learners a sense of belonging to their hometown.

“We live in a fragmented and disconnected global culture, alienating us from each other and our environment” (Reisberg, 2008, p.251; also Bowers, 2005; McLaren & Houston, 2004a, 2004b; Orr, 1992). The Western education model unfortunately supports this fragmentation with its division of subject matter and students as not connected to each other and to their environments (Dewey, 1980, 1921; Gruenewald, 2006; Reisberg, Brander & Greenwald, 2006; Reisberg, 2008). However, picturebooks introducing and discussing local living environments can be a powerful instrument to encourage attention toward social and ecological caring; to stimulate young learners to learn more about their roots and their local community; and to stimulate readers to think of ways to better contribute towards their community's prosperity. Thematically selected quality picturebooks help do all that and in a pleasurable way.

Problems with Current Curriculum in Elementary School

Textbooks used in the school subject “Hometown Studies” tend to lack lesson material on students' local living environment — the city/town, neighborhood,

community, and nature where students spend their daily lives and the people whom they spend their every day with tend to rarely, if at all, be represented. In recent years the subject “Hometown Studies” has been renamed as follows: first grade — “Hometown Studies,” second grade — “The World Around Us,” in third grade and fourth grade (duration of elementary school in Bulgaria is four years) the subject is split in two — “Humans and Society” and “Humans and the Environment.”

In the textbook “Hometown Studies” in first grade we observe one lesson called “Family” (Appendix 7), another one about “School” (Appendix 8), and a third one about “Place of Birth” (Appendix 9). There is also a lesson titled “My Street,” although it seems to teach basic safety rules and regulations more than fostering a sense of belonging to a place of birth. On one hand, the lessons are all generic and not locality-specific leaving it up to the teacher to find a way and teach the lesson in relation to students’ local living environment. On the other, it is a positive fact that they are part of Ministry of Education-approved textbook.

In the textbook “The World Around Us” in second grade there is a lesson named “My Home Town” (Appendix 11) which, while generic, encourages both teacher and students, and allows room for creativity, to focus on students’ own home town and compare it to the cities presented in the lesson. The following lesson is called “My Place of Residence” (Appendix 12) and builds on the lesson prior to it. There are also three consecutive lessons on family and two about “My School.” The rest of the lessons in the textbook do not seem to cover anything that is specific to where students actually live. Also, the textbook itself is split in two — the first half being “The World in Which We Live” and the second called “The Environment and Humans.”

In third grade, it seems that there is only one lesson (Appendix 13) about students' hometown. It is actually titled "Hometown" and appears on only one page toward the end of textbook. The limited space allows for a few pictures and some text, none of which are locality specific. Students are left here to their imagination and creativity to somehow link this lesson to their own place of residence. This would have not been a bad idea if the school curriculum had allotted more than just one lesson about students' hometown.

In fourth grade, both of the textbooks "Humans and Society" and "Humans and the Environment" cover lessons such as Bulgaria as a country in the world and as part of Europe and the European Union. Other lessons are covering religious, cultural, and historical issues. While this is all vital knowledge for students, the lack of any lessons in the two textbooks throughout the "Hometown Studies" about students' home town and their immediate world seem troubling.

Although textbook content seem to progress as students advance through the four grades in elementary school and to build on previously learned knowledge, one thing that is common in all the three textbooks choices approved by the Ministry of Education in all four grades is the lack of lessons covering the student world or their local living environment.

Purpose of the Study

Although picturebooks have been popular for many years now, the purpose of this study was to determine whether living environment-themed picturebooks can instill in readers a stronger sense of belonging. Unlike many studies that focus on the practical side of picturebook usage, the main focus of this study is to explain in a more empirical way how this literature impacts learners. This was done by analyzing readers' responses after readings of a selection of five award-winning picturebooks that embody various local living environment elements. The study also determined whether readers recognize serious issues, such as community issues (the way people behave when facing difficulties; how the community gets stronger when united; in what way nature and the lack thereof is represented in an urban environment; whether people feel happiness and live in harmony with one another in neighborhoods, communities and cities; etc.) when presented in a picturebook format — usually thought to be entertaining, light-weight literature for children.

Research Questions

- How do readers respond to living environment picturebooks?
- How do readers make meaning in a picturebook?
- Do readers recognize serious issues when presented in a picturebook format?
- How do picturebooks nurture a sense of belonging in readers?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As a multidisciplinary, international study area, research of picturebooks draws from different fields, such as education, history, cultural studies, literary theory and more. The framework of this study was provided mainly by reader response theories, specifically Louise Rosenblatt's theory of transactional analysis, 1978 and local living environment concepts, particularly Takamasa Yoshizaka's concept of local living environment, 1973, that is similar to, although less complex than Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems' theory, 1979. The literature review that follows presents the history of picturebooks as a literature genre and how they apply to education and continues by looking at the above-mentioned theories. It also presents recent studies on picturebooks use in the classroom and examines claims for their educational benefits.

The History of Picturebooks

The oldest picturebook in existence is thought to be an ancient papyrus roll (around 1980 BC). Its finding has suggested that such books must have been in use longer. It can be hypothesized that combinations of pictures and words could have been engraved on to biodegradable materials — early forms of paper, wood, leaves, or leather. Asian cultures use Chinese characters, which in turn were based on ancient Chinese ideograms. Bland (1951) says that the ideogram is a picture of the thing it represents, is one of the first forms of illustration, and it is difficult to think of a closer relationship between text and illustration than such a combination as that.

It is generally agreed that both paper and printing find their beginnings in ancient China. The invention of the movable type by Gutenberg in the 1430s in

Europe was what opened the way for feasible mass publishing and therefore made education in the West accessible not only to the elite few who had access to hand-crafted literature, but to the common people. The method developed by Gutenberg was not seriously challenged for about 400 years.

In the early days, the printed and the illustrated books were printed from woodcuts. However, woodcuts had their limitations — one was the fact that they were cut from the plank side of the wood, which makes them prone to splitting; and two, images produced this way showed the outline of an object, just like in children's coloring books. Later, engraving on metal was what was used because of the better precision and sophistication compared to woodcuts. Unfortunately, the printing press for images differed than the letterpress and for a book to be produced (engraving placed next to a text) each page had to be run through two different printing presses, which in turn increased cost.

Comenius' *Orbis Sensalium Pictus* (1658), the first illustrated book designed for children to read, was met with a great interest, which also led to its longevity. Nevertheless, its example was not broadly reproduced and picturebooks of children did not become commonplace until the late 1900s. Thomas Bewick was the person who generally developed the book illustration. His achievement was in bringing wood engraving to a completely new level. His skillful hand, together with a deep interest in the natural world helped bring this process above and beyond the simple reproduction style. We have to note though, that *engraving* here is more like a relief process like the woodcut and different than incising or engraving upon metal.

George Baxter and Charles Knight, independently from one another, invented a process for printing color from woodblocks in the 1830s. Until then, color was

usually added by hand. The principle of lithography (the basis of all modern printing) was invented by Alois Senefelder in 1796 but it took a while until the process went into a commercial use.

Edward Ardizzone's books hold a special place in the evolution of picturebooks. His books were in full color throughout (only on one side of the paper) and were produced by offset photolithography. Ardizzone drew the black ink line on an intermediate transparent plate, called a 'blanket' while the watercolor washes were painted on a different sheet of paper. The blanket is used to print the final image onto paper. This delicate process was how a solid printed black line matching the original could be achieved. Offsetting contributed to the production of a high print quality, and images produced in almost any medium could be transferred to almost any type of paper, metal, plastic, etc.

In the world of picturebook production it does not come as a surprise that offset photography has become the presiding method, since it reproduces very closely the genuine concept of the picturebook creator and can be used in almost any desired medium.

"Fast, efficient, sensitive and flexible, the rotary offset litho press has transformed the production of the picturebook. Pictures and words can now be combined in more or less any way that a book's designer might wish and that in turn raises all sorts of possibilities of the reader" (Lewis 2001, p. 144)

On the other hand, the presence of the eBook format and the increasingly global society we live in can only mean that the picturebook will keep breaking the established norm and surprising its readers.

The picturebook in our century has also turned into a sanctuary for many smaller countries and cultures who are gradually recognizing the importance of preserving their own language, customs and traditions. While famous authors are being published internationally, many outstanding works exist on a regional level. It is not unusual for smaller nations to subsidize the production of local, indigenous picturebooks which can nurture in local readers a sense of identity and belonging.

Picturebooks in Education

Through its history, the picturebook has proven its place as a practical educational tool useful in and outside of the classroom. Young learners develop personally, socially, culturally and intellectually through the use of picturebooks (Jalongo et al. 2002, Jalongo, 2004; Karlin 1994, Nilolajeva & Scott 2006). Since picturebooks are based on the combination of two levels of communication, the verbal and the visual (Nicolajeva & Scott 2006), and thus are easily understood by readers, they are often used as a tool for literacy and aesthetics development in formal and non-formal settings (Jalongo 2004, Kiefer 1988).

Picturebooks are often first read by a parent or a teacher, and in a group with other young learners later. This helps with retaining new language, as well as understanding the specific sequential nature (story) of the picturebook read (Moffit 2003). Maintaining a carefully selected assortment of local living environment-themed picturebooks from around the world in the classroom makes it easily

accessible for the teacher to use during lessons, as the need arises; and for the students to use during their spare time at school. When reading a variety of children's literature, students are triggered to think more deeply about their own surroundings and compare them to those in multicultural books.

Picturebooks can play an important role in the developmental stages of readers—the process of socializing—by providing them with a variety of characters in different settings, thus teaching them about how to share their opinions and agree and disagree with others. This is an essential stage for learners who are developing relationships, first with teachers and classmates, and later with members outside of their immediate community. Research suggests that “books capacitate the newly socialized child to explore interpersonal relationships and human reasoning” (Jalongo et al. 2002, Kiefer 1988, Sulzby 1985).

Young learners are often familiar with opinions communicated in their own household at this developmental stage, while at the same time this is when they begin encountering ideas, different from their own or their household's. This is when they gain interpersonal relationship skills and learn about different types of reasoning. Gilpatrick (1969) lent support to the claim that picturebooks convey self-acceptance, and that they teach strategies for contending with difficulties for learners who are learning to cope with strong emotions. Accepting oneself, overcoming struggles in life and handling highly-emotional situations successfully are necessary skills in life (Gilpatrick 1969, Moffit 2003). Picturebooks play an important role in developing such skills in young readers.

Moffit (2003) discusses how picturebooks help develop intellectual growth by supplying information and presenting questions about learners' surroundings. Since

the world known to young readers is limited, a variety of quality multicultural picturebooks about local living environments can be an important source of information about different places and cultures around the world. Thus, in picturebooks about local living environments questions about people and places from near and afar arise, which in turn provides a good opportunity for learners to further develop intellectually.

Discussion thus far indicates that picturebooks can play an instrumental part in learners' development of cultural identity and multicultural perception and also that they play a significant part in readers' development of character and awareness of their role in society (Fraser 1981, Gilpatrick 1969, Jalongo 2004, Pierce et al. 1994). Local living environment-themed picturebooks can be a useful educational tool, with application in formal and non-formal education settings to help develop learners' identity in their own culture. This literature can enhance textbook material and be used during lessons to make readers become better acquainted with their own culture, while also allowing them to become familiar with various cultures of the world, thus helping bring about curiosity and creativity. To better understand their own surroundings, students can compare them with those of their peers in other countries, regions and places.

When defining the concept of sense of community McMillan and Chavis (1986) explain that it is based on "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 9). Sense of belonging instilled in learners would later in life encourage stronger community

involvement and desire to contribute to one's local community. Multicultural picturebooks about local living environments can be that necessary beginning.

Reader Response Theories

Reader response theories focus on the reader and his/her experience of a literary work by examining the extent and diversity of reader reaction and analyzing the ways in which different readers make meaning of personal reactions, which may be inherited or culturally (and historically) conditioned ways of reading. They entail a negotiation between the text's inferred meaning and an individual's interpretation by the reader through the lens of their personal emotions and understanding of the world; in the transaction between the reader and the text, the reader constructs meaning (Rosenblatt, 1978).

To understand how multicultural picturebooks about local living environments nurture a stronger sense of belonging, it is necessary to keep instructions to a minimum before picturebook readings and ensure freedom and creativity when students fill out the blank tables (matrices) used in the study (Rosenblatt 1938). The reader response theory is grounded in the autonomy in reader reaction to a given literary work. According to Beach (1993), there are five theoretical perspectives that do not exclude one another: textual, psychological, social, cultural, and experiential. Two of the five were used in this study: experiential and textual.

Experiential Theories

Theorists such as a Louise Rosenblatt focused their attention to the nature of readers' engagement or experience with text. Rosenblatt formulated her theory in the 1920s - 30s, which many today consider to have been ahead of its time. It defined reading as a dynamic transaction between reader and text; a two-way process. She

put forward that in order for the reading process to happen several components must be involved — what she calls “transaction.” “... [A] text, once it leaves its author’s hands, is simply paper and ink until a reader evokes from it a literary work — sometimes, even, a literary work of art” (p. ix). To paraphrase, only when a reader, within a given time and space or context, has a relationship with a text, the text begins to have a meaning.

There are also more recent theorists who further shed light on reader response theories, such as Beach (1993, p. 52) who identified the following five categories to classify responses for analysis purposes: engaging — becoming emotionally involved, empathizing or identifying with the text; constructing — entering into and creating alternative worlds, conceptualizing characters, events, settings; imaging — creating visual images; connecting — relating one’s autobiographical experience to the current text; evaluating/reflecting — judging the quality of one’s experience with a text. Other researchers also created their own response classifications based on the collected data, allowing categories to materialize from the data itself. This is based on Squire’s (1964) reader response study, which focused on the reader. He examined oral responses of young adults to several short stories in order to see how reader responses developed during the reading process. He recognized the following seven response categories: literary judgement, interpretational response, narrational reaction, associational responses, prescriptive judgements, self-involvement, and miscellaneous. It must be kept in mind though that the types of categories presented above emerged in studies about literary works that were not necessary in multimodal format.

Research so far shows that text response follows similar patterns. At the same time, Siegel (2006) suggested that when response is categorized in given media, researchers should include a media-specific analysis using the constructs distinct to the media and not to that of literary text. It can be said that reader response to picturebooks might require additional response categories.

Responses to Multimodal Texts

While the above response categories are with a reference to language texts, recent studies are considering response of readers to multimodal texts. Of course, the reader here relies on a blend of modes (images and text) to be able to make meaning. Sipe (2008) studied elementary school students' responses to picturebook readings to find out that students made meaning through words and illustrations and that a significant amount (23%) of the responses were analysis of books' images. Categories that emerged in his study included: analysis of illustrations (analysis), stories related to other stories and media (intertextual), connections to students' own lives (personal), merging of real world and story world (transparent), and 5. usage of book as a springboard for creative play (performative). This is to show that the emergence of literature in multimodal format — not only picturebooks but also comic books and graphic novels — creates the need to look at reader response theories from a different angle, thus devising the necessary additional categories. s

Other early studies (Kiefer 1993, 1995) focused on elementary school students' verbal responses to picturebooks and detected developmental differences in how students responded. Students seemed familiar with visual elements such as line, color, and shape, while at the same time lacked the correct vocabulary to express it. It seemed they noticed details first and used critical thinking in their

responses later. The response categories that emerged in Kiefer's research are as follows: informative (content of illustrations, storyline, text to life observations, comparisons to other literature), heuristic (problems solving, inferences, hypothetical language), imaginative (entering into life of book and using figurative language), and personal (expressing feelings and opinions, relating to characters, and evaluating illustrations).

The studies above list different labels to response categories. Also, responses differed developmentally in young readers' answers. At the same time, there are some common points in the responses with the exception of perhaps reactions to illustrations. There is a need of closer analysis and classification of responses of multimodal books, since responses to images often go unnoticed because teachers tend to focus on the verbal aspects of texts. As mentioned earlier, analysis categories usually are let to arise from the data itself. Based on the similarity of categories, a metalanguage for looking at multimodal texts can be developed, (although that is not the focus of this study).

Response to the visual elements requires ... not only a different language but also a different approach to the printed word given the complex relationship between these two aspects. Perhaps we now need a different term that incorporates viewing, reading, and responding to other multimodal aspects of the new texts for children (p. 370).

When reading text-only or multimodal texts such as picturebooks, many factors influence the reader's interpretation of text in the reading process, with the reader individualizing the response. As will be discussed later in this study, age and gender, ethnic and socioeconomic background, and cultural environment are some

of the factors that that can influence readers' responses (Galda & Beach, 2001). "As members of a particular culture and of a particular subculture or social group, we have absorbed concepts governing the nature of the literary arts, the satisfaction to be sought, the conventions to be observed, the qualities to be admired (Rosenblatt 1994, p. 152). Since the reader plays such a vital role in experiencing a literary work, a detailed look at the audience of picturebooks is due.

Picturebooks Audience

Picturebooks clearly have a dual audience — that of a young reader, together with a sophisticated adult. That is why picturebooks have to communicate to both types of readers on many levels. There are many great examples of books that appeal to an audience beginning with nonreaders all the way to the literate adult. Parents and teachers are frequently immersed in the conventions of the picturebook and are thus experienced in decrypting text in the more traditional way, following how events should unfold and usually scanning from left to right. There are many good examples of picturebooks that are better suited to the young reader's eye. Such books can consist of various smaller scenes and pictorial events that tend to diverge from the traditional course. Picturebooks designed this way appeal to their varied audience by not requiring much expertise in picture decoding or rich understanding of the world. Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott in their seminal work *How Picturebooks Work* (2006) say that "Clearly the best audience is a team of adult and child together, each offering special strengths (p. 21)." Authors acknowledge "a variety of levels of reading ability, sophistication, experiences of life, and the sense of humor characteristic of these levels, so that no one is excluded from feeling a part of the audience" (p. 22). Picturebooks are first read to children by adults and, later, are

encountered again, and read and re-read by children themselves, as they develop literary skills.

While the text can be rather simple, in contrast, the narrative elements presented visually can be rather complex. The humor in many picturebooks, for example, often depends on the oddities that images and text present. This, seemingly, lack of harmony that is the counterpoint between text and image can indeed be an important communication point. The reader is thus actively involved in the unfolding of the story due to this more exquisite and advanced narrative perspective. Such counterpoints can be, for example, juxtapositions of outdoor and indoor scenes, distanced perspectives followed by close-ups, and others. This way authors can break picturebook conventions in the way they represent space and perspective, to engage both the adult and the child reading the book together. This can be accomplished by the synergy of objective and subjective elements involved in text and image, and by the contrast between humor in the pictures and a more serious subject found in the text. The ultimate goal of picturebooks is to support imaginative perspectives and to actively engage audience — this is accomplished by breaking away from the orthodox and although picture and text may seem counterpointing, they work in cooperation toward this common goal.

What is seen as appropriate for young readers, as far as picturebook content goes, has been constantly changing. Variations are great from one country or region to another. On the picturebook market what we see more and more is that authors and artists are creating crossover books with which different audiences can relate. Picturebooks can be seen as a communication medium for all ages. Martin Salisbury

and Morag Styles' *Children's Picturebooks* (2012) write about a picturebook festival in South Korea that states in its publicity material:

Picture books, in the present era, enjoy a status as a culture form to be enjoyed by people of all ages. It is a precious and versatile art that has already left the confines of paper behind, shattering the boundaries of its own genre and fusing with various other forms of art and imagery (p. 113).

What is “suitable” for children is to be decided by adults. Taking a look back in the history of picturebooks, one will see that cautionary children's stories (especially in fairy tales) in the beginning were quite dark and fierce. Subjects we consider difficult, such as abuse, racism and even death, have been covered in many a picturebook but our society (in the West in particular) has been going in a direction towards protecting young children from things we consider dangerous and unpleasant, both in life and literature, and even further in all aspects of life. Pages of the picturebook have covered topics such as death and dying, sex and relationships, domestic violence, war, etc., and it can be said that the topic of childhood has been somewhat sentimentalized in some areas of multimodal children's literature. Although, in some areas and cultures of the world — parts of mainland Europe (France, Germany), and particularly the Scandinavian countries, South Korea, Japan and others — we see that some of the topics mentioned above are indeed being discussed in picturebooks today. In other countries (e.g. the UK) it seems that more difficult subjects are allowed only sometimes and mainly in the works of prominent authors. In other English-speaking countries (the US, Canada, Australia) generalization is difficult to be made— we sometimes see some touchy and probing

picturebooks appear, while at other times the conservative force of the West is strongly felt (Salisbury & Styles 2012).

It is said that picturebooks play a role in “documenting” social, political and other changes of their time. How people in different countries and regions see and feel about childhood is what is significant here. Books oriented towards young readers can easily be affected by how a given culture, at a given time, sees childhood. Of course, practices and customs of a given society vary greatly. When we speak of children’s literature, this can greatly affect to what extent it is suitable to cover more disturbing subjects on picturebook pages. As far as picturebook images go, they can be influenced by a given country or region’s traditions in the illustration arts.

Currently, there is no conclusive research as of what visual texts best communicates to children. Something that this study suggests is that:

... children of the traditional picturebook age tend not to have the language skills to express in words what they are perceiving from an image. They can be suggestible and prone to saying what they imagine adults want to hear. So, even with the best designed research projects, the world of that children are experiencing will inevitably remain something of a mystery to us. As adults we make decisions on their behalf, even though we may struggle to retain the magical ability to read pictures that appear to come so naturally to the young (Salisbury & Styles 2012, p. 113).

Textual Theories

Textual reader response theories are based on a reader's prior knowledge of text and literary conventions, which in turn is obtained by reading and studying literature. In contrast, the New Critical theories earlier maintained that meaning in literature is situated in a static text to be unsheathed by the reader (see Eliot 1919 and Ransom 1941). Wolfgang Iser's (1978) notion of gap-filling and Jonatan Culler's (1980) notion of text or genre conventions can give an explanation how, although the text does influence readers' responses by acting on the readers, readers takes action on the text based on their own experiences of the world and knowledge of how to process text. This prompts readers to keep revising their understanding as they move on with the text.

