

Chapter 5

Using Wordless Picturebooks as Stimuli for Dialogic Engagement



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5.1 Introduction

In this chapter we explore how collaborative meanings can be made as teachers and young children (six-year-olds) engage together in reading wordless picturebooks. The activity of talking about these visual texts was a central part of the DIALLS project as children joined together not only to make meaning from them, but also use them as stimuli for deeper philosophical thinking about themes around living together and social responsibility. The discussions gave children the opportunity to engage in ‘genuine dialogue’ (Buber 1947), as they co-constructed meaning from the narratives and as they then related the themes within them to their own lives, values and identities. Here we look specifically at the meaning-making process and particularly examine how the very nature of co-construction from wordless narratives is not only a dialogic process (Maine 2015, 2020) but one that undertaken with tolerance, empathy and inclusion, embodies the values of cultural literacy as a dialogic social practice (Maine et al. 2019).

The data we present in this chapter demonstrate how the language modelled by teachers and their careful guidance enables independent sense-making and collaborative co-construction as a dialogic enterprise. We examine teachers engaging their classes with two wordless narratives to understand how these can be mediated differently to enhance understanding and engagement, exploring how different reading pathways of the books affect the co-construction process. As sociocultural researchers we are deeply aware that reading events are dependent on readers, the activity and the text (Snow and Sweet 2003) and are situational occurrences (Rosenblatt 1994) that are unique to each new reading and set of readers. The teachers in

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each class approached the tasks differently of course, but the affordances we draw on are from the narrative structures themselves.

A key theme of the DIALLS project was the recognition of the multimodality of literacy and expression of culture. Wordless narratives (picturebooks which tell their stories through visuals rather than verbal means) were chosen as the stimuli for discussion not only because of the convenience of their transferability for different language users but also because of their inherent gaps of meaning (Iser 1978) that afford a dialogic space of possibility (Maine 2015) in their interpretations. In Chapter 6, Rodosthenous-Balafa, Chatzianastasi and Stylianou-Georgiou present a deep exploration of such affordances in two such wordless picturebooks from a literary perspective, whilst in this chapter we look at their use in the classroom.

5.2 The Affordances of Wordless Picturebooks

‘Wordless picturebooks’, ‘silent books’, or ‘picturebooks with sparse verbal text’ are all labels given to picturebooks that include few or no words at all to communicate their meaning. A common misconception might be that these texts are designed for non-readers or very young children, yet the growth of the wordless picturebook market has generated a rich resource of challenging, ambiguous texts for all ages.¹ Ghiso and McGuire (2007, 355–356) argue that “quite the opposite of watered down or simplified picturebooks they are in fact a distillation – a concise presentation of all the essential features of literature” and that, “it is precisely the brevity of the verbal text and the associated challenges to the reader that open up a space for close looking and deep discussion” (ibid.). The picturebooks in this study use language in their titles, and these could be considered to set the tone of the story. Bosch would describe them as ‘almost’ wordless (2014, 74) rather than ‘pure’ wordless, as in addition to the title, author and publisher, they contain a short blurb on the back cover. However, this then raises an interesting question about language. As part of our commitment to a wide representation of texts in our project, books were sourced from around Europe. The blurbs are in a language which the children in the classes did not speak; for them then, these *were* pure wordless texts as they could not garner extra clues about the books from their blurbs. Rather than making judgements about the categorization of wordlessness being to do with a quantity of words, Arizpe argues it is, “the degree to which readers are expected to actively engage that marks the difference between picturebooks with and without words and which enables the reader to co-construct meaning” (2014, 96–97). In previous work (Maine 2015, 19) we describe this as a “dialogic space of possibility” drawing on the work of reader response theorists such as Rosenblatt (1994) and Iser (1978) to reflect reading as a transaction of meaning. Where there are no words present then this dialogic space is enhanced by the readers’ collaborative interpretations of the images.

¹In the DIALLS project, texts for 14 and 15 year-olds often discussed challenging and sensitive issues, see <https://dialls2020.eu/library-en/>.

5.3 Reading Visual Narratives

We make sense of the world through the construction of narratives; storytelling is a central feature of child-(and adult-)hood and, in fact, Hardy suggests that narrative is “a primary act of mind” (Hardy 1977, 12). Stories are motivating for young children as they can represent and reflect back their lives, offering a chance for deep thinking about their worlds. Stories offering moral challenges give children a chance to explore these without being personally involved, to explore their own thinking and values and those of others.

