

**THE EXAMINATION OF  
KEY STAGE TWO LITERARY ENVIRONMENTS  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO POETRY**

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Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom.

Though it cost all you have, get understanding.

(The Bible, Proverbs, 4, 7)

## **Abstract**

I began this research by identifying that poetry was sometimes a challenging subject for primary school teachers to teach. With the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (DfEE, 1998) came extensive coverage of poetry, and I argued the necessity for independent research to investigate how teachers, without specialist training in English, interpreted the NLS for poetry sessions, and how pupils responded. My research aim was to provide an independent and historical insight into the literary experiences of two case study groups, each consisting of a teacher and six pupils in Year Six, and the impact of the recently implemented NLS. To realise this aim I used qualitative methods of data collection: observation to examine the role of poetry in the classroom; and interview, to gain a phenomenological perspective of the relationship between poetry and the research participants.

Having carried out the research process it emerged that there were three inter-related areas, which had had significant impact on the literary environment that children engaged in over the Y6 school year. These were: the NLS; the Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs); and National Curriculum (NC) English Level Descriptions attributed to students. Though poetry in the NLS was present across each term, the perceived pressure of attaining certain Level Descriptions in SATs meant that poetry was omitted so that more time could be spent on refining other literary skills. When poetry was taught key issues arose in relation to the way in which each teacher interpreted the NLS. These were: lack of subject knowledge; little discussion of the meaning of the text; and, minimal reference to children's experiences of poetry outside of the classroom. It was also noted that children engaged in ludic word play under certain conditions, and that this was generated in response to interaction with the poem, and each other. I conclude by considering the implications of a



socio-constructivist approach to poetry, which I suggest works with children's pre-disposition for playing with language and learning and engaging with others. This study also highlights that language play in the classroom is relatively unresearched, while establishing a link between ludic play, reader-response theory and the teaching and learning theory of socio-constructivism.

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed

Date 1/5/2006

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# Chapter 1

## Setting the Scene

### 1.1 Introduction

There is much research to suggest that teachers and children find poetry problematic (Benton, 1978; Barnes, Barnes and Clark, 1984; Benton, 1984; Wade and Sidaway, 1990; Andrews, 1991; Ray, 1998), yet with the ‘quasi-statutory’ (Smith and Hardman, 2000, p.365) implementation of the National Literacy Strategy: Framework for Teaching (NLS) (1998) across all primary schools in England, poetry is now in a more prominent position within the English National Curriculum (NC) than previously. This study considers the kind of poetry experiences non-specialist English teachers and children are engaged in at Key Stage 2 through the framework of the NLS, and how children respond.

The research rationale of this thesis is centred on the focused examination of the literary environments of two case study primary schools, with a detailed analysis of two Y6 teachers’ and their pupils’ experiences of poetry. Underpinning this study are two interrelated research questions. They are: ‘what kind of literary environments are children experiencing as they engage with poetry in the classroom?’ and ‘what is the contribution of the NLS framework to that environment?’ These ques-

tions were chosen as I have had an ongoing interest in the teaching and learning of poetry. This began as a child, when I would often write poetry at home, and later as a BEd (Bachelor of Education) student where I carried out a case study on children's perception of non-rhyming, serious poems (Cumming, 1993). Following this, I completed a Masters Degree in which I considered the effect of two teaching methods on the interactions between the teacher, pupil and the poem (Cumming, 1998). Around the time of my MEd (Master of Education), the NLS was implemented nationally, and so I felt that it would be a natural progression to consider the impact of the sitting Labour government's initiative on pupils' experiences of poetry. My previous experiences of poetry, both personally and academically, were an intrinsic part of the process of this study (see 3.3.2), and informed the research questions central to this thesis.

This study offers an original contribution to research for several reasons. These are: that it is an independent and historical account of the literary environments of Y6 children carried out in the year 2000, two years after the NLS was implemented; that language play in the classroom is relatively unresearched, and this study highlights a link between ludic play, reader-response theory and the teaching and learning theory of socio-constructivism; and, that as a result of my observations, I have developed a socio-constructivist approach to teaching poetry, which I suggest encourages children's predisposition for playing with language and learning about poetry, by engagement with others.

In Chapter One the background context to the teaching of poetry is briefly explored in an overview of the difficulties teachers and children may have with poetry. This is then followed by a description of the complex struggle for curriculum control through the implementation of government initiatives, the relationship between school and society, and the changing image of the learner. These themes are presented historically to demonstrate the context of why and how the NLS was im-

plemented, and to give some understanding of the present climate in which poetry was taught in classrooms at the time of this study.

Having set the background context to this rationale, Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature that considers the historical development of the teaching of poetry, the origins of poetic experience, and the changing images of the child as a learner. This culminates in an examination of the structure, content and theoretical underpinnings of the NLS and how this relates to poetry. This is followed by an in-depth discussion of the research design that guided the qualitative stage (Chapter 3), and an outline of the type of data collected and the instruments used to best illuminate children's literary environments in the classroom. The data is then analysed in two sections: the observation material (Chapter 4), and the interview data (Chapter 5). Finally, (Chapter 6) the issues and themes highlighted in the analysis of the data are discussed in relationship to the research questions posited at the beginning of this thesis.

## 1.2 Research on Poetry in the Primary Classroom

Within the past fifty years, English education has undergone many changes as governments and professionals have struggled to find a definitive framework that encapsulates what it means to teach and learn 'English'. One of the most difficult of those areas to define has been poetry, and this has been the subject of much research. Before the Education Reform Act (ERA, 1988) it was a matter of choice whether poetry was included in the curriculum or not, however, with the implementation of the English National Curriculum (DES, 1989a), followed by the NLS, it has been included as an important part of children's literary experiences. The question of whether poetry should be taught or not has been resolved, theoretically at least, but the problem of how it should be taught remains.

In considering the research in this area it appears that several key issues have

dominated the teaching of poetry in both the primary and the secondary school. These are: difficulty over a suitable methodological approach to poetry; lack of subject knowledge; and attitudes of teachers and children towards poetry.

### 1.2.1 The Problem with Poetry

There is evidence to suggest that many teachers have found poetry to be deeply problematic. In the early 1960s the official line taken by the Ministry of Education was that 'nobody should have to teach poetry against his will' (DES, 1963, p.77). This was followed by The Plowden Report (1967, p.216), which was 'doubtful whether poetry has ever been well treated in schools'. Eight years later the Bullock Report (1975, p.135) compounded the problem by suggesting that for the majority of people poetry was something very strange indeed: 'In the public view it is something rather odd, certainly outside the current of normal life; it is either numinous, and therefore rarely to be invoked, or an object of comic derision.' With just three and a half pages given over to poetry in the 600-page report entitled *A Language for Life*, it seemed that there was little to help teachers overcome their apprehension and misconceptions. The situation appeared to have changed very little when, twelve years later, a HMI report on secondary teaching of poetry concluded; 'The evidence is that, in national terms, poetry is frequently neglected and poorly provided for; its treatment is inadequate and superficial' (DES, 1987, pp.4-5).

Outside of the classroom, however, there was a positive growth of poetry written specifically for younger children, and anthologies of poetry became more accessible in content and presentation (Hughes, 1967; Causley, 1975; McGough, 1976; Rosen, 1974, 1977). As Clark (1978) notes, the idea that a child could, or would, want to own a poetry book of their own was never really a serious consideration before this time, and revealed that positive attitudes to children's poetry were being nurtured. Despite this, poetry in the classroom appeared to be suffering. Benton (1978, p.112)

summarises this:

Handling poetry is the area of the primary/ middle school curriculum and the secondary school curriculum where teachers feel most uncertain of their knowledge, most uncomfortable about their methods, and most guilty about both.

At that time Benton felt there was a struggle between the need to find time for poetry, and the obligation to teach poetry as a duty. Both situations were unsatisfactory. The idea that in the literary field poetry could be omitted when it was considered to be uniquely 'special', representing the highest order of creative language (Benton and Fox, 1985; Scannell, 1987; Stibbs, 1995) was disturbing. Harrison (1983, p.87) claimed that; 'the study of poetry ought to be at the very heart of English studies', while others recognised it as; 'a pleasurable use of language offering distinctive ways of thinking' (Walter, 1993, p.19).

In contrast to omitting poetry altogether, it seemed that there were difficulties in the way in which teachers dutifully approached poetry, through cognitive strategies more suitable to other curriculum areas. The reading of a poem became surrounded by 'the anxiety to pin the meaning down, to explain words, to take the class on a guided tour through a poem, enlivening it with metaphor hunts and simile chases' (Benton, 1978, p.113). Though the teacher was perceived as being central to introducing and nurturing children's positive experiences of poetry through appropriate choice of methodology and confidence in the subject matter, these were the very areas that teachers struggled with.

### **1.2.2 Teaching Methodologies and Subject Knowledge**

A teacher's methodological approach in the classroom has been shown to be vitally important in influencing the kind of learning that takes place (Webster, Beveridge



and Reed, 1996). A 1980 survey of junior school teachers' methods and practice (Barker-Lunn, 1984) revealed that teachers preferred to teach English didactically, with an emphasis on the development and practise of basic skills. With research suggesting that a collaborative methodology encourages better learning (Rogoff, 1990; Meadows, 1993; Wood and Wood, 1996), teacher training encouraged teachers to engage with such methods both theoretically and practically. However, a questionnaire followed by detailed observation of fifty primary and fifty secondary teachers in the southwest of England (Webster et al., 1996) demonstrated that, though the majority of teachers said they preferred collaborative teaching styles when teaching literacy, this was more likely to occur in primary rather than secondary schools. Secondary teachers tended to choose 'low risk' styles, such as didactic teaching, so that the demands of the content of the subject could be met.

A study on Year 6 and Year 7 children's attitudes to teaching styles (Cullingford, 1987) showed that they preferred a balance between individual and whole class attention, that expectations about subjects should be made explicit, and that the teacher expressed genuine interest in the work they were doing. But above all they valued the security of knowing what the teacher expected, and how they could achieve those expectations. Consequently, if the teacher approaches poetry with prejudices, worries and a lack of subject knowledge then this could lead to an anxious and uncertain environment for both the teacher and the pupils.

As poetry has become a major part of the English curriculum, this self-perpetuating cycle of anxiety, and lack of knowledge needs to be tackled if it is ever to be taught well. In this area of teaching 'riddled with prejudice and misunderstandings' (Hunter-Carsch, Beverton and Dennis, 1990, p.127), teachers need to be trained in a 'coherent methodology' that will encourage a successful engagement with poetry for both teacher and pupil.

### 1.2.3 Teachers' and Children's Attitudes Towards Poetry

Ray's research (1998), involving a questionnaire given to 48 second year primary trainee teachers, revealed how their own experiences of poetry at school had shaped their perceptions and attitudes towards their own teaching of poetry. It showed that teachers' experiences had been much more negative in secondary school than primary, some of the reasons being that poetry was 'studied too critically so that it ruined the initial feel of the poem' (p.7). Though Ray (1998, p.6) sensed that throughout the study there was 'a vague underlying optimism that poetry could fulfil all kinds of expectations, if only one could learn to understand it', these expectations came from a focus on the usefulness of literacy. When asked the reasons for teaching poetry the majority of teachers offered cognitive justifications in terms of using the poem to teach such things as sentence structure and extend vocabulary knowledge. Ray (1998) concludes that BEd and PGCE trainee teachers who are non-specialists in English may have confused perceptions of poetry based on their own experiences in the classroom. She suggests that this can be addressed by the trainees experiencing both the enjoyment and appreciation of a variety of different poems, which they can then channel into devising poetry programmes.

Other studies have revealed similar attitudes (Harrison and Gordon, 1983) to Ray's research. A questionnaire by Wade and Sidaway (1990), which targeted middle school teachers' (9-13) attitudes and beliefs about poetry teaching, showed a discrepancy between what teachers thought they should be doing, and a lack of confidence in carrying this out. They also asked middle school pupils about their experiences of poetry as a leisure activity, and found that the frequency of reading of poetry was quite low. However, this reflected an attitude towards reading generally, revealing that it held little appeal when rated alongside other leisure activities. The overriding feeling that pupils communicated about poetry was that they were interested, but the teacher's approach often led to a negative experience.

Teachers seem to be instinctively aware that poetry has much more to offer, but, because of negative experiences in their own school life, are likely to create those similar experiences for their pupils, due to the anxiety and worry poetry evokes for them. If 'the teacher is the key to the delivery of the curriculum and the teacher's own experiences, actions and attitudes will exert their own influence' (Wade and Sidaway, 1990, p.75), then it would seem that any kind of framework for helping teachers to teach poetry, needs to acknowledge teachers' feelings and experiences about poetry, and encourage them to engage with poetry in a positive and non-threatening way.

#### **1.2.4 A Gap in the Research**

Though poetry has suffered neglect in the past, the future would appear to be better, with the NLS containing an extensive, three-term framework to help teachers make the wide and varied range of poetry now available accessible to children (Rowe Townsend, 1990; Hunt, 1994; Styles, 1998). Primary school teachers seeking guidance on the teaching of poetry also have a number of books at their disposal, which attempt to demystify the subject by offering practical advice on how to teach reading and writing of poetry in enjoyable and exciting ways (Hughes, 1967; Benton and Fox, 1985; Corbett and Moses, 1986; Sedgwick, 1997). Other helpful books outline critical theories of reading, so that a teacher may relate suggested practical ideas to the theory that underpins them, thereby encouraging greater understanding of the subject as a whole (Dias and Hayhoe, 1988; Andrews, 1991; Thompson, 1996). What many of these authors have in common is that they present poetry as an area that is often difficult for teachers, suggesting that this is one of the reasons why they have written such a book.

With such a range of material available, and with the ongoing curriculum development of the NLS now including lesson plans for poetry lessons on the Literacy

website (DfES, 1997-2001a), it could be said that teachers have, if they want, access to a wide range of material to support them in the teaching of poetry. This could suggest that though poetry caused consternation amongst teachers in the past, the situation should now be improving. However, while there have been a number of surveys on poetry teaching in the classroom over the years (see 1.2) with a balance between primary and secondary studies, there is a lack of evidence about the impact of the NLS upon the teaching of poetry and the nature of children's involvement with poems. It is not clear whether the amount of support and training that teachers have had has been enough to reverse the cycle of guilt and uncertainty with poetry (Benton, 1978; Ray, 1998). Therefore, with the identification of research that shows poetry to be challenging to teachers prior to the implementation of the NLS, this study seeks to present an original and historical critique of teachers teaching poetry through the NLS two years after its implementation, and an illumination of children's responses to that.

### 1.3 Curriculum Control

In examining the research questions presented at the beginning of this chapter, 'what kind of literary environments are children experiencing as they engage with poetry in the classroom?' and 'what is the contribution of the NLS framework to that environment?' it is necessary to consider how the environments observed in this study came to be formed. By considering historically the way in which the external and internal pressures and influences upon schools have impacted and shaped the literary environments that children are engaged in, the NLS can be placed in context and discussed in relation to one of the most powerful issues that has been prominent in much of the history of education: the control of the curriculum. Several themes interrelate to provide a complex picture of this historical struggle: the implementation of government initiatives; curriculum theory and the changing

image of the learner; the relationship between school and society.

### **1.3.1 The Implementation of Government Initiatives**

The following is a summary of the relationship between the main Acts of Parliament, the findings and recommendations of major official reports, and curriculum control.

In attributing meaning to the term ‘government initiatives’, its simplest application could be described as ‘the actions of government, aimed at securing particular outcomes’ (Ozga, 2000, p.2). However, I also take the view that government initiatives are a process ‘involving negotiation, contestation or struggle between different groups who may lie outside the formal machinery of official policy making’ (Ozga, 2000, p.2). By focusing on process, this allows a more complex picture to emerge of how a variety of factors interrelate and interact, rather than defining policy merely through text.

#### **The Early Years**

A distinction is drawn here between the early and later years of government initiatives, broadly defined here as pre and post 1960, as previous to this many of the initiatives were positive in encouraging greater access to a good standard of education for all children. Significant changes that had taken place were:

- Appointed LEAs were given significant freedom to oversee and develop schools in their area, even though there was a Ministry of Education over all the authorities, in the 1944 Education Act.
- Teachers maintained a strong professional autonomy with very little opposition.
- The government introduced set exams so that there was continuity in comparing results nationally.

- As far back as 1862, with the publication of the Revised Code (Committee of Council, 1862) funding was linked to pupils' results had been phased out as it was widely regarded as narrowing the curriculum and putting undue pressure on teachers to teach to the test.
- Interest in child-centred education was growing.

However, during the later years there was a tremendous increase in the number of initiatives implemented that culminated in power and authority being transferred from LEAs, schools and teachers to overall government control. The latter part of the historical discussion, then, is extremely significant to this study, in that it demonstrates how and why the NLS was formed in response to a number of critical factors that gained momentum and dominated much of the educational debate over the next forty years. These were: claims that standards were falling in children's reading and writing; greater demand for teacher accountability in the classroom; and the engagement of schools in a market economy.

### **The 1960s**

In the 1960s 'the curriculum' attracted fresh attention with the controversial 11 plus selection process reduced at primary level due to a rise in comprehensive schools. Selection and grammar schools still continued, though with less emphasis than previously.

During this decade the country was plunged into economic decline, with little political direction, and, as attention was drawn to the cost of implementing new policies, the broad consensus of opinion that had supported the 1944 Act began to dissipate. This led to the government implementing reforms that sought to bring schools under the control of a larger, more consistent body, which they would be accountable to and which would have the power to act on policy and evaluate it.

In 1961 the central government attempted to implement a Curriculum Study Group through the Minister of Education, Sir David Eccles, to help advise schools on the curriculum, but this was opposed by teachers and local authorities, as it was perceived to be a bid for the control of the curriculum. The Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations was set up instead, funded by central and local government with teachers on the committee, so maintaining the balance of the tripartite power in favour of the teacher (Becher and Maclure, 1978).

### **The Plowden Report**

The Plowden Report (1967) reported on all aspects of primary education, including the transition to secondary school, and observed that there were a wide variety of teaching methods in practice. It was a significant document in that in all the teaching methods observed, the Report emphasised that those based on the child-centred theories of Piaget were the most effective. This developmental approach to the curriculum recommended that children should experience more informal forms of learning that allowed knowledge to be discovered, rather than taught in compartmentalised packages of objective facts and truths. The Plowden Report also concluded that parents' views of education were of real importance in influencing the success of children, going beyond any other determining factors such as socio-economic backgrounds of parents and the schools themselves.

The Plowden Report had a dramatic impact on parents and professionals in education, though reactions to it were mixed (MacKinnon et al., 1995). Some teachers welcomed change from a less formalised approach to teaching to a more co-operative and creative approach, but hostility grew as a stereotype was formed of a liberalist kind of education that allowed children to do exactly what they wanted. Even though HMI reported that, in practice, the methodologies proposed by the Plowden report were less in use than people supposed, a backlash of resistance to the Plowden

philosophy gathered momentum with attacks on incompetence and the manipulation of ideas expressed in the popular five Black Papers (1969-1977).

### **The 1970s**

Through the 1970s the subject of who was really in control of education as opposed to who should be, and the distribution and measurement of that power to be exercised, became the focus of a final struggle of power between the government and the LEAs, head teachers and teachers.

Dissatisfaction with the education system was growing, as a wave of compelling research conducted in the form of interviews of parents, teachers, ex-pupils, pupils and employers sought to establish what they thought the objectives of education were (Raven, 1973, 1977; Dore, 1976; Johnston and Bachman, 1976). All the groups interviewed felt that having initiative, confidence, being both a team member and an independent learner were important qualities that should be at the forefront of educational objectives. When researchers investigated whether these objectives were being attained in both primary and secondary education they came to the conclusion, from observations made, that they were not.

Finally, the Bullock Report (1975) outlined the problem of comparing standards of literacy on a national basis and across the years because of the difficulties in defining literacy in a way that everyone found acceptable, and comparing different tests from different areas. But as Webster, Beveridge and Reed (1996) point out, this did not stop the Bullock enquiry from interpreting results as showing a fall in standards amongst the reading levels of seven year olds onwards in comparison to children of the same age groups from years before.

During the second half of the 1970s teacher autonomy was still dominant, but a number of incidents were presented in such a way as to encourage them to be viewed with growing hostility (Becher, 1984). These were: confusion over dubious



results of national monitoring, suggesting that standards had declined; the William Tyndale affair of 1974-1976, where it was claimed that poor standards were a result of teachers using progressive methods (Davis, 2002); the Black Papers (1969-1977); Bennett's work on Teaching Styles and Pupil Progress (1976), which suggested that, though there were exceptions, primary school children in 'difficult' schools reached higher standards with teachers who taught in traditional styles than those who were taught progressively; and finally the consumer movement, which was to eventually re-define the school as a 'market place' with 'market principles' and devolve the hierarchy of the professional knowing best.

Parallel to this came a speech by James Callaghan, the Labour Prime Minister, at Ruskin College in 1976, who articulated the public demand for greater emphasis to be made on increasing schools' accountability, and focused upon consumer rights, and how schools needed to be governed by what parents and the industry wanted in a 'market economy'. This principle was given weight by allowing parents greater recognition in having a say in how the education system should work through official documentation (Taylor's Committee, 1977a). This was seen as having a positive effect by further developing education as a commodity, so encouraging greater competitiveness and therefore leading to a wider range of resources to choose from.

### **The Early 1980s**

As the 1980s began, Education Acts were brought in which sought to call for more accountability over schools with the aim of increasing standards (DES, 1980; DES, 1984). The emphasis was on school effectiveness (Marsh, 1997) and consequently teacher effectiveness came under scrutiny.

During this time the nature of evaluation changed as it responded to the increasing demands made upon it. It became highly politicised and was streamlined into a model that grew rapidly, producing cost-effective information. This informa-

tion came in the form of measurable quantities that provided the politicians and the public with evidence of standards being met. At all levels evaluation took place with central government initiatives playing a major part in bringing that about with teachers, local government, heads, heads of departments, schools, and HMI (DES Circular 14/77, 1977b; DES 1981a; DES Circular 6/81, 1981b). The whole of the education system became introspective as a consequence of the increasing external pressures to be accountable, and in the political climate of this time evaluation became a fundamental part of that process (Lawton, 1980; Nutall, 1982).

### **The Late 1980s**

In 1988 the Education Reform Act was published by the government, which dramatically changed the direction of education. The 1988 Act introduced local management of schools (LMS), formula funding, and an option to become grant-maintained, while significantly reducing the powers of the LEAs, but most radical of all was the statutory implementation of a common curriculum for primary and secondary schools in England. All pupils from 5-16 would be taught under this curriculum with standardised tests implemented at 7, 11, 14 and 16 (if not taking GCSEs) based on the National Curriculum Level of Attainment. It was considered 'probably the most significant change to take place in the education system since the 1944 Education Act' (Croll and Moses, 1990, p.187) and drew a lot of interest because of the restructuring that had to take place (Lawton and Chitty, 1988; Graham, 1993; Goodson and Marsh, 1996). It was possibly one of the most powerful initiatives implemented in decisively and swiftly moving 'localised' control of the curriculum to 'centralised' control under the government with very little serious opposition.

The philosophy of the non-competitive atmosphere of the primary school was also seen to be seriously jeopardised, with growing emphasis on comparing SATs performance amongst pupils and schools. There were worries that with the increas-

ing workload, the relationships between the teacher and the pupil would inevitably suffer (Gipps, 1990). Corbett and Wilson (1988, p.37) observed how exams and increased political and public scrutiny changed the climate of many schools.

Although they acknowledge that the National Curriculum does indeed recognise the value of using knowledge and skills acquired in contexts other than the classroom, they claim that it works against these principles at various levels, not least because of the amount of work that has to be covered. The heavy workload of the National Curriculum and the speed in which it was expected to be implemented was considered problematic and inappropriate given the amount of work that was left uncompleted:

Aldrich (1992) notes that, although there was obviously a strong sense of Conservative ideology in the education philosophy and programmes advocated, the origins of the 1988 Act can be traced back to the political climate of the 1970s where discussions about education focused on falling standards, concerns over content of the curriculum, choice of teaching methodologies and a call for greater accountability. He also suggests that the legislation of the 1980s, leading up to the 1988 Education Act, could be seen as the fulfilment of the 1944 Act's intentions, which in the first section promotes the idea of education for all people. Tate (1999, p.11), indeed, describes the National Curriculum as: 'an attempt to offer a broad liberal education for all'. However, Aldrich also recognises that through the legislation of the 1980s, the power and activity of the government increased significantly, while the power of other involved groups reduced dramatically. As a consequence, he gave this warning (Aldrich, 1992, p.69): 'the educational legislation of the 1980s has given central government considerable powers: powers that will not be relinquished lightly'.

## The 1990s

By 1990 the testing of the three core subjects: mathematics, English and science, as laid out through the National Curriculum, were well established. The 1991 Key Stage 1 SATs tests were task-orientated with activity and processes of learning, which were thought could be used in conjunction with good infant school practice. While some regarded tests as being based on a transmission model of learning, Gipps, McCallum, McAlister and Brown (1991) felt that the kind of assessment seen at this time could support and inform good teaching and learning, with the tests being part of the process rather than the goal to work towards. Others (Resnick and Resnick, 1991) recognised the complexity facing teachers, and suggested that a move towards paper and pencil tests might be a way forward. In order to reduce the workload in the implementation of SATs, the latter tests became the norm while the tests based on process-orientated tasks were phased out.

Testing was given greater prominence within the school year because the issue of perceived or alleged falling standards seemed to be gathering greater momentum. Turner (1990) argued that, based on tests by nine anonymous Local Education Authorities carried out back in the 1980s, reading standards of seven year olds had declined. He saw this as being linked to teachers departing from traditional, skill-based reading schemes, to use more liberal approaches such as 'apprenticeship' models. The Alexander Report (1992) commissioned by Kenneth Clarke, the Secretary of State for Education, seemed to agree, as it also blamed declining standards on teachers' lack of a didactic methodology, and placed more emphasis on streaming, whole class teaching and group work. The report by the so named 'Three Wise Men' (Alexander, Rose and Woodhead, 1992) also recommended that subject teaching and whole class teaching should work together. They felt this approach would result in higher standards in teaching and learning, so raising the standards of pupils with what they termed 'traditional, common-sense classroom values' (Alexander et

al., 1992). These criticisms and suggestions for improved practice within the primary school were given further support in the Ofsted publication *Primary Matters* (Ofsted, 1994).

### 1.3.2 Summary of the Later Years

In these latter years a number of problems were posited in relation to the development of education. These were:

- that there was a hostile reaction to what was considered liberalist education promoted by the Plowden Report;
- although it appeared that there was inconsistent evidence there were claims that standards in education were falling;
- there were greater demands for accountability in relation to falling standards.

In response to these concerns government reforms were implemented that:

- brought education under the control of one powerful body-the government;
- introduced the NC as a way of ensuring that all schools covered the curriculum consistently;
- introducing testing in the three core subjects-maths, English and Science as a way of measuring standards.

It was against this backdrop, with a growing concern that standards were still falling, that the Conservative government faced a general election in 1997, and education was used as a crucial policy lever in Labour's victory.

## 1.4 The National Literacy Strategy

Labour victory saw the almost immediate publication of the White Paper, *Excellence in Education* (DfEE, 1997a), with the newly elected Prime Minister declaring that 'Education, education, education' were his three main priorities. Prior to this, and in anticipation of their win, David Blunkett, the Shadow Secretary of State for Education, had put together a Literacy Task Force in order to pilot a scheme that would tackle poor standards in literacy in the primary schools.

The National Literacy Project (NLP) began in 18 LEAs, and on the basis of the NLP's recommendations, in that same year all primary schools in England had implemented the NLS: *Framework for Teaching* (DfEE, 1998). Alongside this implementation came a commitment by David Blunkett to resign if certain targets were not met in literacy by the year 2002. These targets were set according to the base line achieved in 1996 where 57% of 11 year olds had achieved a Level 4 or 5 in English SATs. The target set for 2002 was for 80% of children to reach a Level 4 or 5 through the implementation of the NLS. However, David Blunkett moved to another department before his self-appointed deadline, and Estelle Morris took his place, continuing to monitor whether results were improving.

### 1.4.1 The Raising of Standards

The government has drawn a clear link between the application of the *Framework for Teaching* (DfEE, 1998) and a dramatic rise in standards (DfES, 2005), but in a study of 39 schools, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, Smith and Hardman (2000) have found that the general consensus of opinion amongst teachers was that there was an inconsistency between what was being taught through the NLS, and what was being tested in the SATs.

Although the government claims that there has been a dramatic increase in the standards of literacy, this has only been reflected in the results of the SATs tests for

reading. The results for writing have not shown the same improvement, and, as the government defined literacy as 'the ability to read and write' (DfES, 1997-2001b), and describes the process of reading and writing as 'unitary', questions were asked about how adamant claims can be about rising literacy standards (Hilton, 2001a).

Questions have also been raised on whether the test papers are becoming easier. In an analysis of the reading tests from 1998 to 2000, Hilton (2001b) found that the papers had become easier to the extent, that if enough lower-order questions (to find information in the text) were answered, a child could achieve a Level 4 without having to answer any higher-order questions (using skills such as inference and deduction).

Furthermore, an article in the TES (Henry, 2001) reported that The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) discovered that in the Key Stage 2 tests for 2001, children in the same classes produced an identical set of answers for questions, which indicated that phrases, words and even whole pieces of work had been learnt by rote, and sometimes had little to do with the question asked. Henry (2001) also reported that the QCA warned teachers to stop drill teaching, but teachers argued that they can do little else under increased pressure to meet the demands of the government and the public.

Under growing intensity and scrutiny SATs tests in literacy have become the indicators of more than just rising standards. As David Blunkett (DfEE, 1997b, p.1) inferred to parents in discussing the secondary school league tables: 'I hope you will find these tables interesting in themselves, and helpful when talking to your child's school or thinking about which school he or she might attend after leaving primary or middle school'. But, as Fullan (2001) asks, are standards in literacy, as reflected in the results achieved in SATs, indicating how well children read and write? And, are the apparent changes in the results an indication that deep and long lasting learning has taken place? Fullan (2001, p.231) states:

We don't think so. Don't get me wrong. The gains are real and they represent not a bad day's work. But they do not represent the kinds of transformation in teaching and learning that are being identified by cognitive scientists, or the closing of achievement gaps by disadvantaged groups.

Teaching and learning within the classroom is surrounded by controversy and confusion, and, though much research has been conducted in the development of cognitive growth (see Chapter 2), still the learning process is shrouded in a certain vagueness that eludes description (Newman, Griffin and Cole, 1989; Nash, 2001a). Meadows (1993, p.330) describes how the enormous quantity of research on why some schools or teachers foster pupils' achievement better than others is complicated by many differing independent variables. These include: the difference in level of skills; difference in level of knowledge pupils begin from; difference in abilities; differences in cognitive-related activities outside of school; the problems associated with measuring achievement; and the problems in identifying and measuring relevant school or teacher characteristics.

'Performance indicators' are becoming very important to many different countries, as they allow comparisons over time and geographically, generating a considerable body of research trying to identify what makes an 'effective school' (Edmonds, 1979; MacKenzie, 1983; Mortimore and Sammons, 1987; McGaw, Piper, Banks and Evans, 1992). However, as most of the studies are based on case studies and not statistical analysis, generalisations cannot be readily made. Riley (1992) warns that without using complicated statistical analysis of the data that takes into account the socio-economic status and educational background of the parents (Goldstein, 1987) the results on a national level will be invalid and unfair, inadequately reflecting the school. There are also justifiable worries that the complexity of evaluating teaching and learning has not been explained properly to those not professionally involved,



leading to misinterpretations of the results (Riley, 1992).

Finally, in relation to school progress and achievement and the notion of the NLS being 'effective', Smith and Hardman (2000) found that, though improvement had been made in all the schools observed, those who had implemented the NLS for longer had not made any more improvement than those who had been teaching from it for a shorter time, suggesting that progress would be hard to maintain. This had considerable implications, as there were Government proposals to increase targets in 2004.

With so much emphasis placed on quantifiable results it appears that there needs to be more qualitative research that provides a greater insight into the kind of literary environments children are engaging in under the framework of the state-controlled NLS. This thesis attempts to contribute to that knowledge.

## 1.5 Curriculum Theory and the Changing Image of the Learner

Having considered the implementation of key government initiatives, which resulted in the curriculum coming under the overall control of the government, and leading up to the implementation of the NLS, this part of the discussion focuses on the development of theoretical movements in educational research that influenced curriculum models of teaching and learning in the schools, and what happened to them in response to internal and external pressures.

*The teacher's understanding of teaching and learning, and how the adult and student engage with poetry as a result of that understanding, is thought to be an essential part of fostering and nurturing positive experiences with poetry (Andrews, 1991). That understanding, which involves how and what of the curriculum should be delivered, has been influenced by a number of internal and external forces, in-*

cluding government policies, educational research, teachers carrying out their own research, and public opinion. This is why Goodson (1994, p.111) suggests that the curriculum is 'a multifaceted concept, constructed, negotiated and renegotiated at a variety of levels and in a variety of arenas'.

The curriculum is considered to be a reflection of the dominant ideological forms that shape society (Goodson, 1990) expressed through certain choices made over theory, pedagogy and organisation, which can be classified under many different headings associated with curriculum theory (Clarkson, 1988). Embedded in the foundation of any curriculum theory is the implied question: 'What are schools for?' which Lawton (1980) suggests is intrinsically related to: 'Who shall be educated?' In answering the former question many ideological statements are made, which are conceptualised in theories of the curriculum (Aldrich, 1982), and each stance raises its own set of varied and complex questions. But, over time, what appears to have been most frequently presented are two, polarised approaches to the curriculum: progressivism versus traditionalism, which have been aligned to the 'positivist/humanist' argument in philosophy and social sciences (Silcock, 1999). However, the situation is much more complex than this, as there are many different constructions under any one heading of a curriculum theory. The following discussion identifies three of these ideologies that have dominated models of curriculum theory, and also appear to underpin the NLS.

### **Child-Centred Learning**

Child-centred ideologies are widely considered to have originated from the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his book *Emile* (1762), in which he expressed the view that children should learn what they are capable of and interested in, rather than having to acquire a large quantity of prescribed knowledge. Since then there have been many interpretations of a child-centred approach, which, in the main, adhere

to developmentalist principles where the processes of cognitive development of the child are seen as more important than the acquisition of knowledge. Therefore, any educational construct must be developed to support the individual needs of the child.

Dewey, Nunn, Steiner, Froebel and Montessori made big steps in the area of developmental psychology by focusing on the processes of learning, and explored what were considered progressive ideas to do with the way children learn. They emphasised the need to allow children to become ‘architects of their own understanding’ (Webster et al., 1996, p.41), through experimentation with practical activities. Piaget’s work (1926, 1950) was also considered very significant in outlining a model of child-centred teaching and learning through the depiction of set stages of the natural development of the child.

Both the Hadow Report (1931) and the Plowden Report (1967) endorsed child-centred theories by suggesting that children could benefit from practical and creative learning experiences. Many people felt that the way in which the curriculum was addressed in the form of documents and policies was insufficient and inadequate in encompassing all that a child needed, and there was a growth of interest in the notion of wanting to transform the curriculum. This approach was implemented in primary schools in the 1970s, as there was a move to consider other ways of looking at the curriculum in the action of reflecting on processes of thinking rather than concentrating on documents and policies. This led to teachers being encouraged to be researchers in their classrooms (Richards, 1988), and there was a wave of enthusiasm, as it seemed possible that the reconceptualisation of the curriculum was gathering momentum. However, by the mid 1970s a number of factors inhibited this change (see The 1970s in 1.3.2 The Later Years). Ultimately, it was felt that child-centred theories appeared to lack practical application in the classroom (Sutherland, 1988), they had limitations and lack of validity and increasing statements of standards

falling and greater public scrutiny of teachers added to the growing disillusionment.

However, while there is a body of research that suggests that primary school teachers have strong child-centred beliefs (Pollard, Broadfoot, Croll, Osborn and Abbott, 1994; Francis and Grindle, 1998), and in the past have used a mixture of teaching methods, some of which have been based on 'progressive' theories (Bennett, 1976), other research has observed that child-centred methodologies are the least used in the classroom (Webster et al., 1996), and child-centred practices may not have been very prevalent in classrooms, even during the supposed high point of the 1970s.

### 1.5.1 The Impact of Learning on Society

Ideologies that emphasise society consider how adults emerge from education to influence and shape the future. There are two dominant streams of expression in this area: 'reconstructivist' ideologies and 'instrumentalist' or 'revisionist' ideologies.

'Reconstructivist' ideology views schools as having an important impact on changing the makeup of our society through its role of shaping children into the kind of adults that would contribute towards a democratic social ideal. Education, then, is seen as an agent in social transformation, and, as such, the teacher encourages the students to engage actively in critical analysis and questions of the existing social order through a curriculum based on liberating students and eliminating inequalities and oppression (Shor and Freire, 1987). This was referred to as a 'Process' model of learning, where the developmental needs of children were placed above curriculum content, with characteristics of child-centred learning and progressive education (Blenkin and Kelly, 1987). This could result in high levels of motivation and varied and interesting learning experiences for children.

'Instrumental' ideologies are based on the concept of education taking on the form of 'industrial trainers' (Williams, 1965), thereby preparing children for their

chosen vocation through an appropriate curriculum. A traditional vocabulary dominates (Golby, 1988), characterised by terms such as 'standards', 'direct teaching', 'subject' and 'assessment'. The role of the teacher is to transmit the necessary knowledge to the student through an 'Objectives' model of curriculum planning. The breaking down of the curriculum into a set of objectives is considered a very practical approach to the curriculum (Marsh, 1997), and therefore could be said to have psychological limitations (Bantock, 1980) because assessment is limited to easily identifiable and measurable outcomes that do not take into account the complexity of teaching and learning (Meadows, 1993).

The 'Process' model and the 'Objectives' model of learning highlighted in the 'reconstructivist' and 'instrumental' ideologies are considered to be contrasting approaches to learning (Littledyke, 1996). The former emphasises process as the centre of learning characterised by child centred approaches, compared with an objectives dominated model, with knowledge as the centre of learning with transmission approaches. The following discussion considers what ideologies and models of learning underpin the National Curriculum and the National Literacy Strategy.

### **1.5.2 Knowledge as the Centre of Learning**

Ideologies about teaching and learning that are based around the communication of specific knowledge and skills have been described as an 'elementary' or 'conservative' tradition (Richards, 1988), which sees the product rather than the process as the most important. In this ideology the choice of knowledge to be passed on from one generation to the next is seen as critical in preserving and maintaining all that is best about that culture. This form of learning was epitomised in the 1800s when teachers used formal methods of passing on specific knowledge, as salary pay for teachers and funding for schools were related to children passing annual tests.

### 1.5.3 Ideologies and the National Curriculum and National Literacy Strategy

In assessing the National Curriculum (Moon, 1990; Chitty, 1991; Littledyke, 1996; O'Hear and White, 1993) there are many indications that it is underpinned by a 'conservative-instrumentalist' ideology. Its main emphasis of raising standards and monitoring effectiveness is conveyed through a market-led economy subject to meeting the demands and needs of the consumers (parents, industry, government).

The main focus of the National Curriculum is upon three 'core' subjects, including English, where prescribed knowledge is broken down into a set of objectives that a child is expected to attain according to a pre-determined level. Each child is expected to be assessed by the teacher in accordance with attainment targets for different ages, and then measured by Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs), which can be compared nationally and ultimately globally. Such a rigidly defined hierarchical structure, through which the child is expected to ascend, appears to assume that the child will fit into a standardised role of learning too.

Underpinning the framework for the National Curriculum for English is the concept of passing on a specific body of knowledge. While 'The Cox Report' (DES, 1989b) proposes that children should be immersed in our literary heritage, there has been much criticism over what that heritage should consist of (Inglis, 1987; Lewis, 1989; McEvoy, 1991; Naidoo, 1994; Williamson and Woodall, 1996; Goodwin and Findlay, 1999). With regard to poetry, there are many who would suggest that the Programmes of Study do not reflect the public British literary heritage canon, rather, as Styles (1998, p.188) states it: 'marginalizes the very poetry actually written for young readers'. Also, there appears to be a lack of poetry from other cultures and from female writers.

The National Literacy Strategy seems to be a development of the ideologies expressed in the National Curriculum. At the time of the National Curriculum,

Conell (1992) expressed relief at how the teaching of English was not reduced to literacy skills and grammar, but the NLS framework lays out formal grammar and skills in great detail, to be taught as part of a national strategy for improving standards. Furthermore, it is suggested that they should be taught through the structure of a literacy hour. With the NLS and the invitation to those in the private sectors to get increasingly more involved in education, the Labour government is keen to develop a work force that can compete with others economically on a global level (DfES, 1997-2001c).

The conservative-instrumentalist ideologies that underpin the NLS could have a significant impact on the literary environments children are immersed in and contribute to the kind of experiences children are having with poetry.

## 1.6 Changes in Society

Society has undergone many changes and, as a result, transformations in attitudes and interest towards education have dramatically altered at local, national and global level, to the point where existing perceptions of power, professionalism and authority have dissipated, moving control of the curriculum away from the teacher and into the hands of the state. This has been due to a number of factors, whereby interested parties, such as politicians, the media, and parents, have questioned in similar ways, though with different motivations and intended outcomes, how schools are meeting the needs of children.

In the early years of education, around the time of the published 1862 Revised Code, school was considered by the general public to be a place where social order was reinforced, and the majority of children could be expected to come away with basic knowledge and skills that would equip them in becoming a part of the growing industry. Teachers, in the main, used formal teaching methods, and the authority of schools were considered very powerful, resulting in few disciplinary problems.

In the 1920s and 1930s there was growing development in the professional status of teachers, as National Union of Teachers (NUT) gathered strength and the government implemented policies designed to attract non-working class trainee teachers into a longer period of training of higher quality than previously. Teachers had a great deal of autonomy at this time since performance testing had been phased out, but they were isolated in the community, and parent and teacher rarely made contact. However, 'attitude, expectations and behaviour' (Gardner, 1988, p.40) were to radically change in the post-war years compared to the pre-war years, as dramatic changes took place in relationships between teachers, children and their parents. Gardner (1988) relates how from the 1870s to the 1930s teachers and parents were hostile or ignorant of each other, but, as interest in education changed, teachers had to cope with a more intrusive parental role, which paralleled greater involvement by the government. By late 1940s this was beginning to have a significant impact upon teacher autonomy in the classroom.

In the 1950s there was still a lot of support for the class teacher, reflected in media coverage over pay disputes (Cunningham, 1992), but the press became increasingly hostile in the 1960s due to a number of strikes over the same issue. Although these strikes achieved the objective of increasing teachers' salaries and demonstrated that the NUT was a powerful force, the disruption which they had caused, combined with publicity over documents like the Plowden Report (1967) and the first of the Black Papers (1969), drew negative coverage.

The 1970s saw teachers come under increasing attack for children's poor performance in schools. Significant changes were taking place in industry, which reduced the power of the trade unions considerably through legislation and the empowering of management, establishing a relationship of fear between management and the work force. This, in turn, reduced the power of the NUT, and lent strength to the government's movements to bring education under its overall control. At this time



more and more questions were being asked by industry as to why the standard of the pupils coming into the work place seemed to be of a lower standard than previous years (Heller, 1988). It failed to take into account that a greater number of higher education places were being taken up by pupils, but nevertheless these kinds of issues were added to the ever-increasing public and political concern over an apparent educational decline.

During the 1980s the implementation of the National Curriculum and a greater accountability through testing and inspection reduced teachers' professional autonomy dramatically (Gardner, 1998). It was not clear at the time to what extent results from the SATs would be used in teacher appraisal, but Key Stage 2 results were to be published in the domain of the general public. The results could be publicly scrutinised through what has been termed 'performance reporting' (Marsh, 1997) and results compared nationally and internationally. As Aldrich (1992, p.60) stated: 'If schools are to respond to market forces and parents' choices why should the same not apply to the curriculum?' The 'market economy' that Callaghan had hinted about in his speech in 1976 was developing markedly in schools and this would now take a stronger hold during the 1990s as schools took on 'market principles'.

### **1.6.1 Education and Globalisation**

During the 1990s a new relationship between education and society had begun to emerge embodied in the concept of 'globalisation', which, though not a new phenomenon (Fitzsimons, 2000), has recently gathered momentum heralding 'a dramatic transformation in economic, political, cultural and moral understanding and interrelationships' (Heath, 2002, p.37). Fitzsimons (2000, p.507) describes the conception of globalisation as a:

constitution of systems that are reliant on the increasing interdependence and internationalisation of formal institutions (in financial markets, busi-

nesses, nation-states, media, and the Internet), while at the same time relying on the dimensions of localism (including personal identity and ethnic affiliation).

The Labour government has pushed to engage with globalisation in a powerful way through the implementation of educational policy and proposed practice, which is reflected in the preoccupation of raising standards through the NLS. Labour initiatives in education could, therefore, be linked to the wider picture of striving to achieve a significant place of power and influence in the global market. This view is reflected in the rhetoric expressed on The Standards Site where in the Implementation of the NLS: Final Report (DfES, 1997-2001c) it is stated:

Above all, the Group needs to develop and sustain good links with similar strategic approaches to literacy in other countries. We believe that, increasingly such international cross-fertilisation can make a vital contribution both in providing ideas and approaches and in ensuring that standards here match the best in the world.

Avis (2000, p.186) outlines the structure of how economic conditions are articulated through the concept of globalisation:

- globalised economic relations
- competitiveness dependent upon investing in human capital
- value-added production
- an effective education system
- social cohesion and inclusiveness leads to a stable society
- social stability provides a basis for competitiveness

This structure does not hang easily together because the conflict of knowledge driven by consumerism is at odds with social justice and equality. As Heath (2002, p.38) expresses:

In a globalised world there is an almost overwhelming tendency to see education solely as a means to an end, as instrumental to goods which lie outside the realm of knowledge and rational or critical understanding. Education here is all about 'achieving outcomes' more quickly, more often and more effectively than ever before.

This conflict is revealed in a particular kind of understanding that the government has constructed about globalisation (Avis 2000); that is that economic competitiveness is embodied in the development of the individual within a society embracing justice, inclusion and cohesion. At the heart of this construction of meaning is an agenda of competitiveness, which the government is determined to engage with on a global level by creating a climate of competitiveness at a local level, with school competing against school. With this kind of understanding education provides the resources whereby people can better themselves, so increasing human capital, but the understanding and the framework that has been developed around the identity of the individual is limited, and lacks social democracy.

## 1.7 Summary of Curriculum Control

Through this discussion of the battle for the control of the curriculum articulated through the three major themes of government initiatives, theories of the curriculum and changes in society, it is evident that education has undergone radical transformation.

In the book *Work and Identity in the Primary School*, Mentor, Muschamp, Nicholls, Ozga, and Pollard (1997, p.29) use Dale's (1994) interpretation of the mar-

ket economy to define what they perceive to be the change in relationships implied by the legislation that has been implemented.

Table 1.1 (Mentor et al., 1997, p.29) shows a reversal of roles, whereby ministry and politicians have become dominant in education, with industry becoming influential in their decisions. Parents are seen as the beneficiaries of education in their role as consumers, with their children appearing as commodities within such a system, while LEAs and teachers are merely instrumental in responding to and carrying out state initiatives.

Mentor et al., (1997) express real concerns over the changes they have witnessed since the 1970s, particularly in the relationship and roles of key players in the development of education. Table 1.1 (Mentor et al., 1997, p.29) shows a de-skilling of professionalism within education, countered by a rise in the influence of public opinion outside of education and a growth in the concept of marketisation as the way forward.

	1944-74	1974-88	1988-95
Ministry (DES/DFE)	oversees	attempts steerage	Minister's instrument
Politicians	reserve	opportunists	dominant
LEAs	partners	squeezed	excluded
Teachers	partners	problems	deskilled
Parents	who?	natural experts	consumers
Industry	indifferent	concerned	partners
Pupils	invisible	problems	commodities?

Table 1.1: Policy-making in England, 1944-95

At one time teachers were considered to play an important role in the socialisation of children. However, the identity of the primary school teacher has changed dramatically; whereas at one time the construction of identity would have come from a variety of resources that would endorse the teacher as a professional, e.g. training, support from local authority, and relationship with the class, this has now changed with support being narrowed and responsibilities becoming wider and

greater. Teachers' professional identities have been transformed to meet cultural changes, which are focused upon demands being made in the public domain. Mentor et al., (1997, p.19) state: 'We believe there are issues about power, exploitation, fragmentation and loss of professional identity that should be explored and illuminated'.

The government have gained overall control of the curriculum and have implemented a strategy for improving standards in English that appears to be based on conservative-instrumentalist ideologies that seek to meet the demands of the market economy that has been created. Many researchers have recognised this influence of industry on the education system (Kenway, 1994; Soucek, 1994; Watkins, 1994), and reflect that the attitudes that shape industry are the driving force behind the 'economising process' that is marketing education as a product.

Opposition from the public is not a serious issue for, as Stainthorp (1999, p.1) suggests: 'Like motherhood and apple pie, no-one could seriously object to a national concern to ensure that as many children as possible are able to read and write with fluent ease'. However, there are many professionals within education who have watched the changes with unease. Avis (2000, p.185) considers that:

It is important to examine ideas in that they are often presented as progressive and as carrying a commitment to social justice. This is particularly the case with those of New Labour, whose rhetoric offers at one and the same time deeply conservative politics under a progressive veneer but also provides space for radical intervention.

While Tate (1999, p.11) warns:

It is not enough to debate the curriculum solely in terms of a return to basics. Nor is it enough to debate the curriculum solely in terms of skills needed to survive in a global capitalist economy. We also need to cultivate their aesthetic abilities, their understanding of the society

in which they live, both its past and present, their appreciation of the nature of scientific enquiry, and their awareness of spiritual and moral dimensions of human existence. In addition, they need opportunities to learn to reason and maybe even philosophise.

I have considered these issues in order to present the political, social and global context to this study, as these may have implications on how poetry is taught at Key Stage 2. If a market economy presides over the education system, then how does poetry fare, placed prominently as it is in the theoretical framework of the NLS? And what role can it practically have given the daily climate of pressure and competitiveness that now surrounds teaching and learning in the primary school?

## 1.8 Research Aim

The aim of my research is to provide a focused examination of how poetry is taught by two non-specialist English teachers in two Year 6 (Y6) classrooms supported by the NLS, and in doing that consider the kind of literary environments children are engaged in.

In Chapter 1 key research was presented, which identified several themes that have emerged as being problematic in the teaching of poetry. The background context for the articulation and development of the underpinning research questions was then considered through an historical discussion of external and internal pressures, and influences upon primary classroom practice. As an important part of this scene setting the implementation of the NLS was also examined in the context of the historical development of English educational reforms. This discussion was then developed to demonstrate that, though there is a growing body of research on poetry in the classroom, there seems to have been little observed practice of primary teachers' and children's experiences of poetry under the guidance of the NLS

framework.

In Chapter 2 the context presented in the first chapter is developed and extended in the form of a literature review that considers the historical development of the teaching of poetry, the origins of poetic experience, and further consideration of the changing images of the child as a learner. The structure, content and theoretical underpinnings of the NLS are then discussed in detail and related to the previous discussion on poetry.

## Chapter 2

# Reviewing the Literature

### 2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 it was suggested that the teaching of poetry may pose problems for teachers, with three areas identified as areas of particular concern: the difficulty in finding a coherent methodology suitable for poetry; insufficient subject knowledge; and, teachers' and children's attitudes towards poetry.

In this Chapter the discussion is further developed with an examination of the way in which poetry has been considered a subject for the 'literary elite' juxtaposed with the idea that playful manipulation of language is an instinctive part of human development (Crystal, 1987, 1998). The origins of poetic experience are examined both in society and the individual, and I suggest that creativity and invention with language, which is at the heart of poetry, is a natural expression of our human desire to communicate and interact in a social setting. Finally, I examine the NLS framework (DfEE, 1998) to consider whether it encourages teachers and children to engage with poetry in a positive manner that both nurtures and develops that instinctive desire to play with and manipulate language simultaneously.



## 2.2 Perceptions of Poetry

English, as a recognised subject, did not appear in the curriculum for schools and universities until the late nineteenth century. It emerged in two distinct forms according to class: the upper and middle classes studied literature; the lower classes were taught basic skills in reading and writing in elementary schools. Although the study of literature, and particularly poetry, was considered to be part of the education of the middle and upper classes, it was deemed more suitable for women, whereas men could 'amuse themselves with works of English Literature as recreation' (Poulson, 1998, p.19).

There was a growing concern that the purely functional role of English in the elementary schools did not develop children's aesthetic and moral character, and there were calls for educational reform, as writers argued that the study of literature was essential in encouraging each individual student to reach their full potential in society. As the study of literature began to take a more prominent role as part of the English curriculum in elementary schools, poetry, which had once been considered purely for the elite, was introduced into the classrooms of teachers and children from all kinds of backgrounds. That transition was not an easy one and, though it is many years now since poetry was so blatantly labelled as being only fit for the middle and upper classes, there are still hints of elitism that surround the subject which have yet to be fully dispelled.

Druce (1965, p.35) observed how: 'Too many teachers are liable to come to a poetry lesson with the hushed and sometimes tongue-tied reverence of a priest to the sacrifice', while Doughty (1970, p.201) asked:

How many teachers, especially in grammar schools, feel that they ought to teach poetry? For them poetry is exclusively the poems of the tradition, the body of finished work by adult poets that constitutes, if you

choose to see it that way, the heritage of English poetic literature.

Marsh (1988, p.v) felt obliged to set the record straight: 'Poetry teaching is not only for the Masons initiated into the arcane mysteries of the ancient art, but for all'. He then goes on to state (p.3):

Some feel instant hostility - they know that poetry is part of an effeminate culture that people like them reject wholesale. Others just feel hopelessly unable to relate to the task; poetry is a mystery way beyond their ken, for people from families that go to the theatre.

Part of the problem could be linked to the kind of poetry that has been presented to children. When Styles (1998) examined key anthologies for children, compiled of British poets and spanning the years from 1801 to 1995, she found that poetry written by adults for adults, 'by the so-called 'great' poets' (Styles, 1998, p.194), such as Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Tennyson, was far more likely to be included than poets who wrote specifically for children. However, Styles also notes that since the 1970s, poetry written predominantly for children has grown, as well as significantly changing direction from the idealised view of middle class childhood that was previously presented (Styles, 1996, 1998). The publication of *Mind Your Own Business* by Michael Rosen in 1974 comically charted 'the ordinary ups and downs of most children's lives' (Styles, 1998, p.263), and opened the flood gates for a wealth of material that embraced the experiences of those that had been previously marginalized, such as the working-class, urban and black child.

This could explain why, over the years, two apparently opposing streams of thought have been expressed: that poetry is the apex of human expression and eloquence, represented by poets such as Shakespeare and Wordsworth (Clark, 1978; Benton and Fox, 1985; Scanell, 1987; Stibbs, 1995; Lambirth, 2001); and, that poetry is a natural and instinctive part of human development (Jakobson, 1960; Walter,

1993), as represented by Rosen and Dahl. The former has inadvertently contributed to the notion of poetry being elitist literature because it would seem to isolate those who have difficulty with language and its meaning. If poetry represents the highest order of creative language, then it would appear that it is only accessible to those able to understand the most complex of literary works. Others have disagreed with this notion of poetry, believing that it needs to be 'demystified' and 'transformed into the popular imagination' (Jackson, 1991, p.39) and suggest that children have a natural predilection for playing with language (Mattenklott, 1996; Crystal, 1998). Different though these views may at first appear, both have value, and, furthermore, can be held together when we consider the origins and the development of poetic experience for the individual within the community (see 2.1.).

The following discussion examines the relationship between poetry and human development as something that is both instinctive, and requiring support and guidance through social interaction to reach its full potential.

### **2.3 Poetry and the Linguistic Development of the Child**

If art is concerned with human creativity and invention, and a poet is described as possessing an acute imagination and expressiveness, then oral poetry could be considered a verbal form of art. Jakobson (1960, p.350) asks the question: 'What kind of verbal message makes a work of art?' then proceeds to answer it by explaining how poetry contains what he terms a 'poetic function', which draws attention to the message or meaning of a poem. Poetry is considered by many to be the embodiment of language at its most creative and imaginative (Clark, 1978; Stibbs, 1981, 1995; Garnett, 1989), yet the 'poetic function' is not exclusively restricted to this form of language. All kinds of discourse as well as formal poetry can be said to be works of, or contain elements of, art. However, what this function essentially does, is make conspicuous the language or 'message' of the text in the interests of itself, so, while

other types of language can employ the 'poetic function', poetry stands out because of the greater degree to which the 'message' calls attention to itself through the use of poetic devices such as rhyme, rhythm and images (Buchbinder, 1991).

Jakobson sees the study of poetics as an essential part of linguistics. He states (Jakobson, 1960, p.377): 'the linguist whose field is any kind of language may and must include poetry in his study'. Walter (1993, p.19) concedes, that if we take Jakobson's (1960) description of the 'poetic function' as being an integral part of language, then we can examine the origins of children's interactions with poetry.

Many have thought that the origins and growth of language in the human race (language phylogenesis) could be traced through study of the linguistic development of the child (language ontogenesis). This suggests that children's early language use is less sophisticated and can therefore be compared to primitive 'communities'. But Crystal (1987, p.6) states that:

Every culture, which has been investigated, no matter how 'primitive' it may be in cultural terms, turns out to have a fully developed language, with a complexity comparable to those of so-called 'civilized' nations' and this is no less true of the child's culture.

There is little or no evidence to show that the linguistic development of the child is parallel to the linguistic development of the human race (Geertz, 1983), but by taking a phylogenetic and ontogenetic approach to both the child and the human race, with specific reference to the presence and evolution of poetry, creativity and invention with language can be seen as an important part of human experience. Poetry in its many different forms can be traced through the evolution of the human race, and observed in children at its most prevalent and real.

As studies of children's manipulation of language increase, it becomes clear that children have a complex lore that is only really accessible to them, and that this lore,

far from dying out as other primitive cultures have, is alive and thriving, passed on from one generation to the next.

### 2.3.1 Approaching Poetry Phylogenetically

Through a phylogenetic approach the 'poetic function' is seen as being present everywhere within human communities. This focus sees the existence of primitive, original poetic experience and oral poetry within pre-literate communities as ways, for example, of storing memories or explanation.

Geertz (1983) explains how in so-called 'primitive' communities, the technical activities of the adults were accompanied by 'magic' in the form of mystical rituals, such as dancing and chanting, for example, before a hunt. This meant that the affective, emotional part of the brain would take a central role alongside 'rational thought' in an attempt to construct a sense of understanding of themselves in relation to the world. Such an approach is carried out at a very complex social level, which encourages the community to act, not as individuals but as a group working towards the common goal of making sense of life through their enactments.

Poetry is one way of drawing attention in a very individual and unique way to that everyday reality that is common to human experience (Jensen, 1996), making it remarkable through the employment of a variety of poetic devices (Tunncliffe, 1984). These devices, such as vocabulary, form and rhythm change the world around us into something that is abstract from our human experience when viewed objectively, yet has the capacity to connect both on a superficial and deep level with threads of our own understanding and reality, transforming it into a shared expression of the struggle and the delight of human existence. At times this transformation has been described through the use of supernatural language placing poetry on a mystical level.

Rosenblatt (1978, p.52) describes how the 'synthetic and magical power,' of the

imagination' is shaped by poetry, while Hall (1996, p.28) suggests that:

The poet's fascination with the sheer magic of words is shared by all young primary children. I remember that my own son, aged barely two years, loved to recite words like 'fancy' and 'certainly' (which he had heard in A.A Milne's 'The King's Breakfast') as if they had talismanic power.

In compiling a list of the best poetry of the 1980s for children in the United States, Crisp (1991, p.146) notes that one of the objectives of the poets when writing for children was 'to demonstrate the magic fluidity of language', while Benton (1978, p.123) has observed that: 'Story enthral: older children might fall under its power but few under ten or eleven can resist its magic. Stories in verse hold them in a double spell: the enchantment of the fiction and the form'.

It is no accident that such emotive language is used to describe poetry and children's responses when we consider the significance of magic for many communities (Geertz, 1983). Crystal (1987, p.8) suggests that the 'magical influence of language is a theme which reverberates throughout literatures and legends of the world' and is found in both the past and the present. It is possible that poetry connects us to that concept of magic that encourages an essential engagement with life and language beyond the norm, to the extent that those who find poetry deeply problematic still would affirm that poetry is something that should be taught in schools, and that it is an important part of a child's development, even though they cannot explain why (Ray, 1998).

Art, then, is the means for understanding the world at an aesthetic level. It does not replace science, but science is not enough to satisfy the need to know why we are here and what life is all about. Both art and science are a part of the human rationale, present in varying degrees in all human communities, and one of the ways in which this 'magic' or art can be expressed is through poetry.

### 2.3.2 Approaching Poetry Ongenetically

An ongenetic approach considers the development of that proto-poetic experience in the individual. Ninety percent of vocal exchanges in the first year of a baby's life consist of playing with language (Crystal, 1998). Parents induct the baby into the culture of their social environment through different forms of language play, and this may well include much poetical discourse in the form of nursery rhymes. This is a strange phenomenon, for it is clear that many English nursery rhymes were never originally composed for children but for adults, growing from proverbs, songs, ballads and many other sources (Opies, 1959). The majority of nursery rhymes are violent and amoral and yet they have been passed on from the adult to the child in a rhetorical situation, transforming what was once adult culture into children's culture (Lynn, 1985).

At this time children are also likely to experience the tactile nature of poetry. It could come in the form of grandad always chanting a particular nursery rhyme while jiggling the child on his knee, or a mother moving hands and fingers in response to spoken images and phrases. Poetry begins to carry with it associations and responses in different situations.

In this way children are exposed to poetry at an early age, and in turn they are able to use what they have heard to create literary narratives meaningful to them. Fox's (1993) study of a collection of 200 oral stories told by five children aged between three and a half and five revealed that the children were able to produce rhymes, rhythms, compose songs and poems as well as create poetic and lyrical narratives. These children had experienced many books being read aloud to them, leading Fox (1993, p.14) to conclude that: 'their imaginations are furnished with all sorts of interesting material which they can interpret and reinterpret in ways which are maximally meaningful and personal to themselves'. Chukovsky (1966) also observed how the language of pre-school children was enriched by poetry and

fantasy. In his book *From Two to Five* he carefully noted down what children said, commenting on their inventiveness and playful manipulation of language. Thacker (2000, p.9) states that children's literature plays an important role in developing socially constructed readers by encouraging "openness and testing of adult value systems and the law of language in the most challenging, imaginative and enlivening children's texts".

Research has also been carried out to discover what constructs of poetry young children have formed at the ages of six and ten years, and the meta-language they used to talk about it (Thompson, 1996). Discourse data was collected from Year 2 and Year 6 classes between children and teachers in a number of different schools in the north-east of England. The children had to sort through a range of texts and then report their findings back to the teacher, resulting in informal talk child-to-child, and more formal talk between child and teacher. The study used stylistic features identified by Carter and Nash (1990) as being specific to poetry, to provide a framework of analysis by which children's constructs of poetry could be interpreted. They were (Thompson, 1996, p.2):

- the way poets pattern language to produce specific effects
- the phonaesthetic contouring (patterns of sound)
- the organisation and patterning of the text
- the creation of text-intensive poetic meaning
- the stylistic contrasts (grammatical, syntactical, lexical)
- the use of modality
- the clause structure
- the isomorphic fit between language structure and meaning.



The results of the research were that, without prompting, six and ten year olds were able to recognise texts and genre types, and use appropriate meta-language to describe them, e.g. rhyme, poem, song, and nursery rhyme. When children did not have the knowledge of appropriate meta-language they used other strategies such as indicating features about the text that communicated their knowledge of poetic genre in other ways.

It is suggested, then, that from a very early age children have an intuitive knowledge of poetic genres, though the meta-language for demonstrating that knowledge by talking about poetry is not fully developed. Other research (Goswami and Bryant, 1990), on younger children who have not yet begun to read, demonstrates that most children have an ability to detect rhyme and alliteration. It is not clear how much can be attributed to genetic predisposition or the environment, although it is suggested that: 'The truth almost certainly lies between the two' (Goswami and Bryant, 1990, p.24) but it is evident that children have a knowledge and understanding of poetry and its uses, and that they have a natural desire to play with language using poetic devices.

