TRUTH, FACT AND FEELING: AN INVESTIGATION OF CHILDREN MAKING MEANING FROM POETIC NONFICTION PICTURE BOOKS

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of

Doctor of Education

at the University of Leicester

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November 2018

Abstract

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'Poetic nonfiction picture books' (Kesler, 2012, p.338) are a growing group of multi-layered and complex picture books for children which combine nonfictional content with poetry and artistic images. These texts and children's responses to them have so far received little attention in academic and educational literature. In this qualitative case study I investigated the responses of pairs of children (n=8) aged 9-10 years in a primary school in the East Midlands of England to a selection of texts which exemplified the features of this text type. The children's conversations were recorded as they discussed the texts together and they were subsequently interviewed about their responses to them. Data was analysed through inductive thematic analysis and through applying deductive frames adapted from transactional reader-response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978 and Iser, 1978) and dialogic reading (Maine, 2015).

The children's conversations provoked more creative, imaginative and playful responses to the texts than the interviews, suggesting that open-ended approaches to reading nonfiction may promote engagement and active meaning-making. The findings indicated that the children understood the nonfictional nature of the texts but responded first to their aesthetic and emotive qualities. Responses were shaped by established reader identities built upon intertextual and personal experiences. The research demonstrates the contribution which children can make to discussions of their literature and I argue that this contribution merits greater consideration within literary criticism of children's literature. The study highlights the need to develop children's critical understanding of the different ways in which truths are represented in nonfiction texts and indicates the openings which the texts offer for these discussions. Finally it draws attention to the potential of this group of texts to widen children's experience of nonfiction and to encourage an approach to reading nonfiction which recognises and values the breadth of emotive, aesthetic, personal and efferent response.

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Preface

This study is based on a long-standing fascination with children's nonfiction which is both personal and professional. As a child in the 1960s and 1970s, nonfiction books were a significant aspect of my daily life: they were the main means of knowing about the world outside the home and classroom and a gateway into the past, present and future. I was fortunate to grow up in a rich period for children's book publication, due in part to the technical developments which enabled wider use of colour illustrations and photographic images than before (Whalley and Chester, 1988). These developments had considerable impact on the availability and variety of nonfiction books for children and gave rise to the colourful and entertaining nonfiction titles and series which I enjoyed such as those created by Usborne publishing (1973).

These texts and series were trusted implicitly and mined without question for information to support topic work in the primary classroom. Yet for me, their appeal did not rest solely on a supply of factual information: nonfiction books offered affective and imaginative possibilities, a springboard through word and image into my own stories about treks into the jungle or life on the planet Mars. Reading a nonfiction book was not so very different in this respect from that of reading fiction and the distinction between the two categories was less important than the vicarious experiences which both offered.

Much later, as a primary teacher, I discovered that my childhood experience of nonfiction had little place in educational practice. Nonfiction reading and writing followed an increasingly 'functionalist' approach, where reading nonfiction was placed entirely within the context of 'reading to learn', a process which necessitated a clear purpose and a prescribed set of skills with which to fulfil that purpose (Smith, 2003, p. 116). My use of children's nonfiction in the classroom fell reluctantly into that mode: nonfiction books served to deliver a curriculum which was highly prescriptive and structured. In my classroom our nonfiction books were becoming tired and old and the new ones which we purchased were designed to conform to a uniform structure and fit around a narrow set of curriculum topics. Apart from an occasional gem which inspired and excited me and my pupils, creativity, imagination and emotion did not play much of a part in our nonfiction reading.

Later still, whilst working for a Schools Library Service, one of my tasks was to re-organise schools' libraries. A major part of these visits was to weed and discard children's nonfiction books which were damaged or out of date: regularly I would find Ladybird books from the 1950s, space books from the 1960s and books picturing computers the size of small cars. These old books had served their time but many had a quirkiness and breadth of content which was missing in newer titles. The process of discarding them was not one which I enjoyed and I began to wonder what a 'good' nonfiction book for children in 21st century classrooms might look like and if nonfiction books had a place amidst the wealth of information available through digital sources.

These thoughts led to much reflection over the years, but this study really began with me finding one of those 'occasional gems': *North* (Dowson and Benson, 2012) and being inspired by it to take my questioning further. In this thesis I bring together my experiences as a child, a reader, library staff member, parent and teacher to explore nonfiction for children through a group of texts which defy the functionalist approach and present the real world in ways which are thought-provoking, complex and diverse.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The focus of the study

In this study I investigated the responses of 8 primary-aged children (9-10 years) to a selection of 'poetic nonfiction picture books' (PNFPBs) (Kesler, 2012, p.338). These texts are picture books which combine artistic images with poetry or lyrical language to convey information. Although according to Kesler they are a growing category, they have so far received little attention in scholarly or educational literature within the UK. The investigation was concerned with the ways in which children responded to the features and characteristics of the texts; how the children made meaning from them and the potential implications for using them in educational contexts.

In this chapter I discuss the hybrid nature of PNFPBs and some reasons why they are under-represented. I present the context of teaching and publication of children's nonfiction in England to demonstrate why this discussion is timely now. I explain why listening to what children have to say about the texts is central to this study and its potential significance for educational practice and criticism of children's literature.

1.2 Problems and questions

When viewed as a distinct group of texts, PNFPBs raise a number of questions relating to literature, literacy and educational practice which merit further investigation. The category brings together a diverse and often innovative group of nonfiction picture books for children which can be placed within a wider classification of 'hybrid' texts. Hybrid texts use and combine elements of the style, structure and content of different genres to create new literary forms (Elster, 2009). Many children's books fall into the category of hybrid, the most common being those which merge literary or narrative features with informational content and purpose (Gamble, 2008; Kiefer and Wilson, 2011). Hybrid texts have always been a feature of children's nonfiction but have received little attention in academic or pedagogical literature (Bintz and Ciecierski, 2017).

Hybrids are often marginalised or ignored because they do not fit readily into established ways of teaching and treating texts. They challenge literary conventions, are often unconventional and confront readers' expectations about genre and form. Hybrids which blend literary or narrative text with factual content are seen as problematic by some critics who have argued that they confuse inexperienced readers and disadvantage them by detracting from exposure to more conventional expository text (Neate, 1992; Pappas, 2006; Chapter 2). These arguments are based in a pedagogical approach to nonfiction reading and writing which is highly structured or functionalist (Smith, 2003), where nonfiction texts are viewed simply as sources of incontestable facts. Hybrid texts such as PNFPBs do not sit within the traditional binary approach which places fiction and nonfiction in opposition, and raise questions about the ways in which nonfiction is perceived and introduced to children in primary classrooms.

In England nonfiction texts in general are given a lower status and importance than fiction both in primary educational practice (Severs, 2017) and in criticism of children's literature. From an educational perspective teacher bias may be a factor. Topping (2018, p.29) found that nonfiction was under-represented in children's most popular book choices and suggested that this might be down to an 'unconscious' encouragement to read fiction over nonfiction by teachers and librarians. Pedagogical discussions about nonfiction have been dominated by the popular, but debatable perception that boys prefer nonfiction books (Hall and Coles, 1999; Moss, 2007; NLT, 2012; Topping, 2015) which has prevented thinking from moving on to other areas of relevance and interest.

In the context of children's literature nonfiction is often excluded from scholarly dialogue, at best occupying a token chapter in an academic text. Key authors in the field, such as Hunt, Nodelman or Nikolajeva typically omit nonfiction from their discussions. Nodelman, for example, addresses and justifies the exclusion, acknowledging that his approach is based on the assumption that 'poetry, drama and nonfiction' are 'marginal sub-forms' and 'less important within the genre than children's fiction' (2008, p.95).

Any discussion of children's books comes up against a further problem of who articulates that discussion. Traditionally children themselves, their views and observations, are absent from children's literature criticism (Gubar, 2013). This absence is particularly noticeable when viewing response to text from educational and childhood studies perspectives, since in both fields children's right to participate and be heard in research is well established (Deszcz-Tryhubczak, 2016). However including children's views in discussions of text is not straightforward, and involves ethical issues of power and representation, as I discuss below (1.6) and in Chapters 2 and 4.

1.3 The state of children's nonfiction

In order to understand where PNFPBs sit within current educational pedagogy and practice in England, it is important to consider the context of historical policy developments, how these have influenced the teaching of nonfiction in English schools and their possible impact on nonfiction publishing. Both the teaching of nonfiction in England, and nonfiction publishing for children more widely in the UK as a whole, have undergone a particularly changeable time since the late 1990s. Since the introduction of the National Curriculum through the Education Reform Act (HMSO, 1988), educational policy has played a significant role in shaping teachers' approach to teaching nonfiction in the classroom. This has impacted more widely upon the nature and type of nonfiction texts which have been published for children.

1.4.1 Context: teaching nonfiction in England

The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in 1998 promoted an approach to literacy teaching in English schools which was dominated by genre theory (Rosen, 2011), where the focus was on teaching children specific and separate forms of discourse. In the NLS (DfEE, 1998), nonfiction texts were divided into six specific categories of instruction, recount, explanation, report, persuasion and discussion, and texts within each category were identified by their distinct structural and language features.

According to Mallett (2010) these categories originated from the Australian researchers and genre theorists Martin, Christie and Rothery (1987) although in

England the NLS was primarily informed by research from the Exeter Extending Literacy Project (EXEL) which was set up in 1992 to respond to concern about poor standards of literacy teaching in primary schools. The project identified the dominance of fiction in junior classrooms and ascribed this at least in part to teachers' lack of confidence in teaching with nonfiction texts (Wray and Lewis, 1997). As a result the researchers highlighted a deficiency in children's knowledge of nonfiction reading and writing, which it was felt would give them a disadvantage in future schools and career prospects. The *'Extending Interactions with Non-fiction Texts'* or EXIT model (Wray and Lewis, 1995), designed with the aim of helping children tackle nonfiction reading and their own nonfiction writing, presented a structured but outcomes driven approach. The focus was on supporting children to read nonfiction effectively based on the premise that nonfiction reading was primarily for the purpose of finding out the answer to a particular question. The priority was to encourage children to ask the right questions to elicit the required information, working with texts which offered clear and distinct boundaries according to their type or category. The desired end result was the communication of accurate information, usually through a written process. The EXIT model adopted an approach focused on strategies and procedures which was not concerned with the affective or aesthetic worth of the texts.

The designation of six identified nonfiction text types, coupled with specific subjects which were covered by the curriculum in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) programmes of study, meant that teaching of nonfiction became very narrowly focused and this dictated the nature and content of nonfiction books which would be purchased by schools. Nonfiction texts which conformed to the six text types were favoured and publishers responded to this by creating 'model' nonfiction series for teachers to use, which followed specified text types and included the structural features associated with standard nonfiction texts such as contents, glossary and index. According to Gamble (2008, p.75) this resulted in 'educational texts written to a formula and removing nonconformity in order that organisational and grammatical features can be examined'.

Yet, whilst the aim of the six nonfiction categories in the NLS was to help children identify the different ways in which information can be presented, when it comes to

encounters with many texts in the 'real' world there is much overlap and similarity between the categories. Texts which instruct may also explain, persuasive texts may contain features of discussion and recount. Corbett and Strong (2011, p.13) point out that this can present a problem for teachers who wish to teach nonfiction in its 'pure' form but find that 'off the shelf' texts rarely remain within one type.

Although the benefits of exposing children to a variety of text types and forms has been widely documented and continues to be supported by research studies both in the US and England (Yopp and Yopp, 2012; Arizpe and Styles, 2002; DfE, 2012), little advice has been offered for dealing with texts which overlap categories or do not conform to a recognisable type. This may lead to the exclusion of hybrid texts such as PNFPBs from classrooms which will not only limit innovation and impoverish children's encounters with the full range of nonfiction, but also deny children access to the possibilities and potential which such texts offer.

1.4.2 Context: nonfiction publishing

The NLS was a probable, but by no means sole factor in the perceived stagnation in publishing children's nonfiction books which was highlighted in 2012 by a letter to *The Guardian* newspaper by twenty-six children's authors, including several nonfiction writers (Vaughan *et al.*, 2012). The authors argued that nonfiction publishing for children was in crisis. Publishers were no longer printing a range and variety of nonfiction; new texts were limited to a few curriculum-based topics; publishers were unwilling to risk producing innovative nonfiction books, and fiction dominated the market, with nonfiction making up a small proportion of published output (Bradbury, 2014). According to Graham (2015) the influence of the internet as a powerful source of information, coupled with the high cost of producing many nonfiction books, led publishers to produce short print runs and keep to formulaic and uncontroversial formats and topics. Children's authors Nicola Davies and Viv French, (signatories to *The Guardian* letter) argued that children's nonfiction was met with apathy or was condemned as 'dead' by those in the publishing industry (Eckel, 2012, para3).

Their letter appeared to signify a particularly low point in nonfiction publishing in the UK, as three years later Lisa Edwards (2016), a publishing director, argued that, 'we are [now] in the middle of a renaissance in non-fiction publishing for children'(para2). She cited as evidence of this upturn a number of UK published, large format titles with artistic illustrations which have received awards and acclaim: Aleksandra and Daniel Mizielinski's *Maps* (2013), William Grill's *Shackleton's Journey* (2014) and Kate Scott's *Animalium* (2014) being notable examples. Beckerman (2015), a journalist and author, also argued that, 'publishing is now teeming with inspiring and exquisitely illustrated nonfiction for children' (para1). At the same time initiatives such as National Nonfiction Month (founded in 2010) and the Schools Library Information book award have grown in influence and have re-drawn attention to children's nonfiction and alerted readers (and purchasers) to some of the newer nonfiction titles.

At the point of writing, therefore, children's nonfiction in England seems to be in a more positive position. Amidst the debate and discussion some exciting and beautiful nonfiction books for children are being published. Books such as those cited above are designed to be aesthetically pleasing for adults as well as children; their concern is with form as much as content. They are desirable objects, offering a tactile and sensual experience which is distinct from surfing the web for information. Such texts seem to re-define the value of the printed book and offer possibility of a future for children's nonfiction.

1.4.3 Context: nonfiction books in schools

However these changes seem to be having limited impact on the books available to children in schools in England. Many school libraries, where the majority of nonfiction texts might be expected to be found, are closing (ATL, 2016; Finch, 2017) due to budget cuts and a move towards electronic sources of information (Bradley, 2016). Studies by the Libraries All Party Group (2014), The School Library Commission (Douglas and Wilkinson, 2010) and The Chartered Institute for Library and information Professionals (CILIP) (Streatfield *et al.,* 2010) highlighted a decline in school library provision. A number of both national and international studies have

indicated the positive value of a school library in promoting reading for pleasure and information literacy (Lonsdale, 2003; Ofsted, 2004; Ofsted, 2006; Ofsted, 2011; Williams, Wavell and Morrison, 2013) yet despite this evidence schools in England do not have a statutory requirement to provide a school library, nor is Ofsted required to report upon the provision of a school library in inspections (ATL, 2016).

CILIP (2018) states that a key function of a primary school library is to 'help create confident, enthusiastic readers and engage children in life-long learning' (para3) and that in a well-functioning school library both fiction and nonfiction is organised, managed, maintained and added to regularly. Of course nonfiction books are not solely to be found in the school library: within the majority of primary schools most classrooms also have a smaller set of class library books which will include fiction and nonfiction. Whilst there appear to be no recent studies of these classroom book collections in England, US based research by Duke and Bennett-Armistead (2003), Yopp and Yopp (2012), Young, Moss and Cornwell (2007), Jeong *et al.*, (2010) and Ness (2011) suggests that most are fiction dominated. Without the centralising factor of the school library, upkeep of the classroom book collection, and of the nonfiction books within it, becomes the responsibility of the class teacher who may or may not have particular interest or expertise in sourcing and curating the nonfiction book collection. The demise of school libraries and libraries more generally, is therefore a significant factor limiting children's access to a range of nonfiction books and in a climate where spending on educational resources is stretched, spending on new nonfiction books is one area where schools may be tempted to make cuts. My professional experience of working in school libraries upheld the view of decline and under-investment described above. I saw many libraries where book stock was old and out of date but I also saw examples of bland and formulaic new nonfiction books as noted by Gamble (2008).

More recently changes in the curriculum since 2014 and the diversification in the status and management of schools might seem to offer a more open approach to nonfiction teaching and learning. Academies and free schools do not have to follow the National Curriculum, but can create their own curricula as long as these are 'broad and balanced' (DfE, The National Curriculum, overview, 2018). In maintained and

community schools a less structured approach to teaching nonfiction in English classrooms has been possible since the introduction of the current National Curriculum (DfE, 2014), as the six categories are no longer specified in the programmes of study for English. However in practice the influence of the six text types still remains, as they have become the classifications of nonfiction most widely used in the professional literature (Wray and Lewis, 1997; Mallett, 2010; Corbett, 2011). Moreover, as teachers have been trained to use them and many existing resources refer to them, it is likely that they will continue to be used at least for some time in English classrooms. The focus on assessment in reading and writing including SATs (standard assessment tests for schools) and baseline measurements has created a high level of accountability in primary schools which has resulted in 'teaching to the test' and a 'narrowing of the curriculum' (HoC Education Committee, 2017, p.25). Such an environment is not conducive to new ways of teaching or innovative practice. Although few teachers would object to having new and different texts in their classrooms, where funding for resources is limited, conventional nonfiction texts which have standardised content information may seem to be a more sensible choice. If schools are to be persuaded to invest in new nonfiction, and more specifically in PNFPBs, clear arguments need to be provided, based on evidence from research about the value of these texts.

1.5 The state of children's nonfiction in the United States (US)

The state of children's nonfiction in England contrasts with the emphasis on the category in the US. The many US sources which I cite in this thesis reflect the prominence of nonfiction texts and the active and vibrant debate about nonfiction there. The introduction of the Common Core State Standards in 2012 (Common Core, 2018) has led to an increased awareness of nonfiction texts amongst parents, educators and publishers (Eckel, 2012). Nonfiction features significantly in the English Language Arts Standards, with an increasing focus through grades 4-12 (Common Core 2018). At 4th grade the expectation is that informational text will comprise 50% of children's classroom reading, rising to 70% by 12th grade (Bintz and Ciecierski, 2017). Informational texts are seen as preparing children to be 'college and career ready', a principle aim of the standards (Lazarin, 2016, p.10). McNeill (2015) argues

that the Standards have impacted directly and positively on nonfiction bookselling and publishing in the US, leading to greater diversity and breadth of children's nonfiction titles.

However an additional factor may be that the numbers of libraries and librarians in the US remain relatively stable (Reid and Thompson, 2017), in contrast with the current situation in England. If a connection exists between physical libraries and the promotion of nonfiction books, as discussed above, then this might also influence the status of children's nonfiction in the US. Discussion of nonfiction is certainly more evident and has extended beyond education to include authors and academics. This is reflected in academic literature with recent texts for example by Sanders (2018) and Yenika-Abbaw, Huddock and Lowery (2018) considering different approaches towards nonfiction.

1.6 Children's voices

So far this discussion has presented the views of adult critics, teachers and policy makers but not the voices and opinions of the children for whom the books are written. Attitudes towards including the voices of children in discussions of their literature vary between the fields of education, childhood studies and literary criticism. Capturing what 'children' think or what their responses mean is ontologically problematic since children are collections of individuals and do not share a collective way of thinking, just as childhood is not a 'homogenous entity' (Kellett, 2010, p.7). Within childhood studies, childhood is now widely accepted as a socially constructed concept with cultural and historical contexts affecting the way in which children and childhood are perceived collectively and as individuals. Childhood is seen as a time of value in its own right rather than simply as an apprenticeship for adulthood (Uprichard, 2008) and children are viewed, not as 'passive subjects' of society (James and Prout, 2015, p.7) but as active contributors to it. The growth in participatory methods in contemporary social and educational research with children (Kellett, 2010; Levy, 2011; Clark, McQuail, and Moss, 2003; Stern, 2015) has attempted to give them a more equal voice in an area traditionally dominated by adult priorities and agendas.

In contrast criticism of children's literature has focused on adult analysis of texts and the role and perspective of child readers is usually excluded (Gubar, 2013; Deszcz-Tryhubczak, 2016). This does not mean that the problem of children's representation has been ignored. Hollindale argued that the exclusion of children's voices from discussion of their literature 'undervalues the presentness of childhood' (1997, p.16) by presuming that what children have to say lacks worth because they are only 'adults-in-the-making'. Yet Rose (1993) and Nodelman (2008) contended that as adults we cannot know what childhood is like for children who are living through it at the moment, and ideas about childhood, expressed in the books which adults write for children, are inevitably situated in the adult author's experiences of a childhood which has passed. This position acknowledges the imbalance of power between adult and child but concludes that rather than misrepresent or speak for children, it is better not to include them at all (Gubar, 2013). Nodelman (2008) asserts that asking children for their views is not as straightforward as it seems: research which asks a few children is unreliable as we cannot know from their responses what children as a collective group, think, feel and understand about a text. Furthermore children, 'with a limited experience of language' (Nodelman 2008, p. 84), may not be able to articulate their thoughts and feelings in their entirety.

Although Nodelman (2016) has more recently modified these views, he adopts a 'difference model' (Gubar, 2013, p.450) where children are represented as fundamentally unlike adults. Murris (2016) and Jones (2009) categorise this perspective as one of the many ways in which children are excluded and marginalised in Western society: children's perspectives are less important and significant than those of adults. Deszcz-Tryhubczsak (2016) calls for a way forward for children's literature scholarship which focuses on the connections and similarities, rather than differences, between adults' and children's perspectives.

This study has therefore taken place at a time when debate is moving towards considering how to include children in children's literature scholarship and there seems to be an openness amongst some critics to looking at how inclusion of perspectives from childhood studies could add to and 'broaden its scope' (Deszcz-Tryhubczsak, 2016, p.226).

1.7 Aims and scope of the study

The context presented above suggests that tensions exist currently between innovative nonfiction publishing and limited resources, and between new curricular possibilities and established practices and approaches to teaching nonfiction in primary schools. It is therefore timely to consider the possibilities which new forms of nonfiction open up for children and the implications which these new forms have for nonfiction learning and teaching. My initial aim was to explore those tensions within the current English context, but the publication of Kesler's new category of PNFPBs in 2012 offered the possibility of focusing on a specific group of innovative texts which in themselves provoked consideration of some of the wider issues. PNFPBs presented me with an opportunity to ask what constitutes a nonfiction text for children and how children understand what nonfiction text is.

This study draws attention to PNFPBs as a 'new' category of picture book nonfiction texts through reflection on their characteristics, particular features and diversity. This reflection is intended to support teachers' decisions about choosing and using the texts with primary children. Using hybrids and PNFPBs in particular in classrooms requires an investment in time and money from schools and teachers so it is particularly important to take a measured and careful approach to evaluating the texts at a time when expenditure in both must be seen to be justified and based on evidence rather than speculation. By giving attention to the texts as well as the children's thoughts and ideas about them I have sought to avoid a tendency noted by Arizpe and Styles to 'use picture books as a convenient medium for gathering data' (2016, p.182) where the books themselves are given little attention.

However it is the children's responses to PNFPBs which are at the heart of the study. Central to this thesis are the thoughts, ideas and responses of the children who took part. The study is rooted in a belief that what children say has validity and importance. Children, immersed in living through their own childhoods, ask 'different questions have different priorities and concerns and see the world through different eyes' (Kellett, 2005, p.3). Consequently their reactions to texts can widen our understanding by offering new perspectives which are sometimes at odds with adult-

centred points of view. The thoughts and responses expressed in this study are of a small group of children and focus is on the voices of those taking part: it is qualitative, in-depth and I do not seek to draw generalisations or make comparisons based on gender, school or social setting but instead to value and listen to what the individuals have to say.

The themes which emerged through my exploration of the literature (Chapter 2) formed the basis of my three research questions below:

1. How do the children respond to texts which are examples of poetic nonfiction picture books?
2. How do the children appear to make meaning from the texts?
3. What do their responses to the texts indicate about their perceptions of nonfiction?

1.8 Significance of the study

This thesis offers the first examination of a 'new' category of children's nonfiction picture books and presents a critique of Kesler's classification of PNFPBs from an English perspective. Since the wider group of hybrid children's texts to which PNFPBs belong have received little attention in academic and pedagogical literature, through disseminating my findings I hope to draw the attention of teachers, scholars, publishers and librarians to these texts and to evaluate them within an educational context and through children's perspectives as these are particularly underrepresented. This chapter has explained why such a discussion should take place now when PNFPBs are becoming more readily available and when there is the possibility of moving away from more structured forms of nonfiction tuition in English classrooms.

The study contributes towards what I hope will be a renewed interest in children's nonfiction in England, and aims to bring the discussion more in line with the current debate in the US. I argue that this discussion needs to move forward through critical reflection suggested by the US experience rather than seeking to replicate it. Discussion amongst academics and teachers relating to children's nonfiction needs to be placed within the particular curricular and cultural contexts and constraints of

English classrooms. By placing the focus on PNFPBs, which are a-typical and invite an emotional and empathetic response, I explore in this study the possibilities of approaching nonfiction in a more holistic way, which moves away from a narrow focus on skills and procedures.

Finally, through discussion of the texts and their reception by the children this thesis demonstrates the contribution which children can make to discussions of their literature. It is hoped that the study will contribute towards the academic debate about including children in criticism of children's literature and that it will also provoke some consideration of the importance of nonfiction as an aspect of children's literature, not separate from it.

1.9 Outline of the thesis

A summary of each chapter is presented below:

Chapter 1: Introduction introduced poetic nonfiction picture books as a distinct group of texts and considered the context of children's nonfiction publishing and the teaching of nonfiction in England. It set out the aims and significance of the study and the three research questions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review identifies the key themes which informed my research questions. It is presented in two sections. Section one places PNFPBs in the context of the literature about children's nonfiction and picture books, addressing in particular how they relate to issues of knowledge, truth and emotion. Section two considers the nature of meaning-making and discusses approaches to understanding how children make meaning from texts through dialogue. PNFPBs are viewed from the perspective of reader-response theory (Rosenblatt 1978, 1995; Iser, 1972, 1978) focusing on the two-way nature of the transaction between reader and text.

Chapter 3: The Five Texts introduces the 5 texts used in this study and critiques Kesler's categorisation. It presents a rationale for the inclusion of the 5 texts as PNFPBs discussing their key features and qualities.

Chapter 4: **Methodology** Presents the methodological design of the study and discusses reasons for the choice of methods. The approach to data analysis is also presented and discussed.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Discussion analyses and discusses the children's words from the conversations and interviews and considers the themes which arose. These are related to literature about children's nonfiction, talk about texts and meaning-making through dialogue.

Chapter 6: Conclusion provides an overview of the study including the main findings, how the research addresses the research questions, recommendations for practice and further research, and a personal reflection.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter has two main sections: the first explores the place of PNFPBs as a distinct category within children's literature and nonfiction. I consider some of the complexities and controversies which surround children's nonfiction as a genre and where PNFPBs are placed within these debates. The specific texts used in this study are analysed and discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

This discussion forms the basis for the second half of the chapter where I address the issue of children's response and the ways in which children make meaning from text through the lens of transactional reader-response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978; Iser, 1978) and through dialogue (Maine, 2015). I argue for and from an approach which sees meaning-making as a developing process and seeks to respect and honour the child's view (Aukerman, 2013). I consider how PNFPBs relate to current discussions about children's understanding of nonfiction texts, and in particular where these understandings are revealed through dialogue. The chapter concludes by explaining how the themes in the literature helped to inform my research questions.

The sources in this literature review are drawn primarily from conventional academic books and journal papers, including a number of US sources, to reflect the increased focus on nonfiction in US pedagogy and research as noted in Chapter 1. In addition to these sources occasional reference is also made to grey literature including blogs, websites and newspaper articles which present authors' perspectives; publishers' and experts' advice for teachers and parents, or the views of teachers and parents themselves. This literature is useful as it can often reflect more recent developments than peer-reviewed publications and includes perspectives from non-academic sources such as practitioners, artists and authors.

Kesler's 2012 article provided a starting-point for the review, especially in relation to US sources, whilst Arizpe's and Styles' 2002 study was a seminal text for considering children's response to picture books from an English perspective. As the review progressed the search became focused around three themes of children's nonfiction,

picture book research and literacy teaching. In collating the range of literature for this review it is striking how often children's views and opinions are absent in discussions of the books which have been written for them.

2.2.1 Defining text

Throughout this study I use 'text' to denote the totality of word, image and the graphic elements such as font type and size, which make up the complete book. Each aspect plays a significant role within the PNFBs discussed which the reader must engage with to gain understanding of the whole. Word and image are separate systems of communication and the processes of reading them differ (2.3.9) but in picture book reading both systems create the text (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006). A simultaneous reading of image, word and graphics is a feature of multimodal texts, a term which also encompasses diverse forms of communication such as film, sound, music and gesture (Charles and Boyle, 2014). Although this study deals with printed books it is important to acknowledge that definitions of text are changing and evolving in response to digital technologies, and need to reflect the broad and varied experiences of text which children now have (Luke, Carrington and Kapitzke, 2003; Kucirkova and Littleton, 2016).

2.2.2 Defining nonfiction

As their label suggests, PNFPBs are texts which have nonfiction content. It is therefore important to consider first what the term nonfiction means, especially since 'there is nothing neat and tidy about nonfiction' (Beers and Probst, 2015, p.20). Even the spelling differs: in this thesis I use nonfiction as a single word, although it is also widely written with a hyphen. 'Information' or 'informational' books are now familiar terms, but are still synonymous with 'nonfiction' in the UK. On the surface nonfiction appears to define itself; it is everything which is not fiction (Fisher, 1972). However the range and scope of what is left is unwieldy and includes such diverse textual forms as text books, diaries, biographies, bus timetables and self-help guides. Since the 1980s electronic resources have been added, such as e-books and websites, creating more nonfiction text than ever before (Mallett, 2010). Finding a satisfactory term to

encapsulate this scope continues to raise debate (Root, 2003; Bukowiecki, 2012; Isaacs, 2013; Gamble, 2008).

Definitions of nonfiction focus on intention and truthfulness. Nonfiction is most frequently defined by the author's purpose to inform and/or instruct and obligation to impart truthful information (Fisher, 1972; Duke and Bennett-Armistead, 2003; Charles and Boyle, 2014). Telling the truth is seen as an 'ethical' responsibility for the nonfiction author (McDermott, 2013; Colman, 1999; Stone, 2011) which must be taken seriously. Colman argues that 'nonfiction is writing about reality…in which nothing is made up' (2007, p.260) and Root describes the nonfiction writer as 'bound' by the real world which he or she must interpret and represent (2003, p.246). Mallett offers a more inclusive definition which describes nonfiction as 'factual genres (which) explain, organise and explore aspects of the real world which we inhabit' (2002, p.101). Throughout this thesis Mallett's definition is preferred as although it focuses on nonfiction as situated in the real world it does not stipulate ways in which information must be presented or make any claims for truth.

2.2.3 Defining hybrid text and PNFPBs

The debate above highlights a persistent and binary approach to literature where fiction and nonfiction must be separated and dichotomised as distinct genres. According to Short this is 'overly simplistic' (in Yenika-Agbaw *et al.*, 2018, p. xiv), and this approach creates particular challenges when defining hybrid texts. Hybrids are texts which cross genre boundaries, and Elster (2009) contends that they are a means by which new genres are formed. By their very nature hybrids push at the limits of genre distinctions and defy categorisation, yet a number of critics have sought to clarify and separate them into sub-genres with distinct features (see Appendix 1). Elster (2009) identified seven types of hybrid text which he categorised loosely as 'structural' relating to form and 'functional' relating to purpose, whilst more recently Bintz and Ciecierski (2017) organise their typology by focusing on the specific 'design elements' (p. 63) which hybrids use to combine narrative and information text. Typologies overlap and disagree, leading to a fractured and often confusing picture

of what constitutes a hybrid text but reveal the dominance of a genre-based approach which suggests that texts must be classified in order to understand them better.

Hybrid texts which combine factual content with elements of narrative, poetic language and/or images seem to be those most commonly found in children's literature. In such hybrid texts information and sometimes structural guiders such as contents, glossaries and indexes, are merged with features more familiar to fiction such as plot and characterisation, suspense and lyrical or poetic language.

In his 2012 article Kesler places PNFPBs as a distinct text type within the wider group of hybrid texts, and he creates a typology for identifying and classifying them. He notes three essential elements for PNFPBs: the visual format of the picture book; poetry or poetic language and factual information (2012, p.338). Kesler's article explores the variety of texts which could be categorised as PNFPBs based upon a selection of 76 texts from the US, chosen mainly from award-winning lists. His selection orders texts which range from collections of separate poems linked by an overriding theme, to lyrical expository prose, which he places on a continuum from 'poetry' to 'nonfiction' with a number of variations in between. In his article Kesler focuses on the relationship between poetic language and nonfiction content but does not discuss the images. He suggests that the use of poetic language in PNFPBs deepens understanding of the subject-matter, since 'the poetic craft and musicality of the language have a synergistic relationship with the nonfiction content' (2017, p.621). Yet, as I demonstrate in Chapter 3, the elements of image, poetry and nonfictional content are so interlinked within PNFPBs that to exclude one is to minimise the essential role which the images play in the texts. In this thesis I argue that images must be fully included in discussion of PNFPBs as image and word are complementary modes in creating overall meaning.

In defining the category of PNFPBs, it is important to note that Kesler is not identifying a new type of text. Books which conform to the type he describes as PNFPBs have existed for some time without such a label. For example I have a copy of *Cockles and Shrimps* (Palmer, 1973) which fulfils all of Kesler's criteria for a PNFPB. What is valid and new about Kesler's category is that it draws attention to the hybrid nature of

these texts and invites an exploration of features which have not previously been brought together: poetry, nonfiction and artistic image.

2.2.4 Trade books, text books and content knowledge

PNFPBs are examples of what are referred to in the US as 'trade books', that is, they are books generally available to the public (Locke, 2007). They are a category distinct from text books which are written solely for educational use within classrooms (Locke, 2007). In England teachers at primary level do not use text books as much as in countries such as the US or Singapore (Oates, 2014) and prefer trade books for study of topics in the curriculum. Trade books offer a diverse and individual approach in contrast to text books which function primarily to present key concepts and 'core knowledge' and offer a broad view of the main facts or issues about a topic (Oates, 2014, p. 5). There have been calls to introduce more text books into teaching in English schools with claims that text books will raise standards by offering coherence and progression which can be aligned with 'international standards of excellence' (Oates, 2014, p. 20). In English primary schools this has met with resistance as there is a strong tradition of teacher-led planning which is embedded in primary pedagogy and a belief that following a text book stifles teacher autonomy and creativity (Oates, 2014).

The text book debate raises some questions about the nature of the content which nonfiction books in schools, and PNFPBs in particular, might be expected to contain. The use of texts to communicate a core body of knowledge suggests that a set of facts about each subject exists which is immutable, substantive and 'handed down through the generations' (Lock in ASCL 2017, p.14). Acquisition of this core body of knowledge is seen as an essential tenet of education by powerful voices such as Nick Gibb, the current Minister of State for School Standards who supports an approach based on a 'knowledge-based curriculum' (Gibb, 2017). Advocates argue that 'knowledge is key' (Handley-Kirk, in ASCL, 2017, p.11) and that there needs to be a shift from a skills-based approach to teacher-led, knowledge-based lessons to ensure high standards of education (ASCL, 2017).

However what constitutes core knowledge and who decides what it is raise further questions. Viewed from a socio-cultural perspective knowledge cannot be detached from its context and culture, and texts are 'never a neutral depository of extractable meaning' (Smith, 2010, p. 61). Meek (1996) suggests that the presentation of information in children's books as 'facts' presupposes a mistaken idea that knowledge has an 'objective existence' (p.11). She argues that for most children information is gained from their experience of and curiosity in the world around them and information books serve only as a way to confirm, extend and order that knowledge. Communication of facts does not therefore rest solely with the author but is subject to the reader's comprehension and interpretation, part of a transaction between author and reader (Rosenblatt, 1978) and modified in the light of the reader's experience.

Meek's (1996) perspective, in which individuals and societies create multiple versions of the truth, contrasts with these ideas about a core body of knowledge. At the heart of this debate lie differing concepts of the epistemology or nature of knowledge within children's nonfiction. Whilst some facts, such as the height of Everest, may be irrefutable, any fact is always presented within a context which is culturally, historically and politically framed. The influence of context raises the ontological problem of whether facts really do exist and how (and if) they can relate to each other. It also brings into question the possibility, or impossibility, of imparting a body of knowledge which is true in an absolute sense, which I discuss further below (2.2.6). Whilst PNFPBs and trade books in general present a diversity and individuality which is counter to the 'core knowledge' pedagogy, they offer children the chance to see different interpretations of content which text books and standard nonfiction texts do not.

2.2.5 Quality, literature and nonfiction

In describing PNFPBs as 'literary nonfiction' (2012, p.340) Kesler assigns them a particular quality or status beyond that usually afforded a children's nonfiction text. Although less familiar in children's literature, the term 'literary nonfiction' is established within adult literature where it has a long history and encompasses

innovative and diverse texts which present information using the 'techniques of fiction to bring stories to life' (Singer and Walker, 2013, p. 3). Kesler's assertion links to wider arguments about the place of nonfiction within children's literature. When Colman in 1999 published an article entitled *'Nonfiction can be literature too'* she was articulating an underlying concern about the status and quality of children's nonfiction which has underpinned discussions since the 1970s.

The use of the term 'literature' implies a judgement of quality or value, and 'literary' texts assume greater status and significance than other forms of writing. This judgement is necessarily bound by cultural and historical contexts, thus definitions of quality are subjective: according to Culler, literature is 'whatever is treated as literature by a given society' (2007, p.229). Classics are texts which have the ability to last, that is to continue to be relevant and noteworthy, and an openness to re-reading and different interpretations (Kermode, 1975, p.44).

When judged against these criteria very few nonfiction children's texts have merited distinction as classics. It is rare for a nonfiction text to last beyond 20-30 years and they seem to age quickly, either in design, relevance or currency of content, as new information becomes available and renders content inaccurate and presentation out of date. As for re-reading and interpretation, many nonfiction texts assume a 'consumption mind-set' (Yenika-Agbaw *et al.*, 2018, p.8) as they aim to convey information simply and directly in a manner which actively discourages different interpretations as this may lead to misunderstanding or confusion. Yet some exceptional nonfiction texts transcend their temporal contexts, dealing with issues and ideas which are universal. They invite reading and re-reading at different levels as concepts are assimilated and explored (Colman, 1999). In labelling PNFPBs as 'literary' or 'creative' nonfiction, Kesler emphasises the qualities in the text which resemble the characteristics of literature, and draws a distinction with conventional expository writing.