In Iser's theory we see two types of readers — the Implied and the Actual. Generally, readers understand the text they read by building an image that is formed by the limitation of text (Hammond 2009). What the text leaves untold — the gaps — are usually filled in by readers who, based on previous experience, constantly make decisions about what to keep and what to leave out. This predisposition of how to interpret a text in an anticipated way is referred to as the Implied Reader. Again, based on readers' background and knowledge, the Actual Reader may choose not to fill in the gaps in the text or to make meaning as expected. "The Actual Reader has some more freedom in the gap-filling process and this accounts for variability in text interpretation (Hammond 2009, p. 22).

Since in picturebooks the gaps are more distinct, this genre requires a more active and engaged participation of the reader to understand the line of the story. To create meaning the audience needs to connect image and text on different pages for

a unified, smooth fusion. When reading and rereading picturebooks readers have a variety of choices. This produces a varied experience from reader to reader, based on the frequency of revisiting a book. Furthermore, Rosenblatt (1995) states that there is no such thing as a correct reading of a text. Again, previous experience and knowledge of text and text conventions affect readers' responses and are a factor towards valid interpretations.

Readers' internalized grammar of literature, or knowledge of literary conventions is another way a text can apply some force in forming readers' responses (Culler 1980). "A reader approaches a text already understanding the structure of certain genres or literary forms and how they work." "Without this knowledge of the rules, literature would not be intelligible as literature (Hammond 2009. p. 23). Culler (1980) states that readers acquire knowledge of literary conventions during the process of literary education in formal education and that they are not always aware of possessing this knowledge. Young readers often acquire some knowledge of reading conventions before they enter an educational institution formally.

From an egalitarian point of view, it is practical to teach literary conventions since not all students bring to school a similar background, knowledge and experience, and cultural resources (Kress 2003). More knowledgeable students about different text and illustration conventions could respond differently to reading than those with less knowledgeable peers (Beach 1993). The educational systems offer students ways to read and interpret literature and to develop literacy competency.

Different conventions are in use in various genres. For example, particular genres following familiar patterns give their readers a certain pleasure, which is based on recognition of the familiar (Scholes, 2001). In the case of romance readers, firm expectations exist of what represents a romance and readers of such literature tend to be disappointed and even angered when the expected conventions were not in place (Radway 1984). "As readers come more familiar with the conventions of a certain genre, they are more aware of how their experience with the genre is shaped by the text. They also develop a growing sense of their own expertise (Beach 1993, p. 31).

Another way to learn literary conventions is informally, through experience in contrast to formal literature lessons. "The unresolved development question is whether readers acquire this interpretive know-how simply through reading or through active participation in formulating participation with other in communities whose members share knowledge of these conventions (Galda & Beach 2001, p. 65). The readers' response and reading transaction are influenced by the institutionalized conventions (relying on particular cultural skills) and readers experience and expertise with the conventions (Christiansen 2000).

Semiotics Theory

Picturebook reading is a complex semiotic process. Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation. The process also involves the production of signs, communication through signs, the systematic structuring of signs into codes, these social function of signs, and the meaning of signs. Signs as a substitution of something else, keep evolving and chaining in meaning of significance.

Semiotics is also concerned with is the meaning created in texts — what texts mean and also how they mean it. A Swiss linguist by the name of Ferdinand de Saussure, in the past century, formulated a theory of semiotics to define how we make meaning through signs. He put forward that signs are comprised of a signifier and a signified. The former is an image, object, or sound impression, and the latter — a meaning (De Saussure 1989). The relationship between the two Saussure adds, is arbitrary (the “arbitrariness of the sign) and depends on a person’s beliefs and experiences (Bomer 2008). There is no reason why a given signifier should be attached to a given signified. Readers make meaning through signs based on the rules of their own culture, or a code system.

As an interdisciplinary area of study, semiotics places all modes of communication, pictures, gestures, music, as equal to language. “Semiotics is uniquely suited to understanding multimodality because it offers a way of thinking about meaning and text that does not privilege language over all other signs systems” (Siegel 2006, p. 68).

According to Kress (2008), a mode is a “culturally and socially fashioned resource for representation sand communication” (p. 45). In the creation of a semiotic product, multimodality is the use of more than one semiotic mode, the so called “semiotic ensemble.” Meaning is made depending on the mode and each mode has its own potentials and limitations. In multimodal texts such as picturebooks, when modes are arranged together the reader must observe all the present modes, as well as their interrelation. That is because a given mode carries only one part of the total meaning of the text. In picturebooks, readers have to pay attention to the interrelation between illustrations and text to create meaning.

Modes can be categorized into two types of organizational logic (Kress 2008) — time-based modes (speech, dance, music, gesture, action) and space-based modes (image, sculpture, etc.). Kress talks about the affordances of writing, which are controlled by the logic of time, compared to images, controlled by the logic of space. In writing, the reader or writer has to read or write the text in a specific order for meaning making. In images, all elements are offered side by side. Text can represent action and events, and illustrations can represent the visible world. At the same time, text can also be used to narrate illustrations, and sequenced illustrations can embody action.

In the sequential process of reading picturebooks, we observe multimodality on each page and as a whole, the picturebook is a semiotic product. Picturebooks are based on the logic of time because readers go through the pages in a specific order and also read the text in a specific order. Time in picturebooks progresses only as fast as the reader's eye moves across a page — time-boundedness. The entire page is available to the reader at the same time and the reader can go back and forth (what Yang, 2008 calls “visual permanence”) as frequently as necessary for meaning making.

According to Miller (2001), communication modes are usually codified, not possessed by the reader, and sometimes medium-specific, thus regulating formal aspects of a given medium. When a reader is not familiar with a meaning of a sign, it is not a sign — thus sign meaning has to be learned in advance. “Semiotic toolkits” (Siegel 2006) need to be developed by young readers in order to understand the multitude of texts available. Signs can be symbolic (representing certain meanings), iconic (structural resemblance to a meaning), or indexical (linked

to another image for its meaning). Picturebook conventions comprise a shorthand allowing the reader to fill in the gaps using their imagination when reading (Lewis 2001).

The Concept of Local Living Environment

Takamasa Yoshizaka's Concept

In 1973 Takamasa Yoshizaka advanced the Concept of Local Living Environment represented by four concentric circles (Figure 1) in which the central element is the child or the individual. Here, the person and his/her family are placed in the core circle 1. The following circles 2, 3 and 4 are respectively the neighborhood, community and town/city where the individual resides.

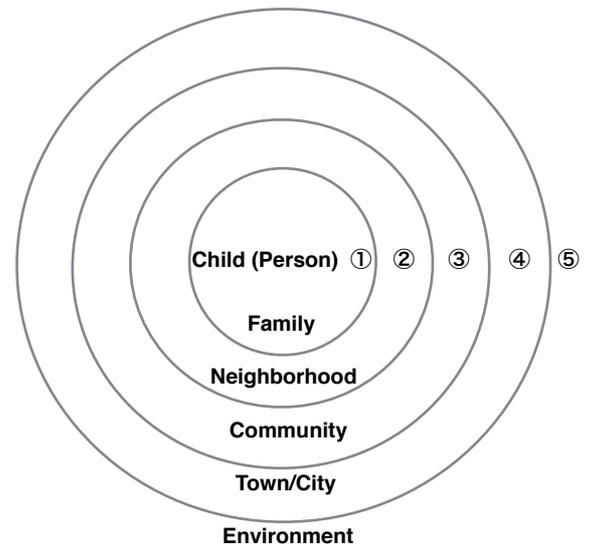


Fig. 5 Takamasa Yoshizaka's concept of local living environment

While all circles are independent, they relate to and influence one another and together construct the living environment 5 of the individual. In this study I hypothesized that *sense of belonging* (McMilan & Chavis, 1986), which local living environment-themed picturebooks embody, is based on and explained by the circles/spheres, which the above five elements constitute, and their interrelation with one another.

Yoshizaka's concept can be compared to Clarence Perry's Neighborhood Unit theory (1929), a comprehensive physical planning strategy used for designing self-contained residential neighborhoods, promoting a community centric lifestyle. In his theory Perry also places the individual as a central part of his model and puts importance on the neighborhood and community within a city. This concept considers protecting and promoting public health and the safety and welfare of

citizens (Mumford 1954). Both Perry and Yoshizaka’s concepts have been in use by city planners and community developers as they enhance the feeling of identification with the environment and foster social cohesion for community members, or as this study states—a stronger *sense of belonging*.

Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Theory

In 1979, Urie Bronfenbrenner developed the Ecological Systems Theory (Figure 2), which also identifies five environmental systems with which the individual (child) interacts. Community psychologists and other specialists use this framework to study the relationships with individuals’ contexts within their community and the wider society. Bronfenbrenner also places the child

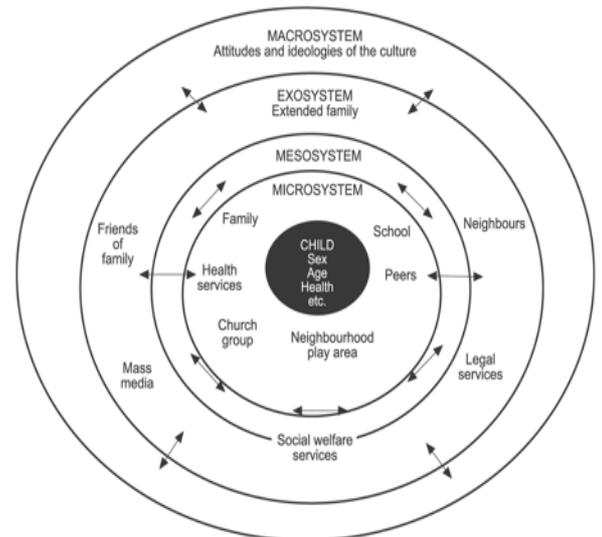


Fig. 6 Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory

in the center with the family just outside the core. The *microsystem* refers to groups that immediately and directly impact the child’s development, such as the neighborhood. The *mesosystem* includes the relations between the child and community members. The *exosystem* involves social settings in which the individual does not play an active role; it is further away from the core center (ex. town/city level). The outermost circle is the *macrosystem* and entails the larger cultural context where members share a common identity, heritage and values (environment). (This theory also includes a *chronosystem*, which relates to all the changes that happen to an individual over time.)

P. O. Wikstrom's Chart

Yet another similar idea comes from the field of political criminology. In Figure 3 we see that P. O. Wikstrom (1990) also places the child in the center, the family immediately outside, followed by the residential district, and community after that to portray the human living environment of a given

individual. Due to limitations of time and space a detailed look into this concept will not be made here. It is used in this study to show that while the three living environment concepts are grounded in different scientific fields, were developed apart from one another geographically and in time, and for different purposes, the core elements and their positioning are repeated in all of them. Yoshizaka's concept is used in this study as it is the most clear (due to its simplicity) of all. The five selections of picturebooks read with students in this study were also made based on Yoshizaka's Concept of Local Living Environment, and the matrix, described in chapter 4, was also created using this theory.



Fig. 7 Wikstrom's idea of human living environment

Reading Picturebooks

Picturebooks can be described as multimodal texts because they contain two semiotic modes — images and words (Kress, 2003) combined in multiple ways. The pictures and the text are fused together to deliver a message, while both systems are needed to construct meaning (wordless picturebooks exist as well). The idea of transmediation, “a special case in semiotics in the sense that learners use one sign

system to mediate another,” (Siegel 1995, p. 461) accurately portray the blend between pictures and words in picturebooks. This synergy can be described as “the simultaneous action of separate agencies which together, have greater total effect than the sum of their individual effects” (Guralnik 1976, p. 1444). The “total effect” in picturebooks is based on the illustrations, the words, and the correlation of these two sign systems where “we adjust our interpretation of the pictures in terms of the words and our interpretation of the words in terms of the pictures” (Styles 1998, p. 103). Most simply put, children’s literature in picturebook format is a complex combination of visual and verbal narratives.

Picturebooks and Comics

Although picturebooks as a format have been present in children’s (and at times adult) literature for quite some time, comic books (and graphic novels) have been gradually growing in popularity. Because of the use of visuals, reading picturebooks can be compared to reading comics. The prior knowledge used to make sense of reading, or the schemata, is what both picturebooks and comics make use of (Hatfield 2005). Restructuring, the forming of new ways of understanding through metacognition or reflection and tuning, adjusting schema to specific tasks through practice are also involved in the process of reading of the two genres. Hatfield also says that different types of text require different schemata. In the case of comics, the picture layout is different than that of picturebooks and text and images can be more fragmented.

Storyboard books, one of the many types of picturebooks, are somewhat similar to comics because of the use of some comics conventions (Spaulding 1995): pictures divided into multiple frames, animation with the use of lines and symbols,

dialogue balloons, and sound effects. Spaulding even goes further and call the storyboard book a “hybrid of comic and picturebook” (p. 14). Readers develop some of the schema needed to understand picturebooks by learning to understand elements of plot and characterization from the illustrations in literature, such as the contemporary picturebook and the storyboard book.

Picturebooks and Photobooks

In a photo-book or a photobook, photographs make a crucial contribution to the overall content of the book. A sub-genre also exists — that of coffee table books, a type of oversized, hard-covered book with the purpose of display on a table intended to entertain guests and visitors; a book that can also serve to inspire conversation. Coffee table books consist of photographs and illustrations, accompanied by captions (minimal text) and are intended as a “light read,” thus not using difficult terminology or jargon.

One of the reasons why this study focused on picturebooks and not on photobooks is because the former allows unlimited creativity and imagination both to the picturebook creator and the picturebook reader. For example, the creator can draw and write in a way that keeps the reader focused on one central element on the page or double spread of a picturebook, thus conveying specific meaning and having a specific goal in mind for the reader. While photobooks can consist of compelling high-definition photographs that can entertain the reader and convey a message, photographs are limited to capturing a moment in reality. Therefore it is much more difficult for a photograph to focus the reader on one central element because it would also contain many other elements that are less or not important to the reader if the goal is instilling a sense of belonging — the process this study aimed at analyzing.



Figure 8. A photo-book example. Here, the photograph and the text are placed separately on opposing pages. While the photograph captures a specific moment in time, it can not separate different elements, and can capture only a moment in reality.

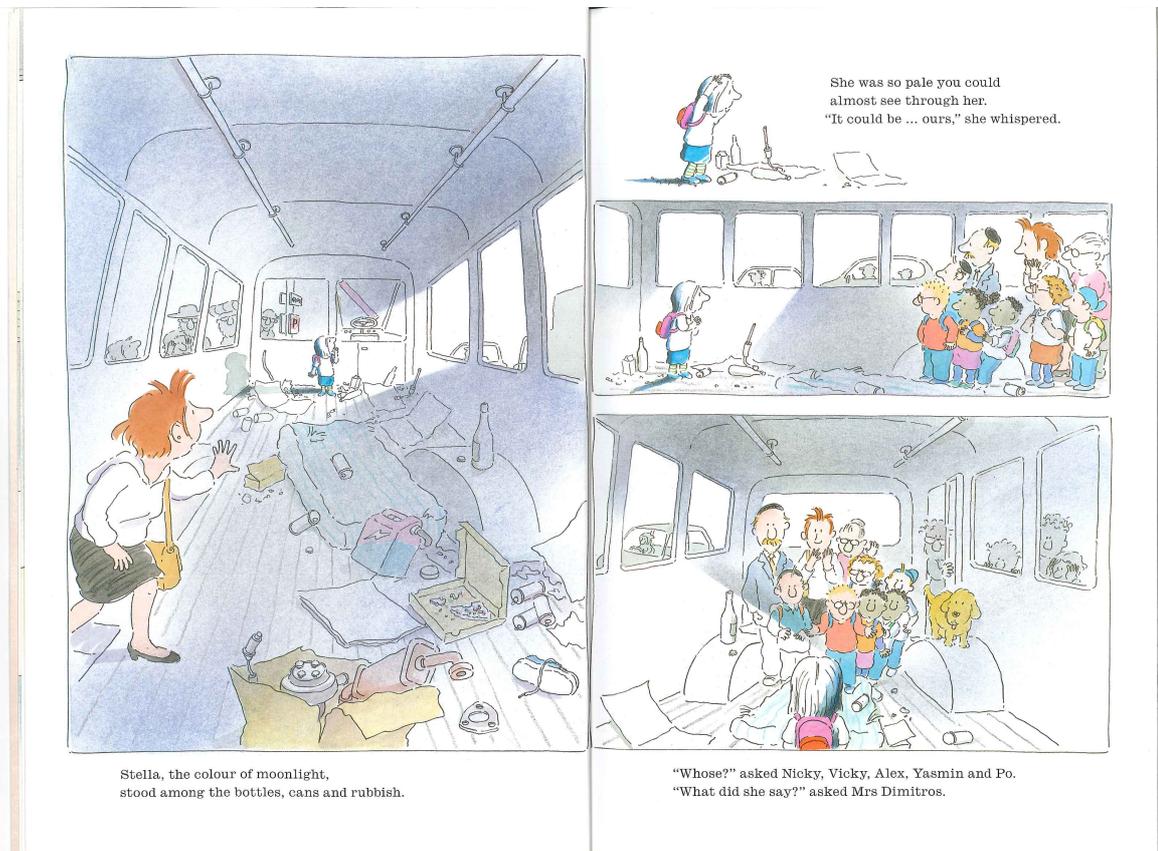


Figure 9. An example of a double spread of a picturebook. The creator has used color variations, difference in size, and angles to convey a specific idea to the reader.

Picturebooks and Traditional Books

Reading picturebooks requires different strategies than what readers use in reading traditional print-only texts. While both types of literature follow the convention of reading from left to right (for Western-style books) and top to bottom, the reader's eyes would jump between text and visuals and not read in an even pattern, and would rescan the information from a new angle on the verso (left-hand page), recto (right-hand page), or the double spread.

Priority of Text or Image

It is difficult to distinguish whether the words are read before or after contemplating on the images (Eisner 1996, Wolk 2007). One notion states that when you read the text you are not seeing the image, and when you look at the image, you ignore the text; that image and text are mutually exclusive. Groensteen (2000) states that the worlds of image and text are running on different planes and cannot be successfully set side by side. "Since it is impossible to 'see' both picture and words simultaneously, the presence of the one necessitates the absence of the other creating a continual unresolvable play of difference between the two textual forms" (Schmitt 1992, p. 158).

Some researchers would say that the image is subordinate to the text not because the importance of the image is smaller (images can enhance narration with greater power and economy than words) but because, as a narrative element, the image must conform to a literary order of perception. Although illustrations exceed text space in size, the text actually influences how the reader understands the illustration. Others believe in the priority of the image, not because the image covers

more and more important space, but because the reader makes much of the meaning in response to that image. Still others consider that placing linguistic signs over pictorial such disregards the basic status of both as signs. If treated as anything else but equal ignores their shared purpose and mutual importance in the process of reading picturebooks. By blending the visual and the written one is not simply accommodating the other and both are equally important — this demonstrates a multimodal approach. “Images and text arrive together, work together, and should be read together” (Gravett 2005, p. 11). When reading picturebooks, The reader is required to utilize both verbal and visual skills in contrast to reading a more traditional text-only type of literature. Another thing that differentiates picturebooks from traditional texts is the double-coded narrative — both modes, text and illustration, can transmit separate meanings or plurality of messages.

Rereading in Picturebooks

Compared to reading a traditional text, reading picturebooks demands more from the reader: focus and rereading. Readers are required to stay more focused because they need to ultimately decode the multimodality presented in picturebooks, a process that requires time and effort. Rereading on the other hand is necessary since reading picturebooks is not usually done in a linear way. Rereading tends to enhance word recognition, story comprehension, and enjoyment, while it helps develop more vigorous understanding of the story (Faust & Glenzer 2000).

In this study students read the five selected picturebooks more than once, while providing responses in writing and/or as an illustration (Pantaleo 2005) after each reading. This was done to allow respondents to express themselves in both the form of a text and that of an image (just as in picturebooks), and because what

readers brings to the multimodal texts individualizes their response (Galda & Beach 2011).

Summary

This chapter looked at the reader response theory and the semiotic theory as both concern picturebooks and sequential art. It discussed the history and evolution of the picturebook, and covered how such children's literature can be beneficial both in formal classroom settings, as well as non-formal such.

Picturebooks, as a more recent addition to the existing literature genres and forms, is still being studied and researched from various angles. This study examined how readers respond to serious issues when presented in picturebook format, and more specifically it empirically showed how picturebooks help instill a stronger sense of identity and sense of belonging through the use of quality multicultural picturebooks about local living environments.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology and organization of the study. The first section presents the participants and the role of the researcher. The second section discusses the materials used including the five picturebooks and the matrix. The third describes the readings of the books and explains the procedures in the study. The fourth section discusses the design of the study including the issue of objectivity in readers' responses. Finally, the last section looks into the data collection and analyses.

The Participants and the Researcher

The Participants

The study took place in two different settings, at an elementary school in Bulgaria and at a university in Japan. The elementary school is in a school district in the second largest city in Bulgaria, Plovdiv and the fact that it is my own alma mater provided easier access to students and teachers. The enrollment of the school is approximately 600 students with six classes in each grade. The student population mainly includes Bulgarian students but also most ethnic minorities in the country are represented, along with some students from Far Eastern (China) and war-torn (Syria) countries. Such school population dynamics are observable in most schools in a big city like Plovdiv. The university is centrally located in Tokyo, Japan and is the eighth largest tertiary institution by student population in the country. While most enrolled students are Japanese, there is a growing number of international students from Asia (China, Vietnam, Korea, and others) and from other parts of the world (Brazil, Colombia, and others).

The two sites were selected for several reasons. The elementary school is in the same building as my junior high school alma mater and therefore I had easier access because some of the teachers used to teach me in the past. Additionally, my mother is a Physical Education teacher in the junior high school and, provided that I reside in Japan now, helped me with organizational matters before and after my visits of the site. As a full-time English lecturer at the Faculty of Regional Development Studies at the university, I was able to read the five picturebooks used in this study with my own students and later collect data of their reader responses. The picturebooks contained social issues such as urbanization, environmental problems, neighborhood politics, children's rights, etc. — issues that my students learn about in their four years in college.