## 2.4 Poetry and Education

Over the years significant poetry educators have outlined ways of introducing poetry to the pupil. Pirie (1987, p.17) describes how 'it is the poet's especial task to reveal the surprising within the ordinary'. She encourages teachers to guide children through the process of drawing upon their own experiences, while developing an objectivity that allows them to choose and arrange the words that communicate that idea with the greatest power. Walsh (1983) notes how pupils who are defined as less-able or less intelligent also need to be able to connect to poetry through their own everyday experiences, giving them access to literature and literary experiences that they may well have been denied.

Rosen (1989, p.6) also states that he learnt the lesson in his early years to 'write about what you know', culminating in the poetry book *Mind Your Own Business*, which was an autobiographical account of Rosen's experiences as a child. He also suggests that children come to school with knowledge or culture that is different from that which they engage with at school, and that the teacher needs to connect with that culture. Rosen has observed that much of that culture is passed on orally, and that to successfully engage pupils in the writing of poetry they need to be encouraged 'to write expressively in the voice they possess: the oral voice' (Rosen, 1987, p.37). This will provide the foundation upon which their writing voice can be further developed.

Chambers (1995, p.16) suggests that narrative, the telling of stories to ourselves and each other, is a fundamental part of human interaction, and that literature should be seen as a natural part of that interaction, for 'in literature we find the best expression of the human imagination, and the most useful means by which we come to grips with our ideas about ourselves and what we are'. Hamley (1996) also notes how common features in story telling represents a universal process whereby repeated patterns in narrative support humanity in making sense of experience.

Chambers (1995) states that it is important that the teacher reads and enjoys literature too, becoming a member of the group so that together they can come to a corporate understanding of the book, which allows for different interpretations. Sutcliffe (1995, p.150) also suggests that 'students who are very good primary teachers of reading should be active readers of fiction and non-fiction (including poetry) written for children'. While Rosen also feels that it is important that teacher and pupil are engaged in the experience together, and that there is mutual sharing and ownership.

These influential poetry educators take both an ongenetic and phylogenetic approach to literature, in that they recognise that children have an instinctive desire to

manipulate and experiment with language, and that their experiences of humanity and literacy can allow for a shared empathy about the common human condition.

## **2.5 The NLS and Poetry**

With the implementation of the NLS came a recommendation, through inclusion, that a range of poetry should be taught regularly as part of children's literary experiences in the classroom. However, the introduction of the Framework was underpinned by the three beliefs that had resulted in its implementation (Fisher, 2000): that there was a need to raise standards; that this could be done by improving teaching; and, that this improvement could most effectively be measured by the setting of national targets. It was unclear from this what role poetry would play in the raising of standards.

The following discussion outlines the impact of the implementation of the NLS on teachers. Following this, the framework of the NLS is discussed in relationship to suggested pedagogical implications through the way in which the objectives for learning are laid out, and the structure of the literacy hour.

### **2.5.1 Training**

While some teachers felt that the training received on implementing the NLS in school was a strength, other studies revealed that teachers thought the training was rushed, and left them feeling ill-prepared to cope with all that they perceived was being asked of them (Fisher and Lewis, 1999; Smith and Whiteley, 2000). Anderson, Digings and Urquhart (2000) found that training differed across schools and counties, with the majority having between two and five days. It was also suggested that such was the nature of the training that it left teachers feeling that there was little ownership (Dadds 1999; Anderson et al., 2000): 'Encouraging messages given at national and local level did nothing to relieve the notion that the framework had

to be taken on board, lock stock and barrel' (Anderson et al., 2000, p.117). It was perceived by teachers that this was something that had to be done, and quickly.

Raising standards in reading and writing through this large-scale reform appeared to focus on creating a consistency in how teachers taught English. This was indeed an ambitious step, for research has shown that teachers are slow to adopt new teaching styles and will not readily change the way in which they have always taught (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988; Galton, Hargreaves, Comber, Wall and Pell, 1999). However, unless a better alternative could be demonstrated, the NLS was expected to be used in all schools by all teachers across England, and, it seems that in the majority of schools that these changes were accepted.

Though the training was intense at the time of the implementation, it is not clear how much time was given over to the teaching of poetry within the NLS at Key Stage 2. Given that teachers were being asked to teach a greater range of poetry than ever before, and with detail that would appear to require an in-depth knowledge base, there seemed little material to guide and support them in comparison to the amount that had been produced on grammar and spelling banks. Teachers with little background subject knowledge of poetry, and a possible lack of input in how to teach poetry through the framework of the NLS, would have to interpret the objectives and the literacy hour for themselves.

Research about student teachers on Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) or Bachelor of Education (BEd) courses has revealed that though they may have had problems applying the NLS in the classroom, they have had more time to address these issues (Graham, 1998). However, it is suggested that the idealistic beliefs and values trainee teachers may have had in inspiring and exciting pupils about English, are significantly influenced by the teaching practice placements, and the choice of the first school (Marshall, Turvey and Brindley, 2001). This suggests that at the time of implementing the NLS, student teachers were affected by how the school at

which they had their placement reacted to the document.

## 2.6 The Framework

According to the NLP, the framework has been designed to help teachers interpret the English National Curriculum Programmes of Study for Reading and Writing from Reception through to Year 6. Speaking and listening is not included specifically in the framework, although reference is made to it as being an essential part of the structure (DfEE, 1998).

Planning from the NLS is laid out on three levels:

- The Framework, which indicates what should be taught
- Medium-term planning (termly or half-termly) indicating when objectives should be taught
- Short-term planning (weekly) indicating how it should be taught

Each term's work has a set of teaching objectives covering a range of poetry, which are related to reading and writing in the form of three inter-related strands (DfEE, 1998, p.7):

Word Level	Phonics, Spelling and Vocabulary
Sentence Level	Grammar and Punctuation
Text Level	Comprehension and Composition

Teachers are expected to select poetry that will cover the teaching objectives in these three strands.

The management for the content specified in the framework, takes the form of 'The Literacy Hour' (see Appendix 2.1). This hour is divided into four quadrants, which teachers are expected to follow. It should begin with 15 minutes whole class work on a shared text through reading and writing, followed by 15 minutes of whole

class work on focused word and sentence work based on that text. There should then be 20 minutes of guided group work and independent work on reading, writing, word or sentence work, ideally related to the text, but with a differentiated task. Finally, 10 minutes of reflecting and consolidating on the work that has been covered in that lesson. The expectation is that in 60% of that hour pupils will be taught directly by the teacher, and in the remaining 40% of that time they will be working independently. Since the implementation of the hour it has become clear that this allotted time for literacy is inadequate (Campbell, 1998; Beard, 1999), and extra provision is expected to be set aside for silent reading, teacher reading to the class and extended reading time.

It is intended that, in a two year cycle, work will revisit, extend and develop skills at a more advanced level in reading and writing, so raising the standard to the required level set by the government in Year 6.

### **2.6.1 The Objectives**

In considering the structure of the NLS in relation to the objectives, it could be suggested that regardless of the intentions of those who formulated the framework, and the 'good messages emanating from the NLS' (Styles, 2002, p.10) it is open to mis-interpretation.

As noted in 4.2, each term's work has a set of teaching objectives laid out in the NLS that covers a range of poetry, which are related to reading and writing in the form of three inter-related strands: word, sentence and text level work.

Stainthorp (1999, p.3) states that the NLS makes it clear that word, sentence and text level work are to be integrated by 'Learning to use a range of strategies to get at the meaning of the text...the range of strategies can be depicted as a series of searchlights, each of which sheds light on the text'. However, in a survey of 32 primary schools, Frater (2000) made a key observation of the way in which teachers

implemented the NLS, and how effective they were in doing so. He found that the schools that were struggling with the NLS were those who interpreted the framework literally. They seemed to be preoccupied with covering the prescribed content, and taught the NLS literally as fragmented and separate sets of skills and knowledge. Frater makes an important observation (Frater, 2000, p. 109-110):

What is wrong with following, so literally and faithfully, the guidelines that the NLS team has drafted so painstakingly? The first answer must be that this cannot be what the team intended. The framework is analytical...But an analysis is not in itself a plan: what the NLS's framework offers is a basis for planning the delivery of the National Curriculum (NC)...To follow it literally is to be driven by taxonomy; it is also to ignore how children learn, or at least how they learn best. Such a conscientious, but misguided interpretation will invariably fail to integrate the component parts into which the English curriculum may be classified.

The schools that effectively implemented the NLS were 'professionally self-confident' (Frater, 2000, p.109), with teachers making constant connections between text level work, sentence and word level work, and linking that with children's experiences. He also observed that they had exciting and innovative initiatives for promoting literacy, with strong leadership and management of the whole school literacy policy. Twisleton's (2000) study of student teachers teaching the NLS argues that, though there are many positive aspects to the framework, the prescriptive detail can lead to a preoccupation with fulfilling the objectives without understanding why they are being taught. She observed that student teachers were teaching the task on a very superficial level, but had little understanding of the 'deeper relationships within the subject' (Twisleton, 2000, p.402). Styles (2002, p.10) has also voiced concerns that poetry is being taught as 'a vehicle for the teaching of phonics or spelling or sentence structure, rather than appreciated as a text for itself'.

The layout of the word, sentence and text level columns could pose considerable problems, because they do represent a fragmentation of skills and knowledge if read literally, and for those teachers who lack the confidence and knowledge awareness to combine these columns, it may seem easier to keep them separate, rather than inter-relating them. Also, the act of reading the columns, leading the eye from left to right, means that the word and sentence level columns could appear to have greater prominence in the reader's vision. This may also suit the reader, since the word and sentence level work could be considered easier to teach than the text level work, which is often considered more intangible and open to interpretation than the 'fixed' structural devices by which a poem might be identified or written. Such a reading model, which appears to be promoted by the structural layout of the objectives, could be labelled 'bottom-up reading', that is the working through of individual words and sentences often with no reference to the context of the poem as a whole. By adopting such an approach in the classroom this can often lead to a mis-interpretation of single words or sentences, which could lead to an overall lack of understanding of the poem. Meaning may become divorced from the poem as a whole, leading teachers and pupils to struggle. Dias and Hayhoe (1988. p.26) warn that:

The reader who is preoccupied with understanding a poem sentence by sentence or line by line is making obstruction to progress in creating provisional understanding of the poem as a whole. At worst, extreme focus on an itemized reading may prevent any attention to the poem as a poem.

Also, by concentrating mainly on the first two columns, the pupils' response to a poem, or response through writing a poem, may be lost due to a preoccupation with identifying or including poetic devices. Druce (1965, p.24) makes an important point about the teaching of poetry:



Young writers need to be convinced of the fact that what really matters is not rhyme, nor metre, nor line-length, but what they have to say. This is not to suggest that rhyme and metrical regularity are worthless; both are of infinite value. But they must take their place as the servants of thought, not as its masters.

### 2.6.2 Content of the Objectives

In the NLS the majority of the objectives appear to be focused on children identifying and using poetic devices, rather than encouraging children to personally respond to them, and express themselves through poetry.

For example, in Term 1 (DfEE, p.50) children are asked 'to write own poems experimenting with active verbs and personification', in Term 2 there is no written composition of poetry explicitly set out, while in Term 3 (DfEE, p.54) the requirement is that children should 'write a sequence of poems linked by theme or form e.g. a haiku calendar'. With regard to this latter point, Harmer (2000, p.15) makes an interesting statement:

Why is the government so keen on young children mastering the Zen-like qualities of the haiku? Is it because they, like Basho before them, see the universe as the reconciliation of order and chaos, of stillness and change, of the frog disturbed by the mirrored pool; or is it because they think children need to learn about syllables?

In the language used to describe the written composition objectives, it could be interpreted that there seems to be little expectation that children are crafting something expressive and unique, rather they are producing something that demonstrates that they have assimilated the knowledge laid out in the objectives. Lambirth (2001) suggests that the emphasis is upon the teacher presenting a poem and asking pupils

to imitate it, perhaps because it is 'both teachable and easily tested'. However, the teacher's interpretation of what the framework is stipulating, and the delivery of that in the classroom, will determine how children respond to the task of writing a haiku calendar. It could be that the teacher might take pupils outside for a literary session once a month and encourage pupils to 'meditate', to listen, to look and to record in poetic language their observations. Or, the teacher might write down a list of the seasons and ask children to write a 'haiku' for each one. However the teacher approaches the task, it illustrates that the NLS is only a 'framework', through which the teacher's own subject knowledge, methodological choices, prejudices, values and confidence levels are enacted. For the expert in English, someone who has studied the subject at GCSE, 'A' level and degree level, this open interpretation is its strength. Any statement made by the NLS can be embellished, fleshed out by the knowledge that the teacher brings to the reading of the objectives. However, for the teacher with limited experience and reading of the objectives, a reductionist approach may be taken, i.e. what is read is what is taught, and, if the explanation for a haiku is considered (NLS, 1998, p.83), it is suggested that this could be a serious weakness.

Haiku: Japanese form. The poem has three lines and 17 syllables in total in the pattern 5,7,5.

This suggests that the language of the framework is extremely important, as the teacher who lacks confidence and/or the expertise searches for clues as to how to proceed with the task of teaching poetry. It also means that any ambiguous statement or an obvious omission, such as speaking and listening, may be misinterpreted and lead to teaching that was never intended by the authors of the NLS.

### 2.6.3 Children's Previous Experience

As previously discussed in 2.1 Poetry and the Linguistic Development of the Child, children experience a range of poetry in various forms outside of school, and appear to have a natural inclination to play with language. In examining the NLS to see if this body of knowledge was referred to and drawn upon in the classroom, it seemed that there was very little evidence to suggest that children's experiences of poetry were to be valued and included.

Though the teaching objectives for Reception acknowledge that pupils should be taught rhyming patterns, and the example of learning nursery rhymes is given (DfEE, 1998, p.18), there appears to be little acknowledgement that children may come to school with prior knowledge and experience of poetical forms. Through Years One and Two the objectives about poetry are revisited, developed and extended, but, as for Reception, there appear to be few links between what goes on in the classroom and children's experiences outside of this. Those who formulated the NLS may have intended work such as learning nursery rhymes to draw upon children's home experiences, and later in Key Stage 2, Year 4, Term 2 (DfEE, 1998, p.39) there is explicit reference to children drawing upon their own body of experience, as they are encouraged to 'Write poems based on personal or imagined experience'. It could also be suggested that a teacher who believes that children bring literary experiences from home would constantly inter-relate school and home knowledge. However, if the premise is once again considered that a teacher who has little expertise in English may take a literal reading of the NLS, then the fact that personal experience in relation to poetry is only mentioned once at Key Stage 2 may mean that children only have one opportunity to write from personal experience.

Fenwick (1995, p.28) has observed that pupils 'often display an understanding of poetry which has hitherto been unsuspected', while Wade (1982) claims it is important as soon as children enter school that the knowledge they bring with them

about poetry is shown to be valued, and that what happens in the classroom extends ‘the knowledge, skills and pleasures that are embryonic in the young child’ (p.193). If their experiences are not taken into account to the extent that research suggests it should, then new information about metaphors, alliteration, and onomatopoeia may have little meaning to the child, in that it is specialised knowledge that has no relevance to the constructs of knowledge formed outside of school (Boekaerts, 1992; Vosniadou, 1992).

With a growing body of evidence to suggest that children have an understanding of poetry that is influenced by nature and nurture (Carter and Nash, 1990; Goswami and Bryant, 1990; Fox, 1993; Thompson, 1996), and that they spend a significant amount of time playing with language, perhaps there is a need for this body of knowledge to be specifically referred to, so providing an important bridge to the further development of children’s poetical understanding and experience.

#### **2.6.4 Structure of the Literacy Hour**

The structure of the Literacy Hour (see Appendix 2.1) is considered to be both a strength and a weakness, with some research (Smith and Whiteley, 2000) suggesting that teachers deviated from the structure, while others felt that a constraint had been placed on their practice, and they lacked the confidence to adapt the structure to meet the needs of their pupils (Anderson et al. 2000).

The layout of the structure is intended to highlight the most effective way of teaching the objectives to pupils, and to ensure that children are experiencing consistency in literacy teaching throughout the school, and across schools. Although the hour is cited as providing a ‘clearer focus on literacy instruction’, it is presented as being much more than a return to didactic methodologies. Rather, it is suggested that successful teaching is (DfEE, 1998, p.9):

- Discursive - characterised by high quality oral work

- Interactive - pupils' contributions are encouraged, expected, and extended
- Well-paced - there is a sense of urgency, driven by the need to make progress and succeed
- Confident - teachers have a clear understanding of the objectives
- Ambitious - there is optimism about high expectations of success.

However, it seems that such wording has perplexed teachers. In interviewing and observing teachers in Key Stage One and Two English, Hargreaves, and Hislam (2002) noted how they were confused by what they perceived as a conflict between the urgent pace, and the 'high quality oral work' where pupils' contributions are 'extended' (DfEE, 1998, p.8). Fisher (2000) also observed how differently ten Key Stage 2 teachers interpreted the suggestion: 'well-paced - there is a sense of urgency, driven by the need to make progress and succeed', with some feeling pressurised and restricted, while others felt worried by the amount of work that needed to be covered. Again this suggests that the language of the NLS can create uncertainty and anxiety amongst teachers as they try and interpret what is being asked of them.

The structure of the Literacy Hour is presented as a simple diagram, and broken down into sections where more information is given on how the objectives should be interrelated and presented.

In the first fifteen minutes of shared reading or writing, teachers are encouraged to teach both the objectives in the text level column and also use reading as a context for 'teaching and reinforcing grammar, punctuation and vocabulary work' (DfEE, 1998, p.11). For shared writing it is suggested that this time can be used 'for pupils to learn, apply and reinforce skills', with grammar and spelling to be included (DfEE, 1998, p.11).

The second set of fifteen minutes is intended for word level work, where it is expected that 'spelling and vocabulary work and the teaching of grammar work'

(DfEE, 1998, p.11) will be covered.

The third section of the Literacy Hour, the 20 minutes of guided group and independent work is to give the chance for the teacher to work with one group, while the rest of the class work independently. Teachers should ask questions in shared reading 'to direct or check up on the reading' (DfEE, 1998, p.12), but also to pose problems which can be solved. Guided writing time is expected to sometimes flow from reading, and be linked to the whole class writing preceding this section. It is also expected that sessions will be used to focus on specific objectives and aspects of writing, such as planning and composition. Examples given for independent work are varied. Those that are teacher driven are: phonic and spelling investigations and practice; comprehension work; vocabulary extension and dictionary work; hand-writing practice; practice and investigations in grammar, punctuation and sentence construction.

The final ten minutes provides a time for the whole class to be brought back together, and the teacher (DfEE, 1998, p.13) is able to 'spread ideas, re-emphasise teaching points, clarify misconceptions and develop new teaching points' and 'enable pupils to revise and practice new skills'. The plenary is also to (DfEE, 1998, p.13) 'enable pupils to reflect upon and explain what they have learned and to clarify their thinking'; 'develop an atmosphere of constructive criticism and provide feedback and encouragement to pupils' and 'provide opportunities for pupils to present and discuss key issues in their work'.

In extracting different statements from the information given about how the structure and objectives interrelate, as demonstrated above, it appears that it could be read in number of ways, but perhaps most strikingly it could be suggested that it is underpinned by two opposing schools of thought - a didactic, teacher-driven model of learning and a learning-driven model. In considering these terms, attention needs to be drawn to the teacher-driven and learning-driven styles outlined in *Managing*

*the Literacy Curriculum* in which Webster, Beveridge and Reed (1996, p.37) identify pertinent characteristics of each. They are:

Teacher-driven

- Adult structured with frequent reinforcement
- Teachers find opportunities to rehearse rules
- Children do as others require them
- Learning through prescribed steps
- Activities are not negotiable
- Pupils' task is to absorb
- Context is irrelevant
- Learning is managed for pupils by the teacher
- Literacy is a set of skills to be handed over

Learning-driven

- Adults and pupils decide together how to pursue a task
- Teachers guide and negotiate
- Children are seen as active partners
- Learning arises from joint problem-solving
- Activities provide opportunities for dialogue
- Pupils work collaboratively
- Context is made specific

- Learning processes are highlighted
- Readers reflect and review
- Writers compose and redraft

It could be suggested that in the teaching of skills such as phonics and spellings, a teacher-directed style could be more appropriate, and for example, the plenary could be used as a way of transmitting knowledge by the revision and practice of skills, and/or it could be seen as an opportunity to develop children's meta-language, encouraging pupils to internalise knowledge and enhance understanding. However, methodological choices such as this may need to be explicitly underpinned by a theory or theories of learning if a teacher is to choose the most appropriate.

Unfortunately, there appears to be no clear statement of an underpinning theory or theories to the methodologies proposed in the NLS, which is the main document that teachers refer to when teaching, and this is why one educationalist describes the framework as a return to a 'Victorian model' (Hilton, 1998, p. 4):

In the light of educational history, the new Literacy Hour begins to look very much older than is claimed, with many nineteenth-century dysfunctional assumptions enshrined within it. It is a return to authoritarian oral instruction based on texts chosen by the teacher from a set scheme; much of the instruction is at 'word level' and involves constant interrogation of the pupils. The domestic curriculum of the child is ignored and the child's existing body of knowledge made irrelevant.

And another is able to read the framework and conclude that the Literacy Hour could provide a good balance between teacher and pupil interaction (Fisher, 2000, p.13):



In shared work, the teacher plays the largest part and leads the interaction, scaffolding the learning. In guided work, the children are encouraged to be independent, but the teacher supports their independence through focused and targeted instruction. In independent work, children are primarily working independently and practising or exploring what they have already been taught.

There seems to be little sense, as Buchbinder (1991, p.9) states: ‘when we adopt a particular theory (and its practice), we understand why it is appropriate to a particular text and accept its limitations.’ For teachers who have little subject knowledge of poetry, this would seem particularly appropriate.

## 2.7 Summary of Chapter Two

In Chapter 1, I argued with reference to research that many teachers have historically found poetry to be a difficult subject to teach, and that fundamental to this were attitudes to poetry, lack of subject knowledge, and confusion over an appropriate teaching methodology. In Chapter 2, I discussed the common perceptions of poetry, which culminated in the proposition that poetry could be considered as both high status language, and a natural part of everyday discourse. This was attributed to a poetic function, an innate and natural predilection for playing with language which was developed in and for the community. I then examined the NLS and how such a framework could work with the poetic function identified as being present in children. I also discussed the way in which teachers without any subject knowledge in poetry might read the framework, and proposed that due to the language, the structure and the content, the NLS was open to misinterpretation. This could imply that the framework in itself is not enough to ensure that teachers are teaching poetry well, and I suggested that teachers need to be able to make informed decisions about how

to teach poetry based on the understanding of the theories of teaching and learning that underpin the NLS.

In Chapter 3, I outline the research design by which I attempt to examine how the teaching of poetry through the NLS has been interpreted by two Y6 teachers, and the impact of this upon pupils responses to poetry.

## Chapter 3

# The Research Design

### 3.1 Introduction

I begin this Chapter by outlining the case study as a research design that is most appropriate in examining literary environments in Year 6 (Y6), and the contribution of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (1998) to the teaching of poetry. I consider the positive and negative aspects of such a choice and explanations are given as to how significant criticisms have been addressed. Methods of data collection are then explored in detail, with reflection upon my role as the researcher as an instrument of data collection, and the relevance of selection procedures are discussed in accordance with the aims of the study. Finally, I set out a general analytic procedure as one that will facilitate the examination of teaching and learning styles, with specific focus on poetry and the NLS framework.

Central to the research design is the focus upon ‘what information most appropriately will answer specific research questions, and which strategies are most effective for obtaining it’ (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, p.30). Issues were raised in Chapter 1 and 2 about the ways in which children experience poetry in the classroom. From this, two research questions emerged, which underpin the study as a whole:

- What kind of literary environments are Y6 children experiencing as they engage with poetry in the classroom?
- What kind of contribution is the NLS making to the teaching of poetry?

These research questions have significance at this time for, though government-funded research on the NLS has taken place (Ofsted, 1998; DfEE, 2000; Ofsted 2000; Ofsted 2001a; Ofsted 2002a), there has been little independent research as yet, particularly in the area of poetry teaching.

In entering the Y6 classroom to investigate the research questions, I have come to understand that (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p.24):

There is no clear window into the inner life of the individual. Any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed...No single method can grasp the subtle variations in ongoing human experience.

While recognising, as Denzin and Lincoln (1998) do, that researching other people's lives is a complex task, I have adopted a case study design, which acknowledges this complexity by deploying 'a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods', to illuminate and 'to make more understandable the worlds of experience that have been studied' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p.24).

Case studies can take on various forms and be used in different contexts in fields such as medical, social work and psychology, but in relation to my study it is defined as qualitative educational research (Yin, 1994). The case study is discussed and defined in more detail in the following section, outlining problems in relation to the case study, and developing the argument as to why it is an appropriate design for my research.

### 3.2 The Case Study

Stake (1998, p.98) describes the case study as 'Something that functions, that operates; the study is the observation of operations. There is something to be described and interpreted'. The case study, then, is an attempt to gather in-depth data, so that a specific instance or phenomenon may be understood (Robson, 1993; Yin 1994; Stake, 1995) through the deployment of a variety of research methods. Though these methods are often considered to be common to the case study, criticisms have been made because of the way in which the case study has been defined by the methodology rather than the focus being upon the object that is being studied (Stake, 1994). Other criticisms suggest that it provides little basis for generalisation beyond the case itself, and that the data lacks credibility because of the lack of rigour applied in collation, resulting in doubtful evidence and researcher bias (Yin, 1994).

My aim is to present a concise and developed discussion that demonstrates how the case study is an appropriate tool for enabling 'the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances' (Stake, 1995, p.xi), as well as addressing the criticisms noted previously.

The case study is initially defined as the object or instance that has been chosen to be studied (Stake, 1994), which, in relation to this study, is the examination of the literary environment that Y6 children are immersed in, with non-specialist English teachers, and the impact of the NLS upon that. It is based on a naturalistic paradigm with phenomenological orientation: the research examines the many different influences that contribute to the construction of literary events in a real life context, with particular focus on the way in which the children and the teacher experience and behave when interacting with each other and with poetry.

Each literary event observed involved a variety of data sources including the Literacy Co-ordinator, the teacher, the children, the poem, and the NLS. The 'multiple

realities' experienced by the Literacy Co-ordinator, teacher and children when interacting with each other and with the text, were explored further from a phenomenological perspective. In order to understand and interpret the literary processes in which the subjects were involved, I had to be immersed in the contexts that they were experiencing (Moustakas, 1994).

If 'the dimensions of research provide a "road map" through the terrain that is social research' (Neuman, 2003, p.39), then it could be concluded from this initial definition that the case study marks out a road in the research process by including elements that are generic to research design as a whole through design, data collection and analysis, recognition of problems and writing (Yin, 1994).

### 3.2.1 Types of Case Studies

In using the term case study, Stake (1994, p.236) argues that some may use it because it draws attention to the question 'What can be learned from the single case?' This question is intrinsically linked to the research questions, which underpin the study as a whole, and which ultimately define the type of case study chosen. It is important for the purposes of this study to define clearly the type of case study used, so avoiding the ambiguity, and to justify reasons for methodological choices.

Stake (1998) defines three types of case study in order to show how researchers study cases for different purposes. They are the intrinsic case study, the instrumental case study and the collective case study. Firstly, the intrinsic case study is undertaken solely with the interest of the case being at the heart, because it is interesting in and of itself, rather than having external aims or objectives as the main motivating factor of the study. Secondly, the instrumental case study is used to highlight a particular issue or theory so the case becomes the facilitator by which the external aims and objectives of the study are achieved. Thirdly, the collective case study is to do with the study of multiple cases, which enable knowledge to be

gained about a certain phenomenon or group population to enable wider generalisations to be made about such representative cases. Stake (1994) warns that these are not prescriptive labels that case studies neatly fit into but are 'heuristic' in nature, so allowing discovery rather than dictating a function.

I chose two case studies for this study, which simultaneously embody elements of both the intrinsic and instrumental designs described by Stake (1994), and Yin's (1994) embedded approach. The examination of literary environments that Y6 children are immersed in in each school constitute the single case, within which the teacher, the Literacy Co-ordinator, the children, the NLS, and the English policy are sub-units of analysis. The intrinsic aspect of the study relates to my ongoing interest in children's experiences of poetry and has been the focus for research conducted at BEd (Cumming, Unpublished BEd, 1993) and MEd level (Cumming, Unpublished MEd, 1998). The two case studies are also instrumental, for they have been chosen to advance understanding on the kind of literary environments that children are engaged in with non-specialist teachers of English, and the influence of the NLS on that environment, so involving and relating to other research in this domain. Stake (1994, p.237) notes: 'Because we simultaneously have several interests, often changing, there is no line distinguishing intrinsic case study from instrumental; rather a zone of combined purpose separates them.' In the context of my research, it is important to acknowledge that I have a greater instrumental interest in the case than intrinsic, and that this is reflected in the methodology chosen.

### 3.2.2 Case Study Methods

Careful thought was needed to determine what methodologies would be most appropriate in capturing the complexity of real-life literary environments in the context of the Y6 classroom. Stake (1994) describes how the methods for intrinsic and instrumental case studies are different, with intrinsic methodologies focusing more on

the uniqueness of the case, while the instrumental methods focus on issues that other researchers and theorists have raised. Stake (1994, p.237) summarises the characteristics of the instrumental case study:

A particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory. The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else...The choice of the case is made because it is expected to advance our understanding of that other interest.

As the focus of this study is on examining the literary environments Y6 children are immersed in, with special reference to poetry, it is the instrumental nature of the cases that are reflected in the methodologies chosen.

To gain a rich description of the literary environments, I needed to be involved in literary events with the teacher, the children and poetry, so that I could observe the interactions that were taking place. I also needed to have contact with the teacher and children on an individual basis to discuss their experiences of literature and literacy and related issues, as well as the Literacy Co-ordinator to discover what kind of impact his/her role had on the literary environment. It was also clear that I needed to examine the English policy and the NLS documentation, and to observe and report on the way in which these documents were perceived, interpreted and utilised in shaping or influencing a literary event. In order to do this, I negotiated access (see 3.3.4) to two Y6 classrooms in two separate schools and was given permission to interview key subjects, observe poetry lessons and collect and analyse relevant documentation, such as the English policy, lesson and term plans. The following methods were chosen as the most appropriate in enabling the collection of a rich depth of material that would illuminate the complexity of a literary event:



- Interview with the Literacy Co-ordinators;
- Interviews with the Y6 teachers;
- Interview with the children;
- Observations of Y6 lessons focused on teaching poetry;
- Analysis of the poetry books that the children had at home;
- Document analysis of the English policy, the NLS and teachers planning for poetry lessons.

These are discussed in more detail in section in 3.3 and 3.4

In a postmodern climate of constructivism where the emphasis is upon what the individual perceives to be the truth (Von Glaserfeld, 1995), Shipman (1997, p.106) believes that: 'Even the most straightforward situation can be constructed so that each participant has a singular interpretation of its reality. Sooner or later researchers publish and however hard they try to reflect the range of views, it is their account which appears.' However, as Stake (1998) explains, though communication from the researcher to the reader will change the individual's unique cognitive capacity to assimilate what is being communicated, there should be some sense of a common code of experience whereby similar meanings can be attributed to it. In the collation of data one of the major strengths of the case study design is perceived to be the multimethod or triangulation approach (Denzin, 1978; Williams, Karp, Dalphin, and Gray, 1982). This is considered as contributing to the validity of what is being communicated because of the 'process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning' (Stake, 1998, p.97), thereby allowing the cross-checking of data to guard against researcher bias and present a fuller and more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied. By using multiple triangulation in the methodology

the reliability and validity of the study can be strengthened (Hakim, 1987; Robson, 1993; Silverman 2001).

One of the difficulties of such an approach is the integration of the multiples of data collected (Burgess, 1982a), as different accounts of the same situation result in a complex and thick description of subjects and events (Burgess, 1984; Neuman, 2000). Sayer (1992, p.223) suggests that this can be resolved if: 'The meaning of each part is continually re-examined in relation to the meaning of the whole and vice versa', achieving greater credibility to the evidence of the individual accounts and the narrative as a whole. While methodological triangulation can still lead to data being mis-interpreted by the researcher, Shipman (1997, p.106) suggests that: 'Triangulation is an acknowledgement that social research is rarely decisive and that confidence is often best established by collecting and presenting a number of viewpoints.'

The case study design is an approach that encourages the complexity of a particular phenomenon to be explored in a holistic and meaningful way, allowing both the common and the particular of a case to be exposed (Stake, 1994). Stake (1994, p.237) suggests that the case study will probably result in something unique and that: 'the more the object of study is a specific, unique, bounded system, the greater the usefulness.' In discussing the case study design in relation to my own research, my emphasis is the same as Stake's (1994, p.246): 'on learning the most about both the individual case and the phenomenon, especially the latter if the special circumstances may yield unusual insight into an issue.'

### **3.2.3 Problems Relating to the Use of Case Study**

The problem with focusing upon the uniqueness of a case is that this reduces the opportunity to generalise beyond the time, space and events of that particular case study design. This is a particular criticism of the case-study design (Denzin and Lin-

coln, 1998; Punch, 1998; Bryman, 2001), but Stake (1998) warns that details of the case studies can be ignored or overlooked because the desire to make generalisations overrides everything else.

While it seems clear that there are dangers in making generalisations from such distinct case studies, Stake (2000, p.22) suggests that knowledge gained from an understanding of the individual case can be open to naturalistic generalization: 'arrived at by recognising the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural covariations of happenings.' Indeed, the application of Stake's (1994) instrumental and collective case study designs encourage generalisability through reference to relevant theoretical constructs or issues and comparative analysis. Lincoln and Guba (2000, p.38) argue that:

While the idea of naturalistic generalisation has for us a great deal of appeal (for we surely agree with Stake that case studies have a great deal of utility in assisting reader understanding by inducing naturalistic generalisations), we do not believe that it is an adequate substitute or replacement for the formulistic or logical generalisations that people usually have in mind when they use the term 'generalisation'.

Instead, they use a term developed by Cronbach (1975): the working hypothesis. Cronbach states (1975, p.125): 'When we give proper weight to local condition, any generalisation is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion.' Lincoln and Guba suggest that generalisations should come later, if at all, and that if one situation is to be compared to another then both contexts need to be known and understood well before an appropriate judgement can be made. Stake (1994) also acknowledges the need to understand the complexities of the individual case before it can be placed in a wider context.

This study is not large enough to enable generalisations about the wider population, rather it would encourage, as Stake (2000) suggests naturalistic generalisation

to take place as a result of the reader constructing his/her own interpretations and recognising commonalities in the case studies. However, generalisations are made between the two case studies that take the form of working hypothesis, as discussed above. Lincoln and Guba (2000, p.40) suggest that the power of any working hypothesis in its transferability from one context to another is dependent upon: 'the degree of fittingness', the similarities between the two contexts: 'The person who wishes to make a judgment of transferability needs information about both contexts to make that judgement well'. Through the collection and analysis of the data, I have attempted to capture the uniqueness and the commonalities of each case and present them as 'working hypotheses', proposed points of generalisability which appear to be transferable when comparing cross-case results (Yin, 1994).

I have sought to address the problem of generalisability through encouraging the reader to make naturalistic generalisations and locating my research within the sociohistorical, political and pedagogical domains, the issues and theoretical concepts of which were raised in Chapter 2, and will be demonstrated through analysis of the data in later chapters.

### 3.3 Methods of Data Collection

In order to gain access and insight into Y6 children's literary experiences of poetry in the classroom and the interactions of the different participants in constructing such an event, I needed to have access to the data and record it using the most appropriate methodological tool for the context. In the following passage the methodological processes involved are discussed to demonstrate how this was achieved using a case study design.

I decided to present the methodology as a chronological account rather than by introducing each tool in a discrete category. After consideration, I felt the chronological approach to be a more appropriate and realistic way, as this reflected the

way in which methodological tools had been used according to the context in which they were needed throughout the period of data collection. This demonstrates, as Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.22) suggest, that; 'A research design describes a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms first to strategies of inquiry and second to methods for collecting empirical material'. This flexibility allows me to portray the methodology process in a way that I feel is the most realistic and helpful at this stage while keeping the flow of narrative throughout, so that, as Stake suggests (1995, p.134); 'The report may read something like a story'.

Throughout the research process, the role of the researcher as an instrument of data collection remains a crucial position and 'is intimately connected to how the researcher views the purpose of the work-that is, how to understand the social setting under study' (Janesick, 2000, p.384). A researcher can be both methodical and actively creative in the application of techniques of data collection, according to the context, the social situation and the participants involved.

The data collection methods used with the two case studies were:

- Interview
- Observation
- Field notes
- Audio-recording and transcribing
- Collection and examination of written documents

### **3.3.1 Choice of Instruments for Data Collection**

I chose to use the interview for data collection because as Robson (1993, p.229) suggests, it 'has the potential of providing rich and highly illuminating material' accessing the beliefs, value, meanings and perceptions of research participants that

underpin their actions. Whilst there is the risk of bias and concerns over reliability due to lack of standardisation, these can be overcome by employing reflexivity (see 3.3.2 Role of Researcher) and triangulating data, so that interpretations are made from a firmer evidential base. Interviews are time-consuming and demand skilful preparation and practice, but I felt that the time and effort was worth investing because of the power of discovering the participants' understanding of themselves in the literary environment (Punch, 1998). By constructing questions that had a phenomenological emphasis it also gave research participants a stronger voice in the study, and provided a greater depth and insight into the different elements that constitute a literary event.

The observations of the teacher teaching poetry to a select group of children, allowed direct access to practice and complemented the information collected during the interviews. However, serious concerns have been raised over the extent to which the observer is influencing what is being observed, bringing into question how much of it is (Robson, 1993, p.191) "real life" in the "real world." Recognising that this was an issue in conducting my own observations I chose to be a 'simple observer' (Adler and Adler, 1998), that is, I observed the lessons from close proximity but did not participate in the proceedings. Though my presence would still have had some effect over the way in which the participants interacted, I had attempted to minimise that influence while maintaining a highly unique vantage point.

Field notes taken during observations were used to supplement the transcripts of the lesson, which recorded only verbal interaction. They also included basic information such as the time, the date and the place. By noting down seating plans of children, position of teacher and pupils throughout the lesson, body language, activities and responses that were non-verbal I used the information to contribute to the thick description of each literary event. Initially, the children were distracted by my note-taking but soon lost interest in my field notes, once I had shown them

to them.

After gaining permission from the participants, I used audio-recording and transcribing for interviews and observations to obtain a more accurate and complete record of verbal interactions than I would have been able to record if I had tried to write down the speech as it occurred. Reactivity can increase considerably with the presence of a recording instrument (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996) so I used a small unobtrusive tape-recorder at all times to be as discrete as possible. It can be extremely time-consuming when transcribing data, however, this is outweighed by the reliability of the data collected and its richness.

Specific documentation was collected to ascertain its purpose in the context of contributing to a literary event: the English policy, lesson plans, and lists of the poetry books that the children had at home. In both schools the English policy was written before the research was presented to the school so they were non-reactive. However, the other documents were written while the research was taking place so this could have altered the way in which the participants recorded details.

Some of the limitations of the data instruments are reduced by implementing them as a combination and cross-checking data from a number of sources. This is an important step that can strengthen the reliability and validity of the study. A more detailed discussion on how each of the methods were implemented is presented in 3.4 Selection Procedures and in 3.8 and 3.9.

### **3.3.2 Role of Researcher**

Janesick (2000, p.389) notes: 'Because qualitative work recognises early on the perspective of the researcher as it evolves through the study, the description of the role of the researcher is a critical component of the written report of the study.'

My role as a researcher played a central part in the methodological process, particularly in the way that I employed my personal traits to obtain data. From

the outset of the study and throughout, the following traits influenced the research process. I was a female in my late twenties who had been an English student at college on a primary BEd course for four years before qualifying and working for two years fulltime at a primary school. I was therefore part of the primary culture and profession. I then went onto study an MEd in Education while still maintaining contact and experience in the field by carrying out supply teaching.

These traits affected the research process in a positive manner for they helped to determine what topic I would select to study and my approach to it. Burgess (1984) notes how age, sex and biography can all affect the study in terms of gaining access, acceptance and the formation and development of relationships. In considering which field of topic to address I took my traits into account; they were in fact advantageous because I had been part of the primary culture and had detailed knowledge and experience of it. This meant that I had contact with various individuals within local schools and that I could identify with those I would be interacting with, so gaining access to the kind of data I needed. Due to the nature of the research topic chosen my personal traits became an integral part of the research process, which allowed me to successfully become an effective 'research instrument' (Janesick, 2000, p.386). However, I was also aware that familiarity with the field due to my status as a teacher, could result in important themes being overlooked. I approached the study with this in mind, and attempted to consistently exercise self-reflection and gather as much detailed data as possible from various sources in order that repeating patterns significant to this study would not be masked.

As the role of the researcher is central to the research process, any biases and values the researcher has must be made explicit. In acknowledging that research is unlikely to be value free (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Bryman, 2001) being self-reflective and developing reflexivity in regard to known biases and beliefs can place them appropriately in the context of the aims, purposes, influences and interpreta-



tion of the study.

As noted before, I had been part of and understood the primary culture in which I was researching. I also had an interest in the teaching of poetry and the ways in which children respond to it. From the reading of relevant literature and through my own experiences in schools I have developed a growing concern that poetry may not be taught well through the NLS, while in parallel my interest has grown in the theory of socio-constructivism as being an appropriate and effective way to teach poetry to children. I was also very aware that I needed to develop reflexivity to guard against biases in my observations and interpretations, as my study was designed to investigate literary environments rather than test out hypotheses. I did this by keeping a reflective journal of the research process and my role as a researcher (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) and tried to identify when my own beliefs were obstructing, masking or shaping the data collection and interpretation in ways which were restricting or distorting meaning and understanding of what was being observed. I also sought to provide an analysis that would strengthen the reliability and validity of the study. This incorporated the participants' beliefs, values and attitudes through a phenomenological perspective using a semi-structured interview approach, with observational data that demonstrated the participants in action through field notes and audio-transcripts of the lesson.

Through awareness of my own biases and by practising reflexivity my role as a researcher was an integral part of the research process, which added to the depth of the analysis of data collected for this study.

### **3.3.3 The Management and Presentation of Self**

In order to obtain the kind of data I required from the different individuals I was interacting with I needed to create different identities based upon my traits. Through careful management and presentation of self I decided to dispel the ambiguity that

surrounded my status, since people were unclear as to whether I was a student, a teacher or researcher. Initially, people responded to me for my perceived status, which differed depending on who they were and our developing relationship. For example, on initial meetings with pupils they saw me as an authority figure and this could have hindered access to the required data. Access to their world, Thorne (1993) suggests, can be made easier by playing down the authoritative and the adult role. The teachers were also concerned that I had come to check up on their teaching on behalf of the college (the University of Gloucestershire was named Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Education of Higher Education during the period of my data collection). By making it clear that I had been a teacher before, but was now a student demonstrated that I identified with their experiences, and that my role was a non-threatening one. This management of self created a positive dimension within the research, primarily by allowing relationships to develop at different levels and with different expectations, so opening up access to richer data. As Knupfer (1996, p.140) states: 'We must continually keep in mind that not only are we trying to make sense of persons in the culture, but they are trying to make sense of us'.

Throughout the study, I maintained flexibility in my role as a researcher, depending on who I was interacting with and the context. This led to development in my relationships with individuals, especially with the teachers and contributed to my changing roles as a researcher.

### **3.3.4 Access**

Gaining access into a chosen area of study is a sensitive part of the research project (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998), which Robson (1993) points out is helpful to see as on-going process requiring continuous negotiation rather than a single event that occurs at the beginning. The development of relationships is crucial in the negotiation and renegotiation of access.

Previous teacher experience and knowledge of key people facilitated the process of initial access into two institutions that fitted the criteria (see 3.4) for my study. For the purposes of this study, to preserve anonymity I have called those two institutions Chadwick school and St. Albans school. A person with a key role in the institution that is to be the focus of study can be considered by some researchers as 'the gatekeepers who can grant access' (Burgess, 1982b, p.17), so in knowing the Head of St. Albans school and the Deputy Head of Chadwick school, initial entry into those schools happened in a relatively straightforward manner. I knew the Head Teacher of St. Albans school through attending the same church for some years, and was able to approach her informally and gain verbal permission to carry out my research. My relationship with the Deputy Head of Chadwick school was also of a relatively informal nature due to teaching in the same year group for two years at a previous school. I approached him informally and then wrote a formal letter explaining my research proposal which he then took to the Head and obtained verbal permission (see 3.4.1 for selection of schools).

Though access seemed to proceed in a relatively uncomplicated manner, Burgess (1984) warns that in practice it is not often straightforward and suggests keeping detailed field notes on initial contacts, as these can be very revealing and can aid in modification of the research design and questions to be asked. I soon discovered that initial access was just the beginning of a continual process of negotiation and renegotiation in a study that had 'multiple points of entry' (Burgess, 1984, p.49), where gatekeepers can both open up and restrict access to the researcher.

### **3.3.5 The Gate Keepers**

Who you gain access by can be problematic to the study. Fetterman (1998) warns how knowing and gaining access through a powerful member of the community can influence the way in which the study is perceived and ultimately jeopardise the data

collection. This became evident to me in the early stages of the research through the actions of the gatekeepers in both St. Albans school and Chadwick school.

In both schools the gatekeepers made the decision to choose a Y6 teacher on the basis of the criteria outlined to them (see 3.4.5). They apparently discussed the proposals with the teachers and gained verbal permission for me to proceed with my study. During the first interviews it became clear that they had been chosen because the previous year they had supported their pupils in attaining a 100 percent pass rate at Level 4 in English. This implied that the Deputy Head and Head Teacher felt that teachers who achieved higher levels in the SATs were more likely to be able to teach poetry well, yet such criteria had not been mentioned in the sample requirements.

Further to this, the Head of St. Albans school insisted that I observe the Y6 teacher she felt was appropriate, even though she was also the Literacy Co-ordinator. This meant that I had to alter my research design in the initial stages, because the Y6 teacher had originally been a non-specialist in English and, despite this, had still been given the role of Literacy Co-ordinator. I felt that this added unique and particular interest to the case study as a whole. The Head, therefore, arranged the first meeting between myself and the Y6 teacher.

Other problems arose when I initially met with the Y6 teacher of Chadwick school in a meeting arranged by the Deputy Head. It became clear when I showed her a copy of the research proposal that the implications of being involved had not been made clear to her. The Deputy Head had said that she had read the proposal and was happy to be involved but in the initial contact meeting she said she felt unsure about what I expected of her and was shocked when she learnt that I intended to observe her teaching poetry lessons. After a full briefing of the proposal she agreed to take part in the observations, but I felt unhappy that the study had not been made clear to her before she agreed to take part.

Much of the access that was granted was based on the gatekeepers and their relationship with others in the school, as they both had professional working relationships with their staff and had gained considerable respect. In the initial stages of my research I benefited from being associated with the gatekeepers informally, and as they assisted in defining my role as a credible researcher this contributed to my acceptance. However, though access obtained by the gatekeepers had seemed straightforward, as noted above, there were problems which had to be overcome by the researcher remaining 'flexible and opportunistic' (Robson, 1993, p.296). Bryman (2001) notes how access is not simply guaranteed because you have entered an organisation, it is access to people at different levels that is fundamental to the research, with further negotiation playing an important role in that process.

### 3.3.6 Further Negotiation

Once I had secured access to the settings and individuals key to the research I had to further negotiate contact with other key individuals and documentation crucial to the progress of the study. By becoming more independent in my negotiations, as it was no longer appropriate for the Head and Deputy Head Teacher to be the gatekeepers, and by continuing to master the management and presentation of self, relationships developed so giving access to the data.

As well as making contact with the Y6 teachers I also needed to have access to the Literacy Co-ordinators of each school, and a group of six children in each classroom that would form a focused group for my observations. As the Literacy Co-ordinator in St.Albans school was also the Y6 teacher that I had been given permission to research it was straightforward to arrange an interview. In Chadwick school the Deputy Head who had been the gatekeeper, was also the Literacy Co-ordinator and having read the proposal said he was happy to take part in the research project. Access to the children was given through the Y6 teachers who felt it was unnecessary

to ask pupils' permission. As they were in *loco parentis*, I accepted their decision but felt that in order to enable a respectful working relationship to develop which would take into consideration the role of the child as knowledge holder and permission-granter (Graue and Walsh, 1998; Greig and Taylor, 1999) it was important that I gained informed consent from the children. I did this in my initial meetings with the children by outlining the proposals of the research, in particular focusing on their involvement, making clear that anything they shared would be in confidence, and then asking if they would be happy to take part.

It was not only access to individuals that was needed but also to documents such as the English policy, planning notes for the lessons and children's work after an observed session. This posed some problems at times for, although permission was given, teachers and Literacy Co-ordinators appeared reluctant to part with documentation when I tried to collect it. For example, in Chadwick school I had to ask five times for the English policy before it was eventually given. Plans for lessons were also difficult to obtain: in St. Albans school lesson plans were given once all the sessions were completed; in Chadwick school no lesson plans were written. Children's work was also hard to obtain from Chadwick school for the teacher often wanted to take work in to mark before giving me a copy. However, the marking did reveal useful insights into the way in which the teacher evaluated the work (4.7.2 Subject Knowledge, Meaning).

Further negotiations also had to be made over certain criteria set out in the research design. Originally, teachers from both schools had agreed that I could observe ten sessions of poetry involving each teacher, but due to other pressures, such as SATs, sports days, end of term concerts and other curricular events I was only able to observe five sessions each. Although this was a smaller amount than originally planned I was satisfied that with the interview data from the Literacy Co-ordinators, teachers and children, the documentary analysis of lesson plans, written

work and the English policy that there would be a sufficient amount of data to provide a rich description of the case studies.

As well as changing the observational schedule, the Level Descriptions of the children in St. Albans school also had to be re-negotiated (see 3.4.6), as there were very few pupils who could be described as attaining a Level 4 or Level 5 in Literacy according to National Curriculum Level Descriptions (DfEE, 1999a).

Negotiation affects the type and quality of data the researcher is given access to and can also reveal the pattern of social relationships. By remaining open and flexible I was able to incorporate the reality of working within a unique and complex field into the research design and obtain the data I needed. Yin (1994, p.52) suggests: 'the flexibility of case study designs is in selecting cases different from those initially identified (with appropriate documentation of this shift) but not in changing the purposes or objectives of the study to suit the case(s) that were found.'

### **3.3.7 Research Ethics**

Ethical principles were established from the outset by gaining informed consent to access, and providing confidentiality and anonymity, with all data gathered being used exclusively for the purposes of this study. At each point of contact with a new subject I would explain the purposes of the research then ask for their consent to participate in the study, including permission to audio-tape, where appropriate. I also asked for verification that transcripts were an accurate representation of the participants views, where appropriate (see 3.8.2, 3.8.3 and 3.8.4). Confidentiality was assured for all research participants and it was made clear that names of schools and those that had different roles in those schools, would be changed to protect anonymity in the writing up of the report. Confidentiality was a central tenet of the methodology and one which was revisited throughout the data collection with the research participants.

### 3.4 Selection Procedures

My selection procedure was a complex process, and Burgess (1984) suggests that the decisions made in this should be highlighted, so that the nature of the inquiry, theoretical underpinnings and the researcher's judgement are demonstrated to be explicitly linked to the phenomenon under study. The following discourse outlines the selection procedure chosen and the justification for that choice.

Case study choice was based upon the desire to select cases that would elicit similar results: 'a literal replication' (Yin, 1994, p.46), and also be instrumental in developing understanding of how literary environments are constructed. Yin (1994) suggests that such an approach is more appropriate to a case-study design where more than one case is being studied, rather than a sampling logic that intends to generalise findings as having universal implications. I used a replication logic that was grounded in a strong theoretical framework and selected cases that would provide insight and understanding into the way in which children responded to poetry taught through the NLS. I limited the number of cases to two because my intention was to provide rich, in-depth data for analysis, which would have been more difficult to achieve with more cases, due to time restraints. Each case study was selected according to the following subjects:

- Selection of schools
- Selection of time
- Selection of Literacy Co-ordinators
- Selection of teachers
- Selection of pupils
- Selection of documents



With each of those subjects I identified specific criteria that would aid in giving greater depth and insight into the complexity of a literary event.

### 3.4.1 Selection Sampling of Schools

The two schools were chosen on the basis of socio-economic differences to determine whether such conditions encourage predictable outcomes in the way pupils are perceived and treated and how they respond in class (see 3.10). Two primary schools were chosen according to this criteria, one with a predominantly working-class intake and one with a predominantly middle-class intake, to examine whether different levels of support, expectation and standards attained in English in the school were influenced by socio-economic status (Willis, 1977). The main factor in identifying levels of socio-economic status in each school were the number of children eligible for free school meals, although McCallum and Demie (2001) warn that it is just one of a number of measures that indicate social class.

Chadwick school had just under 8 percent of pupils entitled to free school meals, according to the Ofsted Report carried out just after my research finished, and this is well below the national average. In contrast, St.Albans school was recorded by Ofsted inspectors in the same year as this study to have 28 per cent of pupils entitled to free school meals, and this was above the national average. For reasons of anonymity I have omitted references to the Ofsted Reports.

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that school performance is linked to socio-economic background (Gibson and Asthana 1988; Sammons, Thomas, Mortimore, Owen, and Pennell, 1994; Kelly, 1996; McCallum and Demie, 2001; Abrams, Mansell and Bloom, 2003). Political statements infer that schools have low expectations of such pupils (Goldstein and Cuttance, 1988; Murphy, 1992): 'In some cases the excuse has been that "you cannot expect high achievement from children in a run down area like this"' (DfEE, 1997, p.25). Yet, though evidence would suggest

that socio-economic status is related to achievement, Mac an Ghail (1996) argues that such conditions do not always have predictable outcomes.

### 3.4.2 Selection Sampling of Time

Data collection lasted just over one school year, covering the three-term cycle. In each term I collected different sources of data. Data needed to be collected within this timescale because the children would no longer be in Y6 by the following school year. The timescale of data collection proceeded as follows:

In the Summer term of 2000 contact was made with the two schools, and I as researcher was given permission to carry out the study beginning in the Autumn term of that year. In September the Literacy Co-ordinator was interviewed, and the English policies were collected from each of the schools. The information from the policies and interviews were correlated to examine how the Literacy Co-ordinators perceived poetry, their attitude to its treatment in the NLS, and how they have worked with others, particularly the Y6 teachers, to translate this into a policy that suited their school. In particular, it was identified what kind of support was given to a teacher who is a non-specialist in English. As the Literacy Co-ordinator of St. Albans school was also the Y6 teacher, emphasis was placed on finding out what kind of support had been made available to her as a non-specialist in English taking on the Literacy Co-ordinator's role, and how she then supported other non-specialist teachers.

Initial contact was also made in the Autumn term with both Y6 teachers where the structure and requirements of the study were laid out in detail and discussed together. Both agreed to take part in interviews and observation, although, as detailed before in 3.3.5, the Deputy Head of Chadwick school had not made the full proposal clear to the teacher. However, she agreed to take part. Teachers were notified as to the criteria for choosing the sample of pupils (see 3.4.6) and this was

renegotiated in St. Albans school, as there were felt to be no children at level 5 in English. Also, Spring term interviews were set up for the teachers and times were also given as to when children would be available for interviewing. Both teachers gave me their email address so that contact could easily be maintained.

During the Spring term the case study children were interviewed and made a record of the poetry books they read at home. The class teachers were also interviewed.

In the Summer term the observations of children being taught poetry through the framework of the Literacy Hour took place. Negotiations for observing lessons were constantly under review and subject to many changes due to sports days, school trips and preparations for concerts and leaver's services. I was able to observe one lesson on January 31st in Chadwick school, then the remaining four observations occurred in the Summer term on the 19-22nd June. In St. Albans school the observations also happened in the Summer term on the 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th and 10th of July. Once observations were completed, the teachers were interviewed one more time. After the lessons in St. Albans school, I collected term planning sheets and lesson plans, and from Chadwick school I collected term plans. A final interview was conducted with the Y6 teachers, which allowed time for them to reflect and discuss their involvement in the study and to allow me to probe further into points highlighted by data collected throughout that time.

The timescale given was not the one that I intended to follow, for originally I had wanted to observe the children engaging with poetry over three terms to show how the teaching of poetry was developed over the whole school year, both through the NLS and the teacher's interpretation of the structure. However, in discussing the schedule in the initial contact meeting with the teachers I was told by both that in Autumn very little poetry was done, in Spring serious revision took place for the SATs' hence Summer, after the SATs' was the best and most appropriate time to

observe poetry in their classrooms. When asked if I could observe ten lessons of poetry in both schools the teachers originally said that this would be fine, but when the time came to observe I was only able to see five lessons in each classroom, as both teachers cited other commitments that would get in the way of observations such as sports events, preparation for concerts and school visits.

### **3.4.3 Selection of Literacy Co-ordinators**

Literacy Co-ordinators were selected from each school because research suggests: 'that curriculum co-ordinators are playing a major role in whole-school curriculum planning and policy making and raising the collective confidence of staff in their subjects' (Webb and Vulliamy, 1995, p. 41). However, in relation to curriculum co-ordinators influencing teachers' pedagogies and supporting subject knowledge, it has been found that opportunities are limited. With literacy being given a higher profile nationally and in school (Beverton and English, 2000) Literacy Co-ordinators have had to implement the NLS, and in doing so, present aspects of the framework that they believe to be important. I was particularly interested in how Literacy Co-ordinators addressed poetry, as this was a significant area highlighted in the NLS. Also, as the subject specialist within the school, I wanted to discover what kind of support and guidance the Literacy Co-ordinator provided for the non-specialist teacher and their role in influencing the wider literary climate in which children are immersed.

### **3.4.4 Selection of Teachers**

The criteria in choosing the teachers were that they taught in a Y6 class and that they were non-specialists in English. The reasons for choosing such a sample was to examine how non-specialists interpret the NLS with specific focus on poetry, and to illuminate the complex relationship between beliefs and practice about teaching and

learning in the classroom (Gipps, McCallum and Brown, 1999). I was particularly interested in teachers' views on ability, socio-economic status, and gender issues concerning their pupils and how this influenced action.

As the teacher at St.Albans school was also the Literacy Co-ordinator I was concerned that this would compromise my focus on non-specialists in English. However, when discussing the background training the teacher had had, it appeared that she had only received recent training in implementing the NLS in her school, and had little experience of English in education after GCSE's. I felt that this training did not significantly change her position as a non-specialist, and added a unique dimension to the case study.

As the implementation of the NLS has been received with a mixed response by teachers (Beverton and English, 2000) and primary teachers' identities have had to adjust to new demands and expectations (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002) my study investigated how Sarah in Chadwick school and Chloe (both names are pseudonyms to preserve anonymity) in St. Albans have responded. I focused on their beliefs about the role of poetry in their classroom and how that was translated into practice.

### **3.4.5 Selection of Pupils**

The sample of pupils was originally to consist of six Y6 children in each school, three boys and three girls, with one group coming from a high socio-economic background and the other from a low-socio-economic background. In each group there was to be a boy and a girl at Level 3, Level 4 and Level 5, according to the assessment of the teacher in matching those children to the relevant Level Descriptions for National Curriculum for English (DfEE, 1999a). The reasons for these specific criteria are discussed below.

The choice of pupils from differing socio-economic background is significant because of recent research, which suggests that the gap between such backgrounds

has not closed (Abrams et al., 2003). The Ofsted Report's definition of disadvantaged pupils is derived from similarities of characteristics between schools that have a rather high proportion of pupils not achieving the level of that of a 'typical' pupil. They are: number of pupils in the school; free school meals; number of pupils defined as special needs; number of bilingual pupils. The main factor used to describe disadvantaged pupils is the eligibility for free school meals, so this was the defining characteristic in choosing the sample base of pupils from the school with a low socio-economic intake. In the school of high socio-economic intake the teacher chose pupils whose parents had jobs in the professional sector, indicating that pay would be significantly greater than those children eligible for free meals.

Perceived ability of a pupil has particular significance in the final year of primary schooling, and the way in which this impacts the teacher's delivery of poetry and expectations of children's responses will illuminate the beliefs, values and attitudes teachers hold in relationship to achievement. Blunkett's target of 80% of 11 year old children expected to reach a Level 4 in English by the year 2002 (DfEE, 1998), followed by the publishing of the results in performance league tables has had a marked effect on the structure and content of Y6. Accuracy of Level Descriptions have become important in relation to the SATs, with a school's failure or success becoming increasingly dependent on whether a child has reached a Level 4 Description for English in the Y6 tests.

However, it also needs to be recognised that ability is a complex term that is open to interpretation and discussion. While it is a recognised practise that Level Descriptions, as laid out in the National Curriculum, provide a benchmark for the skills and cognitive processes pupils are expected to demonstrate at a certain age, this has come under much criticism. The standardised levels of attainment seem contrary to the idea that each pupil is an individual, not taking into account the chain of factors that influence educational achievement, such as motivation, oppor-

tunity, organisation, background, intelligence and teaching (Beadle, 2006). While critics (Eysenck, 1973; Ceci, 1990; Herrnstein and Murray, 1994) agree that test scores can predict school achievement effectively, they argue that to base a concept of intelligence on these test scores alone is limiting and ignores many other important aspects of mental ability. Indeed Carroll (1993) identified over seventy different abilities using a variety of tests. The term 'ability' then, is used in this study to refer to a wide range of characteristics demonstrated by the pupil such as persistence, interest in the subject, teacher and peer interaction, as well as examining the way in which testing and level descriptions in English shape the teacher's perceptions and treatment of pupils, and pupil's responses to this.

It has been recognised that differences in gender have some bearing on the way in which children respond to English (Wade and Sidaway, 1990; Kelly, 1996; Myhill, 1999). In *A review of Primary schools in England, 1994-1998* by Ofsted (1999) they noted that the gap between girls and boys was significantly high in levels of attainment: about 16% between them at Level 4, and 50% at Level 5 with girls achieving at the higher level. Research has shown that teachers have strong stereotypical images of boys' and girls' interest in English, which contradict the pupils' own preferences (Myhill, 1999). With poetry being traditionally seen as being more appropriate for girls than for boys, this study examines teachers' expectations of the role of gender in influencing children's responses to poetry, and whether these expectations are observed in the lessons.

In implementing the sample design it became clear that it needed to be more flexible to incorporate the individuality of each school. In discussing the criteria for the sample in Chadwick school the teacher was able to provide a Y6 Level 3, 4 and 5 boy and girl but in St. Albans school the teacher said that she felt there were no children at Level 5 within her class of mixed Year 5 and Year 6, and only one girl at Level 4. As a result of this a boy and girl were chosen with Level 2 and Level 3

Descriptions, and a boy who was upper Level 3 was chosen alongside the only Level 4 girl in the class.

When observing the pupils from Chadwick school the Level 3 girl was away on holiday for a significant period and was only observed once. When I asked if she could be observed in lessons once she had returned from her holiday, the teacher apologised but said that she had a number of events that would get in the way of her teaching any more poetry that Summer term. The amount of data collected on this research participant is limited compared to others, but is still included.

### **3.4.6 Selection of Written Documentation**

I analysed the English policy documents in order to understand the philosophy of English teaching, the intentions of the Literacy Co-ordinator in developing English within the school and the classroom approaches that were advocated. Merchant and Marsh (1998) note that the policy is influenced by both internal and external pressures and that the Literacy Hour is a powerful external influence on shaping classroom practice. The policy gives a unique insight into the interplay between external and internal influences and highlights the values, attitudes and beliefs about English that each school holds. To achieve a greater depth of knowledge about how the policy functioned within the school I also interviewed the Literacy Co-ordinator and the teacher upon the subject, as Shipman (1997, p.106) warns that: 'Documentation is a long chain of events open to interpretation and misunderstanding'.

I also collected teachers' individual lesson plans to see how poetry was interpreted and translated from the NLS, and to discover whether what had been written down was followed in practice. Lesson plans showed how teachers structured poetry sessions demonstrating the influence of the NLS, the classroom approaches they preferred, aspects of poetry they perceived to be of importance, and the responses they expected. When children wrote written responses to poetry this was also collected



and analysed providing another rich layer of data to consider alongside their verbal responses.