However the debate about what makes a quality nonfiction text for children extends beyond whether or not a nonfiction text qualifies as literature. Critics argue that good nonfiction texts for children must have specific qualities particular to their genre. In

order to evaluate Kesler's claims for PNFPBs it is worth considering not only their literary status, but also to evaluate the extent to which they meet accepted criteria of quality nonfiction.

In order to investigate which characteristics were regarded as essential for quality children's nonfiction texts, I reviewed 25 sources selected from a range of texts including teacher's manuals, websites, criteria for nonfiction book awards and academic papers (Appendix 2). These were chosen to represent a range of possible sources which teachers might access when looking to choose nonfiction books. The findings suggest that accuracy of text (n=15); attractive design (n=11); clear language (n=11); well-produced and plentiful illustrations (n=9) and logical organisation and structure (n=9) are the most common features identified in the sources examined. In addition there were a number of unique features identified by single authors, and variations in terminology which required interpretation to place them in categories. However the list gives some indication of accepted understandings of the features of good nonfiction, and the value placed upon certain characteristics. Truth, engagement and clarity emerge from this analysis as key features.

2.2.6 Questions of truth

Since the treatment of truth is a central issue for nonfiction (Yenika-Agbaw, Hudock and Lowery, 2018), it needs to be addressed in the context of this discussion about PNFPBs. Purchasers of nonfiction books for children expect them to have gone through rigorous procedures before publication by authors, editors and publishers to check facts and ensure that these are accurate and reliable (Toft, 2014). Physical books, in contrast to internet sources, are regarded as relatively safe, easy to use, accessible and reliable: a 'helpful mediator' (Bartlett and Miller, 2011, p.14) which sifts the truth and presents it to children in a digestible form.

Whilst it is reasonable to expect texts to be factually accurate and checked where they can be checked, errors do occur in children's nonfiction books (Toft, 2014) and the truths which they contain are open to controversy and accusations of subjectivity. Versions of the truth are presented through the author's perspective: the 'truth' as he or she sees it and the facts which he or she chooses to 'privilege' (Yenika-Agbaw

et al., 2018, p.9). The presentation of historical fact is culturally and historically bound to the context in which it has been produced (Meek, 1996). For example whilst few would argue with the accuracy of the facts about trains in *Locomotive*, a PNFPB which tells the story of the introduction of steam trains to America (Floca, 2013), Reese (2014) claims that the lack of adequate discussion or representation of racial diversity in the book renders it an untruthful telling of the history. Gamble (2008, p. 79) gives the example of religious texts which will be accepted as true by some readers but not by others. A nonfiction text is more than a collection of verifiable facts, it is a complex mass of knowledge gaps and contradictions which authors can choose to acknowledge and address or ignore. Sanders (2018) notes that writers of nonfiction may also simplify or distort the truth to make it suit their didactic or moral purposes. Landauer, Logan and Rodríguez-Astacio (in Yenika-Agbaw *et al.,* 2018, p.103) argue that children need to navigate the complexities of nonfiction text by learning how to identify 'false news' or misinformation; knowing how to use reliable literature and being 'guided to construct their own knowledge'.

2.2.7 Truth and reader stance

In practice content in a nonfiction book is presented as factual and by implication true by a tacit understanding between reader and author which builds upon a complex interweaving of conventions, assumptions and expectations (Løvland, 2016). Rosenblatt (1978) argues that the reader is active in adopting a particular stance or disposition towards a text. The stance which a reader takes arises from a combination of clues within the text which indicate a focus of attention, and the purpose of reading.

Rosenblatt (1978) identifies two stances: *efferent* and *aesthetic*. An *efferent* stance towards a text is focused on the end product of reading: 'concepts to be retained, ideas to be tested, actions to be performed after the reading' (1978, p.24). Purely efferent readers are focused on a finding something out and taking that information away to apply to a different context, such as a recipe or set of instructions. In contrast readers who adopt an aesthetic stance become immersed in a text, and the reading is experiential, involving the whole self. The reader pays attention to 'the

associations, feelings, attitudes and ideas that [the] words and their referents arouse within him' (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.25). Rosenblatt (1978) argues that the reader will favour a particular stance throughout each reading event, depending on the purposes of reading, but warns against the simplistic view that efferent stances are inevitably adopted when reading nonfiction and aesthetic stances assumed for fiction or poetry. Instead she acknowledges that in reality the reading of every text is on a 'continuum' of efferent and aesthetic stances, which recede or advance as the reading progresses. Language, images and content will evoke feelings and connect with experiences in any reading event. Research by Many (1992) supports this theory, as she found evidence of both efferent and aesthetic stances in children's responses to stories. The level of experience of the reader and the ways in which the teacher introduced the texts also seemed to influence the stance which the child took (Many, 1992; Galda and Liang, 2003).

Stance is therefore an important reflection of the transactional nature of the reading event because it is activated by both reader and text. Bruner uses the term 'triggers' to describe how the text 'releases responses in the reader's mind' (1986, p.19). Although he refers specifically to narrative devices from fiction, the term can be applied to the conventions which signpost to the reader that he or she is reading something which is factual. These might be the use of retrieval devices such as contents pages, indices and glossaries and structural guiders such as headings and subheadings (Mallett, 2003); front matter or 'codas' which provide extra information about the topic at the end of a book, or suggestions for further reading and activities which highlight the nature of the text. The layout and visual design are further indicators that the reader has a nonfiction book (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996). Readers will learn from such clues which stance to adopt and how to approach the text in a process which becomes instinctive and automatic.

In England children are alerted to some of these conventions as part of their acquisition of literacy skills. The current English National Curriculum document requires that nonfiction texts are introduced from Year 1 (aged 5-6) and that in the primary years (5-11) children will be taught how to locate and retrieve information in nonfiction books and encounter nonfiction texts which have 'different structures and

purposes' (DfE, 2013, p.18). Although they are no longer mentioned specifically, the phrase recalls the six text types discussed in Chapter 1, and the implication is that children will become familiar with typical forms of nonfiction text.

2.2.8 Truth and narrative voice

Children schooled in recognising the features of different genres will be conscious of these triggers when reading, but more subtle indicators may also be employed by the author to convey the message that this is a book grounded in reality. 'Voice' is a potent and often unnoticed feature of children's nonfiction books, which can have direct influence on the way in which the child engages with the text (Gamble, 2008, p.75). Although the distinction between narrator and author is widely recognised in fiction (Abbott, 2002), this distinction also exists in many children's nonfiction texts where the narrator has a specific tone or character: often that of an affable teacher, parent or approachable expert, with the child addressed in the second person. A friendly but authoritative narrator inspires the reader to trust and believe in the truth of the information which he or she imparts. Sanders (2018) cites texts where the author presents themselves, and the processes in which they engaged in creating the text, openly. This approach is becoming more common in US children's nonfiction, yet it could be argued that in presenting 'themselves' the authors are still constructing a narrator, albeit an open one, whose chief characteristic is to appear authentic and trustworthy. In contrast, in many children's nonfiction books where there is no noticeable narrator, the reader is asked to accept an all-knowing, omniscient authority. The relationship between reader and text is one of inequality: the author imparts knowledge not from a process of research or expertise but simply by virtue of their adulthood.

Stewart and Young (in Yenika-Agbaw *et al.,* 2018) argue that use of first and second person voice is becoming more prominent in contemporary children's nonfiction and makes the text more open and engaging for child audiences. Sanders (2018) suggests that the 'invisible' narrators who do not reveal themselves or cite their sources, demand that their readers accept facts without question and encourage a passive, rather than questioning, approach to the truth within nonfiction books. The nature of

the narrative voice in a nonfiction text might therefore give clues about the type of reading experience which it will encourage.

2.2.9 Truth and the modality of images

Further messages about truth are conveyed in the type and style of images. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) refer to 'modality markers' in the visual features of a text which communicate truthfulness. The higher the modality the more representative of the truth the image is (1996, p.159). They assign high modality to 'realistic' images whilst artistic illustrations or abstract images are considered to have low modality as they require more interpretation from the reader. Most contemporary nonfiction books are heavily illustrated, with photographs, which have high modality, as the preferred form of illustration (Sanders, 2018). Yet, as Hudock notes (in Yenika-Agbaw *et al.,* 2018) even photographs in a nonfiction book are subjective, reflecting the author and/or photographers' vision and are interpreted according to the reader's socio-cultural background and within the confines of their prior experiences. She comments from her research with student teachers that the truthfulness of photographs is often accepted without question.

2.2.10 PNFPBs and triggers for nonfiction

Whilst genre triggers prepare the experienced reader to accept the information conveyed as fact, PNFPBs and many hybrid texts often disregard some or all of these conventions. This has generated some criticism of hybrid forms most notably by Neate (1992) and Pappas (2006). Neate views children's nonfiction as concerned solely with imparting information for educational purposes. Although written 20 years ago, some of her observations still resonate with current debates about the purpose and content of nonfiction. She argues that the use of structural guiders help the novice reader in particular to access the content of the nonfiction text. She dismisses works which mix genres and abandon these markers, arguing for nonfiction texts which have a uniformity of presentation and structure. Pappas (2006) acknowledges a place for hybrid texts within nonfiction, but argues that exposure to these texts should be limited as children should first establish a firm understanding of what typical nonfiction texts are like. For Pappas (2006) nonfiction offers children

an important apprenticeship into the type of reading which they will encounter as adults either for study or in the workplace, a point supported more recently by Christie who argues that children should:

> …develop a confident understanding about a genre and the knowledge it expresses before you try to extend, modify or change it …The result otherwise is simply confusing and quite disempowering' (2013, p. 19).

She does not give any evidence for the assertion that children find it disempowering to encounter texts which upset their developing genre expectations. Both Neate and Pappas recommend that children should be guided towards adopting an efferent stance when reading nonfiction which is not distracted by possible emotional or aesthetic responses. Galda and Liang (2004) also argue that texts which have multiple purposes create confusion about which stance to adopt, for example they claim that using 'literature' for teaching content knowledge works 'against the goal of engaging readers (p.74), and hinders their experience of the literary text.

There are a number of problems with this view of nonfiction reading. First it implies that stance is efferent or aesthetic, not a balance of both as Rosenblatt suggests (2.2.7). Kesler (2017) noted how children in his study readily shifted stances when reading PNFPBs and were able to 'oscillate' between the different elements of poetry, image and nonfiction content (p.622). Kesler argues that this type of reading experience is more consistent with the kinds of texts which students 'experience in the real world' (2017, p. 621). Secondly it assumes that the truth of a nonfiction text can be imparted without artistry or artifice. It is important to acknowledge that conventions which dispose the experienced reader to anticipate factual, trustworthy content are as much stylistic devices and constructs as the fiction author's use of imagery and suspense. Even the most apparently transparent text will employ some of these devices. Finally, it assumes that nonfiction does not or should not excite empathy or emotional response, or indeed that empathy and emotional response may distract children from content based learning. Whilst some studies propose that only fiction reading encourages the development of empathy (Mar, Oatley and

Peterson, 2009; Bal and Veltkamp, 2013), Morgan (2016) argues that well-written and engaging nonfiction text has just as much potential to excite empathetic response.

2.2.11 PNFPBs and truth

In answer to the criticisms above it is important to question how truth is conveyed and trust is built in hybrid texts such as PNFPBs which employ some of the conventions of fictional literature. Singer argues that the reader of 'creative nonfiction' has 'to take the truth on faith - not form' (2013, p.141), as the normal parameters by which we assess the genre of texts are not applicable. She argues that this building of faith, or trust, is something familiar to the fiction author who wants their readers to have sufficient belief in the truth of the fiction story to engage and empathise with it. Belief in the story is constructed through stylistic means, such as characterisation and 'vivid sensory details' (Singer, 2013 p.142). These invite empathy and create a sense of truthfulness by evoking an affective response from the reader in which the reality of the text is felt at a human and personal level. Many PNFPBs use image and language in emotive ways to engage the reader. Emotions and empathy are not regarded as divergent from the purposes of nonfiction, but are used to support and enhance understanding.

In *Moonshot* (Floca, 2009), appreciation of the personal experience of the astronauts in Apollo 11 is carefully built through contrasting their human physicality with the cold remoteness of the moon. At take-off:

> Armstrong, Collins, Aldrin
> Ride the fire and thunder
> Pressed deep in their seats,
> Their bodies as heavy as clay.
> (p. 15).

Once in space:

They go rushing into darkness,
Flying towards the moon,
Far away,
Cold and quiet,
No air, no life,
But glowing in the sky.
(p.17).

Whilst Floca's text is grounded in the verifiable facts of the moon landing, the use of empathy fills out the reader's experience of the text to create a more complete understanding of what it feels like to go to the moon. The invitation to empathise in this way is more commonly seen as a feature of fiction. Hybrid texts such as *Moonshot* have a flexibility to address what may not be known, such as how characters felt or what they said, which is denied by a strict adherence to the parameters of verifiable truth in conventional nonfiction.

This more flexible approach to truthfulness is not without its critics. Stone (2011) argues that the writers of nonfiction must tell the truth as accurately as possible and avoid inclusion of half-truths such as invented dialogue or embellished anecdotes. These appear to her to be unnecessary, to deceive the child reader and betray the trust she or he places in the reliability of the text. She argues that authors must adopt the noticeable narrator approach discussed above (2.2.8). They must be transparent in their use of sources and must point out invented additions in the front or back material so that the reader is made aware of what they are doing. In many children's nonfiction books sources, if given, are still hard to find, secreted in small type in the end-papers, suggesting that they are there to satisfy adult expectation and will go unnoticed by the child who is not specifically directed to it.

Stone asserts the child's right not to be deceived or fooled by authors or publishers, but she presents a deficit view of the child reader as inexperienced and vulnerable to the manipulation of the adult and the publishing industry. A child's ability to reflect critically on the truthfulness of the text is not considered: he or she is expected to place their trust in the author and accept passively the facts which the adult transmits to them. Yet Sanders (2018) presents evidence from a number of research studies

which suggest that even young children are capable of critical engagement with nonfiction text, and argues that reading remains at a superficial level in texts where truth is assumed and questions are not invited.

Truth is therefore at the heart of nonfiction but is a complex issue which is resistant to absolute or simple definitions. Aronson (2011) argues that it is the pursuit of truth by both author and reader which defines nonfiction, not the encapsulation of it as if it, 'represented settled knowledge that exists outside and we capture, dead on a plate' (para3).

2.2.12 PNFPBs, poetry and ambiguity

In addition to truth, clear language was cited as an important criterion for a quality nonfiction text in my survey of sources. Duke and Bennett-Armistead (2003) state that language in a nonfiction text must be accessible and appropriate for its readers, without too much use of technical vocabulary. Clear language suggests that the author's meaning is imparted transparently, without any obscurity which may lead to misunderstanding or alternative interpretations.

The use of poetry or poetic language is an essential characteristic of PNFPBs. Kesler defines the poetic element of the texts as 'musicality…figurative language and imagery' as well as a visual arrangement of words, presenting readers with 'spatial information' which carries meaning additional to the meaning conveyed in the language (2012, p.341). Kesler (2012) proposes that the category of PNFPBs spans texts which range from collections of individual poems, to texts which make use of at least some poetic features.

Poetry can cover a range of purposes, including conveying factual information. The informational purpose of some poetry is recognised by Duke and Bennet-Armistead (2003) who refer to 'Informational poems', whilst Pappas describes a category of 'poetic informational coda hybrids' (2006, p. 243). This category features collections of poems with a coda at the end of the book which is written in 'typical informational language'. This kind of PNFPB would be included in Kesler's definition, although he also includes a much broader range of poetic text. As a category of nonfiction Pappas

places poetic informational coda hybrids at the end of the spectrum most far removed from the typical nonfiction text. Therefore, according to Pappas' typology, informational poems do constitute a category of nonfiction but it is one which is atypical and peripheral to scientific texts.

Pappas argues that the distinct register and specialist vocabulary of the typical information text supports children's understanding of scientific concepts and theories and teaches them 'the academic discourse of science' (2006, p.229). In contrast, poetic language, with its qualities of 'compression, allusiveness and patterning' (Gamble, 2013, p.229) generates ambiguous meanings and invites diverse readings and interpretations. It is the opportunity offered for emotive and aesthetic response through poetry which is most often highlighted in educational literature (Lockwood, 2011). Whilst Pappas (2006) acknowledges that hybrid texts of any kind may have value in extending discussion and learning about a topic, she claims that typical scientific expository texts are best suited to supporting children's understanding of the language of science.

Pappas' argument disregards the potential of some texts to be at the same time both aesthetic and efferent. For example *North* (Dowson and Benson, 2012), whilst using lyrical language, language patterning and the visual layout of poetry, also includes specialist language (global warming/migration/silt) and provides a glossary of these terms. Language in poetic nonfiction texts can be allusive and precise, emotive and fact-rich, as in this example from *Moonshot*:

> A monster of a machine:
> It stands thirty stories,
> It weighs six million pounds
> A tower full of fuel and fire.
> (Floca, 2009, p.6).

Furthermore, the use of poetic language and form in these texts offers a particular potential for engaging children in reading, especially in the primary years (Lockwood, 2011). Maynard, Davies and Robinson (2005) identified the benefits of poetry for less engaged or able readers, who were attracted to the brevity and the rhythms, rhymes

and often humorous nature of poems. They compared the ways in which poetry was read: 'selectively and piecemeal, not from beginning to end' with reading magazines or nonfiction books (2005, p. 40). As well as motivating readers of all abilities there are recognised impacts on literacy achievement: Goodwin for example noting the personal and emotional response which her (primary) pupils had to poetry and how it enabled them to 'understand complex ideas, to consider unfamiliar things more closely and to find ways to express their thinking more closely' (Goodwin, 2011, p.40).

The language of PNFPBs is therefore another way in which they are unconventional and innovative, inducing surprise and dissonance by diverging from the norms of typical expository text. Smith (2008, p.41) argues that innovative books help to create 'good' readers who are able to respond flexibly to texts which challenge their expectations. In my survey (Appendix 2) only three sources mentioned 'innovative and original' as desirable features of children's nonfiction. This suggests a conservative approach to defining quality within children's nonfiction genres and possibly a reluctance to consider works which stretch and question accepted norms or boundaries. Hybrid nonfiction texts including PNFPBs challenge the genre conventions which experienced readers are accustomed to expect and invite the reader to question assumptions and interpret content. Yet such texts might be excluded from being seen as 'good' examples if innovation is not widely accepted as imperative for quality nonfiction.

For Meek (1996) good nonfiction texts are the ones which shed light on the unusual or the unexpected, texts which are memorable, so that curiosity in the subject 'sticks and grows' (1996, p.116) within the child's mind. In a world laden with text in all of its multi-modal forms, it could be argued that the need for nonfiction books which stand out and make a connection between the child reader and subject is greater than ever.

2.3.1 Comprehension, decoding and meaning-making

As this study focuses on the responses of children reading PNFPBs, section two of this review considers how children make sense of the texts which they read. Smith (2010) argues that whilst social and cultural factors such as attitudes towards reading in

different communities and children's exposure to different texts in their home have long been acknowledged as important in literacy learning, when it comes specifically to reading comprehension research and practice have tended to bypass the social context. Reading comprehension is often reduced in educational practice to individual acquisition of a set of 'neutral and transferrable skills' and children described as 'good' and 'bad comprehenders' (Smith, 2010, p.63). Smith presents reader, social context and text as three equally vital components in reading comprehension. Readers understand text through their ability to apply their emotive responses, experiences and intertextual knowledge to new texts. She aligns her perspective with reader-response theory and the dynamic, unstable and diverse ways in which texts are understood. Her view accords with Rosenblatt's (1978) account of the reading of any literary text as a 'lived through experience', which at its best can be intense and absorbing (p.27): an experience of reading which goes beyond the process of decoding or employing a set of specific skills to a text.

In this thesis I use the term 'meaning-making' rather than comprehension to acknowledge that reading is an experience which operates on cognitive, social, cultural and emotional levels. Moreover whereas comprehension is more usually applied to the reading of words, meaning-making can include the role which pictures play in the experience of reading as it is often applied to the ways in which children make sense of images (Arizpe and Styles, 2016; Mantei and Kervin, 2014; Painter, Martin and Unsworth, 2014). 'Meaning-making' is a holistic term which is more applicable to discussing picture book texts.

A number of studies have demonstrated that children who are fluent at decoding texts can have difficulty with comprehension (Nation and Angell, 2006; Hulme and Snowling, 2011; Clarke, Truelove, Hulme and Snowling,ss 2013). Fluency in decoding is still seen as a principle and essential skill for understanding a text, but since the revised National Curriculum of 2014 more attention has been given to the importance of linguistic (vocabulary and grammar) and world knowledge in comprehension (DfE, 2014). Reading which is freely chosen and undertaken for enjoyment is also now seen as necessary to developing children's ability to understand texts (DfE, 2012). However, whilst current educational policy in England appears to support a more

rounded view of the reading experience for children, meaning-making is still viewed in relatively narrow terms and the emotional and social aspects are given limited consideration (Roche, 2015; Connor, 2016).

Expectations for comprehension are set out in the National Curriculum programme for English in each of the year groups from Year 1 to Year 13. According to the National Curriculum guidance for English (DfE, 2014), on entering Year 5 (ages 9-10 and the age of the participants in this study) most children should be able to read texts which are suitable for their age-group confidently and fluently. They should be able to deduce the meaning and pronunciation of most unfamiliar words and discuss texts which they have read independently. For these children meaning-making has progressed from decoding words to higher order strategies such as summarising and asking questions (Grabe and Stoller, 2013; Hall, 2012; Tennent, Reedy, Hobsbaum and Gamble, 2018). 'Good comprehenders' will be those who check for sense; ask questions about the text; draw inferences and justify these with reference to the text; recognise main ideas; summarise and 'identify how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning' (DfE, 2014, p.36). When it comes to comprehension of nonfiction texts specifically however the focus is still on ability to 'retrieve and record information' (DfE, 2014, p.36) with a priority placed on having a specific task and knowing what information they need to look for before they begin to read.

2.3.2 Reading for pleasure and making choices

The National Curriculum for English (DfE, 2014) draws attention to the educational and emotional benefits of 'reading for pleasure' which Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell and Stafford (2014, p.5) define as 'the reader's volition, their agency and desire to read, their anticipation of the satisfaction gained through the experience and/or afterwards in interaction with others'. Nonfiction however is still linked in the document to outcome: reading for an efferent purpose.

Yet many contemporary nonfiction trade books are as much about entertaining their readers as they are about informing them. Buckingham and Scanlon (2003) describe these as 'entertainment-orientated' nonfiction texts and note that these are less

'authoritarian' in voice and so allow the child reader to feel in greater control of what they choose to learn (p. 189). Texts like these may be read purely for leisure purposes by children but can also be used in the context of classroom learning. In their study of children engaged in a reading challenge based on science information books, Alexander and Jarman (2018) noted that although some recreational nonfiction texts may appear superficial in their treatment of the content, they expose children to, 'scientific thinking and understanding in a reader-friendly way' (2015, p. 130). These texts provoked both emotive and intellectual responses from the children in their study and 'learning by stealth' (p.130), or acquiring knowledge without the feeling of being taught it, was more powerful when accompanied by an emotional response. Reading for pleasure and for purpose are not distinct activities when dealing with such nonfiction texts which are more entertainment-orientated. Reading for pleasure may stray into reading to find out, and reading to find out can readily become a pleasurable and less outcome-driven activity.

Choice seems to be a key factor in reading for pleasure. The subject matter or topic of a fiction or nonfiction book is important in determining children's choices (Hall and Coles, 1999; Cremin *et al*., 2014; Topping, 2015) but personal life experiences, intertextual experiences and the cultural concepts which the reader has absorbed about what is or is not a 'good' text are also significant underlying factors. In addition readers may relate to a text because it has 'personal meaningfulness': a powerful connection with something happening in the reader's life at the moment (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.158). Clark and Foster, (2005), Clark and Rumbold (2006), Topping (2015) and Cremin *et al*., (2014) stress the importance of giving children a choice of what to read, arguing that this creates more motivated and enthusiastic readers. Choosing however is not naturally easy for some children and needs to be practised and learnt. The National Curriculum states that at Key Stages 1 and 2 'pupils should have opportunities to exercise choice in selecting texts *and be taught how to do so'* (my emphasis) (DfE, 2014, p. 17). A culture which encourages children to make choices about their reading supports the development of self-esteem, relevance, sense of identity and confidence in reading (Cremin *et al*., 2014). Moss and Hendershot (2002) and Topping (2015) argue that children need examples of fiction and nonfiction on

classroom bookshelves in order for them to see the potential of nonfiction as a source of reading for pleasure.

2.3.3 The difficulty of nonfiction

When considering meaning-making from nonfiction texts, there is a perception that understanding nonfiction is more difficult for young readers (Duke, 2003; Raff in Yenika-Agbaw *et al.*, 2018). The diversity of nonfiction text types; specific structural features; unfamiliar vocabulary and the register of nonfiction texts are cited as reasons (Pappas, 2006), alongside teachers' attitudes and experience (Duke and Bennett-Armistead, 2003; Pappas, 2006; Yopp and Yopp, 2012). Studies have indicated that children need to draw upon a broader range of skills when reading information texts than narrative forms (Best, Floyd and McNamara, 2008; Eason, Goldberg, Young, Geist and Cutting, 2012; McNamara, Ozuru and Floyd, 2011), with decoding competence, vocabulary knowledge, motivation and prior, or world knowledge all playing a significant a part in understanding (Best, Floyd and McNamara, 2008; Liebfreund and Conradi, 2016). In a survey of over a million pupils from schools in the UK and Republic of Ireland, Topping (2018) recorded that boys were reading more nonfiction than girls, but that they did not understand it as well as they did fiction.

Best *et al.*, (2008, p.139) argue that most narrative fiction relates to situations and events which are familiar to children, and so new information can be more readily assimilated in this context. Moreover, the sequential structure of most fiction aids comprehension by reducing the demand on working memory, whilst nonfiction texts place greater demands on the reader through unfamiliar, often nonlinear structures; information presented in a concentrated form and new concepts and ideas. The low appeal of nonfiction to children is also cited as a further potential barrier, and motivation was found to be a factor in comprehension for children with lower reading ability in a US study (Liebfreud, 2015), although several studies vigorously contest the assumption that stories are inherently more attractive to young children (Donovan and Smolkin, 2002; Duke and Bennet-Armistead, 2003; Yopp and Yopp, 2012). Liebfreund and Conradi (2016, p.1145) note that the many different factors which

contribute to comprehension of 'informational' text mean that different types of readers will have skills in different areas, making it difficult to prescribe one type of comprehension instruction for all readers.

Currently the National Curriculum for England (DfE, 2014, p.15) requires that pupils are introduced to a range of nonfiction from Year 1 (ages 5-6 years) and although nonfiction tends to be included alongside other literature throughout the primary years, teachers must demonstrate the structural nature of different texts and how to use structural guiders to retrieve information (DfE, 2014, p.35). More specific advice about how to support children in their reading of nonfiction in the professional literature tends to follow a structured approach, and teachers are encouraged to instruct children in a set of specific strategies for tackling the texts which reflect these nonfiction reading skills (Corbett and Strong, 2011; Beers and Probst, 2015; Mallett, 2010). The dominant discourse is one where nonfiction text is treated as something to be tackled and managed and the reader must focus on achieving a 'right' reading and implies that there is a tool-kit of skills which can be applied to any text. Little regard is paid to the influence of emotion and context on the ways in which meaning is made.

The perceived difficulty level of nonfiction may deter some children from reading nonfiction or persuade them to choose easy texts and Topping (2018) claims that many children are choosing undemanding nonfiction. In Topping's survey difficulty is assessed using a measurement which looks at average sentence length, word level and total number of words in a book. Yet this measurement is not suitable for grading picture books and PNFPBs in particular, as the number and difficulty level of the words is often low, and it does not take into account the complexity of the concepts in a text, or the role and readability of the images. On the surface PNFPBs may appear to be easy as many follow a narrative structure and use less specialist vocabulary, belying their complexities and richness as literary texts.

2.3.4 Nonfiction, range and PNFPBs

Topping (2018) also noted a lack of range and variety in the nonfiction available in primary schools. His study found only 9% of the children's self-chosen reading was

listed as nonfiction suggesting that exposure to different kinds of nonfiction literature may be limited; a point noted also by Yopp and Yopp (2012) in early years classrooms in the US.

A number of studies stress the importance of having a diversity of texts in the classroom to encourage and promote reading (Krashen, 2004; Clark and Rumbold, 2006; Yopp and Yopp, 2012; Ofsted, 2011; DfE, 2012). Yet Duke and Bennett-Armistead (2003) argue that teachers should choose to work with texts which are typical of their genre, which would suggest that hybrid texts are unsuitable for class teaching or guided reading. Texts which give children clear triggers about whether to adopt an efferent or aesthetic stance are favoured by Galda and Laing (2003) who maintain that comprehension is closely aligned to adopting the appropriate stance for the text. The authors criticise the use of fiction for topic teaching as they argue that this will confuse children. Their view supports earlier research by Becker (1999) which suggested that shifts in stance are problematic for some readers.

2.3.5 Learning through hybrid texts

Although discussions about children's readings of hybrid fiction/nonfiction are limited, there is contradictory evidence about the value of hybrids in terms of children's learning. Mallett (2010) and Meek (1996) propose that narrative nonfiction text types offer an accessible introduction to nonfiction because children are familiar with story, a view which resonates with research by Best *et al*., (2008) cited above. Yet Jetton (1994) argued that when reading texts where story was combined with information, children remembered the story but not the facts. Flurkey and Goodman (2004) found that complex texts which combine different genres and modes of communication such as fact boxes, images, speech bubbles and stories actually helped struggling readers to build their understanding. When readers, even struggling ones, were allowed to work through a text at their own pace and to discuss and share their struggles as part of the learning process, their confidence and proficiency improved. They propose that complex and unusual hybrid texts should be made available to all readers irrespective of their reading ability and that readers need to

be given the time and opportunity to work through them without too much direction or intervention by adults.

Familiarity and level of textual difficulty are therefore separate but related aspects which impact on children's understandings of nonfiction texts. The omission of any hybrid type of text from current English policy documents suggests that these are very unfamiliar to children and consequently may prove difficult to access using comprehension strategies they have been taught from the usual fiction/nonfiction genre perspective. 'Literary nonfiction' is mentioned in the National Curriculum document, but is not introduced until Key Stage 4 and the examples given are 'essays, reviews and journalism' (DfE, 2014, p.86). The omission of literary nonfiction until the later stages of education also implies that it is more suitable for older, more experienced readers, perhaps in agreement with Pappas' views (2006).

2.3.6 Meaning-making from a reader-response perspective

In this thesis I view the texts and the children's responses to them from the literary perspective of reader–response theory. This approach emphasises the reader as active in constructing meaning rather than passively consuming texts. Reader-response focuses on the 'location of textual meaning' in the reading event (Bennett, 1995, p.3), that is, whether meaning is located in the written text itself, in the mind of the reader as they read a text, or between reader and text. There are a number of different approaches within reader-response theory and some place the location of meaning more towards the text or more towards the reader. I use a *transactional* reader-response approach as expressed through the work of Louise Rosenblatt (1904-2005) and Wolfgang Iser (1926-2007) which views meaning as located in the exchange between reader and text. Reading is seen as a balanced interaction where 'the reader acts on the text … [and]…the text acts on the reader' (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.16). There are many possible meanings within a text as each reader will interpret it in different ways depending upon his or her experiences, knowledge of the world, dispositions and levels of ability. This perspective values the reader's response, but also the role of the text itself.

Smith (2010) argues that culture and context are integral both to the creation of texts and in determining an individual's response to them. Texts are not made or read in a vacuum, but from within the social and cultural experiences of the creator/s and reader/s. Literary texts are objects constructed in a social context which give the reader the opportunity to 'participate' in the 'vision' of another (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.7), but also to recreate that vision according to his or her own experiences. Reading is a process of anticipation and retrospection as the reader makes continuous modifications to their understandings of the text. Readers are constantly filling in the gaps left by the author as a literary work is never fully defined (Iser, 1978).

Both Rosenblatt and Iser argue that there cannot be a single 'right' reading of a text and that an author cannot expect or be guaranteed to transfer their ideas, wholesale to the reader. The reader will always interpret and embellish, as he or she creates meaning which gives the text relevance to them. Moreover, subsequent readings of a text will vary as the reader's experiences and 'world knowledge' increases (Tennent *et al.,* 2016, p. 19) and colours their interpretation. The value of these multiple interpretations can be appreciated as part of the unfolding relationship which a reader can have with a literary text throughout their lives, but this perspective of no single or right reading can appear problematic if the primary purpose of an expository text is accepted as one of communicating information as clearly as possible. If each reader reads a text in a different way, it is not possible for the educator to be sure that a child has understood a concept or that the information which they take away with them is 'correct'.

This raises questions about the applicability of a theoretical perspective which is concerned primarily with literary fiction to discussion of nonfiction. Reader-response theory has been widely used in discussions of children's responses to literature, especially picture books (Arizpe and Styles, 2016), but is less frequently applied to children's nonfiction perhaps because it does not align with conventional approaches to nonfiction. However, as Kesler (2012) demonstrates, a reader response perspective offers a particularly interesting way to consider PNFPBs which can be categorised as both literature and nonfiction, since the focus is less on strategic

approaches to understanding the text and more on the experience of the reading 'event' (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.20).

2.3.7 Primary knowers and possible knowers

Nonfiction texts for children, even of the simplest and most straightforward kind, are therefore open to divergent readings and understandings. Aukerman demonstrates this in her observations of children's responses to fiction and nonfiction texts in classrooms (2007; 2008; 2013; 2016). These offer further evidence to support Rosenblatt's view of no single 'right' reading. Reading activities in classrooms normally involve the teacher in scaffolding the children towards what Aukerman describes as a 'standard reading' of the text so that the correct meaning is made and knowledge is acquired (2007, p.57). In contrast she views comprehension as 'sense-making' (2007, p.53). In sense-making the child explores possible meanings and makes decisions about the text which have meaning for them, and which fulfil a social purpose whether those are their own social purposes or those of others (Aukerman, 2007).

Aukerman (2007) argues that when the teacher does not adopt a traditional didactic role children can become 'possible knowers: someone authorised to voice opinions and persuade others' (p.75-76). Children deserve respect and a 'non-evaluative stance' from a teacher who is interested and curious about what the child is thinking even when ideas are misinformed or obscure (Aukerman, 2006, p.40). Clark and Genareo (in Yenika-Agbaw *et al.,* 2018) noted that the children in their study were motivated to find out more for themselves possibly because their teachers had explained that sometimes 'there was not a right answer to give' (p.72). This approach reflects the fragmentary and incomplete nature of much information in the real world and is stimulating in that it suggests that there is still much to find out and new hypotheses are possible. Children can feel empowered by the realisation that the teacher does not hold all of the answers and that their contributions to the discussion can be equally valid (Roche, 2015).

2.3.8 Meaning-making and ambiguity

I agree with Aukerman's approach to meaning-making, which gives children a greater voice around discussion of nonfiction texts even when these are seen as difficult or challenging and allows them to respond in ways which are not typical of conventional encounters with a nonfiction text, for example discussing an emotive or affective response. It also offers children the opportunity to encounter ambiguity as the content, language and imagery of PNFPBs are open to different interpretations. Willingness to tolerate ambiguity is seen as an important step in developing as a proficient reader by Meek (1988) and McClay (2000), as more complex and demanding texts require readers to be patient and to understand that not all information will be revealed immediately and may be resolved differently from expectations.

2.3.9 Meaning-making and images

Although in this study 'text' refers inclusively to images and words, some consideration needs to be given to the particular nature of reading images in order to appreciate the diversity of approaches to meaning-making which PNFPBs demand. A significant body of research has sought to explore how children understand and interpret images, as greater recognition is paid to the growing multimodality of on-line and print texts (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996; Arizpe and Styles, 2002; Painter, Martin and Unsworth, 2014; Charles and Boyle, 2014). Picture books are multimodal texts which require the reader to read the images as well as decode the words. Contrasting some of the literature about the use of images in picture books with literature about images in nonfiction, again reveals the dual nature and possible tensions within PNFPBs.

Modern nonfiction texts for children make extensive use of visual presentation in ways which are increasingly visually interesting and attractive (Smith, 2003; Donovan and Smolkin, 2002; Heller, 2006). Together with the illustrations the visual elements of a nonfiction book include 'peritext', the term used for the components of the book such as the cover, title page or publisher's blurb, font, tables or diagrams (Genette, 1997). Although these elements are often given little attention, they support

children's meaning-making by organising and presenting information in ways which are attractive and more easily absorbed and memorised (Cook, 2006; Donovan and Smolkin, 2002).

In picture books the nature of the word/image relationship varies: the image may offer additional information to the words by adding detail, or it may carry the main meaning, but it is always essential to the whole text (Nodelman, 1988; Sipe, 2011). Pictures can tell the story for the less able reader, or help the reader to 'fill in the gaps' in Iser's sense and so aid meaning-making. In some picture books, the picture may offer a different meaning which may even contradict the words, inviting the reader to make a conscious and critical appraisal of the picture/word relationship (Gamble, 2013).

Consequently, pictures are often considered to be particularly accessible since even non or less able readers can construct some understanding from them (Arizpe and Styles, 2016; Aukerman, 2016). A series of studies over the past 40 years has suggested that children, particularly in the early and primary years, prefer realistic images (Stewig, 1972; Benson, 1986; Parsons, 1987; Brookshire, Scharff and Moses, 2002), possibly because the meaning is more transparent, whereas illustrations which are more artistic, ambiguous and abstract take longer to understand, detail may be missed and their meaning is not immediately apparent. In PNFPBs pictures range from photographs to impressionistic and abstract images and so provide a useful means for inviting a variety of visual responses.

As discussed above (2.2.9) realistic images or photographs have 'high modality' (Kress and Van Leeuven 1996), are associated with truthfulness and more immediately understood by the reader. Images which are ambiguous require 'additional discussion … to counter … misconceptions' (Donovan and Smolkin, 2002, p.512) and some sources suggest that extraneous detail may confuse a child or draw their attention away from the key content or concept, especially in science books (Donovan and Smolkin, 2002; Cook, 2006). Such discussions suggest that the images in a nonfiction text must support the child towards a single right reading rather than invite inference

and interpretation and that they are subordinate to the words which carry the main meaning.

