

Oh the games we can play! Exploring the rich curriculum possibilities of some top Singaporean children's books.

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Introduction

Oh the games people play now
Every night and every day now
Never meaning what they say now
Never saying what they mean
And they wile away the hours
In their ivory towers
Till they're covered up with flowers
In the back of a black limousine

Lyrics by Joe South

Joe South's lyrical allusion to Lewis Carroll's verbal play on the nature of discourse is apt when, in Chapter 7 of *Alice in Wonderland*, the author challenges Alice's idea that when she says, "I say what I mean" she also says "I mean what I say." They are not the same! What Lewis Carroll invites his character to think about is also the case with writers and readers. What authors say and what readers read, are not necessarily, one and the same thing. So, in my ivory tower (though, given the Christchurch earthquakes, the tower that I used to work in has been demolished), I have been exploring the playfulness of story and possible meanings that may be negotiated focused on some recent award-winning Singaporean books. My intent today (that is to say, what I intend to say, but I accept Carroll's stricture that the saying is not the same as the receiving, and you may take away something completely different), is to persuade you, that seemingly "simple" texts like picture books, can produce a startling range of deeper possibilities of a curriculum that some children may find enchanting, just like the flowers in Joe South's lyric. Have you ever held an exotic flower and been overcome in awe and wonder at its extraordinary difference? Well, this session might be a little different to what you expect, but hopefully not too exotic or too deadening!

Firstly, I want to explore some ideas about teaching reading and how texts work that you may find unsettling. In contrast to the testing regimes (and the consequential pedagogies) that insist on correct answers about what a text means and what it is to comprehend, my argument is that meaning is less fixed and more a transaction-in-the-moment, often unique to each child. To demonstrate this argument, I will secondly introduce structural analysis as a form of scaffolding that might enable teachers to appreciate the complex possibilities of meanings that texts evoke for some readers and thirdly, I will elaborate on this form of scaffolding by sharing some exemplars based on these Singaporean texts.

I need to however, clearly state what I mean by the "curriculum". I am not referring here to the official curriculum as found in national documents: I am referring to the unofficial hidden curriculum that sits both in the text and in the reader. An adopted boy who is located in a messy family situation whereby survival, both physically as well as emotionally, is difficult, may well read into a text a different emphasis or meaning (read curriculum) than a young girl who is comfortable in her own skin, though coming from a different language and culture. This child will potentially have quite a different curriculum (reading "learning journey" here) than a young lad who has had to cope for a

long time with the label of being “autistic” but comes from a loving, large family who do their very best to integrate difference into their family. What I am drawing attention to is the reader of a text is not an idealised reader, but is a real person with complex stories sitting on his/her shoulder. All three children detailed above are attempting to negotiate the hidden curriculum within their own lived realities. This paper will be drawing attention to the need for valuing differences when it comes to negotiating what a text might mean for him/her. I draw attention here to Rosenblatt’s (1978) idea of reading as a transaction in the moment between text and the particular child reader.

Rosenblatt (1978) draws attention to two different stances that readers take up when they read. Firstly, there is the aesthetic stance of experiencing the text in the moment, the “living through” of the story that resonates with what I have called the unofficial, hidden curriculum. Secondly the reader can take up an “efferent stance” (from the Latin word *effere* which means to “take away”) whereby the reader approaches the text more intellectually as they take away information that the text contains. This information may be something the reader instigates or, in terms of schooling, it may be a required stance where the child as reader is required to check the text out in order to take away information. There is an important variable to consider here and that is the locus of control. If a child associates reading constantly with a required efferent stance where the purpose of reading carefully is to get correct answers, there may be an unintended consequence: disengagement. The result of disengagement might result in lower reading achievement (as reading becomes simply a school subject). Potentially this could also result in skilled readers who choose not to read as a personal pleasure and, if this reality is widespread, the potential decline in book culture for this community. Engagement in reading pleasure (the aesthetic stance) is just as important as competency in “taking away” information from a text. Do school policies/practices reflect this?

Indeed, what I, as an “ivory tower” academic might read into a text and take away from the text, my transaction, will be different too. It is not a question of rightness and wrongness but it is an issue of encouraging dialogues. It is in the space of dialogues, between text and readers, in the context of a reading community, that the real deal of a transforming curriculum may be found. Teaching reading needs to be playfully dialogic. Therefore there will be a small workshop experience here when you can (playfully I hope) enter into a dialogue with me. Hence, I do hope you don’t find the session too academic and deadening and request a black limousine to take you away!

Some myths about reading and the teaching of reading.¹

Barthes (1975) when talking about *The Pleasures of Text*, speaks of two types of texts; the writerly text and the readerly text. To “teach” reading effectively, especially in the senior primary school, you need to get to grips with this distinction. We need to distinguish between most contemporary trade books for the senior school (or what Barthes calls a writerly text) and broadly defined, the basal text/readers designed for the purpose of teaching reading (which could be identified with what Barthes calls a readerly text).

In the writerly text, the reader is asked to “write” his/her own story as he/she reads as opposed to simply following an apparently transparent script (the readerly text). One can see this for example in the role of the illustrator. In a trade picture book (bought at the local store), artists often play with, interrogate, and sometimes tell a quite different story compared to the words. By the use of symbols, icons and visual metaphors, ambiguity and complexity is the name of the game (at least in award-winning books I would hope). However, in (basal) readers (which the school locates from non-

¹ Much of the material in this section is derived from a study guide I have written for second year student teachers entitled *The Gift of Story*, University of Canterbury College of Education, 2013.

public commercial sources and provides them), the illustrator's role is to mimic the text; to provide a visual cueing system to help the reader decode the text. In these texts, both the writer and the illustrator are **not** usually in the business of playing textual games for literary purposes but rather to teach overtly what it is to read. Hence the idea of reading levels in the junior school implies a tightly constructed text with an *orientation* to fixed meanings. It would be fair to say however, that the idea of a trade book *of necessity* being a writerly text is not accurate: there are many commercially-available books for children (and adults) where the text is a transparent script with little space for indeterminacy and ambiguity, of reading into the text differences/interpretations. There are many bland picture books on the market.