Children also wrote lists of poetry books they had at home, and brought in any written poetry that they had done outside of school requirements.

### 3.5 Interviewing

Semi-structured or informal interviews as defined by Robson (1993), were conducted in several stages to provide rich and descriptive data on the way in which literary environments are constructed and understood. The purpose of the informal interview is, that though it still has a specific research role in gaining access into situations (Burgess, 1984) the nature of that role is more implicit with a structure open to modification depending on where the 'conversation' is going. With a conversational style the semi-structured interview appears to be, and may feel more natural and easier to conduct. While some researchers polarise structured and unstructured interviews, suggesting that the unstructured interview is conversational while the structured is not (Burgess, 1982c; 1984), Holstein and Gubrium (1997, p.113) argue that all forms of interviews are conversational:

interviews are special forms of conversation. While these conversations may vary from highly structured, standardised, quantitatively oriented survey interviews, to semi-formal guided conversations and free-flowing informational exchanges, all interviews are interactional.

Though I agree that the interview is a form of conversation, I recognise that it is different from the social interactions that take place everyday between individuals (Robson, 1993). Rather, the interviews were conversations, whereby I employed certain strategies to gain access to the participants' thoughts, feelings, meanings and interpretations, remembering that (Fontana and Frey, 1998, p.73): 'each individual

has his or her own social history and an individual perspective on the world.' The interviews took the form of: 'a conversation with a purpose' (Robson, 1993, p.228) and my intention was that all the interviews should be conducted in an informal and open way since I desired to immerse myself in the culture and the context in which literary events occurred.

Crucial to these conversations were the nature of the relationships between the respondent and myself, for the quality of data can be affected and access enhanced or restricted by the way in which the interviewer and interviewee relate. Listening with interest to what the respondent has to say is perhaps one of the most important skills employed in the interviewing technique (Punch, 1998), thereby showing interest and genuine curiosity about what they are sharing (Burgess, 1984; Maykut and Morehouse 1994).

I needed to think carefully about the way I presented myself to the different research participants, so that our developing relationships encouraged them to share their meaning and understanding of the world as they perceived it. It was easier for me to identify with the Literacy Co-ordinators and the teachers, for I had experiences similar to theirs and understood the context of the situations they were in. I also had genuine interest in what they had to share. I was aware from research that it is much harder to gain access to a child's world (Knupfer, 1996) without adult bias dominating any interpretation of what is observed, and there have been many that have suggested that children have their own cultures that are defined by rules and rituals that are inaccessible to adults, both in their position and their understanding (Opie and Opie, 1959; Fine and Glasner, 1979). Writing transcripts up and placing them within the study can also be problematic (Allison and Prout, 1990; Boyden, 1990), as the adult's voice can all but silence the children. Knupfer (1996) suggests that it is very important that biases are made explicit and then reflected upon throughout the study. I adopted a different approach when interviewing the children

(see 3.8.4), and also resisted the temptation to refine the use of children's grammar when transcribing, as it would have altered the way in which the children were represented and seen (Knupfer, 1996; Fetterman, 1998).

In order to make the participants feel at ease and to aid rapport, I gave careful consideration to the impression that I was creating, not only in what I said, using terminology that they were familiar with during interviews and discussions, but also in my nonverbal communication: 'Looks, body postures, long silences, the way one dresses-all are significant in the interactional interview' (Fontana and Frey, 1998, p.68).

Listening is considered an essential part of a dynamic and active dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. McCracken (1988) notes how the researcher can be the ideal conversational partner showing great interest in what the participant has to say without needing to take a turn in the conversation. However, it is important that the researcher shows expression when the interviewee is talking, to aid openness, and to remain alert to what is being said in relations to key phrases and terminology that might need further probing. The combination of structure and flexibility allowed productive lines of enquiry to be followed up with appropriate probes, while questions that received little response could be discarded. However, an apparent lack of response to questions needed to be handled with care (Goetz and le Compte, 1984), for the interviewee might be trying to evade an issue which reveals important information for the study. For example, the Literacy Co-ordinator in St. Albans school tried to avoid discussing the English policy. After further probing she revealed that her predecessor had actually written the policy, and she had not read it.

By employing various strategies throughout the interviews I was able to uncover assumptions that were made by the participants by encouraging them to delve deeper into the answers they had given. I did this by using probes such as Patton (1990)

suggests, detailed oriented, elaboration and clarification probes. I also listened for any anxiety or fears that the participant expressed either through the tone of their voice or what they said. In particular, the Y6 teachers seemed very anxious in their initial interview that the information they shared would be in confidence. Sarah from Chadwick school asked a number of times whether she was answering the questions in the right way. I answered her queries, as Fonatana and Frey (1998) suggest, by replying that it was her opinion that mattered, and reassured her by telling her she was doing fine.

I sought to actively listen throughout the interview, and this was reflected in the questions I asked in response to what they said. It was important also to develop trust and confidence by supporting and encouraging the participant through verbal affirmation, nods, smiles and maintaining eye contact, responding positively to what they shared even when I did not agree with what they had said.

Another important strategy in the development of trust and rapport with the subject was to share aspects of my own life experiences. Neuman (2000, p.370) suggests that: 'A field interview involves a mutual sharing of experiences. A researcher might share his or her background to build trust and encourage the information to open up.' In the initial meetings of the Y6 teachers both seemed interested in the fact that I had been a teacher and asked why I had come out of the profession. When I shared my experiences, which had been very traumatic, due to a car accident in which I had been badly injured and my husband had died, they immediately seemed warmer and more open about their own experiences. Sarah from Chadwick school immediately confided that she had been thinking of moving out of teaching but no one in the school knew. While working on the development of relationships, I also had to maintain a distance, so that familiarity with the culture and the participants did not mask important data. Burgess (1984, p.25) notes that familiarity with the field can be problematic because the researcher: 'may see 'nothing' beyond the ev-

everyday patterns and processes with which everyone is familiar'. By maintaining a balance between friendliness and objectivity I was able to manufacture distance to create critical awareness within a familiar field. The characteristics of the interview procedure aided this, as it was unnatural in relation to everyday social interactions, and, as the researcher, I had chosen to present a particular 'self' that was designed to reveal very little of myself, rather focusing on the participants' lives and experiences.

### 3.5.1 Phenomenology

An important aspect of my interview structure was that it had a phenomenological perspective, attempting to characterise: 'the qualitatively different ways in which people conceptualise, perceive and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them' (Marton, 1988, p.144). By encouraging a plurality of perceptions rather than singular discourses to be expressed (Garrick, 1999), I was able to develop categories that enabled a deeper perspective on understanding and experience to be shared. By listening to the research participants' constructions of their understanding of their experiences, I was able to identify dominant characteristics of individuals' life world from which an overall framework was developed to describe their experiences and understandings.

Schutz (1970) notes that subjectivity is taken for granted in the sense that there is an intersubjectivity in the reality we perceive: 'This intersubjectivity is an ongoing accomplishment, a set of understandings sustained from moment to moment by participants in interaction' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1998). I needed to access the shared meanings and interpretations of the participants to understand how poetry and experiences with poetry were formed and communicated within a common framework of everyday life.

In embracing a phenomenological perspective I needed to practice reflexivity (Gergen and Gergen, 2000) so that I might become aware of my own personal

investment and biases which could distort or occlude emerging constructs of the participants. Gergen and Gergen (2000, p.1028) suggest that: 'Ultimately, the act of reflexivity asks the reader to accept itself as authentic, that is, as a conscientious effort to "tell the truth" about the making of the account'.

In section 3.8. and 3.8.1, I have discussed the defining characteristics of my interviews, that they were conversations with purpose, dynamic and interactive and that they had a phenomenological perspective. The following is an account of the individual interviews that took place demonstrating their uniqueness and the flexibility of the researcher in approaching them.

### **3.5.2 Interviewing the Literacy Co-ordinators**

Having identified the Literacy Co-ordinators in each school, Chloe in St.Albans school and Simon in Chadwick school, I arranged interview dates with them so that I could understand how they came to the role, how they perceived that role for themselves and the school, and their beliefs, attitudes and values surrounding poetry. I identified some key themes that had emerged as being significant in other research (see Chapter Two). They were:

- Biography of the Literacy Co-ordinator;
- Perceived role of the Literacy Co-Ordinator within the school;
- Understanding of the relationship between the English policy and practice;
- The impact of the NLS upon their role;
- Attitudes towards poetry in the NLS
- The treatment of poetry in the NLS;
- The effect of standards on their role.

In order to gain insight into these areas I conducted interviews that took place at the beginning of the school year with each Literacy Co-Ordinator. I arranged the meeting with them during the initial meetings when discussing their participation in the research. I conducted the interviews at the beginning because I wanted to see if values, attitudes and perceptions highlighted were implicitly or explicitly present in subsequent data.

The venue and time for interviews were discussed with Chloe and Simon. Chloe's interview would take place after school in her classroom, while Simon's would take place in his office during time away from the classroom, usually set aside for Deputy Head duties. Before each interview I sought permission to use a tape recorder, which they consented to, explaining that it would mean I did not need to worry about writing notes, and that I would have a record that I could refer back to. It also meant that I could listen more effectively and maintain eye contact. I made it clear that only I would listen to the recording and that I would give them a transcript to look over and check for accuracy. Interviews lasted approximately an hour and a half.

### **3.5.3 Interviewing the Teachers**

I arranged to interview the teachers in the Spring term. There was some overlapping of key themes with the Literacy Co-ordinator interviews but others were added which were more specific. The themes were:

- Biography of teacher;
- Understanding, beliefs and attitudes towards the National Literacy Strategy and the teaching of English and poetry;
- Impact of Standards upon teaching English;

- Beliefs about pupils' learning and the role of gender, ability and socio-economic status.

Both Chloe and Sarah gave me their email addresses and said that this was the easiest way to contact them. I, therefore, organised a venue and time through email. I met both Chloe and Sarah in their classrooms after school, and before initiating the interviews gained consent to use of a tape recorder, making it clear that what they said was in confidence and that a transcript would be provided for them to check for accuracy. Interviews usually lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. At the end of my observations I arranged to interview the teachers a final time to follow up any issues that had been raised during the observations and from their first interviews. At the end of the observations, teachers were interviewed once more to reflect upon the research process, to probe into issues that had been raised for the researcher during the observations, and to draw attention back to the first interview where parallels and contrasts between what had been said were made between what had taken place in the classroom.

#### **3.5.4 Interviewing the Children**

The interviews with the children were arranged through the teacher by email and took place two weeks after the teacher interviews. Chloe arranged for me to interview her children during lesson time in a free room in the school, so I was able to complete them in one day. She said that she had explained who I was and what I was doing, but as this was my initial meeting with each pupil, I felt it was appropriate to go over this so that there were no misunderstandings. I repeated this with the pupils of St. Albans school as well, whom I interviewed during their lunch period. Because of limited time I spent four consecutive lunch times interviewing the children in their classrooms. Interviews lasted between half an hour to forty five minutes.

The children were interviewed about their educational background, the impact



of the NLS upon their literacy learning, the role of poetry in their school and home life, the role of power in the classroom, issues of gender in the classroom and the impact of testing. Because of the nature of power relationships between the adult and child (Knupfer, 1996), I was concerned that the children might find it harder to respond in an informal interview because of their perception of the hierarchy that exists between adult and child. They may have felt under pressure to give a right answer or felt that a conversational style was just not appropriate. To reduce these difficulties I attempted to include the children in the ownership of the study by explaining my role as a non-authoritative figure in the school, the purposes of the research, their role in the study, confidentiality, and then asking if they would like to take part in the research. I felt it was important to ask permission of each child before proceeding with the interview, making it clear that I had respect for them (Fetterman, 1998) and emphasising the importance and worth of what they had to say. I also asked for permission to use the tape recorder. Because of issues of confidentiality, I felt that this would be at risk if I provided children with transcripts of the interviews. They could easily have been read by the class teacher or parents, so I felt it was preferable not to give them this option. Though some children looked nervous initially, especially when I introduced the tape recorder, once initial questions had been answered, all the children seemed to respond with interest and were able to share feelings about school experiences that perhaps they would not have felt able to do with an authoritative figure, such as the class teacher.

### 3.6 Observation

A key element in the process of understanding the literary environments that Y6 children were immersed in was the observation of literary events where poetry was the focus. I needed to spend time in such specific contexts so that my insight and understanding could be enhanced by direct access to situations. Adler and Adler

(1998, p.79) state that: 'For as long as people have been interested in studying the social and natural world around them, observation has served as the bedrock source of human knowledge'. Observation allowed me to obtain rich data of how literary events were constructed and concepts used.

The role of the researcher as observer may vary considerably (see Bryman, 2001), but Robson (1993, p.190) suggests that it is best to have a 'pick and mix' approach to observational techniques that are shaped by the needs and requirements of the situation being studied rather than being confined by a particular description. In my research, I decided to take on the role of a 'simple observer' (Adler and Adler, 1998) following the event as it unfolded without intruding on it. There were occasions when I intervened with a question about what a child was doing, but these were minimal. It was made clear to the class as a whole that I was a researcher and that I had come to watch poetry being taught. I asked the teachers to introduce me by first name, as I felt this would diminish some of the authoritative power attributed to any adult presence in the classroom.

I approached the observations in a semi-structured manner. I had in mind the categories I had constructed for the interviews and the responses of the research participants to them, but I did not want the observation to be purely confined to those areas. I wanted to remain open and flexible to events as they naturally unfolded, expecting themes and concepts to emerge during analysis with the high probability of there being some overlap with those raised during the interviews.

During each observation I wrote a descriptive account of what was happening in the field setting. I did this explicitly, explaining to the children who were initially interested in what I was writing what I was doing, and discretely when required. I also recorded what was being said by the use of a small black tape-recorder, which I placed discretely to my side so as not to be a distraction. In all observations, I gained permission from the teacher and the children to record verbal interactions. By

recording and taking field notes, I collected both verbal and nonverbal interactions of the subjects being observed, as well physical settings, social organization, routines and interpretations relating to the participants.

In order to observe, take field notes and record what the group of six children were saying in each class, I asked the class teachers in the initial meetings if they could sit together on one table. To minimise artificiality, I asked if the children could sit in these groupings regularly through other sessions in the literacy hour before I came to observe so that they would be familiar with the setting. The teachers agreed to do this and when the time came to observe I was able to sit round the table with the group and observe the lesson as a whole, as well as the participants in the research. At these times I tried to remain inconspicuous, but initially the pupils saw me as a teacher-figure who could be asked for help. On such occasions, I gently persuaded them to ask a peer or the teacher for help, which they did, and quite quickly they seemed to accept that I really was there just to observe.

At other points I also wrote down conversations that occurred between myself and research participants when the lesson had finished, walking to other venues or during interruptions, such as when the fire bell rang.

Appearance within the school setting was important in the development of relationships. I felt it was best to dress 'ambiguously' (Morse, 1998, p.62) as I wanted to be accepted by both the teacher and the children. This was difficult since I did not want my clothing to be of such a formal nature that I appeared as an inspector-figure to the adults in the classroom, nor as a teacher to the children. However, too informal, such as jeans, would have been unacceptable in such an institution and may have resulted in offence been caused or the research not been taken seriously. After careful consideration, I decided to dress smartly but casually in trousers and long or short sleeved tops, depending on the weather. My choice of dress code contributed to the construction and management of self in projecting an identity of

both researcher and student.

### 3.7 Analysis of Data

I decided that my general analytic strategy of the case studies was to take the form of an open investigation about poetry and the NLS. The proposition that informed the research questions was that evidence suggested (see Chapter 2) that poetry was a difficult subject to teach and this had implications about the way in which teachers taught poetry and how children learnt about it. Case studies were chosen which would allow for literary events around poetry to be examined and from this, two broad themes were generated as a focus for analysis. They were:

- Poetry in the Classroom (Chapter 4);
- The Relationship Between Poetry and the Subject (Chapter 5).

The first theme examines teaching and learning styles in a literary event with the focus on poetry, and with special consideration of how the NLS supports this, as demonstrated predominantly through the observation data. The second theme investigates how children's responses to poetry are influenced by the micro, meso and macrocosms of significant worlds that impact their literary environments and influence a literary event. This is presented through the interview data collected. However, the interviews, observations and written documentation provided data for analysis in both themes, which strengthened the reliability and validity of the case through triangulation.

Categories of selection were formed by seeking patterns and 'distribution of frequencies' (Goetz and Lecompte, 1984. p.171) in the data that would suggest: 'conceptual categories embedded in social phenomena' (Goetz and Lecompte, 1984, p.169). These are used in the presentation of the case studies under the umbrella of the two broad themes and also aid in comparisons across the cases.

The reports of the case studies are presented individually followed by a cross-case analysis in each chapter.

### **3.8 Summary of Chapter Three**

In this chapter I have set out the research methodology, which was employed as an essential part of the research process. I have outlined the choice of case study design and justified its appropriateness for the subject of this study and discussed the instruments used for data collection, exploring their strengths and weaknesses. Selection procedures are then made explicit and the general analytic strategy for the data collected is outlined. This chapter presents the background contextual framework for the analysis and presentation of the data which follows in Chapter 4 and 5.

## Chapter 4

# Poetry in the Classroom

### 4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 I identified that poetry was challenging for teachers to teach, which had generated two research questions that underpinned this study. They asked: ‘What kind of literary environments are children experiencing as they engage with poetry in the classroom?’ and ‘What is the contribution of the NLS framework to that environment?’. In Chapter 2 I examined how poetry had been historically regarded within education, and discussed its relevance to the developing individual and the community. This was followed by an analysis of the framework of the NLS in relation to the support it gave teachers in the teaching of poetry. Finally, in Chapter 3 I set out the argument for the use of the case study as being an appropriate methodology to explore the questions raised in Chapter 1.

In this chapter the teaching and learning styles of the teacher and case study children are analysed in each of the literary sessions observed at Chadwick school and St. Albans school. The main focus of the analysis is upon the identification of patterns of discourse that can be aligned or attributed to a certain style of teaching and learning, and the way in which this influences the treatment and subsequent

role of poetry. I define the learning of poetry as the way in which pupils construct meaning about poetry individually and collectively, through dialogue and written text. Written work produced in the session is also examined, and, where appropriate, non-verbal responses, so that pupils' responses can be presented from several perspectives, both to poetry and each other. Finally, the session is analysed alongside the NLS to examine the ways in which the teacher has followed the suggested framework.

To provide a comprehensive description of the complex phenomena present in each poetry session I have chosen to analyse in-depth the discourse of one observation from each school. This is then followed by a selection of extracts from the remainder of the sessions, which have been specifically chosen to highlight the themes identified in the first analysis. The selection of the poetry events for analysis was made on the basis that they best reflected the issues that this study was concerned with in the teaching and learning of poetry.

The use of the term 'discourse' in this study refers to the spoken and written word, which will be defined as 'an interrelated set of texts' (Phillips and Hardy, 2002, p.3). It is the exploration of the interplay of these texts that will reveal 'the processes of social construction that constitute social and organisational life' (Phillips and Hardy, 2002, p.2). It will allow a full analysis of the teacher and children's engagement with poetry, with any emergent themes and patterns further illustrated by the highlighting of significant data collected from the other observed literary events. The theoretical basis on which the comparisons of the two observations is founded is upon the 'structuralist point that a statement always gains its meaning through being different from something else' (Jorgenson and Phillips, 2002, p.149). Whilst I agree with this in relation to comparing one event with another, I do not hold to the structuralist position that language structure is fixed and stable. I take a poststructuralist view that language is changeable, and meanings are maintained

and changed in specific events in which language is used. However, the value of employing such a technique where two very different texts are compared, is that the researcher can become more distanced from the data since they are less likely to have the same 'taken-for-granted assumptions' (Jorgenson and Phillips, 2002, p.149), so aiding identification of naturalised patterns of behaviour. In this way I will be 'exploring patterns in and across the statements and identifying the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality' (Jorgenson and Phillips, 2002, p.21).

The text is presented in context, using what Wetherell (2001, p.388) terms 'distal' and 'proximate' context. Distal context refers to social class, the places the discourse is observed, and regional and cultural influences, whereas proximate context includes the definition of the observed event e.g. a poetry lesson, and the roles of the people that speak in the context of that occasion at that time. Both distal and proximate context play an important role in the analysis of the data, particularly the distal context, which was a key factor in choosing the schools, year group, teacher and children.

In considering the approach to discourse analysis I have chosen to analyse my data with both a constructivist and critical emphasis (Phillips and Hardy, 2002), since it is concerned with the study of the social processes that constitute towards a perceived reality, while also being sensitive to issues of power, knowledge and ideology. In this chapter I adopt a theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis, where texts are analysed to provide an in-depth and fuller picture of the complexities of the microcosm of a single literary event that children are engaged in, with emphasis upon the distal context: 'how it privileges some actors at the expense of others and how broad changes in the discourse result in different constellations of advantage and disadvantage' (Phillips and Hardy, 2002, p.25). Shor and Freire (1987) discuss how systematic education demonstrates the dominant ideologies of those in power, reflected in the official body of knowledge that must be passed on,



the authoritative status of the knowledge-giver, and the nurturing or lack of the development of critical autonomy in students to reflect, consider and question their social realities. As Shor and Freire (1987, p.31) state 'through education, we can first understand power in society'. In examining these observations I attempt to uncover the dominant ideologies that are present in the classroom culture and ask whether discourse is liberating or maintaining a balance of power that is of advantage to some and not to others.

In this chapter I will also be analysing the social processes that constitute reality for the research participants by examining how 'discourses ensure that certain phenomena are created, reified, and taken for granted and come to constitute that "reality"' (Phillips and Hardy, 2002, p.21).

After careful thought I decided to label each session in which the teacher taught poetry to the pupils as a literary event, rather than a poetry lesson. I felt that the latter term was one that was immediately familiar to both myself and the reader and as such could carry pre-determined associations and feelings with it, evoking notions, expectations and prejudices which could implicitly influence the writer and the reader. 'Literary event' could suggest a moment that is more open and flexible, encompassing the complexities of the moment-by-moment interaction between the teacher, child and text. The focus of the analysis of each literary event was upon the discourse that occurred in the time set aside for the Literacy Hour (NLS, 1998).

In examining the teaching and learning styles present in each observed literary event, I have chosen to adopt a framework for analysis developed by Webster, Beveridge and Reed (1996). They identify four predominant styles of teaching and learning, which are characterised by descriptions of the teaching process in terms of high and low adult involvement and high and low child initiative, and the kind of learning they might encourage. They are split into four quadrants, which aim to give a general indication of whether a lesson is teacher driven, resource-occupier-driven,

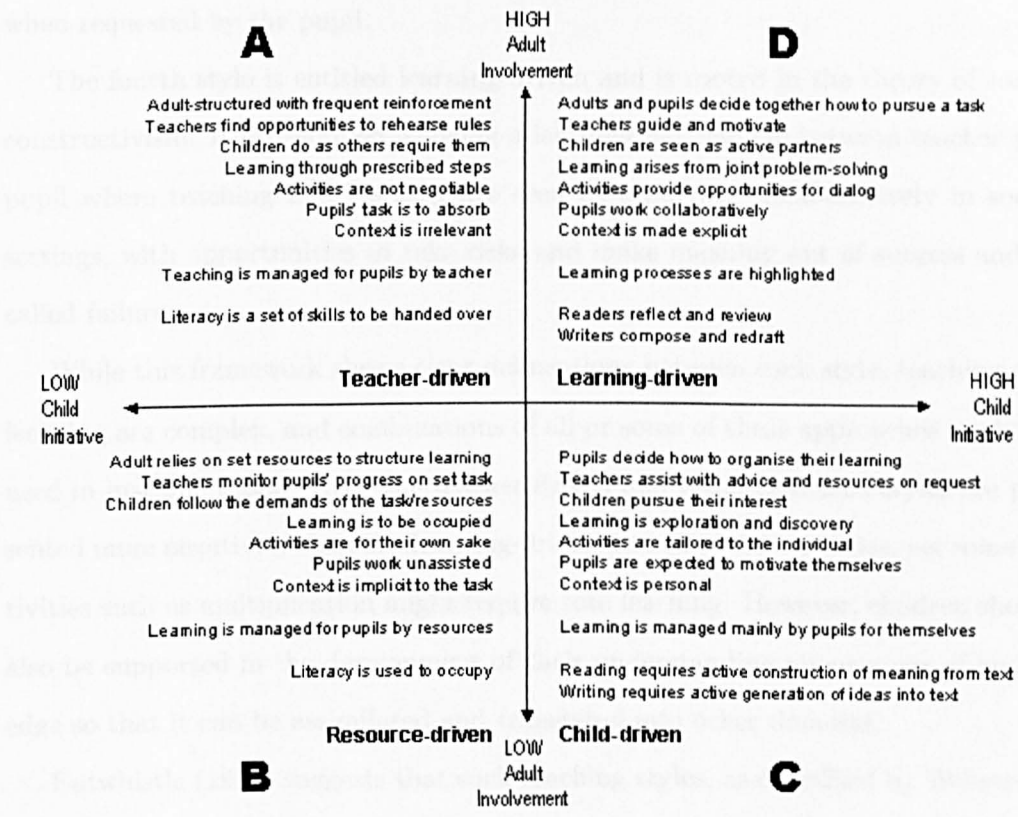


Figure 4.1: Adult-Child Proximity (Webster et al., 1996, p.37)

child-driven or learning-driven as shown in figure 4.1.

The teacher-driven style indicates a didactic approach to learning, where the teacher is the knowledge giver and the pupil is the passive recipient who must fulfil the teaching objectives.

The resource, or occupier-driven style is characterised by pupils working individually through set schemes or worksheets with little interaction with teacher or other pupils, and little or no pupil initiative.

In contrast, the child-driven style sees the pupil as central in initiating his or her learning with direct, hands-on experience, enabling the child to learn at his or her own pace. The teacher has a low-key role of being the facilitator of a rich and stimulating range of resources, as well as being available for information or help

when requested by the pupil.

The fourth style is entitled learning-driven and is rooted in the theory of socio-constructivism. It is described as being a learning partnership between teacher and pupil where teaching and learning are seen as occurring collaboratively in social settings, with opportunities to take risks and make meaning out of success and so called failure.

While this framework shows clear delineations between each style, teaching and learning are complex, and combinations of all or some of these approaches might be used in just one lesson. Also, the teacher-driven and resource-driven styles are presented more negatively than the learning-driven and child-driven styles, yet some activities such as multiplication might require rote learning. However, children should also be supported in the development of their understanding about areas of knowledge so that it can be assimilated and translated into other domains.

Entwhistle (1988) suggests that such teaching styles, as described by Webster et al. (1996) can be polarised into traditional and progressive ideas that are founded in a particular philosophy about the role of education.

A traditional view of education sees the child being prepared vocationally to take his/her place in society, so there is a greater emphasis on standards and fulfilling the criteria needed to do well in exams. In the classroom this would be translated into the teacher maintaining tight control over the structure of the lesson and of behaviour, and learning would be highly structured, proceeding in logical and sequential order.

There are many progressive movements, however, Silcock (1999) suggests that at the centre of each different style and emphasis is the conviction that education should enable the individual to become an active participant in social, political and economic decisions that will have some impact on their lives. In the classroom this would involve each individual being respected for their own diversity of interests, ability, ideas and needs. The individual would also be encouraged to develop their

own socially critical intelligence with others, so working towards the common good of the community.

Both the traditional and the progressive movement are often polarised, yet teaching methods and styles can combine elements as a continuum between the two. Entwistle (1988, p.231) argues that the important point is that, 'Somehow the approach to teaching must take account of the variety of styles of learning among the learners, not just the preference of the teacher'. Much emphasis is placed on the teaching style as opposed to different learning styles, but the learner is not merely an empty vessel waiting to be filled with knowledge. Edwards and Furlong (1987, p.352) suggest that 'teachers can never actually transmit knowledge, for they are still dependent on the pupil undertaking his (sic) own interpretive work and making the necessary links for himself'. These links can be affected by a number of complex factors that include a pupil's body of pre-existing knowledge, intellectual skill, motivational traits and personality, which are further influenced by the context and content of significant environments such as the home and the school (Schmeck, 1988). This can make the process of adopting a certain style of teaching difficult, and implies that any such style should be flexible in order to allow for different ways of learning. It also suggests that the adoption of a particular teaching style results in children learning in a particular way, which can impact on the kind of knowledge that is taught, how it is presented, and how it is assimilated by the child.

In analysing the teaching and learning styles in the observed literary events I will be identifying what kind of teaching styles are being adopted, how this is translated through the presentation of knowledge, and how the case study children respond.

In examining the role and the treatment of poetry in each literary session I have used Dias and Hayhoe's (1988, p.14) table (see tab.4.1), which outlines three major literary trends, which are considered to have influenced the way that poetry is taught in the classroom. To this table I have added a fourth based on reader-

response theory.

Theory	Place of 'meaning'	Critical activity
New Criticism	Meaning is in the text and is to be discovered; the text is guardian of the poem's meaning	Determine what the poem means and how it has transmitted its message
Structuralism	The meaning of a particular poem is given less importance; the focus is on structures and systems of textual meaning	Determine the principle of the systems by which poems mean
Post-structuralism	Meaning is indeterminate and unstable-by the very arbitrariness of language and the individual 'subjectivities' of readers and writers	'Deconstructive' criticism-constructing and reconstructing; demonstrating how a poem cannot mean on its own or as a part of a system, but is dependent on several choices on the part of its reader
Reader response theory (between texts and readers)	Meaning is formed by a transaction between the reader and the text at that given time	Consider the active processes which form the relationship between text and reader resulting in a variety of readings influenced by time, age and context.

Table 4.1: Stances in Critical Theory (Adapted from Dias and Hayhoe, 1988, p.14)

As Dias and Hayhoe (1988) suggest, there are many schools of thought that can be gathered under such a title but the most prominent one to impinge upon the classroom is the theory that explores what happens in the 'transaction' between reader and text (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.20). Other proponents of this theory either move towards a greater emphasis upon the text or the reader, but Rosenblatt tries to demonstrate that there can be a balance between the two 'that allows for a variety of

readings at different times and in different contexts, and by readers of different ages' (Dias and Hayhoe, 1988, p.22). Shor and Freire (1987, p.10) suggest that 'Reading is re-writing what we are reading. Reading is to discover the connections between the text and the context of the text, and also how to connect the text/context with my context, the context of the reader'. While Chambers (1995, p.61) notes how 'Our sense of what a story is changes even as we talk and think about it, and every time we reread it'.

I have used this table to analyse the role of poetry in each session, drawing evidence from the observations and aligning them with the descriptions below to discover the critical theory or theories that underpin the treatment of poetry in the two classrooms (see Sections entitled Role of Poem).

I have chosen to analyse each literary session in proportions of time, in relation to the structure laid out in the Literacy Hour as a key element of the NLS (1998) (see Appendix 2.1). In each segment of time, the data is presented chronologically to give some sense of the delivery of the session in terms of pace, structure and content, as it appeared to the researcher. Following each timed section, the data is then considered thematically to highlight important issues raised.

First, a session from Chadwick school is introduced and background contextual features are briefly presented, followed by an in-depth analysis of the interactions between teacher and pupils. This is then followed by a session from St. Albans school. In both instances, key moments from other literary events observed are also analysed following the analysis of this session, to provide greater depth and fullness to the tentative suggestions already made, so culminating in a clearer argument.

## 4.2 Teaching and Learning Poetry in Chadwick School

The first event was observed at Chadwick school on the 31st of January (the remainder of the sessions were observed in June). I selected this literary event to be

the main focus of analysis as it appeared to be the one that most clearly illustrated the themes that this study is concerned with (see 4.1).

As noted in the previous chapter, this school was selected because it had a predominantly middle-class intake and I wanted to examine the link between socio-economic status and the achievements of the case study children in the class (see 3.4.1). As documented in 3.4.5 and 3.4.6. teacher and children were also selected according to certain criteria.

This session lasted the duration of an hour, and the focus was an objective taken from the NLS, Year 6, Term 2, text level work (DfEE, 1998a, p.52 ):

To recognise how poets manipulate words:

- For multiple layers of meaning e.g. through figurative language, ambiguity

To teach this objective the teacher had chosen a piece of poetry by Ted Hughes (1985, p.87) 'The Warm and the Cold' (see Appendix 4.1), which she had found through the internet by searching for poems with similes. The teacher had not prepared a written plan, and explained that this was normal practice in her classroom.

After each taped literary event, the discourse was transcribed and broken down into sections of speech. Where appropriate, sections of speech were divided by time in relation to the shared text work, focused word work, guided group and independent work, and the plenary set out in the Literacy Hour (see Appendix 2.1). The teacher did not always adhere to the set timings according to the NLS, so speech sections were separated into recognizable structures of subject content designated by linguistic cues, such as a statement of introduction or closure by the teacher or pupils.

The first timed section of data analysis lasted fifteen minutes. The teacher began the session by standing at the front of the classroom with a small white board on

which the objective was pinned. All the pupils were sat in ability groups of six round desks, apart from the mixed-ability table of the case study children seated at a table near the back of the classroom. I had previously asked that all the case study children could be sat at one table to enable ease of observation (see 3.9).

Around the classroom were display boards with art and history work completed by some of the pupils in the class. There was a small library area without any poetry books, and around the blackboard the teacher had printed up thirty-six words, such as 'personification', 'hypothesis' and 'parody'.

### **4.3 Interaction Between Pupil and Teacher In the First Fifteen Minutes**

The teacher began the session with an extensive monologue in which work was presented and related to previous tasks (see Appendix 4.2), as pupils had looked at the poem the day before. She introduced the poet Ted Hughes and related his work to the objective, taken directly from the NLS. In drawing attention to the objective the teacher noted that some of the vocabulary such as 'figurative language' and 'ambiguity' was specific to English and therefore may be harder to understand. Entwistle (1988) and others (Richardson and Webster, 1996) describe how important it is to relate knowledge to children's previous experiences in order to build upon it, however, the teacher did not take the opportunity to find out what knowledge they had, stating: 'don't worry if you don't know them', which implied that she would pass the knowledge onto them at the appropriate time.

After a short pause where the books containing the chosen poem were given out, the teacher continued with another lengthy description of how the session would proceed (see Appendix 4.3), followed by the reading of the poem. The teacher then asked pupils to highlight the similes in the poem. After two correctly identified



similes the teacher posed inferential closed questions based on evidence in the poem.

TEACHER "Does anyone know what we've got in common? What's been written in, in the similes, in all, in most of them anyway? In most of the similes here, what is been likened to something else?"

The teacher had a specific answer in her mind, the use of creatures in the poem, but confusion arose because the similes previously highlighted by the children were, 'Freezing dusk is closing like a slow trap of steel', and, 'And the badger in its bedding like a loaf in the oven'. As a consequence, pupils struggled to find the answer the teacher was expecting (see Appendix 4.4). After two unsuccessful attempts to get the question right, one pupil suggesting that everything was warm, and another that, 'They're all, they're like, they're all like something' the teacher emphasised all the words she believed were important to make sense of the question. It was only then that someone was able to respond correctly.

LISA "Is it that they're all animals?"

TEACHER "Yes! Creatures aren't they? Well done, creatures, things like that, being like these kinds of things."

The teacher then moved on to more open questions. She directed the pupils to a particular simile and explained that it was now time to look at the meaning. The teacher asked a question intended to elicit pupils' responses to the text, but worded it in such a way that pupils seemed confused as to how to answer.

TEACHER "Can you tell me what you think, and there's no right or wrong answer here, it's really what you think, what meaning is Ted Hughes trying to give across here?"

The idea that whatever pupils thought was neither right nor wrong combined with the question "What meaning is Ted Hughes trying to get across?" appeared

contradictory, since the question inferred that there was a singular meaning to be found out. This confusion was reflected in the discourse that followed.

IAN "Is it because the carp's like hidden underneath and excluded from the rest of like the pond or whatever and the planet's excluded? Planets aren't normally close together. They're like far apart and stuff, the sky's in the distance."

TEACHER "Well that could be, that could be one of the meanings. That could be one of the meanings couldn't it? So the carp is quite isolated, the carp on its own and like the planet, being sort of, I mean there are other planets, and there are other fish, but being quite alone, sort of thing? That could be one of the meanings couldn't it? Do you reckon there's another meaning? Do you see anything else? Jem?"

By presenting the 'reality' of the carp and the planet in literal terms, the image which Hughes was depicting seemed to lose some of its power in the teacher's description.

Much of the interaction between pupil and teacher in this time period, appeared disjointed and lacking in coherence and this was accentuated, twice, by the teacher breaking off into a different train of thought. For example, when a pupil commented on the fish being very small she replied:

TEACHER "Fantastic. Well, your idea of the fish being so small in such a, by the way, are carp fresh water fish? I'm not really too sure, but if river where, a fish is comparatively quite small isn't it in the river or sea, whatever, I'm not really too sure."

#### **4.3.1 The Role of the Poem**

In discussing the literary theoretical framework that underpins the first fifteen minutes I begin by examining the objective taken from the NLS, and the focus of this

time.

The objective seems to be based on a structuralist approach (see tab. 4.1) because of the emphasis placed on the poet and the way in which the he/she uses patterns and dynamics of structure to make meaning. This demystification of the author serves to diminish 'authorial inspiration, and moves it instead towards the processes by which readers make sense, in different ways, of literary texts' (Buchbinder, 1991, p.47). The objective, then, has not been allayed to any specific poet or poem, but is used as a generalised theme, which implies that there are operations of form and function that are open to systematic and regular definition. The operations and processes are the focus, rather than the poem and the teacher subconsciously adopted this theoretical framework when presenting work to the class (see Appendix 4.5).

The poem was introduced first in relation to the objective, the centrality of the objective emphasised by its early introduction and the physical act of pinning it to a whiteboard at the front of the class. The poem was only referred to six times at the very beginning of the session either by its title 'The Warm and the Cold' or 'the poem', while Ted Hughes was referred to 20 times, and the word 'simile' was mentioned 18 times. This suggested that the poem was to be the vehicle through which the objective would be met, with the emphasis upon structures and processes became more evident in the literary language used.

The teacher's choice of poem to fulfil the objective was fundamental to the way in which the lesson was perceived and understood both by the pupils and the teacher. The objective in the NLS is presented as (NLS, 1998, p.52):

to recognise how poets manipulate words:

- For their quality of sound, e.g. rhythm, rhyme, assonance;
- For their connotations;

- For multiple layers of meaning, e.g. through figurative language, ambiguity;

The teacher had chosen to focus on the third point. In the 'Glossary of Terms used in the Framework' figurative language is described as 'the use of metaphor or simile to create a particular mood or impression' (NLS, 1998, p.80). If the teacher had read this, this might explain the sudden introduction of the word 'metaphor' without any explanation.

TEACHER "Do you remember when we've done language? Things like similes and metaphors are all what we call figurative language."

The second word, 'ambiguity', is described as 'a phrase or statement which has more than one possible interpretation' (NLS, 1998, p.74), so the teacher had decided to look at how layers of meanings are achieved through the combination of both 'figurative language' and 'ambiguity'. The choice of poem was very important and this was where the teacher seemed to have made a mistake, placing the session in jeopardy. Ted Hughes' 'The Warm and the Cold' is considered to be a poem that has strong and specific imagery that it is not obviously open to ambiguity and layers of meaning (Wilson, 2001). It is suggested that while figurative language is present, it is used to create a very specific mood and atmosphere, causing Wilson (2001, pp.85-86) to write: 'It is a poem where the realities of life on the 'bare brown hill' (ibid.) are presented to us memorably and with a dry-eyed clarity'. By the teacher omitting to discuss the first four lines of the poem, lines which set the scene of images of ice and steel in contrast to the images of animals hidden away in the warmth and safety of hibernation, some of that clarity and meaning is lost. As the teacher tried to unravel layers of meaning that, according to Wilson, are not apparent, and by isolating one line from another, teacher and pupil struggled to make meaning.

It could be suggested that there are underpinnings of post-structuralist theory

in the way that the teacher instructed children that there were layers of meaning within the text, and asked them about their meanings and the poet's meaning. Post-structuralism suggests that meaning is unstable and dependent on the focus of the reader, and moves away from assumptions being made about the poem on the basis of one reading or interpretation. However, I felt that the teacher had not consciously been influenced by any literary theories, since she confessed that she had no knowledge of any during the first interview. Rather she seemed to lack a secure knowledge base from which to teach poetry at the level which was suggested by the NLS.

Distance was created between the children and the power of the poem by the teacher constantly referring back to the objective, focusing upon poetic devices, and drawing attention to the poet.

TEACHER "What meaning is Ted Hughes trying to give across here? Why on earth, Ted Hughes there he is, sat at home er...writing this out...Why did Ted Hughes, why didn't he just write 'But the carp is in his depths like a planet is in the sky?' Because heaven is quite a hard word to rhyme with, isn't it, as well?"

The writing of the poem was presented as a technical exercise, and there was little attempt to engage with how the poet was touched by the images or how the reader was affected by the poem.

#### 4.3.2 Case Study Children

In the first fifteen minutes Jem, Ben and Lisa made contributions to the discussion but Simon, Sarah and Peter did not. Throughout the open discussion time Peter and Ben constantly put their hands up to answer questions posed by the teacher. Jem, Simon and Lisa each put their hand up once, with Lisa and Simon revealing their nervousness by quickly putting hands up, then back down again.

In this short amount of time it was clear that 'students of different personality types may pursue similar academic goals in very different ways' (Entwhistle, 1988, p.99).

Peter and Ben showed that they were involved with the session by keeping their hands up, but Peter eventually got tired of waiting and held one hand wearily with the other, before finally losing interest in the discussion. This was evidenced by Peter folding his arms on the table and laying his head upon them. Ben, however, demonstrated his eagerness to answer the questions by sitting attentively facing the teacher with hand straight up. This seemed to have a positive effect on the teacher, for he was asked to contribute twice, compared to Peter who was never asked to share.

#### **4.3.3 First Fifteen Minutes of the NLS**

In the NLS, the first fifteen minutes is described as shared text work for balanced reading and writing (NLS, 1998, p.11). At Key Stage 2 the teacher should choose a common text that should be shared with the class as a whole to extend reading skills alongside objectives listed in framework text level column. This should be a time when grammar, punctuation and vocabulary work is taught and reinforced in the context of sharing of the text. It is expected that pupils who are less able readers should be able to use texts that are beyond independent reading levels, because the teacher is supporting them. This is expected to result in less able pupils having access to richer texts, developing confidence and learning more advanced skills.

In examining the first fifteen minutes the teacher had fulfilled many of the criteria cited; she had chosen a poem and shared it with the class, she had supported less able pupils by reading out the text so giving them access to the poem. As Entwhistle (1988) suggests, reading can be very stressful not only for those who have difficulty with words, but also to those who are particularly shy and introverted. She had

attempted to choose an objective and cover it through the text, and had sought to extend vocabulary, knowledge of poetic devices and elicit pupils' responses to the text.

In the NLS, successful teaching is cited as being (NLS, 1998, p.8):

- Discursive - characterised by high quality oral work;
- Interactive - pupils' contributions are encouraged, expected, and extended;
- Well-paced - there is a sense of urgency, driven by the need to make progress and succeed;
- Confident - teachers have a clear understanding of the objectives;
- Ambitious - there is optimism about and high expectations of success.

In examining the first fifteen minutes, it could be said that were elements of discursiveness, though it was not of high quality and that there was also interaction, although ideas were rarely extended. It could also be suggested that it was well-paced in that the teacher moved from introducing work to encouraging pupils to identify similes, to discussing the meaning of a particular simile. However, the teacher lacked confidence because there was little understanding of how the objective related to the poem she had chosen. There appeared to be optimism about certain aspects of the lesson, such as identifying similes, but there was lack of optimism in the knowledge that children brought to the lesson from previous work that they had done.

The literacy objectives are expected to give teaching a clear focus and direction with high levels of motivation and engagement of pupils, which are suggested can be achieved by teachers using a wide range of strategies (NLS, 1998, p.8). The strategies that are suggested are varied (see Appendix 4.6) and the teacher did use seven out of the ten suggested. Within the first fifteen minutes it could be suggested that direction, explanation, questioning, initiating and guiding exploration, investigating

ideas, discussing, listening and responding were all employed. From this it could be proposed that the teacher used a wide range of teaching strategies, but there is no indication of quality, implying that a successful session cannot be guaranteed by the amount of strategies employed.

It appeared that even with the best intentions and having fulfilled many of the requirements, which the NLS says should lead to a successful session, the teacher struggled, and early on questions over subject knowledge, confidence and choice of teaching style arose, which I will return to throughout the analysis.

#### **4.3.4 Teaching and Learning Styles in the First Fifteen Minutes**

By comparing the first fifteen minutes with the model proposed by Webster et al. (1996) (see fig.4.1) it is evident that the adult had structured the environment and that there was little room for negotiation. Directives were explicitly given with teacher maintaining strict control over talking, listening and movement, and overall there was a sense that the session was predominantly teacher-driven.

This was demonstrated by the 'predominance of restricted codes' (Edwards, 1987, p.219) as opposed to 'elaborated codes' (p.220). Restricted codes allowed a pupil to respond to the teacher with what she/he knows already. However, quite often the pupil only needed to touch vaguely on the answer required for the teacher to respond with the full answer, which was also vague and indirect, but served to remind pupils that understanding was rooted in the 'teacher's frame of reference' (Edwards, 1987, p.220). Though the teacher used the word 'we' on numerous occasions to convey inclusivity, this often formed part of a list of instructions that children were expected to comply with: 'We're going to remind ourselves, we're going to look at, we're going to draw out'. Opportunities for children to join in, were reduced further by the teacher reading out the poem, choosing a theme that she wanted to discuss, and limiting discussion by choosing one simile in particular to elaborate upon.



Through such classroom talk, the teacher and pupils worked out and maintained social identities and relationships established in the context of power and authority.

In these first fifteen minutes learning was managed for the pupils, as the teacher proceeded through logical steps. Learning was broken down into discrete categories that were explicitly linked to the objective from the NLS. The poem had been chosen to serve the objective and was treated as something that could be broken down into easily identifiable components for study. As a result, the context of the poem became irrelevant.

#### 4.4 Interaction in the Second Period of Fifteen Minutes

The teacher proceeded onto the next part of the lesson with a lengthy exposition of a task (see Appendix 4.7), which involved trying to discover the meaning of an isolated simile from the poem: 'And the badger in its bedding like a loaf in the oven'. The explanation of the activity was interrupted by organisational matters, which the teacher confessed she handled poorly, and as a consequence disturbed the flow of her explanation. This was illustrated by Lisa's question once her table had collected their whiteboards.

LISA "Do you know what you've got to do?"

However, the teacher seemed to be aware that some pupils were unsure and attempted to retrieve the situation.

TEACHER "Can I just recap then? Does anyone still need a pen for their white-board?"

Again, organisational details were mixed up with explanations about the task, and instead of recapping the teacher gave details about how they were to proceed,

which had not been given before (see Appendix 4.8). The teacher specifically instructed pupils to work in table groups, and set a time limit so that their discussions would be focused. However, the teacher seemed to give greater emphasis to what and how they were to write, with the teacher making clear her expectations of the content and style of that writing, rather than providing support for their talk.

The aim of the activity was unclear, as the teacher referred to the meaning Ted Hughes was trying to convey with that of “could we read other meanings into it”, and then at the end of the explanation referred again to “meaning”, as if there was a singular one to be found.

Once the teacher released the class to discuss, the case study children began to tentatively talk about what the simile meant.

JEM “I think... cos the badger...”

SARAH “Cos the badger is warm...”

BEN “Cos the badger’s like warm in its bed, nice and warm.”

SARAH “Yeh.”

PETER “Well, it’s boiling in its bed. Yeh, cos you get a loaf...”

JEM “Yeh, but a badger isn’t that hot in its bed, so you don’t have it that hot in the oven, do you?”

SARAH “Well like you know how a loaf isn’t that hot in the oven...”

BEN “Well you don’t have it that hot, do you? Cos if you had it that hot it would just burn it, wouldn’t it?”

PETER “S’pose.”

BEN “If you had it boiling it would just burn it wouldn’t it, so it would be like warped.”

(Silence as they turn their attention to writing on their whiteboards)

This type of talk could be labelled exploratory talk (Barnes, 1992, 1993), as it included partial formation of ideas, interrupted talk and ideas that were sometimes exaggerated, and it is the kind of talk that Barnes believes allows more pupils to contribute and encourages learning.

It was interesting that Sarah, Jem and Ben reacted strongly to Peter's suggestion, and attempted to impose a reality-bound perspective upon the comparison between the badger in its bed and the loaf in the oven, by matching the heat that would be generated in the oven directly to that of the badger's bed. Though Peter's word 'boiling' seemed inappropriate, it was perhaps a more appropriate word if taking a literal interpretation, than the word 'warm', since a loaf needs a considerable amount of heat to cook right through. Both interpretations, then, were constricted by the literal translation of the images. Galda (1982) suggests that this preoccupation with reality is characteristic of concrete operations, where the text is broken down into discrete categories and generalised through real life experiences, lacking mature literary judgement. This lack of literary judgement was also indicated by the fact that the poet was not mentioned at all, even though the teacher had asked them to think about Ted Hughes's intentions. Galda (1982) suggests that pupils should be encouraged to work towards employing formal operations where abstract alternative realities can be explored, and a spectator stance assumed. This spectator stance is considered by some to be essential in generating mature literary judgements (Galda, 1982).

At this point neither Lisa nor Simon had contributed to the discussion on the meaning of the simile. This could have been attributable to lack of confidence in expressing their own opinions, and given that Peter received the response he did, this may well have put them off. Instead, Lisa attempted to divert the children's attention to a drawing she'd begun on her whiteboard of a badger.

Talk on task was short and there was a long period of time where there was no verbal interaction between the pupils. There was some discussion on the meaning of the simile, but pupils did not discuss many of the questions presented by the teacher.

#### 4.4.1 The Role of the Poem

The teacher began this period of time, by isolating a simile from the context of the rest of the poem. The teacher placed the main emphasis on the children discovering what meaning Ted Hughes was trying to create with this single simile, by choosing to liken one thing to another. This would appear to be underpinned by a structuralist approach, with the emphasis on the poet's use of a set structure and system of textual meaning. It also implied that the teacher was encouraging pupils to process the poem through a 'bottom-up' reading model, demonstrated by the examination of the individual simile, which was decontextualised from the poem as a whole. However, the teacher also asked two questions which appeared to be more in keeping with the theory of reader-response:

TEACHER "What feelings do you get from it? What feelings he's trying to get across?" [referring to Ted Hughes]

Both of these questions seem to be more centred upon the interaction between the reader and the text, and suggested that the children may have had personal connections with the text, but the second question had a different emphasis upon the reader's response from the first. The first implied that the children may have had a personal response to the simile that was evoked purely by the text, while the second question referred to the communication of the poet's feelings to the reader. Though they may both seem to be focused on personal response, it was the first that was suggesting that children might be responding to the text, while the second

was focused on the children discovering what feelings the poet might be trying to communicate. It is interesting that in the group discussion time neither of these questions were explored, rather it was the literal meaning of the text that became the main focus of the talk.

Finally, how did pupils respond to the chosen simile? The teacher defined it as a task, and the children responded to it as a task to be completed. In some ways it could have been said that they fulfilled the criteria set out by the adult: they discussed the meaning of the simile; they wrote down some ideas. Not all the case-study pupils did this, though. Lisa got her written ideas from Sarah, while Simon wrote no ideas down. Once pupils felt the task to be completed the majority moved onto drawing pictures on their whiteboards. It seemed that they had engaged with the task, and therefore the poem, at a superficial level, and they had done what they felt they needed to do. In this way the children demonstrated a 'goodness of fit' in their environment (Lerner, 1984), emphasised by the individual way in which they responded to the task. Lerner (1984, p.150) suggests that:

Attention has begun to be paid to the processes by which children may change themselves or be changed to meet the demands of changing and multiple contexts; in turn, there has also been concern with the processes by which children may change contextual demands to fit their attributes.

To fulfil the criteria in this group, it only needed some of them to understand the task, and to get it done in the required time. Those who did not understand could ask for ideas from the others, if they felt confident enough to, or simply stay quiet and occupied as Simon did. There was no sense of a desire to engage with the text, or an enjoyment of the sounds, the images, the rhythms the poem evoked. For example, by isolating the simile from the others in the poem, the steady driving rhythm was lost, as the children were drawn away from the sound and the feeling of the words, and instead concentrated on a literal interpretation. Therefore the

'tensions generated between the looser rhythms of speech and the relatively tighter rhythms of poetry' (Andrews, 1989, p.24) were lost in the pupils' retelling. Finding out what the simile meant was the task that needed to be completed, and it could be said that this was done efficiently by the pupils, however, the role of the poem was a vehicle to get the task done, and in that sense it did not matter which poem was chosen or what simile.

#### **4.4.2 The Second Period of Fifteen Minutes in the NLS**

In the second fifteen minutes of the Literacy Hour, it is expected that there will be a balance of word and sentence work in the form of spelling, vocabulary work, grammar and punctuation, and that this will be carried out in the context of shared reading and writing. Though the teacher did not explicitly break down the task into word and sentence work, she focused on the meanings of one simile she had chosen from the poem and asked children how this has been done. The concentration on vocabulary work was a continuation of what had been discussed as a whole class, but with a change in group composition, including both talking, reading and writing.

In considering the strategies (see Appendix 4.6) laid out by the NLS as a guide to successful teaching in this unit of time, we can see that the teacher had used a number of them. These were: direction; explanation, where she has had to clarify her instructions; and presentation of questions to initiate and guide group discussion. So again, it could be said that the teacher had implemented a wide range of strategies from the NLS.

At this stage, the teacher diverted from the structure in the literacy hour by breaking the children off into groups. It could be suggested that in doing this the teacher showed confidence in using the framework as a flexible support rather than a rigid constraint which other teachers have felt it to be (Anderson, Digings and Urquhart, 2000; Fisher, 2000; Smith and Whiteley; 2000). However, it may have

also indicated that the teacher lacked confidence and subject knowledge to continue working with the poem with the whole class.

The peer group discussion was at first discursive and interactive, but it lacked pace; there was only limited discussion of ideas, with little extension or development of them. It would be difficult to label the ideas discussed as ambitious. A significant number of the group lacked confidence in entering into the conversation, so as a discussion group it would seem to have had limited success in terms of exploring and developing ideas, and encouraging group participation. In this second period of fifteen minutes the teacher set them on a task that could be described as independent study, since the teacher was not present at the case-study table. Though a wide range of tasks are set out for independent work in the Framework for Teaching it does not suggest that children may be working together and supporting each other in tasks (see Appendix 4.9). A teacher could look at this list and see ways that children could work together, but this is not explicitly encouraged, rather the predominant use of 'independent' seems to imply that children should be working separately on tasks rather than collaboratively.

It is suggested that successful interaction between pupils needs support, encouragement and guidance where pupils learn about turn-taking, listening and responding to others, developing and extending ideas. If pupils have not had experience of this, and teachers receive few guidelines on how to encourage good group work, then successful discourse will probably not happen. Certainly the teacher of this class in Chadwick school gave few suggestions on how pupils should relate to each other when discussing the simile, other than giving children the choice as to whether they wanted to discuss in groups or just with a partner.

#### 4.4.3 Teaching and Learning Styles in the Second Fifteen Minutes

In this second time slot the teacher began with a very structured schedule, which she appeared to drive. In introducing this task she used phrases such as: "I'm going to get you an activity" and: "What I'm going to do is, I'm going to give you another simile to have a look at". In contrast to the opening introduction to the first fifteen minutes of the lesson where the teacher had placed emphasis on the "we" as in "We've been thinking...we had a look", in this section of speech the emphasis has shifted to "I". Very occasionally the teacher made reference to teacher and class working together with comments such as "We'll have a look", but this was predominated by clear references to strong teacher control and directives. Whereas before there had at least been a verbal implication that children were partners in the processes of learning, though this was not borne out in practice, it was now made clearer that learning was explicitly centred around the teacher's instruction and input. Both content and organisational details such as where to write, what to write, when to get up and fetch whiteboards, were orchestrated by the teacher with the children acting specifically on the teacher's instructions. In this first part of the lesson then, it would appear that the teaching style being adopted was one that was teacher driven, with high adult involvement and low child initiative as set out in fig. 4.1.

In contrast to the first fifteen minutes of this lesson, and the first part of this second time slot, the teacher gave the children the opportunity to manage their own learning. This could be seen as a change in teaching and learning style towards quadrant C of fig. 4.1. where pupils are given more initiative in organising their learning, creating opportunities to question, and raise concerns or issues along the lines they want to take them. This represented a positive move by the teacher for, as researchers (Andrews, 1991; Trousdale and Harris, 1993) have recognised: 'Children need to talk about poetry' (Sedgwick, 1997, p.164). However, it would



seem that because so much of their learning was managed for them, they were unable to respond to the task, even given that there was only a short amount of time to fill in discussing the questions put forward by the teacher. This could demonstrate that, due to heavy teacher direction at other times of the lesson, children needed support and guidance to become autonomous and to take on the responsibility of learning for themselves.

#### 4.5 Teacher and Pupil Talk in Third Period of Twenty Minutes

The teacher followed the last fifteen minutes, in which pupils discussed a simile in groups, with a wider discussion. Here group members were chosen to feedback some of the ideas they had talked through, revolving around the simile “And the badger in its bedding/ Like a loaf in the oven” (see Appendix 4.10). They shared similar ideas such as:

SARAH “Cos a badger’s warm and settled in its bed, and its like a loaf, a loaf in the oven, its like warm and baking and stuff.”

The teacher had previously suggested that there might be other meanings, but pupils seemed to focus on that which was most obvious, or, ‘the main one’ as the teacher labelled it. They each contributed ideas that gave a fuller and more developed explanation of the simile, and responded to the pleasant imagery that the simile evoked by sharing descriptive phrases such as “curled up” “warm and settled” “really warm”. This might have been an appropriate time to examine what personal associations pupils brought to their reading of the simile, however, although questions were asked about what feelings the simile might evoke, or the feelings Ted Hughes was trying to convey, at the beginning of this activity (see 4.6.2), none of these questions were followed up in the feedback.

The teacher then became momentarily distracted and preoccupied with the accuracy of a literal interpretation of the simile.

ANDY "I put um, to show that the badger's like slowly warmed up, because if you put a loaf in the oven straight away it doesn't all of a sudden go really hot, it takes its time to warm up just like a batch of the dough after like its been there for a while."

TEACHER "(Laughs) Alright, then. I, I agree, I think there is that, that, that meaning there as well, the sort of, the slowly warming up. I've never baked bread in my life, I confess, but if you put a loaf in the oven it warms up quite slowly. I think you put it on a low heat. Do you have to put on a low heat or a high heat? (Looks to Support Assistant)."

SUPPORT ASSISTANT "A high heat, quite a high heat. I mean as you do it it takes time to warm up."

(Teacher and Support Assistant carry on discussing together momentarily, but it is unclear what is being said)

TEACHER "So like the badger eventually getting warm."

It was interesting that when the case-study pupils discussed this simile (see 4.6.2), they too were concerned about the issue of heat, and it appeared that there was a pervasive anxiety over the accuracy of a literal interpretation, which suggested a lack of confidence in both the pupils and teacher. This was further evidenced in a further exchange between a pupil and the teacher (see Appendix 4.11)

The discussion was brought to an end and the teacher drew the children's attention back to the objective of the lesson (see Appendix 4.12), making it very clear here, that "the point" of the lesson was the objective, and not the poem. The teacher had already highlighted figurative language right at the beginning of the session, but even though they were halfway through the session, she again assured

the children not to worry about the meaning of this word yet, because they would be dealing with that later. There followed a lengthy explanation of the next task (see Appendix 4.13) that was set and how it was differentiated amongst the levels (see Role of Worksheets 4.5.2). The teacher paid most attention to those designated as lower level pupils.

TEACHER "I've put a couple of examples there. I've put the 'cows are on the hillside like the cars are in the yard.' Sorry, its not the best of examples, but its er...likening animals, that's where they are, to cars in the yard. Alright? You don't have to worry about you know, what meaning, you're just trying to um...use an animal and liken it to something else."

When the teacher cited her own example of a simile, she first apologised for it. This apology could be seen to reduce the creativity involved in creating a simile, and again create a climate of anxiety about writing poetry. Also, the extra 'are' that she included in her simile, served to hinder the rhythm and communicated that she had no 'feel' for the language. The simile was portrayed as something the teacher had had to do, a technical exercise, which they now must do, rather than an enjoyable exploration into the play of words and meaning. Meaning, in fact, was presented as surplus to requirements in the invention of a simile, as the teacher actually told children that they did not have to worry about meaning. This seemed to contradict the objective, since meaning was linked to the recognition of how poets manipulate words. Also, to suggest that meaning was not necessary in order to create a simile, implied that the teacher had a lack of confidence in children who were designated to the lower-ability tables, and that they would be able to write something without necessarily needing to understand what they had written.

At the beginning of the explanation the teacher said that she had written the objective down, again bringing it to the attention of the pupils. However as she had not explained figurative language or ambiguity yet, nor the word "manipulate", it is

strange that although the worksheets were clearly differentiated according to ability, the objective was not.

#### 4.5.1 Independent and Teacher Guiding Group Talk and Writing

This section of discourse followed on immediately from previous exchanges, however, it is separated to highlight the differences in the way in which the case-study children interacted together, and how this changed when the teacher intervened.

Once children were given the opportunity to work independently of the teacher, Lisa again showed signs of a lack of confidence and an inability to take risks, even with what appeared to be the most simple of tasks, without guidance from the others.

LISA "What list of animals are you doing? Are you doing a list of animals or are you just writing it out?"

JEM I'm doing a snake...why it says that and that and that. I know... badger, no we've done badger."

LISA "What animal can I write?"

Lisa's situation was desperate because she was finding it difficult to engage with the work. She swiftly lost interest in the task, and tried to engage Jem in some talk off task (see Appendix 4.14).

Even though Jem had previously given Lisa a number of animal names, Lisa asked for her help again (see Appendix 4.15). This stimulated Sarah, Jem, Peter and Ben into sharing their lists with each other, with Ben reading a particularly long and diverse list of creatures. Though Lisa had asked the question, no one read the list to her or Simon, sharing within the group of four. This gave the impression of a fragmented group, divided by ability and a lack of confidence.

The teacher then came and intervened in the group (see Appendix 4.16). In the

conversation that followed between pupils and teacher it seemed that the teacher was not so much interested in the ideas that the children had come up with, in the form of a list of creatures, but rather she was intent on hearing exactly what they perceived they had to do. The teacher's final phrase "Don't be afraid to steal...any phrases that are going to help you" could have implied that the teacher felt that the children had not got any reasonable ideas of their own, and therefore must resort to stealing others' ideas. The creative processes of actually going about the task, appeared to be dominated by the teacher's preoccupation with the technical processes of how the task was going to be achieved. Though the teacher began by questioning Sarah, the majority of the question and answer session was conducted between the teacher and Peter. However, the answers Peter gave were not related to the work that he had been set on the worksheet, but to the task set for Level Four pupils. Both the teacher, Peter and Jem interrupted each other during this exchange, but it was the teacher who asserted her dominance over the directional focus of the conversation: "No, but I mean within the simile, what's your aim?" Again, little if no support was given about how they were to work together as a group, a problem that has been observed in other classrooms across the country (Kutnick, Blatchford and Baines, 2004), and in this exchange there was evidence of poor collaborative group work when the teacher was present: there were frequent interruptions amongst participants; no opportunity was given to discuss ideas and creativity in response to the poem; only one ability group's work was discussed; and there was limited involvement from the majority of the group, with Simon and Lisa contributing nothing at all to the discussion.

Peter then asked a question about the meaning of 'viol' in the simile 'And the butterfly in its mummy/Like a viol in its case'. There was evidence here that the teacher attempted to bridge the specialised knowledge of the words contained in the simile, with that of Peter's experiential knowledge. She did this by relating the

“viol” to “viola”, which Peter then related to the “violin”.

PETER “And its mummy in its case? Er it turns into a...”

TEACHER “What do you think of when you think of the word mummy, I mean maybe this is ambiguity coming into it because how could you interpret the word ‘mummy’, what could it mean. What does it mean to you?”

PETER “An Egyptian mummy or...”

TEACHER “An Egyptian mummification or...”