Mackey (2004) draws on the (1987) work of Rabinowitz in her work exploring how children make sense of narratives. Rabinowitz suggests a set of rules apply; the rule of noticing (what to pay attention to); of significance (how do we use what we know to help us understand); and configuration (putting the parts together so it makes sense). Mackey notes, “we notice and signify in accordance with what kind of pattern of events we anticipate, and we put pieces together in order to make sense along the lines of a particular paradigm” (2004, 51). In wordless narratives, “the visual image carries the weight of the meaning” (Arizpe et al. 2014, 34). In his work, Serafini draws on a history of semiotic research to create a similar framework for interpreting what he calls “multimodal ensembles” (2014, 11) picking out perceptual (including noticing, navigating and naming elements), structural (looking at the grammars of narrative and the visual design) and ideological (situating understandings with a sociocultural context) layers of meaning.

Picturebooks can have different reading pathways that draw on both temporal and spatial dynamics. In some wordless picturebooks the story unfolds through the “openings” (Ghisso and McGuire 2007, 347; Serafini 2014, 77) with linear logic (Kress 2003; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) even if on each page the images are simultaneously present, offering the challenge of determining the importance of the visuals presented.² Other picturebooks present a less apparent storyline, instead offering a series of connected images from which the reader must create their own story. This allows each reader to bring to the fore their own interests and interpretations meaning the reader response is truly individual and situational (Rosenblatt 1994).

Beyond the particular pathways of reading these visual texts, however, is the need for a literacy that enables us to unlock different elements of the visual code presented. Placement, color, size of image and composition, all give us clues to intended meaning, but just as ‘decoding’ words in verbal texts is just the start of reading for meaning, so ‘noticing and naming’ is only the surface level of being visually literate. As Arizpe and colleagues describe, visual literacy provides, “a way of deepening understanding and critical appreciation through the readers active engagement in the interpretative process” (2014, 31). The affordance of the wordless

²It should not be assumed that this means a movement from left to right. In the DIALLS project some picturebooks were produced in Arabic speaking countries, and whilst still wordless, their reading logic led from right to left, fitting with the conventions of the Arabic language, and verbal book traditions. See more at www.dialls2020.eu/library-en/.

picturebook is the opportunity to look spatially in addition to linearly to enrich the reading experience, to slow down the reading and experience the ensemble.

In their work exploring teacher mediations of what they call “picturebooks with sparse verbal text”, Ghiso and McGuire (2007, 341) provide a useful framework of teacher utterances they found in readalouds, and these relate to the visual literacy and narrative interpretation layers. They describe “visual analysis strategies” (347), that include supporting children to develop denoting or noticing skills. Further categories include “probing for underlying relationships” between characters depicted and “building a cohesive whole” (361). As their work revolves around picturebooks which include sparse verbal text they also highlight the importance of mining any verbal text that is available.

5.4 Co-construction and Mediation

If the opportunities for discussion, open and imaginative interpretation and co-constructive meaning-making are afforded by the modes of wordless narrative, then this presents a powerful opportunity for teachers to enable this intersubjective enterprise. A dialogic classroom which embraces an ethos of collaboration, underpinned by collective, purposeful, reciprocal principles (Alexander 2020) serves as a rich environment for teachers and children to make the most of these visual reading experiences. However, this goal does not come without its challenges. Dombey (2010) highlights four dimensions to be considered when sharing a text together: who decides the stance of the discussion; who controls the turns taking; who has interpretive authority and who chooses the topics?

In their study of nine different reading contexts, Soter and colleagues (2008) found that authentic questioning and uptake by teachers played a significant part in effective discussions. The researchers also highlighted the role of modelling on the part of the teacher to support children’s reasoning. Taking this further, Nystrand (2006) argues that successful approaches involve “elaborative interrogations” (397) where children are probed to make explicit the connections that they are making to their prior knowledge and experience. The research by these authors highlights the importance of the themes for discussion being led by the children and framed by teachers, calling for careful, considered mediation by teachers not leading children to the ‘correct’ interpretation, but honoring their own sense-making (Aukerman 2013).

We now turn to an exploration of this visual literacy in action, as we illustrate the processes of co-construction in two classes reading picturebooks offering different reading pathways.

The wider DIALLS project involved capturing video recorded data from a number of lessons where children and teachers explored wordless texts together. In this chapter we draw on video data from these two classes from lessons that were not part of the core DIALLS data. Classroom talk was transcribed verbatim, and significant gestures were noted. The researchers were present in the classes and made observational notes to support their analysis of the videoed data. In one case the teacher is a

co-author of this chapter. Children's names have been changed to anonymize them, but with consent, the teachers retain their first names. In the transcript, emphasis on words is shown through capitalization.