The overall data collection process involved nine elementary school students and their home room teacher in Bulgaria in the pilot study, 204 university students in Japan, and 30 elementary school students in the final picturebook readings in Bulgaria for a total of 244 respondents. In all, 54% of the respondents were female and 46% — male. With university students, the five picturebooks were read in a 90-minute English class setting with the readings done in English, using the original books, while pages were also displayed using projectors and computer screens for a closer, more detailed look by students. The second group of elementary school students were gathered in a so-called book-cafe — a cafe offering free access to books for reading, as well as books to purchase. The original books in English were used and they were translated into Bulgarian by the researcher as they were read. Several homeroom teachers were present at all times and offered assistance when needed.

Role of the Researcher

Students at the elementary school had heard about me — a Bulgarian young man living in Japan who would come to their class and read some interesting picturebooks — thanks to their teachers' prior introduction, presenting me in a favorable light. Elementary school students participating in this study proved to be very disciplined for their age, listened with interest, and asked questions about the book being read, its story, and the characters in it. Although one day I would be teaching in university in Japan and on the next would be doing read-alouds with elementary school students and their teacher in their classroom in Bulgaria, feeling welcomed and the students being ready to read, discuss, and respond, provided for a very positive atmosphere for data collection.

In my role as a lecturer at the university, I was familiar with the school curriculum, the three main study areas my students focused on — community development, environmental issues, and sanitation, as well as what they were interested in academically and career-wise. The local and international problems my students were learning on the undergraduate level were what pushed me to pursue a PhD in the same Faculty's graduate school.

Preliminary Research

In the beginning of this study, I first interviewed a number of teachers at the elementary school, finding out about their students in general, learning about the current school curriculum, and also discussing the lack of local learning environment lessons (city, neighborhood, street, etc.), material, and time allotted across the curriculum. The same teachers later were very helpful in organizing class

observations and picturebook readings while I visited there during school and vacation periods.

When reading picturebooks with elementary school students (second grade), one problem that arose was that the students' difficulty in expressing their thoughts and ideas mainly in written format but also orally. This had to do with the fact that they were still developing many of their communication skills. To solve this problem, I asked the students to not only answer in sentences but to draw pictures as their response to the book read in class (Pantaleo 2008). I also simplified the matrix (Yoshizaka 1973) used in this study, making it more easily accessible by young learners.

The idea about including college students as participants in this study came because of the need of an age group in which readers were still not adults, had had an experience with reading picturebooks, and could express their thoughts and ideas (responses) in a more sophisticated way. Including students from different age groups and different nationalities reading the same books also provided for the objectivity in the collected data (reader response).

When picturebook readings were done with the elementary school students, their homeroom teacher was present and was mainly focused on the overall discipline of the class but also, as someone knowing their students well, helped when students were writing down their responses (Pantaleo 2008). Translations (I had done earlier) of the five books were read by me, in the form of read-alouds, during which pages were visible to students. After each read-aloud the picturebook was available for students to look at for themselves in detail. A short discussion

followed, then students were given the simplified matrixes to fill out and sheets of paper to draw their pictorial responses on.

With college students, each picturebook was read in a 90-minute class called Media English (the picturebooks being a media format) taught in a computer assisted language learning classroom. In the beginning of class there would be a short introduction to the book and the issues it covered, followed by a read-aloud using the actual book. After the initial reading, students were provided with their own digital copy (for use in class only), so that they could freely go back and forth as needed, as they provided their reader responses filling out the matrix provided to them on paper.

Materials

A Bus Called Heaven

Bob Graham, in his book “A Bus Called Heaven” (Walker Books, 2012), tells the story of a dilapidated bus, young Stella, and an urban community. The abandoned bus has a hand-painted sign on it – “Heaven.” As Stella looks at it she says, “Mommy, that old bus is sad as a whale on a beach.” Community members move the bus into Stella’s yard where they clean, repaint, and turn it into a gathering space. When one day the bus is towed away to a junkyard, Stella shows strength of character and wins it back by challenging the junkyard boss at table football. This time the bus is placed into an empty lot where it is again used by Stella and her community. This book shows the longing people have for a true community and how children like Stella, with their

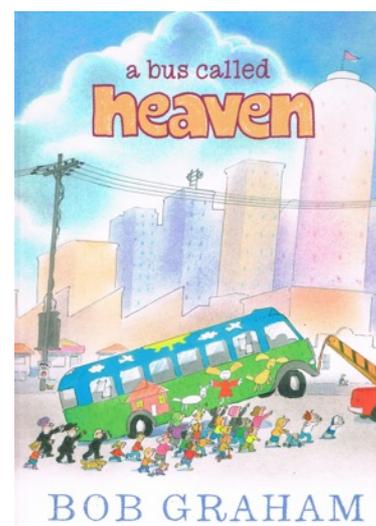


Figure 10. Bob Graham, *A Bus Called Heaven*, Walker Books, London (2012)

different perspective of society and its rules, stand up to authority to do the right thing. This book teaches readers several skills: how to live harmoniously in a diverse urban community, how to follow their dreams however big or small they are, and how to hold a different perspective of the world they live in and not necessarily follow established views.

Belonging

A wordless book, Jeannie Baker's "Belonging" (Walker Books, 2004), follows the life of a girl, from her birth to her twenties, and the changes occurring in and around her inner-suburban home. Through the window of the girl's room we observe how her local community takes action and reclaims the street and an unoccupied lot in front of the girl's house, making them a pedestrian-only area. This in turn helps bring back nature and turns the area into an "urban oasis." Despite the lack of words, this book is compelling thanks to the detailed collages that show how an alienating city street becomes a place to call home, get married, and raise a child of your own. Picturing life in an urban area, this book teaches readers the importance of human connections and bringing nature into the city, because we do not own the land — we depend on it "to feed us and support us and inspire us" (Baker, 2004).

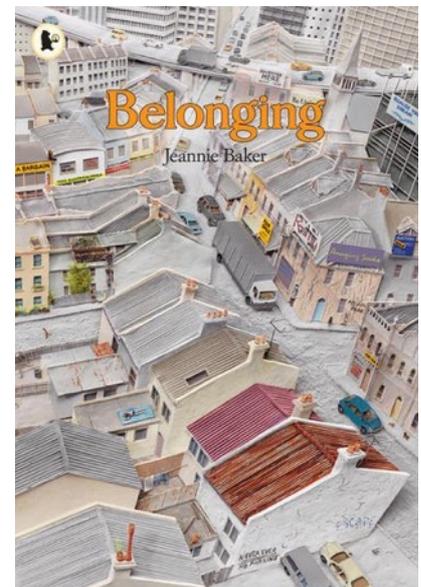


Figure 11. Jeannie Baker, *Belonging*, Walker Books, London (2004)

The Streets Are Free

The third picturebook is based on a true story, painting the life of the children in the barrio (informal settlement or a slum) of San Jose de la Urbina, near Caracas,

Venezuela’s capital city. After the mayor breaks his promise to build the children a playground, they realize that they have to build it themselves. This is a story of how, faced with hardships but also through discussion and taking action, a local community unites in its effort to improve the lives of its youngest members. In this book students learn about human migration and urbanization processes. The book touches on municipal politics and interests, and shows the difference between “top-down” procedures and “bottom-up” movements. While the story may be happening in a far-away corner of the world, it resonates with students now as they experience both disconnection from nature and time spent outdoors.

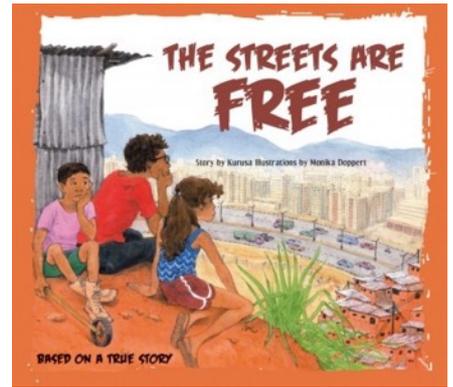


Figure 12. Kurusa, *The Streets are Free*, Annick Press, Buffalo, NY (1995)

Tar Beach

Cassie Louise Lightfoot, the main character in this book, is an eight-year-old girl who can fly above “tar beach” — her apartment building rooftop — in 1939 Harlem. This emblematic story is full of historical and symbolic references essential to African-American culture. As little Cassie dreams of power and freedom she magically helps her family by flying over buildings and thus claiming them. The story illustrates a Depression era family’s struggles — e.g., Cassie’s father and grandfather have been denied membership in the union because of their race. In Faith Ringgold’s award-winning book we encounter new characters and their relationships in the neighborhood and

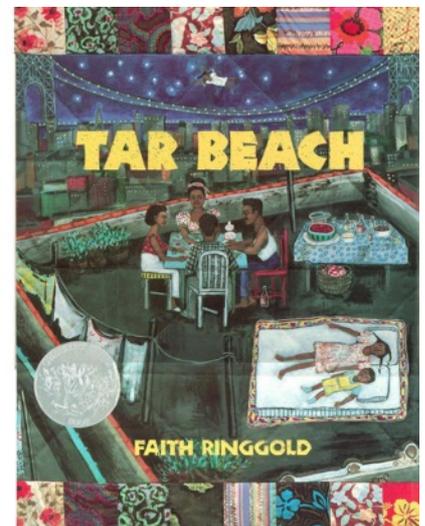


Figure 13. Faith Ringgold, *Tar Beach*, New York (1991)

in the community. This book shares a bold idea of flying and in this way claiming buildings and landmarks to empower a little girl's family in need. "Tar Beach" gives a lesson on how not to be confined in societal dogma but to remain children at heart and to continue nurturing imagination and creativity in ourselves throughout our lives.

This is Paris

Miroslav Sasek takes us on a journey with this travelogue book. Through exquisitely detailed pictures and a hint of mischievousness in the text, we take a Parisian stroll to meet people from diverse backgrounds, explore historical buildings and landmarks, and enjoy the nature and animals in Paris. Informative picturebooks such as this one can easily be part of a classroom book collection, ensuring frequent readings by students. This books is a great exploratory tool to either better understand one's own city or to

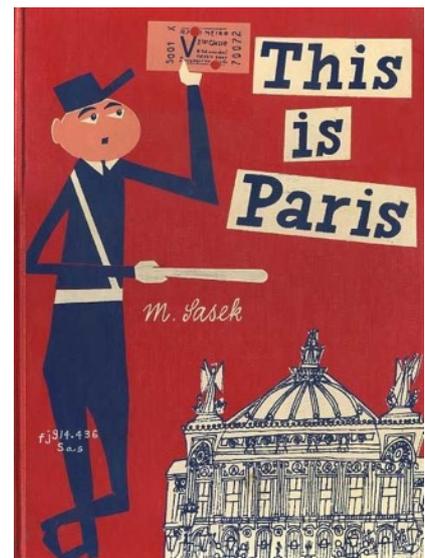


Figure 14. Miroslav Sasek, *This is Paris*, New York (2004)

learn more about a place one may have never visited. Students commented that it became clear that they would like to even produce a book like "This is Paris" about their own hometown; reading the book stimulated imagination and creativity in them.

The five books are examples of local living environment-themed picturebooks that can be implemented as supplementary educational material school curriculums. These five multicultural picturebooks have been carefully selected not only as award-winning books from various countries (Australia, Venezuela, the U.S. and France) but also because of the *local living environment theme* they all represent. More specifically, these five picturebooks were used in this study because each one of

them embodies one of the five elements in Yoshizaka's Concept of Local Living Environment: *people, neighborhood, community, town/city, and environment*.

Procedure

Pilot Study

First, I conducted a pilot study with a group of nine elementary school students and their teacher in Bulgaria. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine students' reactions to readings of the five selected picturebooks and to analyze students' written responses to the books. Response categories also emerged through the pilot study and were used in the main study, being included in the local living environment response matrix. The pilot study revealed that the five selected picturebooks were appealing to elementary students, which also confirmed that they were good choices for the main study. Getting to know the students, their teachers, and what is covered (and not covered) through discussions with them helped better prepare for the main study organizationally and logistically.

Originals of the five picturebooks were read aloud with translations I had prepared in advance and, since children were seated in a circle, illustrations were visible to readers. Students responded that, although they had read many picturebooks, it was their first time to read not only those specific books, but also any picturebooks displaying local living environment issues. Both students and teachers commented that they wanted to have a copy of the books for use in the classroom and that they hoped that local picturebook makers will one day produce books covering similar themes. In the meantime, students said that they wanted to design a picturebook that displays their street, their town, their school — their world.

The five picturebooks were read one after another on a summer morning in the students' regular classroom in their elementary school. Breaks were taken when necessary, taking into consideration the young learners' focus spans. Snacks and drinks were offered during the short breaks in which students, teacher and researcher discussed the previously read book.

Because the English editions of books were used in this study, the author translated them into Bulgarian simultaneously as they were read. Although the books were available to students to look at again and in more detail and titles were translated into English, the homeroom teacher and researcher offered help at all times, especially when students were writing their responses on paper, hence the correct titles of books appear in full in students responses.

Written responses to the picturebooks showed that response prompts need to be more specific and matrix simplified to elicit some direction for the readers' responses. During the pilot study, the response prompts were somewhat general, and came from the elementary school teacher, ensuring that students answer in writing all the questions written on the blackboard and explained by the teacher. The teacher, knowing her students well, wrote four long but simple questions on the blackboard. After that, students read the questions aloud while the teacher made sure the questions were clear. Once that was ensured, students were asked to write their answers in full sentences on the paper provided to them. (See Appendix ? for the four questions.) The questions and the responses prompted the design of the matrix used in the main study with elementary school and college students, which is also based on Yoshizaka's (1973) concept of local living environments (people, neighborhood, community, town/city, environment).

The Main Study

The main study was comprised of a larger number of elementary school students than the pilot study and more ethnicities that constitute the population of Bulgaria. It also included an element of responses in an illustrated form, giving young learners another medium in which to express themselves. In Japan, the picturebooks were to be read with college students one by one in 90-minute classes eliciting more sophisticated written responses.

Japanese university students were mainly in their first and second year and the five multicultural picturebooks about *local living environments* were read in a 90-minute English class setting with the readings done in English, using the original books, while pages were also displayed using projectors and computer screens for a closer, more detailed look. As a way of coding and categorizing responses blank tables (see the five tables in this study in chapter 4, results) were given to readers to write their responses only in the boxes they felt appropriate fit for the story right after the readings were done. Two sets of short discussions took place — one before and another after the read-aloud. The typology for the five categories used in the tables (vertical — structure and space /hard/, horizontal — functions and activities /soft/) 1. people, 2. neighborhood, 3. community, 4. town/city, and 5. (living) environment was based on Yoshizaka's concept of local living environment in combination with responses that emerged during data collection and analysis. This was done to assign conceptual labels to respondents' statements and then group these conceptual labels into a manageable number of categories (Sipe, 2015) using the reader response theory analysis. Also, as part of the reader response theory concept, specific response prompts were used in the study to elicit some direction for

the responses and to focus attention on images, format and story before picturebooks were read to students. For example, depending on which book was read students were told to pay attention to the way people behaved when facing difficulties, how the community gets stronger when united, in what way nature (and the lack thereof) is represented in an urban environment, whether people feel happiness and live in harmony with one another in neighborhoods, communities and cities, etc.

A similar procedure was followed with elementary school students in Bulgaria where students were also asked to provide an illustration as a response to the reading in addition to their written response (usually not very long). Another difference was the lack of discussions — picturebooks were read aloud, students who wanted to see the book for themselves were allowed to do that, and written and illustration responses were given right after the readings. This was done with the short attention spans of young learners in mind. Students were given enough time to complete their oral and illustration responses to their satisfaction. Students tended to focus more on the illustration responses, whereas they tried to finish their written responses quickly.

These two particular age groups — elementary school and college students — were selected for this study based on the notion that the latter have both had experience with such literature in their youth and that at their age and educational level they could express themselves in a sophisticated way in their responses, and the former is the one that is in actual need of local living environment picturebooks as educational material. As stated earlier, collecting data through reader responses from elementary school students only became problematic in the beginning of this

study due to difficulties in expression in written form by students in this age group. Although Bulgarian elementary school students, the lack of local living environment, and the use of local living environment picturebooks as the necessary educational tool to fill this gap in the current curriculum by fostering a sense of belonging in young learners are the focus of this study, university students not only delivered the necessary sophisticated reader responses but in the process also proved another point — that local living environment picturebooks can nurture a sense of belonging in variety of age groups.

Design of Study

The previous sections described the participants and the researcher's role, the materials used in the study, and the methods of the pilot and main studies. The next section will discuss the design of the study.

The *Reader Response Theory* used in this study is a method that focuses on the reader (audience) and his/her experience of a literary work. It examines the extent and diversity of reader reaction and analyzes the ways in which different readers make meaning of personal reactions and inherited or culturally conditioned ways of reading. According to Rosenblatt (1938), this method entails a negotiation between the text's inferred meaning and the individual interpretation by the reader through the lens of their personal emotions and understanding of the world; in the transaction between the reader and the text, the reader constructs meaning. Sipe (2008) examined reader response in multimodal context by looking at students' responses to picturebooks. Past experience with text and knowledge of text conventions influence the reader's response and contribute to valid interpretations. What the reader brings to the multimodal text (picturebooks) individualizes the

response (Galda & Beach, 2001). Meaning is not intrinsic in text itself — it places a demand on the reader to work together with the author/artist of a picturebook.

Because thematically selected picturebooks can cultivate a feeling of belonging and a rekindled sense of identity as a member of a given community only after they have been read, the reader response theory was useful in this study in analyzing readers' reactions after readings of the five books.

Another reason the reader response theory was used in this study is because of its importance in ensuring objectivity in reader's responses. To understand whether multicultural picturebooks about local living environments can actually nurture a stronger sense of belonging, it was necessary to keep instructions to a minimum (although some instructions were necessary and were given to students in the beginning of class) before picturebook readings and ensure freedom and creativity when students filled out the blank tables (matrix) used in this study. The reader response theory is grounded exactly in this autonomy in reader reaction to a given literary work, especially when read for the first time — the case in this study. Consequently, the utilization of this theory in the study assured objective responses given by the students after readings of the five picturebooks specifically selected for this study.

Trustworthiness

In order to verify trustworthiness in this study several procedures were utilized to address the issues of reliability and validity. A good level of trust had been established between the college students and I, given the fact that I was their English teacher in more than one class. At the same time, my students knew neither that I was a PhD candidate nor anything about my research theme. Throughout the

study a good rapport between researcher and elementary school students was established as well. The role of the homeroom teacher played an important part.

Cross-referencing (triangulation) of data also played a part in adding to the trustworthiness of the data. Data was collected from students in the form of written responses, through filling out the matrix, and in an illustration form. Interviews with elementary school teachers, university professors, publishers, and journalists in Bulgaria provided a variety of compiled data as well which, once analyzed, confirmed conclusions made earlier through the above-listed collected data.

In addition, although students of different nationalities, cultures, and ages participated in this study, a remarkable aspect that became apparent in this particular study was the similarity in their responses in the way they comprehend the stories and messages in the five multicultural picturebooks.

Data Analysis

This study was designed to answer the research questions that follow:

- How do readers respond to living environment picturebooks?
- How do readers make meaning in a picturebook?
- Do readers recognize serious issues when presented in a picturebook format?
- How do picturebooks nurture a sense of belonging in readers?

Data collected and analyzed included student written responses, illustration responses, class discussions, interviews with homeroom teachers, local university professors, elementary school textbook publishers, and

journalists covering education in the city. Student written responses, based on the reader response theory, played a major role in this study showing who students react to readings of local living environment picturebooks. Illustration responses were added towards the end of the study as a way to contribute through the creativity and imagination learners at this age possess in abundance as they responded to the thematic children's literature. Interviews conducted during preliminary, as well as in later, stages of study also added toward answering this study's research questions.

Readers' responses were coded based on categories emerging from the data itself. The categories were predetermined only to a certain level — matrix and picturebook selection were based on Yoshizaka's concept. After the pilot study was conducted, codes began to take shape and were confirmed by data collected in the main study.

The analyses (count; categorization) were done manually and the percentage (%) shown in each box in the tables displays the frequency a word or an expression appeared in student answers. Student responses differed in word selection and I categorized them into similar groups according to their meaning. The main keywords (most frequently used) are provided in bold letters and a line has been drawn in each table following those keywords, displaying how the story in each picturebook develops. In the overall student responses after reading of a picturebook we see different structure patterns. These patterns indicate both how a story in a picturebook unfolds and also how the students themselves understand the given picturebook story. This helps not only to show the living environment elements these picturebooks contain but also the relationship between those elements, and readers'

understanding of them. These analyses helps shed more light on how such literature assist in cultivating sense of belonging in readers.

Since the discussion and the interviews were based on questions, the data was basically organized in general categories. Responses were represented according to the questions that were asked.

One way the illustrations created by students were analyzed was for picturebooks conventions: perspective, narration, captions, time, motions, etc.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

As stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to determine whether living environment-themed picturebooks can instill in readers a stronger sense of belonging. This chapter presents the results of the study. First, I present comments elementary school students made after the first readings of the five picturebooks then relative comments made by their homeroom teacher. The reader response results accumulated during the pilot study (elementary school students in Bulgaria) and the main study (college students in Japan; second group of elementary school students in Bulgaria) are presented next in a tabulated form. The above data is presented in the order it was collected and book by book. Interviews with the homeroom teachers are presented, as well as other related information collected through interviews with specialists in the education field (publishers, professors, journalists). An analysis of the visual responses elementary school students created after the second reading of the books is presented as well. Finally, the use of the matrix and its importance as the core element in the findings of this study are described.