PETER “Or a biological mum.”

The teacher intervened in Peter’s exploration of his thoughts and guided him in what she considered, a more suitable line of thought. At first Peter tried to relate the butterfly inside the chrysalis to mummification, the image that Ted Hughes seemed to be conveying. Peter appeared to be trying to pick up on the author’s intentions, but the teacher confused the issue by asking what Peter thought of, when he heard the word ‘mummy’. Unfortunately, by disassociating the word from the rest of the text, meaning was not embedded in the context of the whole line. The teacher seemed to use this approach to draw attention to the NLS objective: “maybe this is ambiguity coming into it because how could you interpret the word ‘mummy’?” It is interesting that when the teacher asked Peter “What does it mean to you?”, the first meaning he suggests is the one that Ted Hughes seems to be implying. This appeared to be at the forefront of this thinking, while the second interpretation of the “biological mum” may have been given just to satisfy the teacher’s request for different interpretations. The teacher then turned Peter’s attention back to the butterfly and the process of change it undergoes in the chrysalis. This is what he had initially tried to think through and verbalise, but had been prevented from doing so. However, the teacher then referred Peter back to the text to identify which one of the two interpretations he suggested was more meaningful than the other.

While Peter and the teacher continued their discussion, Sarah and Jem were engaged in a different conversation.

SARAH "A cat in its basket like a chicken on a barbecue (Laughs)."

JEM "Chicken on a barbecue (Giggles). Are you going to write that?"

SARAH "Yeh!"

Sarah and Jem began to play with language, which generated huge enjoyment, however, there was a subversive feel to the exchange. It was spoken in hushed voices, so that the teacher could not hear, and Jem's comment "Are you going to write that?" suggested that to do that would be quite daring and maybe against the teacher's wishes and expectations, as the simile had not been constructed according to the instructions and modelled examples. This small extract of speech gave the impression that playing and enjoying language was something that was part of a classroom subculture, driven "underground" perhaps because of perceived lack of teacher endorsement and encouragement. Perhaps this is because of the inflammatory nature of word play, for as Crystal (1998, p.54) states 'It is dynamic, exciting, anarchic...anything goes'. Given the heavily structured worksheets and verbal instructions, this is not the kind of language play the teacher had intended.

Meanwhile, Peter and the teacher continued their conversation.

TEACHER "So why would that, why would that, why would Ted Hughes have likened that then to a stringed instrument in its case?"

PETER "A stringed instrument. I think the case is made just for it so it would be kept safe."

TEACHER "Ahh, that's interesting."

PETER "And this is like the changing so it won't get eaten by anything."

TEACHER "So for protection. That's quite interesting isn't it? (Pause) And what does a mummy, do what does your mummy do?"

PETER "Feeds me."

TEACHER "And protects you."

PETER "Yeh."

TEACHER "That's quite interesting isn't it, there's quite a few different meanings come from that." (Teacher leaves)

The teacher tried to support Peter in reasoning through what the simile meant, by drawing parallels with the ideas of the "biological mother", and attempting to bridge the gap between specialised knowledge and Peter's life experiences. However, Peter found it difficult to draw the same conclusions that the teacher had come to about the meaning of the simile, so she had to supply the answer for him, as she had done previously with other pupils in the whole class discussion (see section 4.2.1 Interaction between Pupil and Teacher In the First Fifteen Minutes and Appendix 4.4). Her comment that "there's quite a few different meanings from that" appeared contrary to the conversation they had had, because the teacher had only worked through one meaning.

Both Peter and Jem seemed unsure about what "mummy" meant, despite the conversation with the teacher in which Peter appeared to understand what he was talking about, and they discussed it together (see Appendix 4.17). When Sarah expressed interest in their discussion, both Peter and Jem debated the answer to her question. Peter had greater interest in the accuracy of the name for the process, using the word "chrysalis" that the teacher shared with him, but Jem attempted to give a more descriptive account of how and what constituted a "chrysalis".

PETER "Yes, but a cocoon is like a co-coconut."

JEM "A co-coconut?"



PETER "Yeh, it's like a co-coconut, except you can't eat it."

JEM "That's funny (Laughs)."

PETER "And bugs live inside it. "

JEM "That's rubbish. You're being silly."

SARAH "Are you talking about butterflies?"

PETER "I read it in the dictionary."

JEM "Perhaps it said cocoon." (Pause)

Language play emerged here again, as the pupils seemed to repeatedly savour the sound of the nonsense word Peter had created. Jem appreciated the play with language, and it was noted in several of the interviews that the children liked Peter because he had a good sense of humour, but as Peter added detail to his original idea, she ridiculed his attempts. "That's funny" was swiftly followed by "That's rubbish" when Jem appeared to feel that Peter did not live up to the quality of ludic language he initially displayed. Crystal (1998, p.181) suggests that 'Language players are in effect operating within two linguistic worlds at once, the normal and abnormal, and trading them off against each other'. This involves risk-taking, and sometimes failure when the recipient does not understand or fails to find it funny, which is what seemed to have happened here. Jem then brought the conversation back to the root word which Peter had played with, "cocoon", signalling an end to this period of play, while possibly also implying that this word had been the correct one to use in reference to her previous conversation with Sarah.

SARAH "Ben, what would you put a cat in its basket with?"

BEN "I can't think."

PETER "A toilet roll" (Laughs).

BEN "A toilet roll" (Laughs).

PETER "A toilet roll in the toilet."

SARAH "Like a teabag."

BEN "Like a shoe, a shoe in the cupboard."

SARAH "Yeh, like a teabag in a teapot."

Language play continued, encouraging laughter and enjoyment again, but also resulting in the creation of a simile that has meaning. Though each pupil contributed different ideas, Peter the toilet roll, Ben the shoe, Sarah developed her own ideas but implied that it had come out of the time of sharing: "Yeh, like a teabag in a teapot". Even though Ben said he could not think at Sarah's initial question, once Peter and Sarah began sharing ideas, he was then able to respond with a suggestion.

In this section there were some emergent signs of playing with language, particularly when the teacher was not present. Jem, Sarah, Peter, and occasionally Ben, engaged in word play, which suggested a growing confidence in the use of language and with each other. Crystal (1998, p.181) argues that:

Just as metalinguistic skills in general require a stepping back, so too does language play...It therefore seems very likely that, the greater our ability to play with language, the more we will reinforce our general development of metalinguistic skills, and - ultimately - the more advanced will be our command of language as a whole...

However, Lisa and Simon appeared less confident, engaging in limited amount of talk on task revolving round what they had to do, and the names of creatures.

Group work with the teacher present took two directions: the teacher asked the group to clarify what they had to do; the teacher engaged in a one-to-one exchange with one group member. None of the other members contributed or were expected to contribute to the conversation between Peter and the teacher, even though Jem was occupied with the same work.

### 4.5.2 The Role of Worksheets

In this part of the session the teacher handed out three worksheets, which she had designed and which were aimed at three ability groups defined by their expected Level Descriptions in English: Level Three and below (see Appendix 4.18); Level Four (see Appendix 4.19), and Level 5 (see Appendix 4.20). The poem title and poet headed each worksheet, followed by the objective. As noted before, it was not clear how many of the children understood this objective, or related it to the task set, or whether having the objective written on the worksheet hindered or enhanced children's understanding in the context that it was being presented.

All three worksheets were strictly structured setting out work that was non-negotiable, with little opportunity to move beyond or even within the parameters set. They represented a disciplined step-by-step approach to giving the right answers, rather than a creative exercise in exploring language. They also seemed to be based on a structuralist approach, evidenced by the breakdown of the poems into bits for the Level Five pupils, the carefully structured approach to constructing a simile for Level Three pupils, the demystification of the poet Ted Hughes and themselves as authors, and a concentration on the processes and structures of the similes for Level Five and Four pupils.

There are many poetry books that discuss ideas on how to encourage children to write poetry and respond to it, but worksheets of this design are rarely mentioned (Benton and Fox, 1985; Hall, 1989; Andrews, 1991; Brownjohn, 1994; Sedgwick, 1997).

Though the use of worksheets might seem appropriate for those who have learning difficulties, on the grounds that they might need a more structured approach, in this case-study group it seemed to have varying effects on all the pupils, sometimes to the detriment of their independent powers of comprehension. An analysis of these responses are given in 4.6.3 Responses on Worksheets in the Role of the Poem 4.6.2.

### 4.5.3 The Role of the Poem

As this literary event continued pupils appeared to have little autonomy to engage with the poem: the teacher read bits, the teacher separated sections off from the main text, the teacher chose what the pupils did with those isolated sections.

In both the structure of the session and the expected verbal and written responses, there seemed to be an emphasis upon a structuralist interpretation of the poem. This was suggested by the intentions laid out in the worksheets, which required Level Five pupils to dissect the similes written by the poet, while Level Four pupils were expected to do the same to those they had written themselves, demystifying the poet and making explicit the systems and structures that govern meaning. So, by decontextualising the similes from the main body of the text, followed by little reference to the warm and the cold theme that weaves the images together, pupils' responses were less focused on the meaning, than how meaning was achieved. For Level Three pupils and below, meaning was explicitly stated as being secondary to completing the task:

TEACHER "You don't have to worry about you know, what meaning, you're just trying to um...use an animal and liken it to something else."

They were literally encouraged to fill in the missing spaces that the teacher had left on the worksheet, an activity which McClure (1995, p.125) suggests is 'counterproductive'.

All the tasks set on the worksheet seemed to distance the children from the poem as a whole, and there seemed no sense of encouraging a transaction between reader and text (Rosenblatt, 1978).

#### 4.5.4 The Third Period of Twenty Minutes in the NLS

In this third period the NLS states that pupils should spend approximately 20 minutes in guided group work, with the teacher apportioning time with at least one same-ability group a day, working with them on guided reading and writing. There has been considerable emphasis placed on structured ability grouping as a means to raising educational standards (Hallam, Ireson and Davies, 2004). Normally, all the pupils would have been in same ability grouping, but for the purposes of this research the case-study children were seated in mixed ability.

Work was linked to reading and writing, in as much as they had to read the worksheets to find out what they had to write, some pupils also had to read similes taken from the poem, while all had to re-read what they had written either in note form or complete, to ascertain whether it fulfilled the criteria. It could be suggested that the teacher had scaffolded work, according to the definition in the NLS (1998, p.8) 'by providing writing frames' in the form of the worksheets. As the lower-ability groups were given detailed verbal explanations, as well as written instructions, reading was given greater priority for the Level Four and Level Five children as they were given fewer details verbally, but more complex instructions and examples to read through. However, it appeared that initially all the case study children relied on listening and talking to gain information, rather than reading. Both Simon, and particularly Lisa were dependent on the others to verbally clarify what they had to do, while Peter and Jem started making lists of animals based on the instructions given to the other groups, while later relaying those same instructions back when the teacher asked them what they were supposed to be doing. Sarah seemed confident because she had already verbally repeated back what she had to do in the whole-class discussion, with Ben following the correct instructions too.

#### 4.5.5 Teaching and Learning Styles in the Third Twenty Minutes

In this third period of twenty minutes, it would appear that the main teaching style was teacher-driven. This was evidenced by the teacher spending a considerable length of time on explanations of tasks, which she then reinforced by getting pupils to repeat them back. This was done in both the open class discussion, and with the group of case-study children.

There was some class discussion, but again the teacher dominated, as she did with the small group discussion. Previously to the teacher intervening the group had been engaged in sharing the list of creatures they had generated, but she appeared to halt the flow of creativity by getting them to repeat back what they had to do again.

The use of worksheets took the children through prescribed steps by which the task would be fulfilled, with no apparent opportunity for children to negotiate or move beyond the work set on sheets. The similes were treated in isolation of each other, and of a complete poem, whether the children were being asked to make them up, or comment on the ones in "The Warm and the Cold", rendering context irrelevant. This was further evidenced by the teacher's comment to the lower ability groups that they did not have to worry about meaning when they made up their similes, and not to worry if they did not understand the words linked to the objective.

However, it could be suggested that this period of the session also had some characteristics of the resource-driven style defined in fig. 4.1. by Webster et al. (1996), given that learning was managed for them by the structure of the worksheets. It could also be argued though, that there were also elements of a child-driven style, given that time was given to pupils to working and discuss together in their groups. However, observations imply that this was not underpinned by a child-driven philosophy, as learning was so managed for them, and there was little encouragement given by the teacher for children to explore and discover language for themselves.

Also, the segregation of the ability groupings, represented by the format of the worksheets and the verbal explanations suggested that individuality was not a key factor when encouraging children's responses to poetry.

One of the possible consequences of learning through a teacher-driven style was that the case-study group apparently found it difficult to operate and engage successfully when the teacher withdrew her support and guidance. And when she did intervene it was not always clear where they were going, possibly due to lack of confidence and subject knowledge which created a pervasive anxiety about the poetry event, which pupils may have absorbed and, at times, reciprocated.

#### **4.6 Interaction between Teacher and Pupil in the Final Ten minutes**

The teacher began this part of the session by getting some feedback specifically from the Level 5 children on the work they have been doing in their groups. She then linked this back to the objective again.

TEACHER "What then, going back to this objective here, the point of the lesson, have we touched on something, a word? Some of you will know this. Have we touched on something that I touched on recently? Abigail?"

ABIGAIL "Ambiguity."

TEACHER "Ambiguity! What does that mean then? What does it mean if I'm being ambiguous, ambiguity? (Pause) Tony?"

TONY "It means that it can be read in more than one way."

TEACHER "Read in more than one way, interpreted different ways, a bit confusing. Is that intentional? Is that what Ted Hughes wanted? Did he want us to look, look at it in different ways? Ehren?"

EHREN "Yes, he want us to look at it in different ways cos of the way that he writes it."

TEACHER "Fantastic. And isn't that the beauty of poetry that you have your own way of looking at it, or some of you may have seen a different way, lots of different ways."

The teacher seemed to be suggesting that there are lots of different ways to look at poetry, but, for example, when discussing the simile 'And the badger in its bedding/Like a loaf in the oven' (see section 4.7. Teacher and Pupil Talk in Third Period of Twenty Minutes and Appendix 4.10), it appeared that most children had a common interpretation based on the text, which they occasionally expressed differently. As the teacher attempted to draw children's attention back to the objective and the role of ambiguity, it was not clear from either the whole class and group discussions, that "double meaning" had been discovered in this poem.

The teacher encouraged pupils to carry on working on their tasks, and came to help Lisa. What followed was a very difficult conversation (see Appendix 4.21 for full exchange).

LISA "I don't know what to put."

TEACHER "You're a bit stuck aren't you? (Pause) Right, do you know what you've got to do Lisa? What have you got to do?"

LISA "I've got, I've got to make similes from different animals."

TEACHER "Right."

LISA "Its, its got to be a warm or a cold."

TEACHER "That's, you've got nothing to worry, so you're just comparing an animal in somewhere in a situation to something else aren't you, like I've done some examples there."



Even though the teacher had been through the work Lisa had to do with the whole class, and despite the structured worksheet, she was still unsure as to what she had to do. She knew the terms to use, but did not understand their application. Their conversation together revealed a wide gulf between the adult and child, as Lisa appeared disengaged and overwhelmed when the teacher intervened. Lisa had found it difficult to understand the task she had been given, and this was further exasperated by the teacher's explanation: "...you're just comparing an animal in somewhere in a situation to something else". However, even though Lisa appeared to be struggling, she was still able to converse in the traditional question-answer pattern, and therefore fulfil the teacher's requirements.

TEACHER "What sort of things do you put in your bag?"

LISA "Er...bike keys."

TEACHER "Ahh, bike keys. That'll be a good one, because then, why does that work do you think? Cos we could write 'like, like bike keys in a bag'. Why would that work?"

LISA "Cos it would be like bike keys."

TEACHER "Exactly, yeh, exactly, and that would work and that's fine, that's a good one. There you go, do you want to write that one down straight away."

Wells (1995, p.135) suggests that 'By the time children have been in school for a few years, most have acquired the traditional ways of interacting. They are accustomed to being asked questions and giving the safe and correct answers-or the wrong ones'. So, even though Lisa was disengaged in the teaching and learning process, she was still able to survive by adopting a pattern of action that had the appearance, however superficial, of adult and child interacting in an educational setting. She did this by closely following the teacher's cues, and repeating back sections of speech the teacher had said. Despite the apparent lack of understanding

Lisa still had, the teacher left her and Lisa did not attempt to write any more similes.

Ben began sharing some of his work with the other pupils.

BEN "The calm shark swimming through the deep blue sea like a boiling sun in the sky'. (No response from others) Listen to this one, 'The sparrow, the sparrow's legs snapping in half when it falls out of the tree, like a twiglet crunching in someone's mouth"

SARAH "A twiglet!"

PETER "Yeah. Twiglet!"

BEN "Like a twiglet crunching in someone's mouth."

PETER "Who'd eat twigs?"

BEN "Could you do that, er? 'The sparrow's legs crunching like twigs under people's feet?"

PETER "I like the twiglets in people's mouths."

SARAH "Yeh, I do to."

BEN "Yeh, I know, but I changed it."

PETER "Yeh, you could do that."

BEN "Is that a bit too, Sarah, do you reckon this is too good? 'The sparrow's legs crunching like people walking on dry, soggy twigs'."

SARAH "You could put like on dry twigs, cos they're dried up."

BEN "The sparrow's legs crunching like people stepping on dry, dry leaves."

TEACHER "Alright." (To whole class)

PETER "Dry twigs cos of twiglets."

BEN "Yeh, I know."

When Ben received no response for his serious and creative attempt at a simile, he then shared a humorous one, with ridiculous and nonsensical imagery, which immediately incited laughter. Both Sarah and Peter were drawn to the use of the word 'twiglet' and the imagery it conjured up, and conversation sparked up around the second half of the simile. This began with an appreciation of the use of the word 'twiglet', followed by a deciphering of what each individual thought of when they heard that word. For Ben the word was used in reference to the snack known as 'Twiglets' as something you would eat, but for Peter the word meant a play on 'twig' causing him to ask 'Who'd eat twigs?'. Sarah was called on specifically by Ben to comment and advise on his simile, which she did by suggesting that contradictory adjectives such as 'dry, soggy twigs' were replaced with 'dry', to give meaning to the second part. However, the children did not discuss the first half of the simile, and the meaning of the 'sparrows legs snapping in half', which Ben then altered to 'The sparrow's legs crunching'. The meaning of the simile as a whole did not come under scrutiny, and description was given greater value. This was also represented in the other simile that Ben read out 'The calm shark swimming through the deep blue sea like a boiling sun in the sky'. On first reading this was beautiful and evocative imagery with the shark and the sun, but it was not clear why the sun was like the shark, for the shark was 'calm', and the sun was 'boiling', the shark was moving, the sun was still. So even though the language Ben used was imaginative and emotive, it lost its impact as a simile, because he had not employed the rules of this particular poetic device. What this exchange also revealed though is that while description was significant to Sarah, Ben, Peter and Jem, comedic wordplay had far greater appeal and value.

The teacher began to bring the lesson to a close.

TEACHER "Let me just put this up...I wonder if you can think, and it's from the Ted Hughes poem. Can you all see it, on the board here? I wonder then if you

can tell me, why I might have chosen to copy out this simile and relayed it to this objective here. 'Moonlight greeted the shaggy world like a mammoth of ice'. Who can be really poetic and clever and think about why I chose to write that out and how does it link with what we've been looking at this lesson? Okay, Jem, do you think you know?"

The teacher implied that to be poetic and clever was not necessarily linked to understanding the simile, but by the working out of how the teacher's choice of simile related to the objective.

JEM "The word mammoth could have two different meanings and comparing that to the..."

TEACHER "So the word 'mammoth' you think has got two meanings, because mammoth can mean big, huge whereas mammoth can also mean..."

JEM "The animal."

TEACHER "It's, it's extinct now isn't it, but the extinct animal [Her predisposition for technical accuracy just kills the enthusiasm]. Right. But how does that link with this objective, what we've been looking at?"

JEM "Ambiguity?"

TEACHER "Ambiguity. So what does that mean? So what, it's ambiguous? What does that mean? Can anyone take it a step further? It is ambiguous, you're right. So how does it relate to the objective, cos that's just one of the words there isn't it? Grace?"

GRACE "Its er...its about layers of meaning."

TEACHER "Layers of meaning. Are there layers of meaning in it? Peter?"

PETER "Um...mammoths have shaggy fur and it says the shaggy world so the mammoth's fur might be freezing like the world freezing."

TEACHER "Right. So mammoth of ice you could see as a mammoth, the extinct animal with shaggy hair, the mammoth of ice being frozen or...? Lisa?"

LISA "Does it mean that like um...a big part of the world's cold?"

TEACHER "Or it could mean that, mammoth being a big part. Excellent! So have we got more than one meaning here? So perhaps we've got what we call layers of meaning haven't we? We've managed to do that...I'll have a look at your work and see what you've done today to work out exactly what we're going to do um...in tomorrow's lesson, but eventually you yourselves will be writing a poem inspired by Ted Hughes, the late Ted Hughes." (Instructions follow to collect sheets in).

The teacher used questions to guide pupils in a pre-determined direction so she could return to the objective on the board, and relate what the Level Five group had been doing, to key phrases associated with the objective, 'figurative language' and 'ambiguity'. The reference to these phrases and trying to get children to explain what they were, had been left to the very last minutes of the session, although the teacher had been using those words throughout the poetry event. The explanation for 'figurative language' was quickly dealt with, as the teacher moved on to concentrate the whole class on the 'ambiguity' of one particular 'simile'. She chose a very difficult simile for the plenary, and hurriedly rounded off the lesson with what appeared to be a reinforcement activity.

The next poetry session did not occur until June, six months after this lesson, and the pupils never did get to write a poem inspired by Ted Hughes 'The Warm and the Cold'. McClure (1995, p. 119) suggests that 'When poetry is experienced in a vacuum, it loses its vitality and appeal to the reader'.

#### 4.6.1 The Role of the Poem

In this final period of time, the poem was returned to, but again was separated into discrete sections that allowed the teacher to reinforce the objective of the lesson. There seemed to be no reference to the poem as a whole, and the contrast of the warm and cold imagery, which wove the similes together. Wilson (2001, p.45) states:

A poem or a work of fiction has been conceived of as a whole...The relationship between each part adds something to the meaning of the whole...It is for this reason that it is unfair to the story writer or poet to take a section of text and study it without also seeing it in its context...As we become more familiar with a writer's or a painter's work, we can appreciate a detail seen in isolation, because we have in our minds our knowledge of the rest of the text on which to draw.

In fairness, the teacher had focused on this poem the day before, mentioning that they had looked at some of the similes then. Even so, no opportunity was given to hear the whole poem, or to refer to it as a complete work in this session. Rather, the poem appeared to be treated as an object to serve the purpose of the objective, broken down to illustrate a particular point, rather than embraced as piece of art to be explored and enjoyed.

Hall (1989, p.60) suggests that using poetry for other ends is an 'exploitative approach', which:

reduces imaginative literature with all its potential emotional and intellectual benefits to an arid functionalism...This exploitation of poetry simply mirrors and reinforces the values of the commercially exploitative world that exists outside the school gates.

Although this might seem an exaggeration, Shor and Freire (1987) make the point that education reinforces societal norms, and this exploitativeness was not

only seen in the treatment of the poem, but also with pupils. For example, at difficult points in the session, those who were considered to be more intelligent were used to provide answers to complicated questions. This gave the appearance that the class had understood the work, which was not always accurate. Also, pupils were not asked to share their own work, but were instrumental in expounding the different points relating to the objective.

#### 4.6.2 Response on Worksheets

All the case-study children completed some work on the worksheets, apart from Ben and Peter. I was able to photocopy Ben's whiteboard, but unfortunately Peter rubbed his notes off before the teacher or myself were able to look at it. Before he did, though, I had observed that he had attempted both the first and the second simile.

Jem's responses on the worksheet (see Appendix 4.22) were limited for a Level Five student. In the English Level Descriptions of the National Curriculum (1999, p.7) Jem's writing would be expected to be 'varied and interesting, conveying meaning clearly...Vocabulary choices are imaginative'. However, in the description of the first simile there is a repetition of 'warm and settled', and it is used to describe both the badger and the loaf, resulting in the meaning having less credibility through its application to them both. In the second interpretation of the simile, Jem forgets to write about why Ted Hughes has written in this way, and simply states how each 'fits exactly' into its particular casing. Because this simile is more difficult to understand, and there has been no chance to discuss it as in the previous simile, Jem may have felt unable to take a more abstract approach in writing about the poet's intentions. Again, there is repetition, and there is no development of the imagery presented, nor has Jem included any ideas discussed by the teacher and Peter. The final simile is not attempted.

Lisa's written responses are confined to just one attempt (see Appendix 4.23). On the surface it appears to be an effective simile, and if the writing had been read out of context of the session, it could be suggested that Lisa had written clearly and imaginatively, and had adopted the appropriate style, with words chosen for variety and interest (DfEE, 1999b, p.7). However, the exchange that went on between Lisa and the teacher demonstrates that Lisa did not really understand what she was writing, and that the teacher heavily orchestrated the answer.

In contrast to the rest of the group, Simon (see Appendix 4.24), at Level Three, wrote more, choosing to compare a variety of creatures and situations. Even though there seems to be little meaning in the similes, in that there is no immediate commonality evident in the descriptive imagery between the object and its comparison, he has in fact done exactly what the teacher has asked him to do.

Ben wrote just two similes on his whiteboard (see Appendix 4.25), but did not attempt to describe why he wrote what he did. At Level Four, Ben should be writing in a 'lively and thoughtful way' where 'Vocabulary choices are often adventurous and words are used for effect' (DfEE, 1999b, p.7). Ben demonstrated this in both of the similes he created, though in the second one he needed to think more carefully about the shark and its comparison to the sun. The first simile had greater effect, and this was probably due to the fact that Ben had closely followed and modelled the teacher's example. The sparrow simile was never committed to the whiteboard, although Ben used it to generate laughter from the rest of the group, revealing that he had an understanding of the power of words to evoke both drama and humour.

Sarah's work (see Appendix 4.26) was effective, thoughtful and adventurous, and fulfilled all the criteria that the teacher had set. It embraced the concept of warmth, and conveyed this effect to the reader. She was also able to explain her thought processes in combining one image with another.



### 4.6.3 The NLS

The final part of the literacy hour is entitled the plenary session, where the whole-class is expected to be brought together to review and reflect, and the teacher can consolidate pertinent teaching points, and give pupils opportunity to present work (see Appendix 4.27).

In the plenary of this poetry event the teacher began by asking some of the Level Five children to share their work. She then used this work to re-emphasise the teaching point that was part of the objective: the meaning of the word ambiguity and how Ted Hughes created ambiguity, or different meanings in his similes. She partly clarified and developed the objective at a whole class level, but it was not clear how many of the class had understood, especially those at Level Three and below. For example, when the teacher worked with Lisa on an individual level, even though it became apparent that she was having real difficulty, the teacher walked away without resolving this.

Constructive criticism and feedback was restricted by the desire to use every pupils' answer to reflect back to the objective. Though it could be argued that this was desirable in keeping the teaching points central to the lesson, it equally could be suggested that it limited creativity and did not allow children to develop their ideas. Further, since quite a large proportion of the class had not worked on work directly linked to the objective, this meant that what they had done was almost superfluous to the objective.

Finally, the teacher did not really provide opportunities for the children to present their work, rather work was monitored or assessed according to whether it linked to what the teacher wanted to talk about next.

#### 4.6.4 Teaching and Learning Styles in the Final Ten Minutes

This final section had a variety of groupings in it: whole class work; independent group work; teacher working with member of group. However, in both the whole class discussion and the time that the teacher spent with Lisa, the teacher was very much in control and led the children down specific paths that she wanted them to go on, even when it was apparent that they had not understood, as in Lisa's case. This lesson was driven by the teacher's desire to cover the objective in the NLS using a particular poem, 'The Warm and the Cold'. It could be suggested that this was adhered to so rigidly, that at times it became apparent that meaning did not necessarily matter.

Finally, the feedback time at the end conformed in the main to the 'recitation script' with the teacher testing the pupils to see if they had understood the objective. Again there was no evidence of pupil self-selection; the teacher addressed the questions to the pupils and the response from the pupils was fed back to the teacher.

### 4.7 Recurring Themes in Other Literary Events

In analysing the first literary event it became apparent that two broad categories were emerging under which recurring themes could be identified and situated in the other events, so building up a thick descriptive profile in each of these two areas. They were pedagogy and subject knowledge: the first related specifically to the teaching style adopted and the way this was enacted through teacher and pupil interaction; the second related to the way in which poetry was taught and considered the role of the poem in the event and the effect of this on pupil and teacher.

Literary events two to five are briefly summarised, before repeated patterns of action are highlighted from all five sessions.

In literary event two the teacher introduced the haiku by reading some examples,

and asking pupils to comment on the imagery created by the choice of words and the rhythm. Pupils then worked individually on differentiated worksheets, explaining the imagery present in lines taken from a haiku.

In literary event three the teacher modelled a haiku, and then pupils wrote haikus while looking at pictures from the rainforest and listening to music.

The fourth literary event began with the teacher and pupils sitting outside and writing a haiku inspired by the sights and sounds around them. They then typed up their poems on the computer.

In the final event the teacher handed out paper with four titles on it: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. Pupils were encouraged to write a haiku under each title, inspired by each season.

#### **4.7.1 Pedagogy**

##### **The Balance of Power**

Throughout the five sessions the majority of time was heavily teacher-directed. This was demonstrated in the teacher dominating much of the time with her own talk, where she gave lengthy instructions and explanations that were tightly defined (see Appendix 4.28), and this was reinforced by very structured worksheets that designated a set pattern of work aimed at levels five, four and three and below. There appeared to be no room given for children to move beyond designated boundaries of their ability as dictated by the worksheets, and no negotiation over tasks. She was very insistent on having her own way in how the activities should be approached. This was particularly apparent in Session three when the teacher had set pupils the task of writing a haiku to music. This was a lovely moment as there was a heightened sense of creativity and purpose, until the teacher switched off the music to reinforce a point she had made earlier:

TEACHER "Right, I have got to say something. No matter how many times I say

it, I see people doing all this (mimics counting on fingers)...with their, with their fingers. Did I, did I demonstrate that up there? Did I go 'Oh, there's one word that doesn't fit in?' If you're doing that it defeats the whole object of poetry. 'Oh, I couldn't find a word that fits in'. It should not be like that! I didn't do that up there! I didn't think 'Ooh, I've got find a word with three syllables that fits in'. If you're doing that you're doing it incorrectly cos poetry shouldn't be like that to start off with. We can polish it, at the end, but it should become like that, just three lines...then, if we want to polish it to fit in with Master Basho's seventeen syllables, we can work on that, but to start off with do not worry about that because it's wrong!"

In all sessions observed the teacher kept tight control in negotiation and structure of tasks, physical movement, and verbal interaction.

### **Relating the Work to Children's Previous Experiences**

Whenever the teacher referred to children's previous experiences it was within the context of school knowledge. Even this was quite narrow though, for apart from referring to knowledge of language that they might have come across in previous years or sessions in literary event one, such knowledge was never referred to again. The following sessions all based around the haiku were self-contained in that knowledge from the one session was recapped at the next (see Appendix 4.29). This gave the impression of knowledge being isolated from the rest of children's experiences outside of school, and because the teacher did not highlight poetic features such as similes, assonance and metaphors as she indicated she would in the literacy planner (see Appendix 4.30) this served to accentuate the isolation of the haiku from other forms of poetry studied. There was little sense of progression or development of knowledge and it gave the impression that knowledge was dealt with as separate constructs, one unrelated to the next, and, if they were alluded to, as in session one,

it was never explored as to what constructs pupils had.

### **The Role of Ability**

Ability played a significant role in the structure of the poetry sessions. In session Two it was revealed by the teacher that she had labels for the different levels. 'Table One and Two' were Level Three and Below 'the in-betweenies' were Level Four and 'the others' were Level Five. Tasks were consistently divided between these groups, and there were no opportunities to move between levels, in fact the teacher was most insistent that pupils only did the work that they were set. In session two this was set out on worksheets (see Appendix 4.31), in session three this was set out on a criteria checklist where the more intelligent you were deemed the more features you were expected to include in your haiku (see Appendix 4.32), in session four the same applied. In session Five, however, all the class were given the same sheet of headings on which to write their haikus (see Appendix 4.33).

Overall, there was very little opportunity, for pupils at any level to demonstrate resourcefulness, initiative, and to take ownership and make decisions about their work. However, Level Five pupils were treated with greater respect and authority in the classroom, particularly during class discussions, often be called upon to provide the 'correct answers' to difficult and open discussions.

### **Play With Language**

In sessions two to five there seemed to be no opportunity given for pupils to play with language, and none was witnessed, as in the first session. This could have been attributed to the teacher taking greater control of language during the latter sessions. Whereas, in the first session children had been encouraged to work in groups, in sessions two to five there was no encouragement to do the same. Work was given out independently, and often designated into specific ability categories,

and this seemed to have had an impact on group interaction. Some of the writing on haikus was also done in silence, and, though this seemed appropriate at the time, it may have been valuable for children to have the opportunity to share amongst themselves, rather than just between the teacher and whole class. This would have given children time and space to savour and play with the language, and taken back some of the control from the teacher, for it was she who presented and retold poems to the class. But perhaps, most importantly, there seemed a lack of enjoyment in the classroom. The teacher demonstrated anxiety over writing, which was particularly evident when she modelled a haiku (see Appendix 4.34), and her predisposition for accuracy in her own verbal interactions with the children suggested that they had to be precise in the way they responded to her questions. She never joked or laughed with pupils, and certainly did not encourage them to do the same between themselves. In many ways then the classroom atmosphere was not conducive to play with language, and language appeared to be something that was functional, to be used to get the task done with what appeared to be the minimum of enjoyment inside the literacy hour.

### **Lesson Plans**

During the five literary events observed, the teacher said she did not follow a written plan either for the day or the week. She said this was normal practice, and yet even though there was no plan, there seemed to be a strict structure to each session, and progression, particularly from sessions two to four as the teacher taught about haikus. When I pressed the teacher for term plans after I had observed the sessions, she eventually sent through a detailed timetable for the week in which the haikus had taken place (see Appendix 4.28), although there was none sent through for the work done on Ted Hughes' poetry. The structure for the planning highlighted some aspects of concern.

The structure of the plan for each session appeared to conform to the traditional three-form pattern of lessons before the NLS, with three sections whole class, pupil tasks and plenary, as guided reading was separated from the main body of the literary event. This would suggest that the teacher did not conform to the literacy hour framework, and yet in the main the sessions observed did. This suggests that there was an inconsistency between the plan and practice.

The children were separated clearly into ability groups, which were labelled 'BA', 'A' and 'AA' - 'Below Average', 'Average', 'Above Average'. Work was differentiated between each group, further accentuated by worksheets, and there was no opportunity for children to cross between ability labels, apart from the last day when the teacher gave all children the opportunity to write haikus for all the seasons. Simon, classed as being Below Average, demonstrated that he was perfectly able to do the work set.

#### **4.7.2 Subject Knowledge**

##### **Subject Knowledge**

Though the teacher used the appropriate words relating to the haiku in sessions two to five, she demonstrated a lack of confidence in the subject knowledge in a number of ways. Firstly, four sessions were conducted in a row on the same objective, with the latter three sessions spent writing haikus, which culminated in a feeling of stagnancy and writing for writing's sake rather than for creativity's sake. There were two instances where the writing felt fluent and creative; when the teacher played music and put images of the rainforest up as a stimulus in session three, and when the class went outside and wrote haikus in the school grounds, in session four. But these times were relatively short compared with the amount of time the teacher spent on explaining the haiku, and in the final session getting children to write a haiku for each season, with merely the titles 'Spring', 'Summer', 'Autumn'

and 'Winter' as the stimulus.

She also showed considerable anxiety over her own creative ability evident particularly in event three where the teacher modelled a haiku for the class (for full extract see Appendix 4.34).

TEACHER "Now can I say something for me doing this, I don't think I've ever written a haiku before. I don't think I'm going to be able to write it straight away...I've never written one before. I hope I will improve during the week as you will, I hope...I'm going to say something 'An agreeable pair'. Agreeable, how do you spell that? Agree...I'm not too sure about that spelling, so I'll have to check that one. I think it's like that, but I'm going to have to check that."

She presented the writing of a haiku as a technical exercise, using the checklist as the guide to what she would put in, rather than her response to the images of nature she had on the overhead projector. She also drew considerable attention to her worry about spelling of a word, rather than just asking one of the children to look it up in a dictionary after she had finished discussing the creative ideas. Her finished haiku 'Rising bark, rough and sweet, fragile leaves falling; An agreeable pair' wasn't particularly effective either with the 'rough and sweet' suggesting opposing imagery, and the last statement seeming to be separate, rather than binding the whole picture together. Finally, as part of fulfilling the checklist the teacher asked children what season was suggested by her haiku to which they answered autumn citing the 'falling leaves'. However, as the pictures that the teacher used for stimulus were from the rainforest, where there are no temperate seasons, it seemed that the pictures were only functional in providing the nature stimulus in order that the haiku could be written to fulfil the checklist. The poem then, did not seem to have been written as a genuine response to what had been seen, but in response to what was required.



Lack of subject knowledge was also demonstrated in the teacher's opening session on the haiku where she asked children to explain, on worksheets, the meanings of certain haikus. In particular, the Level Five pupils misunderstood what the teacher was asking them to do.

TEACHER "I've written a few haikus down. Some of them are images created and some of them are explanations, but you decide in the form of a haiku. You've got to read through and write image beside it, if you think think 'Yeh that's definitely describing an image' or explanation, and as I've said on the sheet you need to describe what the others are doing, what the images are capturing, what did you see happening here. Alright?"

JEM "Do we have to write an image for everyone?"

TEACHER "No, not for the explanation one because you won't have an image created there. Alright? What's the difference then between an image and an explanation? Master Basho would be appalled if he read an explanation. He wants nature, images created. Alright?"

The teacher subconsciously misled children when she suggested that an image would not be created in your mind, if it was an explanation. This is contrary to the belief that a reader brings many things to a text, and that it cannot be read objectively without some associative imagery being brought up in response to what is being read (Rosenblatt, 1978). This was reflected in the conversation between Peter and Jem.

PETER "Do you get how to do this? How do you change them?"

JEM "You've got to write image or explanation by it."

PETER "I know that part, but I don't know what's the difference. They're all the same."

JEM "If you get a picture in your head, when you read it, if you get a picture in your head it's an image, if you don't it's an explanation."

PETER "Yeh, but what if you get a picture for all of them?"

JEM "Then they're all image."

In feedback time, the teacher acknowledged that many of the Level Five pupils had had difficulty understanding the nature of the task.

### Meaning

Finally, by constantly drawing children back to the checklist the teacher highlighted criteria which she felt was central to composing a haiku, but in discussing the meaning of a haiku she made a serious error. In the following extract the teacher, introduced a haiku by Matsuo Basho by stating:

TEACHER "Master Basho said it's up to you what you think because you could all see different things, you could all see different images...I'll read it through 'Summer end nears: Now slow bee allows stroking of fur'. Don't worry about, don't worry about what it means, you only want a picture or an image...there's no right or wrong"

The idea that a picture or image can be generated without it being related to some conception of the meaning of the words seems untenable. Though the teacher emphasised the value of different interpretations, she responded more positively to a pupil's comment when she felt it matched her thoughts.

JEM "When it says um 'Crow follows crow' it could be like a long stretch between them."

TEACHER "It could be like a long stretch. Or maybe, could it be anything else?"

OLIVIA "I think it could be where the crow is flying slowly."

TEACHER “Brilliant! That’s how I see it actually. I was going very slowly, crows”

In discussing pupils’ haikus, the criteria on the checklist were discussed in terms of what had or had not been included, but meaning was never highlighted which led to contradictory images as exemplified in Ben’s written haiku (set out as Ben wrote it) in session five.

Parrots follow parrots  
Daffodils sway in the sun  
As sweet smelling leaves fruits fall

The teacher wrote: ‘Don’t worry about the haiku being perfect to begin with. You may need to write the same one 3 times!’, but did not highlight the mixture of seasons that were being suggested nor the unlikelyhood of finding daffodils and parrots in the same place.

This concludes the analysis of the sessions observed at Chadwick School.

## **4.8 Introduction to the Analysis at St.Alban’s School**

In the second part of this chapter the first literary event of St. Albans was chosen for detailed analysis as it highlighted themes based on subject knowledge and pedagogical style that were of concern in this study, and comparable to the literary event observed at Chadwick. Recurring themes in all five sessions are examined at the end of the first event.

## **4.9 Teaching and Learning Poetry in St. Albans School**

The first literary event at St. Albans school took place on the 2nd July 2001. Though this was towards the latter end of the school year, the teacher claimed that this was

the first opportunity she had had to teach poetry, due to the combined pressure of an Ofsted inspection in early spring, and the preparation of pupils for SATs.

This school was selected on the basis that pupils attending were from homes of predominantly low socio-economic status, presenting a contrast with Chadwick school, and providing opportunity to examine any emerging links between class, expectation and achievement (see 3.4.1). As noted previously, the research participants were chosen to fulfil specific criteria such as gender, level descriptions and age (see 3.4.5 and 3.4.6), however, the design had to be flexible to incorporate individual differences between each school. As St. Albans had a smaller intake of children than Chadwick, year classes were combined for economical reasons, therefore, the class observed were a mixture of Y6 and Y5 pupils, though all case-study children were in their final year of school. The children were originally to include a boy and a girl at each of the Levels 3, 4, and 5, but because there were no children considered to be of Level 5 description, children were selected from Levels 2, 3 and 4. These consisted of Joshua and Hannah at Level 2, Jeremy and Julia at Level 3 and Nia and Andy at Level 4. Finally, the teacher was a non-specialist in English.

The focus of the session was:

- To understand and use prepositions; to write poetry from own experiences

The teacher had chosen a poem by David Orme (2001) (see Appendix 4.35) who had written this poem as part of a selection of resources for teachers to use in the classroom. A brief lesson plan had been produced as part of a weekly document for the Literacy Hour (see Appendix 4.36), upon which the following learning objectives for the week had been written:

- To explore the structure of a variety of poems
- To develop use and understanding of prepositions

- To use own personal/emotional experiences when writing poetry

In the classroom there was a small library, but this did not contain any poetry books as they were all kept in the main library area. However, there was a display board where pupils had written poetry around the theme of 'What makes me angry?'.

As in the session from Chadwick school, speech was split into designated sections whereby teacher and pupils used cues to indicate the closure or opening of a subject area. These were approximate to the time slices detailed in the literacy hour, although content was not always literal to that in the NLS.

The following analysis concerns the first fifteen minutes of data in this literary event.

#### **4.10 Interaction Between Teacher and Pupil in First Fifteen Minutes**

At 11:15 a.m. the children came in from the playground and immediately sat in an informal group on the floor around the teacher, who was seated on a low chair, with a small white board to her side on which to write. The teacher began with a short introduction to the session (see Appendix 4.37), where it was announced that they would be looking at a poem, and at their word level work. These were presented as two separate categories, so it was unclear at this point how the two were to be related. She then immediately proceeded to talk about the word 'preposition', which was highlighted in the written objective on the board. Pupils were swiftly included in working through what the word meant, firstly through verbal explanation, then through practical application.

TEACHER "Okay, it tells me where things are, okay so let's have an example. Grace, stand up. (Grace comes and stands by the teacher who places the pen lid to illustrate the point). Right, where is the pen lid?"

JOSHUA "On her head."

TEACHER "Okay. One word that describes the pen lid's position?"

SHARON "On top."

TEACHER "On top. Okay, can you think of another one?"

The teacher proceeded at a swift pace, encouraging them to think and respond to the rapid change of pen position, the change of child to illustrate the pen's position, and the direction of the questions (see Appendix 4.38). The teacher's questions, both literal "Where is the pen lid?" and abstract "What is the opposite to above?" served to make the children think, and the teacher linked back naturally to the term 'preposition', rooting the activity in the objective 'To understand prepositions'.

In this introductory section, the teacher included a range of pupils, both in providing answers and physically illustrating the position of the pen lid. The children looked excited and interested and the majority of the class eagerly put their hands up. The informal seating, fast-paced introduction, and the inclusion of pupils seemed to create a heightened atmosphere of expectation, and it was at this point that the poem was introduced.

TEACHER "Okay, let's have a look at our poem today. As we read our poem I want to think about where the prepositions are and how they've been used in the poem. It's called 'In the garden'. Oh, can you take the clip off the side for me. You can put it back on now. Good. Right, okay, let's see if we can spot the prepositions. Who's going to read the first verse for me? Katy?"

KATY "Under a cold damp stone, A...a"

ANDY "A thoughtful frog."

KATY "A thoughtful frog, dreams of rainy days to come."

TEACHER "Okay, now altogether for the second one please."

CLASS "Behind the old shed, a family of hedgehogs, is dressed in autumn leaves."

TEACHER "Greg."

GREG "In, in compost heap, a thousand beetles, build a mighty city."

TEACHER "Everyone."

CLASS "Over the rooftop, the bonfire sparks, spread like bright seeds."

TEACHER "Okay."

The teacher encouraged the class to share the poem, both individually and corporately. Even when Katy struggled with the words she was treated sensitively and was able to continue with the support of another pupil, without the teacher taking overt control over the situation. It has been suggested that opportunities such as this for peer assistance can contribute to academic achievements for the students involved (Greenwood, Carta and Hall, 1988; Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, and Simmons, 1997).

The teacher then encouraged pupils to identify the prepositions in the poem, and they were allowed to come up to the front and underline them. She then continued by asking pupils about the structure and stylistic features present in the poem (see Appendix 4.39). A pupil outlined the structure of the poem in three steps, which the teacher asked her to repeat. In doing this the teacher drew the class's attention to the point that not all the verses were about creatures. She allowed children to express initial mistaken opinions about this, which other children then countered by pointing to evidence in the poem.

ABBY "The second line describes what it is."

TEACHER "The creature?"

ABBY "Yeah."

TEACHER "Was it always a creature?"

Some children say 'Yes' while others point to verse three, about the bonfire.

TEACHER "So it's what's in the garden we're looking at."

The teacher then asked for pupils' opinions about the poem. When Andy responded with "It's too plain", the teacher attempted to open up the discussion to see if Andy's statement was justified, by asking the children to think of plainer adjectives than "thoughtful" (see Appendix 4.40). In this way the teacher suggested that the session was open to negotiation, that pupils could influence the direction of the discussion, as it appeared that Andy's comments had (Presland, 1996). However, the teacher demonstrated that she was still in control, for even though the children thought of very dull and unimaginative adjectives, the teacher insisted that there was one that was the most boring - the one she had thought of. The children eventually guessed when the teacher practically spelt it out for them. She allowed children to continue with their contributions, elaborating occasionally on their ideas, which the children greatly appreciated. The teacher then moved on to ask the pupils to consider more creative adjectives. Suggestions followed, which the teacher sometimes embellished much to the class's amusement.

SAM "A monotone frog."

TEACHER "A monotone frog! Oh, I like that. Rebbit. (mimics frogs sound in a monotone voice and the class laugh)

A pupil then suggested "a peaceful frog" and the teacher decided to develop this idea in relation to the original poem. She read out a section of the poem describing the thoughtful frog, and related this to the new word they were focused upon now, so scaffolding children's thoughts and ideas. Such an approach encouraged children to relate previous knowledge to new constructs, and use that to develop related concepts (Vosniadou, 1992). However, the thread of the discussion, which had begun as a result of justifying Andy's argument that the poem was too plain, seemed to



have been lost, and this part of the session seemed slightly disjointed. Pupils were then encouraged to attempt to contribute ideas to develop the idea of the “peaceful frog”.

JEREMY “A peaceful scene.”

TEACHER “A peace...yeah that’s a bit obvious, think of another one. A peaceful frog dreams of?”

ANDY “A new wife.”

(Class laughs)

TEACHER “What, get rid of the other one?”

ANDY “Yeah.”

TEACHER “Okay.”

These first attempts were not very successful in developing imagery based on the word ‘peaceful’. While Jeremy’s answer was perhaps obvious and repetitive, the teacher could have asked him to describe a peaceful scene using different vocabulary. Instead, she moved onto Andy who contributed an idea which was not particularly appropriate, but which made the class laugh, and gained a further humorous response from the teacher. The teacher moved swiftly onto the next idea rather than continuing with the idea of ‘the peaceful frog’ and exploring different responses. She could perhaps have engaged the class in personal association with a discussion about what peace meant to them. There followed a more successful exploration of which showed signs of children building and developing ideas together.

The teacher asked the class to think about another word, but immediately picked the word “romantic” which she had initially suggested (see Appendix 4.41). The structure of this discourse was one of a number of examples where choice and partnership were implied, but control of material and direction of conversation was firmly embedded in the teacher’s control.

After discussing ideas generated by the word “romantic” the pupils were then encouraged to think about another adjective.

BOY “An obsessed frog.”

TEACHER “An obsessed frog. What would an obsessed frog be like?”

BOY “Obsessed with thinking.”

TEACHER “Err...what in your mind is your frog obsessed with?”

JEREMY “Collecting things.”

TEACHER “Right, okay, so an obsessed frog dreams of...?”

JOSHUA “Collecting things.”

TEACHER “You won’t have collecting things, would you?”

JEREMY “His collection.”

TEACHER “Right, so an obsessed frog dreams of his collection of...?”

JEREMY “Money.”

TEACHER “Right, very good.”

Though the children were coming up with ideas, they seemed to be random and unrelated to the character or life of a frog. For poetry to be effective on such a subject as this, I suggest that there needs to be some resonance and relationship between the literal frog and the imagery and fantasy that is being created, as represented in the line of the poem ‘Under a cold, damp stone, A thoughtful frog, Dreams of rainy days to come’.

The teacher encouraged personal preferences.

TEACHER “What about the hedgehog? A family of Hedgehogs, Is dressed in autumn leaves. Like that one?”

Mixture of responses from class: “Yes” “No” “Boring.”

TEACHER "You don't like that one?"

BOY "I don't like that one."

She also stimulated children to think about the poet's intentions in writing and the meaning of the descriptive imagery.

TEACHER "A thousand beetles, Build a mighty city. Oh, what would the city actually look like?"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Big. Ginormous."

TEACHER "Would it? Is that what this poet means? Is it going to be this huge building that's sort of going to take over 'our school' (name removed to preserve anonymity)?"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "No."

TEACHER "Nia?"

NIA "It would just be like a load of leaves."

TEACHER "Right, it would just be little, so what's the poet trying to say then?"

NIA "To the beetles it's huge."

TEACHER "Right, to the beetles it's huge."

She switched between the perceptions of the subjects in the poem, and what the poet meant, so encouraging engagement with the poem on a multidimensional level.

The teacher ended this part of the session by referring children to the use of similes in the last stanza (Appendix 4.42).

#### 4.10.1 The Role of the Poem

Though the teacher introduced the lesson by saying that they were going to look at poetry, she began with 'word level work' on prepositions. In presenting the

poem to the class after this it became apparent that the poem was secondary to the preposition work, and that it was being used as a vehicle to teach and develop understanding of prepositions. This was reflected in the moment where the class read the poem together, and then the teacher immediately asked children to underline the prepositions. The poem then became the stimulus for encouraging discussion of their own ideas, and this was reflected in the nature of the questions and answers given by teacher and pupils.

The discussion in this first fifteen minutes appeared to be split into four different areas; work on prepositions, identifying prepositions in the chosen poem, brief discussion on the structure and theme of the poem, and a lengthy discussion of their choices of adjectives with development of some of these into poetical stanzas. However, as pupils moved to discuss their own stanzas, ideas became disjointed from a main theme, such as the season in the autumnal poem they had read. This led to a disjointed feel to their ideas which is apparent when comparing a line from the poem:

“A thoughtful frog, Dreams of rainy days to come”

With that of the collective class response:

“A lonely frog, Longs for a best friend”

While the collective class response is expressive and words had been chosen carefully, it seemed to lack any coherence because it was not rooted in a thematic structure, which essentially binds poetical expression and ideas together. So while the poem had been discussed briefly and important features had been identified such as structure of content, subject, pattern and choice of vocabulary, their ideas had been discussed and applied without reference to an overall pattern or theme.

This would suggest that in relation to the literary theoretical framework outlined in fig.4.2, the approach to the poem is based on a structuralist perspective,

whereby meaning is secondary to structure and poetical features and style (Buchbinder, 1991). Also, the implication that pupils can question a poet's choice of words serves to demystify the author, another pertinent characteristic of a structuralist approach.

#### **4.10.2 Case Study Children**

In the first period of fifteen minutes, all case study children entered individually into the discussion, apart from Julia, who often responded with the cooperative group, as in laughing at an idea.

It became apparent that the case study boys, Jeremy, Andy and Joshua responded more than the girls. They sat themselves close to the teacher and the board on which she was writing, so that they had a prominent position when she looked for pupils to answer questions. Julia and Hannah sat in the middle of the group, while Nia sat towards the back.

All case study children seemed interested in the discussion and involved, even if they were not verbally contributing. The putting up of hands to respond individually or corporately evidenced this, as did laughing at what others said, and the eagerness reflected in body language such as Joshua and Andy, who frequently kneeled in order to stretch up and gain an advantage in height when trying to attract the teacher's attention. This seemed to work to have the desired effect, for they were asked a significant proportion of the questions.

#### **4.10.3 First Fifteen Minutes of the NLS**

In the first fifteen minutes the teacher taught prepositions from Year 6 term 1 (NLS, 1998, p. 50), which she then related to a common text. There was evidence of both the teacher and pupil supporting less able readers, and encouraging all children to participate in reading the poem. This came about by giving opportunity for

individual readings of particular stanzas as well as whole class readings, so developing confidence. By handing over the reading of the poem to the class and allowing another pupil to support an individual who struggled over a line in the poem, the teacher encouraged autonomy, self-sufficiency and support.

Her objective for the session was loosely taken from the NLS, from a point of grammatical awareness in Year 6, Term 1 of sentence level work (NLS, 1998, p.50):

Pupils should be taught:

Grammatical awareness

- The different word classes, e.g. prepositions

However, it was not taken literally from the NLS and was influenced by the teacher's own ideas. There was no reference in Year 6 work to children writing poetry from their own experience, so this was an addition by the teacher. In writing the objective up on the board for the class the teacher had also adapted the language of the NLS, making it more accessible to the pupils.

Many of the elements of successful teaching as laid out in the NLS (1998, p.8) were present in this first period of time. It was discursive, and there were some instances of good quality oral work, such as in the discussion of the structure.

It was highly interactive, as reflected by the number of questions asked and responses given, although many of those responses were lower-order, and there was a fast pace to the discussion. However, sometimes the unrelenting pace disadvantaged children who could not think quickly enough, for the teacher would move swiftly on. The teacher seemed both confident in her ability to handle the material and the children's responses, allowing them to make literary judgements and express a variety of new ideas. This first section of discussion could also be described as ambitious, as at times the teacher encouraged children to think of better words that they could use in the poem.

In considering the statement ‘shared text work’ there was evidence of the teacher sharing her ideas, yet also giving pupils opportunity to share theirs. For example, the teacher still allowed pupils to share their own words, while reminding them that she too had a word that she wanted them to guess.

The teacher used a wide range of teaching strategies in a successful way, which engaged and motivated the class as a whole. The strategies included in this lesson were direction, scaffolding, questioning, initiating and guiding exploration, investigating ideas, discussing and arguing and listening to and responding. Some of these strategies, such as arguing about a point, were not followed up as successfully as some other teaching strategies employed, such as in discussing Andy’s point about the adjective “thoughtful” being too plain.

#### **4.10.4 Teaching and Learning Styles in the First Fifteen minutes**

By comparing this first fifteen minutes with the Webster et al. model (1996) (see fig. 4.2) it was evident that there was much that was comparable with the learning-driven style. Though the teacher maintained control over the structure, pupils were given significant opportunity to engage in dialogue, sometimes influencing and changing the direction of the conversation. Pupils worked together with the teacher to construct ideas and generate others, with evidence of some scaffolding by the teacher (see Appendix 4.43).

In this time segment there had been a feeling of enjoyment, a sharing of ideas and a development of them together. However, the teacher’s comment ‘Any more for me?’ served as a reminder that she was in control and taking the conversation where she intended it to go.

However, there were some interesting passages in this period of teacher-pupil interaction, where the teacher did not ask any questions, but merely repeated each pupil’s answer, while another responded with a fresh idea (see Appendix 4.44).

And at points the teacher also allowed children to work through their ideas, only intervening to give support and guidance, which pupils responded to and utilised (see Appendix 4.45).

#### 4.11 Interaction Between Teacher and Pupil

The teacher moved into the second part of the session by swiftly introducing the next task, in which they were to write their own garden poem (see Appendix 4.46). The teacher explained why writing poetry from their own experience was easier than generating ideas from their imagination, and then attempted to disperse any anxieties that children might be feeling by making a joke. She also tried to include those that may not have had a garden by widening the focus to parks. Research suggests that relating school knowledge to the body of knowledge children bring into the classroom is an effective way of building bridges between the two domains, so encouraging a more holistic approach to teaching and learning (Rogoff and Lave, 1984; Newman, Griffin and Cole, 1989).

She began by asking children to tell her what kind of creatures inhabited their gardens. She responded positively to their suggestions, and then changed the focus to inanimate objects they might find there as well. After some suggestions of non-living things such as swings and bird table, the teacher explicitly linked their ideas to that of the 'Autumn' poem, by including pupils in writing a class poem. The children suggested ideas but the teacher indicated on several occasions that preferential treatment would be given to the ideas she liked, and others rejected on that basis. This seemed to suggest that the children's role was to provide ideas, ideas that fundamentally pleased the teacher (Edwards, 1987, p. 220), rooted in her 'frame of reference'.

TEACHER "Now 'big' is obvious, but think of more unusual."



GIRL "Rickety."

TEACHER "Rickety, yeah, good."

BOY "Gloomy, old."

TEACHER "Gloomy. Behind the gloomy...yeah I like that."

The teacher explicitly referred to the autumn poem as "a writing frame", and seemed determined to follow it in detail. The teacher and pupils worked together to provide ideas to complete the first stanza to their poem (see Appendix 4.47). However, as they came to the last line, the teacher attempted to guide pupils to choose the word that she was thinking of (for full extract see Appendix 4.48).

TEACHER "No, think of getting rid of 'collect' and 'food' and try to find one word. Kelly?"

KELLY "Gathers."

TEACHER "Gathers...for the winter?"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Yeh."

TEACHER "'Gathers for the winter' sound alright? Yeh? Instead of 'Gathers' I was thinking 'Prepare'."

ANDY "Prepare for winter."

TEACHER "An army of ants prepare..."

JOSHUA "For the winter."

TEACHER "For the winter. So it makes a little bit shorter. Does that sound best or do you like it the other way?"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Err..."

TEACHER "It's whatever way you feel happy with."

BOY "That way." (Points to 'prepare')

She implied that their word 'gathers' was acceptable by writing it up on the board and considering it, but then she made it clear that her preference would have been for 'prepare'. She then wrote that up on the board as well, and suggested that pupils could choose either one. However, as in the first period of time, the pupils chose the teacher's suggestion over their own. On the surface children seemed engaged with the process; they were saying lines to themselves, mulling things over, suggesting ideas, finishing off lines, but in doing this they appeared to be also focused upon interpreting the teacher's cues and emphasis. It appeared that the discourse was interactive and free and exciting, because the teacher let them have freedom in expressing themselves, but this seemed to be a pseudo-partnership, because ultimately it was centred around finding out what the teacher wanted them to say.

They moved onto the next stanza, beginning again with a preposition 'beneath'. The pupils then focused on the subject of a group of worms under the soil, and began to build imagery around this (see Appendix 4.49). However, after a good start with 'A cluster of worms', the line lost its impact as the discussion went on, for the teacher's main preoccupation seemed to be that it should match the structure and content of 'Autumn Gardens' rather than having meaning, relevance and resonance.

Further discussion of ideas demonstrated the teacher's preoccupation with structure, and a desire to push her own ideas above pupil's suggestions (see Appendix 4.50).

#### **4.11.1 The Role of the Poem**

In this period of time the poem was explicitly used as a framework for children's and teacher's ideas. The teacher adhered to it closely, trying to make lines shorter, including a simile in the one stanza, fitting in adjectives so that it matched the structure of the Autumn poem. At times it became explicitly evident that it was about filling in the gaps.

TEACHER "Beneath the soil? All right. Beneath the blank soil. Beneath the...what's the soil like in your garden?"

Unfortunately, throughout this passage, little consideration was given to meaning and this was reflected in the ideas that the children came up with, the teacher's contribution to the discussion, and some of the stanzas they created. For example:

"Beneath the moist soil, a cluster of worms, visit their friends."

And:

"Behind the gloomy shed, an army of ants, prepare for winter."

'Army' would have had more resonance with a pupil's suggestion of the ants marching, than the teacher's choice 'prepare for winter'.

The teacher also appeared unclear about what the poem was about. First she stated that they were going to write a 'garden poem', but then used the autumn poem as a framework without integrally linking their own poem to a season. Later, when they picked the prepositions for their class poem she also commented:

TEACHER "Beneath. It's all the 'b' words. It's a 'b' poem."

#### **4.11.2 Involvement by Case Study Children**

In this period of time Joshua maintained the most verbal involvement, followed by Andy, Jeremy and then Nia, but neither Hannah nor Julia contributed individually in this session. However, all case study children looked interested and involved, looking at the board and listening to what the teacher and their peers were saying.

#### **4.11.3 The Second Period of the NLS**

In this second period of time, the teacher concentrated on the development of both focused word and sentence level work, as suggested in the NLS (1998). This was

accompanied by the implementation of a wide range of strategies such as direction, scaffolding, using the poem as a framework, questioning, initiating and guiding exploration, investigating ideas, and listening to and responding. The teaching in this session could be described as interactive, well paced, confident and ambitious. However, I am reluctant to apply the label of discursive and its description as 'characterised by high quality oral work' (NLS, 1998, p.8) to this period of conversation. There were important threads of meaning and context that seemed to be left out by the teacher that may have given children greater clarity and expression when thinking and developing their own ideas about their poems. This was highlighted by matching the framework of their own ideas to 'Autumn Gardens', without attention to any season, which was an integral part of the poem, providing context and meaning to the ideas developed. Rather, the teacher appeared to separate the structural mechanics of the poem, such as preposition and simile, into discrete categories, which the children then modelled with little reference to meaning and interpretation of their ideas.

#### 4.11.4 Teaching and Learning Styles

On first reading of this part of the session it appeared very positive - pupils were interested and excited about contributing, they were given space to ponder, mull and savour words and ideas, and most of the session consisted of well-paced interaction between teacher and pupil. The teacher sometimes asked pupils what they thought, which suggested that there was room for negotiation and partnership in their learning. Overall, this could imply that this teacher's style is in the domain of the learning-driven section as described by Webster et al., (1996) (see fig. 4.2). On the surface there are many elements of this event that appeared to be within this domain, but when examined in more detail it is apparent that this was not always the case. For example, when the teacher gave children a choice, whether it was their

line they wanted to accept or hers, they chose hers. This was possibly because the power was weighted in her direction and they had a desire to please the adult in authority. Also, the teacher consistently demonstrated that her preference was what guided the choice of ideas for future development. Further, writing poems from their own experience also seemed to have to match up with the teacher's experience or else she negated what they offered. It could be suggested then, that the teacher's style is a pseudo learning-driven style, covering a teacher-driven style.

#### **4.12 Interaction Between Teacher, Pupil and Peers**

The teacher briefly explained what pupils were to do next, which was to write their own garden poem based on the one they had read as a class. They were then sent them off to begin work. The case study pupils spent approximately three minutes sorting out materials and seating arrangements, before opening their books to work silently and independently. While the teacher went and sat at the desk with the lower ability children, the case study children started to look through the dictionaries. Then they began to offer advice to each other, and, on request, giving it. Although Hannah asked for help from Jeremy, she had had the confidence to write down some ideas of her own as well, so she was not completely dependent on his support (see Appendix 4.51).