5.5 Class 1: Reading *Mein Weg mit Vanessa* (Kerascoet 2018)

The first case explores Class 1 and their reading of *Mein Weg mit Vanessa* (Kerascoet 2018) hereafter *Vanessa*. This is a wordless picturebook with a linear narrative that presents a traditional reading pathway to lead the readers through their co-construction. In the story, a little girl, Vanessa, we assume, joins a new school where she is bullied by a classmate. Consequently, other children in her class have to make choices about their own actions and the book ends with the children realizing the strength of unity and teamwork as they join together to walk with Vanessa to school. The text uses space dynamically to sequence small but significant character reactions with some openings offering up to six vignettes showing development of plot over time.

In Class 1, Beci the teacher sets the scene by introducing the whole class of children to the book, inviting them to make observations about the cover and endpapers. She navigates a co-construction of the narrative, sharing, mediating and weaving the children's contributions to establish a shared interpretation of both the narrative and the complex themes it explores. The gaps of meaning (Iser 1978) afforded by the wordless nature of the text provide a rich opportunity for co-construction and the challenge for Beci is to skillfully build a cohesive whole (Ghiso and McGuire 2007). Although it could be argued that the traditional linear pathway of *Vanessa* provides increased correlation between the author's intended meaning and the reader's interpreted meaning, the situational nature of the co-construction (Rosenblatt 1994) and the specific affordances of the wordless text offer a unique and productive dialogic space of possibility (Maine 2015), and the children are able to respond to each image as they feel it to be important.

As part of their framework of conceptual categories for mediating wordless texts, Ghiso and McGuire (2007, 347) identify the need for readers to "attend to body positioning and facial expressions", as a key visual analysis strategy, and this important in *Vanessa*. Whilst the images in the picturebook are small, the faces of the characters depict subtle changes in emotion beyond simply showing sadness and happiness. In one opening, the images show the children leaving school and walking home. In the top verso (left-hand) image a scene is shown with a group of children walking ahead, Vanessa behind them and a boy behind her. All the figures are situated within a street scene showing trees and houses. The second two verso images (middle and bottom) show just Vanessa and the boy with no surrounding scenery, isolated from the other children. The boy is positioned leaning back, then forward with an angry face. The story progresses to the recto (right-hand) page where now, the figures are engulfed

in a red ‘haze’ as the boy’s anger spills out into the page. In the final recto image in the opening we see the full scene again, this time with the boy walking away left, Vanessa standing mournfully in the center, and the other group of children to the right with one of them looking back. Turning the page, the next verso image shows the same scene, but this time boy is smiling as he walks. The following interaction in the class, where the children are discussing the bully character and his interaction with Vanessa, shows that the children pay careful attention to body positioning and facial expressions and this allows a richer co-construction of the narrative, supporting them to reveal a deeper layer of meaning:

- Noel:* I don’t really think he was mad. I just think he was a bully.
Beci: Do you? What made you think that then, Noel, because that’s a bit different from what we thought before?
Noel: Because, look (*pointing to book*), he’s looking quite proud of himself of what he’s done to Vanessa.
Beci: Do you know, I HADN’T noticed that.
Jonny: I did.
Emily: I did.
Beci: Noel, you’ve changed my thinking. I thought he was just really, really angry, but you’re right, he does look proud of himself, doesn’t he?
Noel: (Nods).
Beci: So, you’ve got this little boy feeling proud of himself and Vanessa running away. Mmm...
Class: Sad.
Beci: I wonder if all the children at this school are horrible. I wonder if every single child at this school is just horrid. Lucy, what did you notice or what do you wonder?
Lucy: The little boy has a-, the angry smile on his face.

In this exchange, Beci models how she has been supported by Noel to ‘look closer’. Positioning herself as a participant of the co-construction, she shows that readers can change their minds when presented with new evidence. To understand that the mean boy makes Vanessa sad is enough to carry the reader through the narrative of this book, but in noticing the pride and ‘angry smile’ on the boy’s face, Lucy begins to use the richness of the visual text to more fully explore the complex concept and motivations of a bully. Noel is testing his narrative interpretation that the little boy is indeed a bully rather than simply a child reacting angrily to a stimulus and he does this by noticing illustrative detail. Beci supports this aspect of meaning-making by subsequently encouraging the young readers to regularly ‘notice’ the details on characters’ faces.