The interwoven nature of word and image in a picture book makes it very difficult to determine where meaning-making from image begins and ends, even in studies which use eye-movement detection (Roy-Charland, Saint-Aubin and Evans, 2007). Reading a picture book requires readers to alternate between differing sign systems of image and word to construct meanings (Haynes and Murris, 2012; Aukerman, 2016). Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) and Nodelman (1988) suggest that pictures provide different kinds of information, which can be spatial and descriptive as well as subjective and emotive. The naming of objects in a picture, for example, is a form of interpretation which requires a shift from one mode (visual) to another (language) (Serafini, 2010). When making meaning from images the reader draws on prior world experience but also experience of other images and their contexts, for example a reader who encounters a book with cartoon style images may sensibly construe that it will be funny or upbeat (Arizpe and Styles, 2002).

The apparent immediacy of the image means that talking about the pictures is often a key way to begin a discussion of the whole book, and in Arizpe's and Styles' study (2002) less competent readers were often able to communicate sensitive and complex understandings of visual images long before they were able to read the words. Yet some educators have expressed concern that children may rely on information from pictures to mask poor decoding skills (Aukerman and Schuldt, 2016). Aukerman argues that this has led teachers to place emphasis on acquiring phonetic skills and neglect the value of children's meaning-making from images.

Meaning-making from images can be highly sophisticated. Heller (2006) reported that children in her nonfiction book club were fully engaged, motivated and affected by the images in the books which they shared, and that these reactions provoked 'creative and critical' (p.365) discussions which aided comprehension. Fisher notes that this kind of creative dialogue is important for the agency which it gives children, placing them as 'co-constructors of new ideas, new meanings and better worlds' (2009, p.200). Creative responses can also be playful and nonconformist (Ghiso, 2011)

and, like emotive response, do not align with the rational and objective approach to acquiring knowledge which has dominated Western thinking (Haynes and Murris, 2012). Whilst artistic images, such as those in PNFPBs, might seem to inspire a greater degree of aesthetic response (Arizpe and Styles, 2002; Haynes and Murris, 2012), Heller's (2006) study demonstrates that children respond emotively to all kinds of pictures in nonfiction books and that these emotive responses are an intrinsic part of the meaning which they make from the whole text.

2.3.10 Meaning-making through dialogue

Social reading is experienced particularly in childhood as children are often placed in situations where reading is a shared, communal activity (Grenby and Reynolds, 2011). In a social context new meanings are created and ideas changed through talking about them with others. The literature about how children learn through dialogue is eminent and extensive (Barnes and Todd, 1977; Wells, 1987; Mercer and Littleton, 2007; Alexander, 2016) and for the purpose of this thesis it is necessary to limit the discussion to aspects pertinent to the focus of this research. This section focuses on what is meant by dialogue in the context of this study and how children make meaning through dialogue when they are sharing and talking about books, primarily with each other. Although spoken language is the focus, dialogue can also encompass the gestures, expressions and tone of voice which children use in their talk and which contribute meaning and understanding (Maine, 2015).

Bohm (1996, p. 19.) argues that dialogue is 'an empty' space where 'anything can come in'. In this sense dialogue is open-ended, active and engaging, requiring participants to listen as well as to speak, be willing to take on board new ideas and consider and respond to them. When referring to children and books, dialogue of this kind is nearly always applied to children's discussions of poems, stories, novels and picture books (Chambers, 1995; Arizpe and Styles, 2016; Haynes and Murris, 2012). In discussion about nonfiction children are usually guided towards a particular objective or outcome and are encouraged to follow particular strategies to understand the text (Wray and Lewis, 1997; Corbett and Strong, 2011). Duke and Bennett-Armistead support 'thinking aloud' and 'instructional conversation' about

nonfiction texts provided this is taught alongside comprehension strategies (2003, p.64). Their approach invites discussion, rather than dialogue as defined above, as outcome and right readings are intrinsic to the activity. Yet if PNFPBs are viewed as examples of literary nonfiction, Bohm's concept of dialogue is equally applicable. Aukerman's (2015) research has suggested that it is possible to have dialogue around nonfiction texts which can be as rich, creative and unlimited as dialogue about fiction, provided these take place in an environment which is supportive.

Environments which support dialogue are both physical and attitudinal: they present children with a range and variety of texts, and reading is valued and discussion about texts encouraged (Chambers, 1993; Smith, 2012; Levy, 2011 and Gamble, 2013). They are places where children's ideas are 'honourably reportable' (Chambers, 1993, p.81): children know that they can talk without fear of being ridiculed or told that their ideas are wrong. Chambers' view resonates with Aukerman's (2013) approach to respecting children's sense-making (2.3.7) and the idea of a 'democratic space' where philosophical discussion of texts is encouraged (Haynes and Murris, 2012, p.16). Smith notes that 'messy dialogue' occurs when children 'try to articulate ideas which are new to them' (2009 p.32). This kind of talk requires skill and patience from the teacher who must wait for ideas to be developed and formed, as meanings are often only realised when ideas are put into words.

Although discussion can be instigated by the text, the teacher or the children (Duke and Bennett-Armistead, 2003), dialogic approaches emphasise the child's contribution. Teachers who respect children's views will let them revisit ideas, arrive at their final response in their own time and focus on what is of importance to them (Maine, 2015; Chambers, 1995; Aukerman 2013; Roche, 2015). They will model exploratory language, celebrate and encourage different ideas about a text and be willing to concede to children's meaning-making (Maine, 2012). Chambers (1993) argues that teachers must be willing to respect children's choices, allow them from time to time to talk about their own selection of books and accept when a book or situation is not right for talk. These approaches require teachers to surrender some of their control as 'primary knowers' to enable children to become 'possible knowers' whose views are of value (Aukerman, 2007 p.56). The levels of teacher intervention

vary significantly between studies by Aukerman, Chambers, Roche and Arizpe and Styles, yet however backseat the teacher's role may be, their presence inevitably influences the discourse. In contrast Maine (2015) considers the meaning-making which occurs when children encounter visual texts without teacher intervention, and suggests that even without specific objectives and guidance children are able to engage in dialogue which is meaningful and complex.

As the individual process of meaning-making from a text is hidden and often unconscious, observing children's dialogue around texts can offer some insight into the private and personal ways in which children make sense of what they read. Yet this glimpse is at best partial as the nature of dialogic exchange means that the individual's sense of the text cannot be static, as meanings are revised, rejected, re-formed and expanded through the process of articulating and then sharing them. Such dialogue invites the airing of possible meanings, which keep the conversation open to different interpretations through tentative suggestions and 'hypothetical language' (Maine, 2015, p.103). Ideas are developed by being tried out and tested against the wider and diverse experiences of others (Maine, 2013). Social relationships and purposes for talk also affect the roles children play in the dialogue such as the stances which they adopt and their willingness to concede and accept different meanings (Aukerman, 2013; Maine, 2015).

The above seems to suggest that there might be 'good' dialogue and 'bad' dialogue about books and that good dialogue can be promoted through teaching specific strategies, but listening to and respecting what children say is more important in these studies than evaluating the quality of their dialogue. Whilst the competence and sophistication of children's response to text has been noted with some surprise in studies (Arizpe and Styles, 2002; Haynes and Murris, 2012), educational agendas and adult priorities can get in the way of acknowledging what children notice as important and interesting. The perspective which I adopt in this thesis reflects my personal philosophy about respecting and trusting children's contributions (Chapter 4).

2.3.11 Nonfiction and critical literacy

The need for a critical approach to children's nonfiction by children as well as adults is supported by recent criticism (Sanders, 2018; Yenika-Agbaw, Hudock and Lowery, 2018). Nonfiction texts which invite critical enquiry are those that inspire children to wonder and reflect, form their own judgements and expand their knowledge through further research (Sanders, 2018). Critical reading of a nonfiction text involves active engagement through questioning and being curious (Landauer, Logan and Rodriguez-Astacio in Yenika-Agbaw *et al.,* 2018) and logical reasoning skills such as assessing evidence and distinguishing fact from fiction (Fisher, 2009). But criticality is not necessarily limited to older, experienced readers. Comber (2010, p.33) notes that critical literacy is 'an integral part of the reading process' for all readers, not a skill which children must work up to. She contends that even young children, when treated as knowledgeable and capable of independent thought, can demonstrate critical thinking by talking about a text, asking questions of it and relating what they read to wider issues in the world around them.

Whilst critical literacy is not new, the ability to be critically literate is seen as increasingly important, both in order to question and challenge representations of gender and race in texts (Meller, Richardson and Hatch, 2009) and to address increased anxiety around recognising 'fake news' (Janks, 2018; NLT, 2018). A report by The National Literacy Trust (NLT, 2018) noted that critical literacy was not specifically mentioned in the primary curriculum, but argued that teaching of comprehension skills and 'discussion, debate and dialogue' (p.23) were important ways to develop critical literacy and embed it in practice in the classroom. Although the report was focused on digital sources such as news items, the kinds of debate and discussion outlined in this chapter about books (Haynes and Murris, 2012; Maine, 2015; Aukerman, 2015, Roche, 2015) promote an approach which fosters the development of critical literacy. Texts such as PNFPBs, which encourage a different way to look at accepted forms or ways of presenting information, lend themselves well to these types of activity.

2.4 Conclusion

An exploration of literature about children's picture books and nonfiction from literary and pedagogical perspectives has revealed limited discussion of hybrid texts and as yet very little discussion of PNFPBs. However several themes have emerged through this literature review which identify areas of debate regarding children's nonfiction in general, and these apply to PNFPBs and hybrid texts in particular. In summary these key themes are:

1. Nonfiction is itself hard to define: defining PNFPBs which are both literary and informative is even more difficult as they do not conform to genre expectations. Consequently hybrid texts can be avoided by teachers as they do not fit in to established policies and teaching pedagogies.

2. Functional approaches which focus on the purpose and outcome of reading have dominated discourse about children's nonfiction. Emotional and aesthetic responses to nonfiction texts have been largely disregarded or not seen as applicable to nonfiction reading.

3. Children's views are often traditionally excluded from scholarly discussion of their literature.

4. Children's nonfiction texts are usually assumed to be truthful and the ways in which facts are represented and chosen is not questioned. PNFPBs which blend narrative, poetry and artistic images conflict with genre conventions about how truthfulness is presented.

5. Nonfiction is sometimes viewed as more challenging than fiction, and arguably, of less interest to children.

6. A view of nonfiction as concerned simply with knowledge transmission implies that there is a single right reading of the text and disregards the role which the individual reader plays in making sense of it.

7. Dialogue is important for meaning-making from text. The processes which individuals draw upon to understand what they read are largely hidden, but can be seen partially through children's discussions about text. Through dialogue children make meanings jointly and clarify, change or reinforce their own understanding.

These key points helped to inform the research questions (Chapter 1.7) and the methodology for my study (Chapter 4). The limited discussion of hybrid forms in the literature influenced my decision to concentrate on PNFPBs and to investigate in more depth how children responded to texts which have been viewed by some as confusing, obscure or inexact. There is still a need to give greater recognition to children's nonfiction in literary criticism, but recent scholarly work is moving the discussion beyond traditional debates about the features, purpose and status of the genre. Therefore it seems timely to focus on the nonfictional nature of the texts in my study and the responses of a group of children to them.

Chapter 3: The Five Texts

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I detail reasons for my selection of the texts chosen for the study, identify the characteristics which classify them as PNFPBs as defined by Kesler (2012, 2017) and explore some of the limitations and complexities involved in choosing the texts. I also examine and build on Kesler's typology to offer some suggested modifications and differences in approach particularly when considering the texts in the context of work with children in an English classroom.

The 5 texts chosen for this study are examples of British and American children's books which I selected as examples of PNFPBs as discussed in Chapter 2. Kesler's definition of a new category of hybrid texts turns the spotlight on texts which combine image, poetic language and nonfiction and gives recognition to a group of texts which is 'increasingly prevalent' (Kesler, 2012, p.328). In making my selection of texts I looked initially for ones published only in the UK as the language and content of these were more likely to be familiar to children in my study. However, in the end I did include two US examples (*All the water in the world*, Lyon and Tillotson, 2011 and *Where in the Wild?*, Scwartz, Schy and Kuhn, 2007) partly because there were so many more examples of PNFPBs published in the US which seemed to offer more variety in terms of subject-matter and illustrative style than the UK texts available at the time. Table 1 presents a summary of each text and outlines briefly (under g) how each one meets Kesler's criteria.

3.2 The selected texts

Table 1: Summary of texts

Table 1 Summary of Texts.

		All the water in the World	I am Cat	A First Book of Nature	Where in the Wild?	North
a	Title	All the water in the World	I am Cat	A First Book of Nature	Where in the Wild?	North
b	Author	George Ella Lyon	Jackie Morris	Nicola Davies	David Schwartz and Yael Schy	Nick Dowson
c	Illustrator	Katherine Tillotson	Jackie Morris	Mark Hearld	Dwight Kuhn	Patrick Benson
d	No of pages	31	24	108	22	56
e	Medium of illustrations	Digital images	Watercolour paintings	Mixed media: collage, painted and hand-drawn work, linocuts, pastels, spray painted.	Full colour photographs	Water colour paintings and pencil drawings.
f	Summary of content	The author asks where water comes from, briefly presents the water cycle and the value of water for human and animal life around the world.	A domestic cat dreams of being a wild cat and in his dream 'visits' ten wild cats in their habitats before returning to home.	The four seasons are presented in turn with images, poems and prose sections which feature a range of animals, plants and trees and seasonal activities seen through the eyes of a young child.	Readers are invited to look closely at photographs to find camouflaged animals. The photographs are accompanied by poems containing clues about the animal's identity. The page opens out to reveal the hidden animal and provide factual information and further photographs about it.	Starting with the icy winter the changing seasons in the Arctic are shown and the book follows the journeys of a range of animals who visit the Arctic to feed and breed in the summer months.
g	Features of PNFPB	Extended poem with lyrical language. Non-fiction subject (the water cycle).	Extended poem with lyrical language. Fictional subject but based on accurate information and with non-fictional back matter.	Collection of poems and prose. Non-fictional subject (seasons and nature).	Poems and images on individual animals with accompanying factual notes and additional images.	Extend lyrical prose. Non-fiction subject (arctic migration) with glossary and factual back matter.
h	British Library Catalogue Category	Hydrologic cycle- Juvenile literature; Dewey: 551.48 (American Library of Congress online Catalog).	Children's stories - Pictorial works; Dewey: 823.92	Natural history-Juvenile literature; Dewey: 508	Animals-Juvenile Literature; Camouflage (Biology) – Dewey: 590	Animal migration- Juvenile literature; Ecology-Arctic regions- Pictorial works – Juvenile literature; Dewey: 591.568

3.3 Additional criteria

There were also four additional criteria which I used in the selection of texts:

1. Theme: All of the texts are loosely connected to the theme of the natural world, including topics such as animals and camouflage, polar migration, the importance of water for life, nature and the seasons and types of cat. This theme is particularly prevalent in books which conform to Kesler's category. PNFPBs are by no means restricted in subject content and there are a number of particularly good examples of PNFPB biographies (see Appendix 3), but natural sciences tap into a long and established tradition of lyrical writing about nature. Natural science has always been a dominant topic in children's nonfiction and is seen as accessible and appealing to young children (Yopp and Yopp, 2012). Within the English Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2017) and Key Stages 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) natural sciences are also included in 'Knowledge and Understanding of the World' and the Science Programmes of Study respectively. However, it should be noted that during the study I did not present the texts to the children as belonging to a specified theme or in a manner which might imply that nature was being studied.

2. Age appropriateness: Although the study focuses on children in Key Stage 2 in England (Year 5 ages 9-10), books were selected which would be suitable for a wide range of reading abilities, bearing in mind that reading ability applies to the reading of images as well as words (Arizpe and Styles, 2016). Although picture books are traditionally seen as appropriate for young children, the reading experience which they offer has relevance and appeal to a wide age-range (Gamble, 2013). There has been criticism of attaching a specific age category to them as this is thought to limit openness to the texts by teachers, parents and pupils (Warren and Maynard, 2012). Only two of the texts specified an intended age range on the cover (*North* and *All the water in the world*).

3. Examples of quality: this criterion is highly contextual and subjective (Chapter 2.2.5), however the children in the study were unlikely to have encountered this type of text before and it seemed appropriate to present them with 'good' examples which

were visually appealing, imaginative and thought-provoking. Whilst the selection was my own, most of the texts have been nominated for or have won book awards, an accepted if debatable mark of quality also used by Kesler (2012) in his selection of texts.

4. Date of Publication: For the study I selected recent texts which were readily available to children and representative of current PNFPBs. The oldest text in my selection is *Where in the Wild?* (Schwartz, Schy and Kuhn, 2007).

3.4 Kesler's typology of PNFPBs

Within the category of texts which Kesler calls PNFPBs there is considerable variation in style and content. Kesler sought to specify the category further by ordering the books according to the use of poetic language, which he represented on a continuum, ranging from 'collective poems' at one end to 'lyric prose' at the other (2012, p.343). Within this continuum he identified six separate categories with common characteristics and similarities in terms of language and structure. The categories demonstrate the variety of textual forms within PNFPBs, and Figure 1 below shows Kesler's categories within the continuum. Kesler shared the categories with colleagues and noted some differences of opinion in assigning books to categories, but stated that they agreed on the 'clarity of the categories' (2012, p. 345). Initially I sought to select titles which were representative of each category. However, in practice I encountered a number of difficulties in this process. Several texts within my selection appeared to overlap categories and I was unable to find 'pure' examples of each category. Furthermore Kesler's approach focuses on structure and language and does not consider image specifically, whereas in this study I argue that word and image are intertwined characteristics of all picture books, and PNFPBs in particular, and so need to be considered within any discussion of the texts. Innovative and affective aspects, another key theme of this study, are also not included in the continuum. Kesler's continuum therefore is useful in drawing attention to the different characteristics and features of structure within PNFPBs, but has some limitations in terms of classification.

An alternative approach would be to consider how the characteristics of PNFPBs are balanced in each text. The ways in which the different elements: image/poem/nonfiction are integrated gives some insight into the emphasis given by the author and the innovative use of the form. In *Where in the Wild?* for example the separate elements of photograph, information and poem work independently and can be read without the need to refer to each other, although they work better when read simultaneously. It could be argued that this is an example of a multi-layered PNFPB in comparison to *All the water in the world*, where poem, informational content and image are woven together to create the whole. I suggest that texts which have this kind of integration of the three elements are those most different from conventional nonfiction books, whereas texts which present the elements separately employ more standard forms of expository presentation and writing within each element.

Figure 1: A continuum of poetic nonfiction picture books (adapted from Kesler, 2012).

Collective poems	Extended poem	Rhyming verse	Coupled poems	Narrative or expository verse	Lyric prose
Collection of poems on a central theme	One poem that extends across the whole book.	Rhyming verse to present information across the whole book or in chapters.	Poetry coupled with expository writing.	Narrative or expository writing written in verse form.	Narrative or expository writing with many poetic elements.

3.5 Making choices

In selecting certain books for the study my judgements about them were made inevitably from my perspective as an adult reader of a text where the 'implied' reader is a child (Hunt, 1991, p.46). My choices were made from the perspective of a knowledgeable reader of a wide range of texts; someone with a set of values and assumptions about what a 'good' children's nonfiction book might look like and experiences of reading and sharing books with children as a teacher, parent, friend and librarian. Despite attending to the criteria above, when selecting the texts I was engaging in a process of making judgements about what I thought the children in my study would or should like, and setting up some expectations about what their responses would be. This was important as texts suitable for the study needed to offer sufficient potential for discussion and engagement from the children (Arizpe and Styles, 2016).

In order to explore the features and potential of the texts in as much depth as possible I analysed each book using four separate analysis frames relating to nonfiction, language, image and peritext (Appendix 4). These frames took the form of sets of questions drawn from a number of sources including Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996; Grenby and Reynolds, 2011; Painter, Martin and Unsworth, 2014 and Arizpe and Styles, 2016 as well as my own survey of quality in nonfiction (Appendix 2). I collated the answers to the questions under three headings of nonfiction, picture books and poetry corresponding to the key elements of PNFPBs.

3.6.1 The texts as nonfiction

In this section I consider the features which relate specifically to the texts as examples of nonfiction. With the exception of *I am Cat* (Morris, 2012) all of the books are categorised as children's nonfiction according to major library catalogues (British Library and American Library of Congress) and are classed under the 500s in the Dewey Decimal system, which refers to 'natural sciences and mathematics' (OCLC, 2017). This suggests that their informational content is recognised despite their diversity of form. When analysing the texts using the nonfiction frame I was mindful of the definitions and criteria discussed in Chapter 2 which would qualify the texts as

good examples of children's nonfiction. This was in order to evaluate the extent to which they would comply with these criteria if they were to be included and considered as nonfiction texts in the primary classroom.

I am Cat deserves some specific discussion here mainly due to its categorisation under 'children's stories', rather than nonfiction. As discussed in Chapter 2, some critics contend that the author's primary purpose or reason for writing the book is the most significant factor in deciding whether it is fiction or nonfiction (Mallett, 2010 and Yopp and Yopp, 2012). Duke and Bennett-Armistead (2003) present the author's intention to *either* inform and instruct, *or* to entertain and convey an experience, as distinct stances instrumental in determining the genre of the text. Yet as Buckingham's and Scanlon's (2003, see also Chapter 2.3.2) examples of 'entertainment-orientated' nonfiction show that primary purpose can be difficult to determine, and an intention to entertain does not exclude an intention to inform. Morris defines the book as story (Morris, 2013, podcast), yet the anatomical accuracy with which the cats are painted and the factual back matter about them makes it also informative and grounded in the real world despite a dream setting. Author intention should not therefore be used to limit the applicability of a book to different contexts. Whilst the story frame of a cat's dream makes this the most outwardly fictional of the selected books, the quality and accuracy of the information within it has sufficient value for it to be considered as a PNFPB. The extent to which children perceive this informational content and categorise the text was considered within the study.

A key requirement of nonfiction according to a range of critics (e.g. Duke and Bennet-Armisted, 2003; Mallett, 2010; Merchant and Thomas, 2001; Chapter 2) is that of accuracy and communicating truthfulness presents a challenge for the nonfiction author. The extent to which authors make visible the efforts that they have taken to authenticate their information is seen increasingly as a mark of 'quality' nonfiction (Sanders, 2018). The authors of the 5 texts in this study communicate the accuracy of their content to different degrees and in a variety of ways. Morris notes in the peritext on the copyright page of *I am Cat* that animal facts have been checked by an expert from The London Zoological Society. In *North* further sources of information are given in the coda, suggesting that information can be verified and extended by the reader.

In *Where in the Wild?* and in *A First Book of Nature* the credentials of the authors, given in the back of the book serve as an authentication of his or her authority to write about the topic. On-line materials are provided for *All the water in the world* which offer additional and external information, although this is aimed primarily at teachers using the text. Authentication of information is not therefore given a prominent place in any of the texts.

Instead trust between author and reader is established through voice (Chapter 2.2.8 and Singer, 2013). In *Where in the Wild?* the narrator is friendly and humorous, addressing the reader directly and implying an understanding of the reader's interests through a selection of 'did you know' type facts. In *All the water in the world* the author again addresses the reader directly but this time the relationship is one of caring parent and child in which trust is already established, with the reader referred to as 'honey' (p.23). This is reinforced with a picture of mother and child towards the end of the book. *North* does not address the reader directly, but the tone of the text is one of optimism, with an emphasis on the changing seasons, that the harsh Arctic winter will give way to spring and a strong ecological message in the back matter. A *First Book of Nature* occasionally addresses the reader as 'you' but here the perspective is from an adult seeing themselves as a child, and a strong element of size and senses throughout the poems creates empathy with the child's viewpoint. Davies states this quite clearly as her intention in the back matter: 'I cast off my grown-up self, and found me as I was at five or six' (2012, back page). She speaks with authority as an adult, but also as someone who is seeking to understand and remember the child's perspective.

The use of structural guiders, fact boxes and tiered text in a different size of font are further pointers to nonfiction texts which not only indicate the type of book being read, but also support a different kind of reading from the linear engagement with a fiction text (Chapter 2.2.10). Most of the texts in this selection have an absence of structural guiders: only *A First Book of Nature* which is the longest of the texts has a contents page and only *North* has a glossary and index. This absence could be significant in children's acknowledgement of the informational value of the texts, as structural guiders are taught and associated with nonfiction texts from a very early

stage, an aspect which was further explored in the study. However the global organisation of the texts is generally clear, with the texts structured around the changing seasons (*A First Book of Nature, North*), individual animals (*Where in the Wild*) or a story (*I am Cat*). In *All the water in the world*, where a global structure is less evident, it is the visual design and images which serve to unify and link the content as it moves from discussion of the water cycle to a wider consideration of the value of water to the planet.

The objectivity or freedom from bias which the author presents was identified as a significant feature in discussions of quality nonfiction (McElmeel, 2000; Dudgeon, 2017; Yopp and Yopp, 2000; Appendix 2). Sources identify this as the absence of racial or cultural stereotyping (Dudgeon, 2017), inclusion of gender, equality or cultural diversity (NSTA, 2017; Yopp and Yopp, 2012) or the presentation of a balanced argument (McElmeel, 2000). This is an example of how consideration of the images is essential for a full understanding of the text. Since the books used in this study deal mostly with the natural world, there is little in the written account of humans, but people are included in the images for *A First Book of Nature* and *All the water in the world*. In these texts there is some evidence of diversity in gender and ethnicity although not of ableness. Cultural bias is more evident, as the books are written for a Western audience and depict a natural environment familiar to their intended reader: for example *Where in the Wild* focuses on North American animals and environments, *A First Book of Nature* shows typically British gardens and landscapes. In *All the water in the world*, the Western (plentiful) experience of water is contrasted with 'far away' (Lyon, 2011, p.19) and the image of a black girl standing outside a hut with a straw roof. The colours are earth tones: browns and greys and creams, suggesting drought. Whilst the image conforms to certain stereotypes of an African village, the value of water is presented as a unifying force which unites separate cultural experiences.

According to the sources in Appendix 2 quality nonfiction books should have 'an attractive design' which would appeal to the intended audience. The design of a text creates a visual unity and cohesion (Martinez, Stier and Falcon, 2017) and involves consideration of peritextual features. Whilst these are not part of the text itself, they make a significant contribution to children's engagement with and understanding of

a book, determining for example the type of genre and the stance to adopt before reading, and helping the reader to make predictions about subject, mood and tone (Martinez *et al.,* 2017). Clarity and bright colours in textual elements such as the front cover, font style and size, and the layout of text and image are regarded as suitable for younger readers (Mallett, 2010; Phinn, 2000; Appendix 2). The peritext of each of the 5 books in this study combine to create a unified style and mood for the text. Some aspects of design make an immediate impression, such as the front and back covers, whilst others, such as illustrated endpapers (*I am Cat*, *North*, *A First Book of Nature*) or the line of Morris' pet cats on the copyright page of *I am Cat*, offer visual clues to be picked up by careful readers. The extent to which these features were noted by the children was considered in this study (Chapter 5.6.1).

3.6.2 The texts as picture books

One of the most immediately striking features of the 5 books is their visual richness and diversity leaving the reader in little doubt that they are examples of the picture book genre. Image and word work together on each page to effect the 'synergy' which is typical of a picture book (Sipe, 1998, p.98). It is inappropriate to refer to the pictures as illustrations, as this implies they support the written word, whereas in most cases it is the pictures which first demand the reader's attention. In all of the texts most of the images are presented in double-page spreads, with the words superimposed or framed within the image. Yet despite this apparently visual dominance text and image work interdependently. In *North* for example the sparse, lyrical text links the diverse pictures, presenting the animals who are living in and journeying towards the Arctic and telling the reader something of their migration. The images bring the different and often unusual animals to life and create a sense of the urgency of their journey. This is achieved through dynamic composition and the impression of movement and direction through the use of vectors or connections between objects (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). The vision of the icy habitat which they journey towards is impressionistic and colour is subtly used to create mood and invite empathy.

The texts represent a range of materials and methods: from the highly stylised digitally rendered images by Katherine Tillotson (*All the water in the world*), the

painterly watercolours of Morris (*I am Cat*) and Mark Hearld's expressive collages (*A First Book of Nature*) to Dwight Kuhn's high definition photographs (*Where in the Wild?).* When viewed as a group of texts this visual range is not just a lesson in artistic technique: the ways in which the image and text are presented on the page are equally diverse both between and within the books. This includes the use of fold out pages (*Where in the Wild?*); images which are presented from different viewpoints, framed or unframed (evident in all of the texts) and visual use of words. *Where in the Wild?* Employs concrete poetry, whilst in *All the water in the world* the words dance and flow like water alongside the image.

The visual diversity of the texts is representative of picture books as a genre. Arizpe and Styles (2016) have noted the value of the picture book in introducing children to art and educating them in visual literacy and appreciation. However visual diversity is not usually a feature of conventional nonfiction books, where, although illustrations are usually plentiful, these are primarily supportive of the text and aim to be as clear and unambiguous as possible (Duke and Bennet-Armistead, 2003), and in recent years photography has been the preferred choice for nonfiction text illustrations (Sanders, 2018). A more traditional presentation of nonfiction content is seen in '*Where in the Wild?*' where snippets of factual information interspersed with small expository photographs are included in the fold out pages.

The need for 'clear illustrations' as a criterion for quality nonfiction texts noted by the sources cited in Appendix 2, is somewhat vague, but could link to a requirement for illustration to be accurate (McElmeel, 2000) and that images in nonfiction texts should lack ambiguity and offer enough clarity to be informative. Sanders (2018) notes that, unlike paintings, photographs appear to be objective and are often presented as transparent and 'a window to truth' (p. 135), a perception which persists despite our understanding that photographs are constructed by someone and therefore are not without bias. But communicating information through visual realism, or 'high modality' (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996; Chapter 2.2.9) is clearly not a primary intention of the main images in the selected texts. The photographs in *Where in the Wild?* are first and foremost visual puzzles where things are not as they seem and the reader must work hard to discover the animal is hidden in the picture.

Hearld's lively collages use outlines and simple shapes to suggest birds, houses and trees and Benson's image of the tiny polar bear in the vastness of the Arctic plain requires the reader to draw on knowledge of similar images and understand that pencil lines can represent driving snow. In all of these examples the reader needs to fill in the gaps of what is missing in order understand and interpret the images. The reader is also invited to fill in emotional gaps by imagining the experience of being in the vast, cold and unfamiliar landscape of the arctic or empathising with the isolation of the polar bear. In this sense a reader-response perspective applies as much to the images as the words, reflecting the conception of text as word and image combined.

3.6.3 The poetic language of the texts

Kesler (2012, p.338) asserts that to qualify as poetic nonfiction picture books the text must feature 'poetry or poetic devices to create literary nonfiction'. All 5 texts feature musical, figurative language, imagery and visual arrangement of words. The diversity of poetic language in the texts reflects that of Kesler's continuum (Figure 1) and ranges from collections of individual poems on a theme (*A First Book of Nature*, *Where in the Wild*) to extended poems (*I am Cat, All the water in the world*) and 'poetic' prose (*North, A First Book of Nature*). Within the poems there is diversity of form as well, with examples of concrete poems, haiku and rhyming poetry, although free verse tends to be favoured. The words look like poetry on the page, presented in short lines and often arranged in verses or stanzas. The poems make use of stylistic devices such as repetition, patterning, alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia and rhythm, inviting oral readings. The literary language of imagery including personification, simile and metaphor invite the reader to share in common experiences and empathise with unfamiliar ones:

> I dream that I roam
> deep in the jungle,
> bright flame-cat of the forest
> striped like the shadows,
> sun-scorched.
> (Morris, 2012, p. 3).

Choice of vocabulary, enjambment of sentences and compression of ideas make demands upon the reader. Morris' text above for example invites a connection to be made between the picture and the tiger's words. Her use of 'ammonite tight' (p. 2) to describe the sleeping cat may be outside the vocabulary of many children, but they are invited to infer its meaning, look it up or just enjoy the pleasure of the sounds the words make in the mouth. Despite the use of simple vocabulary the language cannot be described as clear, instead it is nuanced and multi-layered. The 'poem', as Rosenblatt (1978) refers to any literary work, demands a reading which is not linear but goes back and forth, a highly active process which stimulates and requires the reader to select from past experiences to find possible meanings and to redefine and 'regulate' (p.11) those meanings during the reading process. Thus Dowson's 'gray-tusked/narwhal whales, strange as fairy tales' (Dowson, 2011, p.33) will make sense to the reader who turns the page to see the image of the narwhals with a single tusk on their forehead and can connect the image with their prior knowledge of unicorns. However sufficient understanding of the text is possible without making such a connection, and this further aligns with Rosenblatt's (1978) view that any reading is temporal and the reader will only really take note of what is significant to him/her at that moment. The poem therefore invites re-reading as experiences and interests change.

The 5 texts display a range of language use through differing registers and choice of vocabulary. In *All the water in the world,* for example, none of the terminology typically associated with the water cycle is used (e.g. condensation, evaporation, transpiration). The process is instead portrayed through the personification of air as a hungry animal:

Thirsty air
licks it from lakes
sips it from ponds
guzzles it from oceans
and this wet air
swirls up…
(Lyon, 2011, p.11)

North in contrast includes a glossary where some of the specific terms used, such as migration and global warming, are explained. Subject specific words such as rodent, prey and nocturnal are used in *Where in the Wild* but are either explained within the text or must be deduced from the context. In *A First Book of Nature* the language is deliberately simple and any specific terms are used with care: names of shells and apple varieties are used but more for their resonance and sound than their meaning. Rosenblatt (1978) argues that the use of scientific terms sends a message to the reader to shut down the emotional response. Whilst this is less likely to apply to inexperienced readers, I suggest that heavy use of scientific or subject-specific language would serve to create a didactic tone which these texts seek to avoid. Davies' deceptively simple and highly observational poems; the rich sensory language of Morris' text; humour and rhyme in *Where in the Wild*; the dynamic, visual language in *All the water in the world* and the elegant and pared-down language of *North* each in different ways invite an affective response from the reader, evocative of memories and open to imagination.

3.7 Conclusion

The 5 elected texts demonstrate characteristics which exemplify the PNFPB category as defined by Kesler (2012), namely nonfictional content, picture book format and poetry or poetic language. This chapter has considered in particular the ways in which they demonstrate characteristics which identify them clearly as picture books, as defined by Sipe (1998) and Nodelman (2008). Each of the texts are nonfictional in so far as they are concerned with an aspect of the 'real world which we inhabit', although there is considerable variation in the extent to which they 'explain, organise and explore' these aspects (Mallett, 2002, p.10).

Viewed through the perspective of transactional reader response theory (Rosenblatt 1978, Iser 1978), these texts encourage active reading. The openness of the language and images leaves the reader free to bring their own perspective and unique set of experiences to make sense of *North's* depiction of the Arctic, or the dreams of Morris' cat. In this respect the books differ from conventional nonfiction texts as they have much less of a focus on a single right reading and didactic purpose. Yet it is important

to acknowledge that the artists and authors of these texts deploy skills and techniques which guide the reader through the text in a particular way, to notice certain things as salient instead of others, to move forward swiftly or to pause a while. For the inexperienced reader the reading experience is therefore fully transactional (Rosenblatt, 1978), a two-way process of engagement with the text and an induction into new worlds and literary forms.

These texts have been carefully designed to appeal to their intended audience of children, but the readers of the texts are also the parents or other adults who may purchase the book for a particular child and possibly read it with them (Nodelman, 2008). A cohesive factor that links the books is the vision of a child seen through adult eyes, a child who is curious about nature and one who, to some extent, cares about the future of the planet. Nature is represented as essentially a force for good which humans need to nurture and cherish: a message which unites the books and features in wider literature for children about the natural world (Echterling, 2015). The concept of the natural child who is in tune and free within a natural environment is one which stretches back to Rousseau and beyond in Western culture (Taylor, 2013). The texts therefore resonate with contemporary adult ideals of a natural childhood as morally and physically wholesome, an idealisation of something lost which adults seek to recapture (Nikolajeva, 2002). This is seen clearly in *A First Book of Nature* where Hearld depicts children happy and active in the natural environment, playing with dogs, pond dipping or building dens. Hearld's illustrations, drawing upon influence by the wartime artists Bawden and Ravillious (Martin and Hearld, 2012), have a vintage, nostalgic feel which evoke a sense of looking back with fondness at a past childhood. The texts operate therefore within an adult construction of childhood, which may be at odds with the experience of their child readers.

Roche (2015) argues that it is important to know the books which we share with children. Throughout the study my understanding and appreciation of the texts changed and developed, in part through many re-readings, but also as the children noticed different aspects or commented on things I had not noticed. This reinforced the value for all readers of discussing and sharing texts and the insight which children can bring to discussions of their literature.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents how I designed, planned and implemented the study. I discuss how I brought together the themes outlined in Chapter 2 to create a conceptual framework to underpin my approach and develop a structure for addressing the research questions. I consider some of the demands of creating a methodology which remains robust and authentic, and demonstrate how this has required constant revision and continuous flexibility. Finally I present the approach which I used to analyse the data and give reasons to justify this approach.

4.2 Philosophical approach and conceptual framework

My intention in this study was to explore children's responses to a selection of PNFPBs in some depth. Emphasis is placed on the views of the individual participants and so the focus is exploratory and specific rather than broad and explanatory. To meet this intention I have adopted a qualitative approach to reflect the distinct and unique nature of the participants. I acknowledge that this approach has limitations in drawing any general conclusions and aim instead for a greater understanding of the participants' responses (Creswell, 2013).

All research is influenced by the researcher since it is not possible to separate ourselves from what we know (Denscombe, 2017). My own beliefs and philosophies have therefore inevitably influenced both my priorities for the research and the design of the study. Consequently, as Creswell (2013, p.47) notes, readers need to know how the researcher 'positions' him or herself in a qualitative study. In this study my position is formed by my belief that childhood is not fixed but changing and is a time of value in its own right, rather than a preparation for adulthood (Chapter 1.5). I have taken an 'epistemological stance' where the child is respected as a 'knower' (Roche, 2015, p. 21) and the knowledge which we gain from listening to children even though they may lack experience and struggle to express their ideas, is valued and accepted. The children in this study do not and cannot speak for all children, but their

voices have value and what they have to say about the books produced for them is significant, and of interest, and should play a part in our understanding of texts.

Developing a conceptual framework (Figure 2) has been an evolving and reflexive process throughout the study, and has helped me to clarify the concepts, theories, expectations, beliefs and sources which have informed my research (Maxwell, 2013). The framework presents a way to see how these separate ideas connect and inform each other in this study.