They carried on working quietly, until Joshua and Nia swapped books, even though the teacher had imposed a ban on sharing work. These pupils seemed to have forgotten her instruction and appeared to enjoy sharing, as Joshua read Nia's out and Nia read Joshua's silently. Pupils demonstrated the ability to talk off task, yet respond to others to get back on task (see Appendix 4.52). When Julia talked off task Andy joined in, but Jeremy regulated the talk by bringing them back onto task with the authoritative comment 'Why aren't you doing any work?'. Though this was a humorous exchange between the two, the underlying disciplinary message made

an impact, for work on their individual poems resumed once more. Minutes later when Julia and Andy talked off task again, they were able to regulate themselves back onto task without intervention from others (see Appendix 4.53).

As noted previously, even though the teacher had specifically said not to share their work and to work independently, the children appeared to show a natural inclination and desire to discuss and exchange ideas, to read others' work and read out their own. All case-study pupils shared their work with each other.

The teacher seemed unaware that the case-study children had been sharing their work, and working co-operatively rather than individually. She instructed pupils to decide as individuals which was their best verse and to combine them into a group poem. She indicated that there was a time limit of five minutes to sort their work out, so creating a sense of urgency and ensuring that the task were done efficiently.

NIA "Right, everyone read a part."

TEACHER "Andy, what's your best verse?"

ANDY "Err, that one."

TEACHER "Can you read it to me?"

ANDY "Across the little pond, A small frog decides to take a dip, He dives into the freezing water."

TEACHER "Uh, I like that. Remember 'Across the little pond' that could be your next line. Or maybe you don't need that line. Perhaps you could have 'Takes a dip'. Or maybe 'A small frog dives into freezing water'. It's quite long that bit, but I do like it. There's quite a lot of information there, Andy."

Nia took on the role of organising the selection of verses, but she did this by allowing each person to choose a part. The teacher intervened and superseded Nia's instructions, focusing on Andy's best verse. She then advised Andy on how he could change the line around, to improve on it. However, the teacher had not allowed for

this in the session, so it seemed inappropriate to begin now as pupils were urgently trying to prepare for a performance.

JEREMY (Reads out his verse same time as teacher is speaking to Andy) Behind the hairy, gigantic bush, An old badger, Remembering the good old days.

TEACHER "Four minutes!"

ANDY "Why do you do it like that? Why don't you just do it like..."

NIA "Andy!"

JOSHUA "It doesn't matter though."

NIA "Pick your best verse."

ANDY "Across the little pond, A small frog decides to take a dip, He dives into the freezing water."

JULIA "A dip?"

(All of the group laugh)

As Andy was on the point of suggesting changes to Jeremy's reading, perhaps modelling what the teacher had done with him, others intervened recognising that time was limited. Nia remonstrated with Andy, while Joshua stated, "It doesn't matter though", but though there appeared to be conflict, Andy responded to their authoritative tone. Any tension seemed to dissolve by the group laughing together over one of his word choices.

JOSHUA "Uh, Julia."

HANNAH "Under the soggy soil, A patch of worms, Prepare for a battle."

ANDY "Prepared for battle? With what?"

JEREMY "With glasses" (Laughs).

(Everyone else joins in laughing)

ANDY "Yeh, with glasses."

NIA "So who do you think should go first?"

JULIA "How can they be wearing glasses?"

JOSHUA "I don't know. This should go first."

ANDY "Right, there comes the worms."

Both Nia and Joshua kept the focus of the discussion on track, trying to steer Jeremy, Julia and Andy from delaying the process any longer. However, this did not eliminate them from sharing the joke about the worms preparing for battle with glasses. They were able to appreciate the humour as well as take control in moving the discussion on.

While Joshua and Nia seemed to be the natural leaders, they shared the responsibility of which verse should go where with the others. While Andy took up the role of designating who went where he too was open to suggestions made by the others, and together they came to a co-operative agreement over the order (see Appendix 4.54).

### 4.13 The Role of the Poem

At the beginning of this period of time, the teacher explained what they were to do next, and in doing so indicated the role of the poem in this literary event.

TEACHER "Okay, so this morning I want you to use this, please, as a model to write your own 'In the garden' poem. Each verse should start with a preposition, okay? And I want at least three verses. If you get to four then your fourth verse should be something about, something non-living in your garden. I want you to work independently today, by yourself, because tomorrow you're gonna be working in pairs and re-drafting together. So if you're already looking at



each other's poem, it will be a waste of time. So make sure that it's by yourself. Okay, date and title please. Off you go."

The teacher related the work of the previous section to this period of time, providing opportunity for all children to do the same work. As in the previous section, she used 'Autumn Gardens' as the model for their own garden poems, although the season was not mentioned. She concentrated on the structure the poem should take, what it should include, and how this should mirror the poem already studied. She also highlighted that they would work independently of each other, stating that 'It will be a waste of time' if they had already seen each other's poem. Nothing was said about meaning of their poem. The Autumn poem appeared to be a useful resource - a framework that pupils had to follow in order to produce an effective poem.

#### **4.13.1 The Case Study Children**

In this period of time the case study children demonstrated an apparently sophisticated level of autonomy in that they were able to work independently and together, share and develop ideas, maintain a standard of self-regulated discipline, and enjoy the experience.

The most striking element of this particular episode of group work was that Level Descriptions of individual pupils did not seem to influence who interacted with who, or the nature of those interactions. Power appeared to be distributed amongst the group, rather than linked to Level Descriptions. For example, Joshua (Level 2) and Nia (Level 4) took on the role of leading the group at significant times, but were able to share that leadership amongst the rest of the group. Biott (1984) suggests that this kind of role sharing is to do with responsible membership, rather than leadership. In this literary event Julia (Level 3) asked Andy (Level 4) for ideas, while Hannah (Level 2) asked Jeremy (Level 3), but in later sessions similar

partnerships showed that they were able to support each other. Though Hannah seemed the least confident in interacting with others in this session, she was able to write some poetry and to competently contribute in the group performance.

#### **4.13.2 The Third Period of the NLS**

In this third period pupils spent approximately 20 minutes in guided group work reading and writing. Although pupils would normally sit in ability groups, for the purposes of this research the case-study children sat in mixed-ability. However, the teacher set work that was open to all abilities, and there was no differentiation, other than the greater amount of time the teacher spent with the lower-ability groups compared to others.

It could be suggested, as stated in the NLS (1998, p.8), that the teacher had scaffolded their work, by providing the poem as a framework for their writing, as well as the previous ideas that they had brainstormed in the previous time segments.

Although children were instructed to work independently and not to share work, there were periods of writing quietly, followed by the sharing of that writing. The teacher seemed happy with the level of talking going on in each group, but given her instructions about not sharing their work it was unclear as to what the teacher thought the talk might be about.

#### **4.13.3 Teaching and Learning Styles in the Third Period**

In this third period of twenty minutes the main teaching style seemed to be child-driven. The majority of time was given over to the pupils working, and there was a strong emphasis on pupils sorting out the order of their verses and making choices to present to the rest of the class. When the teacher withdrew immediate support and guidance, pupils were able to regulate off-task talk, share in humour generated by their work, take turns in making decisions, discipline peers when needed, and

work through disagreements successfully. However, when the teacher intervened it became teacher-driven for that short period of time. The teacher went over the head of Nia's attempt to organise, putting her stamp on what was going on and guiding the conversation with Andy. In terms of allowing pupils to engage practically in making decisions about the conduct of their work, the child-driven approach was more successful. By contrast the teacher-driven style appeared to be oppressive.

#### 4.13.4 The Plenary

In the plenary, different table groups came to the front of the class and performed their poems. The teacher asked the class to clap after each one, and say what they liked about the poem. The case study group was the second to perform. At Nia's quiet and quick instruction they stood in the order that they were to read the poem out. They were all able to contribute something to performance, and they functioned as a team who were confident that they had written something good and enjoyable. As they each read their line out, they spoke loudly and steadily, culminating in a very positive performance.

HANNAH "Under the soggy soil, A patch of worms, Prepares for battle."

ANDY "Across the little pond, A small frog decides to take a dip, He dives into the freezing water."

JOSHUA "On the concrete patio, Stands a rusted, battered barbecue, Like a standing, sly fox."

NIA "Through the blossoming garden, A secretive snail, Glides gracefully to its headquarters."

JEREMY "Behind a hairy, gigantic bush, An old badger, Remembering the good old days."

JULIA "Up the smooth step, A, a snail climbs, Back home again, home sweet home."

Given the hurried discussion at the end of the last period about who would go where, the case study group were able to successfully present their poem without preamble in the order they had discussed.

TEACHER "Thank you. Give them a clap. Okay, what did we like about those poems then? Abby?"

ABBY "Nia, cos you can actually imagine the garden with the snail gliding."

TEACHER "So you can picture the whole scene and not just that one creature. Good. Thank you. Cherie?"

CHERIE "Jeremy's because in his it's about an old hedgehog and thinking about..."

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Badger."

CHERIE "Badger."

TEACHER "You can imagine him being quite old, can't you with a little walking stick, maybe. Poor old badger. Maria?"

Cherie made a mistake in the identification of the creature in Jeremy's line, and it seemed that because time was taken in correcting that, she was not given the opportunity to finish her statement. This terminated an important statement that Cherie was making, for Jeremy's line was not just about the badger being old, but remembering the time when he was younger.

MARIA "I like Julia's because it's got a really good ending in the poem, it had a really good end. Really good poem at the end there."

TEACHER "So you like that, the way that that group did the ending."

MARIA "Yeah."

TEACHER "Right give them a clap."

The teacher repeated what Maria said, rather than asking her to explain why it was a good ending. Perhaps the teacher could have prompted talk about the concept of home for a snail, since it is widely agreed that a snail carries its home on its back. This kind of praise and encouragement is suggested by some researchers (Hitz and Driscoll, 1988) to be ineffective in that it is not particularly specific. However, given the self motivation and autonomy of the case study group it is probable that the intrinsic rewards of the task led them to be less reliant on the praise of the teacher (Brophy, 1981).

Two more groups came up to perform their poems, and then as the dinner bell went, everyone was dismissed for lunch.

#### **4.13.5 The Role of the Poem**

There was no more mention of the Autumn poem, and no attempt to link it into the overall theme of the lesson. However, pupils' poems took a central part of this final session, and they were treated positively. The children seemed very relaxed and at ease with poetry and there seemed to be genuine enjoyment. They were encouraged to make positive statements about what they liked, enjoyed, and felt were good ideas or lines.

#### **4.13.6 The NLS Plenary**

In the plenary, the teacher gave opportunity for all pupils to present some of their work, enabling the teacher to monitor and assess that work, and encouraging positive feedback from their peers. The teacher did not return to the objective or re-emphasise the points from that objective, but it was clear from the poetry read out that they had all understood and were able to use prepositions, and it could be said that they had written from their own experiences of what was in their garden. The children had translated their ideas about the human world into their descrip-

tions of creatures in their garden, using their imagination to create a fantasy world, e.g. the worms preparing for battle, and the snail gliding towards its secret headquarters. These were ideas and characteristics imposed onto other creatures, rather than the children experiencing this for themselves.

All three objectives, outlined in the weekly lesson plan (see Appendix 4.36) were present in the first literary session, with the second objective being clearly identifiable in the NLS. However, the other two could not be literally identified in the text of the NLS document. Though the development of personal response is highlighted in Year 6, it is implied that this is in relation to children articulating their response to a recognised body of literature (see Year 6, Term 1, text level work, 3 and Year 6, Term 3, text level work, 8). Although children are encouraged to write poems, there appears to be no recommendation that this should be generated from their own personal and emotional experiences, so this was an addition by the teacher. Also, the teacher seemed to have been flexible with the first objective too, since the word 'structure' in the NLS is used in relation to stories, as opposed to poetry. She appeared to have used it as an umbrella term to incorporate themes, style and how messages and feelings are conveyed as she looked at various poems with the class over the week. The structure of the daily plan took into account the different requirements of the Literacy Hour, and was set out so that the teacher could think about how she would address each part. The way in which the teacher used this plan demonstrated the ideas of progression, although in practice she began with the focused word level work, before progressing onto the whole class shared reading, demonstrating that she was not confined by the structure of the plan, nor by the Literacy Hour.

#### 4.13.7 Teaching and Learning Styles

The children were given considerable autonomy in choosing the best line that they had written, and how they were going to present that poem. The teacher then encouraged positive feedback from the pupils, which she then reinforced. However, feedback was not developed, possibly because more in-depth critique of individuals' work was to follow the next day.

This style of teaching seemed to be learning-driven, in that pupils worked collaboratively, and activities appeared to provide opportunity for dialogue. However, the reflection and reviewing by pupils on what was shared was not developed, and there was little discussion on the meaning of what had been written. Although pupils clearly enjoyed what they had been asked to do, there were processes of learning that were not highlighted in this session, such as the overall meaning and relevance of images and ideas and their relationship to each other within the context of their poems.

### 4.14 Recurring Themes in Other Literary Events

As with Chadwick school, in analysing the first literary event at St. Albans school it became apparent that repetitive themes in all five events could be identified in the realms of pedagogy and subject knowledge. However, some of the categories differed, highlighting important characteristics unique to the teacher and case study pupils at St. Albans. These were: analysis of term plans; the knowledge of poetical constructs; and the value of poems written specifically as a resource for teaching poetry.

Literary event two to five are briefly contextualised, before the themes are presented.

In the second literary event the teacher used a redrafted version of the poem from

the first literary event, Autumn Garden 1 (see The Poetry-Poems or Resources?), and encouraged pupils to think about how the poem had been improved. Pupils then worked on improving their own poems that they had written in the first literary event.

In the third literary event the teacher presented a poem called I am the Earth (Appendix 4.63). This was followed by the class writing a group poem about a pencil, which closely modelled the structure and content of I am the Earth, and covered the objectives: to use tenses (past, present and future); to write poetry using everyday experiences.

The fourth event began with the class looking at the poems Storm and Windy Night (Appendix 4.58) and discussing feelings, images, shapes and sounds evoked by them. The teacher then introduced the pupils to an onomatopoeia poem (Appendix 4.58) and encouraged pupils to experiment with the sounds that were being suggested by the different words.

Finally, in the fifth literary event the teacher introduced the class to a rap poem (Appendix 4.60) and pupils considered how they would perform it. They worked in groups, concentrating on tone of voice and use of rhythm, before presenting the poem to the rest of the class.

#### 4.14.1 Pedagogy

##### **The Balance of Power**

Throughout all five sessions the teacher demonstrated that control and power were established in her domain. This was sometimes evidenced through firmly stating that an idea was not going to be developed, as in literary event three.

TEACHER "Okay, 'Soon, soon' what will happen? To the pencil?"

JOSHUA "Recycled."



TEACHER "No, it won't be recycled."

Or using her influence, for example in session four, to sway an argument about the use of rhythm in the comparison of two poems:

TEACHER "Yeah, yeah I agree with that. Does everyone think it's quicker reading this one?"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Yeh."

However, her powerful status as the teacher was balanced by an apparent willingness to dissipate control, giving pupils a perceived sense of considerable autonomy in the classroom. This was experienced by the children in a variety of ways: sitting informally on the floor round the teacher; choosing their own partners to work with; involvement in underlining key words of a poem on the board, in the colour of their choice; plenty of opportunity to read others' and their own poems out; the freedom to occasionally change the focus of discussion during whole class interaction; opportunity to respond and express opinions without the teacher specifically asking them; and the teacher giving minimal instruction and maximum involvement time for pupils in all five literary events.

In event two, the teacher also involved pupils in contributing to guidelines of how they might respond to peers' work (see Appendix 4.55).

She also allowed them to negotiate terms of finishing off work:

TEACHER "Right, I'm looking forward to reading these redrafted efforts. Are they all finished?"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "No."

TEACHER "Are there any that need another couple of minutes, need another couple of minutes?"

BOY "Just a couple."

TEACHER "Just a couple, okay."

And in literary event three, she allowed Joshua and Andy to re-negotiate work conditions and work individually when they were unable to co-operate together as instructed.

Though it was clear that the adult held the authority in the classroom, pupils operated within a flexible structure that encouraged a certain amount of freedom and autonomy, allowing expressions of individuality without degenerating into chaos.

### **Relating Work to Children's Previous Experiences**

The teacher attempted to embed the work of each session within the context of work already done and experiences outside of the classroom.

For example, after the first literary event, a pupil was inspired to bring two poetry books from home, while others told the teacher that they had read some poetry outside of classroom time. The teacher highlighted this by encouraging the pupil who had brought the books in to read her favourite poem at the end of the second session. In the third literary event, she also spent time asking the case study children about the poetry books they had at home (see Appendix 4.56).

The teacher also related immediate work back to previous work covered in other sessions.

TEACHER "There again, how's this similar, put your hand down, how's this similar to the poem that we read on Monday?"

She encouraged them to choose ideas based on their own experience both outside the classroom, as in the writing of the garden poem in the first session, and from their immediate experience within the classroom in the third session.

The teacher also related many of the poetical devices and stylistic features in the poems back to sessions of the preceding year, asking pupils to identify and explain

terms such as stanza, ellipsis, simile, personification and figurative language.

Children's previous experiences outside of the classroom were utilised within the classroom as a way of encouraging children to write poetry. However, work from other literary sessions was given greater emphasis in providing a strong foundational basis upon which the identification, understanding and use of poetic features could be further extended.

### **Play With Language**

Most of the play with language occurred in the context of tasks set, as pupils thought about the words they might use, checking them with others, reading them out repeatedly and making alterations.

Occasionally language play was manipulated to enhance a mundane activity, as in session two where a mispronounced word provided opportunity for word play association.

JEREMY "Err, Julia can I have that fesaurus after you?"

ANDY "Fesaurus?"

NIA "That one's better."

ANDY "Thesaurus not fesaurus."

JEREMY "I don't care."

JOSHUA "Tyrannosaurus."

And:

JEREMY "Why didn't you add that word in? 'Under the sharp, soggy soil' Why didn't you write that down? Redraft, redraft, giraffe."

HANNAH "Giraffe?"

Humour played an important part in this classroom, instigated by both teacher and pupils, who, in turn, demonstrated a general appreciation of each other's contributions, and this was often linked to play with language.

The teacher, for example, would often make jokes, which the class readily laughed at as in the third session observed when they were discussing preferences for words used in a poem about the earth (for poem see Appendix 4.57).

CHERIE "I like the word 'stubble'."

TEACHER "You like the word stubble? Makes the Earth sound like George Michael now doesn't it?"

This had the effect of embracing all the class in the poetry event, possibly making the moment more accessible. However, this particular poem was not intended to be humorous, for it described the mutilating effects of humanity on earth, so it could be suggested that this joke diminished the message of the poem.

In session three a pupil displayed inspired repartee when a peer suggested an idea based on the personification of a pencil's figurative 'death'.

TEACHER "Right, last line 'But my spirit will live on'."

ANDY "But my spirit will live on'."

JOSH "It's not Jesus, Andy."

Andy also demonstrated the art of comic timing in simultaneously offering both encouragement and discouragement to his work partner in a brief, but frank exchange of contrary opinions.

ANDY "Oh, oh, you can start at that one."

JULIA "In the springy green grass, A family of woodlice, Are having a family dinner.

In the centre of the garden, A small insect, Is having so much fun.

Up the smooth step, A snail crawls back home again - Home sweet home."

(Andy applauds)

JULIA "Okay, is that okay?"

ANDY "Well, it wasn't really good."

NIA "Andy!"

ANDY "It's better than the last one."

Occasionally a pupil would engage in daring language play to entertain and shock others.

JOSHUA "Sexy pencil"

(Case-study children laugh).

While the teacher teased pupils about possible risqué behaviour during class time.

TEACHER (To Jeremy who is looking in the thesaurus) "You're not looking up rude words are you?"

JEREMY (Laughs) "I don't do that!"

And sometimes humour was used at the expense of another, as in session five.

TEACHER "Right, stand where you are. Let's see what you come up with. Great! Nia's group?"

NIA "Julia's playing, Julia's playing with Lucy, Jeremy's playing cool un...so...Hannah's lost in poetry, and Joshua's heading the ball."

TEACHER "Excellent, thank you."

JOSHUA (Whispers to Jeremy) "Andy's the fool."

In all the sessions observed, there was a general air of humour and enjoyment of language, and an appreciable grasp of word play that permeated teacher and pupils' times together.

## Lesson Plans

During the five literary sessions observed, the first three sessions corresponded to what had been written in the daily plans (see Appendix 4.36), although in the plenary of Thursday's event a particular poem was not read out because the teacher used this time to hear pupils' poems instead. However, at Friday's event the teacher departed from the plan, teaching a different session without any evidence of written framework of planning. Instead of writing a poem about bullying based on personal experiences, the class looked at two different poems about stormy weather and then switched to a different poem based on onomatopoeia (see Appendix 4.58). The contrast of styles and subject matter led to a disjointed and incoherent feel to the session, as in the first half the teacher led a discussion on feelings and images that the poems evoked, then in the second half discussed sounds of words and how they could be written to evoke certain readings.

The last session was also conducted without a written framework, but this had a clearer structure in that they looked at a rap poem and worked out how they would perform it, and then, in groups, they began to write their own rap poem about people in their class.

In considering whether the five sessions covered the learning objectives set out by the teacher, it was evident that the structures of a variety of poems were explored. Over the five literary events the class looked at seven poems, which introduced children to different forms, and pupils were given the opportunity to model their own poems on four of them.

Pupils also gained an understanding of prepositions, evidenced in their use of them in their own written poems.

Finally, the children used personal experiences in the writing of their poetry, such as thinking about what was in their own gardens for one of their poems, choosing objects in their classroom to write about, and also composing a rap based on

children in their group. However, it was debateable as to whether or not emotional experiences had been used in the context that the teacher meant, for she had included a session where pupils were going to write a bullying poem based on personal experiences. However, this had been replaced by work on the 'Storm' poem and the work on onomatopoeia. In the replacement session the teacher did try to engage the children to talk about their emotional responses to the poetry, but this was done swiftly and without any extensive development, so perhaps the teacher lacked confidence in this area (see Appendix 4.59).

#### **4.14.2 Subject Knowledge**

##### **Knowledge of Poetical Constructs**

In every session the teacher took the opportunity to revise and consolidate knowledge of poetical style and structure by relating it to the poems they were reading as a class, or to poems they were writing. Across those five literary events, the teacher and pupils discussed the following constructs in the context of set activities: similes, personification, ellipsis, figurative and literal language, alliteration, stanzas, rhythm, rhyme, and onomatopoeia. Pupils were adept at identifying stylistic features in the poems they were reading, and the teacher made it clear that she liked it when they used them in their own poems. Pupils were also able to relate back to previous work they had done on poetry, as when Joshua paralleled the structure of the poem in the third session, to that of the first.

JOSHUA "It's like prepositions but using verbs."

TEACHER "Right, it's got a similar kind of structure, hasn't it?"

The teacher also encouraged the demystification of the poet by considering the words that had been written, and allowing them to think about changes they might make.

GREG "I think he should change 'sharp razors'."

TEACHER "Change 'sharp razors', right. 'But now men come with sharp razors'.  
Can we not think of anything more exciting there?"

In all five literary events there were lots of opportunities for pupils to explore and enjoy the words of the poems written by them, and for them. This was done through whole class reading poetry together, so that less confident readers could join in without anxiety, or individuals would volunteer or be volunteered by the teacher, or children would work in pairs on experimenting with the sound of words. This allowed a variety of readings to take place and different levels of confidence and reading skills to be catered for.

For example, in session four, a pupil volunteered to read a particular poem (for poem see Appendix 4.58) with very difficult and peculiar sounding words based on onomatopoeia. The teacher then encouraged the class to experiment with the different lines in pairs so that they too could experience playing with language, without having to do it in front of the rest of the class.

## Meaning

Though there were some good things that happened with poetry in these sessions, one of the fundamental mistakes that the teacher seemed to make was the lack of attention to meaning.

Although very occasionally attempts were made to discuss the meaning of individual lines, as in session one (see Appendix 4.61), generally there was little reference to the meaning of the poems, either in isolated parts or as a whole. However, when meaning was discussed, as in session three, the teacher suggested to pupils that interpretation was rooted in the individual's right to say what they wanted (see Appendix 4.62).

The implication that any interpretation of a poem is right would seem to be



a particularly damaging concept, because it has no foundation in the context or resonance of the subject of the poem, nor does it recognise how the meaning of isolated lines, words and images inter-relate. This emphasis could be aligned with that of post-structuralism (see fig. 4.2), in that meaning is dependent on several choices that the reader might make. This, perhaps, is encapsulated by the teacher's comment "we're all entitled to interpret this poem in our own way", so hinting at a vagueness and uncertainty about what "Like a green herd" could mean. This was reiterated again in the third event (see Appendix 4.63).

In reading a poem, if a teacher or pupil can say, "whatever I want" this suggests that the focus of meaning rests with what a person thinks, and is not dependent on the text. However, while post-structuralism is focused upon the way in which readers read texts, it is a theory that recognises significant discourses and, more importantly, those that are less obvious. It is the deconstruction of texts to question that which is obvious that seems to be at the heart of post structuralist theory, but this differs from the emphasis the teacher placed upon the reading of the poem. The teacher seemed to be suggesting that "poetic licence" is permission to make meaning without being related to the text, which was evidenced in some of the poetry pupils were writing in the first session. Such a statement may steer pupils away from a close reading of a poem, causing them to miss important clues in the text that could illuminate meaning and understanding of the parts and the whole.

Instead of meaning and interpretation, there was a preoccupation with the structure of the poems, and this was given considerable prominence by the teacher when children wrote their own poetry, as in session two (Appendix 4.64). This seemed to supersede meaning, as demonstrated in the same event when Joshua highlighted a change in a redrafted poem.

JOSHUA Where there's 'colonies homes', colony usually means home so...

TEACHER "Right, so there's an extra word there. Right, thank you, yeah, good."

The teacher picked up on the difference in structure, but not on Joshua's mistaken assumption that colony meant home.

Often, when writing, the meaning of individual words was not discussed in relation to the rest of the poem, even though choices were made as to their appropriateness (Appendix 4.65). And when the teacher asked pupils to redraft their poems, no mention was made as to whether word choices or lines made sense in the context of the poem as a whole (Appendix 4.66).

The teacher's main emphases in the sessions were upon the technical side of reading poetry, identifying structure and poetical features, which the pupils picked up on (see Appendix 4.67).

This emphasis was epitomised in the introduction to the final poem in literary event five.

TEACHER "Right, now this poem is called 'Rat rap' and I want to read it to you and I want you to listen out to all these features: metaphors, similes, alliteration, personification, onomatopoeia and all the rest."

The teacher and pupils then went on to discuss rhythm and performance but the meaning of the poem was never mentioned.

Only once or twice did the teacher begin to explore what some of the poems meant. She did this in session three, though the question was not intentionally about eliciting the meaning of the poem.

TEACHER "Okay. Who doesn't like that poem? Okay, Chantelle, can you explain why you don't like that poem?"

CHANTELLE "These things are not really happening to the Earth."

TEACHER "Right, so you don't think it talks about what's going to be happening to the earth. Okay...I think it's got some bits in there. Those who like it, can you tell me why. Sam?"

SAM "Well I think it's actually true. Men did come and cut the trees down."

TEACHER "Right so it's a true reflection of how the Earth is, in your opinion. Thank you. Nia?"

NIA "Err...it's like the Earth's feelings."

TEACHER "Right, right, so it's taking into consideration how the Earth might be feeling a little bit more. Good."

Meaning was also briefly discussed in literary event four (see Appendix 4.68).

### **The Poetry-Poems or Resources?**

Some of the poetry used in these sessions was written as resources for teaching specific aspects of poetry, some of which she obtained on a course led by a man called David Orme. Most of the poetry Orme writes is written to help teachers teach poetry in the NLS. Orme wrote both the poem *Autumn Gardens 1*, and the redraft, as well as 'I am the Earth', but in examining the first poem used in literary event one and the redrafted version in literary event two, it is not clear how successful they are in supporting children in writing good poetry.

#### **Autumn Gardens 1**

Under a cold, damp stone  
A thoughtful frog  
Dreams of rainy days to come.

Behind the old shed  
A family of Hedgehogs  
Is dressed in autumn leaves.

#### **Autumn Gardens 2**

Under a damp stone  
A thoughtful frog has cold dreams:  
The rain is coming.

Behind the old shed;  
A family of Hedgehogs  
Dressed in Autumn leaves.

In the compost heap	A thousand beetles
A thousand beetles	Scurry through the compost heap,
Build a mighty city.	Building great cities.
Over the rooftop	The sparks of bonfires
The bonfire sparks	Are spreading like shining seeds
Spread like bright seeds.	Over the rooftops.

If the un-inspiringly titled 'Autumn Gardens 1 and 2' poems are paralleled to a verse from Meredith's 'Autumn Even Song' (see Appendix 4.69) the difference in the language, structure and the evocative imagery is striking.

In Orme's poems the flow of the subject matter seems stilted, hindered by the change of subject matter from animals in the first three verses to the bonfire in the fourth, and the sudden introduction of a simile in the last stanza. From initial reading of the first version it would seem that verses one and four are the most successful in establishing some metaphorical image through a poetic structure, although it could be suggested that the lack of poetic imagery overall makes the poem feel more like a statement of factual information, as noted by the teacher in session two.

However, what appears to be most disturbing about these two poems is that the second version of 'Autumn Gardens 2' seems to be even less effective than the first, providing a poor example of redrafting. For example, the use of a colon in the first verse, followed by a semicolon in the second verse seems unnecessary and disrupts the flow of ideas. Previously the prepositions had begun every verse and provided some repetition and cohesion to the poem, but here it has been redrafted so that the first two verses begin with a preposition, the third does not have one and fourth includes one on the third line. This again adds to a lack of coherence and disrupts the structure, but may also confuse pupils since the teacher was intent on them

writing their own poetry using prepositions to start each line. Overall, I suggest that this second version is an unsuccessful redrafting of 'Autumn Gardens 1', and would possibly hinder children, rather than support them in their own writing.

While all the case study pupils were successful in getting ideas down using the framework of 'Autumn Gardens 1', it appeared that unless the teacher emphasised key points such as meaning, in both the resource poems and their own, this resulted in ideas lacking comprehension and coherence. For example:

Hannah:

Behind the old gate

A crowd of mice

Settle for sunset

Joshua:

Beneath a dark damp stone

Wiggles a home sick ant

Scurrying to his home sweet home

Julia:

In the springy green grass

A family of wild woodlice

Are having a family dinner

The resource poems needed to be of good quality to demonstrate clearly and effectively the objective of that particular session, the purpose for which they have been written. However, such poetry can never replace poetry written for its own sake, for the former is a shadow or an imitation of the real thing. Perhaps the teacher could have introduced poetry such as Keats's 'To Autumn', Meredith's 'Autumn Even-Song' or Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Autumn Fires' (Stevenson, 1994)

(see Appendix 4.70) and compared it with the model poem by David Orme. While it may be suggested that such poems are more complex and lack the accessibility of Orme's poem, it would seem that if children are being asked to understand and use complex language at Y6, then with appropriate guidance they would be able to engage with poems like these. Poetry written purely to teach a point may have a place in the classroom for helping children to write their own poetry and for helping teachers to teach poetry, but it cannot replace 'real' poetry, just as reading schemes cannot replace 'real' books.

## 4.15 Summary of Chapter Four

In this Chapter I analysed two literary events from each school in detail. I attempted to present a sequential approach to the data by analysing the session in segments of time, following the format of the Literacy Hour. After each timed segment, I then took a thematic approach and considered how the role of the poem, the interaction between case study children and teacher, the framework of the NLS and the teaching and learning styles interrelated to provide a thick description of how these individual parts contributed to the design of the literary environment experienced by the case-study pupils. After the main analysis, themes that were illuminated in the first literary event were traced in the other sessions observed, and presented as evidence to confirm what had been perceived in the first event. Written documentation, such as daily plans were also discussed, to examine how planning informed practice.

Following this microcosmic analysis of the literary events, I present the interview data in Chapter 5 as a consideration of how the mesocosm of the school, and the macrocosm of outside influences such as government policy, public interest and Ofsted inspections contribute to the research participant's perceptions and interpretation of reality. By considering the internal and external influences that might contribute to and constitute social processes as expressed through discourse, this al-

lows a fuller and more descriptive picture to emerge of teacher, children and poetry in a literary environment.

## Chapter 5

# Relationship Between Poetry and the Subject

### 5.1 Presentation of the Interview Data

In Chapter 4 a microanalysis of observations of poetry sessions in St. Albans and Chadwick school took place. This comprised of in-depth discourse analysis of two events in particular from each school, followed by examples from the four other literary sessions observed, highlighting recurring points and issues.

I continue this in Chapter 5 where I study the interview data (see 3.8.2-3.8.4) from each school using a theoretical framework of analysis called interpretative structuralism (Phillips and Hardy, 2002) (see fig.4.1). This approach encourages a personal account of the research participant's interpretations of the context in which poetry is taught, and allows the discovery of how the processes of social construction lead to a particular social reality. This contributes to the analysis of the microcosm of the classroom in Chapter 4, by considering how the mesocosm of the school, and the macrocosm of outside influences such as government policy, public interest and Ofsted inspections contribute to the research participant's perceptions and inter-



pretation of reality. By considering the internal and external influences that might contribute to and constitute social processes as expressed through discourse, this allows a more full and descriptive picture to emerge of teacher, children and poetry in a literary environment.

In this chapter a wider focus of the literary environment was obtained through an analysis of the beliefs, values and perceptions of those who influenced or might have influenced, that environment, with specific reference to poetry. The Literacy Co-ordinators were interviewed because of their role in implementing the NLS (DfEE, 1998), and to ascertain the measure of ongoing support and advice they provided for staff. The teachers were interviewed because they had an immediate impact and the greatest influence upon shaping children's literary environments in the classroom. The children were interviewed to gain an insight into the kind of literary environment they perceived they were experiencing, which included the identification of external and internal pressures upon them, and the values, beliefs and perceptions they had formed and held about that environment.

Questions were also asked of research participants to illuminate the underpinning system of beliefs that influenced action observed in the sessions, and to give a wider perspective on how the teaching and learning of poetry was regarded alongside the complex internal and external pressures from the individual, the school, the government and the public. By adopting a phenomenological approach, from the multiple realities expressed by the Literacy Co-ordinator, the class teachers and the case study pupils, common codes of meaning emerged to form a literary framework from within which the role of poetry emerged. The following data analysis highlights key areas of that meaning through the research participants' expressions. I was very aware in interpreting this data that my role as researcher could demonstrate bias in the meanings I chose to include or omit. However, in choosing the material to present I constantly reflected upon how it best highlighted the themes raised in the

observation in order to strengthen the validity of the study, as well as give greater understanding of the research participants. Although there can be no generalisations made from the interview data, to further add to the validity I have provided a macro-analysis by relating some of the issues raised to research conducted outside of this study, so establishing relationships between that which has been identified in these two case studies with wider educational issues present in other schools.

The first interviews discussed are those of the Literacy Co-ordinators, followed by the teachers, and then the pupils. This tiered effect will illuminate the way in which pupils are affected by those responsible for their learning, and give them an opportunity to speak about their experiences, beliefs, values and meanings. As there appears to be little research on children's views, values and first-hand experiences (Cullingford, 1987; Duffield, Allan, Turner and Morris, 2000), this was an important part of understanding their literary environment with special reference to poetry, especially given the relatively recent implementation of the NLS.

## 5.2 Interviewing the Literacy Co-ordinators

In these interviews, pertinent questions (see Appendix 5.1) were generated around the following themes:

- Biographies of the Literacy Co-ordinators and perceptions of their role
- Their understanding of the relationship between English policy and practice
- The impact of the NLS upon their role
- Attitude towards poetry in the NLS
- The effect of standards on their role

The interviews of the Literacy Co-ordinators, Chloe from St. Albans school, and Simon from Chadwick school, are discussed together under the above themes.

This not only allows their own reality to be expressed, but enables comparisons and contrasts to be made between those realities.

### 5.2.1 Biography of the Literacy Co-ordinators and Perceptions of their Role

Simon, revealed that he had obtained 'O' levels in English literature and language, and an 'A' level in English Literature, before specialising in the subject as part of a teaching degree. He was then employed as a Literacy Co-ordinator in his first job, where he remained for six years, before moving to St. Albans as both Deputy Head, and Literacy Co-ordinator. He had been doing this for three years.

In contrast, Chloe from St. Albans school had GCSEs in English Literature and Language, but had not pursued the subject further because, "I'd always felt I wasn't good enough to do English 'A' level". Her specialist subject during her teaching degree was R.E. She had then taught for four years, before moving to St. Albans, where she was put in charge of Music and R.E. She had been in her present teaching post for two years. Chloe was given the position of Literacy Co-ordinator when the Deputy Head, who was managing the role, became ill.

In both schools, then, Deputy Heads had been assigned the role of Literacy Co-ordinator within their schools, that is, until Chloe had been given the position. It could be implied from this that not only is English considered important (Protherough and King, 1995), but that the role of co-ordinating it is a powerful one. Chloe certainly seemed to feel that it was advantageous with regard to moving up the hierarchal system of the school.

CHLOE "I'd always done R.E and Music, but you don't get anywhere unless you've got a core subject."

She also implied that this was a role that was sought after.

CHLOE "It's worked for me though because I'm lucky to have had that experience, because there are people in the school that would have liked to do English."

And that the position gave her recognition and status:

CHLOE "As soon as I was appointed staff started to listen to me, so it was a power trip really."

With a new title, Chloe was now attempting to move into Deputy Headship by applying for positions at other schools, and securing interviews at the time of the research.

For Simon it seemed a natural progression, due to his educational experience, that he should co-ordinate English in school, but he took on the role at a time when core subjects, though high profile, were not as explicitly linked to a school's public success as in Chloe's era. Chloe's choice to co-ordinate the subject appeared to be linked to the perception that a core subject would ensure greater access to more powerful positions. Simon also recognised that it was a position of authority, and that it had ultimately helped him move into the position of Deputy Headship.

SIMON "I think because it was a core curricular area, obviously there is a certain er...esteem, but you know, you had to, you had to, it was a core curricular area so you were in a fairly important position within the school and the curriculum along with other core areas."

Shannon (1992, p.2) makes the point that the 'job as literacy educators is political'. Though this statement is made in reference to American education, it seems that it could also be applied to these two schools, for the acquisition of a core subject role appears to be aligned with an increase in power and status that Simon, Chloe and the rest of the staff recognised.

### 5.2.2 The English Policy and Practice

The English policy has been described by Merchant and Marsh (1998, p.52) as 'a statement of the principles and practices which underpin the content and delivery of the English curriculum' devised to meet a range of internal and external audiences. It is intended to communicate the school's philosophy on the teaching of literacy, so the way in which the policy has been developed in each school, the content and the Literacy Co-ordinator's perception of the role of the document provides an important indication as to both the individual's and the school's approach to the subject.

In both Chadwick and St Albans school, the Literacy Co-ordinators had inherited the policy from their predecessors. Simon felt he had a clear idea of how the policy was put together:

SIMON "The approach to policies is the same for all of us, and what usually happens is a policy, either the development of a policy, but really they're revisions of policies, the policy's revised by the curriculum co-ordinator and then it's presented to the staff. The staff meet where it's taken apart bit by bit. Then it's taken away, worked on again, presented again, usually to say 'Yes, that's what we all agreed' so that's how the policy develops."

He felt it wasn't just about staff taking ownership, but accurately representing what was happening in classrooms, and that the policy could only really do this if the rest of the staff were involved in its development.

Chloe also described the process of putting together the policy, which involved the subject co-ordinator writing up the policy with the Head, presenting it to the staff, who underlined bits they didn't agree with, and then revising it.

Though both Simon and Chloe were able to identify a clear and efficient process by which the English policy might be created or revised, both admitted that due to the implementation of the NLS, the policy had not been updated since they took

over the role from their predecessors. Indeed, Chloe expressed major confusion over the origins and ownership of this document.

CHLOE "Our English policy at the moment is just the National Literacy Strategy.

I haven't really looked at the policy so I can't really comment on that.

INTERVIEWER "Do you remember when Sue did it?"

CHLOE "No. Let me have a look. I think her policy's been removed and I have a feeling it just says National Literacy Strategy now. Oh, my name's against it but I didn't write it and it's dated January 97'."

It seemed that the policy had been updated with Chloe's name, and the date of her appointment to the role, but the content had not, and due to lack of time and pressures the NLS had become the underpinning policy for English in the school.

Simon also admitted that the policy was not up to date:

SIMON "I mean, I don't enjoy working on policies and to be honest in recent years it's, I mean I couldn't actually tell you what state the policy's in at the moment. Since I've been here, with the implementation of the Literacy Strategy, and all the demands of that, the focus has been completely on that."

Though both Co-ordinators were aware of the function of a policy in terms of defining the school's aims and approach to English, and how to go about revising a policy, the policies at that time did not reflect the school. This was attributed to the pressures of implementing the NLS, and in Chloe's case the policy was seen to be represented by this document. This could be problematic as the NLS is a framework for teaching literacy, aimed particularly at content and delivery, which was produced universally by the government for all schools, whereas a policy should be explaining the philosophies which underpin practice, with reference to the uniqueness of that particular school community. Merchant and Marsh (1998, p.70) warn that 'if the

language policy is going to be a living, breathing document which communicates practice to a range of different people for a variety of purposes, it needs to be regularly reviewed and updated.'

### 5.2.3 The Impact of the NLS upon their Role

Simon felt that the introduction and implementation of the NLS had had a huge impact on his role, specifically in the way he had to implement it in Chadwick school. He felt that although the National Literacy Strategy was a positive document, the sheer volume of work and the training involved had overshadowed its implementation (see Appendix 5.2) and Simon communicated an overwhelming sense of fatigue about that time, which perhaps prompted him to say:

SIMON "If someone had told me at college, you know, that 'you will be Literacy Co-ordinator and English Co-ordinator' and given me a glimpse of what was involved, the time and the energy that was involved in it I'd have said 'Thanks very much I'll move over onto a subject that I can say I can put my heart into'"

The speed of implementation could be compared to the implementation of the National Curriculum (Croll and Moses, 1990), where many schools were unprepared and overwhelmed by the task. Issues prevalent then, such as content familiarity and confidence in assessment procedures, were also experienced in the implementation of the NLS at Chadwick school. Time did not allow reflection upon the materials, how they might be best communicated to staff, and how teachers might interpret them.

In contrast, Chloe embraced the implementation of the NLS, perhaps because it heralded the start of her new position as Literacy Co-ordinator, and allowed her to establish her authority by training the rest of the staff. She saw the opportunity to implement the NLS as a way to assert her new status, and any extra training

that she attended was viewed as equipping her with knowledge of the subject area. However, because of the timing of her transition into the role, much, if not all of the training revolved around the content of the NLS.

CHLOE "When I first started off I was asked about phonic systems, digraphs and all that and I didn't feel confident enough to answer their questions but then Diane [the Head] put me on a lot of training."

It could be suggested that such training was very narrow, since it was designed to equip Co-ordinators to train staff to specifically implement the NLS, rather than give a broad and varied approach to literature and literacy. Nevertheless, it led Chloe to believe that "I am good at my job, and I do know my stuff, and I am able to give the rest of the staff models on what the work should be like, and I will say what should be happening in the timetable". However, if a person's knowledge of the subject area is defined almost exclusively by the NLS, which is just one approach to teaching English, then it could be implied that there is little foundation upon which such a framework could be confidently scrutinised and questioned (Stainthorp, 1999). It may leave the Co-ordinator, and consequently the school, very dependent on the framework. Chloe, however, felt that she was flexible with the National Literacy Strategy, and that she encouraged the staff to be, but on further probing it appeared that this was mainly to do with altering the time structure of the hour. When considering the content, Chloe seemed bound to the document, specifically when she talked about drama, an area that she would have loved to teach more of.

CHLOE "You go on courses and it's frustrating because they give you these wonderful drama activities and you're thinking where am I going to use this? I mean, does that come in the Literacy Hour if its not specified there, or does that come in English time, but then English time outside the Hour is minimum really because you've got seven hours in the infants and six hours five minutes in the



juniors and it's that specific and it just has to filter through other subjects then."

It seemed that in practice only certain aspects of the Literacy Hour were open to flexibility; the structure of the hour could be changed, drama and poetry could have less focus, but areas such as spelling, handwriting, guided writing and reading were given greater priority.

CHLOE "...if people aren't indicating that they've done the guided reading session, you can say, 'Well you haven't indicated that this week'".

Simon also felt that his school was flexible with the Strategy.

SIMON "We feel far more confident to pull things about and change things. Still keeping in with covering those objectives but still using our own common-sense and the best way to deliver it."

It appears that both Co-ordinators felt able to be flexible with the suggestions about the delivery of the hour, particularly concerning the timed segments, and how the content should be organised throughout the year, yet neither really questioned the content of what they were being asked to teach. Although Chloe expressed reservations about the absence of drama and speaking and listening, she did not address these issues even though she was in a position to do so. Both Co-ordinators said that they did not read the English National Curriculum (1989) document.

Despite the immense volume of work in implementing the NLS, both Co-ordinators felt that it had had a positive impact in their school, mainly due to staff following a set scheme of work.

#### **5.2.4 Attitudes Towards Poetry in the NLS**

Both Co-ordinators felt that the pupils in the school had little experience of poetry other than through the NLS, and that they would not have any poetry books at

home. In the NLS there is considerable emphasis given to poetry, and Chloe said that she welcomed this. Although Chloe felt that poetry was taught well in the school she had never observed staff teaching it, nor led any sessions on the teaching of poetry, although she had on writing. In fact, Chloe seemed to draw a distinction between writing and poetry.

INTERVIEWER "So have you done a staff teaching inset day on poetry or anything like that?"

CHLOE "No. I've actually talked to them about modelling writing, but modelling poems, no..."

CHLOE "I don't think there's the emphasis on poetry like there is on writing because again in the SATs tests, poetry doesn't come up every time. I think there was one in '98, poetry question. There wasn't one last year, I know."

INTERVIEWER "Do you think that's strange considering the emphasis on poetry in the National Literacy Strategy?"

CHLOE "Yes, you'd think you'd be able to say that there was a guarantee of a poetry question. I think its because people don't want to mark it, people wouldn't be able to tell if it's a Level 3. With the writing if they use a subordinate clause that's a Level 4, or if you use a colon, semi-colon that's a Level 4 or Level 5 but you can't say that with poetry and I think that's why it's not included."

Chloe emphasised the grammatical standards needed to achieve certain levels in the tests, but seemed to place no emphasis on the content in terms of creativity and meaning. Simon also highlighted grammar, in fact he felt quite strongly that there was too much attention given to poetry, and that it detracted from what he termed "the meat and the potatoes", the essentials that children needed (see Appendix 5.3). He felt the text level column was overly weighty, and that there needed to be more focus on the first two columns, particularly in the younger years of schooling. Even

though Simon had background training in English, considerable years of experience, and said he recognised the richness of poetry, he talked about poems as instruments or resources to teach the word and sentence columns in the NLS. Ultimately he felt that poetry was less important for pupils than the ‘basics’ (see Appendix 5.4), and that its inclusion in the NLS, particularly in the early years, was cause for concern. This seemed to suggest that even though Simon was a specialist in English, and could be considered an expert, this was no guarantee that poetry would be taught well or for its own sake. Both the enjoyment as well as the knowledge of how to critically appreciate a poem seemed to be lacking.

### **5.2.5 The Effect of Standards on their Role as Literacy Co-ordinators**

Both Co-ordinators were very aware of the standards set by The Secretary of State for Education at that time (David Blunkett), and this drove much of the Year 6 curriculum, and subsequent action plans. In Simon’s school, they had had a 100% pass rate at Level 4 the previous year, and had far exceeded their expected Key Stage 2 results. In Chloe’s school the pass rate was a lot lower (58%), although Chloe commented on the fact that all the children she had in her booster classes got Level 4. However, she had mixed feelings about this.

CHLOE “They definitely jumped up a Level and that recognition for myself was quite good, although I don’t particularly approve of setting children against Levels”.

She seemed torn between the pressure of succeeding in her role as a Literacy Co-ordinator, success being related to students achieving Level 4, and the effect this was having on the children (see Appendix 5.5).

Both Co-ordinators were anxious when successive year groups performed differently, and felt the results reflected upon them.

### 5.2.6 Summary of Co-ordinators' Interviews

In considering the impact and influence the Co-ordinators had on the literary environment of the Y6 children in each school, the Co-ordinator's role was to implement the NLS, ensure that it was running successfully, observe teachers teaching story writing because this was related to pupils' SATs performance, update staff on new documents that came in, and ensure that standards in relation to the SATs were improved or maintained. It appeared that few initiatives or original ideas were implemented by the Co-ordinators. Rather than visionaries, they seemed to be facilitators of the government initiatives. For Simon, the role was jaded. He said that he had never been passionate about the grammar side, but felt that this should be the focus in the primary school years. For Chloe, the Co-ordinator's role was a chance to move up the career ladder, and though she expressed interest in teaching poetry well, and had been on one poetry course, it seemed that she did not have the background knowledge or experience to question or reflect upon the documentation that came her way. It seems improbable that someone with no qualifications in English should be given the Literacy Co-ordinator's role, and yet Stainthorp (1999, p.5) suggests that 'the model of the NLSF is that of a technician and not the enquiring professional'. While Simon seemed to accept the need for testing, and did not question it, Chloe had mixed feelings but ultimately went along with it, possibly because she did not have the knowledge to question it, nor the inclination, given her desire to move into a Deputy Headship. Both of them perhaps encapsulated the co-operative image of how the Co-ordinator should be in the school, implementing what government decided without question or real dissension and this approach seemed to ensure the successful integration of the NLS into each school.

### 5.3 Interviewing the Class Teachers

Class teachers have the most significant and immediate impact upon children's literary environments in the school, therefore it is important to understand how their actions are underpinned by their beliefs, values, perceptions and attitudes towards the NLS, poetry, and the pupils. The following themes are discussed in relation to this, with full interview questions presented in Appendix 5.6:

- Biography of the teacher and future plans
- Understanding of English teaching
- The National Literacy Strategy and teaching poetry
- Personal attitudes to teaching poetry
- Perceptions of children and poetry

#### 5.3.1 Biography of the Teacher

At the time of interviewing Sarah had been a teacher for three and half years in her first teaching post at Chadwick school. She had specialised in P.E. at degree level, and was employed to develop that area at the school. She had confessed previously that she did not really enjoy teaching in its present form, and elaborated that she would like to be involved working with "more able children", as the most difficult aspect of her job was working with a wide range of differing needs.

Chloe had been a teacher for six years, four at St. Albans and two years at a previous school. As noted previously, she had specialised in R.E and History at college and was originally employed to manage R.E and Music at the school. She said that she enjoyed teaching, the main reasons being the variety and interaction with children. What she disliked most about teaching was Ofsted inspections, and the amount of paperwork involved in preparing for them.

Both teachers were trained at the same college, and had good memories of one particular lecturer who taught them poetry.

### 5.3.2 Understanding of English Teaching in the School

Both Sarah and Chloe were unaware of the contents of the English policy for their respective schools. Sarah had read it in a staff meeting when the staff had checked through it together, and Chloe had not, although she was beginning to look at it since a recent Ofsted inspection.

Chloe had never been to the Literacy Co-ordinator for help, because the Co-ordinator had had ill health induced by stress. However, Sarah had been to Simon once over an issue concerning the use of complex and simple sentences. He had referred her to the Literacy Co-ordinator for Gloucestershire who was in school at that time, and she had helped Sarah with the problem.

I asked Chloe and Sarah why they felt it was important to teach children English.

SARAH "So that children can read and write! To succeed in this world you need to be able to communicate, you need to be able to communicate verbally and er...in written means and I mean I'm surprised really by some of the letters I receive off (sic) parents. I actually find it quite difficult to read sometimes what they've written so communication isn't made or its confused so there's one er...there's one reason. Also there's the joys of English, the joys of reading and poetry, which we're probably going to talk about more. Min...you know if they're going to be able to access that then they're going to need to be able to have English they need to be able to read and, and to understand the language."

She spoke about the instrumental and aesthetic nature of English, though the latter seemed to be lost in the desire and need to communicate well.

CHLOE “It’s the focus for everything isn’t it, it’s the focus for all other subjects, English, they couldn’t, you know, the letter writing skills that they do in English, they can use in History, it’s just that, it’s just everywhere isn’t it, it’s just needed in all subjects really...Oh, I love teaching English, yeh, the power of the words, we were talking about personification today, and they sort of were bringing it up in other subjects ‘Oh, that’s alliteration there’ you know, when you’re doing science and you’ve written something down ‘Oh you’ve just written an alliteration there’. It’s the fact that it comes in all other subjects and can be drawn on. I draw on English in other subjects far more now than I used to. Things like, definitely like History and Geography where their writing letters where you have to think about, cos you’ll find if it’s Geography they’ll just slip and write a whole page without paragraphs and I’ll say ‘Well, couldn’t you...’ you know.”

Chloe talked about English in terms of its impact upon other subjects rather than a subject on its own. While she communicated a love of English, she then focused upon the grammatical and instrumental nature of English, rather than the creative aspect of it.

### 5.3.3 The National Literacy Strategy and Teaching Poetry

Sarah confessed that she taught more poetry now through the NLS than she had previously. She stated that her knowledge of poetry was much greater now, and that she read a wider variety of poems. However, this knowledge seemed to relate to the poetic devices in the word and sentence level objectives of the NLS, and writing a poem around those, rather than perhaps a subject or theme.

SARAH “Before the National Literacy Strategy came, it was just the sort of creativity of ‘Hey let’s just write poetry’ whereas now it’s a bit more focused. It’s

you know, perhaps, 'Let's look at personification and see how we can use that in poetry and what sort of different effects we can achieve with that.' It's a lot more focused now."

In contrast, Chloe said that she had taught more poetry before the NLS than now, and felt that there was less emphasis on poetry than previously. However, further questioning revealed that this was not related to the content of the NLS but the pressure of preparing for SATs, which meant poetry was pushed aside.

Sarah voiced similar concerns relating to time pressures and the content of the SATs papers. She always prepared children to answer the story or the letter question so it was unnecessary to teach poetry with the tests looming.

SARAH "...perhaps we're just gearing them up for the tests, because poetry's not in the test, if, if it is it's not, I don't know if people go for it so much, then you don't address it in the lessons."

Sarah confessed that due to the external pressures of these tests, much of the NLS was not covered in regards to poetry because "...we're training them for SAT's...".

Chloe felt that it wasn't the NLS that had given her the confidence to teach poetry well, as suggested by Sarah. She taught poetry the same as she had always done, but with more focus. She suggested that teachers without her confidence would probably not teach the poetry objectives, but this seemed contrary to her previous statement that she believed poetry was taught well in the school (5.2.5 Attitudes Towards Poetry in the NLS). In discussing poetry, she also appeared to be preoccupied both with stylistic features and devices, which she expressed when talking about her daily plans, and with revision for SATs:

CHLOE "You could definitely pick them up and go with it, 15 minutes of reading this poem and talking about styles, metaphors whatever, 15 minutes worth of, yeh, you could definitely pick it up."



CHLOE "There needs to be a balance of that but of the styles that go in, and there's things in poetry that don't get used in other areas that are very useful as well. I was talking to them today about this in the booster classes I said 'If you can drop in a metaphor into your actual story, that will be wonderful, that will really turn your story around'"

When discussing Chloe's aims for poetry that year Chloe said that any aims for poetry were overshadowed by preparing children for SATs, with the focus on story writing. Children were separated into booster classes for English, Science and Maths and seemed to adopt a secondary curricular approach of having one teacher for one subject. Both Chloe and Sarah had begun revision classes after Christmas, and Sarah stated that other schools were starting even earlier than this.

#### 5.3.4 Personal Attitudes to Teaching Poetry

Chloe liked to teach funny poetry, and Sarah nonsense poetry. They both recognised that if they enjoyed the poems, then the children did as well. However, Sarah expressed the view that the children enjoyed nonsense poetry, such as "The Jabberwocky", because anything goes in that sort of poem.

SARAH "...it doesn't have to be real words and so particularly those sort of children who with English tend to fall short with their spelling, their sentence construction, well hey, for this lesson they don't have to worry about that, so I suppose that, you know, that's the beauty of it isn't it, being able to see children who lack confidence generally really just writing, and going for it because they know, well there aren't so many restrictions here."

There seemed to be a misconception here that just because it was nonsense, it did not need to have meaning, or for words to be related within context, although in the NLS, Year 6, Term 2, (1998, p.52) cites, 'to investigate humorous verse:

nonsense words and how meanings can be made from them.' Nonsense poetry could be seen to be more complex than other poetry, because it is necessary to have a good understanding of the structure and meaning of language, to be able to successfully play with the rules of meaning.

When Sarah and Chloe talked about their own personal experiences of poetry, outside an educational setting, they responded very differently. Sarah immediately expressed a very intimate and expressive relationship with poetry.

SARAH "Uhh, I, I don't know, I suppose I read some poems and they just stir my emotions completely um...sometimes it's just the creating of a picture of something or in your head. I don't know, I, I do love poetry um...I just, I just love it when you read something and you can relate it, you can understand what, what's been said here and yet its not said in a conventional way. It's done like a painting or something you, you, I suppose everyone interprets paintings differently don't they, particularly abstract ones and I suppose some poetry can be like that, and you feel as if it's personal to you because it's your sort of interpretation of it. Although most people might have the main part of it, the way that you see it and I love that. I think that's really special to poetry."

INTERVIEWER "So do you write or read poetry at all yourself?"

SARAH "I don't write any poetry, no. I used to when I first started seeing my boyfriend. I think I wrote him a couple of poems (Laughs)."

INTERVIEWER "(Laughs) Ahh. Did he like them?"

SARAH "Well, yes. Well, I, he wrote them to me you see to start off with. Yeh, he's brilliant actually. Doesn't do it anymore, but..."

It appeared that poetry had been used as a way of expressing and capturing a unique and intense moment of time in their relationship, but somehow these experiences of the poetic word had become divorced from the feelings Sarah had about

teaching poetry in school.

Chloe also shared that she had written poetry for a loved one, but quickly moved the focus from personal to educational matters.

CHLOE (Laughs) "Um...yeh. I've written, oh dear I'm going red, I have written poems for people very close to me, but I'm not confident enough to share them, and I appreciate the fact that I'm saying that makes it very hard for children. I think if I was open, I do model for the children, I will model poems, I'm not afraid to model for the children, other adults I wouldn't want to read my poem."

Both had recognised and experienced the power of poetry by choosing to use this medium as a way of expressing intimacy and passion to a partner, but this seemed to be separate from their experiences of teaching poetry to children. This was most evident when Chloe's immediate embarrassment at recalling the poems she had written, were followed by "I will model poems", a comment which seemed disassociated from the intensity of her experience.

### 5.3.5 Perceptions of Children and Poetry.

Sarah and Chloe felt that their pupils probably had knowledge of nursery rhymes before they came to the school, but no experience of poetry beyond that, and certainly no engagement with poetry outside of the classroom. Both stated that children's experiences of poetry outside the classroom did not influence their planning.

In discussing the gender of their pupils and preferences for poetry, Chloe had noticed a difference in the way that boys and girls responded to subject matters and styles. She felt that boys responded more to a poem, such as *Charge of the Light Brigade*, because of its violent content, while the girls responded better to metaphorical poems. In contrast, Sarah felt that boys responded better to poetry than the girls (see Appendix 5.7).

Chloe and Sarah had observed that both boys and girls liked humorous poems, and loved to rhyme when writing their own. However, Chloe was unhappy with what she considered was a poor use of rhyme.

CHLOE "It's just so forced. I will ban them from rhyming for a good term, until I can trust them, cos I personally don't like rhyme cos the children don't use it properly. It's all that forced rhyme that sounds terrible, not actually them, actually, it's not them then exploring any sorts of feelings, it's something that 'I need something to rhyme with nut' and terrible 'who says tut-e-tut-tut' and I'm like 'No, that's awful'."

Finally, perceived ability played an important role in the literary environment. Sarah felt the burden of delivering a poetry session to a mixed ability class, and the need to support them through writing frames. Chloe said that she was not really worried about meeting individual needs in the classroom, but communicated certain opinions about differing abilities when describing a poetry event she attended at the Town Hall.

CHLOE "We were down there for that and I did that with my brighter children, and I've got a booster class of Level 3 to 4, and a class of Level 4 to 5, so I did it with the brighter children and they wrote one together and that was boys and girls, and that was quite collaborative, and that worked quite well, but I think you need to start on a smaller basis...Very often the less able children will actually come up with some quite good stuff, but they would be afraid to in front of other children in case they get laughed at."

Chloe seemed to be implying that such an event was more suitable for those perceived as more able, and while less able children could also come up with some good ideas, there were no guarantees as with "brighter children". These attitudes were also present when discussing what kind of grouping Chloe liked to use.

CHLOE “Small group. I think large group you always lose the less able ones at the back, cos they’re just interested in tying each other’s shoelaces together (Laughs). But it’s nice to do a whole class...cos the less-able hear the more-able come out, and then they go nick their ideas and we’ll say ‘Well we won’t just take them, we’ll change them slightly’.”

Sarah also seemed to have a similar attitude towards those considered less able, when discussing who might influence her pupils.

SARAH “Maybe some do, the more able children might have some influence on them, they might think cos sometimes when they read out examples of work, they might steal some of their phrases...You know the less confident ones really begin to shine because they start, they’ve heard some of the more able talking at the beginning in the large discussion.”

Both teachers felt that they were a combination of a facilitator and knowledge-giver. Sarah felt that she was more a knowledge-giver during SATs revision, while Chloe felt that if children did not know about a certain subject such as haikus, then they needed to be told.

### 5.3.6 Summary of Teachers’ Interviews

Though both Chloe and Sarah attended the same training college, their attitude towards their teaching role differed. Sarah felt overwhelmed by different needs in her class, and Chloe cited paperwork as burdensome, in relation to Ofsted inspections. However, Chloe appeared much more enthusiastic about her role as a teacher, and stated that she enjoyed the challenge of interacting with her pupils. This was evident in the teaching observations, where Chloe joked and laughed with pupils, while Sarah appeared anxious, preferring to talk at pupils rather than interact.

It seemed that the English policy was not considered essential to their teaching of literacy in the school, but this was unsurprising given the emphasis the Literacy Co-ordinators placed on it. Neither teacher had a development plan for English over the school year, rather the aims for literacy and literature appeared to revolve around the SATs tests, with a Level 4 being the mark of successful progress. As a consequence of this, the NLS was the main document to which the teachers referred for guidance and support, although focus was placed upon content that was helpful to the SATs. Both teachers felt that the NLS had replaced the English National Curriculum (1989).

The previous Literacy Co-ordinator in St.Albans school had not had a prominent role in supporting staff, due to ill-health, but since Chloe had taken over the role, other staff would occasionally ask her questions. Similarly, Sarah, in Chadwick school, had only been to see Simon once, so it seemed that in both schools the Literacy Co-ordinator had little influence over the daily planning and implementation of the Literacy Hour.

Though both teachers suggested that the teaching of English should communicate something of the power and joy of language, they focused particularly upon the technical and instrumental nature of the subject. Sarah used words such as "to succeed", "communicate verbally", "written means" and "access", while Chloe used words such as, "letter writing skills", "personification" and "alliteration". This suggested that they perceived the subject as a resource - for Chloe it was the way in which English could be used in other subject areas, while for Sarah it was a way of ensuring success in the world. It seemed that there was little focus on the development of pupils' enjoyment of expressing oneself, to be creative, to allow the imagination to be developed in exciting ways, and to open up new worlds for children through literature. This was translated into practice in Sarah's literary sessions, probably reflecting her unhappiness with teaching. However, St.Alban's

pupils demonstrated a real joy in engaging with poetry they had read and written, which seemed to reflect Chloe's genuine love of teaching.

Both teachers' perceptions of ability appeared to be well formed although simplistic, dividing the class into those who were 'more able' or 'less able'. Generic and polarised characteristics were identified around these labels, which led to assumptions being made about pupils' ability to interact in group discussions, whether a student would be an originator or 'stealer' of ideas, and the capacity to listen. Such assumptions were not always so clearly defined by the pupils (see 5.4.1 The Child and Power and The Pressure of Tests for St. Albans School; 5.4.2 The Pressure of Tests for Chadwick School). In practice, sessions taught by Sarah demonstrated her perceptions of ability through her structured use of differentiated worksheets, focusing on the answers of children of Level Five Description in whole group discussions, and the difficulty pupils had in working in a mixed ability group. However, in Chloe's classroom, her beliefs about abilities were less clear in practice, as children of all level descriptions were engaged in answering questions, work was not clearly differentiated, and mixed ability groupings worked well together. These differences are further highlighted in Interviewing the Children (see 5.3.).