A key feature of Beci’s mediation of the text is that she makes the process of meaning-making explicit to the children by supporting them to understand the process of their own inference and the cultural references they engage. In the extract below Charlie has inferred that the bully is angry but struggles to identify what supported this inference:

- Beci:* ...Charlie, what were you THINKing? What were you wondering? What were you noticing?
- Charlie:* I was thinking that he was saying, 'GO AWAY and go and play with someone else.'
- Beci:* OK. They're quite, they're quite nasty things. Why do you think they're nasty things that he's saying? What gave you a clue?
- Charlie:* Because he's shouting and putting his hand over there.
- Beci:* Hang on a minute, I can't HEAR him shouting. How did you know that he's shouting?
- Charlie:* Because he's angry.
- Beci:* How do you know? I agree with you. I think the same, but what gave you a clue?
- Charlie:* Because he's very cross.
- Beci:* Yeah, his face. Look, look at his eyeBROWS, look at his eyes.

This interaction begins as an "elaborative interrogation" (Nystrand 2006, 397) with Beci encouraging Charlie to make his connections and meaning-making explicit. Once it becomes apparent that Charlie does not yet have the ability to identify or articulate his meaning-making connections, Beci moves to guide and model these processes, helping him to notice details that enable him to see how his ideas are accountable to the text (Dombey 2010), to test his interpretation against the visual clues in the text.

This explicit identification of comprehension strategies is further developed in the following passage when Beci supports the children to identify a visual clue that they have used to infer the boy's anger, the red haze surrounding the character.

- Beci:* ... What's special about THIS illustration here? It's quite different on the page, isn't it? What's special about it? Why is it different, Freddie?
- Freddie:* Probably, when someone gets angry, there, there's red all over the place.
- Beci:* Oh, I know what you MEAN... It's quite an angry color, isn't it? Red's quite an ANGRY color. So, you said probably he's FEELing quite red, a bit like our zones, when you're angry, we put it on the red zone, don't we?

Here, the co-construction draws on multiple cultural references; the use of red to represent anger, and a more local cultural reference to the children's classroom behavior management system where colors symbolize different emotions, the combination of which results in highly situational meaning-making (Rosenblatt 1994). This example also works to demonstrate the unique affordances of the wordless picture book in allowing different visual literacy tools to become central to the co-construction, in this case understanding the symbolic use of color. Without the use of verbal text, the author relies on the reader's interpretation of and ability to make links between different visual features and cultural references, and Beci makes Freddie's use of this strategy explicit.

In another example of engagement with *Vanessa*, the children explore a further visual feature that supports their deeper meaning making, this time moving beyond

the tiny details into broader image design. The book's prominent use of pathetic fallacy across two openings symbolizes a significant turning point in the narrative: first after Vanessa has been bullied, and then where the outcome begins to look hopeful for her. In the story, a double-page spread in one opening shows a night scene of houses with two small lit windows, one in the verso page and one in the recto page. In one window we can see Vanessa, and in the other, the child who noticed her being bullied. Their separation is enhanced by their positions on opposite pages, but their unity is demonstrated through the light in their windows and how these draw the eyes of the reader. The night is dark, and the darkness is further emphasized through what we can see as rain streaks and a large dark cloud hanging over the houses.

Beci draws the children's attention to the imagery in the extract below:

- Beci:* Do you know what I notice? I know that even the sky is sad in this picture.
Class: Yeah.
Beci: Miserable, raining, stormy night.
George: It's all rainy.
Beci: Everything's making me feel quite sad. Natasha.
Natasha: I, I can see a tree that looks like it's fallen over.
Beci: Yeah. It's just a sad picture that one, isn't it? Let's see what's going to happen (*displays next page*). Oh, a brand-new day. Right, a BRAND new day.

Turning the page, the opening now shows a brand-new morning, with sunlight streaming through the 'friend's' window as she realizes the action she can take to support Vanessa. The children discuss this positive turn of events and how it is reflected in the image:

- Beci:* She's gone to VANESSA'S house, hasn't she? LOOK! Is it a sad, miserable day anymore?
Class: No...
Beci: Daniel, what kind of day is it now?
Daniel: Happy.
Beci: Happy. I'm hopeful. I'm hopeful, because I think something happy is going to happen in the story now. The colors are giving me a clue.