Written Responses — First Reading (Pilot Study)

As explained in the previous chapter, a pilot study took place in the beginning of this project to determine the accessibility and applicability of the selected five picturebooks. Another important element were the categories (or codes) that emerged in this first set of reader response — they were used later in the design of the tables (matrix) applied in the main study with the university students and second group of elementary school students. Following are all the comments given by the

nine students after picturebook readings took place, as well as relative comments given by their home room teacher (see Appendix 20 for response prompts). Since comments were made in Bulgarian, I translated them as close to the original as possible. What follows are responses given by the nine students who participated in the pilot study. They are all significant for several reasons: students answered in a similar way, although wording and sentence structure differed; the information gathered through them were vital for the rest of the study, for example because of the categories that emerged in them; they showed how pure students are in their answers, how young learners differ in thinking (imagination and creativity) than adults, and how they follow their own rules that differ from those of adults. For these reasons students' comments are presented one after another without any comments disrupting their flow.

“I really like my neighborhood because it is quiet. I really enjoyed the activity today. It was really good because I learned many new things. The book I liked the most was the one with the windows — *Belonging* — because I could think of the text on my own.”

“I like my neighborhood because people there are very kind and polite and keep clean. I liked the activity today. What I liked the most was that the books were very interesting. My favorite book today was “*This is Paris*” because it is about many and different things.”

“The reason I like my neighborhood is because it is near the park and my school. Today's activity was interesting because we learned many new things. The book I enjoyed most was the first one, “*A Bus Called Heaven*.” I liked it because it was amusing and there was a lot to learn.”

“I like my neighborhood because it is not dirty and because I have many friends there. I liked today’s activity. What I liked the most was that we met again with a guy who teaches in Japan. I most enjoyed the book about the playground (The Streets Are Free) because in it the children fight for a playground.”

“My neighborhood is nice because there are many friends to play to with. Today, I liked the event and it was amusing. I enjoyed the read-aloud about the bus. I most enjoyed “A Bus Called Heaven” because the little girl goes against the junkyard boss to save the little sparrows.”

“I like my neighborhood because I have many friends there and it is fun. Today, I liked the activity. I liked it because I learned many new things. The book I liked the most was “This is Paris” because it is very interesting and a little funny.”

“I don’t like my neighborhood because there is trash everywhere. Today, I liked the event a lot. What I liked about the event was that we read many fun books. My favorite book was the one with the playground because the children have gathered courage to go and complain to the mayor.”

“I like my neighborhood because there are always children waiting for me to play. I enjoyed the activity today. I liked it because we talked about picturebooks. The book I liked the most was “Belonging” because it was like a fairy tale but with pictures.”

“I like my neighborhood because there are many trees, flowers and friends to play with. I didn't like my neighborhood before because there was one meter tall grass. I personally liked today’s event a lot because I learned many facts, which will be useful to me. Some were even instructive. Some books were about our environment. How it takes years of hard work to make an area green again. I liked all

the books a lot. The book written on a quilt (Tar Beach) was awesome. So were the one about Paris (This is Paris) and about the playground (The Streets Are Free) and the one about the bus (A Bus Called Heaven) and the one with the window (Belonging). But the books I liked the most today were “A Bus Called Heaven” and “This is Paris.” They were very intriguing and interesting. About Paris, I learned many facts about the cathedrals and about the Eiffel Tower and many other things. The bus about the bus was very instructive. I wish everyone had the courage of Stella.”

The first eight responses are of second grade students and the ninth (last) one is of a fourth grade student. When reading the second grade students’ responses it becomes obvious that their expression skills in writing are limited. At the same time, their responses are straightforward in the way they talk about their neighborhoods and how they felt about reading the five selected picturebooks. In the fourth grade student response we observe more detail and we can see that the answers are not one-sentence long. They are rich in positive feelings too. In all responses we notice a feeling of motivation in students to do something positive for their neighborhood and the people living there. During the discussions students said that they wanted to have a copy of each book translated into Bulgarian to keep in their classroom, so that they can revisit the books in their free time.

The homeroom teacher shared that this was her first time to see such books — local living environment picturebooks. She said, “I love the books we read in class. I’ve been teaching for a while now, some thirty years. I’ve seen, read, and used a lot of picturebooks. But I haven’t seen any, like the ones you brought, on the book market in Bulgaria, no. I’d like to have at least several books that feature children’s local living environment — streets, communities, neighborhoods, town or

city and the people living there. Just like the five books we read! Hurry up and complete your PhD, Ivan, so that you can apply your research in practice!” I felt extremely motivated to do just that, once the study was completed successfully.

The teacher also commented that she saw a variety of ways she could use such thematically selected literature in many of the classes she teaches. Unfortunately, she said, while there is a subject covering issues such as society, community, nation, ethnicities, very basic geopolitics, the students’ tangible “world” was not covered — the streets they walk every day on the way to school and back to their homes, etc. The Ministry of Education is allotting only one lesson per year within the elementary school curriculum and that is only one lesson about students’ actual place of residence in the textbook (see Appendices 14 through 17 for an example of elementary school curriculum), although the Ministry usually approves three textbooks written by different authors and issued by different publishers for schools around the country to choose from. Both students’ and their homeroom teacher’s responses and attitude toward a future application of such children’s literature indirectly offered an answer to one of this study’s research questions — “How do picturebooks nurture a sense of belonging in readers?” — students’ willingness to build a small collection of such books to read and re-read in their free time and the teacher’s desire to incorporate local living environment picturebooks into her lessons and cover what both curriculum and textbooks lack are the first step toward nurturing a sense of belonging through reading such literature.

Tabulated Responses of Collected Data

As a way of coding and categorizing responses blank tables (see five tables below) were given to readers to write their responses only in the boxes they felt

appropriate fit for the story right after the readings were done. The typology for the five categories used in the tables People, Neighborhood, Community, Town/City, and (living) Environment was taken directly from Yoshizaka's Concept of Local Living Environment. The matrix was designed so that readers could write their response in the boxes they felt appropriate fit for the story. For example, **People**:*Neighborhood*, **Community**:*Town/City*, or **Environment**:*People* all offered a box for respondents to write in their keyword/phrase found in story, once or twice, upon their discretion. This was done to assign conceptual labels to respondents' statements and then group these conceptual labels into a manageable number of categories (Sipe, 2015) using the reader response theory analysis. While the five elements borrowed directly from Yoshizaka's concept appeared twice — both in the vertical and in the horizontal planes — they play different roles here. The former represents the “hard” plane of the living environment — its structure and space. The latter, on the other hand, stands for the “soft” part of the living environment — representing the functions and activities occurring there.

The author of this study selected specific response prompts to introduce the social issues found in each book, elicit some direction for the responses, and focus attention on images, format and story before picturebooks were read to students. For example, depending on which book was read students were told to pay attention to the way people behaved when facing difficulties, how the community gets stronger when united, in what way nature (and the lack thereof) is represented in an urban environment, whether people feel happiness and live in harmony with one another in neighborhoods, communities and cities, etc. Each of the five books was read once and responses were given at the end of the reading. The books were made available

Functions and Activities /SOFT/

Structure and Space /HARD/		<i>People</i>	<i>Neighborhood</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Town/City</i>	<i>Environment</i>
	People					
	Neighborhood					
	Community					
	Town/City					
	Environment					

Table 2. Blank matrix distributed to university students to fill in after picturebook readings.

to students after the readings in case they wanted to look again at something specific in them and a number of students did go through the books once again.

University students were the targeted age group based on the notion that soon-to-become adults have both had experience with picturebooks in their youth and that at their age and educational level they could respond in writing in a sophisticated way. From the collected data synonyms of the keywords that frequently appeared were compiled in the tables below. The analyses (count; categorization) were done manually and the percentage (%) shown in each box in the tables displays the frequency a word or an expression appeared in student answers. Hypothetically, zero percent (or a blank cell) would mean that none of the respondents chose to write a keyword or phrase in it. Fifty percent, on the other hand, would mean that half of the students selected to fill in that specific box. Finally, hundred percent would mean that all of the respondents decided to write a response in the given box. Of course, in reality a 100% response did not occur, although there

were several zero percent responses indicated by a blank cell. Most of the responses were in the 10% to 70% specter, with the results visible in the matrices shown below.

Student responses differed in word selection and authors categorized them into similar groups according to their meaning. The main keywords (most frequently used — over 50%) are provided in bold letters and a line has been drawn in each table following those keywords, providing hints at students' understanding of the picturebook plot how the story in each picturebook develops. This was done based on the earlier 0-50-100% hypothesis, meaning that over 50% frequency would indicate that the majority of respondents selected to fill that particular box, which in turn would indicate that the given element(s) play an important role in the book and in the students understanding of it — it would have left a strong impression in respondents.

For example, in Table 3 (A Bus Called Heaven) the Environment:*People* box reads, "The bus became a gathering space for people and home for various creatures, 68%." All responses by students that answered similarly were counted and then divided by the total number of respondents to receive the percentage for that box. Since the percentage was higher than 50%, the text appears in bold letters and a line has been drawn through it. This procedure was applied to all boxes in the tables. To give a second example, the box Town/City:*Community* reads, "Key to building a community can be anything, 29%." In this case, since all responses of students who have replied within those lines divided by the total number of respondents was lower than 50%, the text was included (almost a third of students

offered a similar to this reply) but was not set in bold and the line drawn in this table did not go through it.

Functions and Activities /SOFT/

	<i>People</i>	<i>Neighborhood</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Town/City</i>	<i>Environment</i>	
Structure and Space /HARD/	People	Play games, hold meetings, talk with each other—spend time together, 37%	Cooperation of people to create and maintain a comfortable place, 32%	Smiles, kindness and happiness come from connection with people in community, 42%	Variety of people united by the bus-community (diversity; peace), 65%	Stella is kind to people and animals, 48%
	Neighborhood	Bus (public transport)—ideal community space; symbol of the world, 35%	Volunteering spirit important for community, 28%	A little girl as a leader, building a community, 62%	Improvement of relations in community, 45%	Nature gives us strength and we can connect with others, 56%
	Community	People working together; focusing on the same goal, 30%	Symbol of true essence of communal life, 41%		Importance of children and their courage in community building, 33%	
	Town/City	People accepting each other; diverse population, 49%	Bus—an opportunity for people to get together, 60%	Key to building a community can be anything, 29%		It is easy to get rid of nature, hard to get back, 34%
	Environment	The bus became a gathering space for people and home for various creatures, 68%	People should learn to treasure things, 27%	Painted the sun, the clouds and the sky on the bus, 21%	Important to find/create piece of nature in city, 43%	Nature has the power to make people happy, 47%

Table 3. Matrix with results for readings of A Bus Called Heaven.

In Table 3, reader response analysis for the book “A Bus Called Heaven” we observe that students recognize the importance of the bus as a gathering space for people and nature in the immediate community. Stella, the little girl and main character in the story is recognized as a key element in fighting for what is best for her community, even if that means going against the established social rules — the rules of “adults.” The community growing stronger together and becoming united

also gets a frequent mention. The books strikes with the diversity of people in its urban setting and that does not go unnoticed by respondents. Nature, birds, animals, etc., although somewhat indirectly, are a big part of the story and students identify their importance in the story in their responses as well.

Functions and Activities /SOFT/

Structure and Space /HARD/

	<i>People</i>	<i>Neighborhood</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Town/City</i>	<i>Environment</i>
People	Children, 48%	Busy with daily life; Economic Disparity, 61%	Children robbed out of having a “second school”, 51%	Mayor’s Promise and Betrayal, 68%	Preoccupation with daily lives—ignorance toward nature, 55%
Neighborhood	Librarian and Journalist helping the children, 51%		Library—gathering space for children and “idea house”, 31%	Participatory Society—local residents’ needs and desires, 52%	Living space more important than nature, 45%
Community	Children making an effort for a playground, 56%	Lack of playground for children, 38%	4h meeting/50 people; unity and cooperation, 53%	Lack of Top-Down action, 54%	Abundance => Lack of nature, 31%
Town/City	Children’s pledges ignored at City Hall; police called, 32%	Empty space allotted for a playground, 62%	Bottom-up movement, 70%	Urbanization—many buildings, less nature, 49%	While vital, nature in the city is ignored, 29%
Environment	Longing for nature, 40%	Creation & growth pushes nature away, 28%	Lack of greenery—uncomfortable living environment, 42%	Little nature in barrio, 30%	

Table 4. Matrix with results for readings of The Streets Are Free.

Table 4 is a reader response analysis for the book “The Streets Are Free.” Here we learn that adults have a busy life in this slum full of disparity. As the barrio (poor neighborhood) continues to grow, children find that there is not a place for them to play outdoors. They gather courage with the help of the local librarian and confront the city mayor asking him to build a playground for them. The “top-down” system does not work for them — the mayor forgets his promise, although an empty space is allotted for a playground to be build on it. In the end, in a “bottom-up” way, the adults hear their children's pledge and, after a long community meeting, decide to build the playground themselves. Nature gets mentioned often in readers responses and also place an important role in local residents’ lives.

The next table represents the reader response analysis of “Belonging.” The lack and, later, abundance of nature is prevalent both in the story and in readers’ responses. People are not satisfied with their style of life and begin a “bottom-up” movement, taking advantage of a new city rule, allowing some streets to be turned into pedestrian only zones. As the neighborhood turns into an urban oasis, community members realize how important animals and plants are for their well-being. The

Functions and Activities /SOFT/

	<i>People</i>	<i>Neighborhood</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Town/City</i>	<i>Environment</i>
People		People make space for children to play safely, 27%	Good relationship of people in community, 39%	Basic style of urban life in the developed world, 45%	People need nature to lead happy lives, 53%
Neighborhood	People start a movement—great action for environment and people, 52%		Clean community space makes children play outside, 35%	Reclaiming streets promotes safety and happiness, 67%	Increase of nature and greenery, 42%
Community	People gather and do things together, 47%	Community members enjoy clean neighborhood,		Living surrounded by nature we feel refreshed, 37%	Nature and community are important, 68%
Town/City	Reintroducing nature to city to make people happy, 40%	Family, community, nature change gradually, 48%	Urban development vs. community development, 55%		Nature and city are there together, 54%
Environment	People enjoy being surrounded by nature, 38%	Painting the neighborhood in mild colors makes it relaxing, 23%	Community members’ role towards clean environment, 41%	A clean environment promotes coexistence—plants, animals, people, 62%	Bring back variety of native plants and animals, 35%

Table 5. Matrix with results for readings of Belonging.

pedestrian-only street promotes both safety and happiness. Nature does not belong to us, we belong to nature.

“Tar Beach” was the fourth book read with students and analysis of responses is represented in the table above. In the readers’ response of this emblematic book about the African American ethnic group in the USA we see how people make do with what urban life an society offer them. Although the story paints a picture of racial

Functions and Activities /SOFT/

	<i>People</i>	<i>Neighborhood</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Town/City</i>	<i>Environment</i>	
Structure and Space /HARD/	People	Struggles of people, 28%	Next door's neighbors, 51%	Higher class/lower class, 63%	Minority, 45%	Younger brother sleeping on rooftop, 31%
	Neighborhood	The Honey family, 33%	Poor neighborhood, 55%	Apartment building, 69%	G. Washington Bridge, 29%	Rooftop, 42%
	Community	African-American, 47%	Cassie's family, 65%	Grandfather, 52%	Harlem, 25%	Union building, 35%
	Town/City	Building places in the city, 30%	Lower class, 60%	Flying over and claiming places, 68%	New York, 80%	Ice-cream factory, 36%
	Environment	Cassie's hometown, 68%	Cultural traits, 39%	Cultural traditions, 41%	Being part of the city, 48%	Cassie's parents spending time on roof, 66%

Table 6. Matrix with results for readings of Tar Beach.

inequality, the story is positive with the main character Cassie finding ways to empower her family through imagination and by finding happiness in everything that surrounds her in her daily life. We observe that readers preferred to use key words and phrases as their responses instead of short sentence, which shows how different books affect readers differently.

The fifth and last book presented to students was “This is Paris.” In students’ responses we see that they found various interesting information about Paris introduced in an amusing way. Although illustrations and text do not seem complex, much about this world-famous city is unveiled: different people and places, history and culture, nature and animals. etc. Students commented that after reading this book they felt inspired to create a similar picturebook about their hometown. This in

itself was a positive reaction towards fostering a stronger sense of belonging toward their local living environment.

Functions and Activities /SOFT/

Structure and Space /HARD/		<i>People</i>	<i>Neighborhood</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Town/City</i>	<i>Environment</i>
	People	Various age groups; backgrounds; occupations, 21%	locals, countryside people, foreigners, 30%	Historical facts through elegant pictures and easy text, 68%	True representation of landmarks and people (occupations), 51%	Tribute to city through the eyes of an outsider, 54%
	Neighborhood	people share responsibilities, 23%	people belong to their neighborhood, 62%	acceptance of outsiders by community members	Humor in pictures and text about city, 68%	"thousands of cats" in Paris, 31%
	Community	Focus on details, 37%	daily lives of people along with their peculiarities, 67%	uniforms, attire; fashion, 39%	Culture, leisure, religion (Christianity), 52%	bridges, squares, churches, cafes, shops, markets, 60%
	Town/City	Diversity in the big city, 35%	variety of paces in different parts of city, 64%	City guidebook for children, 45%	Paris, 48%	Buses, subway, cars, bicycles, boats, horses, 63%
	Environment	Occupations, men/women/children, foreigners. Country vs. city, 55%	clean, tidy; utilization of space, 51%	Dogs, cats, horses, donkeys, birds, 60%	Parks, gardens, rivers, plants, fountains, etc., 52%	People, animals and nature together in the big city, 61%

Table 7. Matrix with results for readings of This is Paris.

Patterns Appearing in Local Living Environment Picturebooks

After coloring boxes where response frequency was above 50% (bold text) in gray, different patterns became visible. While these patterns did not play a vital role in the current study, it was nevertheless intriguing to see them appear based on the most frequently appearing responses given by readers. They can be the key to further findings because it could be theorized that these two patterns indicate not only how a story in a picturebook unfolds but also how the students themselves understand the given picturebook story. While every picturebook has a story structure intended by its author — how a story is understood can vary among readers.

A remarkable aspect that became apparent in this particular study was the similarity in student responses in the way they comprehend the stories and messages in the five multicultural picturebooks. These results suggest that this type of children's literature can deeply affect readers on more than one level in developing in them a stronger sense of belonging towards their local living environment. A local living environment picturebook is thus an educational tool that can be easily used by its readers to produce a desired positive outcome (increased sense of belonging). This finding helps not only to show the living environment elements these picturebooks contain but also the relationship between those elements, and readers' understanding of them.

Challenges

Sipe (2008) looks at the role of the adult in encouraging children's meaning making from picturebooks. While children can assist one another in clarifying and enhancing their individual interpretations through discussions with one another, the teacher can assist readers in a variety of ways before, during, and after picturebook readings. Because of the vital role of the teacher, we have to acknowledge the fact that the instructions given prior to, and the discussions that took place before and after, the picturebook readings had some effect on the data collected in this study. Future studies of multicultural picturebooks covering the theme of local living environments will show how objective this study was in comparison with other readers' responses and the impact of the teacher in collecting data by students.

Interviews

Interview with a Publishing House Representative

In an interview with a representative of the largest textbook publishing house in Bulgaria, who is also an elementary school teacher, it was learned that in the latest hearings organized by the Ministry of Education, held every three years about issues with textbook material in the elementary school curriculum, selected teachers shared that most problems they find are with the “Hometown Studies” series. “My colleagues and me go to these hearings and talk about difficulties we experience when teaching according to the current curriculum. We also talk about what textbooks lack. Most teachers complained about “Hometown Studies” but I’m not too sure whether Ministry of Education representatives listen to us or not...” Based on such comments and evaluations by schoolteachers, textbook authors seem to adjust contents in the textbooks, although the application of major changes is usually not seen, added the interviewee.

Interview with a Major Local Newspaper Journalist

In another interview with a journalist covering educational news and issues for a major local newspaper it was shared that results from the most recent state exams at the end of fourth grade (also end of primary education in Bulgaria) show that the different subjects studied in elementary school are understood only separately and that students are not able to relate the information learned in one class with that learned in a different class. “Elementary students in Bulgaria learn things separately. They can’t relate something learned in one class with that learned in another.” The interviewee also stated that students in the Bulgarian elementary school are gaining

only “theoretical knowledge.” The journalist added that in elementary school students should be “learning by doing;” that they should be spending time outdoors in nature, walking down streets in their neighborhoods and this way learning about their local living environment. “Successful educational practices around the world show that students need to go out, on excursions in the outdoor. There they can learn from one another and by working in groups.” Taking into consideration the short attention span young learners have, making students only to study by reading the formal textbook is proving ineffective. “Learning only by reading the textbook, sitting alone and listening to the teacher, not learning by doing, not working in small groups is the wrong way to go about educating our youngest.” Although we understand how important teamwork is, especially later in life when we build our career, forming groups and instructing students to share skills and knowledge is rarely observed in Bulgarian schools, according to the interviewee.

Interview with First Elementary School Teacher

Another elementary school teacher interviewed for this study shared that in the “Hometown Studies” classes the curriculum mentions the street on which each student’s home is, the city where everyone lives and its location on the map of Bulgaria. “It really depends on the teacher — how he or she would go about teaching the lesson. The lesson is only one and I really hope my colleagues in elementary school are motivated to make it a good, positive experience for their students.” In first grade, throughout the school year students mainly learn about the four seasons and the changes in the physical world, as well as introduction of festivals and typical human activities during the different seasons. In second grade the cycle is repeated while more details are added to each category and types of transportation are

included as well. While means of transportation in Bulgaria vary from city to city, the textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education cover all existing ways of transport, even if some exist in only one city in the country, for example in the capital. Because the world of the elementary school students' age group is quite limited (comparatively this age groups travels the least both domestically and internationally), some things, such as transportation, remain understood only in an abstract way — they are not tangible for students. The interviewee shared that according to curriculum at the end of each school year, if the compulsory material has been covered, teachers are allowed to take their students on an excursion to a different city so that they can see something they can not usually see in their own place of residence (for example, subway and tram lines are in operation only in the capital city of Sofia). This of course, other than available time, depends on school budget availability. "Where can students at this age see a tram? Only in Sofia. This is an abstract term for them, intangible. A school with better budget could organize a trip to the capital. Students can this way see things that don't exist in their hometown." To a question about the frequency of lessons covering a student's locality, or their local living environment, the elementary school teacher answered that it is low — between once and three times throughout the school year. One lesson within the "Hometown Studies" class and once or twice more, depending on the teacher's creativity and available class time. Mainly this is done by giving students a project to gather information about a historical place in or person from their hometown, make a small poster on the topic, and present about it in class. "Last year my students had to gather information about the name of their street and present it in class — like a poster presentation. One student even made a slideshow presentation." The reasoning behind this is that students learn, and retain this new

knowledge, better when they have to collect and compile certain information themselves.