The first layer of the diagram shows that the study sits within an interpretive paradigm, which is concerned not with broad generalisations but with 'particularity and complexity' (Stake, 1995, p.8). Below this the second layer presents a socio-cultural perspective to indicate that both my own and the children's beliefs are not created within a vacuum but that past and present contexts have a role to play in the reading process. Each reading event (Chapter 4.3) captures a particular moment in the reader's experience, with some elements which will be constant and some which will change and develop as new experiences are added. Influences such as family, socio-economic background or ethnicity are often hard to tease out since their relationship is overlapping and the significance of different influences shifts in importance throughout the lifespan. This socially situated view of learning is influenced by the work of Vygotsky (Vygotsky and Cole, 1978) who argued that the child draws upon his or her cultural and social background to make sense of the world. The social, cultural and historical environment of the reader cannot therefore be separated from the reading process.

Whilst the interpretivist paradigm and a socio-cultural perspective are overarching principles, it is the voices of the children which underpin this study. The study is dependent upon the active participation of children in providing their views and insights into the texts. Consequently ethical considerations and questions of participation and power, validity and reliability relating to work with children are of key importance in determining the methodology adopted and the methods used to carry out the research.

I have placed the 5 texts which I identified as examples of hybrid poetic nonfiction at the centre of the framework and present these as constants within the research process. The texts are at the heart of the children's meaning-making. From the perspective of transactional reader-response theory, meaning-making is viewed as an active, two-way interaction between reader and text which is deeply coloured by the reader's individual nature and personality.

Within this study meaning-making is presented as a combination of individual and social interactions. The transaction between text and individual reader is different from the social event which occurs when readers discuss texts, but these events are not isolated: the individual responses of the reader may be a starting point from which understanding of the text is developed through social interaction, and equally the reader may return to reflect on their individual response after social interaction to consolidate and confirm their meaning-making. Through dialogue readers bring together individual and joint experiences to add to and modify their understanding, creating what Maine describes as, 'the possibility of meaning-making that draws on the combination of multiple world views' (2015, p.28). The ways in which the participants interact become therefore important in understanding how new meanings are constructed. Study of these interactions requires a close and in-depth analysis which is in keeping with an interpretivist approach.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework

A diagram to show the concepts and theories used in this study.

Interpretivist paradigm
'the central endeavour…to understand the subjective world of the human experience' (Cohen et al, 2011, p. 17)

Socio-cultural perspective
The social context is at the centre of all learning and development

Meanings formed by individual
as she/he experiences the text
Activation of prior experience:
Lived and 'inter-textual'
Efferent and aesthetic stance
(Iser (1972, 1980), Rosenblatt 1978,1995)

The text
Poetic nonfiction picture books
(Kesler, 2012, 2017) as:
Nonfictional texts
Picture book texts
Poetic texts

Meanings formed jointly
through communication with peers and adults

(Maine 2012, 2013, 2015, Aukerman 2006, 2013)

Listening to the child's voice
Discussing and re-visiting texts (Chambers 1993, 1995, Arizpe and Styles 2002)
Honouring children's meaning-making (Aukerman 2013)
Including children's views about the literature which is written for them (Deszcz-Tryhubczak 2016)

4.3 Reading as act and event

In accordance with Rosenblatt (1978), I use the term 'reading event' to refer to what occurred when the children engaged with the books in this study. Iser (1978) defines reading as an act, which requires the participation of a reader and which happens in a distinct time and place. Any reading of a text is a happening which is bounded by time. The specific methods which I adopted sought to capture the multifaceted and complex nature of the reading events which provided the data for this study.

4.4 The case

The reading events which form the basis of this research are presented as a case study. The 'case' is a group of children and the issue under consideration is how they responded to a selection of PNFPBs. The approach taken is described by Stake as 'instrumental' (1995, p. 3), as it is concerned with an issue and uses a specific example to illustrate this. Case studies are 'bounded' by the context which imposes limits upon what can be explored and considered (Creswell, 2013, p.97). My research was bounded by a particular location, but also a particular set of texts, a group of children from a particular class, a particular time frame and a particular researcher (myself). However the focus was always on the children and their responses rather than the context in which the case study took place.

I adopted a case study approach as it allowed me to focus on the exploratory nature of the investigation. Case studies enable the contradictions and inconsistencies of individuals' views to be presented as a strength rather than a shortcoming. Simons (1996, p.237) expresses the 'paradox' of case study research between the desire to compare and contrast findings and relate these to what is known, and the desire to represent with some degree of authenticity the voices of the individuals, who in this case study, are children. My study focuses on gaining a deeper understanding of the children's responses, which can provide the educator with an insight into the potential as well as the limitations of the texts. I do not make claims for what the response of children generally will be to the same texts, or describe ways in which the texts should be used by educators, as I adopt the position that both aspects will alter according to the context of the reading event and the individuals involved.

4.5 The pilot study

The design of the study has been informed by an earlier pilot undertaken in May and June 2014 as part of the taught phase of the Doctorate in Education. The school chosen for the pilot was a smaller than average junior school in an urban area of a city in the East Midlands. According to the most recent Ofsted report at the time, the school had an above average percentage of children eligible for school meals and above average numbers of pupils with special needs and English as an additional

language. Pupils made good progress in reading, and 'talked freely about the books they enjoyed reading' (Ofsted, 2013, p.5).

In the pilot study pairs of children from a year 3 (ages 7-8) class (n=2) and a year 6 (ages 10-11) class (n=4) were asked to choose one of two PNFPBs (*North* and *A First book of Nature*). They were then observed and audio-recorded reading and discussing the texts. These unstructured conversations were used to inform questions for a semi-structured interview some days later at which the children were asked about their understanding and responses.

The pilot helped to shape the full study in practical ways and a number of logistical changes were made as a result, such as videoing rather than audio recording the participants and in the selection of a single age group. I will discuss these changes in more detail in the relevant sections below. The most significant impact of the pilot for me as the researcher was the transformative and unpredictable experience of working with real children which moved the project from a theoretical idea to a live process of interaction and engagement. In the pilot study four of the six children made particularly lively and often unexpected connections, told stories and expressed opinions and beliefs which demanded to be heard. My image of myself as researcher had to change from one of probing for answers to one of being open and receptive to what the children had to say. This transformation was part of moving from what Kellett describes as research 'on' children which sees them as 'objects' in the process to research 'about' or 'with' children (2010, p.16). It began a shift of emphasis in my conceptual thinking rather than a change in my methodology.

4.6 The sample

Decisions about where the main study should take place were based upon requirements dictated by the nature of the study itself and practical considerations to do with access to children, which were particularly influenced by my role as an 'outsider researcher' as I was not familiar with the setting before I started my research (Hellawell, 2006, p.485).

This study took place in a primary school in a city in the East Midlands in England. The school chosen had above average percentages of children receiving free school meals and identified as having special educational needs. At the time of the study the school was described in its most recent Ofsted report (2012) as a 'bigger than average' primary with a well below average number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The report noted the work undertaken to improve levels of reading in Key Stage 1 and the 'emphasis on developing pupils' reading skills in all age groups' (Ofsted, 2012, p.4).

Although, as Stake notes (1995), the uniqueness of each case makes it difficult to claim that it is representative, or typical of others, in choosing the school for the study I looked for one which as far as possible did not appear to have particular or distinct characteristics which may have exerted a particular influence on the findings. Initially I had some difficulty finding a school willing to take part in the study, as unlike many EdD students I was not already a member of a school community in which my research could take place. The lack of interest may have reflected the perceived low priority of nonfiction amidst the many demands upon teachers' time. From the perspective of the school staff, I was unfamiliar and yet to be trusted, asking to research in a primary school where I knew none of the staff or the children and so had no knowledge of the shared histories, experiences and personalities of the school community. The Deputy Head teacher of the study school agreed to my undertaking research partly because they had recently refurbished their library and so were keen to develop its use. However, once the study had commenced he did not engage any further with the project.

The Deputy Head teacher approached the class teachers to find someone who was interested in working with me and I was contacted by a Year 5 teacher. We had an initial meeting to discuss the project and make practical arrangements such as the distribution of consent forms and selection of pupils.

4.7 Sampling strategy

In the pilot study (4.5) I had worked with pairs of children in Year 3 (7-8 years) and Year 6 (10-11 years) classes. Analysis of the data collected revealed significant differences in responses between the pairs, for example a much more physical engagement with the text and more social negotiation in the conversations of the younger children, which invited comparisons between the two age-sets. As I was less interested in how children of different ages responded to the same text than in what each child had to say, to eliminate this variable I chose to focus on children in one year group only. I asked the Deputy Head teacher to choose a single class from Years 4, 5 or 6 based upon the interest of the class teacher in the project, which I felt to be important to the study's success. Inevitably eliminating the youngest children from the study did diminish it in some respects. Maine (2015) describes the creative and imaginative input of children in a Year 1 (ages 5-6) class in response to the texts which she showed them, which, she argued, was less evident in the conversations with children in Year 6 (ages 10-11). Arizpe and Styles (2016) similarly comment on the surprising and often insightful comments of children as young as 4 in their 2002 study. However in this instance the choice of a single year group helped to support the robustness of the study.

Children were chosen to take part in the study through a 'random purposeful strategy' (Creswell, 2013, p.158) where a range of participants is selected within defined criteria. These criteria aim to reduce inconsistency and assist in the research process rather than create a sample which is representative of the wider population (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011). The sampling criteria were discussed with the class teacher who then chose the children at his discretion, taking in to account factors which may have affected the children's ability to take part in the research such as reading ability, which I discuss below.

As the children would be working in pairs, an important criterion was that they were happy to work together, as their relationships would impact on the dynamics of their conversations (Maine, 2012). Choice of friends and friendship groups is a significant factor in putting children at ease in research (Farrell, 2005) and I asked the class

teacher to allow the children as far as possible to choose their partners. An outcome of this decision is that the children tended to select partners of their own gender. In the final sample there was a pair of girls, two pairs of boys and one boy/girl partnership: this gave a sufficient mix to ensure that the study did not have a specific gender bias.

Another sampling criterion was that the children were of average reading ability. Although I wanted the study to be as inclusive as possible and did not seek to exclude children with learning needs, it was desirable for them to be able to read with some degree of capability in order to engage with the texts independently, with the aim of minimising my involvement in the conversations. All the children in the final sample could read competently with some variation in ability and confidence.

A key ethical criterion in sampling was that the children themselves were interested in taking part in the research. Edmond (2005) notes that children's motivations for being involved in research are rarely considered and assessing levels of engagement and interest are important and on-going issues for ensuring informed consent (Gallagher, Haywood, Jones and Milne, 2010; Kellett, 2010). The level of consent and engagement was therefore a primary consideration when conducting the study. Participants were sought initially through the class teacher informing the children of the project in quite general terms, then asking for volunteers and then through a process of seeking informed consent from the parents and children (4.9.1). The children's decisions about whether to take part would have been influenced by interest in the topic but also by reading ability as noted above. It is unlikely that a child with little interest in books would have wanted to take part, although some of the pairs expressed pleasure in being excused from normal lessons for a short time.

4.8 Sample size

After much consideration I decided to focus on one school for the study. I was concerned that inclusion of more than one school would result in comparisons being made between them, which would take the study away from the more specific narrow focus on the children's responses to the texts. Therefore I decided to limit myself to 8 children in the single school, adopting what Stake describes as, 'an

emphasis on uniqueness…that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself' (1995, p.8).

The number of children in the sample was decided by several factors, most importantly that of individual children's informed consent. All but two of the children who expressed an interest and took the letters home returned the slips granting parental permission in time. All 8 were able to take part in all the data collection events.

4.9.1 Research ethics

Both the pilot and the full study were conducted in accordance with Bishop Grosseteste University's Research Ethics Policy (2013) and with reference to the BERA ethical guidelines for Educational Research (2011). Before any research could begin, approval for the study was applied for, and obtained, from The University's Research Ethics Standing Group. Permission was then sought formally from the school, parental consent forms were sent out to the families of those children identified as participants in the study and the children were also approached for their consent to take part. Obtaining consent from the children themselves, rather than just from their guardians, was essential. Consent needs to be informed, that is the children need to know and understand what is expected of them and what the purpose of the research is (Kellett, 2010). How far the consent of child participants in research is truly informed and voluntary has been a subject of much discussion (Alderson, 2005; Hill, Davis, Prout and Tidsall, 2004; Kellett, 2010; Dockett and Perry, 2007) and I had noted in the pilot study that, despite explaining the aims of the research carefully to the children at our first meeting, it was unclear from their response if they had really understood what was happening.

Kellet (2010, p.24) notes that obtaining genuine consent from children presents challenges for researchers because of the 'minority status' of the participants. The first of these challenges concerns the relationship between the researcher and child. Any research involves an unequal relationship between researcher and participant as the researcher is often the one asking the questions and determining what is of importance or value. However with child participants, the adult researcher holds a

much more powerful position within our society (Kellett, 2010). In my position as researcher with children, I needed to be aware that they might feel obliged to agree to take part in my project in order to please me or appear polite, even if they felt that the research was of little significance or interest to them.

Another potential difficulty is that I might try to give the children too much information at the beginning of a project, which they are unable to remember or absorb. Dockett and Perry (2007) suggest that children should have sufficient time to think over their consent and ask any questions which arise. Sufficient information needed to be given for the children to understand the aims of the research; how long it would take; who would know the results, what feedback there would be if any and what confidentiality would be offered (Hill *et al.,* 2004). In this study those who expressed an interest were asked first and their consent requested immediately after I had received the written consent forms from their parents and guardians. In addition to a verbal discussion, I decided to give the children their own consent forms to sign at the beginning of the research. Whilst verbal consent is now sought in most ethical research with children, consent forms for children are not often used (Danby and Farrell, 2005). Danby and Farrell's research suggested that parents did not always discuss the nature of the research task with children. Having their own form to sign can therefore be useful for informing children about a project, but it also gives them a sense of importance and status and emphases the significance of their role as participants in the research process (Danby and Farrell, 2005). The forms were intended to demonstrate to the children that their consent was respected and not assumed. Signing forms is a new and unusual activity for most children of this age and the children in this study appeared surprised and pleased to be asked to sign the forms although none of them asked to withdraw from the project or asked any further questions about the research. This was understandable as, even though they were being asked to engage in a familiar and relatively unthreatening activity (talking about books), it was very difficult for them to envisage what this would be like in practice with me, someone they hardly knew; if they would like the books and, on a more abstract level, how what they might have to say could be interpreted and be of interest to other people.

Ethically it was important to respect the children's right to change their minds about participating as the study progressed. Consent could not be a single or final commitment and Dockett and Perry (2007) suggest that researchers need instead to view consent as provisional and to provide on-going opportunities for the child participants to reconsider their consent as they become more familiar with the study.

Therefore I made verbal checks to monitor if the children were willing to continue their participation and that they understood the nature of the activities. Questions such as 'are you still happy to talk about this?' and 'do you have anything you want to say?' were asked, especially at the beginning of the sessions, but I also had to look for hidden clues in the children's body language and general demeanour to bring the conversations and interviews to a close when the children appeared to be tired or disengaged.

4.9.2 Researcher/child relationships

Kellett (2010, p.86) suggests that trust and openness between researcher and child will develop in a relationship of 'mutual respect' where children are recognised as knowledgeable about their own lives. Although we all share the common experience of childhood, Dockett and Perry (2007) point out that the researcher is no longer a child and can no longer see from the child's perspective, an observation which links with Rose's (1993) and Nodelman's (2008) observations on children's literature (Chapter 1.6). Researchers need to think about how to communicate to children in a way that they can understand and to let them know that their opinions will be heard and valued and that they will not be intimidated or made to feel demeaned or uncomfortable. In a school location, where children already have an expected set of behaviours and relationships, there is even more of a challenge to creating this open and trusting connection. Punch (2002) notes that even though school is a space for children, it is a space managed and organised by adults. If the children view the researcher as having the same role as a teacher they are less likely to disagree or to take initiative in their responses and they may lack confidence in talking to adults on an equal basis (Levy, 2011).

In the study it was very difficult to break away from this established relationship. The children were used to adults coming in to the school to talk to them for a variety of purposes and interventions, and their interactions with me seemed to fall in to this pattern. Just as adults make assumptions about what children will understand or be able to cope with, so too children make assumptions about the behaviours expected of them or how much their views will be listened to.

At the class teacher's request, I held the initial meetings with the children and subsequent conversations and interviews outside the classroom, in a corridor and a room set aside for small group teaching. These locations had advantages and disadvantages. They were sufficiently quiet to enable me to hear and record the children without interruptions and distractions. However they marked the activities as distinct from normal classroom lessons and this may have influenced the children's sense of ease. In Maine's (2015) study of children's dialogue around texts the children's conversations took place in a corner of the classroom. She was able to create a sense of physical distance from the children to reduce observer influence by moving away from the discussion. During the conversations I tried to reduce my influence by appearing busy with paperwork in a corner of the room and popping out from time to time to fetch things. The children were undoubtedly aware of my presence, but although some pairs of children took longer than others to overcome their awkwardness, all of them seemed eventually to talk freely.

Mukherji and Albon (2010) recommend that to create a really open relationship in research with children, the researcher/teacher relationship should be developed over a period of time, and a limitation of this study is that I was not able to establish long-term relationships with the children in the school. Once I had identified the participants I set up a series of meetings with them in the weeks leading up to data collection. These meetings lasted about 20 minutes per child and were informal and unstructured. The children brought a book along and after they had read to me we engaged in short conversations, which were initially about the book but often led on to other topics. The meetings were not sufficiently frequent or long to establish a sense of 'habituation' where the children would be accustomed to my presence (Basit, 2010, p.131). Although I made some field notes about the children after each

meeting, their primary purpose was to introduce myself so that the children might feel more comfortable meeting with me later on. My background as a primary teacher gave me something of an insider perspective (Hellawell, 2006) on school practices. In these conversations I became very aware of my former role and the need to maintain a relaxed, balanced exchange and a tone which was not teacherly. The challenges which this presented highlighted the ease with which we drop into familiar patterns of behaviour and it was a feature of my engagement with the participants which I was aware of a number of times when reviewing the data. In classroom contexts discussion often falls into an inquiry, response, feedback pattern (IRF): the teacher asks a question, the child responds with an answer and then the teacher feeds back. The sequence is ingrained and it is hard to change it (Westcott and Littleton, 2005).

4.10 Ethical validation

If a study's findings are to be taken seriously, it must reflect integrity within its design and methods through expressing truthful answers to the questions which have been asked. Both Yin (2011) and Maxwell (2013) acknowledge that qualitative research, which seeks to understand different viewpoints, experiences and opinions, can present particular challenges to validity and reliability. They contend that it is especially important to counter 'threats' to the validity of the study through methods such as comparison, replication, triangulation, and long-term involvement in the field (Yin, 2011, p.79; Maxwell, 2013, p.244).

Yet traditional means of validation seem out of place in a study which seeks to consider individual responses in depth. Instead in this study validity is monitored and assessed through what Angen describes as 'ethical validation' (2000, p.388). Angen argues that within interpretive research the emphasis should be placed upon ensuring responsible ways in which the research has been carried out, which include respect for the diversity of the participants' contributions and being careful to ensure that the assumptions and purposes underpinning the research project are questioned in a ' rigorous and consistent' way (2000, p.387). She argues for the importance of clearly demonstrating the purpose of the research and ensuring that it is useful and of practical application. This is seen as a duty of responsible researchers and helps to

keep the research grounded; moreover it is in keeping with the remit of a doctorate of education with its professional focus on informing practice.

Throughout the process of this study I sought to find means of acknowledging bias and presenting the findings in ways which will allow the children's voices to be heard and the reader to have the chance to see other possible interpretations. As a single researcher in the project I adopted a reflexive approach and sought to reveal my subjectivity with the help of the input of peers and fellow researchers as well as my supervisors, who have helped me to question my interpretations and suggest other possible alternatives (Le Gallais, 2008). I have been mindful of the need to show the choices and decisions made along the way and as far as possible justify and clarify these. Whilst the purpose of the research has been at the heart of these choices and decisions, the practical application which Angen (2000) refers to has emerged as a process of analysis and reflection. I hope that the findings are presented with sufficient clarity for readers to see further possible applications in their own practice.

4.11 Trusting children's voices

The reliability or truthfulness of children's contributions to research has been discussed widely, with some debate about whether children are likely to lie or change their minds, be persuaded by others or repeat parents' views (Punch, 2002; Dockett and Perry, 2007; Tangen, 2008). Punch (2002) questions the assumption that research with children is in fact so different from research with adults and argues that children's accounts 'have their own validity in terms of being their own perspectives and the way the world seems to them' (2002, p.325). Providing that every effort is made to ensure that the children are informed, involved and given time and consideration in the way the research is conducted, there should be no need to doubt the truth of what they have to say.

4.12 Children as participants

Even when consent is obtained from the children who take part in a research project, they can still remain subjects rather than participants in a study (Hart, 1992; Kellett, 2010). Hart (1992) suggested that children are capable of initiating and making decisions about research to a much greater degree of involvement than they are

usually afforded. His 'Ladder of Young People's Participation' is a model for assessing the level of children's participation in a research project. Level 8 is the highest level, where children and adults share all aspects of decision-making, and level 1 is the lowest level where children are manipulated and not consulted about the research about them, akin to Kellett's notion of research 'on' children (2010, p. 84). This study did not aim to involve children at Hart's highest level, where children initiate the project, as the aims and focus were determined at the beginning. The children in this study were 'consulted and informed' (Hart's level 5) and it was hoped that the atmosphere created would allow those participants who were keen to participate more fully the opportunity to contribute ideas about how to develop, shape and progress the research.

If children are to participate as fully as possible in research it is important to use methods which are appropriate to their ages, abilities and interests and which engage them in 'relevant, meaningful and interesting ways ' (Dockett and Perry, 2007, p.56). A possible limitation of the conversation/interview methods is that they reflect adult research practices which reinforce the power imbalance between child and researcher (Manhon, Glendenning, Clarke and Craig, 1996; Westcott and Littleton, 2005). Much research with young children in recent years has tended to focus on innovative and more child-friendly methods such as games, drawing or writing in response to the texts (Punch, 2002; Levy 2011). These approaches offer different opportunities for response and participation, and Arizpe and Styles (2016) suggest that they may be especially beneficial for children who are less articulate, have short attention spans or prefer to express themselves differently. Yet child-friendly approaches can be seen to imply that research with children needs to be fun and entertaining, or that children are not capable communicators (Punch, 2002). Most of the children in the pilot study had demonstrated verbal competence when discussing the books and this had increased my respect for their interpretations and observations on the texts. It also made me aware of the responsibility I had to represent their views as clearly and honestly as I could. I decided therefore to focus on the interactions and dialogic exchanges between child and text, child and child and

the children, myself and text as I felt that what the children had to say would be more than sufficient for an in-depth and thought provoking analysis.

Historically much discussion about children's involvement in research has focused on preserving their right to confidentiality and avoiding exploitation (Punch, 2002), a focus which has been challenged insofar as it does not necessarily emphasise the need for children's voices to be heard and their views to be represented (Clark, McQuail and Moss, 2003). Hearing and representing children's voices is not a simple matter of transcribing or making notes. Tangen (2008, p.159) argues that listening to what children say is an active process which involves 'hearing and/or reading, interpreting and constructing meanings' especially when children are not yet able or may have difficulty in expressing themselves verbally. Maintaining a conscious and attentive awareness of the need to 'hone' my listening skills and represent children's views as accurately as possible has underpinned this study and will be discussed more fully when considering the analytical approach.

4.13 Data collection schedule

Table 2 presents the order and type of data collected in the school and the timetable of activities.

Table 2: Data collection schedule

Week	Action	Notes
Week one	Meeting with class teacher	Consent forms given out
Week two		
Week three		Consent forms returned
Week four	Meeting with pupils x2	Field notes
Week five	Meeting with pupils x2	Field notes
Week six	Meeting with pupils x2	Field notes
Week seven	Meeting with pupils x2	Field notes
Week eight	Conversations x4	Video recording
Week nine	Interviews x4	Video recording
Week 10		
Week 11	Follow up letter sent	

4.14 The conversations

It was a late spring morning and the sunshine was pouring in to the room on the ground floor of the school, through a single window which looked out on to the empty playground. 5 books were spread on a large table with chairs around it. Two children peered around the door and entered the room hesitantly. I welcomed them and they settled themselves on chairs at the table. A couple of displays were prominent on the walls, on one side of the room about the PTA and one on the opposite wall about the last Ofsted inspection. There was a flip chart and a cupboard and a few spare chairs, but little else in the room. The children looked with some interest at the small video camera which was placed on the table and together we set it up so that they were both visible on the screen. Then we began. (Extract from Field Notes)

The data collection schedule (Table 2) shows that the research plan was linear in design, with a sequence of two reading 'events' involving each of 4 pairs of children. For the first event, which I refer to as the 'conversations', the children were given the task of choosing one of 5 PNFPBs. I explained that they would discuss the book with me the following week. Setting a task like this situated the discussion firmly within an educational context: the readings were not random but focused on an end product, namely the choice of a book. The task was intended to give a purpose and boundary to their activity (Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur and Prendergast, 1997), whilst allowing for some choice, but there were no further instructions and the length and nature of the discussion was left open to the children. My intention was to allow as much time as I could for the children to engage with the texts without distractions and without an imposed agenda. Such encounters are less common with nonfiction, where books tend to be read in topic collections and for a specific purpose and in extracts rather than their entirety.

The conversations of all four pairs of children were recorded on the same day and in the same location. Based on the experience of the pilot study I made the decision, with the children and their parents' consent, to video record both the conversations and the interviews. I found it easier to transcribe video than audio recordings and felt that my field notes did not fully capture the range of response in terms of body language, facial expression and physical engagement with the texts. Moreover it was not always possible to record everything or determine what might be significant later (Basit, 2010). I was aware that video recording an event can influence the participants. Basit (2010) suggests that most children will quickly ignore the camera, but its presence did seem to affect some of the children more than others. Another significant factor in video recording is that it cannot capture everything which might happen off camera, most notably my own movements and actions which had a possible impact on the children's behaviours. I placed the camera in both interviews and conversations on the table, to record them in their entirety from a fixed position (initial preambles as the children settled themselves were not recorded). This meant that the recordings offered some objectivity which would have been lost if I had been hand-holding the camera or choosing excerpts to record.

The children's conversations were effectively unstructured observations but with some qualification: the setting was not entirely naturalistic, as the task took place in a particular space outside the classroom, although the activity of sharing books was one which was within their everyday experience. Although I sought ways to minimise my presence (Chapter 4.9.2), my role at the beginning and end and visibly being there throughout meant that I was a participant in the event. Creswell (2013) notes that the observer/researcher is to some extent present in any observation, no matter how far he or she withdraws from the action taking place. My being there undoubtedly had some observer effect (Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Futing Liao, 2004) possibly on the behaviour of the children and the length of time with which they engaged in the activity. The children may have felt inhibited to talk or may have sought to have the kind of conversation which they felt was expected of them.

Observing children's conversations, rather than interviewing them directly, has certain advantages and constraints. Maine (2012) notes that listening in to children's conversations as they work together to build an understanding of the text provides one form of insight into their hidden meaning-making processes. An advantage of this approach is that it is not guided by the researcher and is therefore open to the direction taken by the children. A possible limitation may be that the children will become distracted, or take the conversation in ways which were not relevant to the study. The event could not be managed, and opening myself to the possibility of things going wrong or not according to a plan was a small way in which the children in this study were given some power and agency to discuss the texts in any way they wanted.

Stake recommends that any account of a case study should offer the reader 'a vicarious experience...a sense of 'being there' (1995, p.63). In this instrumental case study, the physical environment in which the research took place is not of primary concern, but that is not to say that it was of no importance and not worthy of note. I have already discussed the possible impact of locating the conversations and interviews outside the classroom, but the timing before lunch, the sunny day and the displays on the walls, for example, may have all played some part in the final event,

to a greater or lesser degree for each participant. The context of the data collection was, as Stake (1995) observes, at the same time unique and ordinary.

4.15 The interviews

The children's conversations about the texts were followed a week later by an interview between each pair of children and myself. The interviews were undertaken after I had (briefly) reviewed the data from the first reading event. My intention was to explore the texts further with the children, and to ask them specifically about any ambiguities or queries arising from the observed conversations; to question them about any aspects which they did not cover in the conversations and to allow them time to raise any issues about the texts as well. I was also interested to see if the children's perceptions, impressions or understandings of the text had changed since the conversations.

The interviews were semi-structured (Denscombe, 2017) allowing me to pursue some pre-set questions (Appendix 5) but allowing enough flexibility to follow an unanticipated line of conversation if it arose. The children had known me for several weeks by the time the interviews took place, so I hoped that they would feel relaxed and comfortable enough to express their views openly. It was important that the interviews were not viewed as a test of memory about the books and so at the beginning of each the children had the chance to look again at their chosen text and remind themselves of it. Arizpe's and Styles' 2002 study had found that repeated readings of a picture book can be an important means by which children construct meaning. Their study provided the children with several opportunities to encounter and respond to a specific text including a range of questions which required them to 'probe the visual text analytically' (2002, p.10). This repeated questioning yielded responses which they claimed showed deep engagement with the texts: rather than making the children bored, reading the text several times aided the children's understanding of and engagement with it. Christensen (2004) also recommends that researchers avoid a single interview which gives child participants very little chance to reflect on the research subject. Re-exposure to the books reinforces the temporal nature of the reading event since it is always a one-off occurrence, and as Maine

(2012) noted in her study the talk may have been very different if captured on a different day. The interviews therefore had to encompass and negotiate the changing and developing nature of the children's encounters with these particular texts. Allowing children to have different responses, develop their ideas and add to what they said before was another way to afford them more agency within the process.

The timing of the interviews a week after the conversations was influenced by the pilot study. Arizpe and Styles (2002) found that even after several months the children still remembered and were willing to discuss the texts, and were able to contribute some new, more refined ideas. However in the pilot, due to a number of events in the school at the time, the follow-up interviews did not take place for almost a month and I found that the time lapse affected the younger children in particular who seemed to find it difficult to re-engage with the book again. I was therefore keen that the conversations and interviews were scheduled to be close together.

Although I was aiming for an informal atmosphere in the interviews, it was essential that the questions were carefully planned to ensure that the research was defined and the participants' time was not wasted (Yin, 2011). It is just as important to respect children's time as it is adults'. In a semi-structured interview this required a balance between keeping the discussion on track and allowing the children to digress and comment. Arizpe and Styles (2016) suggest that, for children in the age group of my study, the interviews should not be longer than an hour and that there should be no more than twenty questions. Bromley added that questions must be carefully planned 'which tantalise children and … provoke thought' (2016, p.72) and framed sensitively to open up and scaffold the conversation. With this in mind I created a list of 12 standard questions (Appendix 5) which were asked to all pairs of children, and some extra questions which were asked to individuals or specific pairs to follow up the observations. They were mostly open-ended questions although two did ask for any facts or information which they had gained from the book. They started with a relatively simple question and moved on to more demanding ones. The questions aimed to address the complex nature of the hybrid texts themselves, incorporating response to the poetic language, visual appeal, emotive subject-matter and informational content. Through questioning I sought to investigate which of these

factors would emerge as more significant and explore this as a further factor in understanding the children's readings of the texts.

Concerns about the power relationship between researcher and child which I have discussed above, came to the fore again in the interviews. Bromley (2016) states that interviews between researcher and child need to be collaborative rather than replicating the dynamics of teacher and pupil. The pilot study, alongside other research (e.g. Eder and Finkerson, 2003; Westcott and Littleton, 2005; Scott, 2008) had shown that skilful questioning by the interviewer is needed to encourage the children to participate fully. Listening to the recordings from the pilot revealed a number of ways in which I could improve and develop my technique and respond more sensitively. In my questioning and responses to the children I wanted as far as possible to adopt Aukerman's pedagogy of 'dialogic comprehension-as-sensemaking' (2013, A6) through at times holding back and waiting, rather than making suggestions or encouraging remarks. Yet the researcher is not an impartial contributor to the conversation, and needs to be willing to contribute something of themselves in order to build rapport with the children (Fontana and Frey, 2000). I gave this some consideration before the interviews and took this to mean openness in expressing my enjoyment of the books; interest in particular things the children had to say and some careful and limited speculation about meanings and ideas.

I also considered how I would respond to any questions about the texts which the children raised (Yin, 2012). This can be a difficult issue for interviews in a school context where established patterns of behaviour dictate ways in which children both answer and ask questions (Westcott and Littleton, 2005). My aim was to seek as far as possible an approach to answering questions where the children are encouraged to explore their own interpretations or work together at arriving at an answer. In practice the context of the setting, my inexperience as an interviewer and my teaching background exerted a powerful influence to return to the IRF model (Chapter 4.9.2), especially when the children seemed reluctant to communicate.

4.16.1 Data analysis: transcription

Transcription of the video recordings was an important phase of the data analysis and I transcribed all of the reading events myself. Close viewing and re-viewing of the recordings enabled me to become familiar with them and to develop a consistent approach in the written transcripts which would fulfil my needs. Transcribing the data creates a physical text which can be handled and manipulated: the data is easier to get to know, to examine closely and to break down into smaller, manageable parts. Yet transcription is also a form of interpretation as transcribing speech to written language is a change from verbal to written communication.

The children's dialogue was presented in 'speech turns' or 'moves' (Maine 2015, p. 33). A speech turn is everything said by one speaker before the next speaker begins. I tried as far as possible to adopt a 'verbatim' (Gibbs, 2008, p.14) approach to transcription, where all of the speech was recorded, including stutters, false starts and redundant words, working on the principle that it was not possible to know what might become significant later on. I kept the use of symbols and additional context notes on the script to a minimum, for ease of reading and so that they did not interfere with the flow of the children's speech.

Deciding on the level of detail to include was difficult because some descriptive details such as the manner in which the children spoke (e.g. impatiently, shyly, cautiously) involved adding another layer of interpretation to the transcript, yet by omitting some of these descriptive terms the transcript could fail to capture the depth and nuance of the moment. Gesture and body language were noted briefly, but not described in detail. Nevertheless it was important to place them in the transcript since they played a part in both expressing ideas and in social communication, and these were later commented on in the analysis where they seemed significant.

Silverman (1993) argues that detailed transcription is needed to avoid a tendency to simplify data by 'tidying up' 'messy' conversation (p.117). Yet, as demonstrated above, inevitably some level of detail is lost or changed (Kvale and Brinkman, 2008). Through the use of one transcriber (myself) I sought to be consistent in the ways in which the data was presented and maintain a link between the real event and the

recording of it. The accuracy of any transcription as a true record of what occurred is of course open to challenge as there are many possible ways to read an event and inevitably the researcher's perspective will exert some influence on what is recorded. It was my intention that the codes arose as far as possible from what each of the children said, but inevitably they were influenced by my impressions of the children, my knowledge of the books themselves and my awareness of the academic literature. Therefore the transcriptions present inevitably my view of the conversations and interviews.

Transcripts of the conversations and interviews were considered alongside field notes (Gibbs, 2008; Yin, 2011) which were written throughout the period of data collection either whilst on site in the school or shortly afterwards. They were often messy, fragmentary jottings written in a hurry which at times needed careful reading and re-reading and some interpretation to understand. They helped to provide further detail and act as an aide-memoir after the events.

4.16.2 Data analysis: analytical approach

As both Arizpe's and Styles' (2002) and Maine's (2015) studies had been influential in the conception and design of my study, I looked initially at their analytical approaches when considering my own. Both Maine and Arizpe and Styles were concerned in different ways with children's engagement with texts. Though very different in intent and design both studies employed what appeared to be inductive and deductive approaches to data analysis, allowing codes and themes to emerge but also looking at the data from theoretical and conceptual perspectives, informed by relevant literature. In many ways this combining of approaches seemed both helpful and necessary to my study. It was important to present the children's words and actions in a way which was sufficiently open to allow their voices to be heard clearly and for unexpected responses to be noted and acknowledged. Yet as someone handling and interpreting the data, it was not possible for me to ignore my previous knowledge and experience or to fail to notice certain features which I recalled from my reading of other studies. An inductive approach which allows themes to emerge from the

data, coupled with a deductive approach which applies theory to the data, allowed for both perspectives.

Stake's statement, 'there is no particular moment when analysis begins' (1995, p. 71) is a useful reminder that, whilst it is essential to have a plan or framework to structure how data is analysed, analysis also operates on a subjective, instinctive level. In deciding how to analyse the data I needed to be mindful of ways to acknowledge this inherent bias whilst providing a sufficiently objective view to be of use to teachers. One of the most helpful ways to do this was through the process of memos which I wrote as I was analysing the data, and which helped to capture the fleeting and often emergent ideas which came to mind (Yin, 2011; Silverman, 2011). As well as being useful in assessing if an idea had already been considered and discarded, they also provided insight into my initial assumptions and reactions which I was able to investigate and question, such as, for example, presuming that one of the children was more dominant in a conversation than the other (Chapter 6.6).

The Analytical Strategy diagram (Figure 3) outlines the stages in the process. After data collection, transcription and collation of written materials (stages 1-3) a 'general inductive approach' (Thomas, 2006) was applied to each transcript. The conversations and interviews with each pair of children were treated as a separate 'cameos' and the transcriptions coded separately. I began with one pair, Amy and Sharon (pseudonyms), to build up an initial set of codes and then worked through the other pairs. The process necessitated much checking back and forth to ensure that codes were consistently applied and where new codes were assigned I needed to confirm that these had not been previously missed in the cameos which I had already coded. This meant engaging with the detail of the data 'word by word, line by line, section by section' (Silverman, 2011, p.280). It is a laborious process, but one of the main advantages of this approach is the close relationship that can be established with the data and for this reason I decided to code myself rather than using software such as Nvivo.

Whilst codes help to organise the data they are labels imposed by the researcher upon children's speech. I was concerned that there was a danger of the children's

voices becoming lost in the academic language of research. This links back to Punch's observation (2002), discussed earlier, that children's language is not lesser than the language of adults, but may just be different. Initially I intended to apply 'in vivo' codes (Saldaña, 2009) that is, codes which used the children's actual words or short phrases as a way to preserve what they actually said in the transcript.

However, in practice *in vivo* codes were too broad and ambiguous and did not convey the speaker's meaning with the clarity which I needed for the codes to be reliable and consistent. I agreed with Silverman's (2011) view that whilst *in vivo* approaches to coding are well intentioned, they can cause confusion. Therefore I used descriptive codes (Saldaña, 2009) as I felt that these better conveyed the essence of the child's utterance.

Thomas' analytical strategy (2006) suited this part of the study as it is set out in 5 distinct stages leading to the creation of main categories. It is a structured approach to analysis which enables the researcher to work through the data in a methodical way, but also to respond to the unplanned ideas which emerge during the research process. In this study it was essential that these unforeseen aspects were acknowledged and respected as they arose directly from the children's responses to the texts. As the sole researcher conducting the study and carrying out the analysis I was concerned that I might not always recognise what I was not expecting or what was outside my understanding. In order to avoid missing something out which was significant, alongside my work at stage 4, I sought assistance from another colleague who was familiar with research involving children. She coded the transcript of Amy's and Sharon's conversation and interview and we compared our results; although there were some differences in our wording there were sufficient similarities to reassure me that we had identified common aspects as significant.