Personal attitudes to poetry seemed to be separated into two distinct categories: experience and knowledge. It seemed that both Chloe and Sarah had not brought their own experiences into the teaching of their poetry and, therefore, did not expect children to either, although Sarah had included some poetry written by pupils at home in a booklet for school, and Chloe encouraged a pupil to read out a favourite poem from a book she had brought from home.

Sarah felt she had benefited from the NLS's treatment of poetry, while Chloe was more ambivalent. However, both teachers expressed concern over the fact that most of the poetry was not covered in Year 6, due to SATs. The main focus of sessions was on letter writing and stories because they were the questions that the

teachers wanted the children to answer in the tests. SATs dominated the year, and, as such, guided all their planning for English. As Frater (2000, p.110) has written:

The missing step then is the first step: planning for the rich language experiences that pupil will receive in a given term, and the related ways in which they will use language. In terms of writing, this means planning the genres that a class will experience, be taught and will practise in a series of assignments

As with the Literacy Co-ordinators, there was no sense of English being developed across the year, rather the focus was on the SATs and how the NLS could be used to support those tests.

## 5.4 Interviewing the children

Finally, each case study pupil is briefly highlighted in terms of their perceptions of themselves as learners, English and specifically poetry. The case study group from Chadwick school are presented first, followed by St.Albans school. This is followed by section 5.4.3, where detailed contrasts and comparisons are made between the two sets of interviews, and related to wider research. The question format developed around the following themes is reiterated in full in Appendix 5.8:

- Children's perceptions of themselves as learners
- The child and English
- The child and poetry
- The child and power in the classroom
- The role of boys and girls in the classroom
- The pressure of tests



### 5.4.1 Chadwick Case Study Pupils

#### Simon

Simon said he thought he had done moderately well at school, and though he found English quite hard, he enjoyed writing stories. His favourite part of the literacy hour was “when we just do the work”.

In describing poetry, Simon felt that “It’s sort of like music almost. It’s like words that rhyme together and they just go together really well”. His favourite poems were funny ones and he had a whole collection of Spike Milligan poems at home, which he read “nearly all the time”.

#### 5.4.2 Lisa

Lisa said she was “Okay” at school, though she felt she had not done well in English, but she liked writing stories, especially at home. Lisa’s favourite part of the literacy hour was “When, we’re like doing, doing the actual work cos Miss has stopped talking to us”, the worst aspect of it being “When Miss talking and we just want to get on”.

Lisa described poetry as, “verses of rhyming words sometimes”. She thought you studied poetry because “maybe you wanted to be a poet when you grew up and you’d know how to write poems and everything”. However, she felt that you should still learn about poetry, even if you did not want to be a poet, although she could not explain why.

#### 5.4.3 Ben

Ben thought that his teacher might say, “I’m okay, but I like talk quite a lot in the class”. He felt he was “alright” at English, but he found the subject boring because “you’re going over it loads and loads of times and she keeps on saying it”.

Ben described poetry sessions as where “you talk about things that affect you and put them in like nice ways and stuff”. He thought that you learnt about poetry in the event of becoming a poet, but he also saw the value of doing it even if you did not decide to write poems as a career, “cos then you know how to describe things in different ways”. Ben said he had written poetry at home, but that it wasn’t very good and he had not shown anybody. Ben’s favourite bits in poetry were “thinking how you can make things come alive and descriptive words, and what you can use in it”, but he disliked discussing poetry with others.

#### 5.4.4 Jem

Jem stated that she had done well educationally, but felt under pressure because she was going to the local grammar school. She thought that English was valuable regardless of obtaining a specific job relating to it. Jem recognised the literacy hour as somewhere where you did “just writing, writing, writing, and some you’re just listening, listening, listening”.

Jem thought poetry was valuable to learn about if you wanted to become a poet “it depends what you’re going to be when you’re older”. Jem read and wrote poetry a great deal outside of school, and had actually composed a book of poems with a friend, three of which had been included in a poem booklet on display in the classroom.

#### 5.4.5 Sarah

Sarah felt she was about average at English because she had been placed in the middle group. She had mixed feelings about the English lessons: “If it’s a really boring English lesson I talk to my friends, but if like, if it’s something that is like quite interesting like we’ve got to do some like, at the moment we’re doing our SATs so I take quite notice of um...English now because for our SATs work we’re going

need to know these things.” She knew about the literacy hour, and described the best bit as just being allowed to get on with the work.

Sarah thought you might learn about poetry if you were going to be a poet, or a teacher teaching it to others, but she thought that it was probably important to learn about it anyway “cos if you have children and they come home from school with a worksheet, with poems something like that you have learnt about it when you went to school, you can actually help them”. Sarah said she sometimes read poetry books at home. However, Sarah felt that poetry was not essential to her learning.

#### 5.4.6 Peter

Peter said he enjoyed break times best in school, “cos we’re not learning anything”. Although he said he liked learning, he also thought it could be very dull. He felt that he had done well at school.

Peter thought certain aspects of English, like subordinate clauses, were only something you had to learn if you wanted to become a teacher in English. He said he liked writing stories and poems, but disliked learning things that you did not need to use when you were older. Peter knew about the literacy hour, and especially enjoyed the writing up of poems, but found that his attention wavered much of the time, due to boredom.

Peter described poetry as “it’s more like what you feel when you’re writing it”. In the sessions he said “ We don’t really learn about poetry. We learn how to write in the style of a poet”. He thought you needed to learn about poetry if you were thinking of becoming a poet or teacher, but not if you were going to work in something like the army. He said he read poetry at home quite a bit, but was drawn to poems that were sad or angry.

### 5.4.7 St.Alban's Case Study Pupils

#### Hannah

Hannah described herself as happy at St. Albans, with lots of friends and nice teachers. She felt that she had done well in English, and guessed that she was at Level 4 in most subjects. She described the reason for going to school as "to learn so you get a good job".

English was one of Hannah's favourite subjects. She was unsure why you had to study the subject, other than if you wanted be an author, because then "you know how to do stories and how to do poetry". She usually liked English, but disliked it when "we're just doing like reading, and you have to say things about it, and say what level is this for".

In describing poetry Hannah said it was sometimes rhyming, and sometimes funny. Hannah sometimes wrote poetry at home. She felt the only reason to study poetry was to write a poetry book, but she enjoyed learning about it at school.

#### 5.4.8 Nia

Nia was also happy at school, because she had made good friends and there were nice teachers. Nia's favourite subject was English, where she did "loads of writing...punctuation, questions about a text that we've done". She was aware of the Literacy Hour and described it as a time when "we have a lot of group work with that table can do this sort of work, and that table can do stuff on fables".

In describing poetry Nia said "A poem is full of words um...some have rhyme in um...poems are usually about things". Her favourite times in poetry were trying to find words that rhymed together, while her worst periods were trying to make up a poem from scratch, without a subject.

#### 5.4.9 Joshua

Joshua felt he had done about average at school. His worst subject was English because he felt that "It's easy, but they don't let us, they don't, they take a long time describing. It takes ages". He described the subject as being about "...non-fiction like er instruction and that, and story writing...".

In literary sessions focused on poetry Joshua explained " Well, we usually plan it, and we usually get some ideas and then we start um, not usually rhyming cos it's quite hard to rhyme, and it doesn't make sense sometimes". Though he expressed similar reservations to the teacher about rhyme, he enjoyed reading such poems at home. Joshua liked the planning part of poetry because you could "...just mess about and do funny ideas, and then you could have any poem", but he disliked writing them up.

#### 5.4.10 Jeremy

Jeremy thought he had done well at school and enjoyed being with his friends. He felt he had done well at English describing it as "understanding grammar and improving...er, spellings."

Jeremy described poetry as "it sometimes shares people's feelings" and "their moods". In poetry sessions Jeremy said that he wrote poetry or answered questions about it. When describing what he had learnt he said that poetry could be "set as in stanzas, and they sometimes have rhyming words in the end, and they can show people's emotions." He said that he read poetry at home, citing Roald Dahl. His favourite bits of a poetry session were reading the poems and seeing which genre they fitted into, and discussing poetry with others, while his worst was filling in questions about a poem.

### 5.4.11 Julia

Julia felt she had done well at school, and English was one of her favourite subjects, where she did spellings and story writing. She felt that it was important to learn about English so that you could get the job you wanted. Julia liked writing poetry, and stories and liked the planning aspect of writing stories. She disliked copying off the board, “sometimes we write so much that our hands ache”.

Julia especially liked rhyming poetry. She thought that you had to learn about poetry so that you understood how to use rhyme if you were going to become an author. Her favourite bits about a poetry lesson were “...when we read and write, when we read it about it and like, like um, when Miss reads it or we read, it joins, it rhymes at the end of each line, and that’s the thing that I like about it”. She enjoyed talking with others about poetry, because she felt it widened her repertoire of poems.

### 5.4.12 Andy

Andy liked the friends he had at this school, and thought he had done well because he had learnt to write poem and stories. He felt that he was good at English, in fact he described his spelling as “brilliant”, although he felt his handwriting was sometimes messy. He thought that you learnt about English if you wanted to be a writer, but then elaborated this to incorporate all forms of writing.

Andy said he thought poetry was “brilliant”. He described it as “Well a poem is something that...usually explains something in the world or somewhere else, like um there’s pollution poems and um like war poems, you can get it from all time ages, I mean there’s medieval, world wars”. Through the lessons he felt he had learnt how to write a poem, and about rhythm. He also said he read poetry at home, such as ‘The Worst Lad in the School’, and enjoyed writing there too, quoting a poem written about the war entitled ‘Stuck here in this muddy trench’. Andy liked to be

given time to allow thoughts and ideas about poetry to develop. He also liked to talk about his poetry with other pupils, because he felt that he might want to keep some things secret from an adult.

### **5.4.13 Summary of Children's Interviews**

#### **Children's Perceptions of Themselves as Learners**

In St. Albans school pupils cited friends, nice teachers and interesting subjects as reasons to enjoy participating in school, and there appeared to be a strong focus on social interaction, between teachers and pupils, for example, when Joshua mentioned teachers encouraging children to play co-operatively in the playground. Pupils of Chadwick school also highlighted friends as a reason for enjoying school, but there was a greater focus on the academic side of school with the likes and dislikes of subjects being expressed; teachers were mentioned specifically in the role of helping in the classroom, and the desire to be on their own, or to get away from learning as in Peter's focus on break time. Four of the children in Chadwick school seemed very clear as to why you went to school, citing the desire to get a good job, while only Hannah cited that reason in St. Albans school.

The focus on academic matters in Chadwick school continued as the children described their perceptions of the teacher's view of them. Ben, Simon and Lisa's perceptions came across as slightly negative, using words such as "Okay" "a bit chatty" "needs to improve on spellings", while Peter and Sarah did not know what the teacher thought of them. Only Jem had a positive perception of the teacher's view. In contrast, pupils at St. Albans used descriptive labels such as "very good", "hardworking", "well behaved", but also added descriptors that went beyond those normally associated with educational performance. Words such as "funny", "always smiling, always lively", "friendly", "cheeky grin" gave the impression that the teacher perceived them as individuals with unique attributes, and that words such

as lively, cheeky, and funny which could be viewed as a negative in a classroom setting were actually perceived as positive attributes.

In a small study of low achieving ninth-grade children in America, Alvermann, Umpleby and Olson, (1996), suggest that it is the quality of learning experiences rather than the actual level statements that influence how the student perceives himself/herself as a learner. A study (Johnson, Johnson and Skon, 1979) of 64 first grade students in America suggested that cooperative learning conditions, where an individual's success is linked to his or her group's success, have higher achievement levels and productivity than competitive or individualistic situations. This can also result in a more positive view of the learning experience in which they are involved. In my own study I observed that in Chadwick school many of the learning experiences were poor compared to that in St. Albans. There was little interaction between the case study children as much of the work was conducted individually; worksheets and interaction with the teacher reinforced stereotypical perceptions of abilities and increased isolation, and there was a lack of humour and enjoyment in the sessions, probably linked to the teacher's own dissatisfaction with the role. The teacher's comment about boys liking the competitive element of trying to produce the best poem (see 5.3 Perceptions of Children and Poetry) also suggests that competitiveness was encouraged in her classroom. In contrast, St. Albans pupils seemed to have high self-esteem as learners; this was apparent in the way they interacted together, particularly in small group work, where there was a high degree of co-operation over tasks; there was also a general appreciation of humour, which was conducted between peers and between pupil and teacher.

### **The Child and English**

Five out of the six pupils at St. Albans school enjoyed English, and had mixed opinions about why you learnt the subject, such as the desire to be an author, to



help with tests, and to get a good job. Only three of the students were aware of the literacy hour structure (Joshua, Nia and Andy). Though there initially seemed to be mixed opinions over things they disliked, on closer inspection it appeared that they were interrelated. For example, Joshua wished the long explanations could be cut out in the booster sessions, while Hannah just wanted to get on and write, not plan, Julia disliked writing off the board so much that her hands ached, while Andy disliked the plenary because he felt it cut into the writing time. It could be suggested that pupils wanted to get on and do the work, but that there needed to be a balance between listening to the teacher and writing.

The pupils in Chadwick school spoke about English in terms of how well they felt they had done in the subject, rather than whether they enjoyed it, and their perceptions of how well they had done corresponded to their level descriptions. Similar to St. Albans school, all of the pupils in one form or another complained about wanting to get on with work, and the monotony of having to listen to the teacher's commentary on what they had to do. While Cullingford (1987) has noted that children like to have clear explanations about the work they are doing, too much repetition is seen as boring and undemanding. Hilton (1998, p.7) claims that the Literacy Hour means that 'In classrooms where literacy teaching is weak it will be a recipe for mind-boggling tedium'. The body language of the case study children in Chadwick school often suggested that they were uninterested during times when the teacher spoke for an extended period. Lisa, Simon and Jem would doodle on paper, while Peter and Ben would lay their heads on the table.

Pupils in both schools thought that they learnt about English to get a good job, communicating a notion that it was something that would ultimately be of use for the future rather than for now. In Chadwick school it appeared that English was functional rather than a pleasure, encapsulated in Peter's statement that he did not want to learn anything that he was not going to use in the future, and

Sarah's desire to only learn things that were going to be useful to pass tests. As Bunting (2000, p.13) states 'schooled literacy could be described as providing a limited technology for children, rather than a life-enhancing and rewarding orientation to language'. Though, most of the case-study pupils had an innate sense of the relevance of studying the subject, they did not possess a discourse of learning that encouraged them to express the liberating, creative and self-fulfilling nature of English. Rather, it seemed that the instrumental and functional aspects of English were predominant in pupils' minds, with the extrinsic goals of tests and jobs as the focus of development. This was particularly evident in the pupils from Chadwick school.

Many of the case-study children in both schools spoke about the long explanations that dominated the Literacy Hour, particularly in the booster sessions. Hilton (1998, p.5) warned about the 'relentless didactic voice' of the teacher and asks the question 'have the long, quiet concentrated periods of writing and reflection gone?'. The children in both schools seemed torn between wanting to get on and write, and being overwhelmed by the task. As Jem said, the Literacy Hour consisted of "just writing, writing, writing, and some you're just listening, listening, listening". There seemed to be little balance between instruction, activity and reflection. This was further evidenced by Julia complaining about her hands aching, and Andy complaining that he did not have time to finish his work because of the plenary. The plenary session should provide opportunity for pupils to reflect upon what they have learnt, and could be an ideal time to make children aware of how they are learning, bringing the thinking processes to the surface, engaging children in metacognitive talk that could raise standards (Williams, 2000). However, what Andy is suggesting is that the teacher repeats back what they have done, perhaps to ensure that children are explicitly aware of their actions so they can repeat it in the SATs, rather than reflecting on how and what they have learnt. In both schools, then, the booster

classes, from January to May, seemed to be particularly uninspiring and arid literacy sessions.

### **The Child and Poetry**

All of the case-study children in St. Albans school (see Appendix 5.11) and Chadwick school (see Appendix 5.12) had poetry books at home which they read, either on a regular basis or occasionally, and Julia, Andy and Hannah of St. Albans school (see Appendix 5.13) and Jem and Lisa of Chadwick school had written poetry at home too (see appendix 5.14). This was contrary to the teachers' beliefs that children had little or no experience of poetry outside of school time, and that background knowledge would not influence planning; it seemed that children of all level descriptions had literary experiences of reading and writing poetry at home, although the writing was predominantly carried out by the girls. Hilton (1998) suggests that to ignore the literacy practices of children outside of school is to deny children's existing body of knowledge taking us back to the 'authoritarian oral instruction' model of the nineteenth-century. Further to this, many of the books pupils owned contained poetry that rhymed. As this was also a key poetic feature that five out of six pupils mentioned in St. Albans, it seemed overly harsh to have been banned from using it for a term, until the teacher could "trust them" to incorporate it properly. As noted in Chapter Two, children have a natural predilection for playing with language and that central to this are rhymes and word play (Crystal, 1998; Grugeon, 1999) so perhaps experimenting with rhymes rather than banning them would have been a better approach. This would be especially pertinent if much of the poetry in the NLS was already being omitted due to SATs, and given that many of the case-study pupils found booster sessions jaded and uninspiring.

In literary sessions it was interesting that Peter felt he had not learnt how to write poetry, but to write in the style of a poet. Perhaps this perception was due

to the teacher in Chadwick school concentrating on the structure and content of the haiku for four sessions. While pupils produced some effective and thoughtful poems, it could be suggested that given the strict form and content, that over time this became constrictive rather than liberating.

Most of the case-study pupils in Chadwick school, and one in St. Albans school, thought that you learnt about poetry if you were going to become a poet, or, as Peter and Sarah suggested, a teacher. Sarah also felt it would be useful to help your children answer questions on poetry. There was this perception, again, as reflected in the *The Child and English*, that poetry was for the future, and that it was instrumental, rather than a natural extension of playing and enjoying language. However, in observations of play with language, by the pupils at St. Albans word play was both stimulated and incorporated within the literary session as a normal part of their daily interaction. This was encouraged by the teacher who joined in with pupils, and very often initiated it, much to the amusement and approval of the children. In contrast, the language play by pupils that was observed in Chadwick school appeared to be regarded by the children as a subversive and mischievous act. This was suggested by pupils keeping voices low, laughing secretly, looking around to see if the teacher was in earshot, and only sharing with other pupils. Choice of pupils was significant too. Whereas all the case-study pupils in St. Albans school shared word play, in Chadwick school it was confined to those of Level 4 and 5 Descriptions, so Lisa and Simon were excluded.

Five of the pupils at St. Albans, and two at Chadwick school said they enjoyed discussing poetry with others, while in the latter school Ben and Peter actively said they disliked it. In practice, the pupils at St. Albans school showed a natural predisposition to work well together, exchanging ideas, listening and answering questions, offering support and encouragement and sharing responsibilities. In contrast, pupils at Chadwick school found it difficult to interact with each other: Lisa and Simon

were ignored, Ben often had to repeatedly ask others to listen to his work, and co-operation in sharing ideas and responsibilities was minimal.

In St. Albans school, pupils listed rhyme, humour, subject, content, feelings and moods, structure, descriptive words and rhythm, when describing what they had learnt about poetry. In Chadwick school, four of the pupils mentioned rhyme, as well as different styles, portrayal of subject, structure and expression of feelings and emotion.

### **The Child and Power/Status in the Classroom**

In St. Albans school power and status were mainly attributed to those who shared opinions with others, and also listened in return. Nia and Joshua were the main choices, and these were the two that the pupils naturally looked to to organise them during whole-group tasks. In describing pupils' level descriptions Andy was the only one to place pupils' in their correct hierarchical order, although he placed Joshua, Hannah, himself and Nia a level above the teacher. All the other pupils mixed the levels up and there seemed to be no correspondence between actual level descriptions and pupils' perceptions of those levels, perhaps because their own standards were measured by behaviour, or whether their peers had an interesting point of view. This lack of knowledge of Level Descriptions is probably linked to their high self-esteem as learners, and their evident enjoyment and involvement in the poetry sessions observed, whatever their ability.

In Chadwick school, status was attributed to those who had notably achieved intellectual standing, such as passing tests to go to the Grammar school, and being Head of School Council. Each pupil was acutely aware of their Level Descriptions due to ability grouping on set tables. Though friendship was highlighted as influencing who pupils would choose to listen to, this was not always borne out, as in Jem and Lisa's case.

It seemed then that in St. Albans school status was awarded to pupils who demonstrated social skills that benefited the group, while in Chadwick school, status was attributed to those whose intellectual position was known, and that first and foremost benefited the individual. Deutsch (1973, p.365) notes how the:

characteristic processes and effects elicited by a given type of social relationship (cooperative and competitive) tends to elicit that type of social relationship. Thus the strategy of power...results from, and also results in, a competitive relationship. Similarly, the strategy of mutual problem solving and tactics of persuasion, openness and mutual enhancement elicit, and also are elicited by a cooperative orientation.

### **The Pressure of Tests**

All pupils at St. Albans said they were not worried about the tests. However, worry in Chadwick school seemed to be in proportion to intellectual status. Simon and Lisa were very worried about the tests, Ben and Sarah were somewhat worried, but their confidence was improving as they revised, while Peter and Jem had recently passed the Grammar School tests, so were not worried about SATs. Most of the pupils at Chadwick thought it made no difference if you were better at tests to the way others perceived you, although this was contrary to answers given in the *The Child and Power/Status* section (p.299). It was clear that the teacher did treat pupils differently based on how clever they were, and that pupils responded negatively or positively to that, depending on their level description. Also, pupils described the tests as if they were in a secondary school taking GCSEs, using terms such as "revision" and "mocks". In St. Albans school Hannah, Nia and Julia thought that getting a better test result made a difference in the classroom, in giving you more confidence, and perhaps helping to gain more friendships by offering help.

In tests, three out of the six pupils said they would like to answer a question on

poetry in St. Albans, whereas only two pupils in Chadwick school said they would like to answer it.

## 5.5 Summary of Interview Data

In conclusion then, when considering the literary environments of Y6 pupils, with specific reference to poetry, a number of issues were raised in regard to the interview data.

First, the Literacy Co-ordinator's main role was to implement and monitor ongoing support for the NLS. However, conflict arose in the final year of primary schooling due to SATs and the pressure the Co-ordinators felt about raising or maintaining standards in test results due to performance league tables and the threat of closure if targets were not met. Any observations of teachers teaching were, therefore, conducted in relation to what was likely to come up in SATs. As poetry was the less preferred option, compared to story and letter writing, the Co-ordinators had never observed poetry being taught in the school. The focus of literary development in the school, then, was mainly on SATs and the sections in the NLS that related to those tests. Because of this, poetry received little attention, and Simon actually perceived the inclusion of poetry in the NLS as a weakness. With this attitude there was little hope of poetry being given more attention in Chadwick school. In St. Albans school, even though Chloe had an enthusiasm for poetry, and a desire to see it taught well, tests were her priority as well. Though Chloe had had little training or experience in the role of Literacy Co-ordinator, and Simon had, it seemed that it made little difference in the way both Co-ordinator's approached their role in relation to tests, the NLS and the further development of English.

The teachers' contribution to the literary environment of Y6 pupils, and in particular, poetry, was prominent in two specific areas: what they taught and how they taught it (see Chapter Four). What became apparent through the interviews was,

that though Sarah and Chloe had trained in the same college, held similar beliefs and values about ability, poetry, the NLS and testing, Chloe enjoyed teaching and Sarah did not. Chloe's enthusiasm, confidence (possibly due to her promotion to Literacy Co-ordinator), enjoyment and sense of humour, combined with her choice and implementation of teaching methods highlighted in Chapter Four, ensured that that though she made some serious errors in the content of what she taught, overall her teaching had had a positive impact on pupils' self-esteem, interaction and the work they produced and presented. In contrast, Sarah's dissatisfaction with her role, anxiety over meeting individuals' needs, and inability to enjoy what she was teaching meant that there were errors in what she taught, and limitations in how she taught. This was reflected in pupils' low self-esteem as learners, anxiety over testing and an air of boredom and tiredness in the sessions observed. Therefore, though both groups of case-study children had similar experiences (booster sessions with their own or different teachers, testing for SATs, concentration on story and letter writing, the structure of the Literacy Hour, limited poetry sessions), the overall literary experience in Y6 for pupils in St. Albans school was markedly more positive than those at Chadwick school.

In the interviews, both teachers displayed a preoccupation with the first two columns of the NLS-the word and sentence level work and a lack of attention to the text level column. This was also evident in the observations of the literary sessions. Though training could be suggested to counteract this problem, it seems that despite the training that Simon (Literacy Co-ordinator for Chadwick school) had received, he chose to believe that the text level work was not as important as the word and sentence columns. When poetry was being taught in the classroom, the text level work was often not covered, which tended to result in lack of attention to meaning within lines of poetry, or the poem as a whole.

Finally, the children demonstrated the effects of the way in which the adults



around them shaped and influenced their community and their literary environment. As noted before, pupils at St. Albans school seemed more positive about themselves as learners, other pupils and their learning experiences, than pupils at Chadwick school. Perhaps this was linked to the fact that pupils at St. Albans school did not define themselves purely in terms of results and Level descriptions. Though they had spelling tests, parents evening, and SATs, instead of high marks they valued sharing and listening, good behaviour, social skills that were beneficial to a developing community. Chadwick school pupils seemed to define themselves exclusively by how well they thought they had done at school. Therefore, to pass the Grammar school test, to be at Level 5, to be on the school council were things that pupils of lower Level descriptions admired, but for those who could and would obtain such marks of status, there appeared to be something lacking in their achievements. For example, Jem shared her anxiety about the work she would have to do at the Grammar school, rather than expressing pride in what she had accomplished. Though Peter had achieved much in terms of intellectual accolades, having a Level 5 Description, passing the Grammar school tests, he seemed disengaged from the whole learning experience in the classroom, not wanting to discuss with other pupils, finding no pleasure in interacting, unless it was in subversive language play. Sarah and Ben spoke about their desire to obtain the test results they needed, rather than learning for pleasure and intrinsic satisfaction. Though both teachers had emphasised tests as being important, it seemed that in St. Albans school the pupils felt that other qualities were as, if not more, valuable, while Chadwick school pupils appeared consumed by the requirements of the SATs.

The way in which pupils viewed themselves as learners impacted on the way they responded to poetry, the teacher and their peers. The case-study children in St. Albans school enjoyed each poetry session, joining in and taking responsibility individually and corporately; each session seemed to positively reinforce the image

they had of themselves, as they moved beyond their narrow Level descriptions. In Chadwick school the pupils worked individually on poetry, showed little enjoyment in the actual tasks set, and responded as defined by their Level Descriptions, with pupils rarely excelling. In short, both sets of pupils were engaged in a self-fulfilling prophecy defined ultimately by how the task was set, and how pupils interpreted it, based on their past experiences of literary sessions and their classroom environment over the year.

In the final chapter the aims of this study in examining the literary environments of Key Stage pupils in Y6, with special reference to poetry, will be considered in the light of the data that has been collected and presented. Pertinent issues and themes will be further highlighted and discussed, and future developments within this area of study will be suggested.

## Chapter 6

# The Findings

### 6.1 Reflection on Key Points Highlighted in the Study

In Chapter 5 the personal accounts of the research participants were presented to provide a phenomenological perspective to the observation data selected in Chapter 4 on the kind of literary environments children were experiencing in Year Six, with special focus on poetry. In this chapter I reflect upon how themes arising in Chapter 4 and 5 have contributed to the understanding of the kinds of literary environments children of Year Six experienced, with special reference to poetry, and how the NLS has contributed to that environment.

I discuss how this understanding has made a unique and original contribution to research on children's literary environments. I have done this by presenting an independent historical observation and review of the literary environments of Y6 children with non-specialist English teachers, undertaken when the NLS had only recently been implemented. The majority of research on the function of the NLS in the classroom at this time, has been funded by the government. The study also focuses on how play with language can be generated around children engaging with poetry, and each other. Play with language in the classroom is relatively unresearched, so this

study draws a link between ludic language, reader-response theory and the teaching and learning theory of socio-constructivism. From this I have proposed a teaching approach to poetry based on a socio-constructivist principles for learning, which I suggest works with children's predisposition for playing with language and learning by engaging with others.

In this concluding chapter, then, I begin by highlighting key points of interest that arose in the analysis of the data collected, which I have gathered under two appropriate headings: the literary environment experienced by Y6 children over the school year; and the teaching of poetry in the classroom. The interview data from Chapter 5 contributes significantly to the first heading, while the observation data from Chapter 4 to the second. However, at times data is correlated from both chapters to provide stronger evidence to the inferences made. Under these headings subsections are presented which contribute to a more detailed understanding of the literary environment children are experiencing, while raising questions about the quality of those experiences. I then suggested that children's experiences of poetry in the classroom could be enhanced by a methodology founded upon socio-constructivist principles, and a framework for teaching is proposed.

I then demonstrate how the research objectives were realised through the methodological processes by critically evaluating the project, including my role as researcher, the limitations and scope of the study and future research directions.

## **6.2 Literary Environments Over the School Year**

In considering the influences upon this environment it became clear from evidence collected from research participants that there were three interrelated areas, which had had significant impact on the literary environment that children engaged in over the Y6 school year. These themes emerged specifically in the interview data presented in Chapter Five. They were the NLS; the SATs and English Level De-

scriptions attributed to students.

### 6.2.1 The Impact of the Literacy Hour in Schools

It seemed that the NLS had had a huge impact on the literary environments of both Chadwick and St. Albans school (5.2.4). It had removed the pressure from the Literacy Co-ordinator to write a scheme of work, resulting in all staff working from the same document, so essentially it was perceived that there was consistency and continuity between the year groups. The teachers also thought that the NLS was a positive development of English in their school, and felt that it had widened their understanding of grammatical terms and literary devices (5.3.3).

In both schools, the staff had originally felt constricted by the structure of the hour (5.2.4), a weakness identified in other schools (Fisher, 2000; Smith and Whiteley, 2000), but were able to be more flexible with it later. So, the implementation of the NLS was perceived to have had a positive effect in providing a framework of what to do, and how to do it. This reflected growing evidence from other schools that teachers felt that the NLS was a positive step in the development of literacy teaching (Fisher and Lewis, 1999; Fisher 2000; Smith and Whiteley, 2000; Collins and Marshall, 2001) especially since it has raised the profile of literacy in schools to a higher level (Fisher and Lewis, 1999; Anderson, Digings, and Urquhart, 2000). However, the same evidence also revealed that teachers were confused by the NLS and some important issues are raised.

Perhaps the biggest impact of all was the movement of the Literacy co-ordinators from being 'enquiring professionals' to 'technicians' (Stainthorp, 1999, p.5). This was reinforced by the rhetoric expressed in the first annual report of the *Evaluation of the Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies* (Earl, Fullan, Leithwood, Watson, Jantzi, Levin and Torrance, 2000, p.12): 'A crucial question in standards-based reform like the Strategies is whether schools are prepared to

trust that following the reforms and utilising available knowledge, direction and support will lead to the desired increases in test results'. This suggests that little is acknowledged about the body of knowledge and experience already present in the school, and how the Literacy Co-ordinator might envisage implementing programmes that would encourage raising of standards.

Further detailed discussion of the implementation of the NLS in the classroom is presented in 6.2.

### **6.2.2 The Impact of SATs**

Parallel to the daily implementation of the NLS were the external and internal pressures of preparing Year Six pupils for SATs, so that they could meet the standards set by the government. Both the Literacy Co-ordinators and teachers were well aware that 80% of children nationally were expected to achieve a Level 4 in English. This meant that booster classes, where children were separated into same ability groupings, began from January to May, and only those parts of the NLS that were likely to come up in the SATs, such as story writing were covered. This meant that teachers picked strands from the NLS, which resulted in an incomplete coverage of the Year Six programme of study, and poetry was one of the areas that suffered (5.3.3). This was perceived to be due to lack of time, and lack of relevance to the tests. However, even if poetry was regularly included in SATs, Sarah said she would rather choose story writing because of lack of subject knowledge and lack of confidence. Chloe felt that it would be harder for children to achieve the marks they needed if they answered a poetry question than if they followed a set story pattern and including set grammatical features such as a subordinate clauses.

Both teachers concentrated particularly upon the story question because that was the decision the schools had made, based on the perception that it was easier to teach to children (5.3.3). This seemed to narrow children's choices since five out of

the twelve case study pupils said that given the opportunity they would prefer to answer a question on poetry (see 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 The Pressure of Tests). Green (2001), Littlefair (1991) and QCA (1997) note how concentrating mainly on story writing and reading, results in children having difficulty with the organisational features and forms of other texts. Hillocks states (1995, p. 114), 'People write arguments because they have something to argue. They write narratives because they have a story they want to tell. For most writing the substantive purpose comes first'. It could be suggested that if pupils' purpose for telling stories were consistently linked to perfecting narrative skills for performance in the annual tests, then pupils were involved in a functional literary environment, with value being placed on how well they could translate what they were doing in the classroom into a test situation, rather than developing their creative imaginings. This came across strongly in Chadwick school where pupils spoke about wanting to learn things that were useful in tests, and for getting a good job (5.4.1 Children's Perceptions of Themselves as Learners). Both teachers expressed a mixture of guilt and pride over the issue of exams. Guilt because they felt that there was far too much emphasis on the SATs (5.3.3), and subsequent pride when all of the pupils in both schools achieved a Level 4. English, Hargreaves, and Hislam (2002) found similar feelings when interviewing and observing 30 Key Stage One and Key Stage Two teachers who felt that even though they were compromising their own pedagogical principles, accountability to parents and the government had become the priority. The study revealed that: 'in an educational climate dominated by monitoring, inspection and test results, teaching for understanding was regarded as an optional extra, permissible once the learning objectives had been met' (English et al., 2002, p.22).

The raising of standards has been explicitly equated with the implementation of the NLS on The Standards Website (Beard, 1998), but in the Y6 classrooms observed the NLS was only being implemented partially. From the suggestion made

by the teacher at Chadwick school, other schools were implementing revision type procedures too (5.3.3). However, Ofsted does not seem to have picked up on this, for none of their inspection data mention teaching to the test. Indeed the Ofsted inspection of St. Albans school, which took place at the beginning of February of 2001, did not see what would normally happen at that time of the school year. Instead of Chloe's class being divided into ability groupings and being taught by different teachers, they observed Chloe teaching her class, straight from the NLS as depicted in her term plans. With such advance notice being given over inspection dates, it is highly credible that inspectors may witness events that would not normally happen in the school term. Because of this it is not clear how relevant the inspections are in reflecting and judging what normally goes on in the school, nor how the tests relate to the success of the NLS. As a framework over the course of the year, it is difficult to assess whether the NLS has raised standards in children in Year Six of Chadwick and St. Albans school due to the selective teaching that has taken place, which revolves round the preparation of students for the exams.

Though poetry could have been covered from September to December, and the latter part of May to July, little attention was paid to it and it was difficult to see five sessions (3.4.2), even though there were nine points identified in the NLS that could have been covered. It seemed unfortunate that the bulk of the poetry was in Term 2 of the NLS document, at the time when SATs revision was taking place. Given the external pressures each school felt on achieving a certain pass mark in Level 4, either the structure of the NLS needs reworking or the pressure needs to be taken off the tests.

### **6.2.3 The Level Descriptions**

The Level Descriptions of reading, writing, speaking and listening, that were attributed to children by their teachers had a dramatic effect on the way in which



they were viewed, and how they viewed themselves, particularly in Chadwick school (5.4.3). The teacher of Chadwick school seated children in same ability groups, which they remained in through all lessons, while the teacher in St. Albans school grouped them in mixed-ability, and streamed them for Maths and English. In the interview data pupils in Chadwick school revealed that status, the pressure of tests, and their view of themselves as learners were predominantly affected by an acute understanding of their level of ability as dictated by the Level Descriptions, while in St. Albans school Level Descriptions had less of an impact on pupils. This could have been attributed to pedagogical choices made by each teacher outside of the SATs revision sessions.

Though Level Descriptions were discussed by the Co-ordinators and teachers, the origins of the descriptors were never referred back to the NC. In fact, both the Co-ordinators and the teachers stated that they never looked at the NC (see 5.2.4 and 5.3.6), so the Level Descriptors were taken out of context of the document as a whole, and only those referring to reading and writing. This was simplifying a complex relationship between talking and listening, speaking and writing and was one of the contentious issues surrounding the National Curriculum in the separating of these interdependent strands (Protherough and King, 1995). The fact that speaking and listening was not initially included in the NLS fragmented the relationship between the Level Descriptors in the NC and the Framework. It also served to communicate a greater emphasis on reading and writing, perhaps further encouraging a focus on raising standards in the SATs. According to the NLP, the framework had been designed to help teachers interpret the English National Curriculum Programmes of Study for Reading and Writing from Reception through to Year Six. However, both the Co-ordinators and teachers thought that the NLS had replaced the NC, and did not refer to it at all. In all of the sessions observed it was the complex relationship of reading, writing, speaking and listening that gave some suggestion

of what each child was capable of achieving, and, as noted previously, the pupils in Chadwick school, particularly, superseded their Level Descriptions in speaking and listening (see 4.12). In St. Albans school it could be suggested that Simon and Lisa operated at Level 3, while Peter and Jem functioned below what was expected of a Level 5 standard (see 4.4, 4.6.3 and 4.7.1), and yet in the tests Sarah, Ben, Jem and Peter achieved a Level 5, while Simon and Lisa achieved a Level 4. In observing the literary sessions at both schools, it appeared that Level Descriptions were not always an accurate indication of the level pupils were working at when engaged with poetry.

#### **6.2.4 Conclusion of Literary Environment Over the Y6 School Year**

While the NLS had taken away the huge burden of providing a scheme of work, and brought supposed continuity and consistency across the year group and the school as a whole, it had meant that in both these schools time taken on developing the English curriculum, thinking about the content and the processes of learning, were now mainly focused on SATs.

As a single indicator to the success of the NLS initiative, test results have perhaps encouraged a 'relentless focus of reaching the targets' (Earl et al., 2000, p.28), as the improvements demanded by the government become harder to attain. However, as it is suggested that only by improving SATs results can political support and funding be ensured, this can prevent reflection upon what is being taught and how it's being taught, resulting in a lack of vision and development of the English curriculum.

While it could be suggested that the children of Chadwick and St. Albans school had only experienced three years of the NLS in its 'entirety' and, therefore, it was not possible to fully evaluate the impact of the document, nevertheless the teachers and Literacy Co-ordinators expressed concern that the next year group coming up was a poor group with regard to Level Descriptions and they were already concerned

how this would reflect in the performance league tables. This demonstrated that even though the subsequent year group would have had one more year of the NLS it had not necessarily improved standards. It seemed that most of the input to raise standards was emphasised in Year Six, regardless of what had happened previously.

### 6.3 Teaching Poetry in the Classroom

Both teachers taught poetry with a specific teaching style that came across very differently. By controlling the children's social environment, they became the main focus of influence in how the pupils related to poetry in an educational setting. Quicke and Winter (1994, p.444) state that:

All teachers use a language of learning in one way or another, even if they are not conscious of doing so. The National Curriculum subject is taught in a specific kind of social context, i.e. the school, and is nested within the discourse or language of school learning. This discourse is made up of shared meanings which frame classroom interaction.

This discourse of learning could be passed on with the greatest impact through the way in which the teachers interpreted and implemented the structure of the Literacy Hour. In considering this, attention needs to be drawn to the teacher-driven and learning-driven styles as identified in Webster, Beveridge and Reed (1996, p.37), in figure 4.1.

#### Teacher-driven

- Adult structured with frequent reinforcement
- Teachers find opportunities to rehearse rules
- Children do as others require them

- Learning through prescribed steps
- Activities are not negotiable
- Pupils' task is to absorb
- Context is irrelevant
- Learning is managed for pupils by the teacher
- Literacy is a set of skills to be handed over

#### Learning-driven

- Adults and pupils decide together how to pursue a task
- Teachers guide and negotiate
- Children are seen as active partners
- Learning arises from joint problem-solving
- Activities provide opportunities for dialogue
- Pupils work collaboratively
- Context is made specific
- Learning processes are highlighted
- Readers reflect and review
- Writers compose and redraft

The teacher-driven style is based on a didactic transmission model of teaching while the learning-driven style is based on socio-constructivist theory (see 6.3.1). When comparing these two styles with the ten descriptors given as an effective way to achieve the objectives laid out in the termly plans in the NLS, it could be said that

half of the strategies are compatible with socio-constructivist theory (NLS, 1998a, p.8):

- scaffolding
- initiating and guiding exploration
- investigating ideas
- discussing and arguing
- listening to and responding

While the other five strategies are more aligned to a transmission model of teaching:

- direction
- demonstration
- modelling
- explanation
- closed questions

Using the descriptions of the learning-driven and teaching-driven style as a framework of analysis (see fig. 4.1) it was possible to compare how the teachers taught very differently from the same document, and draw conclusions about the kind of teaching styles they adopted in teaching poetry and the impact this had on the pupils.

Observation data (see 4.3.5, 4.4.3, 4.5.6 and 4.6.5) shows that the teacher from Chadwick school adopted, in the main, a teacher-driven style, which was expressed in the way pupils were introduced to poetry, the discussions between teacher and

whole class and teacher with groups, the physical control of resources by the teacher, and the differentiation of the activities set. Control over the questions lay with the teacher, who reworded children's answers, re-interpreted their ideas, set down a particular train of discourse, and re-directed questions to other pupils. Edwards (1987, p. 223) calls this 'expressions of dominance'. In analysing the discourse between a teacher and his class Edwards (1987, p.226) observes that:

As the transmitter of news, he (sic) is 'entitled' to take up pupils' contributions as pieces in the jigsaw being built, to deny them 'existence' by ignoring them or translating them into more convenient form, to display them as representing a common understanding, or to formulate a failure to understand which has to be remedied by bringing pupils to (or back to) the appropriate meanings.

Much of the classroom talk in Chadwick school displayed a power-relationship that demonstrated the dominance of the teacher through tight control of the subject content and the structure, and that power was associated with the one who controlled language in the classroom (Danielewicz, Rogers and Noblit, 1996). When thinking about who is asking the question and who is responding Danielewicz et al.(1996, p.328) suggests that the teacher does both: 'By controlling the conversation, and even putting words into the students' mouths, the teacher wants children to internalise patterns of school talk'. It is the teacher who organises the structure of the lesson, so often takes a major role in implementing it.

The work on poetry was also broken down into prescribed tightly defined steps organised around ability, which appeared both constrictive and unhelpful (see 4.5.3), especially when the teacher resorted to the use of worksheets. There are many poetry books that discuss ideas on how to encourage children to write poetry and respond to it, but worksheets of this design are rarely mentioned (Benton and Fox, 1985; Hall, 1989; Andrews, 1991; Brownjohn, 1994; Sedgwick, 1997). Indeed, McClure

(1995, p.124) suggests that if teachers want their pupils to connect with poetry and poets:

This teaching should not be done formally through worksheets, multiple-choice tests, or specific lessons on poetic elements. Rather, it should be incidental as part of a general conversation about what makes a particular poem pleasing or enjoyable.

Though the use of worksheets might seem appropriate for those who have learning difficulties, on the grounds that they might need a more structured approach, in this case-study group it seemed to have varying effects on all the pupils, sometimes to the detriment of their independent powers of comprehension, while others struggled to understand what was required of them.

The teacher of St. Albans school taught predominantly with a learning-driven style (see 4.10.4, 4.11.4 and 4.12), which was expressed through greater involvement of pupils in discussions, pupils working together collaboratively, greater physical freedom within their environment, openness of activities to all abilities. Though, at some points in the teacher's discussion with pupils there was a sense of teacher-driven style, and ultimately this served to illustrate that power was firmly in her hands, there was a feeling that power was more evenly distributed between teacher and pupils. In whole-class discussion times there was a sense of partnership and negotiation, as children seemed to be able to direct and influence the way the session went. In group work this sense of the distribution of power was especially effective as pupils discussed, argued, encouraged, joked and made decisions about their work (4.12). In sharing work with the whole class there was a sense of having created something of worth that was received constructively by the teacher and the rest of the class. While research (Edwards, 1987) suggests that teachers have the power to decide who will speak, how long they speak for, and what they speak about, that power can be shared to make others feel and act as if they have a responsibility for

their own learning, rather than it purely resting with the teacher. It would have been quite easy for the case study group to have not done any work when engaged in small group activity, to have taken advantage of the teacher's absence, yet they seemed to enjoy engaging with poetry, and observations revealed that even if they strayed off task, they were able to regulate themselves and each other back onto the task, demonstrating motivation and a desire to fulfil the task set for their own intrinsic satisfaction.

In considering the influence of socio-economic status on the case-studies groups, it seemed that, as reflected in other research (Johnson, 1974; Gorard, 2000; Nash 2001), that Level Descriptions of children were much lower in St. Albans school, than Chadwick. However, this bore no relationship to the way in which children interacted with poetry in the classroom, as pupils in St. Albans interacted more effectively with poetry, the teacher, and peers. Pupils in Chadwick school, though of higher level ability (according to Level Descriptions), demonstrated greater anxiety and low self-esteem as learners compared to St. Albans. This suggests that a teaching style based on learning-driven principles is more effective in promoting positive learning experiences and can encourage good teaching and learning, which can transcend measures given purely on their academic achievements. As Gorard (2000, p.572) states, though it is mainly by test results the gaps between socio-economic communities are measured, 'It is hoped that the full experience of school for a student is actually about a lot more than this'. It seemed that, though levels were lower in those of low socio-economic status, that the perception of themselves as learners (5.4.3), their ability to co-operate and engage in their work, and the work they produced was of a higher standard (see 4.13 and 4.13.3) than those in the more affluent area (see 4.4, 4.6.3 and 4.7.1) - and yet, according to SATs results the case-study group of Chadwick school looked as if it had experienced better teaching and learning.



Though teachers taught very differently in style, in the way they organised work, class discussion and group work, there were commonalities in the way they used the content of the NLS to teach poetry. The following discussion highlights two key areas.

### 6.3.1 Subject Knowledge

Teachers are expected to select poetry that will cover the detailed teaching objectives in these three strands. However, in all sessions observed there appeared to be too much emphasis on the word and sentence level, and not enough on text level. Because of this, meaning was often compromised (see Meaning in sections 4.7.2 and 4.14.2) and too much focus was placed on the grammatical and technical side of the reading and writing of poetry.

Though the three strands of work are meant to be interrelated the fact that they are included individually suggests that they could and can be taught separately. Certainly the layout of the strands in the NLS leads the reader to consider the word level work first, then the sentence level, followed, finally by the text level work. This would imply that the NLS was based on a structuralist approach as laid out in figure 4.2: Stances in Critical Theory, where emphasis is placed on the breakdown of the text into constituent parts and meaning is not related to the text as a whole. It has been shown in both classrooms that it is possible to have a grasp of word and sentence work, and to be proficient in that, but not to relate it to meaning of the text overall. While not the intentions of the framework, the two teachers observed taught predominantly in a structuralist way, and whenever they used poems such as Ted Hughes' 'Season Songs' and David Orme's 'Autumn Days', they used them as resources to teach the word and sentence level objectives. Indeed, the latter poem had been written and published specifically for the purpose of teaching the mechanics of poetry.

As both teachers taught content from the document that would mainly be tested in SATs, if they had limited knowledge of poetry then they would almost certainly choose simpler skills to teach. Perhaps the formulators of the NLS did not take in the vast body of research, which suggests that teachers have difficulty in teaching poetry well through lack of subject knowledge. If so, then perhaps the Literacy Co-ordinators and teachers would have had specific training on the poetry objectives rather than it being assumed that they understood what was being asked of them and were confident enough to teach it.

Such research could imply that the NLS as a framework is not enough to help teachers teach well. Perhaps those who designed it quickly realised this, for documents and resources have been produced constantly to supplement and support the original framework. But as Goodwin and Routh (2000, p.122) state:

...time for teachers to gain the linguistic and cognitive knowledge required for successful literacy teaching is paramount...Good resources have always been available to schools. However the issue is not what to use but how to use them; and it can be argued that photocopiable sheets, big books and files of lesson plans can only truly be effective in the hands of knowledgeable teachers

The Literacy Co-ordinators and the teachers had read none of the extra documents, as the prevailing attitude was that the NLS was the main document and was enough to get to grips with at that time.

### 6.3.2 Meaning of the Text

In looking through the NLS for Year Six, it became evident that questions such as 'What does this poem mean?' or 'What is this poem about?' were presumed. In Year 6 Term 2 (NLS, 1998a, p.52) meaning is presented in the context of it being an unusual feature:

- 3) To recognise how poets manipulate words
  - For multiple layers of meaning
- 4) To investigate humorous verse
  - How poets play with meanings;
  - Nonsense words and how meaning can be made of them
- 6) To read and interpret poems in which meanings are implied or multi-layered

It seems that in the detailed work set out in the NLS, meaning and interpretation are taken as a given, and a basis upon which other teaching points can be developed, such as in Year Six Term 1 (NLS, 1998a, p.50): 'to articulate personal responses to literature, identifying why and how a text affects the reader'. And it appears that meaning is taken for granted in writing too, for there is no recommendation through Year Six that children think about the meaning of their similes, metaphors, and poems modelled on other poems. Though this may seem obvious, in the five sessions observed in each school it appeared that it was possible to teach, and for children to respond, without the meaning of poems read and written being discussed in any detail or depth. This fundamental concept, seemingly essential to effective teaching and learning, was disguised by the children's ability to successfully recognise the poetic devices and structures in a poem. Because the teacher at St. Albans school had emphasised this in her sessions, she felt that if a question on poetry ever did come up in SATs:

TEACHER "I'm confident that in a test situation they've got a chance at the poetry thing now, you know. They just know what to do, to go through the motions."

However, without emphasis on the context and meaning of both the constituent parts and the whole of a poem, there is diminished focus and little point of impact

between reader and text, which Rosenblatt emphasises (see fig.4.2). Therefore, it would seem that contact with the text is mainly on a structuralist level, where the parts are identified and analysed from a technical viewpoint. This could further suggest that it does not really matter then if the poetry is written for poetry's sake or as a resource to teach children about how a poem is created.

It appeared that without linking meaning to the text the teachers had difficulty at times in understanding how pupils were making their own meaning. They coped with this by using several strategies. The teacher of Chadwick school made much of discovering the meaning that the poet has created through the text, but put little emphasis on what the children brought to the reading(4.3.1). Rosenblatt (1978, p.15) suggests that this is a false dichotomy:

Many contemporary critics and teachers evidently think that they are being 'objective' when they discuss identifiable elements in the text. They do not include in their theoretical assumptions recognition of the fact that even the most objective analysis of the 'poem' is an analysis of the work as they themselves have called it forth.

This was evident when the teacher at Chadwick school 'helped' a pupil to interpret the simile in Ted Hughes' poem, but when writing up the work the pupil chose to write his own interpretation down instead (see 4.5.1).

The teacher of St. Albans would sometimes change what a pupil had said by re-interpreting it through her own understanding (4.11). It seemed she was agreeing with what pupils said, but changed what was said to fit her own ideas. For example, when trying to get the pupils to interpret what the poem was describing she placed her interpretation on top of pupils.

TEACHER "What do you think the poet might have had in his mind when he was comparing the wind and the rain?"

ANDY "A storm."

TEACHER "Well yes, but what might he have been comparing it to, cos Abby talked about personification which is right. Jeremy?"

JEREMY "Bullying."

TEACHER "Bullies? Yeah. I thought brother and sister maybe arguing, and up all night."

Edwards and Furlong (1987, p.342) suggest that when you are a pupil:

Being taught usually means suspending your own interpretations of the subject matter and searching out what the teacher means...The pupil's suspension of his own interpretation may be so complete that if he cannot understand what the material means to the teacher, then it becomes literally meaningless for himself.

In both schools it was evident, particularly in Chadwick school, that pupils did not understand the interpretations the teachers were making. Clarity was lacking because there was no reference to the meaning of the poem, and the relationship of one line or one idea to another (see 4.7.1 and 4.7.2 Meaning).

Where meaning-making is the explicit focus, pupils find themselves at a disadvantage because they have to model the language of the school as expressed through the teacher. In this instance, pupils in Chadwick school were not only struggling with the model language of the school, but also with the lack of confidence and subject knowledge the teacher displayed in the session. The pupils in St. Albans school suffered less though, and this seemed to be due to the fact that meaning-making was not the only focus; having fun, discussing and sharing ideas, and joining in at a number of levels combined with the teacher's confidence and enjoyment of the session added other dimensions to their experiences.

Wade (1981) suggests that experience of a poem needs to involve interpretations, judgements and retelling in order to make meaning that is relevant to pupils. He says (Wade, 1981, p.47), 'We may achieve satisfactory answers to all our questions without involving pupils in the experience of a poem'. Also, Andrews (1991, p.128) suggests that 'Poetry's raw material is language, the common property of everyday discourse'. In the Chadwick classroom the teacher was preoccupied with an anxious literal interpretation of the poem, which she conveyed in the whole class discussion where she asked very specific questions and expected specific answers (4.5). Dias and Hayhoe (1988, p.7) note that this kind of questioning and response is aimed at 'a particular direction of inquiry and a particular destination'. It is linked to a belief that the poem needs to be examined closely to get at the meaning, which is divorced from the effect the poem has on the reader. It has been noted previously that, though the teacher implies that there is no wrong or right answers to questions where pupils are encouraged to find the meaning, there are subtle indications that this is not the case. Dias and Hayhoe (1988, p.7) state that such an approach:

...Dictates a classroom procedure which operates primarily through a process of inductive questioning by the teacher and a corresponding developing sense of the poem by the pupils. The teacher is in charge of the meaning that evolves and the text, rather than the readers' generally unverifiable (it seems) impressions and intuitions, must be adduced in support of the meaning that is 'unlocked' through the teachers' questioning.

However, if the teacher does not understand what the poem means then how was she to draw attention to its meaning?

### 6.3.3 Children's Knowledge Outside of the Classroom

It emerged through the interview data that the Literacy Co-ordinators (5.2.5) and teachers (5.3.5) did not believe that children had much experience of poetry outside of the classroom, even though they were aware that after writing and studying hard at school a significant number of the case study pupils were going home and reading and writing poetry (see 5.7.1 and 5.7.2 The Child and Poetry). It seemed that even though evidence contradicted their beliefs, the adults maintained a particular perception of pupils' literary experiences as being primarily experienced in the classroom. As a consequence of this perception, teachers did not incorporate children's literacy practices at home into their planning and development of the English curriculum. This suggests that the teachers felt they had a body of knowledge to pass onto the children, which can be attributed to a didactic style of teaching.

Burnett and Myers (2002) carried out a small-scale research project on two groups of primary school children who, using disposable cameras, recorded significant literacy events and texts in their lives outside of school and then discussed them. They found that the children in the sample chose to engage in literacy:

- As a way of maintaining and reinforcing relationships
- As a means of organising life
- As a vehicle for learning
- As reflection of identity
- For private pleasure

(Burnett and Myers, 2002, p.58)

They found that all the children were engaged in rich and diverse forms of literacy and that some of the literacy practices in school had been adapted to meet their needs in home life. The researchers concluded that children need opportunities in

school to discuss and explore their own personal literacy practices in order to build a bridge between home and school experiences. In Chadwick school Jem wrote poetry at home with a friend for pleasure and learning. It was a way of establishing and maintaining her friendship, for she particularly enjoyed talking with those who liked poetry. In St. Albans school, Andy used poetry as a way of projecting his own imagination to experience what it might be like to be 'Stuck here in this muddy trench', exploring his fascination with war through another medium. And Lisa, who found it so difficult to write in the session observed at Chadwick school, would write stories at home and tell her peers that she had. By teachers defining such clear cut boundaries between school knowledge and home knowledge the literary curriculum that children were engaging in outside of school hours was denied.

As previously discussed in Section 2.1 of this study children experience a range of poetry pre-school and outside of the classroom and have a natural inclination to play with language. In examining the NLS to see if this body of knowledge was referred to and drawn upon in the classroom it became clear that, though there was much that was positive with the inclusion of poetry, there was very little evidence that drew attention and value to children's experiences of poetry.

The NLS teaching objectives for Reception acknowledge that pupils should be taught rhyming patterns and the example of learning nursery rhymes is given, but there appears to be no significant acknowledgement that children may come to school with knowledge and experience of poetical forms. However, it is also stated that children should be taught 'to link sound and spelling patterns by: using knowledge of rhyme to identify families of rhyming CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words' (NLS, 1998a, p.18). This could mean that the NLS is referring to children's previous experiences, but again there is no explicit indication that this is the case, which could suggest that such things are expected to come from the school and, therefore, subsequent teaching objectives such as: 'to use experience of stories, poems and



simple recounts as a basis for independent writing' could imply that these experiences are attributed to that which is contained within the classroom.

Through Years 1 and 2 the objectives about poetry are revisited, developed and extended but again there appear to be no links between what goes on in the classroom and what children's experiences are outside.

In the teaching objectives for poetry at Key Stage 2 there is only one reference to children explicitly drawing upon their own body of experience and that is in Year 4, Term 2 (1998a, p.39), where it is stated that children should: '...Write poems based on personal or imagined experience...'. If this experience is not taken into account to the extent that research suggests it should, then new information about metaphors, alliteration, onomatopoeia will have little meaning to the child other than that it is specialised knowledge that has no relevance to the constructs of knowledge already in place, which is in essence formed outside of school. And, as there is no opportunity to link a child's love of playing with language with what they are expected to learn about poetry in the classroom, it could become irrelevant and valueless in a school context.

The NLS does include poetry of many different forms, including adverts and songs but those which are probably closest to a child's experience appear only once in Year 4, Term 3 and Year 6 Term 2. It would seem that they have been included not because it is important to acknowledge children's experiences but because they are part of a range of a variety of forms that the NLS is determined every child should cover. It is not explained why any of the forms have been included, so it is open to interpretation to how much value is placed on each individually. Indeed, by the order in which these forms are placed, it could communicate that children's own experience has little value. In Year 4, Term 3 (1998a, p.42) it is stated that children should be exposed to a: 'Range of poetry in different forms, e.g. haiku, cinquain, couplets, lists, thin poems, alphabets, conversations, monologues, syllabics, prayers,

epitaphs, songs, rhyming forms and free verse'. It is strange then that Beard (1999) should highlight songs as being a key example of how the NLS links performance with poetical forms, when it does not appear to have the same emphasis or value, placed as it was towards the end of such a long list. Finally, in Year 6, Term 2 (1998a, p.52) children are expected to encounter a: 'Range of poetic forms e.g. kennings, limericks, riddles, cinquain, tanka, poems written in other forms (as adverts, letter, diary entries, conversations) free verse, nonsense verse'. Poetical forms that children daily engage with have been included, but only as part of a long list that is not, on appearance, intended to release children's knowledge as Andrews (1989) suggests, but rather to provide children with a bank of knowledge about poetry.

Fenwick (1995, p.28) has observed that pupils: 'often display an understanding of poetry which has hitherto been unsuspected', while Wade (1981) claims it is important as soon as children enter school that the knowledge they bring with them about poetry is shown to be valued, and secondly that what happens in the classroom extends: 'the knowledge, skills and pleasures that are embryonic in the young child' (p.193). With a growing body of evidence suggesting children have an innate appreciation of poetry, and spend a significant amount of time playing with language, perhaps this needs to be included as an important strand of the NLS in contributing to the development of children's poetical understanding and experience.

Research in cognitive science (Rogoff and Lave, 1984; Newman, Griffin and Cole, 1989) has shown that children's everyday experience is the foundation upon which they construct an 'intuitive understanding' (Vosniadou, 1992 p.349) of their cultural environment. This understanding can also be referred to as naive knowledge and could be considered by teachers as being unimportant. But, as Boekaerts (1992) argues, for high-quality knowledge acquisition to take place it is extremely important that children's constructs are understood, for it has been suggested that these constructs are hard to change (Vosniadou, 1992). Vosniadou shows that when 'school

knowledge' contradicts experiential knowledge children assign it to separate domains rather than extending and developing previous knowledge. It, therefore, remains separate from, rather than a part of, the restructuring that goes into appropriation. Through my own research I have found this to be the case when investigating children's perceptions of rhyming and non-rhyming poetry (Cumming, 1993). They believed that humorous poetry rhymed, and that non-rhyming poetry was serious. They kept these beliefs despite school experiences involving serious poetry that rhymed and humorous poetry that did not, which contradicted their entrenched beliefs.

To assist teaching and learning, Vosniadou recommends that teachers need to recognise the mental models of thought children have already constructed through their own experience. Her own extensive studies involving children's understanding of the shape of the earth have shown that any restructuring of naive knowledge has to be done gradually and slowly, and that children can go through many levels of different understandings before they can appropriate the specialised knowledge of school.

This study suggests that there should be greater correlation with children's literary experiences outside of school and in the classroom, and that children's body of pre-existing knowledge and literacy practices could be more widely acknowledged in the NLS.

#### **6.3.4 Speaking and Listening**

It is difficult to understand why, in having made reference to speaking and listening as being essential skills alongside reading and writing, that it is not given the same kind of detailed attention as is given in the English National Curriculum. In interviews about the NLS teachers have raised this as a serious concern (Anderson et al., 2000). Although it is maintained in the NLS (1998a, p.3) that it: 'contributes

substantially to the development of Speaking and Listening', the quality of any interactive discourse is left to the discretion and interpretation of the teacher, and there is little in the teaching objectives that explicitly gives support and help in this area. On examination of the Year 6 objectives for poetry the contribution of the NLS to speaking and listening appear to be an exaggerated claim, for there are too few opportunities in which teachers are encouraged to engage children in active discussion to substantiate it.

In Term 1 of Year 6 there is only one occasion where it is stated that interaction through discourse should take place (DfEE, 1998a, p. 50) where children are expected: 'To contribute constructively to shared discussion about literature, responding to and building on the views of others'. In Term 2, Year 6 there are no specific objectives which explicitly link poetry to speaking and listening, and in Term 3 (DfEE, 1998a, p.54) there is only one: 'to discuss how linked poems relate to one another by themes, format and repetition', which could be interpreted as discussion in writing as opposed to speaking and listening.

Fenwick (1995, p.27) has observed the positive developments of the increase and quality of poetry written for children but: 'the development of oral aspects of the genre do not appear to have progressed to the same extent'. Hall (1989, p.12) notes how: 'language and literacy do not exist in isolation. Language is inextricably bound up with experience, thought and feeling' and that poetry is a rich resource in developing those bonds more fully. Marsh (1988, p.31) describes how poetry: 'Is often a social process of shared entertainment and shared experience' while Hull (1988, p.251) states that: 'Defining' the poem becomes a social activity'.

It is interesting that in the *Review of Research and other Related Evidence for the National Literacy Strategy*, Beard (1999) comments on the way in which the framework constantly interweaves speaking and listening, writing, and performance of poems, but the aspect of both performance and oral discussion is not made explicit

in the teaching objectives, nor is it mentioned explicitly in this review. In this report there is no indication as to the amount and quality of interactive discourse that is taking place in classrooms.

Subsequent fliers have been produced on speaking and listening in the classroom (DfEE, 1999a, DfEE, 1999b) which again advocate high quality interactive work 'as long as you don't lose sight of the objectives' (DfEE, p.4), but English et al. (2002) argue that the rapid question and answer sessions modelled in the Ofsted videos as good NLS practice probably had more impact than anything teachers have read. Although there is a lack of explicit instruction or guidance on speaking and listening in the main document, it would appear from the evidence that interactions between teacher and children have increased significantly. However, English et al. (2002) noted in observations and interviews involving thirty Key Stage One and Two teachers, that though pupils' contributions have increased, that there was less opportunity for extended interaction. In measuring pupils' responses, only 10% of responses were longer than three words, with only 5% more than 10 words. Collins and Marshall (2001) have also observed in a single case-study of one teacher teaching literacy in a year 4/5 classroom only a limited number of children entered into the whole class discussion, and that their responses were short and lacked exploration. They felt that though the NLS seemed to rely heavily on interactive discourse in the classroom that the issues surrounding this, such as quality of discourse, were not addressed in the framework, which is after all the document that teachers mainly refer to.