Because the topic of local living environment is barely covered in the “Hometown Studies” classes and because elementary school teachers feel the need to cover the topic of students’ place of residence, teachers tend to use other available time (ex., homeroom class) to do that asking students for example to draw a map of their route to school in the morning and back home after school or to go on an excursion with their classmates or parents to a selected landmark in their hometown and later present or have discussion in class about it.

The interviewed elementary school teacher stated that his students develop fast and on a variety of levels compared to any other stage in life. He said that his students are “woven out of curiosity.” He also said that there is a need for extra educational materials on the topic of local living environment that are easily accessible to young learners — both illustrated and with carefully selected text — teaching students about their “microcosm” with the students’ school and their homes in its poles. “Just like comic books and the Bible for children — they expose students to stories in a richly illustrated and simplified way. I think picturebooks can easily be that necessary educational tool to instill in young learners a sense of belonging and a sense of participatory citizenship.” Because such specialized literature on local living environments does not seem to exist, in the beginning existing literature from around the world will need to be translated into Bulgarian and later, when the need for such books with a local character becomes recognized, local illustrators and picturebook authors could begin creating it. “Another way to make a picturebook that is locality-specific is to involve the whole school — students, teachers and staff to

draw the illustrations and write the text. Everything related to picturebook creation, will culminate in a final product — a picturebook about the school, historical person or event, or anything related to the topic of hometown.” The teacher added, “Taking into consideration the negative population growth and the brain and muscle drains Bulgaria has been experiencing since 1991, nurturing a stronger sense of belonging in young learners is of great importance.” Bulgaria does need its “critical thinking mass” in order not only to survive but also to improve and even if young and capable people do leave the country for some reason (education, work abroad, etc.), a strong sense of belonging to a specific place in Bulgaria will be an important deciding factor for the person to contribute to their local community.

First Interview with Second Elementary School Teacher

In an interview with another elementary school teacher it was shared that students at this age most effectively learn through visual images and by doing. Beginning in first grade, but also continuing to build on it in the following three grades, the teacher said she “instruct[s] students to collect information about a topic of their choice about their hometown through individual site visits and by finding information in the school library or online, to present in a poster format in front of class. Later, posters are exhibited on walls in our classroom.” Unfortunately, the teacher commented, “doing anything extra,” i.e. while useful for the students not specifically mentioned in the school curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education, “really depends on the will of the given teacher.” Of course, students understand well when a teacher does not do only the bare minimum and appreciate when, from an educational point of view, more is done for them.

The second interviewee also shared that there are only two lessons in each of the four grades in elementary school covering the topic of hometown or local living environment — one in “Hometown Studies” class and another during one of the homeroom classes. The teacher said that even if most teachers find a way to teach two classes (class duration is 45 minutes) covering the topic of students’ hometown, it is “far from enough to instill a sense of belonging to their local living environment.” “The lesson found about hometown in textbooks in all four grades is usually spread over two pages, is generic — it is supposed to fit the needs of every city, town, village, etc. in Bulgaria, which of course makes it not area-specific.” The teacher continued talking about the problems in the current educational system, specifically in the elementary school in Bulgaria, complaining that “there are too many lessons introducing new knowledge and skills but not enough time allotted for review and for students to actually do something with what they have learned.” She added that having additional educational materials in the classroom on topics that are close to students’ everyday life would be effective and can be used during recess time, in homeroom class, and surely during specific lessons.

The teacher also shared that in elementary school “students experience difficulties understanding ideas such as what the Europe and the European Union are, the difference between the country Bulgaria and the its capital Sofia, and often say that their country of origin is their hometown.” “Quite the opposite should be done,” she added — “there should be more time allotted for excursions within students’ hometown, so that they can learn more about it” and only then knowledge should be build on, introducing “larger” ideas and definitions.

In the interview it was learned that many teachers collect variety of children's literature for their classrooms, usually through donations by students themselves, and that students frequently read those available books individually and in small groups. The interviewee shared an opinion that, "while it is popular for many students to look outside the country when it comes time for their higher education, a stronger bond with their neighborhood and community will, if not eventually bring them back, help them find a way to contribute to the improvement of the place of their roots in some way. To make this possible, the cooperation of parents is also vital." Through such activities at home as reading books about local living environments, discussions, questions and answers sessions, and story telling, parents can also help foster a sense of belonging in their children. The teacher said that such a "two-way" approach would be much more effective. At school, "Hometown Studies" is the class where love towards one's hometown is to be nurtured. "Definitely," the teacher added, "thematically selected specialized children's literature available in the classroom would be of help. Through excursions and outings on weekends information could be collected about different parts of the students' hometown and later compiled into a locality-specific picturebook designed by the students (and their teachers) themselves. If the whole school gets involved in the creation of such a book it would be used in a variety of classes and in a variety of ways, thus filling the lack of frequency, lessons, and materials about students' local living environment." In the end, the interviewee said that the elementary school teacher's influence on students is formative – it plays an essential role in young learners' development.

Second Interview with Second Elementary School Teacher

The interviews described thus far took place in the first year of this study and before the pilot study. A second interview with the second elementary school teacher was done following the pilot study. Below, what the teacher said about the five picturebooks used in this study and read with students in her class has been described. The teacher said, “I enjoyed all the five books. But also I see many ways the books can be used throughout the elementary school curriculum. Picturebooks just need to be translated into Bulgarian and made available in the classroom.” She specifically spoke about the wordless book used in this study — Jeannie Baker’s “Belonging.” The teacher said, “One easy way this book can be used in class is after reading it students can compare the streets, community and neighborhood presented in the book with their own. Also, what can be done by adults for the improvement of their locality (bottom-up), rather than waiting and expecting something to be done by the city mayor, city hall, etc. “Belonging” can be used as a model for students in making student-created books, a sort of an album, with illustrations and with or without text. At this stage of development, students often feel the need of a model on which to base their own projects.” The teacher commented that in her class there are 24 students and if each student makes a page for the book or album then that would be enough to create one.

All of the five books used in this study and read with students during the pilot study would be useful in classes such as “Reading” and not only in “Hometown Studies,” added the teacher. “Thematically selected picturebooks, such as the ones used in this study, would not only instill in students a stronger sense of belonging but also could be formative in developing social skills.” According to the interviewee,

“each book could be used in more than one class period, first introduced and later discussed by students in small groups. Another way to use the books in school would be as individual preparation or homework to be discussed later in class. While somewhat similar issues are taught in class in elementary school, they are not presented in a picturebook format but as excerpts from books.” Picturebooks covering similar themes that are also written by Bulgarian authors are nonexistent, said the interviewed teacher.

As the interview with the elementary teacher continued, she observed that “first using existing picturebooks translated into Bulgarian and later creating their own books one way or another could be the first step towards developing both critical and participatory skills to be used within their community and the society they are part of. Such picturebooks could cover a variety of topics — from one’s family to one’s community, neighborhood, place of residence, etc., teaching students about their rights as citizens and that it is possible to act in a “bottom-up” way when wanting to improve part of your world.” The teacher said that she strongly believes that elementary school is the most vital stage of development for students to nurture important social skills, interpersonal relation skills, and sense of belonging.

Interview with a Local University Professor, Department of Education

In the beginning of the interview the professor switched the roles of the interviewer and interviewee asking for an explanation of the study’s theoretical and practical work done so far and the vision of its eventual implication. After this was done, he said, “Well, I see great potential in the eventual implementation of local living environment picturebooks in school. Especially because teachers feel a great need for such supplemental educational materials.” Then he shared that potential

picturebooks about Plovdiv (the second largest city in Bulgaria and where this study mostly took place) could “feature streets named after historical figures or events about which students would do a research first to include on the pages of a picturebook they would be working on.” The professor added, “Elements of nature must be included in self-created picturebooks as well, such as plants and animals because nature plays an important role in our lives. Young learners tend to be more creative and can easily ‘see’ things in the world around them which an adult would either dismiss or not even think of. If textbooks introduce knowledge in a factual manner, picturebooks would be needed supplementary education material that teaches through creativity.” After quickly going through one of the picturebooks used in this study “A Bus Called Heaven” due to a request made by the interviewee, it was his opinion that “such books about local stories teach how through common effort to improve their community residents unite in a ‘bottom-up’ format, solve the problem in front of them and through that find themselves in a happier level of co-existence.” “There was nothing that was uniting the community,” continued the professor, “until the bus appeared and played exactly that important role. Stella’s adventures show both the tangible and, what is vital here, the intangible — the structure of human character. In the world of individualism we live in today, people need something that would unite them, something to make them work as a team. Selected picturebooks, in combination with a passionate and experienced teacher, are the key to instilling in students a will to make their surroundings a better place to live in.” In the end, the interviewee said that miracles surround us daily and seeing and feeling things for the first time is what is powerful in life. Every time a child reads and re-reads a book he or she finds something new, something that “was not” there the first time.

Illustration Responses

This study repeatedly mentioned the important relationship between images in text in picturebooks. Pantaleo (2005) looks at “children’s visual responses to literature” and “children’s interpretations” of picturebooks. Encouraging children in this study to respond to one of the picturebooks used in the study, “Belonging” (due to limited time and space in study) was done also from the viewpoint that while children may not have well developed written skills, they more easily express themselves through pictures at this stage of their development. Several selected illustrations will be analyzed below by looking for elements such as *people*, *neighborhood*, *community*, *town/city*, and *environment* — the elements found in Yoshizaka’s (1986) Concept of Living Environment. These five categories are also the base for the matrix used in this study for analysis of readers’ written responses.

The first illustration (Appendix ?) is in a “before/after” format — it shows Tracy’s (main character in “Belonging”) street as a hostile environment lacking in nature and animals, only to transform into a green oasis due to community members efforts later. The predominant color on the “before” side of the illustration is grey — the color of concrete, with minimal patches of green, as well as some brown color in the window frames. In the “after” part of the illustration we observe not only an abundance of the color green — in the grass — but also a flower and a plant appear in Tracy’s front yard. We can see more colors here, such as red and purple as well. In this illustration response the element *people* is not represented, although we see a *neighborhood* as a part of *city/town* and, somewhat indirectly, the results of the *community’s* efforts. Nature, or the surrounding *environment* is also well represented here.

The second response in illustration format (Appendix 2) is also done in a “before/after” style. This time, the world is seen through a window just as in the book. In this response we also do not see any *people* but the elements *city/town*, *neighborhood* and *environment* are the main focus. The “before” and “after” sides are very similar, the main difference being the lack of nature (animals, plants, etc.) in the former and its reintroduction in the latter. On the “after” side we also observe a *neighborhood* that is much more welcoming and comfortable to live in. That is illustrated through the sunny weather, the blooming flowers, and the overall abundance of green in the city.

The third illustration is somewhat different than the first two not only because its style is not a “before/after” one but because it is a more complex representation of Tracy’s neighborhood towards the end, or perhaps as a future episode. In it we notice *people*, as *community* members, enjoying life in their *neighborhood* in the *city/town* surrounded by nature — their living *environment*. Although people’s faces are not “visible” we can infer that people are enjoying outdoor activities such as riding bicycles and barbecuing. Different shades of green and bright colors, such as yellow and red are plentiful in the student’s picture.

Although illustration response number four is entirely grey, drawn only in pencil, a new element is observed here — depth of field. In this somewhat three-dimensional picture response the sense for an “urban oasis” is clear. We can almost “see” the green color in the tree and grass in the front yard, while the house is located not too far from the hustle and bustle of the big city, although just far enough so it is not part of it. There are no *people* represented in this illustration with the main focus, albeit indirect, being the family and the house within the *city*, thus representing

the child's microcosm, this is the world they know at this fragile age. Just as the previous one, this illustration is a representation of the story at the end of the book or an episode right after it.

The fifth picture response brings yet again something not observed thus far — it is drawn in a *circular* pattern, or perhaps even in a *mandala* one. In it, the main elements are the *people* positioned along the mandala, holding hands — subtly suggesting life in peace and harmony. Flowers, trees, and the sun are prominently displayed along the mandala, characterizing nature as a central element in *people's* local living *environment*. On one side of the mandala, in Bulgarian, we read “Which Future” — and urgent message that humans can make the decision to reintroduce local plants and animals in cities for their own benefit.

In the final illustration response presented in this study we see discover that “Tracy is a butterfly” (again written in Bulgarian). Here the element of *people*, Tracy and *environment*, a butterfly are one and the same. This metamorphosis shows us a sense of creativity and imagination often found in learners in this age group, which in turn demonstrates that children often do not follow, or function according to, “the rules of grownups.” The elements *town/city*, *neighborhood* and *community* are not seen in this illustration. The somewhat pale colors in which the sun, grass, and trees are drawn, as well as the lack of foliage on trees, perhaps represent the change of seasons, bringing us back to the element of *environment*.

Although students' responses in an illustration format differed from one another and represented different elements, by incorporating this third method of analysis which proved to be an easy way for students to offer their readers' responses, confirmed findings that became apparent through the other two methods

— the matrix and the interviews. To different extent the five elements the matrix was based on (people, neighborhood, community, town/city, and environment) appeared in students' illustration responses. Most of the illustrations were more *linear*, although one was arranged in a *mandala* form. The idea that children think, act, and function in a different way compared to adults that became clear in the different interviews with people involved in education and pedagogy, was also confirmed through illustrations rich in ideas and creativity.

The Matrix

The matrix proved to be the core finding of this study as a tool to measure the process of instilling a sense of belonging in readers by reading local living environment picturebooks. It was based on Takamasa Yoshizaka's Concept to Local Living Environment and it borrowed the elements of the five spheres in the concept (People, Neighborhood, Community, Town/City, Environment) and directly incorporated them. When blank matrices were distributed to respondents after readings of each book, they ended up being almost fully filled up with keywords and phrases based on readers' impressions (Reader Response Theory). This showed how such thematically-selected picturebooks positively impact readers and how readers react to such literary works, while a stronger sense of belonging is being nurtured in the process.

Although local living environment picturebooks have been used in practice with the goal of fostering a sense of belonging in readers, this tool empirically showed for the first time how and why this is done, linking the practical use of such books and the end-goal of stronger sense of belonging being instilled in readers. The matrix is not a tool to be used in order to create the "ideal" local living environment

picturebooks. Picturebook should be created based on the idea and the goal of the picturebook creator — an imaginative process that does not need to be set within some limits. The matrix should be used with a bigger number and variety of local living environment picturebooks shedding more light on the process of how sense of belonging is being instilled in readers.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the study which included data from the following: written responses to the first reading (pilot study) of “A Bus Called Heaven,” “Belonging,” “The Streets Are Free,” “Tar Beach,” and “This is Paris,” tabulated responses from all the collected data, structure patterns of local living environment picturebooks that emerged through tabulated readers’ responses (and later also appeared in illustrated readers’ responses), mentioned some challenges experienced in this study, and described interviews done at various stages of this study with a publishing house representative, a local newspaper journalist, two homeroom teachers, and a university professor, and analyzed six illustrated responses to the book “Belonging.” Also, the use of the matrix and its importance as the core element in the findings of this study were described. The next chapter will present a summary of the study and the results of the study with reference to the research questions.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a summary of the study and discussion of the results in regard to the research questions indicated in Chapter One. Implications for educational practice, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research are discussed in Chapter Six.

Summary of the Study

This study was conducted in an attempt to ascertain readers' responses to five selected multicultural books that embody the theme of local living environment: "A Bus Called Heaven," "Belonging," "The Streets Are Free," "Tar Beach," and "This is Paris." The books in turn were chosen based on Takamasa Yoshizaka's (1986) Concept of Local Living Environment and its five spheres: *people, neighborhood, community, town/city, and environment*. Rosenblatt's (1938) Reader's Response Theory was employed in this study because it focuses on the the reader and their experience of a literary work, in contrast to other schools and theories that focus attention primarily on the author or the content and form of the work. Keywords emerging from readers' responses in pilot study helped categorize and code the matrix used in the study.

Picturebooks combine art and text initiating a multimodal ensemble that require more complex cognitive skills than reading text alone (Kress 2008). As an educational tool for children picturebooks have been studied since the format appeared some 350 years ago (see *Orbis Pictus* by J.A. Comenius, 1658). Children's literature has been incorporated in areas ranging from foreign language

studies to mathematics. This study looked at picturebooks that incorporate local living environment elements which, through frequent readings of them, can help foster a sense of belonging and pride of their roots in young learners towards their hometown and place of residence.

Little research has been conducted on thematically selected picturebooks (about local living environments), especially with regard to their use in the classroom as an educational tool for nurturing a sense of belonging in young readers. No studies have examined reader response to local living environment picturebooks in combination with an ecological systems concept, such as Yoshizaka's (1986) incorporated in this study.

This study explored the responses of elementary school students (1 - 4 grade) in Bulgaria, as well as university students (second year) in Japan to the five local living environment picturebooks used in this study (listed above) to determine whether students recognized the five elements embodied in the picturebooks: *people, neighborhood, community, city/town, and environment*, thus suggesting that such literature can instill sense of belonging in readers. It sought to examine how students made meaning of picturebooks and if they could recognize serious issues when presented in picturebook format.

A qualitative study grounded on reader response theory was conducted, including elements of quantitative research seen in the matrix based on Yoshizaka's Concept of Local Living Environment, for a unique mix-methods study. Data sources comprised of student written responses to readings of the five books, interviews with teachers, a journalist, a publisher, and a university professor, as well as student

illustration responses to one of the five books. A discussion of the results is presented next.

Discussion of the Results

Data collected from this study attempts to address four research questions. Each question is listed below with a discussion of relevant results from the various data sources.

Research Question One

The first research question asked, “How do readers respond to living environment picturebooks?” Of specific concern was how they responded to the thematically selected picturebooks embodying elements of local living environments: “A Bus Called Heaven,” “Belonging,” “The Streets Are Free,” “Tar Beach,” and “This is Paris.” The following section will discuss students’ responses as well as students’ experience with local living environment picturebooks.

Student Responses to and Experience with the Five Selected Books

Student responses to the books used in this study were positive and were similar to responses they might make to a traditional prose novel with the difference that in picturebooks images played an important role in the narrative, making the format somewhat unique. Since students were used to read mainly text-only literary formats, it was quite interesting for them to return to the picturebook format. That was true especially for university students.

A Bus Called Heaven

As the first picturebook was introduced to students, they did not know what to make of its title — many may have expected a story where the main character dies and goes to heaven. As soon as the story began unfolding though, students were deeply engaged with characters, surroundings, and the plot. The dilapidated bus appearing on Stella’s street and her making the bold move to “make it theirs” hooked readers who were impatiently waiting for the pages to turn. The urban setting and the diversity of characters in the book reminded students of their places of residence — Plovdiv, Bulgaria and Tokyo, Japan. During the discussions after the book was read university students commented that the scene where community members move the bus into Stella’s yard where they clean, repaint, and turn it into a gathering space is quite similar to what professors give them as examples of a “bottom-up” style of community development. Elementary school students also recognized something similar, saying that their teachers often told them to cooperate to keep their neighborhoods clean, which in turn will provide for a more engaged community and a better living environment. Students were moved when Stella showed courage and disregarded “adults’ rules” not for her own benefit, but for the people, animals, and environment around her. Readers commented that the books promoted imagination and creativity, and showed that change begins with us and from within us.

Belonging

When the second picturebook was presented to students they expected that the reading experience would be something similar to that of the first picturebook. Soon they realized that they are reading a wordless picturebook, only to be surprised again from the amount of text clues spread over the pages of the book. For many

students reading a wordless picturebook was a new experience and in comments during the discussion later they said that they loved the room for imagination on an individual level “Belonging” allowed for.

Students followed the life of Tracy, from her birth to her twenties, and the changes that occurred in and around her suburban home. Book pages (spreads) are similar in that the reader “looks through” Tracy’s window in two-year intervals, displaying the positive changes that happen on her street and in her part of town thanks to local people’s efforts to improve their living environment and reintroduce local plants and animals. Readers said that the book displayed life in a city not too different than their own. It showed them the importance of human connections, as well as the fact that humans feel the need to live in harmony with nature no matter their place of residence — even in the big city. Students commented that the book motivated them to do something positive toward the improvement of their living environment and gave them examples how this can be done.

The Streets Are Free

The third book read with students proved to be the longest one and the one including most text. In readings with elementary school students though, readers remained focused until the end, while university students were the ones somewhat losing concentration during readings of the book. This confirms the notion that the role of the teacher or adult reading the book is of importance, and that picturebook readings should be approached in an interesting and engaging way.

Students commented that in the book it was visible that the forces of urbanization play a negative role in what happens to nature and that people have to

sacrifice access to clean water and air for the benefits of convenience of life in an urban area. They began asking themselves whether there was a way of enjoying both. They also saw that things like corruption in politics and poor neighborhoods exist all over the world. Students commented that the book presents in a clear way the difference between “top-down” and “bottom-up” developments. They commented that the latter is what they liked since they had access to it. Through readings of this book with Bulgarian and Japanese students it became clear that while the story may be happening in a far-away corner of the world, it resonates with students now as they experience both disconnection from nature and time spent outdoors.

Tar Beach

For elementary school students in Bulgaria “Tar Beach” proved to be the most difficult to comprehend since this emblematic story is full of historical and symbolic references essential to African-American culture, specifically in 1939 Harlem. Also, the story illustrates a Depression era family’s struggles, i.e. Cassie’s father and grandfather are denied membership in the union because of their race. University students seemed to have better understanding of those issues due to the fact at their age they had had more formal and informal experience with such topics. However, both groups of students felt the power of “Tar Beach” as the book gives a lesson on how not to be confined in societal dogma but to remain children at heart and to continue nurturing imagination and creativity in ourselves throughout our lives. This is visible as little Cassie dreams of power and freedom and she magically empowers her family by flying over buildings, claiming them her own. The book definitely introduced to readers new characters and their relationship in their neighborhood and in the community on the apartment building rooftop in New York.