Scaffolding the discussion in this way supports the children in determining significance within the plot; noticing that something has changed. Daniel is able to make the visual link and although he clearly demonstrates the ability to infer the mood from the color tones of the illustrations, Beci scaffolds the links between this inference and co-construction of the narrative, to make the meaning-making explicit. As an experienced reader, she uses the phrase "I'm feeling hopeful" to support their co-construction by recognizing this pivotal change in the narrative and creates a sense of anticipation in their co-construction.

Modelling is a central feature in Beci's mediation of the text, but she also listens to the children's ideas and makes their reasoning explicit. In this way she steers the class towards a coherent co-construction. This pedagogical approach also works to

include other children, as whilst they have to listen patiently as she engages with just one child, they are included by her explanation of the comprehension strategies that they can then employ for themselves.

5.6 Class 2: Reading *Naar De Markt* (Smit 2017)

In our second case, Class 2 were reading *Naar De Markt* (Smit 2017)³ which offers a variation of the traditional linear narrative as a wordless picturebook with a looser, open-linear style. The openings consist of vibrant double-page spreads that follow a mother and daughter's trip to the market, alongside a number of simultaneous mini parallel stories. Goldstone (1999) argues that non-linear narratives can provide an alternative rhythm to reading and necessitate a higher degree of co-authoring and this is evident in the mediation of the text by the Class 2 teacher, Cecilia. We describe the pathway as 'open-linear' to reflect that whilst the pages show different market scenes with the central characters in each, their 'story' is not led by narrative causation, even if there are multiple smaller parallel stories shown in the background. Attention is not immediately drawn to the minor characters as the placement of an adult and child is central and recursive, leading the reader to see them as the key protagonists. That said, in the children's reading of the story, they are quickly drawn to these parallel stories and prioritize them over these central protagonists.

After exploring the title and reading the blurb in Dutch to the children (who are fascinated by the sound of the language), Cecilia turns to the first opening. The extract below shows how the children quickly seek to impose a traditional linear narrative upon the text. From the outset they show that they are searching for the story, to find a foothold for their journey through the text. Without prompting by Cecilia, the children begin:

- Jay: Once upon a time, there was, there was...
- Charlotte: A man...
- Jay: A big city full of people.
- Cecilia: Jay's sharing his version of the story. Once upon a time there was... what did you say Jay? A city?
- Rose: A big city.
- Jay: Full of lots of people.
- Milly: And there was a market.
- Cecilia: Milly said, and there was a market.
- Christopher: And people were all very busy and it was noisy and not very peaceful only at night.

The children seem to indicate a level of unease with the text and its lack of a single narrative pathway and they quickly collaborate to narrate a traditional story start.

³The affordance of *Naar de Markt* as a text is discussed in the next chapter in the book where Rodosthenous, Chatzianastasi, Stylianou discuss its themes of diversity.

Cecilia skillfully navigates this disquiet initially by mediating the dialogue to support the children to use simple visual literacy strategies to notice elements on the page:

Ffion: I've spotted them.

Cecilia: Tell me more -who have you spotted?

Ffion: The girl the dog and the mum.

Cecilia: You've spotted the girl the dog and the mum. Has anyone spotted, or noticed something else? Let's make sure we all have a turn (*whispers*); Josh what have you spotted?

Similar to Beci, Cecilia's technique of making the strategy of 'noticing' explicit in this way helps to children to determine the importance of key events that are happening, and Johnny moves to an interpretation:

Johnny: The people that are on the front cover must be the main people of the book.

With *Naar de Markt*, the children seem to struggle to identify the pattern or rhythm to use to track and determine significance through the text so Cecilia helps them by leading them to transactional strategies for comprehension (Pressley and Allington 2015): making connections to knowledge, determining importance, asking questions and making predictions to find out more. Once the children label the main characters on the cover, deciding they are a mother and daughter, they are provided with the hook they need to begin to explore the rich range of narratives and parallel stories on the pages as they occur around 'the mum', 'the girl' and 'the dog'. The children's determination to discover a traditional causation in the narrative, however, continues beyond identification of the main characters. The children search for a problem in need of resolution (Nodelman 1988), the evil that needs to be vanquished or the lost treasure that need to be found. Searching around the page they notice that in the foreground are oranges that appear to have fallen to the ground, and also that a previously apparent shopping bag is now missing.⁴

Cecilia: Logan said their doggy's there, but they have lost something I wonder what have they lost? Lauren thinks she knows (*Lauren waves hand*) What have they lost?

Lauren: The orange things.