This is significant because of the difference in the way the two teachers guided and supported speaking and listening in the classroom in this study. In the whole-class discussions in Chadwick school, children were observed responding frequently to questioning, yet these were very often one-word responses, which were only occasionally extended. In St. Albans school the teacher dominated the majority of

the talk, and both teachers often relied on the same pupils to answer questions. In Chadwick school children on higher levels were often encouraged to answer questions, while in St. Albans school it was often the boys who were asked questions, perhaps because they positioned themselves in close proximity to the teacher, so were immediately in eye-contact when she asked a question and they raised their hands.

In considering the way in which the two teachers managed talk in the classroom, they both approached it very differently, and it seemed that the teacher of St. Albans school was much more successful in engaging children in discussion than the teacher of Chadwick school. However, the most successful talk went on in the case-study group of St. Albans school when it was left to work through and engage with the teacher's, their own and each other's ideas. This suggests that training how to encourage quality interaction in the classroom needs to be included and not left to presumption that it is necessary and therefore being managed well.

### 6.3.5 Talk in Groups

In observing children talking in the classroom some researchers have suggested that 'it may come as a surprise to find how long and how far small groups of children sent off on their own to engage in some directed task (such as exploring a poem) will often go on their own' (Martin, Williams, Wilding, Hemmings and Medway, 1976) while others have noted that children demonstrate a rich and complex use of language (Crystal, 1998; Grugeon, 1999). While some studies suggest that group work facilitates learning, others have observed that it may lead to little directed learning (Bennett and Desforges, 1984); Wood (1988) states that group work needs careful management and support if children are to be expected to work together on problems. Henson (1993, p.39) comments that, 'Using talk to help establish learning Communities is more involved than simply providing opportunities for students to

use it as kind of “talking to learn” to improve their comprehension of a subject’. She uses the term Community to define a mutually supportive group that allows for individuality to flourish, and while recognising that this is an ideal, she believes that approximations of such a community can exist where people work towards fulfilling their potential. This kind of group work is sometimes considered to be part of a more informal and progressive approach (Barnes, 1976; Stubbs, 1983) whereby:

Equal status and mutual trust encourages thinking aloud: one can risk inexplicitness, confusion and dead ends because one trusts in the tolerance of others. The others are seen as collaborators in a joint enterprise rather than as competitors for teacher’s approval. (Barnes, 1976, p.109)

In considering the interaction between the two groups of case study children, it seemed that there were distinct differences. Though there were the beginnings of some tentative talk in the Chadwick group, which could have lead to exploratory and interpretative learning, this was limited. It seemed to have been terminated due to a disagreement in interpretation, and it appeared that these children needed some support and guidance in turn-taking, encouraging others to share ideas and valuing what others said. When the teacher took away her strong directives the children seem to find themselves with no established framework that they could work confidently and freely within. Instead they seem to adopt something of the teacher’s responses in terminating ideas that did not agree with the majority (4.4).

Henson (1993, p.41) states that:

One of the prerequisites for being part of a community is being able to communicate in such a way that is accepted, whether the community is a large one, such as a religion, or a small one made up of only a few friends. For this reason, talking only enhances Community when everyone ‘speaks the same language’ or when people from differing language communities

are willing to value each other's language.

There are many powerful examples of children beginning to take ownership of learning and conflict management in Pierce and Gilles, *Cycles of Meaning* (1993), which have amazed the adults observing and those involved in facilitating children. In the sessions at St. Albans school the case-study group demonstrated sophisticated and effective ways of working towards a common goal, by sharing responsibility individually and corporately, encouraging each other, and by acknowledging their different strengths. The teacher played a key role in facilitating each child to function successfully as an individual within the community by allowing them freedom to approach the work to the best of their ability, by involving children in decision making, by encouraging principles of constructive criticism and positive feedback, by providing structured activities that relied on the autonomy of the individual and the group to accomplish the task (4.11.4).

Henson (1993, p.42) states that many pupils do not feel a part of school Community due to outside or within-factors in school, which prevent children from taking part in dialogue. Silencing goes on in schools in several different ways: when schools do not allow students to talk or when schools do not value the students' language. Either way, students who are silenced often become alienated, and students who are alienated will find it hard to become part of any learning Community in school. Shor and Freire (1987, p.7) also recognise that 'student alienation is the biggest learning problem in school'. In examining the responses of the case-study children it would seem that Simon and Lisa felt isolated from the task set, but Peter has also showed signs of being distant from the learning experiences. Alienation, then, is not necessarily linked to those identified as being lower-ability.

In the NLS (1998a) there is little support or guidance on how teachers should encourage and manage group work. Although the NLS (1998a, p.10) says: 'Careful management of demands and responses in whole-class and group sessions offer



high levels of involvement for all pupils', no framework is provided in this document about the characteristics of good group work, and what strategies might be employed to encourage effective group discussion. In fact, in the rationale, where successful teaching is described, the language used relates more to teacher-pupil interaction, than pupil-pupil, and this is also reflected in the description of the two main categories of group work in the NLS (1998a): guided group work, which is overseen by the teacher working with one similar-ability group, and independent work, presented as tasks which pupils must get on with without the need to interrupt the teacher.

In a later document published as a guide and support to Speaking and Listening in the NLS and across the curriculum, it is noted that exploratory talk 'would be more successful if the patterns of language needed were explicitly identified and taught' (DfES, 2003a, p.8). In this and other documents (DfES, 2003b; 2003c), talk between teacher and pupils, and pupils and peers, is discussed in detail with some useful practical guidelines on how to engage in and nurture dialogic talk that is meaningful to everyone involved. Unfortunately, such support was not available at the time of observing the two teachers, and even these materials are not presented as priority for the development of good group work, or talking and listening in general, but for 'teachers and schools who want to review their current provision, development plans and priorities' (DfES, 2003a, p.5). At the time of its implementation, additional support materials were provided for the NLS in the form of 'Activity Resource Sheets' (1998b), which attempted to show how a particular objective taken from the Framework could be taught through whole class and group work. Though these sheets were useful, they were specific to the objective being taught and did not include generalised strategies on how to develop talk. Further, there were only two resource sheets based on poetry chosen from Year 3 and Year 5. While the National Curriculum was also intended to support Speaking and Listening, in interviewing the teacher from Chadwick school she said that she thought the NLS had replaced

the National Curriculum and that it was no longer relevant. She also revealed that she felt she did not have the time to read the extra support documents that accompanied the NLS, so the omission of a detailed account in the Framework on how to develop talk in the classroom, was not necessarily compensated for by the extra handbooks and resource sheets that followed.

While many researchers have observed the positive effects of group work (Johnson, Johnson and Skon, 1979; Wade, 1981; Measor and Woods; 1984; Rowland, 1984; Pollard, 1985), some researchers have expressed concern over the kind of group work that has occurred in schools (Galton, 1981; Sands, 1981; Wade 1981). Galton (1981, p.180) states: 'Urgent research is required, not only to explore the perceptions of teachers and the nature of group working, but also to observe and identify the best of existing practices as models for future in-service and initial training'. A survey of sixty children (Cullingford, 1987), some of whom were in their last year of primary school, while others were in their first year of secondary, suggested that children's attitudes to teaching styles were that they liked variety, provided they knew what was expected of them. This has been supported by further research on children's views on learning in the classroom (Brown and McIntyre, 1993; McCallum, Hargreaves and Gipps, 2000).

### **6.3.6 Teacher Talk During Group Work**

In both classes, when the teachers joined the case-study groups, power reverted back to the adult, and the teacher governed the conversation and its direction.

In St. Albans school the teacher appeared to adopt a teacher-driven style when joining in the group, which had an oppressive effect upon pupils' verbal and written responses (4.12). On the whole, group work in this classroom was much more successful when the teacher was not present. However, the teacher did on one occasion joke with a pupil, and asked the case-study group what poetry books they had at

home, demonstrating that play with language was acceptable, and that talk need not always be strictly confined to the task. The pupils adopted the same principles in many of the sessions.

In the Chadwick classroom the teacher intervened in the group when they needed her help, but her guidance and support seemed to elicit only a superficial response. For example, Lisa appeared to be struggling with the work, but she was still able to converse in the traditional question-answer pattern, and therefore fulfil the teacher's requirements (4.6). However, even though Lisa was disengaged in the teaching and learning process, she was still able to survive by closely following the teacher's cues, and repeating back sections of speech the teacher had said, a pattern of action that had the appearance, however superficial, of adult and child interacting in an educational setting. This is different from the dialogue between teacher and pupil that Goodwin presents (2001), where the teacher 'scaffolds' the ideas the children are exploring. She states (p.29):

The youngsters are prepared to offer ideas that are speculative because the social relationship between teacher and learners are secure. In their speculative remarks, the risk of failure to get the correct answer to the puzzle is a positive challenge to be overcome rather than as a confidence-sapping full stop to learning.

In comparing the teacher interaction with Peter, and with Lisa in the group, there were noticeable differences (4.5.1). Peter was more confident in his approach, questioning the teacher twice and using assertive phrases such as 'I think'. In comparison Lisa was very compliant, her responses minimal, enough to fulfil the task. Pollard and Filer (1996, p.11) note how, in classrooms with limited negotiation and legitimacy, only children who are exceptionally confident feel able to take risks while others 'keep their heads down'.

In all of the sessions observed, there was no time where the teacher worked with one group while the rest of the class worked independently as suggested in the third period of twenty minutes in the Literacy Hour. Rather the teacher moved from one group to the other and, therefore, contact time with students in groups was fleeting and directive (possibly due to limited amount of time available).

### **6.3.7 Play with Language**

The oral culture of play enacted in song, chant, and rhyme becomes a significant part of relationships and social interaction with peers, for as children become older they reject what has been preserved by adults for something that is self-organised and unique to them, becoming part of a complex playground culture (Opie and Opie, 1969; Grugeon, 1988; Opie, 1993; Blatchford, 1996). The Opies (1959, p.1) have observed that when children engage in the lore and language of the playground they abandon 'adult approved' rhymes for their own oral tradition of rhymes, songs and jokes that: 'are at once more real, more immediately serviceable, and more vastly entertaining to them than anything else they learn from grown-ups'. It is one of the most important ways in which children interact together to: 'explore and explain in their own terms their perception of the world that they are living in' (Grugeon, 1999, p.13). Grugeon relates how a student teacher observed children engaging in: 'spontaneous use of complex rhythms and phonological patterning, use of alliteration and assonance, the handling of sophisticated narrative structures and rhyme' (Grugeon, 1999, p.15) so signifying a natural predilection towards the use of the 'poetic function', and leading to the conclusion that rhymes and word play are central to children's oral culture. Koch (1970, p.8) writes: 'One thing that encouraged me was how playful and inventive children's talk sometimes was. They said true things in fresh and surprising ways', while Hall (1989, p.98) has observed how pupils in Year Six 'are inordinately fond of word-play'. Many such observations have led

Crystal (1998, p.6) to suggest: 'that it is part of the normal human condition to spend an appreciable amount of time actively playing with language...or responding with enjoyment to the way others play'. While Mole (2002,p.37) states that, when visiting primary schools, he has been delighted to discover that 'although the world has altered in so many ways since my own playground days, the grammar of that secret society remains unchanged', Crystal (1987) notes how little research on how children's play with language develops as they progress through school. There also seems to be a lack of study of the way in which children use play with language in the classroom, yet from these case studies it emerged that children played with language whether it was encouraged by the teacher or not.

There is much evidence then that children have a natural predisposition towards the use of the 'poetic function' in oral language and an intuitive understanding about poetic devices. It is this that prompts Crystal (1987, p.184) to say:

...the axiom which should underlie all work on language intervention, whether in classroom or clinic, is the same that underlies all good educational practice: that one will make most progress when teaching can be related to what the student already knows.

It is also suggested that this predisposition is nurtured and developed within a social setting that begins at home with the sharing of traditional language play between the adult and child, which is then re-interpreted and transformed into something that is exclusively shared amongst peers. However, in this study it was observed that if the teacher encourages play with language, as in St. Albans school, then it could become a natural part of the teaching and learning culture that is endorsed by both pupils and teacher (4.14.1 Play With Language). Pupils may share language play with peers, but this was also, at appropriate times, shared with the teacher. The teacher often set the precedent of joking with pupils and engaging in word play and imagery that the students readily appreciated. This in turn led

to a discourse of learning that included language play as a natural part of engaging with each other and the poetry. This gave many of the sessions a fresh and exciting feel to the work, and a general feel of enjoyment and appreciation, both of the text, and of the reader's response.

In Chadwick school play with language was also observed, but pupils very much engaged in this as a subversive act, done in response to their work yet separate from the culture of work that they were immersed in (4.5.1). The discourse of language play ran parallel to a discourse of learning, but it remained 'underground', and was shared exclusively amongst peers.

## 6.4 Teaching Poetry Well

In Chapter Two (2.1) it was suggested that poetry could be approached phylogenetically (2.1.1) and onogenetically (2.1.2), that the 'poetic function' is an instinctive part of the makeup of an individual, which is then nurtured within the community as a way of making sense of our existence. If children have a natural predilection for play with language, and poetry as a function within language is instinctive, then this would suggest that a methodology for teaching poetry needs to not only acknowledge this, but use children's experiences as a starting point to develop that natural desire and instinct (Pirie, 1987; Chambers, 1995; Rosen, 1989).

Such a methodology could also work to re-establish poetry's role within the community as a way of sharing experience, rather than mis-representing it by breaking it down into 'skills' and 'processes' (Comber and Cormack, 1997, p.22) using it, for example, as a vehicle to teach metaphor or rhyme. Though poetry can have a function of teaching skills and processes, that should not be its prime function. Burnett and Myers (2002, p.61) have observed that: 'In the children's world, literacy is broad, varied and offers choices'. In the following discussion the theory of socio-constructivism is explored as a foundation upon which an appropriate methodology

for teaching poetry could be based.

#### 6.4.1 Socio-Constructivism

Although the theory of socio-constructivism has been around for over twenty years, little research has been carried out on its use in specific school contexts (Bliss, Askew and Macrae, 1996). However, it is suggested that it can be applied to the teaching of many different subjects in the curriculum (Littledyke and Huxford, 1998). Bruner states:

I have come increasingly to recognise that most learning in most settings is a communal activity, a sharing of the culture. It is not just that the child must make his (sic) knowledge his own, but that he must make it his own in a community of those who share his sense of belonging to a culture.

(Bruner, 1986, p.127)

In the past, the traditional view of construction of knowledge by mainstream educators has been that knowledge is constructed individually with little reference given to the surrounding environment that the individual is in (Fleury, 1989). However, social constructivism sees personal constructs being developed in a social context, with particular emphasis in Western schooling on language as the main communicator of those experiences. Tobin (1998, p.195) puts it succinctly:

Social interactions using a shared language enable the teacher and learners to communicate and test the fit of their knowledge with others' representations. When the fit reaches an acceptable level it is concluded that a consensus has been achieved, in the sense that personal constructions bear a family resemblance to the constructions of others with whom negotiation has occurred.

Von Glasersfeld (1995) argues, that while collaboration with others to reach a goal is a compelling and powerful principle, nevertheless, he insists that the mind is still individual, and constructs schemes and concepts in that way. As he points out, when others are communicating to us through language they may use similar words, but they might mean totally different concepts to what we think they mean. However, the opposing view could be taken, that though the words may be different, as discourse continues the structure of the concepts appear to have similarities. Newman et al. (1989) consider this to be the way in which we construct meaning together. They use the example of a teacher discussing poetry with the class and finding that differences begin to emerge in how the children and the teacher seem to be interpreting the poem. They say: 'the participants can act as if their understandings are the same' (p.62), allowing time for appropriation to take place, for social conflict has been shown to generate cognitive growth (Johnson Ames and Murray, 1982). Although von Glasersfeld's point serves to show that communication through language is a complex affair, nevertheless, it is an important tool in the validation of our own individual experiential reality by others in stabilising our 'reality'. There is 'common ground', a sense of sharing a reality that makes it all the more real.

Much work of a socio-cultural nature has originated from Lev Vygotsky's work, which considers that the individual's cognitive activity cannot be separated from the environment, as it is social and intersubjective by nature. This environment is made up of the technologies and skills developed through cultural history such as literacy, mathematics, problem-solving and reasoning, into which children are introduced through an experienced and skilled guide. Gradually through social interaction, which emphasises the interrelatedness of children and adult roles, children are expected to internalise skills needed to perform tasks independently and participate in the culture.



In his work Vygotsky (1978) observed that children had a 'readiness to profit from practice or instruction', which he attributed to what he termed the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). He described the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86) as:

...the distance between the actual development as determined by independent problem solving and level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

In the learning process as a whole, he considered that it was the bridging between the learner's existing knowledge and skills and the development of these towards the new goal that was crucial in terms of success. This bridging has been described as scaffolding.

#### **6.4.2 Scaffolding**

It was Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) who first introduced the term scaffolding in relation to adult-child interaction within a learning context. It is used to describe the way in which an adult might support the child in solving a problem or task, where failure would occur if unassisted, with the child coming to a point where it is able 'to internalise knowledge and convert it [the scaffold] into a tool for conscious control...[the adult serving as] a vicarious form of consciousness until such a time as the learner is able to master his own action through his own consciousness and control' (Bruner, 1986, p.123). In linguistic terms Wood et al. (1976) state the importance of the learner being able to understand the steps to the solution of a problem before attempting to solve it unassisted, that 'comprehension of the solution must precede production' (Wood et al., 1976, p.90).

This concept of scaffolding does not have its foundation in formal schooling (Wood, 1988; Bliss et al., 1996); rather, through a socio-cultural approach, culture

and cognition work together to extend the child's cognitive processes. Rogoff and Gardner (1984) discuss the merits of the American socio-cultural school where they focus on the type of informal learning that goes on at home. It has been observed in the context of the home that though formal teaching strategies are not consciously used, yet a child's cognitive development emerges from and within social and cultural activities. As Rogoff (1990, p.9) states, 'The traditional distinction among cognitive, affective and social processes becomes blurred once we focus on thinking as the attempt to determine intelligent means to reach the goals'. The adult's role in assisting the child through social interaction is considered extremely important in this process, yet the child's role is seen as equally as important. Wells (1985, p.12) points out that it is the joint contributions of both child and teacher that result in the most positive of learning experiences.

Scaffolding, then, can be seen as the best way of approaching the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). Wood and Wood (1996) describe scaffolding as: the recruitment of the child's interest in the task; maintaining interest in the task-relevant goals; bringing attention to crucial factors missed by the child; showing how goals may be achieved; through careful gauging of complexity and engagement of child with task, helping to avoid frustration. As Wood states (1988, p.15), 'I do believe that the development of certain ways of reasoning and learning about things is a direct product of both spontaneous and contrived social interactions between the developing child and more mature members of his community'.

It would seem then that the NLS could be open to interpretation by the teacher who will be influenced by his/her own understanding of teaching and learning (Fisher, 2002). For example, if we look specifically at one of the strategies - scaffolding. I have included it as an indication that the NLS is taking a socio-constructivist approach, but the example in the NLS (1998a, p.8) is: 'scaffolding: e.g. providing writing frames for a shared composition of non-fiction texts'. The

teacher in Chadwick school could have been said to scaffold her pupils through the use of worksheets (4.5.4), while the teacher in St.Alban's school scaffolded pupils' attempts to compose a class poem (4.11). This is a very narrow definition as opposed to the description given previously in this Chapter on scaffolding, but it serves to demonstrate that the NLS is open to interpretation, and that teachers can teach very differently from it with very different effects.

### 6.4.3 Encouraging Speaking and Listening

In a socio-constructivist classroom in a Western school, discourse is an essential part of making meaning. The use of language not only 'opens a window on conceptual structures' (Von Glasersfeld, 1995, p.77) but is also a way of 'sorting one's thoughts out about things' (Bruner, 1986, p.72). In the past before print, poetry had been shared through discourse and was considered an oral art. This oral art has not died out for children though, but is passed down from generation to generation (Rosen, 1989). From birth children have been exposed to word games and nursery rhymes, and in the playground they generate a wide and varied use of poetry. It is in the school that the child is introduced to poetry as being an almost exclusively literary tradition. Harrison and Gordon (1983, p.270) state that the relationship between the poet and the audience needs to grow from 'ordinary discourse' because 'no speech-utterance can be entirely free of emotional expression-and understanding another's discourse requires an effort, an attention, an active thinking in the listener/onlooker'. By recognising familiar expressions in the 'imaginative patterns' of the poet the audience can respond to the 'primary ideas' expressed.

If children are to relate their own experiences of poetry to the specialised knowledge of poetry in schools they need to be able to hear poems being read out, and they need to be able to hear themselves reading bits out and discussing what the poem is saying to them, recognising those 'primary ideas' and then developing them (Cham-

bers, 1995). Grennon Brooks and Brooks (1993, p.108) say that: 'having an opportunity to present one's own ideas, as well as being permitted to hear and reflect on the ideas of others, is an empowering experience'. Eddershaw (1998) demonstrates how effective this can be when discussing Michael Rosen's poem *Keith's Cupboard* (Rosen and Blake, 1987), with a group of nine and ten year old children. The children assimilated new knowledge by considering personal experiences and existing ideas as they re-heard bits of the poem.

In the NLS document there is only one clear statement where children are given the opportunity to read poetry out to each other (Term 1, 1998a, p.50), which could result in empowerment being left in the hands of the teacher.

#### **6.4.4 Socio-constructivism and Poetry**

Though constructivism is well established in maths and science education, socio-constructivist elements are less well emphasised in other subjects. There is little research on the practical application of socio-constructivism in the classroom because fundamentally it is not a theory about teaching, but about knowledge and learning. Although there is a body of research articulating the fundamentals of socio-constructivism and some research showing how this works in one-to-one tutoring with a mathematical or scientific subject base, there is little to show how it could be practically applied in the teaching of English in a classroom of thirty or more. However, it would seem that a methodology underpinned by such a theory could work well with the teaching and learning of poetry by considering the main characteristics of socio-constructivism and aligning these with the main points highlighted by the previous discussion about poetry. I summarise these points as follows:

Socio-constructivist theory states that:

- Social interaction is at the heart of teaching and learning

- Differences of understanding can exist and contribute to cognitive growth through social interaction
- Existing knowledge is seen as important and that it is essential that any new knowledge is linked to that
- Adult and child form a joint partnership
- Teaching and learning is relevant to child's culture and the community as a whole

The arguments highlighted about poetry are that:

- It is a social activity
- Teacher and child may bring different interpretations to poetry based on past experience, subject knowledge and intrinsic knowledge
- Children have a natural predilection for play with language and an intrinsic knowledge of poetry
- Poetry is one way in which a community makes sense of the human condition

In making explicit the arguments about poetry and socio-constructivism it would appear that a methodology based on this theory could encourage a teaching and learning climate that successfully engages children's natural instinct for poetry and learning and develops the two together in a way that unites, rather than divorces, teaching and learning experiences from the classroom and life outside of school. Such a methodology could be set out as below, which takes into consideration a number of teaching strategies that would promote the principles of the socio-constructivist theory. The following is adapted from Scott, Dyson, and Gater (1987), who suggest teaching approaches based on a constructivist approach to science. Teachers

should be taught to teach poetry based on a reader-response theory, a transaction between the reader and the text, which is then shared with others based on socio-constructivist principles. As play with language sometimes occurs through transaction with the text and with others, this can be encouraged and developed through socio-constructivist principles, which acknowledges the body of knowledge that children come to school with and attempts to build bridges between those constructs of school knowledge and home knowledge. I have adapted their framework for the teaching of poetry with socio-constructivist underpinnings.

### **A Teaching Approach to Poetry Based on Socio-Constructive View of Learning**

#### *Orientation*

Arousing children's interest, imagination, creativity, emotion and intellect by engaging in poetic experiences that are easily accessible e.g. reading and discussing a poem together on a subject that children can relate to, such as a humorous poem, or a nonsense poem.

#### *Elicitation/Structuring*

Helping children to engage with poetry and with each other's ideas by giving time for children to respond individually and corporately. This might involve periods of quiet meditation 'thinking time' followed by sharing of responses such as ideas, feelings and experiences that are stimulated by engaging with the poetic.

#### *Intervention/Restructuring*

Encouraging children to experiment and play with language through engaging in activities such as sharing favourite poems, writing in different forms and communicating in exciting poetic ways their thoughts and feelings. To encourage children to

see poetry as an exciting medium of expressing feelings, thoughts and ideas, which can be worked on together, or individually, and shared amongst the classroom community.

### *Review*

Helping children to recognise the significance of their play with language by sharing what they have found out about poetry, about themselves, about the constructs of language through metalanguage.

### *Application*

Relate work on poetry to wider constructs of language development in school and home. Encourage bridges between home and school knowledge by relating achievements to literary environments they engage in outside of the classroom, such as playground chants, books read at home, nursery rhymes they know, poetry they might write at home. Encourage a literary community by encouraging every child to participate in the development of the classroom community through active involvement and acknowledgment of private and corporate literary practices.

This represents a generic approach to the teaching of poetry but the following demonstrates how socio-constructivist principles can be applied specifically in a literary session. In the following session I have chosen the poem *The Warm and the Cold* by Ted Hughes (see Appendix 4.1) as the focus for the event, to show how differently it could be approached from that presented in Chapter 4. Due to the ideas surrounding this session, inspired by the poem, I would teach this in Autumn/Winter.

## **A Teaching Approach to a Poetry Session Based on Socio-Constructive View of Learning.**

### *Orientation*

Arousing children's interests, emotion and intellect by encouraging children to brainstorm collectively about things that are warm and cold in winter time, such as a bonfires and frosty mornings. Collect ideas on board in two separate columns under Warm and Cold.

### *Elicitation/Structuring*

Allow children time to think individually about experiences where they have been really cold and warm. Share responses with partner, then with table groups. Ask children to meditate upon ideas they have shared together, and while they are doing this display slides of warm and cold images inspired by Winter. As they are looking at the images read the first verse of The Warm and the Cold.

### *Intervention/Restructuring*

Encourage children to play with language by giving time as a whole class, and in their table groups, to discuss the meaning of the first verse and how the language, imagery and structure used conveys meaning and heightens impact. Encourage children to think about the way in which they can communicate their experiences of warm and cold through poetry by encouraging them to individually write some ideas down, and then to share and construct a group poem with those on their table.

### *Review*

Helping children to recognise significance of play with language by each group sharing their poem, and discussing how their imagery, language and structure con-



veys meaning.

### *Application*

Draw children together round a picture depicting an animal keeping warm on a cold winter's night. Read the whole of *The Warm and the Cold* poem. Ask children to collect words and items outside of school that express their experiences of warm and cold. Make a display board on which the Ted Hughes poem, their group poems and any words, pictures, items (such as an autumnal leaf, a scarf, gloves etc.) can be shown.

This approach could combine Rosenblatt's reader-response theory, which is the transaction between text and child, with children's natural predilection to play with language, within a community setting encouraged by adopting a pedagogy underpinned by socio-constructivist principles. Such an approach complements itself, working towards the same aims, unlike the mixture of teaching and learning theories that were observed in Chapter Four. It also relates to the principles suggested by Pirie (1987), Rosen (1989) and Chambers (1995) in Chapter Two (2.3.3 Poetry and Education).

For such an approach to work successfully, I suggest that in initial teacher training in English, and the teaching of poetry, literary theory needs to underpin practice and be related to practical application in the classroom. Teachers can then be informed and make decisions on best teaching methods, because they understand better the underpinning philosophies and the effects on children's learning. Conscious decisions can then be made which are underpinned by knowledge of theory. Though both case study teachers said they had no knowledge of reading theories, and could not remember studying them on the BEd course, they were still adopting practices that could be aligned with particular theories of learning.

Any teaching document such as the NLS should also be explicit in the theories

that underpin content and methodology, and teachers should be aware of them. This might bring about greater consistency in teaching from such a framework, and allow teachers to make decisions about how they are being asked to teach and what they are being asked to teach. Such knowledge could liberate teachers and schools from a slavish and literal translation of the document, because they can then choose to teach poetry in line with a school's policy on underpinning teaching and learning theories.

This could have major implications if schools, primary and secondary and teacher training colleges and universities worked in partnership with each other in this area.

## **6.5 Development of Research Methodologies**

In attempting to answer the research questions underpinning this study, data gathering techniques were employed to enable me to analyse the micro and macro-environment of the schools involved, to observe and gather participants experiences and perceptions of their literary experiences with poetry.

### **6.5.1 Methodological Processes and Analytical Processes**

This study began with the identification of a need to understand what kind of literary environments children were experiencing at Year Six, and specifically, the way in which the NLS had impacted on the teaching of poetry. I argued that, though there has been a significant amount of research on the implementation of the NLS and how it has contributed to rising standards, much of this research has been government funded and therefore it could be suggested open to bias. Further I noted how there was very little research available on how poetry was now being taught through the NLS, and posited that this was particularly important because, prior to this, research had shown that poetry had always been considered a challenge to teach and learn. I considered it necessary to enter the classroom and gain first-hand

experience of poetry being taught in the Year Six classroom, as well as ascertaining the perceptions of pupils, and those persons who had opportunity to contribute to those experiences. This gave a fuller and more complex description of the many different factors that influenced each literary event. The qualitative methods I chose to employ to realise my research aims gave understanding of those literary environments through observation, and a phenomenological perspective by interviewing participants in those environments.

### **6.5.2 Data Collection and Analytical Processes**

This research highlighted the kind of literary environments pupils were engaged in at Year Six, while collecting data on the teaching and learning of poetry, which has been a neglected aspect in previous research studies. I provided a microanalysis by observing literary events focused on teaching poetry, as laid out in the NLS, in two schools. I then considered the macro-climate in which these sessions had taken place, by interviewing research participants to gather their perspectives on their literary environments. Though it can never be fully possible for a researcher to gain complete access to others' perceptions, I utilised these perceptions as evidence to illuminate action observed in the literary sessions, and to provide a more complex picture of emerging themes. I also identified similarities and differences in the way in which literary environments had formed, underpinned by the NLS, in the two schools. I used methodologies which enabled me to scrutinise the literary climate both at a micro and macro level, so that there was a thicker description of events.

Collecting data in this way allowed the analysis to demonstrate how the beliefs, values and perceptions of the research participants were interrelated with action, creating a multi-dimensional study. It allowed for the identification of areas which impacted the literary environment of the case-study groups over the school year. Essentially, it allowed for a focus on poetry and its role in the classroom, as it was

taught through the NLS. Research existed which focused on the teaching of poetry in the classroom, however the research focus and methodology did not allow for a comprehensive picture of analysis where the teaching and learning of poetry was examined in detail, with the wider consideration of poetry's role and contribution across the school year. In order to gain a more accurate picture of how poetry is being managed both aspects need to be of concern, to evaluate firstly any pedagogical issues that arise, and poetry's role in the school year. By combining observation with the phenomenological perceptions of key players, I was able to gain both an overview and in-depth insight into the role of poetry in these two schools. By ensuring this focus my research made a powerful case for pedagogical implications, subject knowledge and the cyclical structure of Year Six. The process acknowledged these themes in both schools, and retained a focus on the actions and perceptions of a range of individuals, including those of the children. Previous research on poetry, has not often taken into consideration the perceptions of the pupils in the process, so this was an important contribution to understanding the way in which pupils experienced the literary environments they were immersed in.

During the research process the research participants in each school had opportunities to reflect upon the role of poetry in their lives, particularly in the context of the school year, with all the other requirements that that meant. The literary events meant that both teacher and pupils were able to relate their perceptions to immediate experiences, even if this was not done explicitly. The interview responses suggested that I had formed an open and honest relationship with the interviewees, and that issues could be discussed with openness and trust. This was important on all levels, but especially pertinent with the children as my position as an adult could have seriously restricted their contributions. However, the development of confidence and openness was an intrinsic part of the research process.

By developing a research process that has sought to describe the literary envi-

ronments that Year Six pupils are engaged in, this has made a much needed and timely contribution to insights about how the NLS is supporting teachers in teaching poetry and how pupils are responding to that teaching. While providing an interesting and in-depth analysis of specific literary events and perceptions of those involved, it has raised some important issues about the way in which poetry is being taught through the NLS and how poetry is perceived as part of the Year Six English curriculum.

Though my research focuses on just two schools, my findings may provide insight to the consideration of how the NLS supports the teaching of poetry in schools in general, and how teachers are interpreting that support and delivering it in the classroom.

### **6.5.3 Tensions and Ethical Issues**

Research was made possible through self-funding, which allowed me to govern and direct my own study, rather than under the direction of interested parties. This status also allowed me to have access to schools and participants, without my professional role presenting any overt threat to the establishment. However, previous experience in the classroom as a teacher, meant that I was familiar with the structures, pressures and language of school and this aided my relationships with the research participants, particularly in terms of understanding the time pressures teachers were subject to. The examination of my role as a researcher within a setting which I was familiar with is presented in 3.3.2.

The ethical principles set out in 3.3.7 were adhered to throughout the research process, with the issue of confidentiality a central tenet to the proceedings. There were findings, which if shared with others in the school, could have compromised the individuals involved, and my research. In writing up I practised great care in preserving anonymity for each school.

As noted in 3.3.2 I had developed concerns over the way in which poetry was being taught in the NLS, and I was aware of how this bias might have presented a problem. I dealt with this by acknowledging my own position from the outset, and practising constant reflexivity when examining my analysis. I also endeavoured to collect a range of perceptions from the same setting, so that any analysis made was as a result of a number of perceptions converging at a point of interest.

#### **6.5.4 Limitations of the Research and Implications for Future Study**

I have attempted to justify the research design theoretically and methodologically in relation to answering the questions underpinning this study, and relevant research themes. The use of a case study approach has allowed for in-depth and insightful data to emerge, characterised by my inductive and deductive analysis.

This research was undertaken with the aim of exploring the literary environments of Year 6 children, and in particular the role of poetry in that context, as taught through the NLS. As indicated in Chapter 3 in Selection Sampling of Time 3.4.2 the number of events observed were smaller than originally intended, and this meant that there was no opportunity to observe how poetry was taught throughout the school year, and how teachers and pupils engaged with the range of content relating to poetry in the NLS. Also, the sample was further reduced by the teacher and Literacy Co-ordinator being the same person in St. Albans school (Selection of Teachers 3.4.4), which gave the interview data a narrower perspective than originally intended. The choice of this teacher may have seemed in opposition to the declared focus on non-specialist English teachers, however, as the Literacy Co-ordinator had only received training on how to implement the NLS in the school, and had no background in English training other than this, I felt that this added to the uniqueness of the case-study approach without compromising the focus.

Also, by interviewing the pupils before the observations took place rather than

after the event, an opportunity was missed to gather pupils' perceptions of the sessions, which would have been valuable and insightful. In retrospect I should also have obtained permission from the parents of the pupils involved in the research in advance of the interviews, rather than accepting that the teacher could make that decision for them. Only the parents should have that authority, and should be kept informed of such situations as they occur.

Further limitations of my research include the omission of observing how the teachers taught poetry prior to the implementation of the NLS, and the subsequent changes that that document may have had on the literary environment. This would have yielded useful insights for comparison both pedagogically and concerning subject knowledge.

Due to the nature of the case-study approach the data was specific to the context in which it was observed and collected, and therefore generalisations about the findings could not be made beyond those two schools. However, issues which were related to poetry teaching and learning in Year Six in Chadwick and St. Albans, may well be faced by other schools nationally and I suggest it would be useful to evaluate the experiences that children and teachers have with poetry at the micro level of individual sessions, throughout the school year, from Reception through to Secondary, and across the country. In particular, it might be pertinent to focus specifically on the lack of attention to meaning when referring to the text and the concentration on the word and sentence level of the NLS to the detriment of the text level.

This could give a more comprehensive and complex understanding of how poetry is faring in the NLS at a local and national level, and lead to strategies of intervention where needed.

## 6.6 Conclusion

This study began with the recognition that poetry has been, and can be a challenging subject to teach and to learn about. Its inclusion in the NLS, was acknowledged as significant, but this in turn had brought its own challenges.

A growing body of evidence suggests that teachers are willing to implement the NLS, but are genuinely confused by it. It seems that the strengths described by one teacher can also be described as a weakness by another. For example, the Literacy Hour is considered to be both flexible and suited to individual schools while others see it as rigid and prescribed, lacking flexibility. And while some schools are finding the NLS to be very effective, others are struggling to implement it (Frater, 2000). As such, the NLS has received mixed reactions leading one educationalist to (Hilton, 1998, p.4) describe the framework as a return to a 'Victorian model':

In the light of educational history, the new Literacy Hour begins to look very much older than is claimed, with many nineteenth-century dysfunctional assumptions enshrined within it. It is a return to authoritarian oral instruction based on texts chosen by the teacher from a set scheme; much of the instruction is at 'word level' and involves constant interrogation of the pupils. The domestic curriculum of the child is ignored and the child's existing body of knowledge made irrelevant.

Another is able to read the framework and conclude that the Literacy Hour could provide a good balance between teacher and pupil interaction (Fisher, 2002, p.13):

In shared work, the teacher plays the largest part and leads the interaction, scaffolding the learning. In guided work, the children are encouraged to be independent but the teacher supports their independence through focused and targeted instruction. In independent work, chil-



dren are primarily working independently and practising or exploring what they have already been taught.

In the sessions observed in Chadwick school and St. Albans school it was possible to see that two teachers taught at the same initial teacher education college, with similar backgrounds and experiences of English, could teach poetry very differently.

To conclude this section Hall (1989, p.55) states: 'No wonder that at secondary level the love of poetry quickly dies, because it is at secondary school that teachers feel the need to teach simile, metaphor, alliteration, etc. and to analyse in depth just what it is the poet is saying'. Marsh (1988, p.10) also states that: 'Reading a poem has been turned into a frightening, problematic activity by our education at O and A level' This is an important point for it would appear that the primary school has taken on a secondary school curricular approach to poetry, and research shows that in the past pupils have enjoyed poetry at primary school level but left secondary school with a strong dislike of it (Harrison and Gordon, 1983; Barnes, Barnes and Clarke, 1984; Benton, 1984).

Though a child may have negative experiences in the classroom outside of the teacher's influence, poetry in whatever form, is still thoroughly enjoyed (Opies, 1959; Crystal, 1998). It may be that poetry is being forced underground, a developing subculture in which children engage with poetry in ways that are relevant and exciting, becoming more and more divorced and isolated from the experience of poetry in the classroom. Stibbs (1981, p.39) notes that:

As well as being a particularly refined manifestation of high culture in books which sell in small numbers, poetry is an ancient, universal, and popular art form...found on gravestones and lavatory walls, in advertisements and pop songs, "In Memoriam" columns, the jokes of dirty young men (and young women, for all I know), and in children's games.

By establishing a socio-constructivist approach to poetry, children can use their knowledge of poetry outside of school to enhance learning of specialised knowledge in school and so create together with the teacher, their own 'literary tradition' (Koch, 1970, p.39). It should not be too hard either, for Benton (1978, p.113) notes: 'The imaginative conditions within the child...are right for the enjoyment of poetry'. As Mauro and Forty (1994, p.11) describe their use of every day forms of poetry, such as advertising and jingles, in helping young bilingual children to read and write poetry they say: 'The aim is that poetry should become a natural part of the classroom environment. Children - and often adults - find it hard to define what a story is, but certainly know one when they read or hear it; the same should apply to poetry'.

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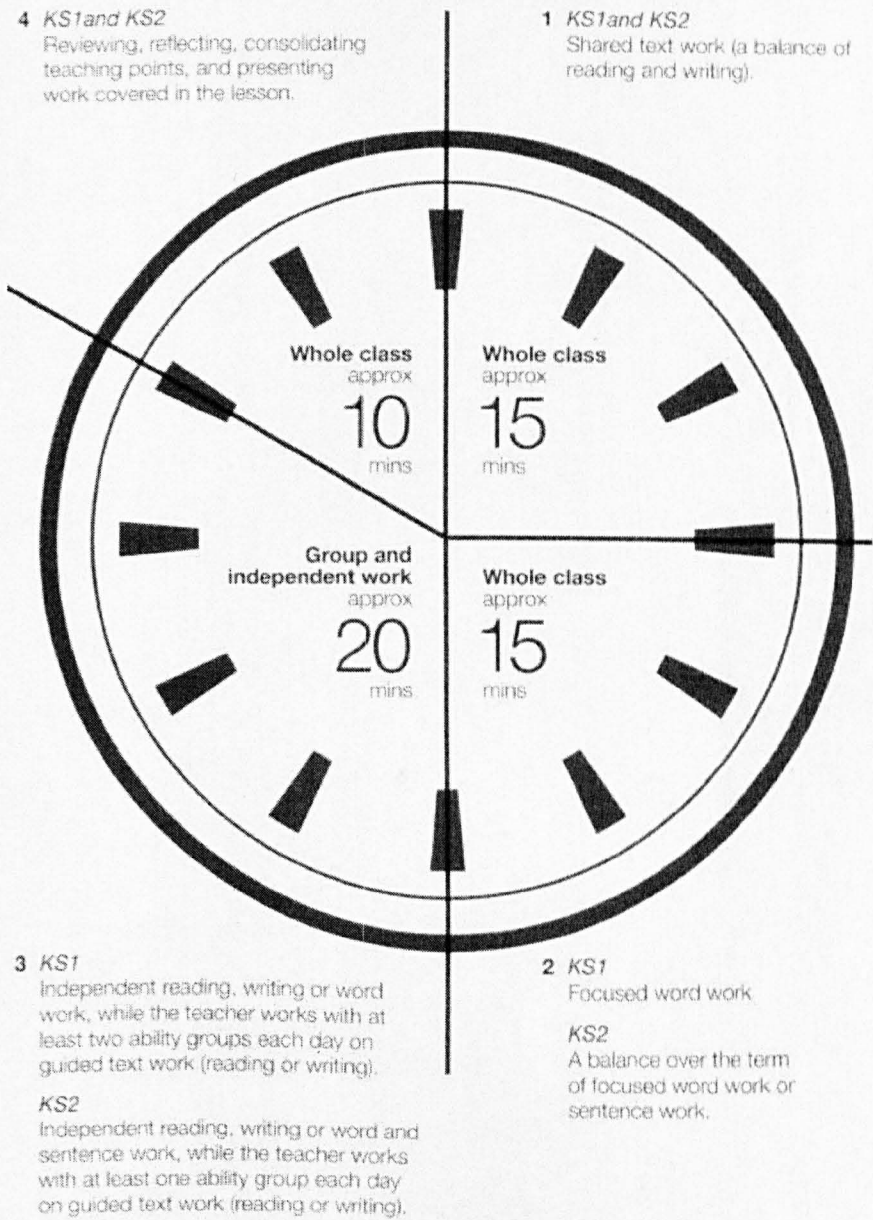
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# Appendices

## 2.1 The Literacy Hour



#### **4.1 The Warm and the Cold Poem by Ted Hughes (p.87)**

## 4.2 Teacher Relating Work to Previous Lesson

TEACHER Right can everyone turn around and face this way please. Right as you know this week then er...we've been thinking about poetry, well we did yesterday anyway, and we talked yesterday about the poem 'The Warm and the Cold', and we had a little look at some of the language and the words that Ted Hughes had used. Today we're going to focus on how Ted Hughes uses words to make different layers of meaning so I'm just going to pin up here, this is our objective on the white board of what we're going to be looking at and learning today. Right so we're going to be recognising how poets, in this case Ted Hughes, manipulates words, changes words, uses words, what he does with the words for layers of meaning. And I've put these longer words, figurative language, ambiguity which is a word we have spoken about this year, and I expect you've looked at some of the words in the past but don't worry if you don't know them, all right? So today we're going to be looking at The Warm and Cold poem again. What meaning can we get? Are there, is there more than one meaning in some of the words and the language that Ted Hughes is using? So we're going to look at the poem and then think about ways in which there are different layers of meaning in it.

## 4.3 Teacher Explaining How the Session Will Proceed

TEACHER Peter and er...Ben could you come round quickly and give out these books. One between two, and if you could immediately turn to the text. Because we're gonna er...read it. Page twelve. This table you'll have to have sheets today because we haven't got enough books. You alright Sam. (Short discussion with Sam out of earshot) Right listen to page twelve then, right you've got the poem in front of it. Right, what I'm going to do then is I'm going to read it to you, and then we're going to draw out some of the similes, we're going to remind ourselves what a simile is, then talk about those similes, and then we're going to look at this objective here. That is, why has Ted Hughes likened one thing to another? What meaning can we get from that? So, let me read the first verse to you again The Warm and the Cold, and see if you can identify the similes in it. You should be quite good at it, because we did a bit of that yesterday. Right (reads out the first verse of the poem expressively

then pauses).

#### **4.4 Pupils Attempt to Find the Answer the Teacher is Looking For**

TEACHER "Okay, great when we spotted this would it have been likened in each case, in each one we've got something in common with these similes. Does anyone know what we've got in common? What's been written in, in the similes, in all, in most of them anyway? In most of the similes here, what is been likened to something else?"

OLIVIA "They're warm."

TEACHER "Good. Yes, something warm, such as the one you've pointed out Olivia 'And the badger in its bedding like a loaf in the oven' because its warm there, although they're not warm there are they, if you've read on because in that verse it says like a 'snow line'. It's not very warm is it? Can we make this comment to all, most of them that we've read so far? Ben?"

BEN "They're all like, they're like, they're all like something."

TEACHER "That's what a simile is. All right. Let me highlight the words, and see if we can work out what's er...common to most of them. 'But the carp is in its depth... And the badger in its bedding... And the butterfly is in its mummy...and the owl' (Emphasises highlighted words vocally so that they stand out). What do you think is in common with these here? Lisa?"

LISA "Is it that they're all animals?"

#### **4.5 Teacher's Presentation of the Task**

TEACHER "Today we're going to focus on how Ted Hughes uses words to make different layers of meaning so I'm just going to pin up here, this is our objective on the white board of what we're going to be looking at and learning today. Right so we're going to be recognising how poets, in this case Ted Hughes, manipulates words, changes words, uses words, what he does with the words for layers of meaning. And I've put these longer words, figurative language, ambiguity which is a word we have spoken about this year, and I expect you've looked at some of the words in the past but don't worry if you don't know them, all right? So today we're going to be looking at The Warm and Cold poem again. What meaning can we get?"

#### **4.6 Strategies for Successful Teaching Outlined in the NLS**

- Direction: e.g. to ensure pupils know what they should be doing, to draw

attention to points, to develop key strategies in reading and writing

- Demonstration: e.g. to teach letter formation and join letters, how to read punctuation using a shared text, how to use a dictionary
- Modelling: e.g. discussing the features of written texts through shared reading of books, extracts
- Scaffolding: e.g. providing writing frames for shared composition of non-fiction texts
- Explanation to clarify and discuss: e.g. reasons in relation to the events in a story, the need for grammatical agreement when proof-reading, the way that different kinds of writing are used to serve different purposes
- Questioning: to probe pupils' understanding, to cause them to reflect on and refine their work, and to extend their ideas
- Initiating and guiding exploration: e.g. to develop phonological awareness in the early stages, to explore relationships between grammar, meaning and spelling with older pupils
- Investigating ideas: e.g. to understand, expand on or generalise about themes and structures in fiction and non-fiction
- Discussing and arguing: e.g. to put points of view, argue a case, justify a preference
- Listening to and responding: e.g. to stimulate and extend pupils' contributions, to discuss/evaluate their presentations.

## 4.7 Teachers Introduction to Second Half

TEACHER "Right I'm going to get you to do an activity in a minute. What I'm going to do is I'm going to give you another simile to have a look at and see why you think they, that Ted Hughes has chosen to liken that animal, and there it is with something else. What feelings do you get from it? We'll, we'll have a look, we'll come to that. Now, I want you to do this on your white board, I should have said to you at the very beginning 'Get your whiteboards out' but in a minute I'll let you go and get those, cos you've got those in different places. Can you now look back at the book (Pause) and can you find er... the next simile down 'And the badger in its bedding like a loaf in the oven'. Quite a simple simile to read there. I want you to see what, what you think Ted Hughes is trying to get across there, what meaning. All right? Or what feelings perhaps he's trying to get across to you. All right. I've got pens up here which I'll come round and give to you. Can this tables One, Two and Three can you go and get you're whiteboards really quickly."



## 4.8 Further Explanation Given by Teacher

TEACHER “What you’re going to do then is discuss this with people in your table group. I’m only going to give you three minutes maximum for you to have a look at that simile and think with your partner, or people in your own group. I don’t mind which way you want to do it. ‘And the badger in its bedding like a loaf in the oven’. What meaning was Ted Hughes trying to get across by likening a badger? And what you know about a badger being in its bedding, to like that of a loaf in the oven. Is there just one meaning? Or can we think, could we find, could we read other meanings into it. All right? So just a few minutes then. If you could just jot down, obviously on the whiteboard you’re just jotting down ideas. You’re not writing neat, beautiful sentences. You don’t have to copy out the simile or anything like that. You’re just jotting down ideas, then we’ll come back in a minute and see what meaning was there.”

## 4.9 NLS Independent Points (1988a, p.12-13)

Independent tasks should cover a wide range of objectives including:

- Independent reading and writing
- Phonic and spelling investigations and practice
- Comprehension work
- Note-making
- Reviewing and evaluating
- Proof-reading and editing
- Vocabulary extension and dictionary work
- Handwriting practice;
- Practice and investigations in grammar, punctuation or sentence construction
- Preparing presentations for the class

## 4.10 Getting Feedback on the Meaning of the Simile

TEACHER “There’s some interesting ideas actually about what meanings you’ve come to understand from the simile in the poem. Er...Sarah then.”

SARAH “Cos a badger’s warm and settled in its bed, and its like a loaf, a loaf in the oven, its like warm and baking and stuff.”

TEACHER "So warm and settled? That's quite interesting. So warm and settled like a loaf would be eventually in the oven, after being warmed up and like the badger because...?"

SARAH "Its, the badger's curled up and all warm."

TEACHER "Curled up and warm in the bedding. Alright. That's got be, like the most obvious meaning, isn't it, or what I understand is the main one. Did anyone manage to think, where there were other little things that you managed to get from that [Pause]. Er...Ben."

BEN "Umm...cos the badger's in his hole in his, like his bedding, the bread's also in the oven so the badger's like in his hole which you can compare with an oven, and when he got, and the bread's in there, and the badger's in there so its like the badger's really warm and the loaf's really warm."

TEACHER "Right, okay. Similar idea then really like the bedding representing the oven."

BEN "Yeh."

TEACHER "Yes, brilliant, brilliant."

#### **4.11 Pupil Preoccupied with Literal Details**

TEACHER "Er...Emily do you want to say anything else?"

EMILY "When the badger curls up its in the shape of a loaf."

TEACHER "When the badger actually curls up its like in the shape of a loaf?"

EMILY "A little bit bigger."

TEACHER "What? Just a little bit bigger. Alright, good, so the actual shape of the badger creates could be like that of a, of a, of a loaf itself. Fantastic, well done."

#### **4.12 Teacher Recapping on Session So Far**

TEACHER "Can you just pop your pens down for now, some of you have got some brilliant ideas flowing. Could we all just have a look back at the objective and what we're looking back today (Pause). Okay the point of the lesson then (Pause) is for us to look at how poets manipulate words for layers of meaning. We've been looking at figurative language, don't worry about this word yet, we're going to look at this um...later on. Figurative language, we've been looking at similes. They're a type of figurative language, and we've been seeing what meaning poets, Ted Hughes, has been trying to get across through his similes (Pause). Haven't we? That's what we've been looking at so far."

### 4.13 Teacher Setting Differentiated Work

TEACHER "Okay, those children that are normally on One or Two you are going to er...do some work on writing some of your own similes, alright. You're going to have a go at writing some of your own similes, likening something to something else. You don't have to worry about trying to create a warm or a cold thing like Ted Hughes has done here. I'm going to give you a sheet that I've done now. I've given you a couple of examples that I want you to have a look at. Yesterday you, you started to do that so you should feel quite happy today when I show you some examples of what I've written. So yesterday, today I think you should be quite confident in approaching this because some of you came up with some brilliant similes yesterday. But you don't have to worry about them being warm or cold, just need you to liken one thing to something else, an animal to something else. Alright? So, I'll, I'll give those out to er... to those people. Can you put your hand up if you know which is yours because you've moved about now so I don't know...(Starts to hand out sheets to pupils with hands up). Okay you can be looking through your sheets to see what you would be doing (Pause). Can you pass those rest for me er...for Kim, Simon. Okay, those children then that are on Tables Four, Five and Six you are going to read what we've been doing now. You've got to look at some of the similes that we've been talking about. I've highlighted which ones they are, and you're going to tell me what meanings you think you can get from those similes, just as you were doing now, talking about it. What meanings do you think Ted Hughes is trying to do? Why has he likened such an animal in such a situation to something else? So you're going to be doing what I've done on the sheet for you. So can you put your hand up, sorry, Tables Three, Four, Five and Six. Can you put your hand up if you'd normally be doing...(Teacher hands out sheets. Peter is whispering to Ben) Er... Ben and Sarah, and Jem. Ben Sarah, and Jem, you usually er...well you can have a look at the sheet there cos you're going to be writing similes. But I do want you to get across being warm and cold, but I think you're going to be fine doing that. And as it says on the sheet you'll also have a look at, say, well why did I choose that, why did I choose that simile, why did I, you know, what meaning did I want to get across? So can everyone have a look at the sheet now that you've got in front of you."

### 4.14 Lisa Talk off Task

LISA "My mom's not going in today."

JEM "What?"

LISA "My mom was going to get that training card. Yeh, but she's not going that far."

JEM "Oh."

LISA "Did you like that bracelet?"

JEM "Yeh."

LISA "What, the pink one?"

JEM "No."

LISA "The one on the top. Am I doing this right?"

JEM "I don't know. I can't think of anymore."

#### **4.15 Lisa Asks for Help Again**

LISA "Jem, what animals are there?"

SARAH "I'm doing cat, tiger."

JEM "I put carp, parrot, snake, tiger, horse and shark."

PETER "I put cat, spider, ant, carp, dog, tiger, tiger."

BEN "I put, Sarah, I did trout, spider, monkey, snake, whale, shark, carp, donkey, horse, sparrow."

SARAH "Err...okay."

(Teacher comes to the table)

#### **4.16 Teacher Intervenes in Group Situation**

TEACHER "Have you got your list of creatures yet have you?"

SARAH "Yes."

TEACHER "Right, what have you got to do now?"

SARAH "Now we've got to write similes."

TEACHER "Simile. Alright, and what are you, what you gonna do with the simile then? What are you gonna have in it?"

BEN "Well like, we've...we've got to compare it with something."

PETER "We've got to have the animal."

TEACHER "Mmm."

PETER "And we've got to compare it to something like, not like, well it doesn't have to be similar."

TEACHER "So you're comparing an animal in a situation doing something"

SARAH "To something else."

TEACHER "To something else."

SARAH "Yeh."

JEM "Yeh."

TEACHER "Right, that's fine. Have you got um...is that it, is that it? Or do you have to think about trying..."

PETER (Interrupts teacher) "Then afterwards we have to like try and think about..."

JEM (Interrupts Peter) "Why we um..."

TEACHER (Interrupts Jem) "No, but I mean within the simile, what's your aim?"

PETER "Oh, to make sure it's warm or cold."

TEACHER "Right, so warm and cold. So you've got to try and get that across. How are you gonna do that?"

PETER "Well, I er...make comparisons with warm or cold like the loaf, like the badger and the loaf."

TEACHER "Right. So something like that. Don't be afraid to steal, as I always say, any phrases that are going to help you."

#### **4.17 Jem and Peter Discuss the Meaning of 'Mummy'**

JEM "A butterfly in its mummy"

PETER "What's an Egyptian mummy?"

JEM "What's an Egyptian mummy?"

SARAH "What's a butterfly thing come out of? What are they?"

JEM "They're caterpillars, aren't they, in a cocoon."

PETER "It's called a chrysalis."

JEM "Yeh, but the mummy is..."

PETER (Interrupts Jem) "It's called a chrysalis."

JEM "Yeh, I know but they make a cocoon."

## 4.18 Worksheet for Levels Two and Three

### The Warm and the Cold-Ted Hughes

**Objective:** To recognise how poets manipulate words for layers of meaning, e.g. figurative language, ambiguity

Collect a list of creatures. Include specific names of birds, fish, mammals, insects. Choose four of them and write a two-line simile about each. Line 1 says where the animal is. Line 2 compares the animals with something else.

The...is/are...

Like...

Examples:

The cows are on the hillside  
Like the cars are in the yard

The snake is in the grass  
Like the pen is in its case

Jot ideas down on your whiteboard so you can change words if you like before writing your final four similes down here.

1.

2.

3.

4.

## 4.19 Worksheet for Level Four

### The Warm and the Cold-Ted Hughes

**Objective:** To recognise how poets manipulate words for layers of meaning, e.g. figurative language, ambiguity

Collect a list of creatures. Include specific names of birds, fish, mammals, insects. Choose four of them and write a two-line simile about each. Line 1 says where the animal is. Line 2 compares the animals with something else. Try to make your reader feel either warm or cold.

The...is/are...

Like...

In a sentence or two say why you likened your creature to something else.

Example:

The pink salmon meandered its way through the reeds  
Like a chilling wind finding an escape route through the dense forest

I likened the meandering fish to the movement of the wind because sometimes it appears as if the wind is moving in and out of the trees just as the salmon is moving in and out of the reeds.

## 4.20 Worksheet for Level 5

### The Warm and the Cold-Ted Hughes

**Objective:** To recognise how poets manipulate words for layers of meaning, e.g. figurative language, ambiguity

Here are some similes extracted from *The Warm and the Cold*. In pairs try and think of the meaning behind Ted Hughes' similes. You may be able to find more than one meaning for some of the examples.

Example:

But the carp in its depth  
Like a planet in its heaven

Here Ted Hughes is likening the carp's environment, that of the deep water, to the 'heaven' environment of the planet. Hughes chose to use the word heaven rather than sky or universe because he wanted to encourage the feeling of the carp being at peace in this environment.



## 4.21 Teacher Tries to Help Lisa Write a Simile

(Teacher comes up to the table)

LISA "I don't know what to put."

TEACHER "You're a bit stuck aren't you? (Pause) Right, do you know what you've got to do Lisa? What have you got to do?"

LISA "I've got, I've got to make similes from different animals."

TEACHER "Right."

LISA "Its, its got to be a warm or a cold."

TEACHER "That's, you've got nothing to worry, so you're just comparing an animal in somewhere in a situation to something else aren't you, like I've done some examples there."

TEACHER "Did you manage to write some animals down?"

LISA "Yeh."

TEACHER "Right, good. And you've even started haven't you, one here. So the hamster is in its..."

LISA "Er...house."

TEACHER "House. Have you got a hamster?"

LISA "No."

The teacher tried to relate it to Lisa's experience, but to no avail.

TEACHER "Is that were you think hamsters live? That's a good thought then. Like a...then you think of something else apart, apart from an animal that might be in something else. So what about having something in a bag? In a handbag? What sort of bag? Like a...what do you keep in your bag? (Pause) Do you have a bag? "

LISA "Yes."

TEACHER "What sort of things do you put in your bag?"

LISA "Er...bike keys."

TEACHER "Ahh, bike keys. That'll be a good one, because then, why does that work do you think? Cos we could write 'like, like bike keys in a bag'. Why would that work?"

LISA "Cos it would be like bike keys."

TEACHER "Exactly, yeh, exactly, and that would work and that's fine, that's a good one. There you go, do you want to write that one down straight away." (Teacher leaves).

## 4.22 Jem's Responses on Worksheet

### THE WARM AND THE COLD-Ted Hughes

**Objective:** To recognise how poets manipulate words for layers of meaning, e.g. figurative language, ambiguity

Here are some of the similes extracted from *The Warm and the Cold*. In pairs try to think of the meanings behind Ted Hughes' similes. You may be able to find more than one meaning for some of the examples.

**EXAMPLE:**

But the carp is in its depth  
Like a planet in its heaven

Here Ted Hughes is likening the carp's environment, that of the deep water, to the 'heaven' environment of a planet. Hughes chose to use the word heaven rather than sky or universe because he wanted to encourage the feeling of the carp being at peace in his environment.

And the badger in its bedding  
Like a loaf in the oven

Ted Hughes did this to show<sup>that</sup> the badger  
is warm and settled in its bed like a loaf  
warm and settled in the oven.

And the butterfly in its mummy  
Like a viol in its case

A butterfly fits exactly into it's  
mummy like a viol fits exactly  
into its case.

But the trout is in its hole  
Like a chuckle in a sleeper

## 4.23 Lisa's Reposes on Worksheet

### THE WARM AND THE COLD-Ted Hughes

Objective: To recognise how poets manipulate words for layers of meaning, e.g. figurative language, ambiguity

Collect a list of creatures. Include specific names of birds, fish, mammals, insects. Choose four of them and write a two-line simile about each. Line 1 says where the animal is. Line 2 compares the animals with something else.

The.... is/are...

Like...

Examples:

The cows are on the hillside  
Like the cars are in the yard

The snake is in the long grass  
Like the pen is in its case

Jot ideas down on your whiteboard so you can change words if you like before writing your final four similes down here.

1 The hamster in it's house  
like bike key's in a bag

2

3

4

## 4.24 Simon's Reposes on Worksheet

### THE WARM AND THE COLD-Ted Hughes

Objective: To recognise how poets manipulate words for layers of meaning, e.g. figurative language, ambiguity

Collect a list of creatures. Include specific names of birds, fish, mammals, insects. Choose four of them and write a two-line simile about each. Line 1 says where the animal is. Line 2 compares the animals with something else.

The... is/are...

Like...

Examples:

The cows are on the hillside  
Like the cars are in the yard

The snake is in the long grass  
Like the pen is in its case

Get ideas down on your whiteboard so you can change words if you like before writing your final four similes down here.

1. The mice are in <sup>there</sup> ~~there~~ hole  
like cars in the drive.
2. The ants are in there hell  
like ~~to men~~ ~~at work~~ in the world.
3. The tiger is in the jungle  
like a worm in the ground.
4. The Shark is in the sea  
like a star in the univers.

4.25 Ben's Reposes on Worksheet

...	1. The horse running through a forest
throat	like the cool wind of winter trying to
Spider	escape the trees.
monkey	2. The calm shark swimming through
Snake	the deep blue sea like the boiling sun
whale	in the sky.
Shark	3.
carp	
donkey	
horse	
Sparrow	



## 4.26 Sarah's Reponses on Worksheet

### THE WARM AND THE COLD-Ted Hughes

Objective: To recognise how poets manipulate words for layers of meaning, e.g. figurative language, ambiguity

Collect a list of creatures. Include specific names of birds, fish, mammals, insects. Choose four of them and write a two-line simile about each. Line 1 says where the animal is. Line 2 compares the animals with something else. Try to make your reader feel either warm or cold.

The... is/are...

Like...

In a sentence or two say why you likened your creature to something else.

Example:

The pink salmon meandered its way through the reeds

Like a chilling wind finding an escape route through the dense forest

I likened the meandering fish to the movement of the wind because sometimes it appears as if the wind is moving in and out of the trees just as the salmon is moving in and out of the reeds.

1. A cat in its basket, like a tea bag in a tea pot.

I compared these together because when I think of a cat in a basket I think of something warm.

2. A snake in a forest, like the sun slithering over backs.

I compared these together because a snake slithers across the forest and the sun slithers across peoples backs.