Figure 3: Analytical strategy

A diagram to show the stages and processes of the data analysis.

Analytical Strategy

Stage 1	Field notes, reflections and memos made during the data collection stage.			
Stage 2	Transcription of four pairs: conversations and interviews 1. Amy and Sharon	2. Barry and Mia	3. Jim and Billy	4. Martin and Cory
Stage 3	'Tidying' transcripts: making the application of transcription codes and formats consistent			

Stage 4: Inductive coding	Coding: Initial codes from pair one are used for subsequent pairs. New codes identified in each pair are then applied to all earlier pairs	1. Amy and Sharon: creation of codes	Colleague coded pair 1 transcript and checked against my codes
		2. Barry and Mia: creation of codes	3. Jim and Billy: creation of codes	4. Martin and Cory: creation of codes

Stage 5:	Categorical aggregation: looking for patterns, consistencies	Generation of categories	Direct Interpretation: looking for instances, examples

Stage 6: Deductive coding: application of frames	Frame 1: Reader-Response Frame				Frame 2: Reading Together Frame			
	Pair 1	Pair 2	Pair 3	Pair 4	Pair 1	Pair 2	Pair 3	Pair 4

Stage 7: Direct Interpretation	Identification of illustrative events	Identification of illustrative events

Stage 8: Interpreting	Data from stages 5 and 7 brought together, to create a rich descriptive account of the findings, drawing upon patterns and correspondences and using illustrative examples, or significant moments.

Stage 9: Authenticating the children's voices	Return to videos of each pair to check how far findings from above are representative of the indivduals and their contribution: do the findings represent the children as individuals? How audible are their voices in the final data?

Thomas emphasises that although the researcher/analyst must be alert to the unexpected and unplanned, it is important to use the research questions to guide the 'domains and topics to be investigated' (2006, p.239). In a study which involved children's reactions and interactions, it was easy to be distracted into considering aspects which arose from the data and were interesting but not relevant to the main study, such as the relationships between the children.

This stage of the analysis was one of breaking the data down into parts for closer examination (Maxwell, 2013). I was concerned that in the process of coding the data from the children's conversations would become separated from the individuals in the study. For this reason I sought to keep the analysis linked to the pairs and to look at interpretation in the context of the pairs as much as possible, returning to the videos at the end of the process (stage 9) to look for evidence of the children's voices in the final discussion of the findings, and how these were presented.

4.16.3 Data analysis: deductive frames

The inductive stage of the analysis left me with a number of questions which suggested that there was more to explore within the videos and transcripts. Application of a deductive method of analysis which explores the data for theory, prior assumption or hypothesis (Thomas, 2006) allowed me to look for certain features within the reading events, such as examples of efferent reading or of strategies for meaning-making, or, indeed, of their absence.

Maine (2015) describes a process of applying 5 different levels of analysis to the vignettes of children's dialogue in her study in order to build a full picture of the data. Each level offers a different focus for exploring and probing certain features of the dialogue such as critical and creative thinking, self-monitoring or metacognition and social interactions between peers. This depth of analysis is appropriate for reading events such as those within this study, which are highly complex and multi-faceted, where meanings are dependent upon context and can change and develop throughout the course of the conversation.

With this approach in mind I developed two frames derived from the conceptual framework for stage 6 of the analysis (Appendix 6). These enabled me to view the data from particular perspectives to look for certain features and determine how far these were evident. The frames drew upon reader-response theory and strategies for meaning-making, adapted from Maine's analytical approach.

The first frame ('Reader-response frame') identifies the four main themes from transactional reader-response theory which are of particular relevance to PNFPBs: efferent and aesthetic reading (Rosenblatt, 1978), filling the gap and entanglement (Iser, 1972, 1978) (Appendix 6a). The second frame ('Reading together frame') draws on the 'transactional strategies for making meaning' (2015, p. 78) identified in Maine's third level of analysis which focus specifically on the interaction between the readers and the text to make meaning. In Maine's study (2015) this layer of analysis was one of many, but it is the layer which was most relevant to the context of my study. The 4 themes in this frame are: determining importance and making connections to existing knowledge; asking questions, hypothesising and making predictions; creating narratives and evoking images to extend and explain the story world; empathising with characters and entering the story world to understand it more (Appendix 6b). These strategies include creative and critical ways of making sense of the text as well as more familiar comprehension strategies such as asking questions and hypothesising.

Each frame was applied to the each of the conversation and interview pairs separately. Here the process was not to group codes to form categories but rather to identify particular 'significant moments' or examples which would illustrate the aspect identified in the frame. Stake (1995) names this approach as direct interpretation, where incidents are noted which are seen as significant for what they represent rather than how often they occur. The frames also allow for gaps to be identified where what we might expect to see is absent or infrequent. This was important as it allowed me to be more critical of my use of theory by questioning how applicable the approach was to PNFPBs. In the case of reader-response theory for example, as I discussed in Chapter 2, there was some doubt about how relevant a theoretical approach grounded in literary theory was for discussion of nonfiction

texts. Similarly, I needed to consider if Maine's approach, which had been used for visual and/or fictional texts, was appropriate to the PNFPBs in my study.

4.17 Conclusion and reflections on analysis

Stake (1995, p.73) describes analysis as 'finding...the right ambience, the right moment, by reading and re-reading the accounts, by deep thinking, then understanding creeps forward'. His description sums up well the process of analysis as I experienced it through this study. The analytical strategy offered a structure to work through and gave a sense of progress and a point for concluding that process. I moved away from the strategy at times, especially at stage 5, to return repeatedly to the data, to question the codes and themes and refine them. Many trains of thought were pursued and abandoned. Memos which I wrote during the analysis stage were useful for capturing these thoughts and in some cases showed a development of ideas. For example, when analysing Billy's and Jim's transcript I note repeatedly the differences between the two readers:

Jim keeps up a running commentary on his reading. He forms his opinions about the texts very quickly (ST52C)
Billy in contrast is slower and takes longer to reflect/come to an opinion. Billy asks what the animals are: Jim states confidently and erroneously that they are swordfish [they are in fact narwhal whales]. Billy works through a process of comparing swordfish to sawfish and then checking in the text to discover that they are whales.

Jim is confident in his own decision and does not see the need to verify this, even when challenged by Billy.

Speech turn 63-67 shows that meaning-making can be individual and divergent as well as joint. (Analysis notes)

Looking back at these notes they seem to me to be an honest representation of the process of analysis and interpretation: the many dead ends and re-readings, revisions and challenges to ideas which make qualitative analysis so demanding (Creswell, 2013).

Stage 9 of my analytical strategy directed me to, '*return to videos of each pair to check how far findings from above are representative of the indivduals and their*

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contribution: do the findings represent the children as individuals? How audible are their voices in the final data? (Figure 3). This was to ensure that I had not taken sections of the children's dialogue out of context or changed their emphasis. The distinct character and perspective of each child shines through the data. Much of what they had to say contrasted with my expectations and demonstrates the 'unpredictability of young people's responses to texts' (Descz-Tryhubczak, 2016, p.218), which is a powerful reason for including them and listening to them in discussions of children's literature. Their words, and my interpretation of them, are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the talk of Barry and Mia, Cory and Martin, Jim and Billy and Sharon and Amy: 8 children from the same Year 5 class (9 to 10 years) in an East Midlands urban primary school, whose names have been changed to preserve anonymity. The data collected from conversations between pairs of the children and interviews with me (Chapter 4.14, 4.15) are analysed in order to address the three research questions at the heart of the study identified earlier in Chapter 1.7.

1. How do the children respond to texts which are examples of poetic nonfiction picture books?
2. How do the children appear to make meaning from the texts?
3. What do their responses to the texts indicate about their perceptions of nonfiction?

In the first part of the chapter I set out the themes which emerged from an inductive analysis of the transcripts of the conversations and interviews. The second section examines the results from the application of the two deductive frames to the data. Finally I consider the contribution of both the inductive themes and deductive frames to the analysis.

The children were all volunteers who had agreed to take part after being approached by their class teacher (Chapter 4.6, 4.7). Throughout the study they gave of their time, in most cases with enthusiasm, but always with patience and good humour. They came as requested in friendship pairs and all were willing to work together and share ideas. Their responses are presented in a way which aims to be mindful of their individual personalities and to convey their statements and my interpretations of them as transparently and respectfully as I can. Qualitative analysis is cyclical and reiterative, and began from my first encounters with the children, when I met with each child before the study started formally. From those initial meetings I gathered

impressions and ideas about the children and what they had to say, making notes which I returned to and re-evaluated as I came to know them as individuals.

5.2 The task

In the first reading event, which I refer to as the 'conversations', the children were given a task, to choose a book from a selection of 5 examples of PNFPBs. Apart from my initial introduction, I was not involved in the rest of the activity. None of the children had seen any of the books before, which meant that I was able to record their first impressions of the texts. The setting of a task gave a purpose and outcome to the activity and a focus for a semi-structured interview which occurred a week later, where I asked the children, still in their friendship pairs, questions about their chosen text.

The children's choice of texts is presented below:

Figure 4: Choice of texts

Barry, Mia, Martin, Jim and Amy	*Where in the Wild?*
Sharon	*A First Book of Nature*
Cory	*All the Water in the World*
Billy	*I am Cat*

Choosing a book was a quick decision for Martin and Jim, but for the others, most notably Billy and Cory, it was a more considered affair and involved several changes of mind. Of the 4 pairs only Barry and Mia chose the same book, *Where in the Wild? North* was the only text which was not a final choice, but all 5 texts were discussed within the conversations and interviews. The open-ended nature of the task allowed for a variation in approaches and for children to choose as a pair or individually. They were free to find their own way through the texts. In the conversations they read individually or together, silently or aloud, discussing their preferences and sharing ideas and experiences. With the exception of one or two asides they remained largely on task, although the presence of the camera and myself in a corner of the room had a likely influence upon this level of engagement. In the second reading event, which I

refer to as 'the interviews', I asked all of the children a set of prepared questions, but also picked up on some of their comments from the conversations, thereby using a semi-structured approach.

5.3 Inductive analysis: analysing the transcripts

The conversations and subsequent interviews with the children were videoed and then transcribed by myself (Chapter 4.15.1) and set out in speech turns, (Maine, 2015) with occasional comments about gesture and context where these were necessary. The transcript for each pair of children was then coded separately and each speech turn was assigned at least one or more codes. This resulted in a large number of codes which were eventually grouped into categories. Through a process of ordering and revising the categories I developed 3 main themes to facilitate discussion of the data in relation to the research questions: identity, making sense and understanding of textual forms. This process is demonstrated in Figures 5, 6 and 7 which show the theme (green), category (yellow) and code (blue).

Where quotations from the children are used in the thesis, the number of the speech turn (ST) is given and a letter is assigned to the end of the number to indicate if the statement occurred in the conversation (C) or interview (I): e.g.

Martin: No, I don't like cats (ST14C)

5.4 Theme 1: identity

The children came to the study with particular understandings of themselves as individuals, and as experienced readers who had distinct interests and literary tastes. During the conversations and interviews, they revealed their understanding of self (what I am like or what I have done) or of their identities as readers (what I like, what I have read or how I read) based on their experiences and expectations of what they would find interesting or enjoyable. Identities were also expressed through their interactions with others and the individual experiences which they brought to the discussion. Identity statements, although relatively few in number, were influential in determining how the children reacted to the books and which ones they chose. They

helped me to understand how the children positioned themselves as readers (Figure 5).

It is of course possible that these identities were roles assumed just for this task and were not a reflection of their real selves. Throughout the study I maintained the epistemological position discussed in Chapter 4.11 that the researcher should trust what children say, and how they choose to say it (Punch, 2002; Dockett and Perry, 2007; Tangen, 2008). It was important for the children to know that I believed them and to respond genuinely to what they said. If the children had adopted roles, this was how they wanted me to see them. They were roles in which they felt comfortable and which allowed them to engage in discussion of the texts.

Mia, Martin, Cory and Billy made statements early in the conversations which expressed their sense of themselves as individuals and as readers. Martin, for example, chose *Where in the Wild* quickly because he was clear about what he would like: he said he liked games and did not like *A First Book of Nature* because it was too long. I had gained the impression that Martin was not an enthusiastic reader at our first meeting, when he brought along a joke book for us to read together.

Figure 5: Identity codes and categories
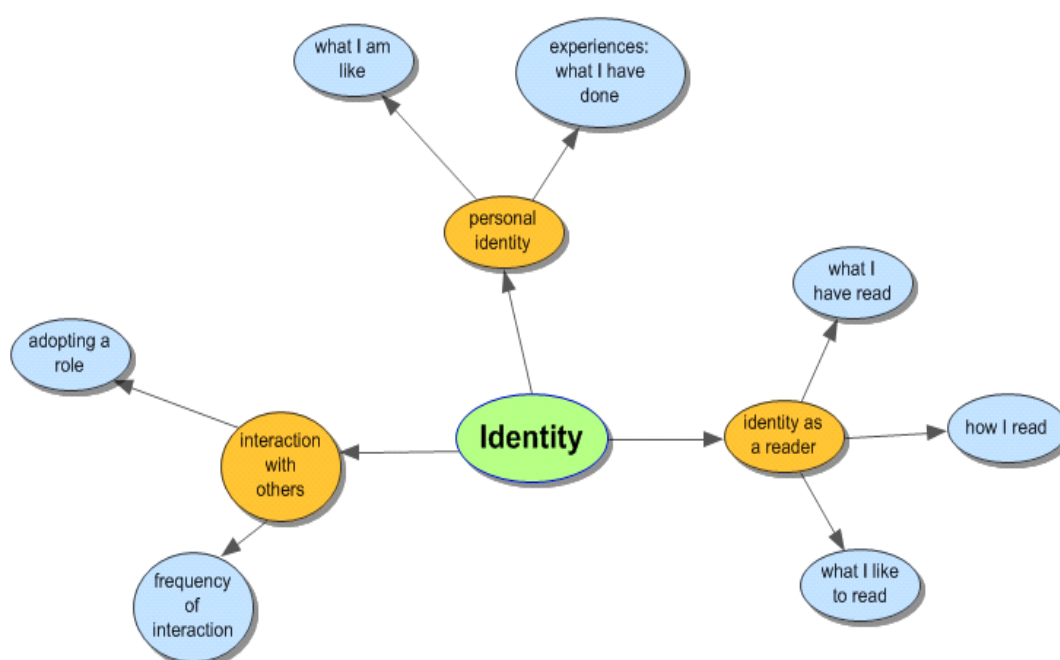
Although he seemed to be drawn initially to the game format of the book, it became apparent that he was also interested because the book had a section about a green snake, and this interest was partially influenced by his experiences outside of school, as he told us in the interview that his mum had just bought a corn snake as a pet. His knowledge about snakes, built up from practical experience, impacted on the way in which he 'made sense' of the text, but was also something which was special and different about him, and which he was proud to tell Cory and myself about. Cory, in contrast was certain that he would not like *Where in the Wild*:

> Cory: I don't know because I'm not really the type of person that likes the wild. (ST8C)

Cory demonstrated an emotional reaction to Martin's choice of text, and a sense of himself as someone with established likes and dislikes. His understanding of what 'the wild' meant to him emerged through the conversation and interview as an unpleasant and dangerous place populated with tigers and lions. Reader identity was an aspect of understanding which had not been particularly highlighted by the literature in the context of nonfiction, although Aukerman (2007) noted identity as a factor in the very personal nature of sense-making. Alexander and Jarman (2018, p.78) noticed that at the beginning of their study the children were inclined to think that science books would be 'boring, difficult or at variance with their reader identity'. However, since little research around children's nonfiction has considered reading nonfiction for pleasure (Alexander and Jarman, 2018), the importance of identity as a motivating factor can be overlooked. This was therefore an example of an emic theme which arose from the children's dialogue.

Mia, who chose *Where in the Wild*, expressed early in the conversation awareness of her reader identity through her reading behaviour:

> Mia: I don't know 'cos I'm used to sitting there and reading a book about that big *(gestures 3-4 cm with her thumb and forefinger).* (ST2C)

Mia's perception of herself was as a reader who read 'thick' books and perhaps by implication she regarded these as harder, more challenging and mature than picture books. She may have seen them, like the child in a study by Smith (2009, p.94), as suitable 'for little children'. Her reader identity had a direct impact on her motivation

to engage with the activity and her ability to choose a text. She only became involved in reading after her partner, Barry, encouraged her to look at the book he had chosen. Her reaction echoed Beth, a child of a similar age in a study by Abodeep-Gentile and Zawlinksi (2013), who rejected picture books because the rest of the class were reading chapter books. Beth felt that picture books were socially unacceptable since they indicated a lower level of reading to her peers. Whilst Mia did not say this, she made it very clear that she was unhappy with the choices on offer. Cory also stated that he saw himself as a reader of chapter books (ST43I):

> Cory: …'cos a story is more like detailed and makes you feel happy but nonfiction's not normally where you want to read on … (ST160I)

Cory shows self-reflection and understanding of the emotional relationship which he has with fiction, and contrasts this with nonfiction which has less attraction for him. He expresses his enjoyment of plot and suspense. This was supported by his choice of *All the water in the world,* with its more linear narrative form. However he was more open to discussing all of the texts than Mia and appeared to enjoy them, to look at each carefully and engage Martin in discussions about them.

A further strand of the identity theme related to the interactions which the children had with each other. The conversations in particular reflected an intertwining of individual response and joint interactions in which the children adopted different roles, which were at times 'teacherly', organisational or playful. Amy was keen to find humour and to talk away from the text, whilst Sharon kept pulling her back to the task. There were several exchanges between them in which Sharon appeared to enjoy the banter, but maintained her role as the more grounded, sensible partner. At times there were comments which revealed some of the children taking on the role of 'possible knowers' (Aukerman, 2006, p. 38) offering their opinion with authority and trying to persuade the others of it, as for example when Jim states:

> Jim: well in personification you can't get it just in a story you can get it in nonfiction as well …cos that's nonfiction *(Jim points to the text)* but it's still personification too. (ST183I)

Jim's straightforward and no-nonsense approach to the texts was very much in line with my first impression of him in our initial meeting, where he came across as friendly and affable, with a down-to-earth attitude. He was keen to get on with the task and had a high number of organising comments or comments which were aimed at bringing a particular section of the discussion to a conclusion. His stance and this sense of self seemed to determine the duration of the conversation (the shortest of the 4) and the extent of his engagement with the texts.

Although the children were outside of their classroom in this study, their sense of reader identity revealed in this data reflected the importance of the social context in which children usually read and are seen to be reading. Children read in social contexts more often than adults (Grenby and Reynolds, 2011). Abodeeb-Gentile and Zawlinski (2013) noticed that the children in their study were acutely aware of the kind of readers they were perceived to be by others in their peer group and by the adults around them. According to McRae and Guthrie (2009) this awareness is particularly acute in primary education and assumes less importance after moving to secondary school, as children's sense of self-esteem becomes less bound to academic achievement. The changing nature of reader identity is noted in the literature (Cremin *et al.,* 2014; Abodeeb-Gentile and Zawlinski, 2013; McRae and Guthrie, 2009) and may be aligned to the child's growing sense of self and ability to self-reflect which is developing at this age (Nikolajeva, 2018). However rather than focusing on the transitory nature of reader identity it is worth noting that the children discussed above expressed a strong and developed sense of themselves, and themselves as readers, and it was important to respect these identities which were real for them at that moment and shaped their reading choices. The theme of identity was therefore key to how the children responded to the texts (research question 1) since it influenced both the choices they made and their reactions to the 5 texts.

5.5 Theme 2: making sense

The theme of 'making sense' brought together the many ways in which the children sought to understand the texts, both individually and through discussion. The holistic

definition of meaning-making as discussed in Chapter 2 was applied. Figure 6 identifies the many codes which emerged during the process of analysis and reveals the complexity and the range, variety and levels of meaning-making which the children became involved in during their interactions with the texts. I identified 8 main categories from this theme which were: reading the text; evaluating; knowledge; emotional; physical; summarising; imagination and creativity and interpersonal. These are discussed in turn below.

5.5.1 Theme 2: making sense: reading the text

This category drew together the many ways in which the children engaged directly with the words and images to make sense of what was happening on the page. Codes included direction of attention to words or parts of the image to clarify meaning or share something of interest; naming and labelling of objects and remembering or re-reading a passage or section. Also noted were the frequent miscues, self-corrections and occasions when the partner stepped in to correct a misreading or mispronunciation. All of the children asked questions about the text, either rhetorically or directly to their partner, and sometimes they repeated what their partner had said as if to verify or consolidate the information.

Although the extent to which the children referred to the words of the text varied considerably between pairs, the images were always significant in their discussions, reflecting Arizpe's and Styles' findings that the 'pictures were more interesting [to the children] than the words' (2016, p. 24). They all used phrases to direct their partner to look at details in the pictures and their close examination of some of the images shows them reading the pictures and avoiding the words altogether:

> Amy *(looking at page 47)*: more dolphins!
> Sharon: no they're sharks-
> Amy: no
> Sharon: or there's sharks I don't know
> Amy: we've not read it, if we read we'll find out what it means *(goes to read page)*
> Sharon *reads*: whales and walrus. (ST111-116C)

Barry and Mia who chose *Where in the Wild* appeared to focus almost exclusively on the pictures and discussed them with only occasional references to the words. Unlike

many traditional nonfiction books these examples did not have captions or labels for the pictures, so verifying information or naming an animal required the child to look in the main body of the written text.

Figure 6: Making sense codes and categories
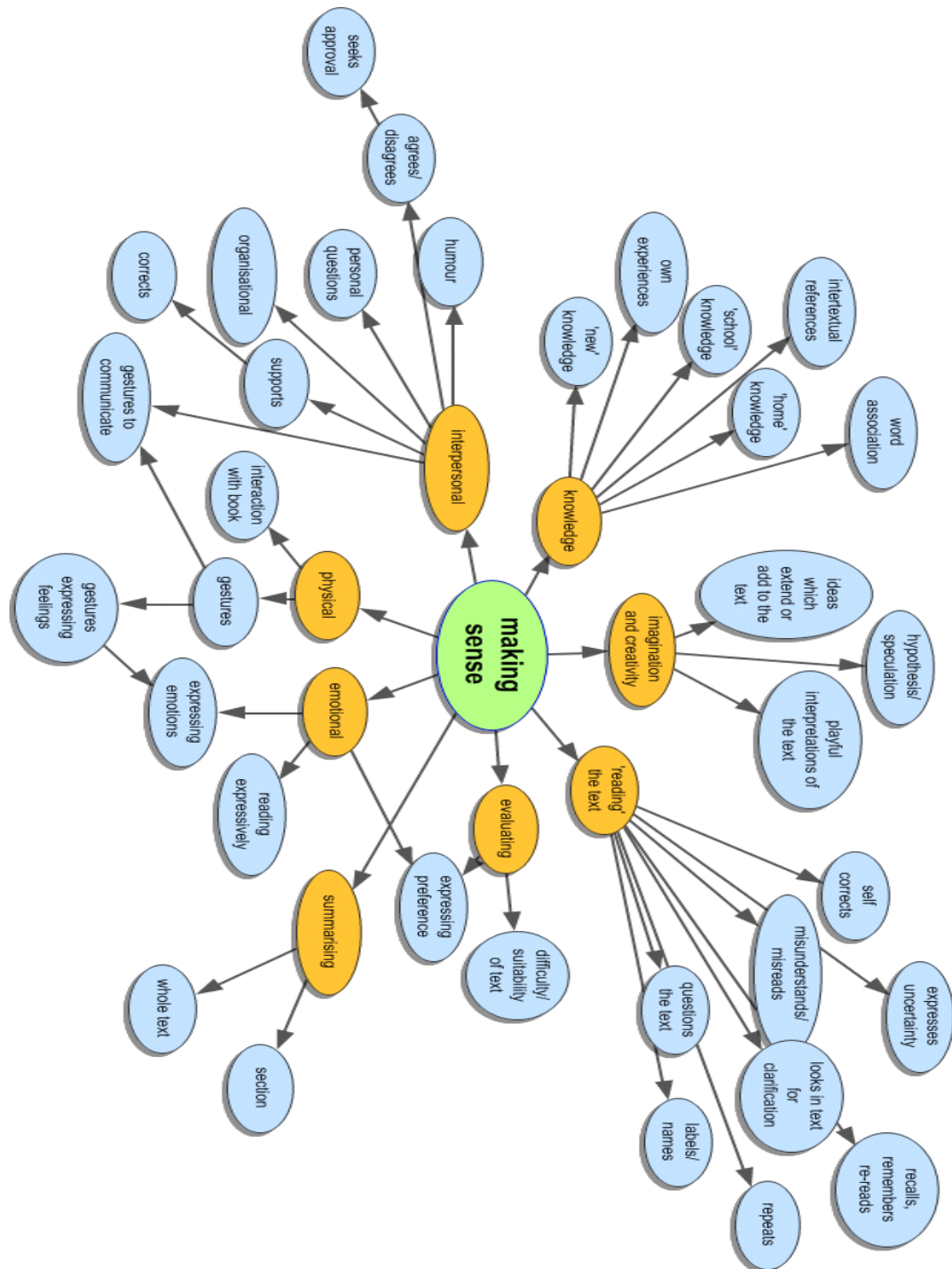
Sharon and Amy chose to read more of the words aloud than the other three pairs and their conversation was particularly high in the number of codes within this category. Yet even they engaged mostly with the pictures first, and on a number of occasions discussed and debated what was going on at some length before checking up in the relevant passage. On some occasions both children were happy to stay with their guesses without checking, as were Billy and Jim. Checking in the text to clarify questions was identified by Hall (2012) as a specific comprehension strategy often used by more able readers. Perhaps the children mentioned above were less confident in their reading ability and found it difficult to check in the text to aid their understanding. However reading behaviours develop which are convenient and asking each other for information is quicker and easier than looking it up. According to Meek, 'no matter how insistent teachers are about "looking up" learners adopt routines that suit them' (1996, p.18).

Labelling or naming emerged as a frequent code within this category. Children would name an animal or object in the picture, as they spotted it, as Martin and Cory, reading *I am Cat*, demonstrate below:

Martin *(looking through book)*: a lion-
Cory: cheetah
Martin: a leopard... I think that's a leopard. (ST152-154C)

Labelling was more evident in discussion of the non-narrative texts. *Where in the Wild* encouraged this sort of interaction and the children often called out the name of the hidden animal as they found it in the photographs. Overall this appeared to be a way of clarifying and agreeing meaning and moving the reading process along. Meek noted that a characteristic of a topic book is that it 'names things' (1996, p.42). The naming of objects is one of the earliest experiences which children have with text, as they sit with a parent or carer pointing to images and saying the associated word (Meek, 1996; Serafini, 2010). Once an object has a name it has a reality and can be categorised, and this is the first step in assimilating it into the existing schemas which the child has built from the knowledge and experience which they already possess.

This category shows the children actively seeking meaning from the text at a word-by-word and page-by-page level. All of the children read the pictures as much if not more than the words: often debated and discussed the image content before or without checking it in the text; named or labelled objects in the images; corrected each other's mistakes and directed their partner to specific words or images to share what was interesting or significant to them on the page. These actions demonstrate the importance the images play in the texts (Chapter 3.6.2). They also reveal the children 'living through' the text (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.27), and absorbed in the business of reading, although, as the next section demonstrates, alongside these comments they were also able to step outside the text and adopt a more reflective approach.

5.5.2 Theme 2: making sense: evaluating

Evaluative comments encompassed choices which the children made about their final selection including comments about the texts which they did not choose. These choices were often bound up with emotional response or with the child's personal identity. 'Personal meaningfulness' (Rosenblatt 1978, p. 153; Chapter 2.3.2) was a factor in Martin's choice of *Where in the Wild* (5.4) as the text had particular relevance for him at that moment due to his current interest in snakes.

Evaluative comments also demonstrated children making ongoing assessments of the texts as they built their understanding of them. Jim for example draws upon his cultural 'assumptions' of quality or worth (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 152) to assess the images in North:

> Jim: I like the pictures in it they're really, really good, painted and…you know. (ST54C)

Reasons given for choices were based on a variety of criteria including the type and style of image, subject-matter or format: for example Billy rejected *North* as an 'olden day book' (ST25C), whereas Sharon picked *A First Book of Nature* because she liked the cover (ST137C). The game format of *Where in the Wild* was cited as a reason for selection by Barry, Mia, and Martin, whilst the pictures in *I am Cat* attracted Billy.

Cory gave a number of reasons for deciding on *All the water in the world* which included the graphic design:

> Cory: 'cos I like the colours and I think I like the way its laid out because normally books are straight in a row *(gestures block of text)* but this one is going diagonal *(gestures diagonally)* and I like the pictures 'cos I like the colour blue and I like water 'cos I like swimming. (ST49I)

Some of these findings resonate with the features of 'quality' nonfiction discussed in Chapter 2.2.5 and the importance of subject matter in book choice (Hall and Coles, 1999; Cremin *et al.*, 2014; Topping, 2015.). They support Alexander's and Jarman's (2015) and Clark's and Rumbold's (2006) observations that children often chose books based on pertitextual features such as the attractiveness of the front cover, back cover reviews and 'blurb', as well as from reading sections of the book and link to the research findings previously cited (Chapter 2.3.9) which suggest that children prefer bright and realistic images (Andrews, Scharff and Moses, 2002; Shastova, 2015):

> Sharon: I like this one because the front cover's really colourful! (ST138C)

They also demonstrate that format and game element can be influential factors in choice (Moss, 2001; Smith, 2003), and this may have contributed towards the popularity of *Where in the Wild?*

Those who took longer to arrive at a decision like Cory showed how an overall 'feeling' for the text was built gradually, based upon an understanding of the relationship between words, images, content and format. Evaluation resulted in an outcome- the choice of text- but this was arrived at through a process of sense-making. As in studies cited previously (Clark and Rumbold, 2006; Topping, 2015; Cremin *et al.,* 2014) choice was a significant factor for the children who, although they were given a limited set of texts to choose from, seemed to appreciate the opportunity to choose and take ownership of their book choice even when their partner tried to persuade them to choose a different book.

5.5.3 Theme 2: making sense: knowledge

'Background or 'world' knowledge is widely regarded as an important aspect of comprehension (Chapter 2.3.3; Best, Floyd and McNamara 2008; Liebfreund and Conradi, 2016; Tennent *et al.,* 2016). Comments in this category indicated the kinds of prior understandings which the children brought to their reading and which helped them to make sense of what they read. I created separate codes for 'school', 'home' and 'intertextual' knowledge, to indicate not so much where the information had come from, which was impossible to determine, as the kinds of knowledge expressed. 'School' knowledge often related to the children's use of formal terms and definitions, such as personification (Billy ST180I) or statements where the children referred directly to what they had learned in school, showing that they were making the connection between formal teaching and what they encountered in the texts:

> Amy: I've already learnt about the water cycle though. (ST20C)

'Home' knowledge referred to less formal kinds of knowledge often acquired through experience, as for example Martin's interest in and knowledge about snakes. It is likely that Martin had gained knowledge of snakes informally through the process of looking after his own pet corn snake.

In this study intertextual knowledge was linked to both home and school experience and contributed, as expressed earlier, to the reader identities which the children had developed and to their understanding of new texts (Smith, 2010). The children made connections with films and songs as well as books. Sometimes word association appeared to trigger an intertextual link, as when Amy thinks of the '5 thousand miles' song (see Table 3) or Jim recalls the film, *Where the Wild things Are* when looking at *Where in the Wild.* How far they supported the children's understanding of the text was unclear, although in a general sense they showed the children looking at the ways in which the books compared with other forms of text. Knowledge of the text types which they brought to their understandings are discussed more specifically below in 5.6.1.

An additional category of 'new knowledge' was applied to those statements where the children stated that they had found something out which they did not know

before. There were surprisingly few new knowledge comments, and several children said when asked that they had learned nothing new at all from the books. Perhaps their perception of 'learning something new' was aligned to their understanding of learning as gathering facts simply and directly from the text: a traditional view of nonfiction text as a 'literature of answers' (Sanders, 2018, p.29). This perspective fits in with the fixed view of knowledge discussed in Chapter 2.2.4, where information is packaged in a way which can be passively acquired. In these complex texts, where facts are not presented through an image, poem or narrative, they may be less immediately identifiable. Billy, for example, went to the coda or back matter of Morris' book, where the facts about cats are set out separately, to show me something 'new' which he had learned about Amur leopards rather than the text of the book itself. However it is also possible that this finding may support Jetton's (1994) conclusion that when reading narrative nonfiction, children remember the story instead of the facts. In either case it suggests that the children were likely to have been used to recognising facts or 'knowledge' in nonfiction books through the conventions familiar from traditional nonfiction texts such as fact boxes or levelled text.

5.5.4 Theme 2: making sense: emotional

The feelings and emotions which the children experienced when reading the books were identified through the outward facial expressions, exclamations, gestures and words taken from the videos and transcripts. Not all emotional response can be seen or is articulated (Rosenblatt, 1978) and it is often modified to conform to what is socially acceptable, so these may not have represented the children's true feelings. However, given these limitations, emotions were expressed by all of the children, and were more noticeable in some children (Martin, Amy and Mia) than others. The emotions most frequently expressed by the children were surprise and interest. Martin's response to '*Where in the Wild*' was punctuated with exclamations such as 'whoa!' (ST61 and 72C) 'ooh' (ST56C) and 'yeah!' (ST82C). As in Arizpe's and Styles' study (2016) the images evoked emotional reactions, which seemed to suggest pleasure and empathy, in this study most often relating to the sentimental appeal of the animals:

Mia: Ah…but it's so cute. (ST83C)

Sharon *(closes the book)*: that's a nice cat that is. (ST188I)

Emotional response was also triggered by the language of the books and demonstrated the potential poetry has to engage young readers (Chapter 2.2.12; Goodwin, 2011). As in Goodwin's classroom, poetry or choice of 'poetic' words in these texts appeared to evoke a particularly emotional response in some of the children. Feelings triggered by certain words and their associations vary from individual to individual, and are imbued with what Rosenblatt described as a certain 'feeling-tone' for the reader (1978, p. 72). This feeling-tone was apparent in Billy and Cory's interpretation of 'the wild' and was also seen when Amy and Sharon giggled at the description in *North* of the walrus as a 'blubbery mother' (Dowson, 2011 p. 30). Rosenblatt (1978) argued that more scientific terms had less associated feeling-tone in order to minimise subjectivity in response. Texts which use a high number of scientific terms for example will evoke less of an emotive response, a point which aligns with Pappas' (2006) view of the significance of scientific terminology in nonfiction books (Chapter 2.2.12). Some subject specific language is found in *Where in the Wild?* and *North*, but in general the texts in this selection did not use overtly scientific language which may have influenced the children to adopt a more emotive response.

Sometimes the children just read a particular section or sentence aloud as if relishing the words. These moments seemed to indicate a pleasure in and connection with the language of the texts (5.6.4) which needed no additional interpretation.

5.5.5 Theme 2: making sense: physical

Significant expressions (such as Mia's frown when she looked at the texts for the first time in ST10C) and decisive bodily movements (such as Jim sitting back and looking away to show that he is waiting for Billy to make his decision in ST105C) were included in the transcript. Given the length of this thesis and the focus on verbal communication, it was not possible to analyse the gestures which the children used to any depth. However through reviewing the videos touching and handling emerged as a significant feature of the children's interactions with the books.

There were many instances of flicking through pages; looking for a particular page or passage; reading back and forth within the book; studying the front or back covers and taking the book from their partner or pointing to specific sections of the text. Mangen (2016, p.471) notes the extensive use of hands amongst children and adults sharing picture books to 'point, gesture, underline and otherwise guide one's own as well as others' attention'. All of the children also used physical touch when showing which text they had chosen by picking up or placing their hand on the book to indicate their decision. The nature of the 'choosing' activity in which they were engaged may have affected the level of physical involvement. However it is also indicative of nonlinear reading, typical of engagement with traditional nonfiction texts: for example when Billy flips to the back of *I am Cat* to read the supplemental information about cats or when Amy and Sharon select only certain poems from *A First Book of Nature*.

Where in the Wild, which used flaps to conceal the location of the hidden animals and the information pages, particularly invited physical manipulation. Barry and Mia and Amy and Sharon appeared to enjoy this interaction, and invented playful ways to add to it. Barry at one point turns the book upside down to make it more difficult to spot the hidden animal (ST126C), and Amy postpones lifting the flap to extend the game:

> Amy….found it
> Sharon: where?
> Amy: shan't tell you ... I think I have anyway (*lifts flap*): no, not showing you I know where it is I found it!
> *(Sharon tries to lift flap, Amy stops her).* (ST223-226C)

Physical engagement with the text provides the reader with information about the length, reading progress and location of events to gain an overall 'sense of the text' (Mangen, 2016, p.466). When Cory picked up *All the water in the world* and examined its front cover, flicked through its pages and read the back page, he seemed to be gaining this overall sense in order to come to a conclusion about whether or not it was poetry. It is also part of the emotional and sensual experience of reading texts which Jim hints at this when he strokes the pictures in *I am Cat* (Table 3).

In paired reading, touching or 'haptic engagement' with the book (Kucirkova *et al.*, 2017, p.46) may be a significant social feature of the reading experience: 'the element

of connecting with hands may be one of the specific pleasures of reading graphic texts together' (Mackey, 2007, p.119). Physical engagement may therefore play a part in both the processes of meaning-making and the child's emotional response to text.

5.5.6 Theme 2: making sense: summarising

Summarising was frequently used by all pairs of children as they drew ideas together and presented an account of what they had read. Sometimes this was for the whole text:

> Cory: it's quite interesting; it's about all the different seasons. (ST117I)

Whilst on other occasions this was for a specific section or page:

> Sharon: there's people there and they're on a boat. (ST27I)

Sharon's talk was particularly high in summarising statements. She appeared to use it as a way to clarify meaning for herself; to explain the text to her partner Amy, to express and legitimise her choices and to move the discussion of the text along. Sharon and Amy sometimes worked together, sharing words and phrases from the text to create a joint summary. Elsewhere summarising was used as a holding strategy whilst meanings were being determined individually:

> Billy: so it's like how um you have to find them. (ST80C)

Summarising is viewed as a 'higher order' comprehension strategy (Grabe and Stoller, 2013 and Chapter 2.3.1). Through summarising children identify and bring together what is important in the text, although what is important may vary between individuals (Tennent *et al.,* 2016). Palincsar and Brown (1984) cite summarising as one of a number of strategies which can be used to aid comprehension but also, importantly, to self-monitor it. In this study it occurs as a way in which the children check on the meanings which have been made so far, and can be seen as a verbal testing out of the reasonableness of that meaning:

> Amy: it's my turn, *reads to almost the last of my kind (stumbles over regal).* I think it's all about this cat that wants to be umm a tiger. (ST185C)

It is possible that the children had been taught summarising as a specific comprehension strategy, but if so it appeared to have become 'thoroughly automatised' (Grabe and Stoller, 2013, p.10) as it occurred without prompting and was distributed throughout the reading. However the use of summarising to hold or delay the progress of the conversation or to clarify and agree joint meanings also suggests that it had a social function in the reading events. In the conversations it occurred spontaneously, whereas in the interviews it was most frequently used to reply to my question 'what is the book about?' and at the end when I asked the children if the texts had anything in common.