This is Paris

The last book to be read proved to be elementary school students' favorite for several reasons. As this travelogue picturebook took readers on a journey through the most famous places in Paris to meet with various people, "see" historical buildings and landmarks, and "touch" nature and animals there, doing it with a hint of mischievousness both in text and pictures, it did it in such a subtle way that readers were left with two sets of strong feelings in the end: that they have a sense of understanding of one of the capitals of the world without actually ever been there, and that now they wanted to read a similar book about their own hometown, even if they had to produce it.

This book is not only a great exploratory tool not only to learn about a far away place or to better understand one's own hometown, but also clearly displays how such literature — local living environment picturebooks — nurtures in young readers a sense of belonging toward the place they reside.

The five books selected for this study proved popular, interesting, and engaging according to both students' comments during discussions after readings and to their reader responses that appear in matrices. These award-winning multicultural picturebooks originating in and representing different countries — Australia, Venezuela, the U.S., and France — were selected for this study because of the local living environment elements each of them embodies: *people, neighborhood, community, town/city, and environment*. Reader responses suggest that indeed such thematically selected picturebooks have the potential to instill in their readers a sense of belonging to their hometown. This is true especially for young learners (elementary school students) because of the fact that they are at an

age in which they develop fast and on different levels. Picturebooks proved to have similar effect on university students — an age level where students learn to think critically about social, environmental and other complex issues. The return to reading picturebooks proved to be effective for the above reasons.

Research Question Two

The second research question asked, “How do readers make meaning in a picturebook?” This question was answered in by examining students’ methods for reading picturebooks — that was addressed in students’ written responses, as well as in illustration ones, and during discussions.

In contrast with traditional text novels, response strategies used by students indicated the importance of the images, or visual literacy. Illustrations in picturebooks provided details and played an important role in the narrative. Eisner (1996) stated that no one really knows how readers approach multimodal texts — whether the text is read before or after viewing the pictures, validating Schmitt’s (1992) approach of “zigzagging.”

Students recognized that reading picturebooks required multitasking and use of multimodal literacy skills and most of them stated that the combination of text and image helped them make do to the story. In the multimodal ensemble that picturebooks possess, students recognized that the illustrations and words build on each other to create a new unique mode. This new multimodal literacy, build up of two modes in two separate literacies, was required for meaning making (Kress 2008, Siegel 2006). Arizpe and Style (2008) report that multimodal text require enough time to look closely at texts, to go back and forth between images, and to reread, which in

turn adds to the concept that readers find new elements in picturebooks as they revisit them, making them an effective educational tool for the classroom. “For students who no longer deal with pure word texts in their daily lives, multiple literacies are a necessity” (Schwartz 2006, p. 63) The more practice learners gain with multimodal materials, the more they go into detail, comparing facts across texts, seeing themselves as co-creators with multimodal text makers (Wolf 2008).

Research Question Three

The third research question concerned students’ abilities to interpret thematic issues when presented in picturebook form. In written and illustration reader responses, as well during discussions, it became apparent that students recognized the major local living environment elements in the five picturebooks used in this study. Students also identified social, environmental, racial, political, and community-related issues.

Some students admitted that at first they did not think picturebooks can communicate serious issues, thus not taking the format seriously, only to be surprised later as how much they enjoyed reading the books, and how effectively picturebook makers communicate complex issues through this format. Revisiting the picturebook format after years (especially in the case of university students) readers were reawakened about the literary merit of this format. Although mainly the content of the five thematically selected picturebooks through which sense of belonging can be nurtured was the focus of the study, the format of the books played an important role too.

In the interviews conducted with teachers, publisher, journalist, and university professor, and in discussions with students after readings of the books, it was learned that thematically selected picturebooks should be included in the elementary school curriculum. Specifically, local living environment picturebooks should be used in the “Hometown Studies” classes to fill the existing gap created by the lack of lessons in textbooks and lack of frequency of hometown lessons, according to the current curriculum. Elementary school students and their teachers commented that, if possible, they would like to have copies of the five picturebooks used in this study, translated into Bulgarian to be accessed easily not only to be used in class but also in students’ free time. Finding picturebooks engaging also supports the research that multimodal literature can be effectively used as a motivational education tool (Krashen 2004).

Research Question Four

The last research question asked the vital for this study question, “How do picturebooks nurture a sense of belonging in readers?” It became clear from written reader responses, interviews with people involved in education, and illustration reader responses that local living environment picturebooks not only have the potential to foster in readers a sense of belonging toward their locality but also that ,as a supplementary educational material, such literature is desperately needed in places like elementary schools in Bulgaria where students unfortunately do not have access to any similar thematic texts. This is due to the fact that Bulgaria’s Ministry of Education decides how elementary school curriculum should look like, thus limiting publishers when creating textbooks, such as for the “Hometown Studies” classes, because such textbooks would be approved to be used in schools

by the Ministry of Education only if they are in line with the decided curriculum. This created vicious cycle would prove difficult to deal with. However, teachers are free to use any additional educational tools and materials they deem both necessary and effective for the lessons they teach, in their classrooms, and to their students. This is exactly the case with the thematically selected picturebooks studied here.

Through the Reader Response Theory (Rosenblatt 1938) and thought he prism of the Concept of Local Living Environment (Yoshizaka 1986) this study not only helped shed more light on how multicultural picturebooks selected thematically instill in readers a sense of belonging, but also showed where and how exactly such children's literature is to be used. Also, the research topic proved timely in the case of elementary schools and the teachers and students there.

Summary of the Results Concerning the Research Questions

In summary, students responded to the five picturebooks in many of the traditional ways students would respond to traditional text novels assigned in the classroom with the addition of responses about images and responses in an illustration form. Students recognized literary elements such as theme, story, and characters. Responses were related to both text and images.

Students had had much experience with the picturebook format at a younger age, and were pleasantly surprised when they were reintroduced to this type of children's literature. After readings, they were amazed at how much they like the five picturebooks used in this study. Students believed that picturebooks have a great potential and should play a more prominent role in their classroom.

Students did not seem to have any specific difficulty when reading the picturebooks. They used various ways of reading, their methods including reading both text and images. During discussions students noted that it was helpful that picturebooks were made available to look at again and in more detail to give them a closer attention.

Readers were also able to recognize serious issues when presented in picturebook format. They felt that thematically selected picturebooks should be included in the school curriculum, and that especially in areas of studies where lack of materials was felt by students and teachers, picturebooks have an important role to play.

This study also showed: how local living environment picturebooks theme and story relate to the five circular layers in Yoshizaka's concept and also, how such picturebooks illustrate Yoshizaka's Concept of Local Living Environment as stories in them unfold — the matrices built on this concept show this reader responses; that local living environment picturebooks embody the elements in Yoshizaka's concept and the importance of their interrelation with one another; the lines drawn through each table following the keywords forming either a linear or circular structure pattern show how stories in the books progress and how they are understood by readers.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND TEACHING

This chapter discusses implications for educational practice. It also present some limitations of the study. Finally, it offers suggestions for further research and some final comments.

Implications for Educational Practice

One result in this study confirms that young learners enjoy reading local living environment picturebooks. This demonstrates that such thematically selected literature can be popular with students and effective as a supplementary educational tool for teachers, provided that they are made available in schools — in the classroom and in the school library.

Students responded to picturebooks in ways similar to responses they would make to traditional text-only literature. Teachers and librarians seek to expose students to a variety of genres and formats to broaden their skills and interests. The Internet together with film and drama are widely accepted formats in the classroom and library. Multicultural picturebooks, thematically selected for the given subject and class, can be introduced as an alternative format, in addition to traditional textbooks, and used for similar purposes. The capacity of the picturebook has been demonstrated in teaching a variety of subjects and teachers have successfully integrated them into the classroom for different purposes. Local living environment picturebooks can in turn be effectively used in classes such as the “Hometown Studies” classes in the elementary school in Bulgaria.

Although some students might have been skeptical about reading local living environment picturebooks, all of them recognized serious issues presented in this format. Student awareness of such thematic literature would be increased if it is included as supplementary educational material to the curriculum. Teachers who participated in this study showed readiness and desire to include these picturebooks in their classroom library, thus accepting them as legitimate literature that has the ability to address serious issues. Since students find such picturebooks engaging, incorporating them into the curriculum in some capacity would increase students' participation and learning. Because similar thematic picturebooks seem not to exist in the Bulgarian book market, they first have to be translated into the language and, hopefully, local picturebook makers would pick on the topic. Another way of creating locality-specific picturebooks would be to engage the whole school — students, teachers, and staff — in the production of such literature to be used later by current and future students, while the model could be repeated.

Miller (2015) says, “Students urgently need opportunities in schools to develop new literacies, performance knowledge, and multimodal learning strategies required for new times and social futures” (p. 451). Kress (2008) talks about the importance of images and says that the visual elements of texts are becoming ever more complex. He also points that the screen is replacing the book as the dominant communication medium and that the dominance of text has been replaced by that of image. Kress believes that eventually this will change the nature of writing on the page because of the multimodality of writing on the screen and its placement, shape, size, and color, and its position to images.

Ideally, organs like the Ministry of Education in Bulgaria would loosen their grip on curriculum design and development, and in a decentralized way will allow provinces and cities to create their own school curriculums according to their local peculiarities and needs. This in turn would allow more freedom for textbook publishers to serve the needs of different localities. Unfortunately, whether this is going to happen at all remains unknown. What can be done now is to fill the existing educational gap in subjects such as “Hometown Studies” and offer students lessons and materials that motivate them to think about their own local living environment in a positive way. Thematically selected picturebooks can easily be the needed supplementary educational materials and tools.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations including the choice of picturebooks and the limited access (frequency) to the elementary school in Bulgaria due to the fact that the researcher currently lives in Japan.

Selection of the five picturebooks for this study (also found in Dr. Yasuhiro Endoh’s massive collection of thematic picturebooks) — “A Bus Called Heaven,” “Belonging,” “The Streets Are Free,” “Tar Beach,” and “This is Paris” — were based not only on the fact that they are all award-winning multicultural picturebooks that have proved to be popular with young audiences around the world, but also because they all embodied the five elements found in Yoshizaka’s Concept of Living Environment: people, community, neighborhood, city/town, and environment. The books represent quality literature for young people and of picturebooks, but the study reflects a unique experience with these five books that might be difficult to repeat with other picturebooks. This suggests that it might not be easy to draw

generalizations about students' responses to picturebooks overall from their responses to these five particular books. It is important to follow certain criteria, such as the elements of local living environments when selecting picturebooks to be used in specific classes, such as "Hometown Studies" classes.

In preliminary stages of this study, I visited the model elementary school in Bulgaria to actually observe "Hometown Studies" lessons. Since the teachers were willing to cooperate, they "saved" the one actual lesson about the students' place of residence for when I was present, so that I could see how material was presented through the textbook and students' reaction to it. Living and working in a university in Japan meant that the only time I could visit Bulgaria and conduct field work there was during longer vacations — Spring and Summer breaks. The Spring break for most Japanese universities takes time in February and March, and Summer — in August and September. The former two months were the only time to observe classes since they were in session then. During the latter two months schools in Bulgaria were dismissed for their summer vacation. This meant that field work involving events such as observations needed to take place in February-March, and others, such as interviews with people involved in education, etc. — to be conducted in summer. If I had more frequent access to the elementary school and students and teachers there, I could have been able to collect an even richer data from readers. Luckily for this study, I was welcomed by both teachers and students when readings needed to be done, and teachers did not mind conducting lessons I pointed at during the times I was there to observe.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study contributed to reader response research with regard to picturebooks. Because there is so little empirical research with picturebooks, it suggests further research possibilities.

A different way to conduct this could be by using a more representative sample. Such sample could include a broader age range: junior high and high school students for example, and greater diversity in terms of population. This would assist for better prediction and generalizability.

Second way of replicating this study would be by using a different set of local living environment picturebooks. Further research could focus on picturebooks that have been created by local authors and artists, or on picturebooks created by students themselves (with the help of teachers, etc.). Nevertheless, the books used to instill a sense of belonging in readers ought to embody one or more of Yoshizaka's Concept of Local Living Environment elements, making it a central focus of the book.

Repeating this study in a different context, for instance in a school that has used such literature by incorporating in the curriculum as supplementary educational material, would provide different results. It can be assumed that students familiar with picturebooks would respond differently than readers in this study, most of whom were unfamiliar with local living environment picturebooks, although all of them had previous experience with the picturebook format.

A study of longer duration would be another way to approach this research. This would assist the researcher to introduce a greater number and variety of picturebooks featuring hometown elements and scrutinize reader response in more

detail. A study conducted over a longer period of time would also allow for additional lessons with the same or different students and teachers, and in different school subjects.

Another possibility would be to conduct this research in an on-line class and compare reader responses with those of similar picturebooks read in a traditional classroom format. Do students today have a preference for one medium over another? Would there be difference in response between on-line and traditional learners? Are picturebooks accepted better as a literature introducing serious social and other issues when presented in a digital form?

This study used a manual method in counting the frequency of similar reader responses, making the task time consuming and laborious. Future research should incorporate a type of well-recognized software used in the field of statistics, etc. to make the process more justifiable, more easily reproduced, and even more trustworthy. The use of software in future studies would also show how similar or different results are compared to this (original) study.

The matrix used in study and distributed to readers to fill out could (and in future should) incorporate pictures or small icons for each of the five categories, People, Neighborhood, Community, Town/City, and Environment. A clear example of such icons used in architectural and city planning studies can be seen in Appendix 19. The inclusion of small pictures into the matrix will help respondents, especially children, to understand what this reader response task requires of them and what the different categories mean.

Picturebooks have been used as an educational tool and material since their beginning. At the same time, local living environment picturebooks and their potential to instill in readers a sense of belonging toward their place of residence is an under researched area to say the least. Further and more empirical and academic research is needed to shed even more light on how this type of children's literature can help develop young learners in desired directions.

Final Comments

This study was designed and conducted to probe into reader response to picturebooks about local living environments and learn if and how such thematically selected literature fosters in readers a sense of belonging toward their hometown and their locality. Reading the local living environment picturebooks was a new experience for the participants in this study. This finding opposes the belief that picturebooks play an important role in the development only of very young learners — those who are still learning how to read — and once this stage is passed picturebooks are not a type of literature to return to. Students had no difficulty understanding the five picturebooks elected for this study. With the introduction of this type of picturebooks, students learned to more closely examine the text and images, and that serious issues can be exhibited through this type of children's literature.

Although research about picturebooks abounds, it could be true that we are novices in the studies of local living environment picturebooks — only now learning how much we do not know. It is hoped that this study helps contribute toward the scholarship in the field of such thematically selected picturebooks for specific educational purposes, as well as toward reader response studies.

It is also hoped that this study adds to the discussion of multimodal literature and of picturebooks as multimodal texts. Mainly, this study sheds more light on thematically selected multicultural picturebooks and their role in fostering a stronger sense of belonging in young readers. Including such picturebooks as additional educational material to the curriculum will help students to develop what Endoh (2015) refers to as “love towards the place you live in;” to contribute for a better place of life for themselves and people around them.

Picturebooks

Baker, J. (2004). *Belonging*. Walker Books: London

Graham, B. (2013). *A Bus Called Heaven*. Walker Books: London

Kurusa. (1995). *The Streets are Free*. Annick Press: New York.

Ringgold, F. (1991). *Tar Beach*. Dragonfly Books: New York.

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Appendix 1



Appendix 2



nyqgn

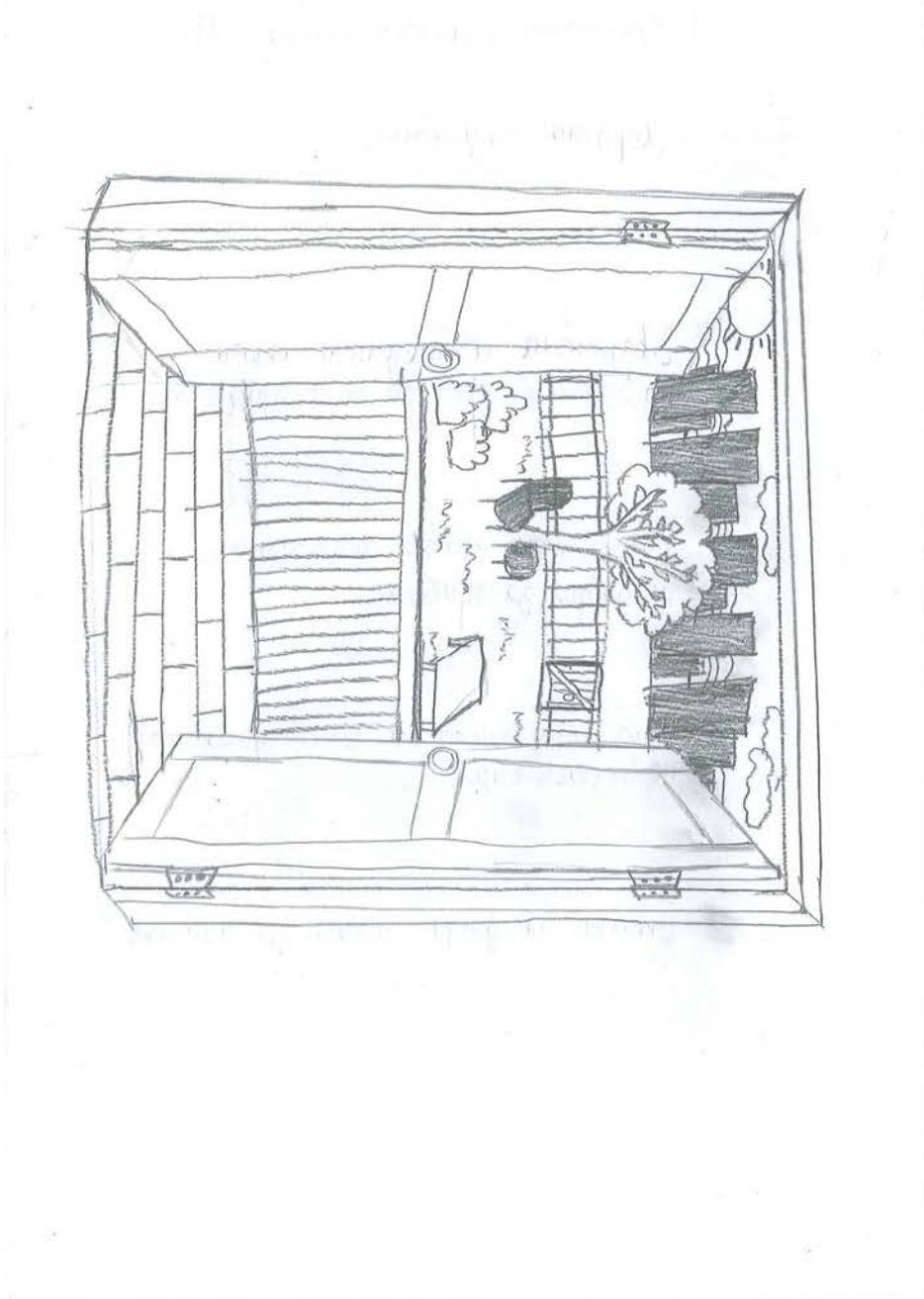


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Appendix 3



Appendix 4



Appendix 5



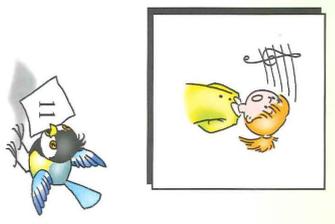
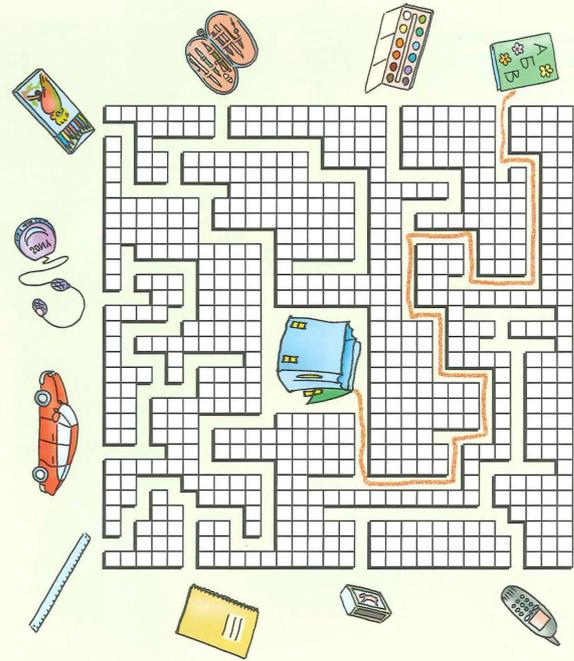
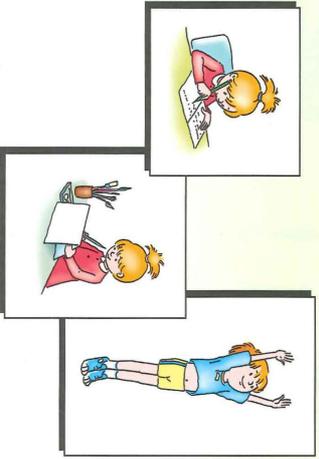
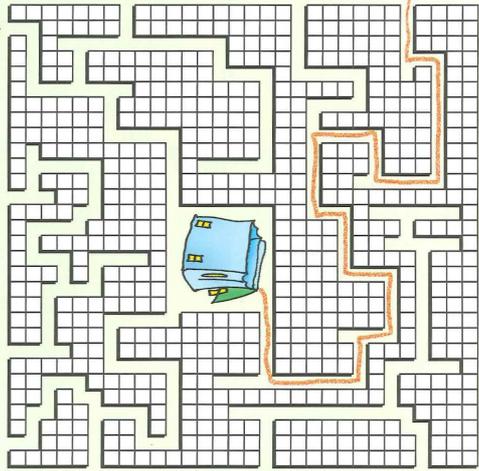
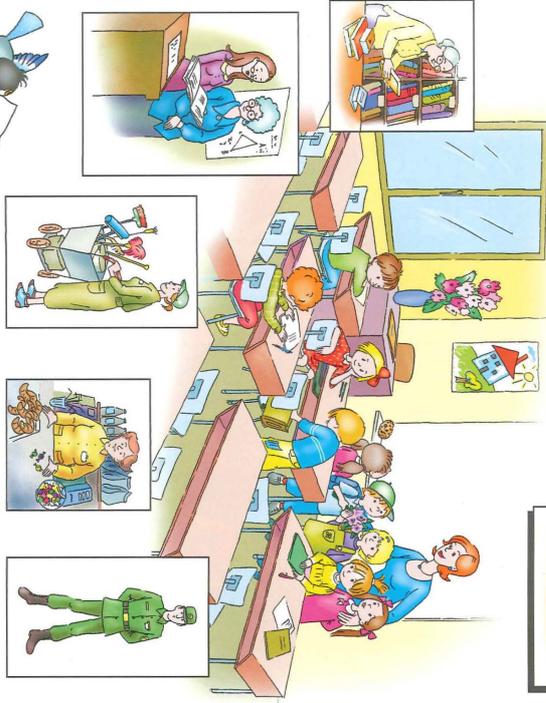
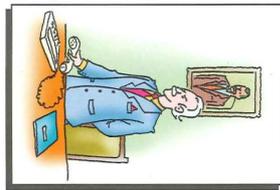
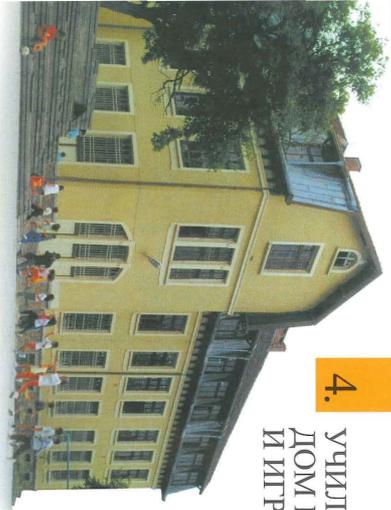
Appendix 6