## 4.27 The Plenary as Outlined in the NLS (1998, p.13)

It should be used to:

- Enable the teacher to spread ideas, re-emphasis teaching points, clarify misconceptions and develop new teaching points
- Enable pupils to reflect upon and explain what they have learned and to clarify their thinking
- Enable their pupils to revise and practise new skills acquired in an earlier part of the lesson
- Develop an atmosphere of constructive criticism and provide feedback and encouragement to pupils
- Provide opportunities for the teacher to monitor and assess the work of some of the pupils
- Provide opportunities for pupils to present and discuss key issues in their work

## 4.28 Examples of Long Explanations

### Session Two

TEACHER "Right, okay then, I've got this objective what we're going to be thinking about really for the rest of this week er... with poetry, and what we're going to be doing today is to eventually, not so much today, we're eventually going to write a haiku poem linked by theme or form. Er, we're not going to write a poem today, we're going to learn about haiku, which is a type of poem, a Japanese type of poem. It's actually called a haiku. Right, has anybody heard of a haiku? (Some children put their hands up) Well a haiku, as I've said, is a Japanese type of poem, and it's a very, very short poem actually made up of three lines...three lines, which is really short, which I know some you like, some of you prefer to write smaller poems. And it was actually a Master Basho who lived in the 17th Century actually formed the haiku, this sort of poem, so what he would do...have you got those matches for me there? Sorry, so what he would, Master Basho, he would write, something about nature, about feeling. He'd sit there, and there and then he'd write about a moment, and then about nature, and then about a feeling, and he'd have a candle, very much like this one, and he'd be sat down just as you are now. And he'd sit there, and he would light the candle, and then he'd almost do like a meditation, not quite, but he would sit there and he would really think about sight, what he could see all around him in his garden, the smells, things that he could smell, things that he could hear. And he found by lighting the candle (Teacher lights the candle) that he could focus his mind by looking at the candle, he would focus

his mind on the sights and the sounds and the smells around him. Then he could write his very small haiku, his very small Japanese...poem. Now you just sit there, and really, really concentrate. So while he was sitting down he would close his eyes, he was focusing on sounds, the birds, maybe the fish splashing, the coy carp splashing in the pond, or maybe he would think about the smells that he had, the banana tree that he had growing, and the smells that were around him in his garden and then he would open his eyes and he would look at stuff, and then there and then he would write his poem. He didn't leave it and then go back home, back into his hut and write his poem, he would sit there and write it. Now Master Basho, and this isn't made up, this is true, and he had a lot of followers, new students who would um come to his hut, where he lived, and they would come out, and they would write a poem, and they'd also learn about haiku, and they'd learn how to appreciate the very simple things of nature around them. It might be something as simple as...a worm moving through the earth. It might be as simple as a movement of a leaf in the garden. It wasn't anything complicated. Master Basho didn't like poems that used really complicated difficult language. He liked something simple. He actually said something like 'Using long words isn't good poetry. What you should is just capture the moment as you see it there and then. Don't try to make up a really long and complicated word, that's not what you see there and then. You see it as simple'. Okay? That's what Master Basho did, and that was over three hundred years ago, and haiku are still written today. And okay, it might have started with Japanese people, that's where it originated, but obviously English people write it as well. I'm going to show you a couple of haiku in a minute, but I'm just going to show you a particular thing. I'm going to put it up, no actually, it's to remind yourself of what a haiku is. As I've said there it's a tiny poem filled with a love of nature. Japanese haikus have seventeen syllables in three lines, and as I've written here it goes five, seven, five syllables. That's a Japanese haiku. Some English translators, people who translate Japanese haiku, particularly Japanese haiku into English, and they translate it into English six, four, five, two because they translated the Japanese language and they translate it so that it fits that five, seven, five but later translations however feel free to use any word first, so they, they actually feel normally like it's shorter than seventeen syllables and it's called free form haiku, that's free form. So some of the haiku that you see today, and over the next few days, they might not have the strict seventeen syllables, they might have shorter. So that's why I said about translators, but there are some people who write it, write their own haiku, as you are, and you might choose, no, in fact you might say 'I would like to do it in a Japanese style using five...is it five? Five? Five, seven, five' or you might think 'No, I find that too hard so I'm going to do the free form haiku'. Okay? Right, what we're going today is have a look at some of these haiku, and one of these is my favourite um...we're going to read them, and these were actually haiku written by Master Basho. Um... 'Basho', I think I've got this right, I'll have to check



this, I think it actually means 'banana tree' because Master Basho, as I said he sat in his garden and lit a candle, he had a banana tree as well he used to often, you know, write his haiku about...let's have a look at one then so you can see, you know, what they look like. What have we learnt about the haiku then? What have I shown you? What have you learnt? Anything to do with haiku. Alice?"

### Session Three

TEACHER "Okay. But things like that you come across, don't worry about it while you're writing it. You can check that later like I'm going to. Okay, now what we're going to do then, cos we need to move on as we're running out of time, is we are going to have a go at writing for the first time your haiku. Now Table One and Two I'm going to ask you er to work with the person sitting next to you, um, and choose, well either an idea that you've put down or choose an idea that I've got on here, you begin to form your own haiku. All I want from you, listen, is to have three lines and have it in the present tense, just those, so see if you can get on with that. Alright? You can use any of the ideas that I've written down here to help you."

BOY "Can you do the others?"

TEACHER "You can include the other one's, of course you can, but what I'm saying is, when I come to mark your work I'm definitely looking for those two. Will the middlies, sort of the in-betweens, what you're going to do, I want you to try do this on your own. You're writing your own haiku, so I would like you to try and suggest a season, as well as the present tense, and your three lines. The others of you, you have to include every, well no not everyone, that's probably a bit too much, as much as you can on there. I don't mean in just one haiku, you might be able to write a few in the next fifteen minutes, but you need to have a go at seeing if you can include, particularly those short vowel sounds. See if you can have a go at using those, and the contrast, that's what I tried to do here. Would you like me to play the music quietly while you're all...I will put, the thing is you're talking in a pair you'll have to whisper. Open your books then, you may want to write in pencil. You won't write a perfect haiku straight away, not for your first line anyway."

### Session Four

TEACHER "Good. Er, like a gap sometimes can create stillness within the poem. Er 'This stretch of water, dash, the frog jumped'. Something like that er, to create stillness or a slowing down to help emphasise the pace of your poem. So what we're going to do then is we're going to go to our garden area, we're going to sit down, we're not going to have long out there so you need to be focused and out there we are going to sit down very calmly, and we are going to think about the sights, smells and sounds that we can hear and see and smell, all

the senses, and like I showed you yesterday, on the board here, you're going to write down maybe some words together, maybe just the odd word, just putting down for your own haiku. It might be the odd word, then you might want to see if you can link those words together to capture an image a moment in time. I'm going to be er doing one as well while I'm out there, so we all need to be very quiet, and sit together focused. Some of you might want to look at a particular part of a bush, you might want to look at maybe the movement of a small insect or something. It doesn't really matter what you're going to do, as long as you think about the sights, the smells, the sounds all around you. (Deputy Head comes in and hands a slip of paper to teacher and makes a comment about it). It is our I.T time as well and we have got that until ten to, so hopefully we'll spend a little bit of time outside, not wasting time, and then type up our haiku on the computer. So can we have, make sure you've got your pen, and your board and your slip. Let's line up."

## 4.29 Recapping Again

### Session Three

ALICE "It's got three lines."

TEACHER "Three lines, yes. Yes?"

BEN "One has five, seven, five syllables and the other doesn't."

TEACHER "Free form and strict form, one that actually sticks to seventeen. Sam?"

SAM "When you wrote a poem, he didn't like it complicated."

TEACHER "Good."

SAM "He liked it simple."

TEACHER "He liked it simple. Well done. Abby?"

ABBY (Can't hear)

TEACHER "What was it about?"

ABBY "Nature."

### Session Four

TEACHER "Right, who can remember then what we were looking at yesterday in our literacy lesson? What were we looking at? Paul?"

PAUL "Haiku."

TEACHER "Haiku. And what is a haiku? What is a haiku? Sarah?"

SARAH "A three line poem um, and it has seventeen syllables."

TEACHER "Good girl. What things do we think about to do with a haiku?"

SIAN "Can I say that Master Basho did them?"

TEACHER "Um, yes you can. They were performed by Master Basho, invented I should say by Master, Master Basho. Sam?"

SAM "Master Basho doesn't like you using um long words."

TEACHER "Right, he doesn't like things complicated, long words, that are unnecessary. He likes things to be kept er quite simple as well. Tom?"

TOM "There's strict form or free form style of writing haiku."

TEACHER "Right, and what's the free form version then?"

TOM "When you write it, you don't worry about the syllables."

TEACHER "They don't have to be seventeen do they. Good, and you?"

BOY "Master Basho tries to um capture like one particular moment in nature say like a feather blowing in the wind, he'd try to capture that and put it in detail."

## Session Five

TEACHER "Er, please quickly recap on all those things then that we said went into a haiku, a haiku poem. Ryan?"

RYAN "Suggesting a season."

TEACHER "Suggesting a season...er, not necessarily saying obviously um, err 'It is winter', but perhaps suggesting by mentioning something that occurs in winter, maybe the falling of snow, things like that. Jamie?"

JAMES "Three lines."

TEACHER "Three lines."

JEM "Something to do with nature."

TEACHER "To do with nature, to do with a love of nature, to do with something about nature."

GIRL "Keep it in the present tense."

TEACHER "Keep it in the present tense. Make the situation you capture there and then. William?"

WILLIAM "Um, no complicated words."

TEACHER "Yes."

WILLIAM "Have simple sentences."

TEACHER "Yes."

WILLIAM "And have seventeen syllables."

4.30 Literacy Planner for the Week of the Haikus

Day		Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
10 Minutes Free Level		Differentiated spelling lists: ph of T Children to find meanings to words		Discuss meaning of spelling words and ways of learning spellings		Practice spelling of words ph of T		Consider new words and how they may be read in a sentence			
<b>Objective</b>		To practise and extend vocabulary through inventing word games		To write a sequence of poems linked by theme or form, e.g. a haiku		To write a sequence of poems linked by theme or form, e.g. a haiku		To write a sequence of poems linked by theme or form, e.g. a haiku		To write a sequence of poems linked by theme or form, e.g. a haiku	
<b>Whole Class</b>	<b>Focus</b>	Words <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences <input type="checkbox"/> Text <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking & Listening <input type="checkbox"/> E.T. <input type="checkbox"/>		Words <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences <input type="checkbox"/> Text <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking & Listening <input type="checkbox"/> E.T. <input type="checkbox"/>		Words <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences <input type="checkbox"/> Text <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking & Listening <input type="checkbox"/> E.T. <input type="checkbox"/>		Words <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences <input type="checkbox"/> Text <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking & Listening <input type="checkbox"/> E.T. <input type="checkbox"/>		Words <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences <input type="checkbox"/> Text <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking & Listening <input type="checkbox"/> E.T. <input type="checkbox"/>	
	<b>Introduction</b>	Shared Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Let's Year 6 Word Book Page 44-45 Read and discuss the poem and give ways of inventing jokes and puns. Consider use of anagrams to make jokes		Shared Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Explain the objective explain what the haiku is and read some examples. Give history of the haiku and ask children to comment on their favourite example		Shared Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Revise features of a haiku Listen to Rhythmic music for inspiration for haiku Model writing of a haiku demonstrate correct use of syllables and show alteration made along way		Shared Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Children to be assisted in garden area nature and insects provide inspiration for haiku sequence of poems, e.g. sounds, sights of nature in Summer Record ideas on whiteboards Model my ideas into a haiku		Shared Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Writing <input type="checkbox"/> To write a class haiku calendar on the classroom wall Brainstorm words for different seasons, use pictures Divide class into Summer, Spring, Autumn, Winter Consider instruments for seasons	
		P.45 in pairs solve anagrams and create 5 of own anagrams		Children, in pairs, to write a sequence beneath each example haiku explaining what the image is about		In pairs children write a haiku on any nature theme, incorporate correct number of syllables (inspiration from music)		Children, in pairs, to write a sequence of haiku addressing same theme, e.g. insects		Write a haiku for Summer Season (pairs) -use ideas listed and add accompaniment	
		Same as above but individually and solve anagrams on p. 47		Children to recognise the different images referred to in each haiku and note most favourite explaining why		Same as above but children to work independently and include reference to a time of year		Same as above but individually and include features such as alliteration		Write a haiku for Spring Season. add accompaniment include other poetic features	
<b>Pupil Tasks</b>	<b>A Group</b>	Challenge and anagrams on p. 45 and 47 to solve individually		Same as above but also consider which examples are strictly haiku ie images not explanations		Same as above but children to include punctuation for pace or effect (Examples on acetate)		Write a sequence of haiku that are linked include metaphoric language and similes		Write a haiku for Autumn and Winter seasons- add accompaniment include assonance	
	<b>B Group</b>	Share anagrams and check answers		Reverse properties of a haiku and the images created		Share haiku and accurate examples-evaluate against criteria		Share draft form of haiku-evaluate against criteria		Share haiku and accompaniment Record in book and on tape	
	<b>C Group</b>										
<b>Final Review</b>		To appraise a text quickly and effectively, to retrieve information from it, evaluate its value Non-fiction group reader Fiction and Poetry		To appraise a text quickly and effectively, to retrieve information from it, evaluate its value Non-fiction group reader Newspaper and Fiction		To appraise a text quickly and effectively, to retrieve information from it, evaluate its value Non-fiction group reader Fiction and Play script		To appraise a text quickly and effectively, to retrieve information from it, evaluate its value Non-fiction group reader Poetry and non-fiction		To appraise a text quickly and effectively, to retrieve information from it, evaluate its value Non-fiction group reader Non-fiction and play script	

## 4.31 Worksheets for Session Two

### Level Five

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**Objective:** To write a sequence of poems linked by theme or form

The following are set out as haiku poems, in themed pairs, but some of them are explanations which are not really suited to be poems and would be more appropriate as sentences in essays.

Which one are the images, and which are explanations? Write 'image' or 'explanation' next to each one. Describe what the **images** are capturing.

#### **Nature and religion**

To live is to suffer,  
religion offers comfort  
and hope

Contending-  
temple bell  
winter wind

#### **Looking**

Telescope-  
eyeful of haze,  
three pence

You can't always  
find what you seek,  
as you'd hoped

#### **Shopping**

Swinging homeward  
with my shopping: muddy leeks  
the weight in the base

It is a pleasure  
to buy good food  
and plan a meal

From reading the above explanations and images explain what the key difference is between image and an explanation.

## Level Four

---

**Objective:** To write a sequence of poems linked by theme or form

Here are some haiku written by Master Basho. Read the poems and write a sentence or two under each one explaining what the image is about. The first one has been done for you.

**1.**

The petals tremble  
on the yellow mountain rose-  
roar of the rapids

This haiku is describing a fragile rose in contrast to the strength of the mountain rapids. The force of the water causes the petals on the rose to move. Tremble is a reaction verb to the rapids roaring.

**2.**

An inch or two  
above dead grasses  
heat waves

**3.**

The shallows-  
a crane's thighs splashed  
in cool waves

**4.**

Ice in the night-  
the water jar cracks,  
waking me

**5.**

With what kind of voice  
would the spider cry  
in the autumn wind?

Which is your favourite haiku and why?

## Level Three and Below

---

**Objective:** To write a sequence of poems linked by theme or form

Here are some haiku written by Master Basho. Read the poems and write a sentence or two under each one explaining what the image is about. The first one has been done for you.

1.

The petals tremble  
on the yellow mountain rose-  
roar of the rapids

This haiku is describing a fragile rose in contrast to the strength of the mountain rapids. The force of the water causes the petals on the rose to move. Tremble is a reaction verb to the rapids roaring.

2.

In the moonlight a worm  
silently  
drills through the chestnut

3.

A dragonfly, trying to-  
oops, hang on to the upside  
of a blade of grass

4.

Ice in the night-  
the water jar cracks,  
waking me

5.

With what kind of voice  
would the spider cry  
in the autumn wind?

## **4.32 Haiku Checklist**

### **Level Five**

- To recreate the essence of natural experience
- In present tense
- Three lines-17syllables or less
- Suggest the season
- Smells sounds
- Contrast-big and small, rising and falling, delicate and unyielding
- Long or short vowel sounds, e.g. crow or hop, to emphasise meanings of slow and long or quick and short

### **Level Four**

- In present tense
- Three lines-17syllables or less
- Suggest the season
- Contrast-big and small, rising and falling, delicate and unyielding

### **Level Three and Below**

- In present tense
- Three lines-17syllables or less
- Suggest the season

## **4.33 Headed Paper for All Abilities to Write Haikus on.**

### **The Four Season Haiku**

**Spring**

**Summer**

**Autumn**

**Winter**



#### 4.34 Teacher Shows Anxiety Over Writing.

TEACHER "So try and get some contrast in the haiku. Now you've got to really now imagine your in a rainforest, so, we need to be very quiet, we're going to put the music on, we're going to look at these images...it's going to be quite hard actually, cos I've got to put the images up and I've got to think, but that's okay, I've got to begin to...write a haiku. Now can I just say something, for me doing this I don't think I've ever written a haiku before. I don't think I'm going to be able to write it straight down, but what I will do, and you can watch me doing this, is just maybe jot down some ideas, words, things like that that come into my mind. You are going to write down ideas as well, not on your whiteboard cos it'll take too much time, so turn to the back of your books."

Music is switched on and teacher writes on board.

TEACHER "Yes, I did that as well. Can you put the lights on please, Peter. Now what want you to do now is look at the whiteboard, I'm just going to write down notes really, I'm going to use this now to help me write a haiku. I've never written one before. I hope I will improve during the week as you will I hope. Er, so er I'm going to have a go at doing this one now. Um, what we're not going to worry about um, at the moment is er whether or not we write seventeen syllables. We have to try to keep it er, we can try to, I'm struggling to say it, we don't need to restrict ourselves, we don't need seventeen, I don't care about what we do we those, but we want a haiku with three lines, so we've got to restrict, you know, make sure that we've got the right number. Right, so if you could turn, if everyone can turn this way and look now, I'm going to have a go at writing one, and if you're not looking at me you're going to find it very difficult. Now, what I'm want to try to include, using that check list is some certain sounds, which we heard earlier. Now we couldn't get the smells, we could get the sounds, but we couldn't get the smells so we have to imagine those. Master Basho was very fortunate in that he had those things. Okay, while I did make those notes thought, I tried to think of contrast, and there was one where I just scribbled down here, er, I'll just read it 'Rising bark, falling' I wrote 'Falling, tumbling green' er I got that from one of the images where you could see a very, very tall tree, and it was as if the cameraman was looking up, and saw all the green hanging around, and that was, that was, sort of stimulated a thought to me, and made me think of that contrast there. Okay? So I'm going to use that one as my starting point. Er...so I need to have three lines, try and put three lines, see if I can get some contrast in with smell and some sound. Right, so if I pick out rising, then I can use the words leaves tumbling, and that would be a good contrast for me. But I don't just want to put rising bark, I might want to...how do I picture that bark? I can picture it quite rough, and the leaves are quite soft. Ahh, that would be good because I'm going to get my rise and fall, and then I'm going to get my rough

bark, and my tender soft leaves. I'm going to use that idea. Er... 'Rising bark' (teacher begins to write this up on board) and er 'rough', good, cos it feels rough. 'Rising bark, rough...Fragile leaves...falling'. I'm going to say something 'An agreeable pair'. Agreeable, how do you spell that? Agree...I'm not too sure about that spelling, so I'll have to check that one. I think it's like that, but I'm going to have to check that. 'An agreeable pair'. Right, what I'm going to do is exactly what you're going to do in a minute. Alright? You're just going to write something down. I'm not going to leave it like this, although that's the image, a moment in time, I've captured, from listening to the music, and the images. Now I want you to think more about the checklist. Could I include perhaps a smell in there. Could I include a smell? What do you think? Well, bark, bark does have a smell, leaves do as well. Oh...I don't know.

## 4.35 Poem Used in First Literary Event.

### Autumn Gardens 1

Under a cold, damp stone  
A thoughtful frog  
Dreams of rainy days to come.

Behind the old shed  
A family of Hedgehogs  
Is dressed in autumn leaves.

In the compost heap  
A thousand beetles  
Build a mighty city.

Over the rooftop  
The bonfire sparks  
Spread like bright seeds.



### 4.37 Short Introduction to the Session

TEACHER "We're going to look at poetry, and we haven't looked at poetry in quite a while. Okay, we're going to look first of all, we're going to do our word level work first, and then we're going to look at our poem. Okay, we're going to look at preposition, so can any one tell me what preposition is? There. Jeremy tells me that he could so, yeah?"

JEREMY "It's like it's related to like, um, behind, by the side or in front."

### 4.38 Teacher Questions Children

TEACHER "What else could we have? Under? Andy? Opposite of under?"

ANDY "Below."

TEACHER "Opposite of under?"

GIRL "Over."

TEACHER "Okay err... Jeremy. Where is it in relation to Jeremy's face? Oh hang on, we've had over. Let me think of another one err...(puts it behind)"

BOY "Underneath."

TEACHER "Underneath, good. Let's think of some more preposition words in relation to where the lid might be. Andy?"

ANDY "Down and up."

TEACHER "Up, down. Right. Yep?"

BOY "Inside."

TEACHER "Inside. Opposite? Opposite?"

BOY "Outside."

TEACHER "Outside. Good. All good preposition words that we'll be using in our own poem later on."

### 4.39 Teacher Asking Pupils About Structure and Stylistic Features in the Poem

TEACHER "Right, okay. What sort of pattern does this poem then follow? What are the stylistic features of this poem we can see that we like? Kelly?"

KELLY "It's about autumn where, autumn where the animals like, try to find a home."

TEACHER "Okay. It's about the garden, where the animals are in the garden. Good. Andy?"

ANDY "Um...good vocabulary."

TEACHER "You like the vocabulary. Can you find one you like?"

ANDY "Um...like...um... 'Build a mighty city'."

TEACHER "'Build a mighty city.' So what, what's the word there that you like exactly?"

ANDY "Mighty."

TEACHER "'Mighty', you like the use of the word 'mighty'. That's fine."

#### 4.40 Teacher Encouraging Pupils to Think of Dull Adjectives

TEACHER "It's too plain. Okay, let's have a look at the first verse, and let's see if your argument is justified. 'Under a cold damp stone, A thoughtful frog, Dreams of rainy days to come'. What do you think I like about that first verse? Joshua?"

JOSHUA "'Thoughtful frog'."

TEACHER "'Thoughtful', right. What could you have used instead that might not be as an exciting word choice? 'A thoughtful frog'- well it must be a frog thinking. Do you ever think about a frog thinking, sat on its lily pad going 'Mmm'? (Some children laugh). No not particularly? What word could you have used if you were going to be a bit boring about it? A 'what' frog?"

BOY "A green..."

TEACHER "A green frog. Yeah go on, be more boring than that. What's the most shocking adjective you can think of?"

ANDY "A bored frog."

TEACHER "A bored frog. I think that's quite good, something like that. A bored frog that has nothing to do with his day, but sit there and look around. Jeremy?"

JEREMY "A wet frog."

TEACHER "A wet frog. That's a bit obvious, isn't it? 'Thoughtful' is a little bit more abstract, a bit more removed from the, from what you see. Yes, Joshua?"

JOSHUA "Plain? A plain frog?"

TEACHER "A plain frog. Yes, can you think a little bit more boring? What would be the most boring word beginning with a 'b'?"

GIRL "A nice frog."

TEACHER "Nice, ohh that would be good, a nice frog. What's the word I have beginning with a 'b'? Three letters."

SEVERAL CHILDREN ANSWER AT ONCE "Big."

TEACHER "A big frog."

#### 4.41 Teacher Picks Word for the Class to Discuss

TEACHER "Okay, let's think of another frog word from our list right there. What about a romantic frog?"

CLASS "Yeah."

#### 4.42 Teacher Highlights Poetic Feature

TEACHER "Okay, very good, and 'Over the rooftop, The bonfire sparks, Spread like bright seeds'. Now what's been used in that last verse, Amy?"

AMY "Err..."

TEACHER "No? Jeremy?"

JEREMY "Simile."

TEACHER "Simile. What's been compared to what then?"

JEREMY "The bonfire sparks to bright seeds."

TEACHER "The bonfire sparks to bright seeds, good."

#### 4.43 Scaffolding by Teacher

TEACHER "What are the other words that we had there? A feared frog. James, what would a feared frog dream of?"

JAMES "Err...fighting."

TEACHER "Yeh, fighting what?"

JAMES "Other frogs?"

TEACHER "A, a feared frog dreams of fighting other frogs? Can you explain that a little bit more?"

ANDY "Toads, toads."

JEREMY "Toads, toads cos they're bigger than frogs."

ANDY "Yeah."

TEACHER "Right, could he be fighting? Can you think of a better word than fighting?"

ANDY "Battering."

TEACHER "Battering. Okay, much better, okay, much better."

#### **4.44 Teacher Repeats Back Answers**

SEVERAL CHILDREN ANSWER AT ONCE "Big."

TEACHER "A big frog."

BOY "Little?"

TEACHER "A little frog."

ANDY "A dead frog."

TEACHER "A dead frog! (Laughs) A dead frog thinks of nothing."  
All class laugh.

#### **4.45 Teacher Allows Pupils to Work Through Ideas**

TEACHER "It's really good, but can we make that a little bit better even. A lonely frog dreams of a best friend."

JOSHUA "No, dreams forever of a best friend."

TEACHER "Dreams forever of a best friend. Okay."

GIRL "A lonely frog dreams of the time when he will, he will have a family."

TEACHER "Okay. A lonely frog dreams of..."

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Having a family."

TEACHER "Having a family. Yeh, you need to shorten that down cos that's getting quite long. Joshua?"

JOSHUA "Eventually having a best friend."

TEACHER "Yeh, okay. We don't want too many extra words."

GIRL "Longs for."

TEACHER "Longs, that's good. A lonely frog longs for a best friend."

#### **4.46 The Teacher Introduces Next Task**

TEACHER "Right, you're going to have a go at writing your own garden poem. What things do you find in your garden? Because when you're writing I think it's a hard, it's one of the hardest things to make things up when you can actually use things that are in your own experience, things that you've actually seen. What's in your garden, and I'm not talking about your wellies (Class laughs). Keith, what's in your garden?"

KEITH "Stones."

TEACHER "If you haven't got a garden then you can think about the park"

#### 4.47 Teacher and Class Discuss Ideas for First Stanza of Class Poem

TEACHER "Behind the gloomy shed...I'm using this as a writing frame. Behind the gloomy...we've got two adjectives there haven't we? Do we want gloomy or do we want that other one there? We like this? A...what's behind that shed then?"

TEACHER "Kelly?"

KELLY "A bunch of...cuddly fox cubs."

TEACHER "Right. We're only thinking of a short one here, okay. 'A thoughtful frog' 'A family of hedgehogs' 'A thousand beetles' 'The bonfire sparks'. Yes?"

NIA "An army of ants."

TEACHER "Behind the gloomy shed, An army of ants. Is that your line Nia?"

NIA "Yes."

TEACHER "An army of ants. Alright what might they be doing behind that shed?"

JEREMY "Marching."

TEACHER "They might be doing drill practice, mightn't they? What are they doing behind that shed?"

GIRL "Collecting food for the winter."

#### 4.48 Teacher Discussing Word Choice with Pupils

TEACHER "Collecting food for the winter. Behind the gloomy shed, An army of ants, Collecting food for the winter."

TEACHER "It's quite long. Can you shorten that?"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Collecting..."

TEACHER "Can you shorten that though?"

BOY "Collecting food."

TEACHER "Something food for the winter - one word. Not collect."  
(Several children experiment with words)

TEACHER "Mm."

GIRL "Collects."

TEACHER "Hang on, let's write that down. Collects food for the winter. Can you shorten that?"  
(Several children read line through to themselves)

TEACHER "Can you get rid of 'collects food' and think of one word?"

BOY "Scrumptious food."



TEACHER "No, think of getting rid of 'collects food' altogether and think of another word."

GIRL "Gets food for winter."

TEACHER "No, think of getting rid of 'collect' and 'food' and try to find one word. Kelly?"

KELLY "Gathers."

TEACHER "Gathers...for the winter?"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Yeh."

TEACHER "'Gathers for the winter' sound alright? Yeh? Instead of 'Gathers' I was thinking 'Prepare'."

ANDY "Prepare for winter."

TEACHER "An army of ants prepare..."

JOSHUA "For the winter."

TEACHER "For the winter. So it makes a little bit shorter. Does that sound best or do you like it the other way?"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Err..."

TEACHER "It's whatever way you feel happy with."

BOY "That way." (Points to 'prepare')

#### 4.49 Discussing the Second Stanza

TEACHER "A cluster of worms. Are doing what? Something relating to a verb please. A cluster of worms are doing what? (Children say lines to themselves) Think of a verb here? Are they dreaming? Are they thinking? Are they playing? What are they playing, Greg?"

GREG "Um, they're playing hiding"

TEACHER "Oh, they're playing hide and seek."

GREG "Yes."

TEACHER "With the birds."

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Yeh!"

TEACHER "Okay. 'Play' put the word 'Play hide and seek'. Yes? Can anyone improve that last line? 'A cluster of worms play hide and seek'."

JOSHUA "They play a game called hide and seek."

TEACHER "Play a game, yes. I don't mean to make it longer cos I like the length, but can anyone think of, maybe they're not playing, maybe they're doing something different. Andy?"

ANDY "And build a house?"

TEACHER "Build a house? Could be, yeh."

JEREMY "Wriggle pensively."

TEACHER "A cluster of worms wriggle pensively. Okay, I like that. That's quite nice. Any others? We're not saying what the worms look like they're doing."

SAM "They're...doing nothing."

ANDY "Slithering."

TEACHER "Slithering? Where are they going if they're slithering?"

ANDY "To their home."

TEACHER "To their home? Where else? Where would they be going?"

GIRL "Best friend."

TEACHER "Their best friend's house. Right, okay, 'A cluster of worms, Move to their friend's house for tea'. Can you think of shortening that one? 'A cluster of worms...'"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Go for tea. Go to tea with their friends. Visit their friends."

TEACHER "Visit their friends?"

GIRL "Yeah."

TEACHER "Yes, that's good."

## 4.50 The Teacher Guides the Discussion

TEACHER "Right, okay, pick another animal then please. Pick another animal in your garden."

GIRL "Wasp".

TEACHER "Wasp. Now what preposition can you use for wasp, do you think. How can we start this one?"

Rather than discussing the behaviour and characteristics of a wasp, the teacher began from a preposition and how that related to its position.

TEACHER "How can we start it? For wasp?"

GIRL "Above."

TEACHER "Let's go with above. Lorna? Above what? What are they above first of all? What are they above? Nia?"

NIA "They're hovering."

TEACHER "What are they hovering above? Yeah."

GIRL "Their nests."

TEACHER "Right, okay, but you don't see them up in your back garden."

SAM "Yes."

TEACHER "Not, not very often."

Though Sam had a relevant point the teacher disregarded it for she seemed to have other ideas that she wanted to focus upon. She appeared to switch from fantasy to literal when it was a point she wanted to make or an idea she wanted develop. For example, previously she had said that the ants could have been performing drill practice, which was fantasy, but now she turned to literal reasoning over the wasps' nests, claiming that you did not see them very often. This not only made it difficult for pupils to predict what you could or could not contribute, but also went against the notion that they were bringing ideas from their own experiences.

TEACHER "Yes?"

GIRL "Above the green grass flies the..."

TEACHER "Above the grass? Flying above the grass? Yes, it could be, that's fine. Cherie?"

CHERIE "Above the flowers."

TEACHER "Right. Above the flowers, a wasp/bee or a single bee? Is it a single bee or a lonely bee?"

Suddenly, but subtly, the teacher changed the subject matter without discussion, and tried again to focus the children in the direction of her intended development.

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Single."

TEACHER "Right. Above the flowers, a single bee...is doing what?"

BOY "Is in search of a friend."

TEACHER "Right, we've had that before. Let's think of a simile. What does the bee actually look like?"

ANDY "It's when, when it collects pollen."

TEACHER "Right. Above the flowers, a busy bee collects pollen. Like?"

The teacher then added her own adjective to describe the bee as 'busy'.

ANDY "For honey."

TEACHER "No, I think we were going to think of a simile there, weren't we?"

The use of 'we' was deceptive, for it was the teacher who had decided that they must think of a simile.

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Like...like..."

TEACHER "How do they move? How would you describe a bee? How, how do bees move? Sorry? Can you not all shout at once? Put your hand up please. Greg?"

GREG "Fidgeting in the air."

TEACHER "Fidgeting? Okay. But how does it actually move? One word to describe. That actually was quite a nice word. Above the flowers, a single bee fidgets..."

BOY "Yes."

JOSHUA "Through the air"

TEACHER "Fidgets...through the air. Yeh, that's all right. Andy?"

ANDY "Floats...through the air."

TEACHER "Floats through the air like what? What floats?"

BOY "A feather."

TEACHER "Yes. Don't think about what floats in the air, think about what floats in something else?"

AMY "Like a boat..."

TEACHER "Like a boat through the...?"

AMY "Through the water."

The teacher again heavily directed the conversation, and this was reflected in the next passage of discourse when a pupil read back the line and became confused with what had been accepted and rejected.

TEACHER "Lovely. Can you say that out for me?"

AMY "A..."

TEACHER "Above the flowers."

AMY "A busy bee."

TEACHER "A fidgeting bee."

Amy recited the adjective the teacher had suggested previously, but the teacher decided to include the pupil's suggestion instead.

AMY "A fidgeting bee...floats through the air like a boat floats through the water."

TEACHER "You didn't need to say 'floats' twice. Yeah, that sounded lovely."

It was a confused and uncertain reading, generated by the teacher's contribution, and as such received both criticism and praise.

## 4.51 Peer Support

JOSHUA "Julia, if you can't find it'll be in here (Referring to another dictionary)."

HANNAH "Where do snails come from?"

JEREMY "From the grass."

HANNAH "What would you do as well as grass?"

JEREMY "Don't know."

HANNAH "What about here?"

JEREMY "A tree."

HANNAH "Oh, I've already done that."

#### **4.52 Talk off Task Regulated By Others**

JULIA "I don't like drawing in a straight line."

ANDY "That's in your Maths book."

JOSHUA "What?"

ANDY "That book. Maths book. I wonder what it's about."

JEREMY "Why aren't you doing any work?"

ANDY "I'm thinking."

JEREMY "Out loud."

ANDY "I'm thinking (laughs)."

#### **4.53 Talk off Task Regulated by Those Involved**

JULIA "I bet you don't know how to do these? (Drawing a maths symbol in the margin of the book)"

ANDY "Yeah, I do you know."

JULIA "You don't."

ANDY "I, I don't do it like that. I do it like this."

JULIA "I'll do it again."

ANDY "Go on then."

JULIA "Oh, I can't do it now."

ANDY "It's easy. Look, you just go like this, and you do an 'a'."

JULIA "I don't know the 'and' sign."

ANDY "Just do it round there, and put that round there a bit."

JULIA "I don't do mine like that. I do, I do...an add sign."

ANDY "Freezing water."

JULIA "Between the pipe and the wall, A small insect, Grows more and more."

#### **4.54 Pupils Decide on Order of Stanzas**

JOSHUA "Nia, what order do you think?"

NIA "Okay, I think it should go...what do you think?"

ANDY "I think Hannah's should go first. Hannah should go first."

NIA "Hannah then Andy."

TEACHER "And stop."

JEREMY "Then you."

TEACHER "Right, if we can have quiet, and all come and sit down here."

ANDY "Then you, then Julia, then Jeremy, then Joshua."

JULIA "I'm last."

ANDY "Why?"

TEACHER "Stop."

JULIA "Cos of my ending."

JOSHUA "She's got 'home sweet home'."

JEREMY "Yeh, she's got 'home sweet home'."

ANDY "Yeh, she's last."

TEACHER "Right now make it nice and clear please"

#### **4.55 Teacher and Pupils Discuss How to Respond to Work**

TEACHER "If you're working with a partner and we're suggesting improvements, what do we need to remember? What do we need to be careful of? If we're going to be telling people what they're doing wrong with their work? What do we need to remember? Joshua?"

JOSHUA "Don't say all the um things that aren't good, and some that are good."

TEACHER "Right, okay. So what maybe should we start with? Nia?"

NIA "Um like you said before, be gentle about and you don't um tell them like all their work is really bad."

TEACHER "Right. Don't tell them everything that's wrong. You maybe pick two or three of the main things that they can work on to start with."

#### **4.56 Teacher Asks Pupils About Poetry Books**

TEACHER "Do we buy many poetry books? Do you have any poetry books?"

HANNAH "I've only got four."

TEACHER "You've got four."

HANNAH "Yeah."

TEACHER "That's quite a lot isn't it. Some people haven't got any."

ANDY "I got about ten."

TEACHER "You got about ten poetry books. Which poetry do you prefer?"

ANDY "Um...funny poetry."

#### **4.57 Pupils Talk On and Off Task**

JOSHUA "What alliteration can I use here?"

JEREMY "Um, um."

JOSHUA "Glistening gardens."

JEREMY "Why's Rowan dumped you?"

JOSHUA "Cos I play football too much" (Julia laughs).

JEREMY "Oh."

ANDY "I think, I think Abby dumped Sam as well, but I'm..."

JULIA "No, she didn't."

JEREMY "Did she?"

NIA "She did."

ANDY "I think so because..."

JOSHUA "Why they sitting together then?"

ANDY "Sam came over..."

JEREMY "Yeah, why they sitting together then?"

JULIA "Yeh. You're lying, Andy."

ANDY "I said 'I thought.'"

JOSHUA "Glistening gardens."

JULIA "Up the smooth step"

#### **4.58 Pupils Exchanging and Developing Ideas**

JULIA "Would you say grass is shiny?"

ANDY "Grass is not."

JEREMY "I don't know."

ANDY "Grass..."

JEREMY "No, but when it's been raining though."

JOSHUA "Moist grass."

JULIA "Moist."

JOSHUA "Frozen grass...frosty grass."

NIA "Soft and bouncy."

JULIA "Yeah. Soft and bouncy."

## 4.59 Teacher Directs Discussion

NIA "What else is long-awaited?"

TEACHER "Long awaited?"

JEREMY "A cat."

TEACHER "Sorry?"

JEREMY "No."

NIA "The sun, the sun coming out."

TEACHER "Like a long-awaited sun after rain. The spring after winter? Like a bride coming down the aisle?"

NIA "Like, like the sun after the..."

TEACHER "Like the...if you'd like to think about that."

JEREMY "Like the cheerful sun after the miserable rain."

TEACHER "Yeh, that's better. Keep thinking."

JEREMY "Um..."

TEACHER "What does the sun normally do if it's been raining?"

JEREMY "Dry up everything."

TEACHER "Sorry? Right 'Once I was long-awaited like the sun drying up the...' What does it dry up?"

JEREMY "The washing."

TEACHER "'Like the sun drying the washing'. Oh, I don't know, that's going off the track a bit there now isn't it. 'Once I was long-awaited, Like the sun...' Think about when it's in the sky and when it's been raining. What's the sun doing to the clouds?"

JEREMY "Evaporating them."

TEACHER "Evaporating them, right, burning them off isn't it. 'Once I was long-awaited, Like the sun burning through the...' What?"

JEREMY "Grey."

TEACHER "'Burning through the grey'. That sounds good, well done."



#### **4.60 Teacher Allows Pupils to Engage in Conversation Together**

TEACHER "How might you describe yourself using verbs? What verbs would you use to describe what you were doing?"

ANDY "Causing havoc."

TEACHER "Causing havoc?"

ANDY "Yeh, like biting kids' legs."

TEACHER "You bite kids' legs?"

JEREMY "Andy, it's about yourself."

ANDY "Oh, human stuff! I thought we were rats."

#### **4.61 Teacher Encourages Pupils to Express Preferences**

TEACHER "'But now I'm bitten and chewed, Short and stubby, Sitting in the abused tray'. Or 'unwanted tray'. Which one do we want?"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Unwanted." "Abused."

TEACHER "Who wants 'unwanted'? Who wants 'abused'?"  
(Children put hands up to indicate preference)

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Oh no."

TEACHER "'Abused' has won the day."

#### **4.62 Teacher Mediates Pupils Ideas**

TEACHER "Okay, 'Soon, soon' what will happen? To the pencil?"

JOSH "Soon I will be a microscopic piece of dust."

TEACHER "Ooh."

ANDY "How can a pencil turn into a microscopic piece of dust?"

Children start to argue amongst themselves: "You can only sharpen it about that much'."

TEACHER "Josh, can you explain your interpretation? Do you mean it literally or were you being figurative?"

JOSH "Err..."

BOY "Figurative."

#### **4.63 Poem Used in Third Literary Event**

##### **Earth**

I am the Earth  
Once, forest covered my face  
Like a green beard,  
And great animals hunted in it.  
But now men come with sharp razors  
To scrape my tender skin,  
Leaving nothing but cuts and sores and stubble.  
Soon I will be barefaced and bald,  
And the hot sun will burn me.  
I'll never get used to it,  
Even if it is  
The latest fashion.

#### **4.64 Poems Used in Fourth Literary Event**

##### **Storm**

They're at it again,  
The wind and the rain.  
It all started when the wind took the window by its collar  
And shook it with all its might  
Then the rain let it in  
What a din!  
They'll be at it all night.  
Serve them right if they go home in the morning  
And the sky won't let them in.

##### **Stormy Night**

Rumbling in the chimney,  
Rattling at the doors  
Round the roofs and round the roads,  
The rude wind roars.  
Raging through the darkness,  
Raging through the trees.  
Racing off again across the great, great seas.

## **Onomatopia Poem**

Ever been kissed by a toothless vampire?  
(gwall-smakktup)  
Ever thrown water on a Brownies' campfire?  
(splutsch-frisskress-kik)  
Ever caught your socks on a rusty wire?  
(pir-keressfrick-twick)  
Ever found and rolled an old car tyre?  
(coom-coom-roooo-roooo-roo-roofth)  
Ever jumped in a barrel for a cooling drink?  
(whee-sklundftslansh-blurburb-drok)  
Ever bathed a baby in the kitchen skink?  
(splumge-splumge-thwogt-bunk-dribbledub)  
Ever smashed a clock with a heavy hammer?  
(whoo-powcrunchaduncklecrash-tinkle-bink-ink-k)  
Ever heard a barn owl stutter and stammer  
(t-t-tw-twhit-twhit-t-t-twh-twhoo-hoo)

## **4.65 Poem used in Fifth Literary Event**

### **Rat Rap**

C'mon everybody, slap some grease on those paws.  
Get some yellow on your teeth, and go sharpen up your claws.  
Yeh we're rattin' up, rattin' up, rattin' up tonight.

## **4.66 Teacher Encourages Pupils to Talk About Emotional Responses**

TEACHER "Right, let's think about our own feelings of that poem? How did we feel when we read that poem?"

JOSHUA "Which one?"

TEACHER "The first one. How did we feel when we read that poem? James, can you go and sit over there please. Sorry? On this one, how did you feel when you read that poem? How did it make you feel? How did it make me feel?"

JOSHUA "Lifted".

TEACHER "Yes, you were quite happy weren't you? Quite a cheerful poem. Make, make you laugh, maybe?"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Yeah."

TEACHER "Yeah? Quite humorous? Hope you can read my words. What about the second poem? Andy?"

ANDY "I like um kind of dark...and stormy."

TEACHER "It's quite a dark mood. Okay, thank you. James, sit on a chair where you can see, not behind the rest of the class. Sit on a chair please. Images, right what images were created then? Joshua?"

#### **4.67 Discussing Meaning of Line in Poem**

TEACHER "Okay. 'A thousand beetles, Build a mighty city.' Oh, what would the city actually look like?"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Big. Ginormous."

TEACHER "Would it? Is that what this poet means? Is it going to be this huge building that's sort of going to take over 'our school'?" (name taken out for preservation of anonymity)

#### **4.68 Teacher Discusses Interpretation of Poems**

TEACHER "What do you think he means 'I am the Earth, Once forest covered my face, Like a green herd'? What do you think that, what do you think he means there with that? Josh."

JOSH "Like an animal, a group of trees, then they cut down."

TEACHER "Okay, cos the good thing about poetry is that I can't say 'No, I think you're wrong, Josh', because we're all entitled to interpret this poem in our own way. And the poet might be able to say 'No, that's not what I intended' but there's no wrong interpretation. Has anyone got another interpretation for what 'Like a green herd' might be? Sam?"

#### **4.69 Teacher Implying Meaning is Purely Subjective**

TEACHER "Are you using your poetic licence? Licence to say whatever I want to? 'It's my poem'?"

JOSH "Yeah."

TEACHER "Yes, quite."

#### **4.70 Teacher Focuses on Structure**

JOSH "Um, on the first three verses she said about animals then suddenly it's about a garden and chair."

TEACHER "Yeah, but that's what the poem, that's what the poem had as well the other day, and we had to follow that structure so that's, yeh, that's fine."

It was also given prominence in literary event three, as they wrote a class poem.

TEACHER "Ah, let's just check our structure again. 'I'm bitten and chewed'...right, we need another two lines, don't we."

#### **4.71 Choosing Words Without Discussing the Meaning**

TEACHER "But now I'm bitten and chewed, Short and stubby, Sitting in the abused tray'. Or 'unwanted tray'. Which one do we want?"

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Unwanted." "Abused."

TEACHER "Who wants 'unwanted'? Who wants 'abused'?"  
(Children put hands up to indicate preference)

SEVERAL CHILDREN "Oh no."

TEACHER "'Abused' has won the day."

#### **4.72 Teacher Presents Guidelines on How to Redraft Poems**

TEACHER "Take words away, okay? Try omitting and adding words. Two: use a thesaurus. Three: make sure there's nothing, make sure there's not too much repetition, that you've not used the word 'prepare' six times in your poem. Choose another one. Err...think about stylistic features. Now you don't have to include all of these, you might include some of these...and check whether you've stayed inside the structure of the poem."

#### **4.73 Pupils Emphasise Poetic Features**

TEACHER "Right, so what's the overall theme of that poem then if it's giving the earth sort of human type feelings?"

ANDY "Personification."

TEACHER "Right, there's lots of personification in there."

#### **4.74 Discussing the Meaning of the Poem**

TEACHER "It makes the wind and the rain sound quite naughty, there doesn't it? The wind and the rain have been at it again, fighting. What does it remind you of? What do you think the poet might have had in his mind when he was comparing the wind and the rain?"

ANDY "A storm."

TEACHER "Well yes, but what might he have been comparing it to, cos Abby talked about personification which is right. Jeremy?"

JEREMY "Bullying."

TEACHER "Bullies? Yeah. I thought brother and sister maybe arguing, and up all night."

#### **4.75 Autumn Even-Song**

Swift little breezes, darting chill,  
Pant down the lake;  
A crow flies from the yellow hill,  
And in its wake  
A baffled line of labouring rooks:  
Steel-surfaced to the light the river looks.

#### **4.76 Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Autumn Fires'**

In the other gardens  
And all up the vale,  
From the autumn bonfires  
See the smoke trail!

Pleasant summer over  
And all the summer flowers,  
The red fire blazes,  
The grey smoke towers.

Sing a song of seasons!  
Something bright in all!  
Flowers in the summer,  
Fires in the fall!

## **5.1 Literacy Co-ordinator Interview Questions**

### **Biography of the Literacy Co-ordinator and Perceptions of Role**

How long have you been Literacy Co-ordinator? Is that your title? Literacy Co-ordinator?

How did you get the position?

What was your previous experience?

Were you given a role description which laid out your responsibilities as an English Co-ordinator? Did you talk through this your role with the Head?

Did you receive any additional support in your development of this role e.g. training, courses, peer support?

How did the other staff react to your position?

So how do you perceive your role to be now? Do you think others perceive your role in the same way?

Has this affected your confidence in supporting other staff or being scrutinised in OFSTED inspections?

What kind of qualities do you think a Literacy Co-ordinator needs to be successful?

### **Understanding of the Relationship between English Policy and Practise**

Now you have an English policy. Tell me how this came about? Was the whole school involved in the creation of the policy?

And what do you think an English policy is for?

Who do you feel that you are producing an English policy for? Yourself? Staff? Ofsted?

How much do you think this policy reflects what is going on in practice? Do you think that others would be informed as to what went on in the classrooms with this policy?

How would you make it different? What has stopped you from doing the things that you've wanted to?

Do you think it is helpful for you as the Literacy Co-ordinator to work on an English policy?

### **The Impact of the NLS upon their Role**

Now lets talk about the NLS because that has had an impact on you role and what you do as a whole school? What were you first reactions to the NLS?

Do you like the NLS? Do you 'believe' in it? When the government produces documents such as the National Curriculum and the NLS do you feel you have the confidence in your own knowledge of English to be able to question aspects of it or do you feel happy to accept it as it is?

How have you integrated the NLS into your school? Were all the staff happy with it-did you have any problems or successes in integrating this into the school?

Do you feel that the NLS deals with all the areas of English that children need to experience?

Do you think there is a difference between literacy and literature?

Do you think the NLS makes a distinction between literacy and literature?

How do you think it does this?

### **Attitude towards the Inclusion of Poetry in the NLS**

The NLS places a lot of emphasis on poetry? What do you think of this? Are you happy with the way in which it asks you to teach poetry and what it asks you to teach?

Do you encourage the school to stick very closely with the NLS? Do you monitor the way in which other teachers teach poetry? Do you give feedback?

What are your own experiences of poetry when you were at school? Negative or positive experiences?

Does this influence the way in which you communicate to others about poetry? Do you feel confident enough in your own teaching and understanding of poetry to teach children/ support staff?

Do you think that children experience poetry outside of school or do you think that all their knowledge of poetry will come from school?



Do you think the NLS encourages a connection between what children know already and the specialised knowledge they learn in school in the Literacy Hour?

### **The Effect of Standards on their Role.**

Are you aware of the standards that need to be met according to government statements?

How has your school done in the SATs last year and the year before?

Have you had any additional funding or support that you've been able to deploy as a Literacy Co-ordinator over the last two years?

Do you feel under pressure to see standards rise? Does this affect what you teach and the way in which you teach poetry?

Do you have any long-term or short-term plans to see this happen?

What sort of intake does your school have?

Do you think this affects standards?

Are these taken into account by the government/by parents?

## **5.2 Simon Talks About Pressures of Implementing the NLS**

SIMON "The training, the twilights and the inset days we had over that twelve-month period was intensive, incredibly intensive. And it really smacked of moments where you thought people are getting really low with this. You know, I mean I was desperately low with it because I was delivering all the training and it was, I mean you've seen the packs that they've sent out And then you had to plough through this stuff that most of it was presented in such a dull sort of way and you're reaction would be 'I don't want to deliver it like this' And so it was like wading through mud and treacle, you know it was just a hard, hard slog and you felt that people were doing that it nearly potentially died a death during that twelve months of its implementation."

### 5.3 Simon Discusses Poetry in Education

SIMON "You sometimes sort of feel they've dealt with, you've dealt with one aspect of punctuation or spelling and then you sort of move on to a whole load of statements all about poetry and you kind of think 'Well, we could without those. We could with fewer of them perhaps and more of the word level stuff'. You know really bang on about the word level stuff and do it through poetry, fine, so they're experiencing poetry, and for writing poetry, but they have the word level stuff as their focus. And you know, I know that the idea is that these things are married and meshed across between the word level strand and the text level strand but I still think there's a lot of statements that are purely to do with sort of almost like an appreciation of different kinds of poetry, and while I think that's lovely and it's nice, and it's nice for them to have a rich experience at the end of the day it's not much use if they're still leaving a year like Year 3 and they've got serious issues with their high frequency words."

### 5.4 Simon Shares His Thoughts on the Value of Poetry

SIMON I've kind of got a few sorts of issues with focusing on poetry a great deal with the children. Particularly since I moved to Year 3 where you suddenly become aware how there's a lot of children who are in need of really revising some very, very basic skills and obviously that varies from year to year. But I kind of sometimes feel like you need to you gotta keep things light and quite often the poetry, the kids certainly enjoy writing it. I mean it's a great way of exploring certain aspects of text level, of sentence level, you know, you can focus on adjectives and that sort of thing and give you a sort of very, very rich focus on a particular thing and poetry's good for that whereas other text, a prose text has got so many words in it that if you want to focus in on a particular type of word class then poetry's sometimes really good because by definition there's usually fewer words in there so each word has got a greater value.

INTERVIEWER Yes.

SIMON "You can really explore the value of words, so it's great for things like that but I think sometimes you can feel that, that if there's a heavier emphasis on poetry in a term you can almost feel like it's, it can, it's pulling the kids away from doing some of the stuff that you're kind of thinking the old traditionalist way, they need to meat and the potatoes and that's a little bit too much of the pudding, do you know what I mean? Mmm and you know I'm all for one for making it interesting and lively cos I try and do that even with the dullest bits of what they've got to learn but at the end of the day with the younger children it can sometimes sort of, it can cloud their view of some of the essential stuff that they need to keep on repeating over and over, and over and over again, which I think the National Literacy Strategy does reasonably

well revisiting things. You sometimes sort of feel they've dealt with, you've dealt with one aspect of punctuation or spelling and then you sort of move on to a while load of statements all about poetry and you kind of think 'Well, we could do without those. We could with fewer of them perhaps and more of the word level stuff'. You know really bang on about the word level stuff and do it through poetry, fine, so they're experiencing poetry, and for writing poetry, but they have the word level stuff as their focus. And you know, I know that the idea is that these things are married and meshed across between the word level strand and the text level strand but I still think there's a lot of statements that are purely to do with sort of almost like an appreciation of different kinds of poetry, and while I think that's lovely and it's nice, and it's nice for them to have a rich experience at the end of the day it's not much use if they're still leaving a year like Year 3 and they've got serious issues with their high frequency words. And yet you feel you should be covering it, you feel you should be covering the poetry statements cos they're in there so, but that's the same for text work, that's the same for some of the text stuff as well. The text level column seems very, very heavy, it's a very weighty thing and you can get drawn into it, I know I have in the past. You get drawn into focusing in on that and you think 'Yeh, well, I can feed my word level into this, I can feed my grammar stuff into this', but at the end of the day there an awful lot of statements that are there to do with appreciating the text as a text."

## 5.5 Chloe Discusses Impact of Tests on Children

CHLOE "David Blunkett's panicking like anything isn't he, getting more money in, and I had all these children and I was saying 'You will get Level 4'. And right from the outset I was really intense with them saying 'You have got the potential to get level 4, don't come in here if you're going to waste my time' and it was that serious. But they loved that really, they were saying 'Do you think I might get Level 5' so I just said 'Let's just go for Level 4, be happy with that' it's like, 'No you're not going to get Level 5'. You can only do so much, and they were so pleased. In that sense it's good but for the children who get Level 2 and they know at the end of the day, because the others are saying 'I got Level 4' and I think as the years go on it is going to get to 'Oh, you're thick because you've only got Level 2'."

## 5.6 Teachers' Interview Questions

### Biography of Teacher and Future Plans

How long have you been a teacher for?

Is this your first teaching post?

What's your main subject?

What do you hope to do in the future? Where do you see the job going?

Do you enjoy teaching? What's the best thing that you like about teaching and the worst?

What kind of training did you receive in poetry when you were at college?

### **Understanding of Teaching English.**

Have you ever read the English policy for your school? Is it helpful?

Have you ever gone to the Literacy Co-ordinator for help or advice?

How do the National Curriculum and National Literacy Strategy work together in English? What are their aims?

Why do you feel its good that children are taught English?

What does it mean to you to teach English?

### **The National Literacy Strategy and Teaching Poetry.**

Did you teach much poetry before the National Literacy Strategy? (Next question depending on answer.)

Is the way you teach poetry now any different from how you taught it before the National Literacy Strategy?

Do you think the National Literacy Strategy helps you to teach poetry well? Does it help you to teach poetry more confidently?

Do you find planning harder or easier using the Strategy?

What do you think the aims and goals of the National Literacy Strategy are for children learning about poetry?

Do you stick rigidly to the NLS requirements for poetry or are you flexible? Do you feel confident enough about poetry to use your own ideas?

Do you have any knowledge of literary theories like New Criticism or Reader Response Theory? Depending on answer.

Which do you prefer? Would knowledge of these be helpful?

What are your goals in teaching poetry this year? Do you feel confident that you will achieve these goals?

What do you want children to get out of a poetry lesson?

Do you make your expectations known about what you expect them to learn from a poetry lesson?

### **Personal Attitudes to Poetry.**

Do you feel confident about teaching poetry?

What sort of poetry do you like to teach?

Do you feel you understand enough about it to teach it?

What do you think poetry is about?

Does poetry interest you?

Do you write or read any poetry at all?

What is it about poetry that you find most difficult to teach?

Do you think that children are enthusiastic about poetry?

When you were in primary school do you remember how poetry was taught then?

What were your experiences of poetry like? And in secondary?

Have these experiences or lack of them affected your attitudes to poetry in any way?

### **Perceptions of Children and Poetry.**

Do you think poetry is a relevant subject to teach children?

What do you think children should learn about poetry?

Do you think children know anything about poetry before they start school?

And now at Year 6 what, if anything, do you think children bring to a poetry lesson?

Do you think children come into contact with poetry in any kind of form outside of school?

Does this influence your planning in any way?

Do you think you are influenced by the background of your children when you teach them/ your attitude?

What about the gender of your pupils? Do you think girls or boys respond better to poetry? Why?

What about intellectual capacity and ability?

Do you think these three factors influence learning?

Do anyone's comments in the case study group stand out about poetry? Whose does?

Whose doesn't?

How effective do you think you're teaching will be in encouraging a positive attitude towards poetry?

### **The Shaping of the Classroom.**

Define the best learning environment? The ideal classroom?

What kind of strategies do you use to meet this ideal?

Do you see yourself as the main person influencing that community?

Do you see yourself as the knowledge giver or the facilitator in this community?

How much power do you think you have in the classroom?

How do you use that power?

What do you see is the function of the large group and the small group discussion?

## **5.7 Sarah's Perceptions on Why Boys Like Poetry Better Than the Girls**

SARAH "I think they, they love listening to it, the boys in this class, and any other classes, they love umthey get their poem, they love listening to each others and talking about it, and they get inspired by what others have written and I think, I mean I could say that for other, other pieces of work but, other aspects of English but I think with poetry they find it's more instant, they can get things down a little bit more quickly than with other aspects of English and they enjoy it. Sometimes they do paired poetry and they love that, boys particularly, because there's a bit of competitiveness I think, who's, who's going to get the best poem."

## **5.8 Children's Interview Questions**

### **The Child's Perceptions of His/Herself as a Learner**

How long have you been at this school?

What do you like about school?

What do you dislike?

Do you think you've done well at school? In what way? What is the most important thing for you to achieve at school?

How do you think the teacher would describe you as a learner? What do you think you're like as a learner?

What are you like at school? At home?

If you had to say why you go to school to an alien what would you say?

### **The Child and English**

How well do you think you do in English?

What do you think English is about?

Do you like it?

Why do you think you have to do English?

What are you like in the classroom during English?

Now what do you do in the Literacy Hour?

Which bit of the Literacy Hour do you like best?

Which bit do you least like?

Why do you think you have to do the Literacy Hour?

### **The Child and Poetry**

If you had to describe poetry to an alien how would you do it?

What do you have to do with poetry in a lesson? How do you feel when then teacher asks you what the poem means?

Why do you think you have to learn about poetry?

What have you learnt about poetry so far?

Do you ever read poetry outside of school?

Why not? Or what sort?

What are you favourite bits about poetry lessons?

What are your worst bits about poetry lessons?

Do you like poetry?

Do you like learning about poetry in the Literacy Hour?

Do you like talking with others about poetry? Why/ Why not?

How much work have you done on poetry?

What do you like to do when you're at home?

### *The Child and Power/Status in the Classroom*

Which person out of the whole class do you think others listen to the most?

And what about amongst the case study group (use names)?



Do you think your classmates listen to you?

Do you like large group or small group discussions/work best?

Why? What are you like in a small group/large group?

Have you got a best friend in the class? Who would you like to best friends with? Why?

Does anyone stand out when they talk about poetry? Do you think 'That person is saying something good'?

Who doesn't?

### **The Pressure of Tests**

Now you have important tests to do at school this year. Does that worry you?

Do you find tests difficult or hard?

Do you think that if you're better at tests you have more to say in the classroom?

Does it make you more important in your teacher's eyes and your classmate's eyes?

If a question on poetry came up in the test would you answer it? Why/ Why not?

## **5.9 Andy Expresses Dislike of the Plenary**

ANDY "Well Mr ... just goes over what we've done, and I just don't see what the point is in just going over it. I mean we've been told what we have to do, we've done it, and we'd probably get even further if we didn't have the plenary lesson, but Mr ... insists on having the plenary lesson and I just don't think it's necessary."

## **5.10 Andy Describes Peers Using Level Descriptions**

ANDY "I put myself above Jeremy. I think he'll get a level 4, Level 5. I think I'll get a Level 5 well, just under, just under Nia cos she's way up in a Level 5. I think I'm just a little bit under her, and I think Julia is in between the two of

us. I think she's a little bit Nia and a little bit me and a little bit Jeremy."

## 5.11 List of Poetry Books Owned by St. Alban's School Pupils

Listings unchanged from original copies

### Hannah

- *Sky in the Pie* - Roger McGough
- *Please Mrs Butler* - Allan Ahlberg
- *Poems to paddle in* - Raymond Wilson
- *Salford Road* - Gareth Owen

### Joshua

- *Now we are Six* - A.A Milne
- *Poems for 10 year olds* - Kit Wright (Ed.)

### Andy

- *The Worst Class in School Poems* - Brian Moses (Ed.)
- *The Day I Fell Down the Toilet And Other Poems* - Steve Turner

### Nia

- *Bad, Bad cats* - Roger McGough
- *Niffs and Whiffs* - Jennifer Curry (Ed.)
- *Please Mrs Butler* - Allan Ahlberg

### Jeremy

- *Please Mrs Butler* - Allan Ahlberg
- *Ghost Poems* - John Foster (Ed.)

## 5.12 List of Poetry Books Owned by Chadwick School Pupils

Listings unchanged from original copies

**Jem**

- *A Children's Treasury of Milligan: Classic Stories and Poems*-Spike Milligan
- *The Children's Classic Poetry Collection*-Nicola Baxter
- *The book of 1000 poems: Classic Collection for Children*-J. Murray Macbain (Ed.)

**Lisa**

- *The Big Fat Father Christmas Joke Book*-Terry Deary

**Sarah**

- *Poems About School*-Brian Moses (Ed.)
- *Wicked Poems*-Roger McGough (Ed.)
- *I'm Telling on You*-Richard L. Biren

**Simon**

- *A Children's Treasury of Milligan: Classic Stories and Poems*-Spike Milligan

**Peter**

- *Bad, Bad Cats*-Roger McGough
- *Beware of the Dinner Lady: Three Term Poems*-Brian Moses

**Ben**

- *Poems About School*-Brian Moses (Ed.)
- *We couldn't Provide Fish Thumbs*-James Berry (Ed.)

## 5.13 St. Alban's Poetry

The original spelling, punctuation and structure of the poems have been preserved.

**'Red Poem' by Julia**

Red is loud,  
Red is dangerous,  
Red isn't peaceful,  
Red is sad.

Red is war  
That's why they fight  
Red can be pretty  
Only on flowers

**'Christmas' by Hannah**

Christmas is here  
Not a single tear  
There are all celebrations here and there  
And all the trees are white and bare  
Christmas is here it's time for joy  
Everyone has some toys  
Snowmen with twigs  
Some with wigs!!

**'Silly Seagulls' by Hannah**

Seagulls are a sort of creature  
And sometimes pecky teachers,  
Have you seen a seagull wearing glasses?  
Or either teaching seagull classes,  
Seagulls even put lipstick on  
But normally look a dipstick,  
Have you ever seen a seagull slurping tea?  
Or eaten to death by a bumble bee,  
Seagulls are grumpy flyers  
And some floating even higher,  
Have you seen a seagull kiss?  
But normally give it a miss,  
Seagulls love juicy bread,  
They get bread juicy by flipping it up onto their sweaty head,  
Have you ever seen a seagull dance?  
You've got a chance,  
One thing a seagull will never do, is be SILLY!!!!

Chesney never remembered to bring his poem in about war called 'Stuck here in this muddy trench' but the teacher confirmed that he had written this one, because his mother had told her about it during parents evening.

## **5.14 Chadwick Poetry**

The original spelling, punctuation and structure of the poems have been preserved.

**'BedTime' by Lisa**

Bed Time  
Bed Time  
It's time to go to bed  
I've been told a 1000 times  
So I better go to bed

**'The Spanish Horse' by Jem**

There was a horse from Spain,  
who wanted to clean his mane,  
he fetched the water,  
got it up his snorter,  
That clean-mane horse from Spain!

**'Bones the crime solver' by Jem**

Bones is the perfect dog he lives in the wood,  
but when it comes to crime and law,  
he's very, very good.  
He's the crimesolver of all around,  
a very special hound!  
But when you're at the scene of crime,  
Bones is the very one you'll find.  
Bones, Bones theres no-one like Bones,  
he's solved every human crime,  
he'll capture them at home.  
His power of crimesolving would make a policeman stare.  
For when you're at the scene of crime,  
Bones is the very one you'll find,  
I'll tell you once and once again,  
Bones is the very one you'll find!