5.5.7 Theme 2: making sense: imagination and creativity

Statements were coded as creative and imaginative where the children invented ideas or added to the text. In the pilot study I had particularly noted how the children had brought their own imaginative and creative ideas or stories to the books to modify, embellish and explain them. In this study examples of 'creative dialogue' (Chapter 2.3.9; Fisher, 2009, p.200) or imaginative ideas were fewer, and were almost exclusively seen in the conversations. It seemed that the children found the conversations more conducive to opening up and sharing ideas and felt better able to discuss the texts in a less structured context without an active teacher presence.

The relationship between partners seemed to influence the degree of imaginative and creative response. Amy and Sharon and Barry and Mia, who had a greater rapport with each other, made more creative comments than Billy and Jim or Cory and Martin. This aligns with Maine's observation in her research that creative response was limited when the children were less 'socially cohesive', (2015, p.103) as imaginative and creative ideas were largely absent in those conversations high in organisational comments (such as Cory and Martin) where the focus was on completing the task (Chapter 5.5.8).

Comments in this category were also associated with a playful approach to the text. Amy was always on the lookout for ways to amuse Sharon: she remarks fancifully that she would like to 'be' a whale (ST46C) or a weasel (ST211C). She gives a name to one of the fisherman on page 13 of *North:*

Amy *(pointing to picture of a fisherman):* That's Bob Fisher! (ST40C)

Although Sharon guided her back to the task, Amy's comments were treated with tolerance and good humour by her partner.

In Barry and Mia's conversation creative and imaginative ideas were used to extend their interactions with the text. Their playful discussion evolved into a series of short games with rules devised by Barry, where they competed with each other to see how quickly they could find the camouflaged animals or they both had to randomly flick through the book to find their animal. Such playful behaviour in a school context and with children aged 9 and 10 years could be considered challenging and off-task and at odds with an outcome driven approach to nonfiction reading, but these playful interactions may have helped them to relate to the text and to make the reading a more pleasurable, shared experience. Through using humour and play the pair found ways to overcome Mia's initial resistance to the texts and negotiate their own form of 'literacy practice' (Ghiso, 2011, p.31).

Imaginative and creative response to text can however be seen more broadly. Rosenblatt argues that all reading requires imagination, since the reader needs to 'conjure up' what words represent and 'entertain new ideas' (1978, p. 32). This again is a largely hidden process, but the more overt imaginative/creative comments in the data showed the children as active agents, making their own meanings and finding their own relevance in the texts. According to Gamble reading is in itself a 'creative act' and texts which challenge children's expectations or ideas require creative 'shifts in thinking' (2013, p.39). Cory makes one of these shifts when he is trying to decide if *All the water in the world* is a poem or not:

> Martin: that's quite like a poem
> Cory: that's quite interesting cos I thought some of it was about like life cycles some of it at the end was like er well I thought *(leafing through pages)* I thought like this part *(leafs through)* not this part, this part was like a poem *(points to page 19 Everything waits)* because-
> Martin: I think it was all a poem
> Cory: yeah *(uncertain)*
> Martin: it feels like a poem book
> Cory: yeah *(more certain)*… shall we see what the blurb says. (ST176-181C)

His response shows how the text demands active thinking from the reader and a creative response in putting those different elements together to make meaning.

5.5.8 Theme 2: making sense: interpersonal

The section above touched upon the influence of the relationship between the partners on their meaning-making. Further evidence of this was seen in interpersonal comments found throughout the data. These were comments not directly about the text, but included questions arising from it such as:

Jim (*points to Red Spotted Newt):* would you like to have that as your pet? (ST24C)

They also included humorous asides and organisational comments where the children were managing the task of looking at and selecting a book which they wanted to read. Interpersonal comments were more common in the conversations than in the interviews across all four pairs, and some children made more interpersonal comments than others within a pair. This may have indicated their ease with each other or level of engagement with the task.

Amy asked the greatest number of personal questions, and this may have been a reflection of the humorous role which she adopted, as seen below where she continues a conversation alongside Sharon's discussion of the text:

Sharon *reads*: Spring is-
Amy: spring is about breeding
Sharon *reads*; plants and animals are waking up etc.-
Amy: you are very quiet today
Sharon carries on reading
Amy: hey my voice is got better. (ST143-148C)

Although Amy seems to be pulling Sharon off task on a number of occasions, she does not work in opposition to her. There are equally places in the data where she works with Sharon to create meaning with her:

Amy *reads*: 'walrus are filling up with food'- where are the walruses?
Sharon: I don't know
Amy: where's the whale?
Sharon: I don't know where the whale is – (*points to bottom of page 47)*: walruses!
There's walruses and there's whales! (ST 117-121C)

As in Maine's study (2015), the use of humour seems to bring them together and strengthen their social bond. Sharon and Amy slip easily into fulfilling the task, with little negotiation.

The number of organisational comments seemed to reflect the importance placed on completion of the task by some of the children, for example Jim and Cory who made a higher number of this type of comment than the other children. Cory kept bringing Martin back to the task and encouraging him to look at all of the books:

> Cory: so let's read it this time!
> Martin *(nods)*: okay
> *Start looking at book*
> Cory: and then at the end we can describe what we think. (ST120-123C)

Jim's focus on 'getting the task done' conflicted with Billy's slower, more thoughtful attitude and might have limited Billy's opportunity to engage with all of the texts if he had not been so single-minded in continuing at his own pace.

The positive influence of a partner was particularly noticeable in Barry and Mia's conversation, where Barry worked at trying to interest Mia in reading *Where in the Wild* over the first 5 minutes of the conversation and eventually succeeded at ST20:

> Barry: shall we read one of these then? (*He swaps books*). You look at that and I'll look at this… you've got to find the animals, look there *(points)* and you're not allowed to *(reaches over her and turns page)* you're not allowed to lift that until you find the animal… *(points)* look why don't you read that first?

By ST31 Mia smiled at him when she found her first hidden animal and she continued to be engaged with the games he invented and introduced throughout the 21 minutes of their conversation.

The nature of the children's relationships revealed through their interpersonal comments could therefore open up or limit response to the texts and impact on the length and depth of the discussion. The findings support Maine's assertion that 'the best collaborative thinking…may depend on the 'match' between speakers and their ability to both communicate their own meaning and understand each other' (2015, p.16). This would suggest the need to consider carefully who works together as

meaning-making, both joint and individual, can be aided by a partner who supports and suggests ways to interpret the text, or can be limited by one who shuts down or over-directs avenues of discussion.

The scope and breadth of theme 2 indicates that the children's meaning-making from PNFPBs (research question 2) was complex, drawing upon a range of skills, experiences and different kinds of knowledge. Taught comprehension strategies, where used, were embedded within a wider approach to meaning-making which was both emotional and social.

### 5.6 Theme 3: understanding of textual forms

The children discussed the genre, format, layout and design of the texts and considered the decisions, skills and techniques which the authors and illustrators had used. These comments arose from my questions in the interviews, but also spontaneously in the conversations. They showed their awareness of the books as constructed objects and their understanding of the differences between different forms of text, hence the title of this theme. Comments which reveal their perceptions of nonfiction in particular (research question 3) are addressed in this section. This included how the children defined and identified nonfiction; how nonfictional they perceived the texts to be and the extent to which they noticed the other hybrid features of the texts. Figure 7 identifies the codes and the four main categories which were brought together under this heading: knowledge of genre; facts v truth; word and image and language.

5.6.1 Theme 3: understanding of textual forms: knowledge of genre

The books were presented to the children without any comment and I was interested to see if they identified them as belonging to a specific type or category. In the context of the literature on children's limited exposure to a variety of nonfiction (Chapter 2.3.4; Yopp and Yopp, 2012; Topping, 2018) and structured approaches to teaching nonfiction texts (Chapter 1.4.1) I was particularly interested in their perceptions of the nonfiction aspects of the texts and how they handled their possibly ambiguous nature. There was a clear distinction between the evidence from the conversations and the interviews in this respect. In the conversations none of the children

mentioned 'nonfiction', although Sharon noticed straight away that 'this is like showing information about water' (referring to *All the water in the world* ST2C). Her comment, and subsequent comments in the interviews, suggested that they were aware of the nonfictional nature of the texts but saw no need to label the text as fiction or nonfiction. Comments specifically about nonfiction are therefore derived mostly from the interviews, where I deliberately introduced the term in order to ask the children some specific questions relating to it. All of the children apart from Sharon (who got her definition the wrong way round) were able to give a basic definition of nonfiction and fiction, using simple phrases such as 'nonfiction is a book which tells you facts' (Amy ST114I). This was not surprising as children in Year 5 following the National Curriculum would have been introduced to the terms from Year 1 (ages 5-6) onwards.

Figure 7: Understanding of textual forms: codes and categories
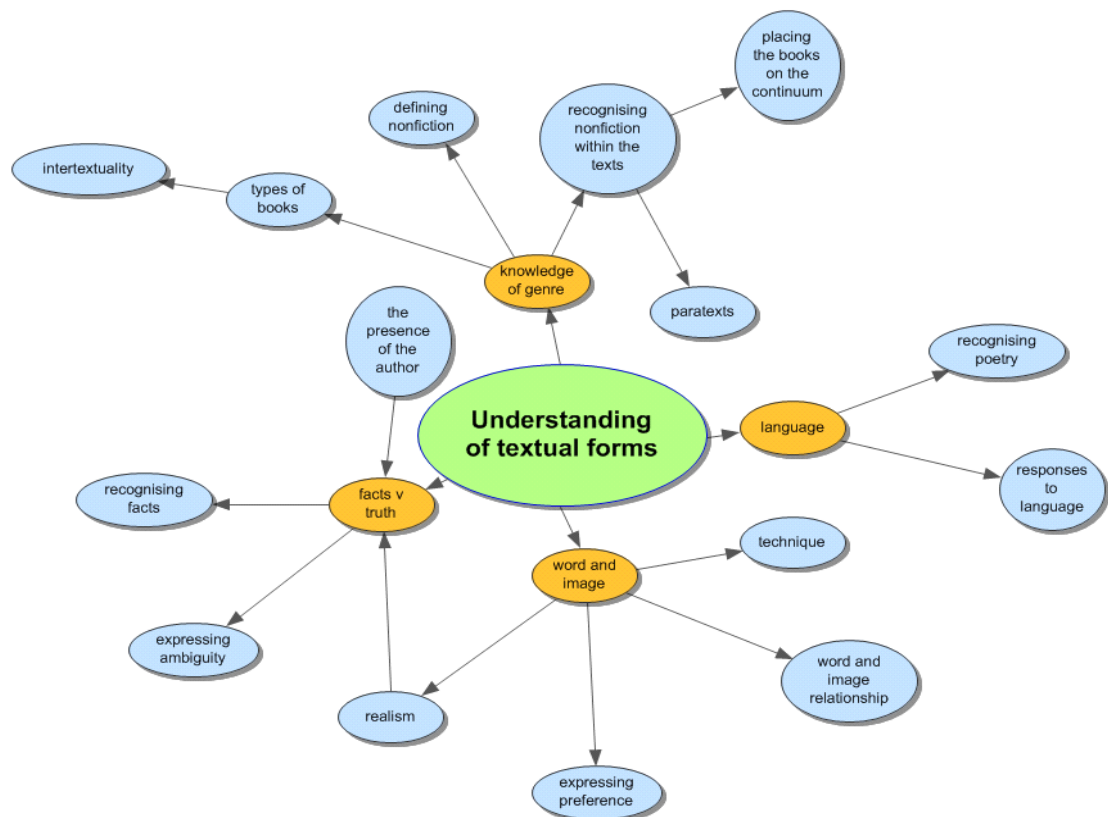
The children were asked to place their chosen text at a point on a continuum from fact to fiction. Of the 5 children who chose *Where in the Wild?* three classed it as 'completely nonfiction' whilst the other two placed it as nearly fiction or half way between fact and fiction. Martin cited the language (specific and scientific) as an indicator: 'I thought that 'cos this is like a nonfiction 'cos where it's smooth and non-poisonous' (ST155I). Billy and Cory placed *I am Cat* and *All the water in the world* at mid-point, whilst Sharon placed *A First Book of Nature* close to fiction: 'cos this tells you a little bit of facts about the animals and it is also a story' (ST123I). Although all of the children needed time to think about this activity, only Cory expressed difficulty with making a decision or suggested any uncertainty.

Three of the children (Amy, Sharon and Cory) commented on the presence or absence of structural guiders such as glossary, contents page and index. They would have been taught to be aware of these: the National Curriculum states that children in Years 4 and 5 'should be shown how to use contents pages and indexes to locate information' (DfE, 2014, p.37) and these structural guiders are often cited as explicit features of good nonfiction (Chapter 2.2.5). Cory referred to the glossary and index as indicators that the text was nonfiction and showed some understanding of how nonfiction texts may be read differently from fiction, in a non-linear way:

> Cory: fiction is like where it's a story and it's not telling you facts and it hasn't got a glossary and an index and things like that nonfiction is like facts and it's not like stories where there is like proper detailed text but nonfiction is telling you about things like a glossary tells you where to go but in this you just read along and then you get to the page. (ST132I)

Billy was able to identify different types of writing within I *am Cat* and seemed comfortable that the book could contain both fiction and nonfiction:

> Billy: Nonfiction is like just facts and fiction could be like stories, like I'd say this book (*turns to front cover)* could be fiction 'cos its telling a story of a cat that's dreaming and if it was a nonfiction it would say like facts about cats, like on the back part (*turns to back)* I think this part is nonfiction and the rest of its fiction 'cos its telling a story from when the cat starts sleeping to when he's opening his eyes to wake up. (ST13I)

Both children hint at an awareness of the differences in purpose between reading fiction and nonfiction text. Yet they do not develop this, possibly because of the

nature of the task which I set them. The National Curriculum states that, by Year 5, 'in using nonfiction pupils should know what information they need before they begin and be clear about the task' (DfE, 2014, p.37). The task in this study was open-ended: the children may not have been used to encountering nonfiction texts in this way, especially if their experience of nonfiction was usually framed within a specific functional purpose. The National Curriculum implies a specific stance which should be adopted when encountering a nonfiction text, which aligns with Rosenblatt's (1978) idea of an efferent stance where the focus is on coming away with a specific piece or pieces of information (Chapter 2.2.7). Intertextual knowledge also helped to determine the attitude, or approach which the children took to the texts. Sharon and Amy showed great excitement when they realised through turning the flaps that *Where in the Wild* had a game element:

> Sharon: what this is doing its showing kids it's fun- found it! (ST26C)

Amy drew upon her knowledge of other books to see where it might 'fit':

> Amy: cos it's like a game put into a book you know like them puzzle books that you get at the shop. (ST290C)

Unlike some nonfiction flap books (Smith, 2003) the use of flaps in *Where in the Wild?* is not particularly innovative: the flaps serve primarily as a device to hide the location of the hidden animal and the information about it. What was significant was that they indicated the possibility of a playful stance to the children. In this sense the design of the text determined response, 'reading as play' rather than 'reading as work' (Moss, 2001, p.106).

The comments suggest that the children had an understanding of nonfiction based on language, content and form, and were able to identify features of nonfiction in the texts even though they did not immediately classify them according to genre.

5.6.2 Theme 3: understanding of textual forms: facts and truths

Given that accuracy and truthfulness are significant and contested features in nonfiction (Duke and Tower, 2004; Gill, 2009; Mallett, 2010; Chapter 2.2.7) I was interested to explore how the children decided what were true facts within the books.

This was a challenging concept for them and their responses revealed different levels of perception and reflection. Jim had a typically straightforward response:

> Jim: I know its facts 'cos on every page it tells you facts. That (*points to intro*) tells you facts as well and on every page it tells you like different facts about everyone. (ST163I)

Billy's answer was more reflective and indicated that he thought that the structure of a text might give clues about whether it was true or fictional:

> Billy: the story bit is like in some fairy tales it says once upon a time and in nonfiction it just goes on to facts like if it's about many different animals it will start with the introduction of some facts about animals. (ST160-161I)

Martin and Billy measured the truthfulness of the text against their prior knowledge about the topic:

> Martin: I know that this one is true 'cos I know coyotes do have them and come out when it's like full moon. (ST166I)

Martin seems confident that if he knows that some of it is true, the rest of it will be. Billy however identified that he could not be certain where the text dealt with new information that he did not know already:

> Billy: in this one I think it's true but in some of the animal-cats that I do not know I'm not sure if they're true or not. (ST191I)

Barry and Mia, who had chosen *Where in the Wild*, linked their belief in the truthfulness of the text to the images:

> Barry: this is like set in real life
> Me: okay
> Mia: yeah-
> Me: what makes you say it's set in real life then?
> Barry: because it's like these are like proper animals. (ST49-53I)

Later Mia adds to this: 'cos it shows you actually animals' (ST122I). They did not articulate that this was because they were photographs; however the perceived reliability of photographs (Chapter 2.2.9) was implicit in their discussion and was built on later when they discussed the photographer's technique (Chapter 5.6.3).

Comments about the reliability, truthfulness and the genre of the text reflected what could be described as the children's awareness and tolerance of ambiguity (Meek, 1988; McClay, 2000; Chapter 2.2.12). With the exception of Cory all of the children were willing to accept that the author could combine truth and fiction in one text. When I asked if they thought that this combination might be confusing, their surprised reaction suggested that I was raising an unfamiliar issue. Mia, Martin and Jim did not think it was a problem, whilst Billy thought 'it would be confusing for um the people in Key Stage 1' (ST199I) but by implication not for him as a more expert reader. This aligned with findings from Alexander's and Jarman's (2015) study where their participants felt that only younger readers might be confused by books which combined story with fact: [they] 'might think it's fiction instead of teaching the facts about the world' (p. 127). Jim's response showed him placing his trust in the author to make the 'right' decisions:

> Jim: that's fine
> Me: what makes you think that?
> Jim: 'cos if the author wants to he can. (ST196-198I)

His response seems to indicate a passive role, accepting and unquestioning of the authority of the text. In the selected books the authors do not reveal themselves overtly or present the research processes which they used (Chapter 3.6.1). Their hidden presence makes it more difficult to question them or their choices about what to leave in, what to take out and how to present information (Sanders, 2018). This relates to Sanders' (2018) argument (Chapter 2.2.8) that 'invisible' narrators invite a less critical engagement with text from their readers and are a feature of more traditional authoritative nonfiction texts. When later Jim says, 'I just know that they're facts' (ST171I), he appears to be accepting an unspoken 'contract between the nonfiction text and the reader…the text is expected to be perceived as true' (Løvland, 2016, p.177).

The children responded more readily to discussing the poetic voice. They all accepted the poet's license to use language figuratively and in a way which presented some ambiguity between fact and fiction. They understood the creation of a fictional

narrator as a device for presenting ideas. For example personification in the poems in *Where in the Wild*, which the children had learnt about recently when studying poetry, was identified by several of the children, including Billy and Jim:

> Billy: it's first person cos the flounder's talking, that's the way the author's made it
> Me: yeah, can flounders talk?
> Billy: no ...its personification
> Me: yes so it's a bit of a made up bit isn't it really?
> Billy: yeah
> Jim: well in personification you can't get it just in a story you can get it in nonfiction as well ...'cos that's nonfiction *(Jim points to the text)* but it's still personification too. (ST178-183I)

These comments suggest that the children were able to tolerate the truth and fiction duality of some of the texts. The texts seemed to invite self-reflection and critical reading through offering possibilities for 'active dialogue' (Sanders, 2018, p.13) where the authority of the text can be questioned. However the children needed encouragement to adopt this line of thinking. They accepted the reliability of the evidence in the texts, and were not easily inclined to question the author's choices. My probing led them into areas which seemed unfamiliar and at times uncomfortable:

> Cory: this one's telling facts and it's a story *(smiles)*
> Me: well you've got to make your mind up then where it goes
> Cory: it's complicated. (ST141-143I)

Cory's comment is interesting in relation to the perceived difficulty of nonfiction texts (Chapter 2.3.3). Pappas (2006) argues that clarity and lack of confusion is essential for good nonfiction, and the implication here is that 'hard is bad' (McClay, 2000, p.101). Yet Cory's response to the text showed that he was beginning to understand its complexity and not to take it at face value. He was entering into hitherto unchartered territory, where he had to test his understanding of genre against new experience, showing 'puzzlement and curiosity': features of engaged nonfiction reading (Sanders, 2018, p. 202).

5.6.3 Theme 3: understanding of textual forms: word and image

I now consider the children's understanding of the nature and purpose of the images in the texts and their relationship with the words. As noted previously images have always played a significant role in children's nonfiction, and traditionally they have tended to be supportive and supplemental to the main text, although there are some notable exceptions such as the Dorling Kindersley series (Meek, 1996). In picture books and PNFPBs in particular, the image plays an equal, complementary role to the words and the kinds of image invite aesthetic and emotional responses rather than just having informative value (Chapter 2.3.9).

Asked whether they felt that words or images were more important in the books, all of the children described them as equally important, noting that images could tell you things like 'the colour of the animals' (Barry ST98I) or that the words without the pictures would not 'give you an image in your head' (Cory ST127I). Whilst most of the children viewed the images positively, Sharon felt that pictures might inhibit imagination:

> …if there were just words and there were no pictures it was just blank you could just use your mind to imagine what it is. (ST188I)

Billy showed an emerging understanding of how the balance between word and image changes in different kinds of writing. When discussing *I am Cat* he commented on the word/image relationship in the main body and in the coda of the text:

> Billy: I think the words are more important like on the back page the pictures don't describe what they're actually- and the information the words (*gestures circles with hand over book)* so I find that the words are more descriptive than the pictures. (ST129I)

In the coda at the back of the text ten small images of different types of cats illustrate paragraphs which describe the location, habits and endangered status of the animals. This detailed writing is in contrast to the sparse lyrical words in the body of the text, where Billy noted that some of the pictures would stand alone without any words.

As in Arizpe's and Styles' (2002) study, most of the children were interested in how the images had been made, and there were a number of speculations about the artists' decisions and technique:

> Sharon: they look like they have just stuck it on to a piece of paper so it's a plain piece of paper they've painted it one colour and they dabbed blue on and then what they did is they got paper and they painted that and cut it and stuck it on to the sheet instead of actually drawing it on. (ST83I)

Although the children identified the constructed nature of the images, the discussion did not extend to the artists' intentions in selecting a particular style or technique, as it had in Arizpe's and Styles' study (2002). They *noticed* the image, and this awareness is again divergent from many conventional nonfiction books where illustrations are presented as transparent or neutral. As discussed previously (Chapter 2.3.9) photographs, rather than artistic images, are usually associated with contemporary nonfiction text and according to Løvland (2016) the 'fact that drawings are chosen is itself a fiction marker' (p.182). PNFPBs however tend to favour artists' images over photographs and the only text in the selection to use photography was *Where in the Wild*. Barry and Mia were interested in the role of the photographer and wondered how he managed to take the photographs:

> Barry: how did that man (points) how did he get the pictures without the animals moving-
> Mia: that's just what I was going to say like how did he take the photos? (ST167-168I)

They then went on to speculate:

> Barry: How did he get that 'cos that would of probably bit him or something 'cos it's a coyote … he must have just set a camera on a tree waiting until something walks past and then…
> (ST171I)

The playful approach which Barry and Mia had taken to the book meant that they were less constrained by the text than the other children, and this discussion shows them thinking creatively again. They were demonstrating awareness that the person behind the camera was making decisions and constructing images. This was the beginnings of criticality as they were showing that they were curious, raising

questions and pursuing a line of inquiry which was of interest to them (Roche, 2015). Jim in contrast said he chose the book, 'um…'cos all of the pictures 'cos they're not like they're painted in, they're real' (ST53I). He goes on to link this with the reliability of photographs: 'because it shows you that they're the real things, because some people might paint them and they might not be real' (ST61I).

The popularity of *Where in the Wild* may have been partly due to the high modality (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996; Chapter 2.2.9) or realism of the photographs. Løvland notes that even though it is known that photographs can be altered, they are still accepted as reliable evidence, 'we perceive photographs as an imprint of something real' (2016, p.182). Choice of this text also appears to confirm the research that children prefer bright, realistic images (Stewig, 1972; Benson, 1986; Parsons, 1987; Brookshire *et al.,* 2002; Shastova, 2015).

Discussion of technique was often linked to appreciative comments such as 'pretty' (Amy ST92I) or 'colourful' (Sharon ST138C). 'Realistic' was used by Sharon as a term of admiration for Hearld's images in *A First Book of Nature* (ST88I), even though the animals in his pictures are drawn in a stylised manner, and she seemed to struggle to find words to express her enjoyment of the pictures. It was a difficulty which all of the children had in describing or categorising the images, despite their interest in them, unlike the children in the Arizpe's and Styles' study, who speculated about what was going on 'in the artist's head to imagine how he wanted the reader to react' (2016, p. 98). Perhaps this was because images express ideas and emotions which the children found difficult to articulate, but it may also be that they were unused to talking about images, especially since the teaching of visual literacy is still not fully embedded within the English curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2 (DfE, 2014). Their responses support Arizpe's and Styles' observation that 'some knowledge of terminology, of how visuals work …and of the processes of reading an image can be helpful to move readers beyond literal responses to enrich the reading experience and intensify that initial pleasure' (2016, p. 124).

5.6.4 Theme 3: understanding of textual forms: language

The children had recently finished a teaching unit on poetry. They were generally enthusiastic about it and confident in using and naming poetic terminology and structures. Several children recognised the language of texts as poetic early on in the conversation, even in those texts which were more narrative in form for example *North*:

> Amy (*gestures hands small distance apart*): it's like a, like a poem
> Sharon: yeah
> Amy: with pictures
> Sharon: about different animals
> Amy: yeah! (ST77-81C)

Martin, reading *All the water in the world,* became aware of it as an extended poem by ST176 in the conversation, although Cory was unsure (Chapter 5.5.5). The children also showed that they were familiar with personification and alliteration as features of figurative language. It seems likely that they had been taught to look for specific indicators to recognise and evaluate poetry: what is perhaps more significant is their enthusiastic response to the poetic form of the texts.

In *Where in the Wild* it was possible to ignore the poems completely, although the introduction does state that 'the poems will give you hints' (Schwartz and Yale, 2007, p.1). Barry and Mia, focused on finding the animals in the pictures, only seemed to refer to the informational text under the flaps afterwards, to name and label the animals, and made no references to the concrete poems in the text. In contrast Martin had picked up on the clues in the shape and content of the poem and was able to use these to work out the identity of the hidden animal, as well as looking for it in the photograph:

> Martin: It gives you a clue on the other one (*points to page*) what it's kind of gonna be
> Me: yes
> Martin: ah it's this one 'Motionless' look at it so you knew it was gonna be that (*poem is set out like a spider's legs*). (ST71-73I)

Martin's reading provides a good example of 'oscillation' between the different elements of the PNFPB, in this case photographs, concrete poems and information under the flaps (Kesler, 2017, p.622; Chapter 2.2.10). The combination of the poem, set out as eight spider's legs; the camouflaged spider in the picture and the facts about crab spiders on the information pages enriched his reading experience and helped him to predict and solve the puzzle. In contrast Barry and Mia, who focused only on the pictures, did not engage with the text in the same depth although they achieved their objective by finding the hidden animals.

I noted (Chapter 5.5.4) that the children chose to read certain poems and sections aloud, and their enunciation of particular words and phrases seemed to indicate enjoyment in the sound of the words. Choice of these extracts was highly individual, with no common themes or patterns emerging. The children dipped into individual poems but sections from the more narrative texts were also chosen. Amy and Sharon who read aloud most often of the 8 children, joined in enthusiastically with the onomatopoeic frog noises in Davies' poem *Listen to the Pond* (p.10) and Martin and Cory read through the whole of *I am Cat* together, struggling over some words but taking time to savour phrases such as 'watching, waiting. Shrouded in mystery,' (Morris, 2012, p. 11). The children were responsive to the ways in which poetry can excite, entertain, amuse and surprise the reader, even on a simple level of enjoying the rhyme and rhythm or 'musicality' of the words (Kesler, 2012, p.341), as Mia shows when she reads 'vagabond and pond and eggs and legs' (ST71I). When asked why she thought the author had used poetry she commented:

> Mia: 'cos it makes you want to read it a bit more 'cos people might like poems rather than information text. (ST179I)

The poetic language of the books was recognised and appreciated by these children. Far from putting them off poems, as Lockwood suggests (2011), studying poetry appeared to have made the poems more accessible and enjoyable to the children and they accepted it readily, even within the context of nonfiction, as a particularly positive feature of the texts.

Theme 3 suggests that the children's perceptions of nonfiction (research question 3) were based on clear-cut, genre-based definitions which are grounded in textual form and presentation rather than issues of purpose or truthfulness. Although they did not specifically comment on the hybridity of the texts they were drawing upon their knowledge of the conventions of both fiction and nonfiction in their reading. Consequently their readings were not restricted by genre expectations.

5.7 Applying the deductive frames

The second part of the analysis involved applying the two deductive frames to the data (Chapter 4.16.3), one derived from aspects of transactional reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978; Iser, 1978), and another from Maine's transactional strategies for meaning-making (2015). Both frames were applied after the initial inductive analysis phase to provide a deeper insight into the children's responses by examining the data from different perspectives. This phase of the analysis sought out specific instances from the conversations and interviews to link theory to practice and expose gaps where my data and the theoretical approach did not align. To achieve this I moved from the single speech turn as a unit of analysis to a 'block and file' approach (Grbich, 2013 p.62) where sections from the transcripts were copied and grouped together under each heading. Tables 3 to 5 present the frames, offer a description of each category, an illustrative example from the data and my accompanying commentary. The transactional reader response frame has been split into two sections to allow for a separate discussion of Rosenblatt's and Iser's ideas.

5.7.1 Transactional reader-response frame

The themes in this frame focus on the two 'stances' for reading: efferent and aesthetic (Rosenblatt, 1978) and two of the key features of transactional reading: 'filling the gaps' and 'entanglement' (Iser, 1978).

1. Aesthetic and efferent stances

All of the children demonstrated instances of efferent and aesthetic reading during the reading events, as defined in Chapter 2.2.7 and in accordance with Rosenblatt's concept of the reader moving along a continuum between both reading stances.

Rosenblatt (1978) noted that when reading efferently the aesthetic qualities of the text are ignored or minimised as the focus is on gathering information. Examples of this kind of efferent reading were seen in Barry and Mia's case where the children were focused on the game aspect, looking for the animals in the images and only using the words of the text to confirm the animals' names. This reading was one-dimensional and linear, as Barry and Mia were only really concerned with playing the game. Whilst the other children also demonstrated instances of this kind of efferent reading, more often they seemed to take a more circuitous route through the texts, moving between image, poem and content to make meaning.

I identified this as an aesthetic response, as the children were attentive to the quality of the images or the language and involved in an active and developing relationship with the text. The choice of vocabulary for example seemed to evoke the 'feeling-tones' discussed above (Rosenblatt, 1978; Chapter 5.5.4). This suggests that the literary qualities of the PNFPBs were most prominent for the children and diverted them away from focusing on the products of reading (what content knowledge they would learn) to engaging with the process, the 'lived through' experience (Rosenblatt, 1978 p.27).

This may account for why several of the children did not feel they had 'learned' anything new. It was not an intention of the study to test factual recall and it was noticeable that in the interviews a week later the children discussed the format, images and language of the texts as much as content. This suggests that the kinds of learning or what they took away from the texts was not just content based. Their comments align with Alexander's and Jarman's (2015, p. 131) description of 'learning by stealth' (Chapter 2.3.2) in visual and aesthetically pleasing texts where the affective experience of interacting with the texts is what is most powerfully felt by the reader, at least initially. It would be necessary to return after a much longer time (as in Arizpe's and Styles' study, 2002) to explore further the knowledge which had endured from the reading events.

Table 3. Reader-response frame 1: adapted from Rosenblatt (1978)

Aesthetic	Demonstrates emotional response, reaction to something in the text, appreciation of a perceived quality in the text (words and illustrations) 'In aesthetic reading the reader's attention is centred directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text' (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.25).	Jim: I like this one 'cos its pictures in it - feel it *(strokes page, Billy does the same) Billy shrugs.* Jim: I like the pictures in it they're really, really good, painted and - you know Billy: yeah- Jim: I like the landscape what they're in Billy: yeah...they're *(indistinct)* Jim: yeah the landscape like tells us where they are 'cos I've never seen this before I've never read this book so- (ST 29-58C)	Jim is responding 'aesthetically' to the images in the book. Even though the image is not tactile he wants to touch it as a way of extending his engagement with it. He shows he is aware that there is a special quality to the images ('painted') but lacks a vocabulary for discussing them further. However his remarks about the landscape he has never seen before seem to hint at the way the images evoke a sense of place and atmosphere.
Efferent	Attends to informative nature of text, content and facts contained within the text. 'The reader's attention is focused on what will remain as the residue after the reading - the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out' (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.25).	Mia *points at moth page:* I didn't know that could be that colour Barry: and I didn't know that that was like like an animal- Me: what is that? Barry: it's a weasel (ST26-29I)	Barry and Mia were focused on the images and so the information which they regarded as 'learned' was derived from looking at the photographs. Their discussion elsewhere in both the conversation and interview highlighted the difficulty of finding the animals: therefore it is likely that the most enduring impression of the text will not be about content knowledge but the challenge of finding the camouflaged animals and the skill of the photographer.

2. Entanglement and filling the gaps.

As the poetic language of PNFPB texts is often sparse and allusive, the reader must be active in filling in the gaps (Iser, 1978) through inference, imagination and making connections between words, sentences, paragraphs and pages. For example the first page of *All the water in the world* just reads '…is all the water in the world'. The reader needs to link back to the title to form a whole sentence, a point which puzzled Cory:

Cory: Miss? I've got a question for this book… 'is all the water in the world' is a question and it hasn't got a question mark! (ST163I)

These gaps in the writing are not designed to be deliberately obscure, rather the poetic language gives particular emphasis to the choice and quality of the words used. Words stand out as strange or significant, seize the reader's attention and curiosity and invite the reader to see the ways in which the author builds understanding. Gaps similarly apply to the images through the ways in which the artists represent and symbolise objects. The reader needs to look carefully and allow time for the meaning of the image to unfold. In the first page of *North* for example, where the tiny polar bear leaves a trail through the snow, the twisting track and the flecks of paint to indicate the blizzard require interpretation by the reader. Amy and Sharon made sense of this image with ease, whereas some of adults to whom I showed the page, had trouble identifying what was going on. Nodelman (1988), argues that picture book texts which do not have any gaps and which aim to be as comprehensive and transparent as possible, render the reader passive and lack imaginative inspiration. Texts which require the reader to resolve puzzles and ask questions are demanding but lead to self-reflective, critical reading (Meek, 1996; Sanders, 2018).

On a simple level 'entanglement' (Iser, 1978, p.131) is a form of involvement or getting caught up in the world of the text. Martin, reading *Where in the Wild,* is fully immersed, making exclamations of surprise and excitement, oblivious to Cory's comments or suggestions. He is fully 'present' in the reading event (Iser, 1978, p.131). Iser describes the experience of reading as an interaction between the 'present' text and past experience and that the reader is in a constant process of balancing what is familiar with what is new in order to create a sense of unity or 'gestalt' from the text. Entanglement is therefore also seen where the reader goes back to ambiguities to clarify and build the sense of the whole text. The example of Cory and Martin's discussion in Table 4 shows them working together to clarify what was happening to the cat and how this related to their experience. They are active meaning-makers in this extract, moving between the story world of the text and their own understanding of cats (and figurative language!) to arrive at a meaning which is effective for them.

The Reader-response frames drew attention to specific ways in which readers respond to literary texts and assisted me in identifying instances of these in the data. In this way they helped to address research question one, how the children

responded to the PNFPBs by focusing on the literary nonfiction qualities of PNFPBs and demonstrating how these evoked particular responses from the children.

Table 4. Reader-response frame 2: adapted from Iser (1978)

Theme	Description	Illustrative example from transcripts	Commentary
Filling gap	Uses inference from words and/or pictures and applies prior knowledge to understand the parts of a text which are not explained by the author or artist. 'The gaps not only draw the reader in to the action but also lead him to shade in the many outlines suggested by a given situation so that they take on a reality of their own' (Iser 1978, p.168).	Sharon: there's people there and they're on a boat Amy: there's a doggie Sharon: they're rowing a boat Amy: there's a doggie Sharon: they're rowing a boat so they- Amy: he's a fisherman Sharon: they're rowing a boat so they- Amy: that is Bob Fisher Sharon: to get like- Amy: Fisher Price Sharon: like food - *(laughs)* (ST33-43C)	Despite Amy's jokiness here, she and Sharon are building up an understanding of what is going on by filling in the gaps. The focus of the picture is a large blue whale under the boat on its journey through tropical seas to the North. The text says nothing about the people: Amy and Sharon hypothesise about who they are and what they are doing.
Entangle-ment	Seeks to understand the meaning of the whole text, looking for consistency. 'Consistency-building is itself a living process, in which one is constantly forced to make selective decisions-this is what causes the reader to be entangled in the text 'gestalt' that he himself has produced' (Iser, 1972, p.296)	Cory: I liked about it's...it's having a dream because *(gestures with hand)* Martin: it's dreaming what it wants to be- Cory: personification because it's like we dream- Martin: yeah Cory: and normally cats don't dream Martin: normally they don't Cory: and er like it's on about it wished it could be that Martin: uhu Cory: and it's like it wants to still be a cat but a different kind of cat like a wild one (ST 145-154C)	Martin and Cory are working together to an understanding of the whole book *I am Cat*. They use a variety of strategies, including drawing on their own experience, looking in the text for clarification and bringing in school knowledge such as personification, to produce an agreed meaning.

5.7.2 Reading together frame (adapted from Maine, 2015)

The second frame focuses on the social ways in which meaning was made from the texts, through the children talking together about them and sharing ideas. The 4 themes are adapted from Maine's (2015) study of children discussing visual texts. The frame drew attention to some interesting comparisons and similarities with the codes and categories from the inductive analysis, particularly in respect to 'making sense'.