Cecilia: The oranges. Harry?

Harry: That bag.

Cecilia: Which bag?

Harry: That one – the one that that man is holding.

Cecilia: So what's that man doing?

Ella: He's trying to steal it.

Cecilia: You think he's trying to steal it. You think that people are always trying to be mean and steal things. Just like the little girl was being mean and stealing the oranges.

⁴These parallel stories are considered more fully in Chapter 6.

This sense of anticipation, which results from children's experience of traditional story structures and patterns, supports them to determine significance (Mackey 2004) in the images that they see, though in this case the children overinterpret and their ideas are not completely supported by the visuals.

A key difference afforded by the reading logic of *Naar de Markt* is the opportunity to move backwards and forwards in the text to quickly check that interpretations made have validity. Cecilia supports the children to move back through the temporal space of the illustrations to discover the cause of the lost bag, "connecting and talking across pages toward synthesis" (Ghiso and McGuire 2007, 354). As the children's attention is drawn to different details in the scenes depicted, Cecilia supports their co-construction by regularly moving backwards and forwards in the book so that they can trace the origins of the parallel stories and test their theories. This enables a sophisticated resequencing of events:

Cecilia: Let's go back to this page (*turns pages*) Where were we.. on this page... She was being helpful wasn't she (*all children are engaged – many with mouths open*)

Craig: I see the man I see the man!

Cecilia's approach here is interesting as it highlights the challenge when mediating such an open text (Aukerman 2013; Dombey 2010). Keen to support the children's agency and to encourage their ideas, rather than correcting the children, she leads them back a few pages. For Craig this is the opportunity to find evidence in the text to support his theory about the thief, showing his idea to be accountable to the text, even if it presents a reading that might not be intended by the author.

The extracts from Class 2 show that scaffolding the navigation and co-construction of the open-style linear narrative encourages children to employ high-level comprehension strategies to synthesize logic of sequence and causation; to determine significance retrospectively and to hypothesize both forwards and backwards through the text. The children have to work harder to co-construct a narrative arc with causation, so they search for meanings beyond the literal level of the visual text and explore the detail to expose multiple threads of narrative that are further interpreted by moving backwards and forwards in the text. The responses from Class 2 represent the rich affordances for dialogic co-construction of the reading pathway of this open-linear narrative.

5.7 Conclusion

The extracts shown in the two cases begin to demonstrate the range of complexities facing teachers as they mediate visual texts in whole class teaching. Recent theory around dialogic education has moved the discussion away from analysis of individual interactions between teachers and children, instead considering dialogic stance and values (Aukerman and Boyd 2020; Alexander 2020). In addition to their teaching of visual literacy and text comprehension, these teachers are also facilitating a dialogic

ethos in the class where children feel included and learn to be tolerant and empathetic to the ideas of each other, values situated at the heart of the DIALLS project. As such, the affordance of ambiguous, visually stimulating texts is clear. With no 'correct' answers, and an open dialogic space between reader and text, children are able to explore possibilities for interpretations alongside each other, and importantly, their teacher, who can genuinely co-construct meaning alongside the children.

It is important that visual narratives (not just picturebooks, but films and video games too) are not seen as homogenous, requiring the same simple technical skills of visual literacy to interpret. As shown in this chapter, even two seemingly similar cases demonstrate the flexibility afforded by reading pathways not limited by verbal temporal logic. Movements backwards and forwards through the text helps readers to quickly identify important details that may only become apparent at later stages of the story.

This means that teachers need to be prepared, as Cecilia and Beci were, to adopt alternative styles and pathways of mediation: simultaneously balancing the duality of their role as participants in the co-construction who *also* hold responsibility for supporting other participant's meaning-making skills and dialogic competency. This role is complicated and requires chains of responsive micro-decisions to realize the potential of the dialogic space between readers and text and between readers themselves (Maine 2015). These decisions happen in the moment and will not always capture the rich affordance of children's interpretations. With each child's contribution, teachers have to decide instantly whether to move the discussion forward with the whole class, or take an opportunity to engage extensively with one child to help them make their connections and meaning-making explicit, to add or respond personally to the co-construction or to act proactively in some way to promote inclusivity. The explorations above suggest that using a diverse range of texts, modes and reading pathways, and trusting in the dialogic space of possibility they provide will itself support practitioners to navigate and balance their multi-faceted role. Rich texts and dialogic spaces will produce naturally rich co-constructions and each reading pathway offers new structures for this co-construction.

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