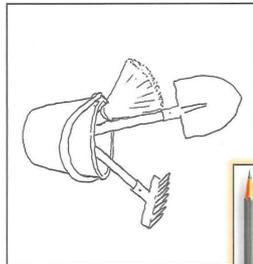
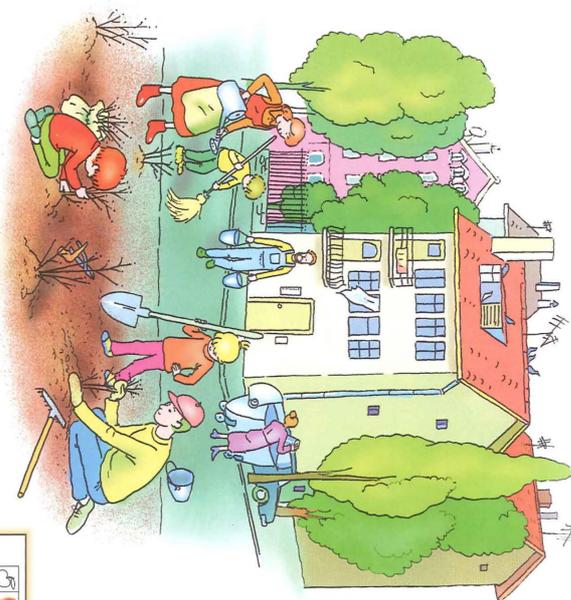
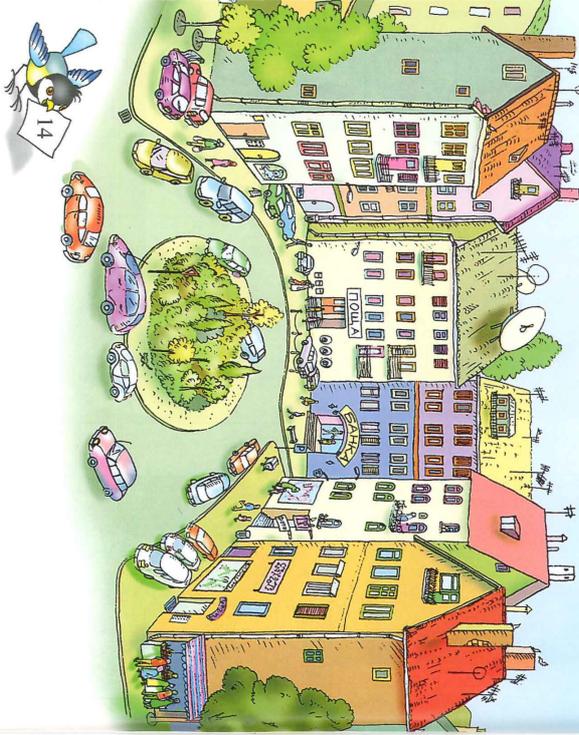
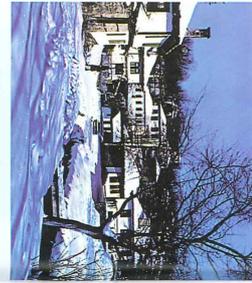
Appendix 7



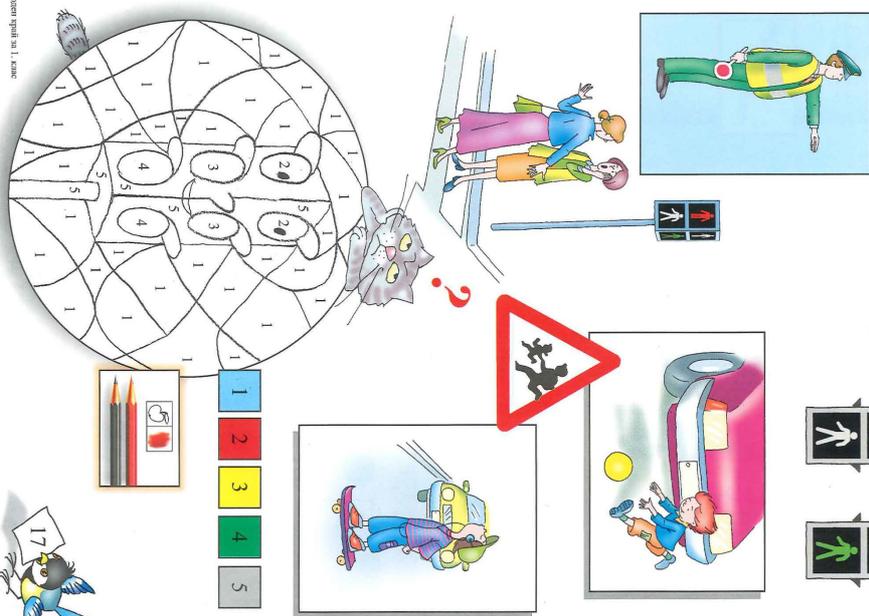
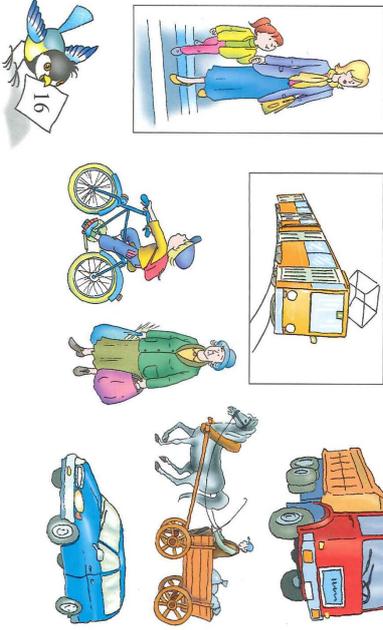
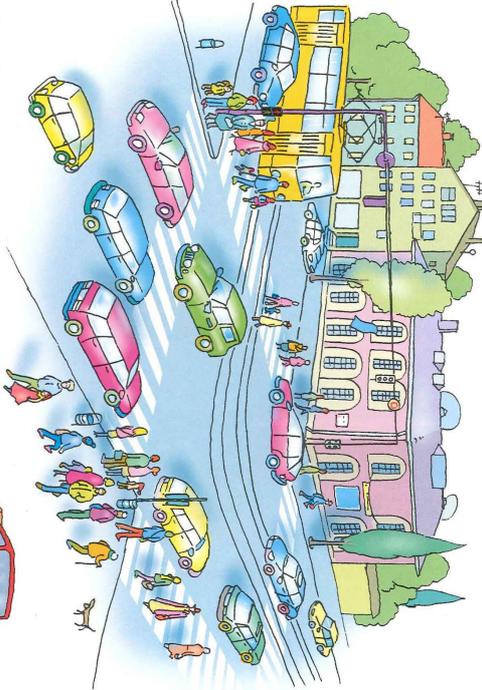
4. УЧИЛИЩЕТО –
ДОМ НА ЗНАНИЯ
И ИГРИ



6. ПОДНО МАСТО



7. УЛИЦАТА ИМА СВОИ ПРАВИЛА



3. Разцвети котката на 1, 2, 3, 4 и 5.



4. Моего родно място

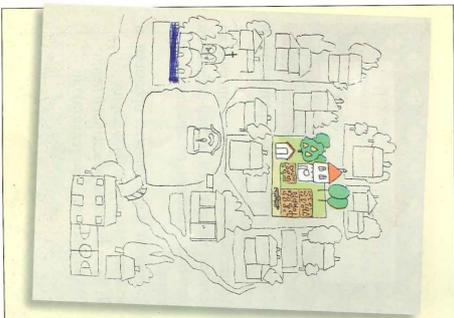
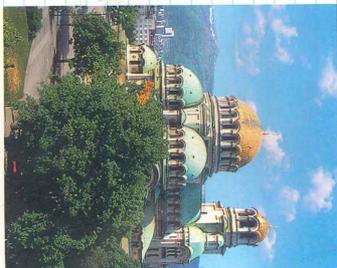
Здравей, Лени.

Моего родно място е София – най-големият град в България. Той се намира в полите на планината Витоша.

Найинтересният ни е на шестия етаж в жилищен блок на булевард „Васил Левски“ № 102. Това е нашият адрес.

От балкона се виждат познатите кулети на храма „Свети Александър Невски“.

Изваз в парка до блока с приятелите от моя клас. През празничните дни се разхождаме в Борисовата градина. Права си и изгледи в планината.



Скъпи Лени,
Аз живея във Варна, но съм роден в едно село сред полето. Каза се Звездича. Сега мама живее в баба и дядо. Бабащата каза е малка, но има златен двор с цветна, оводна и зеленчукова градина. Тамата се близо до площада. На площада в центъра на селото има стара каменна църква. Отляво е църквата. През селото протича рекчица. Нашето село е малко и всички хора се познават. Ако ми прадиш картичка по пощата, доста ти ще е адресът.
Поздравяват: Стоян Петров (ба Евета) с Звездича, Варненско ДК 9103.
Тамто надписвай схемата на центъра на селото с бабащата каза. Изправам ти я.

Хората се раждат и живеят в различни по големина селища – градове и села. Раждат или селото заедно с неговата околност е родното място на човека. В него той живее с най-близките си – мама, татко, братя и сестри – със своето семейство.

Човек може да е роден в едно селище, а да живее и учи в друго. Хората помнят и обичат както своето родно място, така и селището, в което живеят.



1. С кой от снимките по-долу свързваш твоего родно място?
2. Прочети анекдота и помисли защо трябва да знаеш точния си адрес.

Момчето се изгубило и пшавче. Минувач иска да му помогне:
– Защо плачеш, момченце?
– Изгубих се-се-се!
– Не плачай! На кой адрес живееш?
– У дома-а-а!



1. Припомни си стихотворението „Родна стръха“ от Рад Босилек. Обсъдете в класа защо родното място ни е толкова скъпо.
2. Представи си, че си екскурзовод и разказваш случениците си в твоего родно място. Обясни откъде произлиза името му; къде е разположено; какво знаеш за миналото му и за живота в него.
3. Направи албум с изгледи от твоего родно място.



5. Селището, в което живея

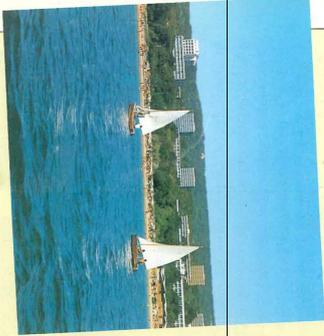
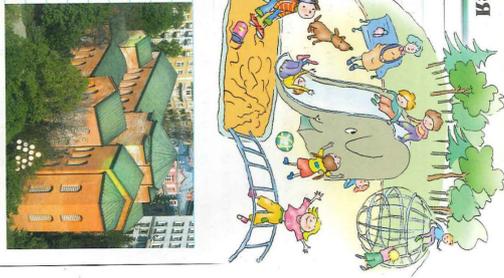
Мила Лена,

аз никога не съм ходил на село. В нашия град къщите имат големи дворове. Улиците са шумни. По тях се движат много коли, въздухът е замърсен и прущен.

Добре че надявам се наркест! Там е чисто и приятно. Има спортна площадка и парцалка за деца.

По зелените поляни растат и цветя. Веднъж надорях букет от елхурчени за мама, но тя не се зарадва. Каза ми, че трябва да навам цветята, за да могат всички да им се радват.

Един от забележителностите на София е църквата „Света София“. Тя е дала името на града.



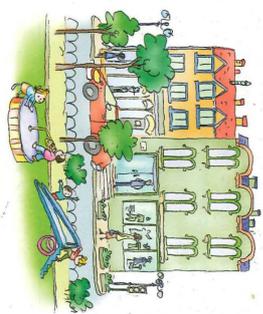
Скъпи Лео,
Обичам да ходя при баба на село, защото там въздухът е чист. Както работата на мама и на татко. Баба е нрасяв и чист град, но по улиците се движат много коли и понякога въздухът също е замърсен. Колко ще е хубаво колите да са безшумен и да не изпускат толкова пръщен! Мислиш ли, че може да има такива коли?
Над-приятно е на морския бряг. С татко ти изпращаме поздрав от него.

Градовете са големи селища с високи многоетажни сгради. В селата къщите са зобиколен от двор с овощи дървета, зеленчуци и цветя. Във всеки град и село има централен площад. Там се намират кметството, пощата, полицията, големите магазини. В селата са построени здравни пунктове, а в градовете – болници. За отпиха и развлеченията на жителите има кина, театри, стадиони, паркове.

Животът в селището е приятен, когато то е благоустроено и чисто. Жителите на селището са и негови стопани. Те трябва да се грижат за реда и чистотата в него.



- 1 Какво е общото между селищата?
- 2 По какво се различават селото и градът?



- 1 Начертай план на центъра на селището, наричан по-горе.
- 2 Помогни да ти помогнат и разкажи за интересно събитие или известна личност, свързани със селището, в което живееш.
- 3 Избери в кое от изобразените селища искаш да живееш. Обясни избора си.



46. МОЯТ РОДЕН КРАЙ



Храм-паметник
„Свети Александър Невски“



98

Вече знаеш колко красива и разнообразна е природата на нашата родина. Неизброими са природните богатства в равнините и низините, в планините, край реките и морето, под земята. Със своя труд хората ги откриват и превръщат в нови, полезни за живота продукти.

Родният край на всеки от нас също е разнообразен и неповторим. Селищата, в които живеем, се отличават по своето местоположение, природни особености, по своето минало. Различен е и трудът на хората в тях в зависимост от условията на природата.

Със своя труд, грижа за природата и с всекидневното си поведение хората непрекъснато променят своя роден край.



1 Прочети различни материали, използвай решените задачи в учебника и учебната тетрадка, свързани с твоя роден край, и напиши кратко съчинение на тема: „С какво е неповторим моят роден край“.

За да си помогнеш, отговори на въпросите:

- кога е възникнало и как се е променяло през годините твоего родно селище;
- каква е природата наоколо;
- какви забележителни природни обекти, обществени сгради и паметници на културата има;
- кои известни личности са родени в него;
- къде се трудят неговите жители, какво произвеждат;
- как си почиват и се забавляват хората в твоя роден край?

2 Постави върху линия на времето годините на по-важните събития от миналото на твоя роден край. Разкажи за най-интересното от тях.

Appendix 14

Nº	Date	Week	Topic	Content	Expected results	Comment
			I. The Child in school			
1	18/09	1.	1. My School	School, Library, Students books, team work, traffic safety.	To know the name of their school. To describe the class room. To explain which is the safest way from their houses to school.	
2	25/09	2.	2. My Obligation in school	Politeness, good manners, behavior	Have good behavior in school- in class and in the break between the classes; participate in class.	
3	2/10	3.	3. Interrelations in school	Interrelations, mutual aid, respect	Can explain the rules for good behavior in school; team work; follow the hygiene rules; respect everyone who works in the school.	
4	9/10	4.	4. My rights and responsibilities in school	Rights, responsibilities, environment, tolerance	Know and follow the rights and responsibilities in school; know what tolerance is; keep the environment clean.	
			II. The child in the family			
5	16/10	5.	1. My family	Family	Describe the members of their families; tell more about their families; explain the jobs of their parents; communication in the family.	

6	23/10	6.	2. My obligation in the family	Time, organization, work, punctuality, clock, hour	Describe how they organize their time during the day; explain the necessity of creating good habits for organizing the time; realize the necessity of doing particular task in particular time.	
7	30/10	7.	3. Interrelations in the family	Help, sympathy	Tell about their responsibilities in the family; tell about celebration of holidays; respect the members of the family; share their experience with family and relatives.	
8	6/11	8.	4. My rights and responsibilities in the family	Rights, protection of the children	Know their rights and responsibilities in the family; know their full names, address and phone number; show respect to older people.	
			III. My childhood			
9	13/11	9.	1. Children's games	Playground, dexterity, sports	Name their favorite names and explain the rules of the games; know that games can be also dangerous; describe what qualities they can develop during the games.	
10	20/11	10.	2. Safety and health	Accidents, protection of health, traffic safety	Realize the importance of life and health and explain how they can take care of their life and health; know about traffic safety; explain the traffic sign "Caution!"; recognizing the places that can be dangerous.	
11	27/11	11.	3. Children and holidays	Traditions and holidays	Describe their family holidays and some of the Bulgarian traditions; participate in the preparation for holidays in the family and/or school	

1 2	4/12	12.	4. The children has many rights and responsibilities	Communication, attitude, politeness	Describe how they communicate with their friends and family; know their rights- for games, medical help, good manners and respect and fulfill their responsibilities- respect others, health care, traditions and good manners.	
1 3	11/12	13.	5. When I want to grow up, I want to be...	Dream, job, computer	Describe the jobs of their parents and relatives; describe different jobs, describe their dreams; realize the necessity of preparation for every job; developing of technology	
1 4	18/12	14.	6. I learn while I am playing	Traffic sign, crossing, roadway	Summarize of the knowledge for basic traffic objects on the roadway, traffic safety, and protection of environment.	
			IV. The child and the motherland			
1 5	8/1	15.	1. My homeland	Country, city, town	Describe their hometown and the landmarks in it; know the name of their hometown; know the name of the capital of Bulgaria.	
1 6	15/1	16.	2. Seasons	Seasons	Know the names of the four seasons, know their order; explain the change in the nature in every different season.	
1 7	22/1	17.	3. The beauty of the nature	Nature	Describe the beauty of the nature and the variety in it.	
1 8	29/1	18.	4. Plants - wild plants	Grassy plants, bushes and trees	Understand what wild plant is; name the basic plants groups- trees, bushes, grassy plants; name some plants of the three basic groups; know the organs of the wild plants	

19	5/2	19.	5. Plants - crops	Fruits, vegetables, nutrients	Know what crops are; know the difference between orchard, vegetable garden and flower garden; describe the advantages of these plants - nutrients;	
20	12/2	20.	6. I learn while I am playing		How the climate change during every season; what are the traits of each group of plants; conditions for life - air, water, light, warmth and soil.	
			V. Animals' world			
21	19/2	21.	1. Wild animals	Habitat, food	Know what wild animal is; explain about the life conditions of the mammals, birds, insects, fish and reptiles; explain about their habitat.	
22	26/2	22.	2. Domestic animals	Donkey, sheep, cow, bull, goose	Know what domestic animal is; know what their conditions of life are.	
23	5/3	23.	3. I learn while I am playing		Traits of wild and domestic animals; the environment they are live in and their behavior; food; footprints.	
			VI. Our glorious history			
24	12/3	24.	1. History of the country	Country, khan, king, flag, national emblem	Name some of the Bulgarian khans/kings; Know the national symbols - flag, national emblem, national anthem; tell about the history.	
25	19/3	25.	2. The day Of Slavonic Alphabet, Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture	Slavic, alphabet,	Know the names of the creators of Cyrillic alphabet - Cyril and Methodius.	