Most examples which could be considered as 'co-constructive acts' (Maine, 2015, p.30) were found within the conversations, where the children discussed the texts together. In the interviews, with the exception of one or two instances where I probed them further, the children usually presented me with ready formed ideas about meanings. By identifying particular ways in which children make meaning from texts through dialogue the application of this frame to the data contributed towards research question 2 and supplemented and supported the findings from the thematic analysis.

Below I discuss each of Maine's four themes in relation to the data in this study.

1. Determining importance and making connections to existing knowledge.

In 'determining importance' Maine (2015, p. 81) refers to the children focusing their discussion on a particular feature of the text which interests them. As in her study, what the children determined as important was not always the intended focal point of the writing or image: as in Jim's discussion of the landscape (Table 5) or Amy's and Sharon's discussion of the people on the boat rather than the huge whale sliding underneath it (Table 4). What became important was often determined by existing knowledge, as something would assume importance for the children when it related to either shared or individual experiences (which links to Rosenblatt's idea of 'personal meaningfulness', 1978, p.157; Chapter 2.3.2). Billy for example wanted to talk about the picture of 'swordfish' in *North* (they were in fact Narwhal whales) because he had seen one. Where the area of interest was not mutual that line of discussion ended, and the children returned to reading the text or a new line of dialogue was taken up. Deeper and more exploratory conversations tended therefore to occur when the focus of importance was shared.

Table 5: Reading together frame adapted from Maine (2015)

Theme	Description	Illustrative example from transcript	Comments
Determining importance (a) and making connections to existing knowledge (b)	(a) 'The decision to concentrate on a particular aspect of the text' (2015, p.82) (b)'Drawing on what they know and making connections to themselves and other texts' (2015, p.85)	(a) Jim: I like the landscape what they're in -yeah the landscape like tells us where they are 'cos I've never seen this before I've never read this book so- (ST56-58C) (b)Amy: geese! Are they flamingos? Sharon: they're not flamingos Amy: yeah they are flamingos Sharon: flamingos are yellow *(puts hand to head)* I mean pink! Amy: no but look at their legs they are flamingos... (ST58-62C)	(a)Jim picks up on the landscapes in the background to Morris' *I am Cat*. He decides to talk about these, because he finds them interesting, rather than the cat which forms the focus of the image. (b)Amy and Sharon are guessing, drawing upon their knowledge of birds so far rather than checking in the text.
Asking questions, hypothesising and making predictions	'Their questions lead them to predict, or hypothesize meanings that are rationalised to ensure that they make sense' (2015, p.87)	Billy: I know *(turns page)* a weasel? Jim: it's a weasel Billy: you can tell most likely it wouldn't be in the wild ...but as in a snake possibly it could be in the wild Jim: it is in the wild 'cos like tigers it doesn't have tigers in there they live in the wild but- Billy: yeah Jim: they probably didn't have any more time to *(pauses)* Billy: to like Jim: to like write any more Billy: yeah they've done their pictures they've done their writing ... they just wanna like try to send it off (ST123-131C)	Billy and Jim are trying to work out the reason why some animals are included in *Where in the Wild* and some are not. They engage in a series of proposals before coming to a joint hypothesis which is acceptable to them both. This extract shows dialogic meaning making in action as the children work together to arrive at a solution to a problem. Jim shows the 'messy dialogue' (Smith, 2005, p.32) which can occur in talk as he tries to put into words an emerging idea. In the ensuing conversation they use many hedging words such as 'likely', 'probably' or 'possibly' as they reach towards their conclusion.
Creating narratives and evoking images to extend and explain the story world	'The children create stories or describe possible events which are situated outside the frame of the text' (2015, p.88)	Barry: what would you do if that was just sat there, on your doorstep, the most dangerous snake in the world - on your doorstep? *Mia stares says nothing* Barry: I'd just come inside and slam the door on its head. What would you do? Mia *giggles*: I'd probably go - my little sister would probably scream and close the bedroom door she'd be like *(gestures)* 'there's some big massive snake on the doorstep!' (ST135-139C)	Looking at the picture of the green snake in *Where in the Wild* Barry and Mia relate to the subject on a personal level by imagining an encounter with the snake in their normal daily lives. Their story is inspired by the text but set outside the events within it.
Empathising with characters and entering the story world to understand it more	Children 'explore the feelings and motivations of characters... [they] place themselves in the 'scene' to engage with it' (2015, p.91).	Amy: it's like a cat trying to be another big cat Me: there's lots of different big cats isn't there? Amy: It's like when a little child wants to be a person. (ST187I) Jim *reads*: imagine you are an animal in the wild trying to avoid a prowling predator, if it can't find you it can't eat you; Me: what made you pick that? Jim: umm (ST 81-83I)	Amy is showing a developing understanding of the story in *I am Cat*, first by offering a literal explanation of what the cat is experiencing in the story and then by applying it to human experience in order to empathise with and understand it more fully. Jim does not explain why he has chosen this passage to read aloud but it is the place where the author has invited the reader to empathise, to imagine themselves in the animals' situation.

2. Asking questions and making predictions (or hypothesising).

This theme focused on questions arising from the text, although, as discussed elsewhere, there were many other types of questions in the data including personal or organisational ones. Many of the text-based questions in this study were 'demands for knowledge' (Maine, 2015, p.86) linked to seeking confirmation from the text and partner, for example asking where or what an animal was. There were fewer 'why' questions which went beyond what could be answered by the text. Where the children did begin to ask 'why' questions as in the example above (Table 5), the conversation became more flowing and the 'dialogic chains' (Maine, 2015, p.33) were longer and more cooperative. The lack of 'why' questions may have been down to the nature of the task with several books to read, allowing less time for consideration of each text. Maine (2015, p.59) suggests that 'why' questions tend to instigate lines of enquiry and 'divergent thinking' where the children engage with the text creatively to speculate about meaning. Speculation, rather than prediction, was seen particularly where the children wondered about the reasons behind an author and/or artist's particular decision or choice of technique.

3. Creating narratives and evoking images to extend and explain the story world.

Adding a narrative explanation to explain or embellish an aspect of the text is one way in which children develop greater understanding and engagement with the text (Maine, 2015). Unlike the pilot study the 'story-worlds' which Maine (2015, p.90) describes were not so evident in the children's responses. In this study narrative explanations were not developed or detailed, instead the children hinted at or alluded to possible stories. Amy in particular did this, by giving the fisherman in *North* a name, or by calling the island on which the gulls nested 'Puffin Island' (ST109C). Barry and Mia's snake story (Table 5) was the most expanded narrative and moved outside the frame of the book completely to share a scary idea inspired by the text. Creative engagement was more apparent with those texts which had a linear narrative (*All the water in the world, I am Cat, North*), less in the collections of poems, although in the pilot study the children had engaged readily in telling stories inspired by *A First Book of Nature.* Again, the balance of areas of interest between partners and the nature of the task may have curtailed story-telling. However, it was

noticeable that Jim and Sharon made intertextual connections with stories when discussing the texts rather than other sources of information. Jim for example compared *Where in the Wild* with *Where the Wild Things Are*, no doubt inspired by word association, but a comparison which he did not consider far-fetched. Sharon compared *A First Book of Nature* with the *Story of Peter Rabbit,* a link possibly arising from Hearld's images of gardens. The association with story suggests that the children were picking up on the imaginative possibilities offered by the texts.

4. Empathising with characters and entering the story world to understand it more.

The 'characters' referred to by the children were the animals, although some humans did feature in the images (Chapter 3.6.1). Although empathy is not normally associated with reading nonfiction (Morgan, 2016), there were several examples of the children empathising with the animals in the texts (5.5.4). Amy, in Table 5 above, compares the cat's experience with that of a human baby and sees this as an acceptable comparison within the context of *I am Cat.* Cory also sees a personal bond with one of the animals and uses this to express his interest: 'that's my favourite one! It's like it's a cute animal and it likes flowers and I like flowers too' (ST109C). Whilst Martin seems to gain satisfaction from applying a human relationship to the cat in Morris' *I am Cat.* (*Pointing to the panther)* 'So I'd say that's his brother' (ST131C). These are all ways in which the children seek to connect with the text, not through rational and cognitive strategies, but through an empathetic response. Empathy is made possible by entering the 'story world' where cats can have feelings like those of a human and this enables them to draw upon their own emotional experiences to deepen their engagement with the text.

5.8 Reflection on the analytical approach

The analytical design of this study was structured to enable observation of the data from different perspectives. It was intended to be re-iterative, by prompting multiple reviews of the videos and transcripts based on an understanding that analysis is a continuous process which takes place throughout the whole of the study (Stake, 1995). Through the first inductive and thematic approach to the data I was able to investigate the entirety of what the children said, and to examine their discussions

through coding each speech turn. Then, by using the frames as lenses through which to view the data I was able to identify particular features in their dialogue and interpret them through theoretical perspectives.

Comparing the three 'strands': thematic, reader-response and reading together, it is possible to see clear lines of connection between them. Emotional response for example, identified in the 'making sense' theme links closely to 'aesthetic' reading and Rosenblatt's (1978) concept of reading as lived experience. It also relates to Maine's theme of 'empathy and entering the story world' where understanding is reached through imagining how others feel. There are many such connections between the three approaches, but each does not simply replicate findings. The three approaches instead offer different angles from which to view the data. This is important within the context of this study which focuses on children's response to a particular group of books with distinct features. Whilst Maine's themes highlight what the children do *together* to make sense of the texts, Iser's and Rosenblatt's approaches are particularly useful for linking what the children do *with the texts*. Iser's concept of 'gap-filling' for example highlights how the children bring experience and knowledge to their understanding of the texts, but it also highlights features of the PNFPBs by drawing attention to the 'indeterminate places' (1978, p.171) where such gaps occur and their prevalence in the PNFPBs in this study. Moreover, by bringing the focus on to the aesthetic nature of the texts, reader-response theory helps to illustrate their literary qualities and supports the argument that they deserve greater recognition within children's literature. The analysis shows that reader-response theory, although well-used in research of children's response, is a valid and useful framework for a study which seeks to explore both texts and children's responses to them, and is relevant to these nonfiction texts.

Finally, a key principle of the study as stated in Chapter 1 was to keep the children's voices at the heart of the research. In presenting the findings in this chapter I have drawn extensively on what the children said in the reading events. It would be naïve and simplistic to claim that I have simply presented the participants' words in this account. In choosing what to include and what to leave out in my discussion, I have inevitably created my own version of the reading events, a particular kind of reality

which Spyrou asserts is 'always mediated through our [adult researchers'] concepts and theories' (2018, p.6). This chapter therefore presents just one account of the children's ideas, but one which reveals the children engaged in complex reading experiences inspired by the PNFPBs.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the response of a group of primary-aged children to the category of books described by Kesler (2012) as 'poetic nonfiction picture books' (PNFPBs). My focus was in 3 areas: the response of the children, the ways they made meaning of the texts and their understanding of nonfiction, which I reflected in my three research questions (6.2). The study was twofold in that it considered children's response to the texts but also necessarily encompassed an exploration of the texts themselves as examples of PNFPBs (Chapter 3).

The ideas and understandings which the children expressed came from a complex range of influences, which included their particular school and year group as well as personal experiences, relationships and the culture of their homes and communities. These formed part of their identities as readers and as unique individuals. This means that their responses to the texts should not be seen as representative. Instead they capture the diversity, possibilities and some of the commonalities of response to PNFPBs and so serve as points of reflection for future research and for practice.

6.2 Summary of the main findings

In this section the main findings from the study are summarised in relation to the three research questions.

1. *How do the children respond to texts which are examples of poetic nonfiction picture books?*

The findings reflect the complex nature of response, as discussed throughout the thesis, and the challenge of capturing children's response faithfully and representing it authentically. The study has demonstrated that response is a broad term which, although often used, encompasses many different reactions, impressions and ways of engaging with the text, some of which are fleeting but which become part of the total reading experience. It may therefore be more accurate to describe the children as having many different responses during the reading events. With the exception of Barry and Mia, all of the children showed initial interest and curiosity in the texts and

were keen to discuss them. They all maintained this interest and engagement throughout the conversations and interviews, and even Barry and Mia, despite their initial reluctance, remained fully focused on *Where in the Wild* throughout the duration of the 20 minutes of their conversation. Using Rosenblatt's (1978) definitions of aesthetic and efferent stance, the children's initial responses appeared to be primarily aesthetic, noting the more 'literary' qualities of the texts before their informational content (Chapters 2.2.5 and 5.7.2). Many of these initial comments were about the pictures, suggesting that the visual images had an immediate impact and were important in their engagement with the books (Chapter 5.6.3). These responses suggested that the children were reacting to the 'entertainment-orientated' (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2003, p.189) features of the texts as they accorded closely with many of the characteristics of reading for pleasure (DfE, 2012; Cremin *et al.,* 2014). The game format of *Where in the Wild* was a key attraction for several of the children, and contributed to making this text the most popular choice. Poetry and poetic language, where noted, were welcomed and seen as fun and enjoyable characteristics of the texts. Throughout the data the theme of identity emerged as a strong feature of response (Figure 5), as all of the children showed awareness of their identity as individuals and as readers which influenced their reading choices and to differing extents pre-determined their reaction to the texts, acting as a way of monitoring what they thought they would or would not like.

Although the findings give an insight into the children's response, they present only a partial view which hints at further subconscious, transitory or suppressed responses. Yet despite the limitations, they demonstrate the active and alternating nature of the reader/text transaction (Rosenblatt, 1978), as the children were simultaneously receptive to the text and active in drawing from their identities to create connections with it.

2. *How do the children appear to make meaning from the texts?*

Meaning-making was the most extensive of the themes arising from the data and the findings (Figure 6) demonstrate the many individual and joint processes which the children used to make sense of the texts. The children employed 'reading the text'

(Chapter 5.5.1) strategies such as self-correcting, questioning, labelling and checking in the text for clarification, but they also made associations with wider and different kinds of knowledge, as well as summarising and imagining to create their own understandings. The use of physical engagement, empathy and emotions helped the children to relate to what they were reading. These findings support research on children's meaning-making by Maine (2015), Aukerman (2016) and Arizpe and Styles (2016). Meaning-making was a fluid process and the texts presented the reader with opportunities to make shifts of perspective as the children moved between efferent and aesthetic stances (Rosenblatt, 1978). Evidence was found (Chapter 5.6.4) of the kind of 'oscillation' in reading which Kesler comments upon (2017, p. 622), as they shifted between the different elements of the texts, which included the images, poetry and graphical design. Whilst imaginative and creative responses were relatively limited, where they occurred, for example in Barry and Mia's snake story (Table 5) they showed the children making sense in playful and personal ways. The 'interpersonal' codes within the data (Chapter 5.5.8) drew attention to joint meaning-making processes, but also emphasised the influence of partners to enhance or hinder individual understandings of the text.

These approaches to meaning-making may not be exclusive to PNFPBs, and align with Maine's (2015) research where children employ a similar range of broad and diverse ways to understand visual texts which include films and single images as well as picture books. However they do suggest a stretching of the usual parameters for understanding nonfiction texts and question the assertion that nonfiction reading does not support the development of empathy (Bal and Veltkamp, 2013), since they engage the readers' emotions and demonstrate that they can be read as 'lived through experience' (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 27).

3. *What do their responses to the texts indicate about their perceptions of nonfiction?*

In their first encounter with the texts (the conversations) the children did not identify them explicitly as nonfiction or fiction. Putting them into either category did not appear to be important, and the truthfulness or informational content of the books

was not questioned. Instead the children responded to the qualities within the text which were not typically associated with nonfiction: such as the artistic images, the language and the design and layout. This may have been influenced by the way in which the texts were presented to the children, as Rosenblatt's (1978) theory of efferent and aesthetic reading suggests. As the nature of the texts was not clearly determined at the beginning, and no fact-finding task was assigned, the children were not guided to adopt a particular stance, as they may be when usually encountering nonfiction texts.

Further questioning in the interviews revealed that, although their initial readings had focused on the aesthetic qualities of the texts, the children's understanding of different textual forms were informing their responses. The children demonstrated knowledge of the conventions of poetry and narrative texts and an understanding of the nature of nonfiction in accordance with what would be expected at their age and stage of the National Curriculum for English (DfE, 2014). This included a simple definition of nonfiction, an appreciation of typical structural features and in some cases (Chapter 5.6.1) an understanding of the different nature and purposes of expository writing. The hybridity of the texts, the truthfulness of the information in them and the authority of the author were not initially noted, although with encouragement some of the children were responsive to these ideas and began to explore the texts more critically. This raises some questions about the openness of the texts to critical reading (Sanders, 2018) which I discuss below (6.4). As in Arizpe's and Styles' study (2002) the ways in which the texts had been constructed (what the artists had done, what the authors had decided) seemed to be a way in to these deeper discussions.

The findings draw attention to the intrinsic value of the texts, and the readiness with which (most) of the children engaged with them supports Bintz's and Ciecierski's (2017) claim that 'hybrid text is not only an engaging tool… but also a powerful tool to pique readers' attention and ensure the curiosity to learn' (2017, p. 61). The PNFPBs provided a rich and diverse reading experience which the children made personally relevant through connecting with different aspects of their personal, educational, emotional and physical lives. But the findings also identify some of the

challenges which the books presented for their readers such as negative response to picture books; the children's limited 'visual' language; their perceptions of what was 'new' knowledge and critical engagement. Whilst these challenges are equally applicable to many other kinds of texts, I discuss the particular implications for practice for those teachers choosing to use PNFPBs in the classroom below.

6.3 Originality

As Kesler's (2012, 2017) classification of PNFPBs is relatively new, this thesis is the first discussion of this category and exploration of PNFPBs in an English classroom context. The only other study which looks specifically at children's interactions with PNFPBs is Kesler's own 2017 investigation in a grade 4 classroom and this differed fundamentally from my own in terms of approach and purpose. Kesler's approach was more structured and instructive: he introduced the texts as nonfiction and helped the children to look for the specific qualities of PNFPBs as a category of nonfiction and reflect these in their nonfiction writing. His results suggested that the finished work produced by the children 'met and exceeded grade expectations' (2017, p.628), demonstrating the potential value of the PNFPBs texts as a teaching resource and stimulus. Bintz's and Ciercieski's study (2017) of more broadly defined hybrid texts adopted a similarly structured approach, and both mirror the pedagogy of nonfiction which has dominated their use in English classrooms (Chapter 1.2). Whilst approaches such as Kesler's and Bintz's and Ciercieski's offer suggestions about practical ways in which hybrid texts can be used in the classroom, my study offers a different perspective of a more open approach which is not focused on a product or outcome which I argue is more appropriate for these kinds of literary nonfiction texts. Instead, through a methodology which includes open-ended conversations, the transaction between the child and text becomes the focus and it is possible to see, albeit partially, how the text affects the child and what the child does with the text.

This study builds upon previous studies of children's responses to picture books which show that they are diverse, complex and rewarding texts to read (Sipe, 1998; Arizpe and Styles, 2002; Evans, 2015). The findings also support Maine's (2015) analysis of the ways in which children make meaning together using visual texts. The research

therefore adds to this body of literature by including hybrid texts which are both nonfiction and picture books and which have been neglected or marginalised. It also builds on Kesler's 2012 study which has formed the foundation of my investigation. The evidence in this study from different fields of research into children's picture books, nonfiction and poetry as presented in Chapter 2 and the children's responses to the texts, uphold his thesis that PNFPBs can be viewed as a distinct category and with the distinct features and qualities which he has described. I have extended the discussion of PNFPBs by suggesting a modification of his typology to suggest an alternative way to view the hybrid nature of these texts (Chapter 3.4).

The study has shown that children read texts in sometimes unexpected ways which can cause us as researchers to reassess our own readings of them. Children bring their whole experience to reading a text just as adults do. What they bring is necessarily less in terms of quantity as they have had less time to accumulate experiences, but it is no less in importance, and it is possible that, because they are fewer in number, the events and texts which children have encountered and bring to their readings hold greater intensity and significance for them. Taking account of their responses can deepen our understanding of children's literature and move the field forward. Descz-Tryhubczsak (2016) argues that scholars of children's literature need to make a 'paradigm shift' (p.218) in thinking which moves away from analysis of children's literature from adult perspectives to inclusion of child readers' views. This study contributes towards that different way of thinking and aims to bridge the gap between scholarship of children's literature and educational research, hence the duality of my analysis of the texts in Chapter 3 and the children' responses to them in Chapter 5. My approach differs from Kesler's (2012 and 2017) as the children's perspectives are not presented within curricular objectives but from an approach which is more exploratory and holistic.

This study employed semi-structured interviews with more open-ended conversations. Comparison of the videos and transcripts from each method revealed a difference in the children's responses. Firstly the conversations seemed to allow children the time necessary to uncover their own readings and interpretations, to puzzle out problems and guide them towards greater self-reflection in their reading.

Freed from a teacher presence or input the children were better able to express ideas which were tentative or provisional. Secondly, in the conversations several of the children seemed to respond to the texts with more creative and imaginative use of language, and to play with the texts in ways which were not obviously studious. Finally the experiences which they brought to their readings showed both how they were 'filling in' (Iser, 1978, p.165) the gaps in their knowledge and also where those gaps arose. In drawing upon their personal experiences the children could be seen to be building relevance as well as sense, sometimes in unexpected ways, as for example in Billy, Cory and Jim's concept of the 'wild' (Chapter 5.4), an area of confusion which I could not have predicted or envisaged.

Contrasting the children's responses in the interviews with their conversations brings into focus some of the possible benefits of more child-led approaches (Chapter 4). The transcripts of the conversations show that the children were more relaxed as demonstrated by their creative and playful responses (Chapter 5.5.7) and the imbalance of power was less evident possibly allowing the children to feel more empowered to express their true feelings about the books rather than being anxious to give the correct response to please the adult. These responses suggest some future pathways for child-led research of children's literature which are discussed below (6.6).

6.4 Implications and recommendations for practice

1. PNFPBs, variety and range of nonfiction

Although choice, range and access to nonfiction books emerged through the literature review as important in helping children to become competent and engaged readers (Chapter 2.3.2), the outcomes driven approach to nonfiction and its low status were presented as factors limiting children's access to a sufficiently broad range of nonfiction texts in the classroom (Chapter 1.4.2). PNFPBs and hybrid texts can be engaging and innovative, appeal to diverse purposes and provide different reading experiences, but may be neglected because they fall between categories, or because teachers are simply unaware of them. Raising the profile of these texts is therefore important if they are to become more common in classrooms. Many

PNFPBs also lend themselves well to reading aloud, because many have a clear narrative thread and lyrical language. As nonfiction is less frequently read aloud to children (Stead, 2014) PNFPBs may also be useful resources to diversify and increase the range of books which teachers choose for reading aloud sessions. The texts can also provide an engaging way to draw in children's attention at the beginning of a curriculum topic through the combination of strong visual images, interesting language and informational content.

For teachers, part of the problem lies not just in locating PNFPBs, but also in finding the time to gain sufficient familiarity with new texts. Many sources recommend that teachers are well acquainted with the texts which they use in the classroom (e.g. Roche, 2015; Cremin *et al.*, 2014) but in practice this is challenging and teachers fall back on what is familiar to them, limiting children's exposure to new books and unfamiliar forms, such as hybrid texts. The importance of support and collaboration between professionals is essential as research by Cremin *et al.,* (2014) suggests that schools with communities of teachers who read children's books are more likely to overcome the difficulties in maintaining a vibrant and varied diet of texts.

Where time and resources are scarce Bintz and Ciercieski (2017) argue that hybrid texts fulfil a multi-purpose function within the classroom. PNFPBs are equally versatile: through arousing curiosity, interest and engagement; encouraging appreciation of literary forms and by offering the possibility of critical investigation of specific topics. To maximise the potential of PNFPBs in the classroom they need to be included amongst a variety of text types, perhaps used alongside two or three more conventional or content-heavy nonfiction texts so that comparisons can be made and topics explored from different perspectives. In this way PNFPBs can help children to move towards becoming rounded readers who are thoughtful and sensitive to the different qualities, efferent and aesthetic, of the texts which they read.

2. PNFPBs, dialogue and meaning-making

As this study has shown, the juxtaposition of image, poetic language and information content in PNFPBs provides much for children to discuss, encompassing expository and literary textual forms and content knowledge as well as aesthetic response to

language and images. The value of dialogue around books is well established (Chapter 2.3.10; Chambers, 1993; Meek, 1996; Evans, 2009; Smith, 2009; Roche, 2015), but Alexander and Jarman (2015) suggest that children are more familiar with book talk that is in response to fiction, rather than nonfiction, and is teacher guided rather than child-led (p.126). The value of more child-led discussions as demonstrated by Aukerman's research on child led sense-making (2015 and Chapter 2.3.7) is supported by this study. Having time to talk about and share books and to revisit them is also noted as valuable in helping children to make sense of texts (Chambers, 1995; Arizpe and Styles, 2002; Roche, 2015). The findings suggest that open-ended and child-led discussions encourage broad kinds of meaning-making and allow children to share experiences and find relevance in the texts they read. Articulating ideas about texts in 'co-constructive dialogue' (Maine, 2015, p. 42) is an important way in which children practice and develop their ability to make meaning from texts. Stimulating and enjoyable discussions where participants listen and participate respectfully are a feature of language rich classrooms, but this kind of reading experience demands time as it can only be established where reading has high status and a wide variety of quality texts are regularly shared and discussed (Smith, 2009).

One of the benefits of extended discussion around texts which this study demonstrated was that of raising opportunities for playful interactions. The children's responses suggest that playful behaviour around texts should not necessarily be viewed as indicative of being disengaged or off-task. The children were given the freedom to explore the texts in whatever way they chose and they often reacted in playful ways which were unexpected and at times surprising. *Where in the Wild* invited a playful stance from the readers, through the lift the flap format, which all of the children enjoyed and responded to. Barry and Mia went beyond lifting the flaps to inventing their own games with the book (Chapter 5.5.7). The poetic language also invited a playful response from Amy and Sharon who giggled and made humorous word associations. Whilst such responses could be viewed as signs of disengagement, Ghiso's (2011) and Maine's (2015) research shows that the use of playful activities and playful language can be a creative response to text and form a useful social function in helping children to work together. Playful language also acts as a

'buffer…buying time between ideas and maintaining the opportunity for inter-thinking' (Maine, 2015, p.108). My study suggests that accepting and sharing playful ways to interact with the texts can also be a way to honour children's sense-making (Aukerman, 2013) and to engage and motivate less enthusiastic readers.

Finally shifts in stance and 'oscillation' across the modes of image, words and design forms (Kesler, 2017, p.619) was seen as a feature of the children's engagement with these texts. Oscillation between text forms is cognitively demanding and perhaps one of the main challenges of reading PNFPBs texts as it requires non-linear reading and the ability (and willingness) to synthesise different sorts of information. There is not a single right way to read multifaceted texts like these, but exposure to complex types of text may support children to become more active and independent readers, able to construct a deeper understanding which has meaning and relevance for them. They may also help them to develop confidence and expertise in bringing together ideas and information when reading across different sources, an important skill for future study.

3. Reader identities, choices and responses.

The importance afforded to their reader identities by children as demonstrated in this study and in evidence from other literature cited, reinforces the need for classrooms where children can discuss their reading choices and reflect on how they see themselves as readers. Giving children choice in what they read and respecting their likes and preferences is one of the key ways in which children's reader identities can be developed (Cremin *et al.*, 2014; Hall, 2012; Meier, 2015). However children need to be able to make choices from a changing selection of texts to prevent them from becoming narrow or 'flat earth readers' who only read one kind of book (Chambers, 1993, p. 13). Many children, with few books available at home (Clark and Teravainen, 2017), rely solely upon teachers to expand their reading horizons. Providing and sharing different kinds of texts including picture books and other innovative genres such as PNFPBs is one way to encourage children to be willing to try something else and so view their reader identities as growing and flexible rather than fixed. Providing a range of nonfiction titles is not just about offering a range of topics or subject

content, it is also about supplying texts which demonstrate different ways in which a topic can be presented and addressed.

'Positive' reader identities are noted by a number of sources (Frankel, 2017; Meier, 2015; Cremin *et al.*, 2014). Definitions of what a 'positive reader identity' is differ, but usually refer to the value placed on reading by the child which is also linked to reading ability (Hall, 2012). In this study none of the children expressed a negative view of reading by stating that they disliked reading or considered themselves to be poor readers. Although Mia did not like the books on offer, she approached them from a positive sense of herself as an able, capable reader. This may have reflected the choice of participants, who were all selected by the teacher as independent readers of average reading ability, but it raises some questions about how to support readers with a strong sense of identity to try new texts and genres which might not appeal to them. Cremin *et al.*, (2014, p.3) argue that effective teachers acknowledge reader identity as an important factor in children's development as readers and that 'interaction, choice, autonomy, and reading for pleasure' are 'responsive' ways to support reader identity development.

Mia's initial response to the books was similar to that of Beth in Abodeep-Gentile's and Zawilinksi's study (2013) and to that of two children interacting with picture books in a study by Smith (2009). These responses suggest that there is still resistance to picture books by pupils in the Upper Primary years, which is bound up with reader identity and as much to do with a perception of what is appropriate reading as it is to do with how appealing the texts are. This attitude persists despite work to identify the value of picture books and promote their use amongst teachers of older children (Haynes and Murris, 2012; Roche, 2015) and despite the production of picture books which are increasingly complex and aimed at older audiences (Evans, 2015). Arizpe's and Styles' (2002) study of children's response celebrates the positive reactions which children across a wide age-range (aged 4-11) had to picture books. Smith links this to teachers' attitudes towards picture books and notes that many studies of children's responses to picture books show them 'doing it well' and asks, 'what about the others? How do children whose teachers do not celebrate picture books and who have nothing extrinsic to gain from them respond?' (2009, p.91). Junior-aged children

who have a perception that picture books are too easy and only for young children are excluded from experiencing the complexity, enjoyment, range and challenge which picture books (and especially PNFPBs) can offer. This is an issue which is an important one which needs to be addressed by educators, publishers and booksellers.

4. Exploring truth and trust in nonfiction texts through critical reading

PNFPBs offer opportunities for critical reading and exploration of the nature of truth and reliability in nonfiction texts. Truth and trust in the narrator emerged as key themes for children's nonfiction in Chapter 2 (Chapter 2.2.6) and I noted that it is increasingly seen as important to support children to become readers who are able to question texts in ways which are critical and enquiring (Chapter 2.3.11). Critical reading is an essential characteristic of capable readers who are able to engage with 'real' texts which they encounter in the world, such as newspaper articles or websites. Critical thinking, critical reading and critical talking are all terms which encompass a wide range of cognitive skills, but what they have in common is the ability to be metacognitive, to review a text from a distance and be aware of the processes which it evokes. Roche (2015) and Sanders (2018) argue that critical literacy is more than a useful skill which children will need in the future; it is a pedagogical approach which is essential if children are to be empowered to make their own decisions and develop informed opinions.

The children in this study responded to the truthfulness of the texts at different levels. Jim was not ready to engage in discussion about the way in which truth was represented in the texts, and accepted the author as omniscient (Chapter 5.6.2) whereas Cory and Billy began to see the 'vulnerable' space which where the authority of the text might be uncertain (Sanders, 2018, p. 223). Presentation of the narrator is one of those vulnerable places and a possible way to open up discussion is through the use of visible and invisible narrators in these texts (Chapter 2.2.8). My questions in the interviews prompted Cory and Martin to begin to reflect on their assumptions about truth and validity in the books which they had chosen (Chapter 5.6.2), and this seemed to support Sanders' argument (2018, p. 229) that, although children will respond spontaneously to some nonfiction texts in ways which are critical and

creative, teacher guidance enabled more of them to engage critically with texts and to develop their critical thinking.

The importance of the images in PNFPBs is one way in which they can provide an opening into developing critical reading and discussion. All of the children in this study were keen to discuss the images, and as mentioned previously they tended to look at the images first and spent much time looking at them. Arizpe and Styles (2016) suggest that confidence in discussing images varies between individuals according to their prior experiences of looking at pictures, and the children in this study were restricted in their discussions by a limited vocabulary to describe them (such as 'pretty', 'realistic' or 'detailed'; Chapter 5.6.3). This suggests that teacher modelling of talk about the pictures might help children to articulate their thoughts and stimulate ideas about what to look for and discuss. As Sanders suggests (2018) photographs offer rich possibilities for considering presentation of truth. Barry and Mia's reflections on how the photographer managed to capture the hidden animals show them beginning to understand, and so question, the constructed nature of the image (Chapter 2.2.9). However the artistic images in the books offer equally valid, if different opportunities for critical discussion about how ideas have been selected and presented and draw parallels between artist and author. Conversations about the images can progress from discussing technique, *how* the artist had made the picture, to considering the artists' decisions and intentions.

The implications are therefore that PNFPBs can be particularly versatile texts for discussion in classrooms and open up a wide range of possibilities for developing children's critical understanding of image, language and nonfiction. I suggest that it is the potential of PNFPBs for critical engagement which makes them particularly significant in the context of contemporary educational debate as they are texts which align with current pedagogical discussions about the nature of critical reading. PNFPBs offer possibilities for critical reading through the ways in which image and poetic language are used to present factual content. They invite the reader to look at subjects in the real world from different perspectives, to be active in considering what has been included and what has been left out and possibly curious to seek out more.

6.5 Future research

In this study I worked with a small number of children, in a single school over a relatively short period of time. The reading events took place outside the classroom and away from the class teacher's presence. The children's teacher, although willing for me to work with the children, kept a distance from the study and did not wish to get further involved. I turned this to my advantage as I was able to respond to the children without prior priming and did not have any preconceptions about their behaviour or ability. However I am aware that similar studies of children's response such as Evans (2015), Roche (2015) and Maine (2015) took place over a much longer period of time and involved close working with the class teacher to build a relationship of trust between the researcher, teacher and children. Collaboration with a teacher, who knows his or her class well, can have distinct benefits for the children and the 'outsider researcher' (Hellawell, 2006, p. 484). Moreover much can be learned about the ways in which children can interact critically and creatively with texts from observing an experienced teacher working with their class.

A further limitation was in the choice of texts. I first began researching PNFPBs shortly after the publication of Kesler's first article in 2012. Although Kesler argued that this type of text was becoming more prevalent in the US, in the UK at the time I struggled to find the same range of PNFPBs that he described, hence my use of two US examples. Writing in 2018 the situation seems somewhat different and I notice a growing number of texts in this category available in the UK and I have listed some examples in Appendix 3. If selecting books for the study now I would be able to choose from a much wider range of UK texts which represented a greater breadth of hybrid features.

Research on hybrid texts and PNFPBs in particular is sparse and tends to focus on how to use the texts in the classroom (6.3). However studies which are concerned with the qualities and properties of the texts themselves are useful in informing pedagogy about practice, and can add to teachers' textual knowledge. Considering what is true and how truth is perceived in the PNFPBs was an interesting area which emerged in this study and which merited further exploration. As discussed elsewhere in this

thesis it is a topic which has been linked to ideas about quality and criticality (Chapter 2.2.9), and continues to be an important point of discussion in the US around nonfiction books for children (Sanders, 2018). Texts which combine biography, images and poetry are a growing group within PNFPBs and would lend themselves well to this type of investigation (see Appendix 3 for examples). Further exploration of PNFPBs and of hybrid texts in general, would fit well in to current educational discourse in the UK about critical and creative reading and reading for pleasure, and help to bring children's nonfiction into wider discussions of children's literature.

As discussed above (6.4) the child-led conversations yielded different responses from the interviews and I suggest that these open-ended first encounters with texts are a helpful way to begin more collaborative research with children about their literature. They could be a useful starting point for a further conversation about the aspects of the texts which the children would like to discuss or explore further and suggest possible avenues for research. The researcher would need to be willing to move away from their initial focus to follow the children's ideas and suggestions. This approach would fit in with the types of participatory research with children which Descz-Tryhubczak (2016) argues are still largely absent from children's literature research to move beyond a traditional concept of reader-response where children's opinions are placed 'within an adult-defined framework' (p.224)

Finally the children in this study could not strictly be described as 'reading for pleasure' according to Cremin *et al.'s* definition (Chapter 2.3.2) since they had not chosen to read of their own volition and were assigned a task or outcome. My intention in this study was not to explore the texts from a reading for pleasure perspective, yet the children did find the reading pleasurable or, as in Barry's and Mia's case, began to find the reading pleasurable after initial resistance. This raises questions about distinctions between reading for pleasure and reading for purpose and whether PNFPBs can conflate these intentions. It would therefore be useful to explore PNFPBs from a reading for pleasure perspective, particularly since research so far on hybrid texts (Bintz and Ciecierski, 2017; Kesler, 2017) has focused on their use within structured activities.

6.6 Personal reflections

Some time has now elapsed since I gathered this data: the participants have moved on to secondary school and have probably long forgotten the reading events which the study captures. My notes chart the ways in which my interpretations of the children's responses have changed, from observing the events as they happened to examining the data in depth and from different perspectives. What surprises me is how the process of analysis helped to reveal the assumptions and beliefs which I had unwittingly brought to the study. Martin was an 'unenthusiastic' reader who brought a joke book to our first meeting and didn't like long books, yet when I analyse his responses I find that he is a sensitive reader who makes insightful comments about the language of the texts and is moved by the poetry. Amy dominated Sharon, preventing her from expressing her ideas about the texts, yet again when I look closely at their speech turns I see that Sharon says just as much as Amy does, albeit in a quieter way.

Barry's and Mia's responses were in many ways the most problematic for me because the children did not seem to enjoy the texts on offer or engage readily with them. I have already discussed Mia's resistance to the books and how Barry supported and encouraged her to read *Where in the Wild* (Chapter 5.5.8). I have also identified some of the positive aspects which emerged from their discussion including their playful interpretations of the texts and their awareness of the photographer's role (Chapter 5.6.3). But the extract below represents a negative approach which initially I found disheartening:

> Mia: I still like that book better *(points to Where in the Wild)*
> *Barry reads a bit aloud*
> Barry: this one's boring
> Mia (*flicking through her book)*: that's just basically every single thing about nature… so it's actually very boring
> (ST 54-57I)

Both children, but Mia in particular, seemed resistant to the books. I was not sure how to respond to this in the interview and I hear myself compensating by talking too much, asking increasingly closed questions and suggesting ideas of my own to keep the conversation going. However, as I analysed the transcripts I saw how my view of

the events had prevented me from seeing the creative and constructive aspects of their dialogue. I came to realise how important it was that negative and less than enthusiastic responses were acknowledged amongst the positive and insightful ones, as Barry and Mia's reaction has as much validity in this study as that of the other participants. Barry and Mia remind me that children come to each reading event with ready-formed reader identities and experiences which have shaped their reading. Since the importance and esteem which is placed upon objects and activities such as books and reading is cultural and contextual, an inclusive approach to sharing texts requires teachers and researchers to listen and acknowledge different values and concepts of quality.

Finally the process has taught me much about the importance of holding back and giving children time and space to respond, particularly when encountering complex texts such as those used in this study. As Roche (2015) observes, it is very hard for teachers to let go of the urge to control and to abandon practices of talking to children based upon an imbalance of power which is ingrained in our classrooms. The ways in which we present texts to children are often motivated by a desire to share enthusiasms and show that 'language and literature are interesting, pleasurable and purposeful' (Roche, 2015, p.33). Yet passionate teacher-readers like myself need to be wary of imposing our readings and enthusiasms on to children and to allow room for different kinds of reading passions, interests and identities. My research has led me to question my assumptions about what a 'good' reader is and to question if there is only one kind of 'good' reader, just as I questioned if there is only one kind of good text or good talk and indeed whether such labels are desirable. Roche (2015) argues that it is dialogue which teachers need to aim for, not acquiescence.

6.7 Final thoughts

In this study I have argued that PNFPBs are complex, multi-modal and multi-layered texts which invite aesthetic, emotive and empathetic responses whilst imparting informational content. They are both children's literature and quality nonfiction. I argue that inclusion of children's perspectives can add to our understanding of texts

and suggest that scholarly criticism of children's literature will benefit from the perspectives which children bring to the study of their texts. The children in this study demonstrate that more open-ended discussions elicit imaginative and creative responses. However I argue that critical talk about texts needs to be fostered through regular discussion in safe, supportive and well-resourced learning environments where children regularly encounter a variety of nonfiction texts types and are encouraged to explore innovative and unusual books.

Kesler's categorisation of PNFPBs serves a useful purpose in alerting attention to a group of often inspiring texts which, because they slip through familiar genre frameworks, may otherwise be neglected by educators. As PNFPBs become increasingly available to the public, whether and when they will filter in to classrooms remains to be seen. I hope that they will do so for the reasons which I have set out in this thesis.

However if they do make their way to classrooms, my hope is that they will not be used just as exemplars or models of a new genre described by a set of generic features. Many hybrid texts of all types are innovative works which test and explore the boundaries of categorisation, bringing together diverse and contrasting ideas and rejecting the traditional ways of doing things, and each is unique. In this sense they typify the challenges and possibilities offered by 'postmodern' texts (McClay, 1996, p.92). PNFPBs demonstrate an important feature of genre which is that it is fluid and always changing and that new forms will develop. They are reminders that accepted text types are not fixed and that model texts which conform to set typologies will not be found in the real world.

Pappas' (2006) and Christie's (2013) arguments that, because nonfiction places particular challenges and demands on children, standard forms should be taught first to support young readers, seems to underestimate both the ability of the child and the power of the texts. The children in this study in line with Bintz's and Ciecierski's research (2017) showed that they were not fazed by the ambiguity and the hybridity of the texts even though their understanding of genre was still developing. Their response to the texts was individual and personal, inseparable from the people they

were. If they found the texts confusing, they drew upon a wide range of strategies, experiences and ideas to resolve those confusions and make the texts meaningful at a level which was relevant for them at that time. This experience, far from being disempowering, allowed them to demonstrate their resourcefulness and take the lead in meaning-making. The danger of creating nonfiction texts which aim to be easy and accessible, to answer all questions and present facts as inalienable truths is that these texts leave no gaps to engage the reader. They make the reading of nonfiction bland and uninspiring. Reading nonfiction is more than simply finding answers, it is about 'thinking, wondering and sometimes understanding' (Meek, 1996, p.12) and it is about generating imagination and curiosity.

Appendix 1

Definitions of hybrid text

Transitional texts	'Bridging' role that narrative plays as children learn how to tackle more unfamiliar nonfiction genres.	Gamble (in Goodwin, 2008).	Examples: Davies and Blythe (2006) *Ice Bear.* Hawking, S and L. (2007) *George's Secret Key to the Universe.* Kieve and Bailey (2007) *Hocus Pocus.*
Transitional genre	For younger children, modify some of the features of the mature forms they are based on. Non-narrative: conversational tone, and appealing format. Narrative texts: organised like stories in narrative form.	Mallett (2003).	Godwin and Abel (1998) *The Drop goes Plop!*
Informational stories	Texts which follow a time sequence but also impart facts and ideas. Transitional in the sense that some of the features of the mature text it is based on are modified.	Mallett (2003).	Hooper (2000) *River Story* (Read and wonder series).
Faction	Texts usually for children under eight which combine features of story and nonfiction. Information given in panels and text boxes alongside story with characters (animal and human).	Mallett (2003).	Hooper, Burgess and Curless (2000) *Dog's Night.* Lia (1999) *Billy Bean's Dream.*
Hybrid genres	Encompass more than one information text type.	Gamble (in Goodwin, 2008).	Gore (2007) *An Inconvenient Truth.* Steer, Harris and Wyatt (2007) *Mythology.*

Dual purpose texts combining narrative and expository structures	Combine more than one text type. Are intended by their authors to present facts and provide a story, use a dual format that allows them to be accessed by readers like a non-narrative information book or like a storybook.	Donovan and Smolkin (2002).	Wallace and Bostock (1993) *Think of an eel*. (Read and wonder series).
Narrative nonfiction	'Sometimes called creative non-fiction, or literary non-fiction…it boils down to this; making sure we are telling a story. The author of narrative non-fiction uses all of the best techniques of fiction writing: plot, character development, voice and theme' (p.70).	Partridge (2011).	Heiligman (2008) *Charles and Emma.*
Informational picture books	An extension of the nonfiction continuum. 'A book both intended and experienced as one that conveys information through a marriage of text and pictures' (p.8).	Isaacs (2013).	Foster, M. and G. (2007) *Whale Port*. Sidman and Prange (2010) *Ubiquitous.* Mora (2007) *Yum Mmmm Que rico*!
A-typical or hybrid information books	'Books that include some of the elements or features described by the 'generic structure potential' but also realise linguistic features from other genres (p.230).	Pappas (2006).	Wallace and Firth (2008). *Bears in the Forest.*
Informational picture storybook	Books which, 'look and read like picture storybooks because information is carried within the narrative by invented characters or situations. However, these books are supported by facts because the primary purpose is to provide information' (p. 13).	Bamford and Kristo (2000).	Cole and Deegan (1986) *Magic School Bus series.*

Appendix 2

Criteria for quality in nonfiction texts for children	
Feature	**Sources**
Accurate	McElmeel (2000): including illustrations; Dudgeon (2017): current; Gill (2009); Merchant and Thomas (2001); Stephens (2008): evidence of research; Moss *et al.*,(1997); Scanlon McMath *et al.*,(1998); Yopp and Yopp (2000): current; Malam (2002): well-researched; Graham and Kelly (2008); Sudol and King (1996); Mallett (2010); award criteria (2018); Saul and Dieckman 2005); Silvey (2003); Duke and Tower (2004); Bamford and Kristo (2000).
Clear language	Graham and Kelly (2008); Mallett (2010): well-contextualised vocabulary; Moss *et al.*, (1997); Phinn (2000): 'unstuffy'; Saul and Dieckman (2005); NSTA award criteria (2017); Silvey (2003); Bamford and Kristo (2000): clear style; ALSC (2018); Arnold (1996); Children's Book Guild Nonfiction Award criteria (2018).
Strong 'voice'	Saul and Dieckman (2005); award criteria (2018): not patronising; Mallett (2010); Gamble and Yates (2011); Harvey (2002); Moss *et al.*, (1997).
Innovative/original	UKLA award criteria (2018); Phinn (2000); Mallett (2012)
Clear illustrations	Yopp and Yopp (2000): relevant and supportive; Mallett (2010); Davidson and Pemberton (1999); Phinn (2000): 'bright'; Stephens (2008); Silvey (2003); Arnold (1996): relate to text; Bamford and Kristo (2000; Hudson (2013): high impact.
Attractive design	Saul and Dieckman (2005); Silvey (2003); ALSC (2018); McElmeel (2000): cover; Graham and Kelly (2008); Mallett (2010): 'uncluttered pages'; Dudgeon (2017); Gill (2009); Moss *et al.*, (1997); Malam (2002); Stephens (2008): font style and size.
Free from bias	McElmeel (2000): balanced; (2017): no stereotyping; Yopp and Yopp (2000); NSTA award criteria (2017).
Structure: use of retrieval devices	Silvey (2003); ALSC (2018); Bamford and Kristo (2000); Graham and Kelly (2008); Davidson and Pemberton (1999); Malam (2002).
Structure: well organised text	McElmeel (2000): logical and easy to use; Davidson and Pemberton (1999); Mallett (2010): 'global structure'; Harvey (2002); Malam (2002); Stephens (2008); Sudol and King (1996): 'cohesion of ideas'; ALSC (2018): appropriate; Bamford and Kristo (2000).
Engaging	Silvey (2003); Harvey (2002); Stephens (2008): especially cover; UKLA Award Criteria (2018); Gill (2009): writing style; Merchant and Thomas (2001); Dudgeon (2017); 'appealing'.

Other features	UKLA award criteria (2018): aesthetically pleasing; Scanlon McMath *et al.,* (1998): provoke young children's thinking; Dudgeon (2017): no anthropomorphism; Arnold (1996): No fantasy.

Appendix 3

Bibliography of Poetic Nonfiction Picture Books

A selection of texts which can be classed as 'Poetic Nonfiction Picture Books' is listed below, with my own commentary briefly describing the content, images, authentication and supporting information. Publishers' and reviewers' age recommendations are given but please note that these are often very subjective and that the texts frequently have much wider appeal. Most of these texts were available via Amazon in September 2018.

1 **Applegate, K. and Karas, G. B. (2014)** *Ivan: The Remarkable Story of the Shopping Mall Gorilla.* **New York: Houghton Mifflin.** Recommended 4-7 years. The book recounts the story of Ivan, a baby gorilla from the Congo. Applegate recounts his happy babyhood; his capture and transportation to America and his imprisonment in a shopping mall in Tacoma Washington where he was to live for over thirty years until he was finally moved to Zoo Atlanta. The story is told in simple but moving words set out sparsely on the page which invite empathy with and sympathy for the gorilla's plight. The images are beautifully observed and drawn from life and reflect the gorilla's emotions especially from inside the crate taking him and a fellow gorilla ('Burma') to America. The book ends with a photograph of the 'real' Ivan (which provoked much surprise when I shared it with a group of children). There are three pages of additional material in a coda at the end which includes suggested further reading and a photograph of one of Ivan's paintings.

2 **Aston, D. Hutts and Long, S. (2012)** *A Rock is Lively.* **San Francisco: Chronicle Books.** Recommended 5-8 years. Part of series which includes *A Nest is Noisy*, *A Seed is Sleepy*, *An Egg is Quiet* and *A Beetle is Shy*. This series of books juxtapose different ways of looking at nonfiction. There is plenty of expository text presented in short paragraphs and fact boxes, accompanied by lyrical headings and short poems which invite the reader to consider natural objects in unfamiliar ways. In *A Rock is Lively* the paintings present a wide variety of rocks as colourful, exquisite objects, drawn with accuracy and filling the page with colour. The scope is also extended to include images of landscapes and ways in which rocks have been used by humans and animals. In the front matter Aston acknowledges the sources of expertise and advice which she received in writing the text.

3 **Baker, J. (2016)** *Circle.* **London: Walker.** Recommended 5-7 years. The book describes the migration of bar-tailed godwits to the Arctic for the summer. The story is loosely linked, through the images alone, to a child who observes them initially in a wheelchair and later on their return, running on the beach with his crutches flung aside. The words are simple, set out like poetry with some use of repetition and lyrical language ('his singing rings across the land').The images are photographs of baker's unique intricate collages made using a combination of natural and artificial materials combined with painting and drawing. They have a strong sense of depth and perspective and the birds are represented with close attention to accuracy and detail. The book ends with a note from the author adding a little more information about the godwits and there are links to websites to find out more. On the facing page there is an annotated globe marking the birds' journey.

4 **Baker-Smith, G. (2018)** *The Rhythm of the Rain.* **London: Templar Publishing.** All ages recommended. Starting with a little boy, Isaac, playing in a pool, this story follows the travels of a jam-jar of water, which demonstrates the water cycle through waterfalls, rivers and oceans, back to rain falling on the land. Text is sparse and non-didactic: the images are what makes the book special: they are particularly effective at showing scale and make use of dramatic landscapes and rich colours. This is to be read as a picture book, with no coda or supporting material.

5 **Burleigh, R. and Wimmer, M. (2014)** *One Giant Leap: A Historical Account of the First Moon Landing.* **New York: Penguin USA.** Recommended 6-8 years. This account of the moon landings in 1969 follows the story from the separation of the Eagle and the Columbia to the astronauts' return to earth. The language is accessible but lyrical and focuses on the astronauts' experiences and feelings. Wimmer's paintings accompany each page and are rich in colour and detail, at times combining realistic renderings of the astronauts and their space craft with loose, impressionistic backgrounds. There is little in the way of additional information: in a note at the end the author muses on the effort involved in the project and future prospects for space travel and at the beginning he acknowledges a number of experts who helped him get 'the facts straight'.

6 **Butterworth, C. and Voake, C. (2018)** *The Things that I love about Trees.* **London: Walker Books.** Recommended 5-7 years. A book about British trees through the seasons, told through an extended poem accompanied by short 'fascinating facts' about the characteristics and different varieties of trees.

Voake's images have a loose, line-drawing feel to them and feature young children playing. There are suggestions for games and things to do with trees and an index on the last two pages.

7   Carrick Hill, L. and Collier, B. (2010) *Dave the Potter: Artist, Poet, Slave.* **New York: Little Brown Books for Young Readers.** Recommended 5-8 years. This text has deservedly won a number of prizes in the US. The story of Dave, a potter who was a slave in Carolina in the 19th century, deserves to be better known by children in the UK. Dave created many huge pots for his master, which he inscribed with short, cryptic and poignant poems: a risky thing to do in a time when slaves were not permitted to read or write. Carrick Hill's extended lyrical poem focuses on Dave as an artist but Collier's rich and powerful paintings place him within the context of life on a slave plantation. There are 5 pages of information in the coda, including photographs of the pots and some of Dave's poems, and suggested further sources.

8   Carter, J. and Hernandez, M. (2018) *Once Upon a Star: A Poetic Journey through Space*. **London: Caterpillar Books Ltd.** Recommended 6-8 years. The book tells the story of Earth from the big bang to modern times, featuring young children in the images. The text is written as a rhyming poem using simple language and addressing the reader directly as 'you'. Words and images are combined in the double-page spreads: the words are presented in a lively and engaging way making use of different font styles and sizes for emphasis. The images are bold, colourful, highly stylised and retro in feel. The final page presents some 'sciencey stuff' with a brief list of facts about the birth of the planet but there are no references or sources given.

9   Cline-Ransome, L. and Ransome, J, (2014) *Benny Goodman and Teddy Wilson: Taking the Stage as the First Black and White Jazz Band in History.* **New York: Holiday House.** No recommended age range. The friendship and collaboration between jazz musicians Benny Goodman and Teddy Wilson is told through extended poems which reflect the rhythms and exuberance of their music. The story contrasts the early lives of the two men and touches on the racism of the times, although the story stops at their famous Carnegie Hall concert in 1936. Ransome's painterly illustrations use varied perspectives to convey the liveliness and energy of the music. Two pages of detailed notes in the coda give further information about the musicians and a 'who's who' of Goodman and Wilson's jazz contemporaries.

10 Davies, N. and Blythe, G. (2005) *Ice Bear.* **London: Walker Books.** Recommended 5-7 years. Ice Bear has been around for some time but is still one of the most notable examples of lyrical nonfiction. Davies' words work on two levels: lyrical, poetic language accompanied by short expository 'facts' set against Blythe's softly impressionistic paintings of polar bears in their habitat. The account is told from the perspective of the Inuit people to show the significance of the bears to them and their culture. There is an index and short paragraphs about the bears, the author and the illustrator in the coda.

11 Davies, N. and Horăček, P. (2016) *A First Book of Animals.* **London: Walker Books Ltd.** Recommended 3-9 years. Davies' collection of poems is arranged around themes of big and small; colours and shapes; animal homes; animal babies; and animals in action. The poems are accurate and observational, and although they are lyrical they are direct and conversational in tone, and include some pages of factual 'notes'. Horăček's single page and double-spread paintings and drawings glow with intense colour and frame the poems beautifully. His impressionistic backgrounds in particular create a rich sense of texture and depth.

12 Dowson, N. and Chapman, J. (2015) *Tigress.* **London: Walker Books.** Recommended 5-7 years. See also *North* and *Tracks of a Panda*. *Tigress* is Dowson's first book, published in 2004 and one of Walker's Nature Storybooks series. Dowson's words simply and lyrically ('snuggled deep in shaded sleep') describe the birth and upbringing of a family of tiger cubs. The descriptive text is accompanied on each page by a sentence or two of more expository writing, adding further facts about tigers, their characteristics, behaviours and habitats. The parting of the tigers on the last few pages is emotive without being anthropomorphic. Chapman's paintings of the tiger family and their habitat are colourful, convey the sense of the landscape well and make clever use of Indian paisley background patterns. There is just a short paragraph at the end about tigers and an index.

13 Elliott, D. and Trueman, M. (2018) *In The Past: From Trilobites to Dinosaurs to Mammoths in More Than 500 Million Years.* **Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.** Recommended 5-8 years. Prehistory. Elliott's short and amusing poems about different dinosaurs throughout prehistory are accompanied by Trueman's slightly muted, detailed watercolour paintings. Word and image work really well together to create dynamic layouts and overall an

aesthetically pleasing text. There are three pages of notes in the coda which briefly outline the different geological periods.

14 Emmans-Dean, A. (2012) *Buzzing!* **Luton: Brambley Books Ltd.** No recommended age range. See also *Flying High*. Both *Buzzing!* and *Flying High* look like traditional nonfiction books and are packed with fact boxes, tables and photographs of insects and birds respectively. What makes them different is that each animal is accompanied by its own short, individual poem. The poems and information work together, with neither dominating the text and the photographs serve a more illustrative role, although they also act as attractive backgrounds to the poems.

15 Evans, M.G. and Gsell, N. (2015) *Spit and Sticks: A Chimney Full of Swifts.* **Watertown M.A.: Charlesbridge Publishing.** Recommended 3-7 years. The story of a family of swifts is told in simple, lyrical language accompanied by watercolour paintings with some collage-effect backgrounds. The story is set in Texas, but is applicable to a UK setting. The paintings juxtapose the story of the swifts with that of a human family who are preparing for the birth of a new baby. This is a good example of images telling a different, or additional story to the words. The last page gives some facts about swifts and some tips about what can be done to help protect them.

16 Floca, B. (2009) *Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11*. **New York: Atheneum Books.** Recommended 4+ (see also *Locomotive* and *Lightship*). Moonshot is a single extended poem which recounts the voyage of the Apollo 11 spaceship and its crew on their journey to the moon in 1969. The poem makes extensive use of poetic devices such as onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance and verbal images to create the emotional experience of the voyage from the perspective of the astronauts, but it is also full of factual detail. The text is well-supported by additional information in a final author's note called 'a Giant Leap' and in annotated drawings of the spaceship in the frontal end papers. Floca's images of space are powerful: the moon and the earth are luminous against a glossy black background. The human characters are stylised and simplified in an engaging and slightly humorous style. Floca explains his sources in a lengthy note at the beginning of the book and provides additional ideas for places to find further information.

17 Frost, H. and Lieder, R. (2016) *Among a Thousand Fireflies*. **Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press Ltd.** Recommended 3-7 years. This is a simple account of how two fireflies (known as glow-worms outside the US) come together from thousands to mate. Frost's text is sparse and clear, using repetition (light/dark) to convey the ways in which the flies communicate. It is accompanied by some stunning close-up photographs of the flies by Lieder which offer lots of detail and ideas for discussion. There is a short paragraph of information at the end.

18 Guiberson, B. and Spirin, I. (2008) *Ice Bears.* **New York: Henry Holt and Co.** Recommended 5-8 years. Guiberson's prose narrative tells the story of a year in the life of a polar bear family, following the birth of two cubs and how their mother teaches them to survive. The story is packed with factual information and the text simple and direct but it is the use of onomatopoeic sounds interrupting the prose which add a poetic element. Text is presented in boxes against Spirin's rich and detailed watercolour illustrations. There are two brief information pages at the end which give an environmental message about the arctic and a list of organisations from Canada and US working to protect habitats.

19 Hegarty, P. and Cluclow, H. (2016) *The River: An Epic Journey to the Sea.* **London: Caterpillar Books Ltd.** Recommended 3-5 years. This very simple story for younger readers describes in rhyming couplets the course of a river through the journey of a fish as she travels from the mountains to the sea. The changing landscape and the animals which inhabit it is shown through Clulow's collage style paintings which incorporate a hole for the lenticular image of the little fish. There are no additional notes.

20 Hegarty, P. and Teckentrup, B. (2015) *Moon.* **London: Little Tiger UK.** See also *Bee* and *Tree: Seasons Come, Seasons Go.* Recommended 3-5 years. This is a beautiful series of books which focus on an aspect of nature and combine simple words, set out in rhyming couplets at the foot of the page, with Teckentrup's rich collage-like paintings. The images are stylised, using pattern and texture and cut out shapes to engage children's interest. There is no additional information.

21 Jeffers, O. (2017) Here We Are: *Notes for Living on Planet Earth*. New York: Harper Collins Children's Books. Recommended 2+. A book with a strong environmental theme which would appeal to a broad range of ages on different levels. Jeffers makes use of his unique visual style to add humour, with cartoony, labelled images and succinct, matter-of fact language. Despite its message the book is never preachy or didactic. Jeffers' dedication is to his two month old son and it reads as a personal message to him about the importance of looking after the planet and each other.

22 Kahn, H. and Amini, M. (2018) *Crescent Moons and Pointed Minarets: A Muslim Book of Shapes.* San Francisco: Chronicle Books. Recommended age 3-5 years. See also *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors*. Both books are aimed at a young audience: with simple language; structured like an alphabet or counting book and accompanied by images of young children. However they would provide a useful resource for a much wider age-range of children interested in Islamic culture. The text introduces a number of subject-specific words which are explained in a glossary at the back, and the bright, appealing images make use of traditional patterns and show traditional costumes and religious practices. In addition to the glossary the Book of Shapes also has an author's note explaining the significance of shapes and geometry in Islamic art and architecture.

23 Knowles, L. and Madden, C. (2017) *We Travel so Far.* London: Words and Pictures. Recommended 4-7 years. See also *It Starts with a Seed* and *The Coral Kingdom*. Each double-page spread focuses on the travels of a wide variety of different animal species; ranging from eels to fruit bats. The text is fairly brief but informative, told from the animals' perspective and set out like poetry on the page. The images are stylised and have a 'retro' feel, making use of limited palettes and simplified shapes. In the back pages a map of the world invites the reader to trace the travels of the animals, and some data on animal migrations by water, air and land is given although sources for this information are not provided.

24 Lesser, C. (2018) *Great Polar Bear.* Seagrass Press. Recommended 2-7 years. This is an innovative text which conveys detailed information about polar bears and their habitats through imaginative, lyrical language ('fringy paws', 'oily crust of ice'). The images are simple torn and cut paper collages. There are three pages of notes which explain the environmental challenges facing

polar bears and an extract from Lesser's journal, showing her observing a polar bear, which add authenticity to her poetic account.

25 **Lorbiecki, M. and Morrison, C. (2014)** *The Prairie that Nature Built.* **Nevada City CA: Dan Publications Ltd.** Recommended 7-9 years. This book introduces the animals who live in the North American Prairie and is written in a rhyming, extended poem reminiscent of the rhythm and structure of *The House that Jack Built*. The illustrations are very brightly coloured and almost hyper-real in their attention to detail. There are four pages of information in the coda at the end, and the author offers validity by acknowledging the help of individuals and organisations and providing further sources of information. Although the North American habitat limits the relevance in the UK, the text is well-structured and presented with enough detail for older readers.

26 **Lyon, G. E. and Hall, A. (2014)** *What Forest Knows.* **New York: Atheneum Books.** Recommended 4-8 years. Lyon follows the forest through the seasons in a simple but lyrical extended poem which personifies the forest as a living entity ('forest knows'). Information in a direct sense is sparse but the poem builds up a picture of the wealth and diversity of the habitat which would provide opportunities for environmental discussion. Hall's images have a soft, dreamy quality which combine different techniques and media.

27 **Mahin, M. and Turk, E. (2017)** *Muddy: The Story of Blues Legend Muddy Waters.* Atheneum. Music. Biography. Recommended 4-8 years. See also: *When Angels Sing: The Story of Rock Legend Carlos Santana.* This innovative and engaging biography of blues musician Muddy Waters is told in lyrical language which evokes the sounds and rhythms of the music. The focus is on Waters' determination and courage to stand up for his music. Turk's images are powerful, with rich colours and bold lines etched into thick paint creating a sgraffito effect. The author's note provides additional information about Waters' life and a bibliography and suggested further listening.

28 **McAllister, A. (2018)** *Wild World*. **London: Wide Eyed Editions.** Recommended 4-7 years. This is a collection of individual poems describing 13 different habitats e.g. coral reef, mangrove, deep sea, moorland. Each poem is lyrical and evocative rather than descriptive, although the animals' names

are italicised. The poems are set against a double-page digital illustration depicting the habitat and the animals and plants which live in it. There are 3 pages of further information at the back which give facts about the habitats and a page about environmental issues.

29 Medina, T. and Watson, J. (2014) *I and I.* **New York: Lee and Low.** Recommended 8-11 years. The text is a series of poems by Medina told from the perspective of Bob Marley and accompanied by acrylic paintings by Watson. The rhythms and language of the poems reflect the beat and dialect of Marley's music and tell the story of his life up to his diagnosis with cancer. Their length and complexity makes them suited to upper juniors. The paintings reflect the colours of the Caribbean but both poetry and image do not idealise the setting. There are 5 pages of rather dense notes in the coda and a personal note from the author. 'Author's sources' are also listed in small print in the front-matter.

30 Messner, K. and Neal, C. Silas. (2014) *Over and Under the Snow.* **San Francisco: Chronicle Books.** No recommended age range. The story of a girl's ski trip with her father across the top of the snow and the animals hibernating or hiding underneath it. Messner uses sparse but lyrical language to tell the story. Neal's images look like wood or linocuts and cleverly use the white of the page to represent the snow, creating a reverse effect in some of the illustrations. There are four pages of information at the back, including an author's note and notes about the animals: some of these are specifically North American species such as bullfrogs. Validation is given by means of a brief author biography.

31 Morris, J. (2014) *Something About a Bear.* **London: Frances Lincoln Books.** Recommended 3-6 years. *Something about a Bear* is a beautiful combination of painting and poetry, depicting a wide variety of bears in their habitats. The inclusion of a teddy bear at the beginning and end seem to aim the text at a young audience, but the rich imagery of the words, the anatomical accuracy of the different bear species and the accompanying information notes make this a book for a much wider range of readers. A conservation message runs throughout and there are suggested websites for further research.

32 Mosca, J. and Rieley, D. (2017) *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin.* **Seattle W.A.: The Innovation Press.** Recommended 5-10 years. See also *The Doctor with an Eye for Eyes: The Story of Dr. Patricia Bath*. In both books Mosca presents the biography of two lesser-known women scientists from the US in rhyming verse. The poems are accompanied by Rieley's humorous and cartoon-style illustrations to give a positive up-beat message. The books are very well supported by factual information in the coda which provide an excellent example of how the story is validated: in *'The Girl Who Thought in Pictures'* for example, there is a note from Temple Grandin herself; two pages of 'fun facts and tidbits' from the author's interview with her; a timeline; notes offering more detailed information and two pages of suggested further reading.

33 Neri, G. and Litchfield, D. (2018) *When Paul Met Artie: The Story of Simon and Garfunkel.* **Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.** Recommended 9-12 years. Music. Biography. The book opens with an account of Simon and Garfunkel's re-union concert in 1981 and then goes back in time to trace the key stages in the story of the duo's rise to fame in a series of quite lengthy narrative poems. Double page spreads present each poem on the verso opposite a full page cartoon-style illustration by Litchfield. The colours of the book are rich and presentation is glossy. The story of the duo ends at the moment in 1966 when their career had risen to its peak. The poems seek to capture the essence of the Simon and Garfunkel sound and are detailed with rich description. In a six page coda at the back Neri provides additional information including a discography, he reveals his approach and the sources for the work clearly and cites a bibliography for further reading.

34 Paterson, J. (2018) *I Am the Rain.* **Nevada CA: Dawn Publications.** Recommended 3-6 years. This book deals with the popular topic of the water cycle and is told by 'water' itself in an extended rhyming poem. The very few, simple words on each page make this appealing for young children, but the striking and colourful paintings which accompany each page widen its appeal to a much broader audience. The 5 pages of information in the coda explaining scientific words and offering suggestions for further resources also make this a useful book for older children.

35 Paul, M. and Zunon, E. (2017) *One Plastic Bag: Isatou Ceesay and the Recycling Women of the Gambia.* **Minneapolis MN: Lerner Publishing Group.** Recommended 5-9 years. See also *Water is Water* (Water cycle). This book tells the story of a community project started in the 1990s in the Gambia by Isatou Ceesay which sought to solve an environmental problem and raise money by recycling discarded plastic bags into crocheted purses. The story is told from Isatou's perspective in a narrative style but with some poetic features such as alliteration and repetition, and the text is set out as poetry on several pages. The images by Zunon combine painting and collage using colourful and patterned papers and materials such as the plastic bags themselves: the end papers are particularly striking. The book is well supported by information on the front and back folds of the dust jacket and four pages of further material in the coda which include an account of the author's own experience of the Gambia and her relationship with Isatou Ceesay, verifying the 'facts' of the story; a glossary of Wolof (Gambian) words and phrases used in the text; a timeline of the events told in the book and a list of suggested further reading: these are illustrated by photographs of Isatou Ceesay, women involved with the project and the author.

36 Pinkney, A. Davis and Pinkney, B. (2010) *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down.* **New York: Little Brown Books for Young Readers.** Recommended 7-10 years. This book tells the story of a group of black college students who, inspired by the words of Martin Luther King, staged a sit-in at a whites-only cafe in North Carolina in 1960. The words are set out like poetry on the page, with key messages presented in bold coloured type. The watercolour and ink images are lively, loose and impressionistic. The amount of writing and the copious notes in the coda would make this a good text for upper junior children: there is a helpful timeline of the civil rights movement, an author's note with a photograph of the four men and suggested further reading. The author acknowledges the research assistance of a number of sources.

37 Steptoe, J. (2016) *Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat.* **US: Little Brown Young Readers.** Recommended 6-9 years. This award-winning text combines original and striking artwork with simple, economical words in an innovative biography of the early life of the artist Jean-Michel Basquiat. The images are richly textured and inspired by Basquiat's style, painted onto a jigsaw of pieces of rough 'found' wood boards and using a variety of collage materials. They provide inspiring stimulus ideas for children's art projects. The text is well supported by 3 pages of

informational notes, including comments by Steptoe about what Basquiat's work has meant to him and his rationale for presenting his own art work (instead of Basquiat's) in the book. There is a bibliography hidden away in the front-matter.

38 Thompson, H. and Betton, J. (2018) *Twilight Chant*. **Clarion Books.** Recommended 4-8 years. An extended poem which introduces the mammals, birds and insects which come out to feed or fly at twilight, accompanied by Betton's watercolour, pastel and pencil images. The animals are typically North American, but the poem itself has a clear structure which invites joining in and imitation. There is a page about the nature of twilight and its importance for animals at the end of the book.

39 Wheeler, L. and Curtis, K. (2006) *Mammoths on the Move.* **Orlando Florida: Houghton Mifflin.** Recommended 4-7 years. This is a fun, rhyming poem about the migration of woolly mammoths accompanied by Cyrus' bold scratchboard and watercolour images which convey well the size and power of the mammoths. The brief introductory author's note explains that little is known about mammoths but states that the behaviours described in the poem are based on the 'latest scientific research', and support from library staff is acknowledged.

40 Yolen. J. and Stemple, J. (2010) *An Egret's Day.* **Honesdale, Pen: Wordsong Press.** No recommended age range. This book is a collection of evocative individual poems about egrets, based on close observation, inviting reflection on their characteristics and beauty. Yolen couples each poem with clear and striking photographs of egrets by Jason Stemple and a short question and answer paragraph, providing information for example about what egrets eat or their size or roosting habits. The total provides a comprehensive but manageable introduction to the birds. A brief paragraph on the final page notes that the poems have been approved by an expert from the Smithsonian Institute.

Appendix 4

Frames for analysing the 5 texts

Analysis frame: images

Ideas taken from a number of sources: Kress and Van Leewen (1996); Grenby and Reynolds (2011); Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2014)

Balance of text and image Does text or image dominate? How are images and text framed, or is text presented within the image? Is there a background context and is it significant?	
Connections between images How do the images link? How are visual clues and messages carried throughout the book?	
Visual modality How realistic are the images? How stylised or minimal are they? How are signs and symbols used to convey meaning?	
Text/image relationship Text and picture symmetrical Text depends on picture for clarification Illustrations elaborate text Text carries primary 'narrative': illustrations are selective	
Cultural frames/references in the images How do we know it is a different country/culture?	
Focalisation What is the reader's eye drawn to? Placement of significant objects Ways in which children/humans are presented: pathos and affect Reader's 'eye' view	
What is left out? What knowledge does the illustrator assume? What are the gaps which the reader has to fill in?	
What is unexpected? What might challenge or defy expectations either with regard to the content or the ways in which the content is presented?	
Action How active are the images? How is action depicted? Successive/simultaneous action	
Use of colour How is colour used in the images; stylistically, realistically? Is colour used to create ambience/affect?	

Analysis frame: language

Ideas drawn and developed from Kesler (2012, 2017)

Visual information How is the language presented upon the page, is it presented as poetry or narrative? How is the space around the words used? (line breaks, stanzas, shape of words or passages, fonts and colours of words)	
Musicality Does the language employ rhyme, pattern, assonance, a clear rhythm, repetition, consonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia?	
Literary language Does the text employ imagery such as metaphor, simile?	
Emotive/affective Is any language used which is especially emotive or affective? Is humour used?	
Intertextuality Any implicit or explicit references to similar books with regard to content or style? Are there any assumptions made in the language about what the children will understand or have experienced?	

Analysis frame: Peritext

Based on Genette (1997) and Grenby and Reynolds (2011, p.90)

Are there any clues in the design layout about: Age Interests Gender Social demographic of the reader?	
Size and shape	
Does text follows conventions or play with them?	
Any challenges to the ways the reader might be expected to read the book?	
Any implicit messages, about the voice of the child, or the underlying values of the text (e.g. printed on recycled paper)	

Analysis frame: Nonfiction

Based on features of good quality nonfiction (Appendix 2)

Text	
Accuracy How does the author indicate accuracy of the information in the text? How accurate are the pictures?	
Clear language Is the language clear and unambiguous? Are subject specific/new terms used and explained? Is language appropriate for reading age?	
Strong voice Is there a clear authorial voice or visible narrator? Is the voice patronising, approachable or open?	
Innovation and originality How does the text differ from NF texts on the same theme? What is unusual or unexpected about it?	
Clear illustrations Do the illustrations support the words? Are they visually bright and appealing?	
Free from bias Does the author suggest a particular bias or perspective? Is the text balanced? Are there cultural, political or gender biases?	
Attractive design Are the layout, cover and style appealing to the chosen audience? Are font and size appropriate?	
Structure/organisation Is the text logical and easy to use? Are structural guiders present? Is there a clear global structure which shows cohesion of ideas?	
Engagement What has the author, designer and illustrator done to appeal to the chosen audience in terms of writing style and design? Is humour used? How has it been made to be relevant to the age group? What knowledge does it assume/require?	
Other features Does the text provoke children's thinking? Is the text aesthetically pleasing?	

Appendix 5

Interview Questions

Standard questions for all of the children

1. You chose (book title), what do you think this book is about?

2. Did you learn anything about (subject matter) from reading it?

3. Is it hard or easy to understand? Why?

4. What made you pick it over the others?

5. Have you got a favourite bit? Can you read it out to me/show me? Why do you like that bit?

6. Did any bits remind you of things that had happened to you or things someone has told you or you have seen on tv?

7. How would you describe the style of the pictures?

8. Did the pictures help you to understand what was going on?

9. Do you think the pictures or the words are more important in this book? Why?

10. What do you understand by fiction/nonfiction?

11. (Fill in nonfiction/fiction line to see where it goes). Why do you think it goes there?

12. What is true in this book? How do you know?

13. Do you think the books are similar in any way?

Appendix 6

6a: Reader-Response Frame: adapted from Rosenblatt (1978) and Iser (1972, 1978)

Category	Description	Ref. to illustrative examples from transcript	Commentary
Aesthetic	Demonstrates emotional response, reaction to something in the text, appreciation of a perceived quality in the text (words and images). 'In aesthetic reading the reader's attention is centred directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text' (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.25).		
Efferent	Attends to informative nature of text, content and facts contained within the text. 'The reader's attention is focused on what will remain as the residue after the reading- the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out' (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.25).		
'Entanglement'	Seeks to understand the meaning of the whole text or 'gestalt', looks for consistency. 'Consistency-building is itself a living process, in which one is constantly forced to make selective decisions…this is what causes the reader to be entangled in the text 'gestalt' that he himself has produced' (Iser, 1972, p.296)		
Filling gap	Uses inference from words and/or pictures to bring something extra to the reading outside the text, this can be prior knowledge or personal experience.		

		'The gaps not only draw the reader in to the action but also lead him to shade in the many outlines suggested by a given situation so that they take on a reality of their own' (Iser 1978, p.168).		

6b: Reading together frame: adapted from Maine (2015).

Theme	Description	Ref. to illustrative examples from transcript	Comments
Determining importance (a) and making connections to existing knowledge (b)	(a) 'The decision to concentrate on a particular aspect of the text ' (2015, p. 82) (b) 'Drawing on what they know and making connections to themselves and other texts' (2015, p. 85).		
Asking questions, hypothesising and making predictions	'Their questions lead them to predict, or hypothesize meanings that are rationalised to ensure that they make sense' (2015, p.87).		
Creating narratives and evoking images to extend and explain the story world	'The children create stories or describe possible events which are situated outside the frame of the text' (2015, p. 88)		

Empathising with characters and entering the story world to understand it more	Children 'explore the feelings and motivations of characters… [they] place themselves in the 'scene' to engage with it' (2015, p. 91).		

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