			VII. Our motherland - Bulgaria			
26	26/3	26.	1. Landmarks in Bulgaria	Monastery, cultural monuments	Know some of the historical and natural landmarks; know the landmarks in their hometown; describe their behavior in historical museum or outdoor.	
27	2/4	27.	2. I am citizen of Republic of Bulgaria	Citizen, rights, national dress	Realize the fact that every citizen of Republic of Bulgaria has rights and responsibilities; necessity of living in understanding and respectful environment.	
			VIII. The child and the world			
28	9/4	28.	1. Bulgaria is part of the world	Sport, medals, art	Feel like a part of the big family of all the kids around the world; proud of the accomplishments of their friends; desire for accomplishments and art.	
29	16/4	29.	2. The children are the future	Future, planet, universe	Describe their notion about the future; what invention they want to invent.	
30	23/4	30.	3. Children's dreams	Peace, free world	Describe and draw their dreams; speak their opinion.	
31	30/4	31.	4. Celebration			

Appendix 15

Month	№	Topic	Goals	Content	Expected results	Comment
IX.	1	Incoming diagnosis	Check of knowledge			
IX.	2	Family and relatives	Expand the knowledge for family and family members and their responsibilities. Realizing that family is community of people who support one another	Family, surname, family holidays, relatives	Name the members of their families and relatives. Tell more about family holidays. Draw family tree. Describe the activities, connected with leisure. Know the rules for communication in the family and home	
X.	3	Family tree and relatives	Explain the relative's connection between the members of the clan. Present the family holidays that gather the family together.	Family, clan, relatives, family tree, family holidays	Name the members of their families and relatives. Tell more about family holidays. Draw family tree. Describe the activities, connected with leisure. Know the rules for communication in the family and home	

X.	4	The school	School as institution and community. Know the name of the school. Know some of the special features of the school. Differentiate other building in their hometown. Form positive adjustment to the learning process and the school. Protect the property of the school.	School, name of the school, community in school	Describe the relation between the people in schools. Speak their mind and respect others people's opinion. Know the rules for communication in the family and home	
X.	5	My rights and responsibilities in school	Interrelations in school. Know their rights and responsibilities. Develop social skills - communication skills. Speak their mind and respect the others people's opinion. Tolerance and help amongst the students.	Community in school, interrelations in school, rights and responsibilities in school	Describe the relation between the people in schools. Speak their mind and respect others people's opinion. Know the rules for communication in the family and home	
X.	6	My hometown in the past and now	Build the basic idea for time. Know the landmark and historical monuments in the hometown. Know the history of their home time.	History of their hometown; landmarks; monuments	Describe the landmarks in their hometown. Describe the location of their hometown / mountain, rivers, sea/	
XI.	7	Landmarks in the hometown	Know the landmark and historical monuments in the hometown. Know where some important buildings are - hospital, city hall etc.	Hometown; city hall, hospital; monuments, nature landmarks	Describe the landmarks in their hometown. Describe the location of their hometown / mountain, rivers, sea/	

XI.	8	Jobs and leisure in the hometown	Expanding the knowledge for different jobs. Connection between work and leisure. Connection between geographic location of the town and the jobs in it.	Job; work; leisure; hobby	Know the connection between the location of the town and the profession of its citizens. Connection between of the location of the hometown and the way of transportation. Describe some of the changes in everyday life due to the building of new factories near the town	
XI.	9	Transportation	Expanding the knowledge for different ways of transportation. Describe the connection between the location of a town and the way of transportation used in this hometown.	Transport	Know the connection between the location of the town and the profession of its citizens. Connection between of the location of the hometown and the way of transportation.	
XI.	10	Living together	Develop the skills for communication with elder people and people on their age. Know different ways of communication and their meaning in the life of people. Know how the modern way of communication changed people's life.	Ways of communication- TV, Radio, Press, Phones	Describe the changes in people's life caused by the building of new buildings, roadways, factories.	
XII.	11	Bulgaria - homeland for all Bulgarian citizen	Know the national and local holidays. Know some of the holidays of other ethnic groups. Forming feeling of tolerance.	Homeland, country, Bulgarian flag, Citizen of Republic of Bulgaria, national holidays	Know the dates of the national holidays. Make and fill a calendar for the holidays.	

XII.	1 2	What did I learn for the world around me	Summary. Check of the knowledge.			
XII.	1 3	Nature	Elements of the living and non-living nature.	Nature, living nature, non-living nature, person, plants, animals, air, soil, water.	Describe the seasonal changes. Observe the durations of the day. Describe the changes in different stages of plant's life and the change in animals' behavior during each season.	
I.	1 4	Change in the nature	Know how nature change because of the rotation of the Earth. Know the specifics of each season and their influence of people's life and work. Know the name of the months.	Earth, Sun, day, night, year, month, week, morning, sunrise, sunset, calendar	Describe the changes in the weather. Observe the duration of the day. Describe the changes in different stages of plant's life and the change in animals' behavior during each season. Know the right order of the days of the week.	
I.	1 5	Seasonal changes	Summarize of the knowledge about the changes during each season. The connection between the rotation of the Earth and change in the nature.	Seasons, seasonal change, thermometer, air.	Describe the changes in the weather. Observe the duration of the day. Describe the changes in different stages of plant's life and the change in animals' behavior during each season. Know the right order of the days of the week.	

I.	1 6	What did I learn about changes in the nature	Summary. Check of the knowledge.			
I.	1 7	Various world of the plants	Expand the knowledge about the growing of the plants. Know how to group plants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Depends on the stalk: tree, bush, grassy plants. - Place where they grow: wild plants, crops. Know the difference between vegetables and fruits.	Trees, bushes and grassy plants; wild plants; flowers, fruits, vegetables	Group plants in different groups according to their specific features. Know what the typical plants near their hometown are. Attempt to germination and grow of the plants.	
II.	1 8	How plants are growing	Know what the necessary conditions for growing plants are- water, light, warmth.	Conditions for growing plants, care for the plants, organs of the plants: root, stalk, leaf, seeds.	Group plants in different groups according to their specific features. Know what the typical plants near their hometown are. Attempt to germination and grow of the plants.	
II.	1 9	Animals around us	Know different groups of animals - wild animals, farm animals and pets. Learn to take care of animals; Know some of the endanger animals.	Wild and domestic animals; pets; zoo; endanger animals	Know the names of the animals. Distinguish the animals living at zoo, wild animals and pets.	
II.	2 0	What do we get from domestics animals	What is the advantage from the farm animals; Classification of the products from the animals.	Farm animals; dairy products, meal; wool	Know the names of the animals. Distinguish the animals living at zoo, wild animals and pets.	

II.	2 1	Animals - our friends	Classification of animals. Distinguish the animals living at zoo, wild animals and pets. Hygiene habits when there are pets at home.	Pet; care of the animals at home.	Know the names of the animals. Distinguish the animals living at zoo, wild animals and pets.	
III.	2 2	What did I learn about the plants and animals	Summary. Check of knowledge.			
III.	2 3	Human body	Know the parts of human body and their function. Acceptance and tolerance to people with disabilities.	Parts of human body / head, limbs, torso/ sensory organs / eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin/ gender, age; disable people	Describe the parts of the body / head, limbs, torso/. Describe themselves and their families.	
III.	2 4	People - same and different	Find the similarities and differences between people. Respect people no matter their differences. Know themselves better.		Describe the parts of the body / head, limbs, torso/. Describe themselves and their families.	
III.	2 5	How to grow up strong and healthy	Know how important health is and build healthy habits; classification of the food; know the benefits from sports.	Health, health care; sports	Distinguish different foods and know if they are healthy or not	
IV.	2 6	People and the nature	Components of the nature. Interdependence between human kind and nature.		Know different groups of plants. Describe the people's activities that damage and pollute nature. Describe activities that protect nature	

IV.	2 7	How did I learn about the human body and food	Summary. Check of knowledge.			
IV.	2 8	Children on the road	Know the main traffic signs and how to behave when they are on the street / ride bikes, roller, walking/. Traffic safety.	Traffic sign, traffic safety.	Recognize the traffic signs	
V.	2 9	Nature disasters	What is nature disaster; explain what to do when a nature disaster occur; safety.	Nature disasters; earthquakes; floods; storm; thunder lights;	Know the danger of fire, poison substances; electricity; speaking with people they don't know.	
V.	3 0	Accident prevention	Know that playing with box of matches can be dangerous as well as poison substances, electricity etc.; developing skills needed for critical situation and accident prevention.	Accident, fire	Know the danger of fire, poison substances; electricity; speaking with people they don't know.	
V.	3 1	How did I learn about safety?	Summary. Check of knowledge.			
V.	3 2	Summary. Annual review	Check of knowledge.			

Appendix 16

№	Date	Topic	Expected results	Comment
1 2 3 4	29/09 13/10 20/10	<p>Main topic: Our motherland- Republic of Bulgaria</p> <p>Bulgaria- my motherland</p> <p>The map of Bulgaria</p> <p>Sofia - The capital of Bulgaria</p> <p>Practice</p>	<p>The students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must describe the methods of imaging the surface and water on the map • Must know some of the most important geographic symbols on the map. • Must point where on the map is the capital of Bulgaria- Sofia. Describe the landmarks in Sofia and the cultural monuments in Bulgaria. 	
5 6	27/10 3/11	<p>Main topic: Thracians - the oldest inhabitants of today's Bulgarian land</p> <p>Thracians - the oldest inhabitants of today's Bulgarian land</p> <p>Thracians' beliefs and treasures</p>	<p>The students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must describe the basic elements of Thracians' everyday life. • Explain about Thracians' beliefs 	
7 8 9	10/11 17/11 24/11	<p>Main topic: Bulgaria in the Middle Ages</p> <p>Slavs and ancient Bulgarians</p> <p>The beginning of the first Bulgarian state</p> <p>The secret of the time in the history - exercise</p>	<p>The students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the importance of the Christianity in the culture, identity and everyday life. • Describe the role of the church in the people's life 	

10	1/12	Bulgaria- Christianize state	The students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the importance of the Christianity in the culture, identity and everyday life. Describe the role of the church in the people's life 	
11	8/12	Golden Ages		
12	15/1 2	Check of knowledge		
13	22/1 2	Religious beliefs and life of Thracians, Slavs and Bulgarians Exercise		
14	5/1	The battle between Bulgaria and Byzantines	The student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the importance of the Christianity in the culture, identity and everyday life. Describe the role of the church in the people's life 	
15	12/1	The progress of the Bulgarian Empire		
16	19/1	The collapse of the Second Bulgarian Empire		
17	21/1	Everyday life of Bulgarians		
18	26/1	Check of knowledge		
19	28/1	Exercise		
20	28/1	Main topic: Leaders of the Bulgarian National Revival	The students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the role of the education in the progress of the Bulgarian society and the role of the church for the Bulgarian identity. Understand the differences between people based on the language, religion and traditions. 	
21	4/2	Leaders of the Bulgarian National Revival		
22	9/2	Schools and churches during the Bulgarian National Revival		
23	11/2	The cities during the Bulgarian National Revival		
24	16/2	The fighter for freedom Exercise		

25	18/2	Main topic: Free Bulgarian state	The students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the rights and responsibilities of Bulgarian citizens • Give example for notable Bulgarians • Distinguish national holidays in Republic of Bulgaria and the national holidays in other ethnics groups
26	23/2	Free Bulgarian state	
27	23/2	The wealth of the Bulgarian culture	
28	4/3	National days in Republic of Bulgaria	
29	9/3	National holidays and traditions	
		Check of knowledge.	
30	11/3	Main topic: Nature in Bulgaria	The students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the surface of Bulgaria. • Describe nature's landmarks • Describe the meaning of natural landmarks in people's life and necessity of preserving them.
31	16/3	Surface of Bulgaria - lowland and plain	
32	18/3	Mountains in Bulgaria	
33	23/3	Climate and season in Bulgaria	
34	25/3	Water resources	
35	30/3	Soil and plants world	
36	1/4	Exercise	
37	6/4	Animals world	
38	8/4	Nature landmarks in Bulgaria	
39	13/4	Protection of Bulgarian nature	
40	15/4	Nature in my hometown - exercise	
		Summary. Nature in Bulgaria	

41	20/4	Main Topic: Interaction between people and environment	The students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe typical work activities. • Give examples for interaction between people and environment in the past and now • Give example of technological developments and how they have changed the life and environment. • Give example for positive and negative interaction between people and environment. 	
42	22/4	Work activity (1)		
43	27/4	Work activity (2)		
44	29/4	Work activity and nature Cultural landmarks in Bulgaria		
45	4/5	Main Topic: My homeland Work activity in my hometown - exercise	The students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the nature in their hometown and give example for protecting it • Explain the connection between work activity and nature resources. 	
46	6/5	Summary : People and environment	The students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the nature in their hometown and give example for protecting it • Explain the connection between work activity and nature resources. 	
47	11/5	Nature and work activity in my country - annual review	The students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the nature in their hometown and give example for protecting it • Explain the connection between work activity and nature resources. 	
48	13/5	History of Bulgaria - annual review	The students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the nature in their hometown and give example for protecting it. 	

Bulgaria - country in Europe and Balkans	<p>1.Home country, people and nation</p> <p>2. Bulgaria on the world map and map of Europe.</p> <p>3. The map of my country - exercise</p> <p>4. Danube Plain</p> <p>5. Balkans mountains</p> <p>6. Vitosha mountain and Sredna gora</p> <p>7. Transitional region</p> <p>8.Rila and Pirin - highest mountains in Bulgaria</p> <p>9.Rhodope mountains</p> <p>10. Black sea coast</p> <p>11. Geographical regions - exercise</p>	<p>1. Know where on the map is Bulgaria</p> <p>2. Show on the map where some of the biggest cities in Bulgaria are as well as the geographical regions in Bulgaria.</p> <p>3. Name some of the protected location in Bulgaria. Describe some of the pollution factors in the different geographical regions</p>	<p>17/9</p> <p>24/9</p> <p>1/10</p> <p>8/10</p> <p>15/10</p> <p>22/10</p> <p>29/10</p> <p>5/11</p> <p>12/11</p> <p>19/11</p> <p>26/11</p>
Bulgaria - part of Europe and the world	<p>12. Cultural development and tourism</p>	<p>1. Know the positive effect of the strategic location of Bulgaria.</p>	<p>3/12</p> <p>10/12</p>
Bulgaria in the Middle Ages	<p>13. Inheritance from the ancient civilization in Bulgaria</p> <p>14. Bulgaria - the new state on the Balkans</p> <p>15. Creation of Bulgarian state</p> <p>16.Bulgaria- part of Christian Europe</p> <p>17.Power and culture peak in Bulgaria - the rule of King Simeon</p> <p>18. Decline of the Bulgarian state</p> <p>19. Bulgaria in 14th century</p> <p>20.Summary - Bulgaria in the Middle Ages</p>	<p>1. Give example for interaction between ancient civilizations</p> <p>2. Culture inheritance as national treasure.</p> <p>3. The importance of Bulgarian state in European history.</p> <p>4. Understand the role of the religion</p> <p>5. Understand the interaction between the different cultures.</p>	<p>17/12</p> <p>7/1</p> <p>14/1</p> <p>21/1</p> <p>28/1</p> <p>4/2</p> <p>11/2</p> <p>18/2</p>

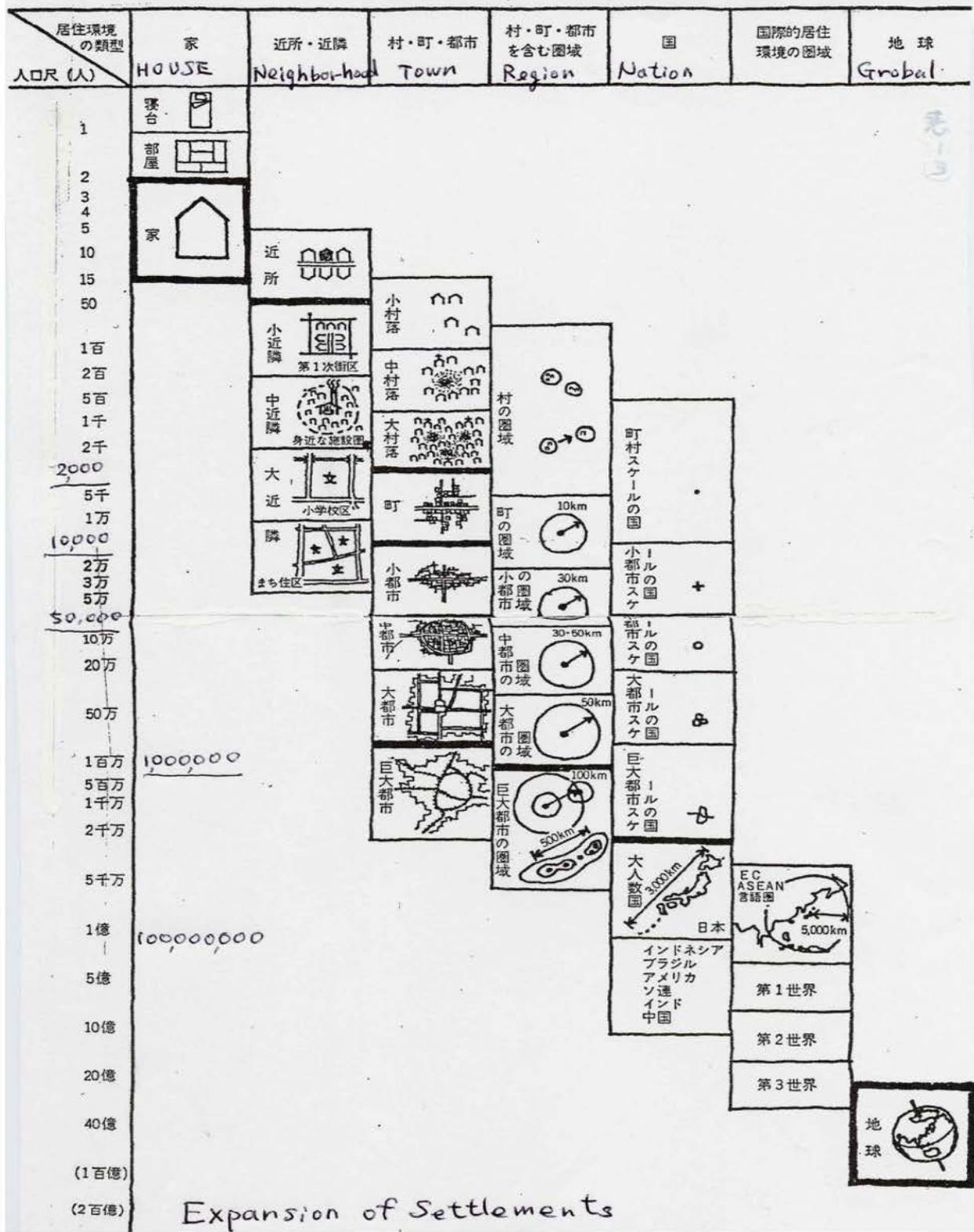
Bulgarian National Revival	21. Revival period 22. The movement for education and free Bulgarian church 23. People during the Revival period 24. The movement for national freedom 25. Freedom of Bulgaria 26. Summary - National Revival	1. Understand the necessity of the movement for education and free Bulgarian church 2. Distinguish the peaceful and armed forms for liberation	25/2 4/3 11/3 18/3 25/3 1/4
Bulgarian state (end of 19 th century - end of 20 th century) Bulgarian community	27. Recreation of Bulgarian state 28. Bulgaria in 20 th century 29. Different communities living together in Bulgarian state 30. Annual review - Bulgaria - part of Europe and the world 31. Annual review - Bulgarian state from 7 th century to 20 th century	1. Distinguish the local and state government 2. Know the role of human rights and distinguish the democratic and non-democratic actions 1. Show empathy and accept different ethnic groups 2. Give example for the interactions between Bulgaria and other countries. Have basic knowledge about European Union	8/4 15/4 22/4 29/4 6/5

Appendix 18

TABLE S.2. TOTAL POPULATION BY COUNTRY, 1950, 2015, 2030, 2050 AND 2100 (MEDIUM VARIANT)

Country or area	Population (thousands)				
	1950	2015	2030	2050	2100
World.....	2 525 149	7 349 472	8 500 766	9 725 148	11 213 317
Afghanistan	7 752	32 527	43 852	55 955	57 638
Albania	1 263	2 897	2 954	2 710	1 755
Algeria.....	8 872	39 667	48 274	56 461	61 060
American Samoa	19	56	57	57	40
Andorra	6	70	71	72	60
Angola.....	4 355	25 022	39 351	65 473	138 738
Anguilla.....	5	15	16	15	11
Antigua and Barbuda.....	46	92	105	114	114
Argentina.....	17 150	43 417	49 365	55 445	58 572
Armenia.....	1 354	3 018	2 993	2 729	1 793
Aruba.....	38	104	107	102	84
Australia	8 177	23 969	28 482	33 496	42 389
Austria	6 936	8 545	8 844	8 846	8 335
Azerbaijan	2 896	9 754	10 727	10 963	9 636
Bahamas	79	388	446	489	498
Bahrain	116	1 377	1 642	1 822	1 602
Bangladesh	37 895	160 996	186 460	202 209	169 541
Barbados.....	211	284	290	282	259
Belarus.....	7 745	9 496	8 977	8 125	6 916
Belgium.....	8 628	11 299	12 019	12 527	13 210
Belize	69	359	472	588	677
Benin	2 255	10 880	15 593	22 549	35 544
Bermuda	37	62	59	54	42
Bhutan	177	775	886	950	793
Bolivia (Plurinational State of).....	3 090	10 725	13 177	15 963	18 118
Bosnia and Herzegovina.....	2 661	3 810	3 584	3 069	1 919
Botswana.....	413	2 262	2 817	3 389	3 681
Brazil.....	53 975	207 848	228 663	238 270	200 305
British Virgin Islands	7	30	35	38	36
Brunei Darussalam	48	423	496	546	489
Bulgaria.....	7 251	7 150	6 300	5 154	3 406
Burkina Faso	4 284	18 106	27 244	42 789	80 990
Burundi.....	2 309	11 179	17 357	28 668	62 662
Cabo Verde.....	178	521	614	707	680
Cambodia	4 433	15 578	18 991	22 545	23 928
Cameroon	4 466	23 344	32 947	48 362	82 382
Canada.....	13 737	35 940	40 390	44 136	49 668
Caribbean Netherlands	7	25	28	30	32
Cayman Islands	6	60	71	82	99
Central African Republic.....	1 327	4 900	6 490	8 782	12 515
Chad	2 502	14 037	21 946	35 131	68 927
Channel Islands	102	164	174	181	182
Chile.....	6 143	17 948	20 250	21 601	19 744
China.....	544 113	1376 049	1415 545	1348 056	1004 392
China, Hong Kong SAR.....	1 974	7 288	7 951	8 148	7 924

Appendix 19



Appendix 20

Response Prompts in Pilot Study

- Tell us what your name is.
- Do you like your neighborhood? Why or why not?
- How did you like today's event? What did you like about it?
- Which of the five picturebooks did you enjoy most? Why?
- Would you like to read similar picturebooks in class or in your free time at school?