Barthes argues that it is the writerly text where most joy or pleasure is to be found. In practical terms, what does this mean? For example, to ask children to predict the endings of a writerly text as the primary way to scaffold their reading progress/understanding is problematic. Authors and illustrators like to create mystery, to give false clues, to tease the reader, and to play games with both image and narrative. Do you try to predict the end of each episode of *Coronation Street* before the episode starts? Of course not: the experience would be boring. Yes, you might be sitting there predicting, but you do not have an expectation of correctness (and therefore satisfied with watching at the required level of prediction). Prediction is a game. Writerly texts then are about unpredictability and ambiguity where debate and discussion about "author's purpose" is going to be very open.

Asking children what the "author's purpose" in writing a text is, is a common device used by teachers (and the many text books that support them) in order to focus on comprehension. For early readers this may be helpful. But is it sufficient? In the picture book as a text type, the author is not the only creator: he/she is accompanied by the illustrator too. Do reading teachers/textbooks/curriculum documents ever talk about the "illustrator's purpose"? Look at Hathorn's (1994) picture book *Way Home* from this perspective. Without the illustrator's purpose, the book is a pretty limited story. It is the illustrator here that gives enormous depth to the story (often the case when there is collaboration between author/illustrator which is unusual in the publishing industry). So, to talk about the "author's purpose" is to marginalise the voice of the illustrator as an Other.

However, there are more serious arguments against the idea of "author's purpose" as an absolute truth. The literary critic Barthes (1968) is renowned for declaring that "the author is dead" (or perhaps in the case of children's literature, terminally ill).² What are the arguments *for the idea* that the author is dead?

Firstly, not every text is clearly authored (eg. oral folktale). Who truly is the author of *Red Riding Hood* or *Cinderella*, stories that are centuries old, found across many cultures?

Secondly, not every possible reading of a text is necessarily intended (the idea of purpose) though very clearly readable. There is the subconscious and the ideological that sits behind the author's conscious mind and though not intended to be expressed, is nevertheless evident and therefore readable. Critical literacy is about unlocking the ideas that are subliminally embedded in the text.

Thirdly, some authors deliberately efface themselves as the authoritative narrator and through irony, encourage the reader to be critical of "voices" in the text. Post-modern writers often deliberately draw attention to the fact that the text is a construction (metafictive) by creating

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_the_Author

multiple, significant key characters (neither protagonists and antagonists) thus inviting the reader to become a writer as it were, making their own decisions about purpose.³

Perhaps it is fair to say that readers (as opposed to trade books) which are specifically designed to teach literacy in the junior school may be constructed more simplistically than senior school texts so that it seems reasonable that we can talk about authorial intention. For the middle/senior school fictional texts, this notion of author's purpose is potentially very misleading.⁴

One of the most misleading aspects of teachers' reading strategies (and the textbooks that support them) is the notion of singularity whereby teachers persistently use the singular rather than the plural when talking about purposes, ideas, and themes. You only have to do a Google search using "author's purpose" (singular) and "author's purposes" (plural) and note the huge difference in hits: over nine million refer to the singular and 25,000 refer to the plural! Children are persistently asked to determine the main *idea* of a text framed as the author's *purpose* or *intent*, typically expressed in the singular rather than the plural. As Davis (2007) puts it:

[Identifying the main idea] comprehension strategy involves the reader in determining the main idea in the text. This is also referred to as the big idea (for example, in a report), the theme (for example in a narrative text), or the key message (for example, in an argument). Sometimes the main idea is explicit and is revisited and revisited throughout the text. At other times, it is implicit and the reader has to infer, analyze, synthesize and evaluate to determine it. The main idea is closely related to the author's purpose. On other occasions, thinking critically about the author's reason for writing the text is important in determining the main idea. Additionally some texts may contain more than one idea, with some having more importance than another (172).

Whilst the author recognizes the possibility of complexity rather than singularity in the last sentence, the subsequent chapter persistently expresses the concepts of the main *idea*, *theme* and the author's *purpose* in singular terms. Such persistent representation negates the proviso offered in the sentence. Can a fictional text be so reduced to what Barthes calls a "singular theological meaning" (Barthes, 1974)? What is also notable in the last sentence in the quote above is the idea of hierarchy (more/less) inviting thus the questions, who decides what idea is more important, for what purpose and with what result? If it is the teacher who decides, what are the implications for children's engagement with the text and the broader notion of reading pleasure (Marsh, 2004)? Indeed, assessment practices that utilize multiple choice questionnaires as part of a quantitative methodology in order to produce seemingly valid national norms reinforce this dominant paradigm of singularity, closure and correctness; the teacher as a textual priest. But is such methodology sufficient to describe what it is to comprehend? There are two issues that I have with the use of the singular in talking about themes and purposes.

The first is that textually, it can be demonstrated that many texts have gaps and spaces (absences if you will) that allow the reader to write into the story their own understanding of what the text seems to be saying that may or may not be the "intention" but is clearly readable. For example, how important is the absence of the father in Sendak's *Where the wild things are* in exploring the psyche of Max and his behaviour? How important is setting in comprehending this story (given the significance of the title "Where") and thus the story is about the island as a place of savagery? Is the image of Max chasing the dog with a raised fork an image of animal cruelty? Is this story about family violence as a learnt behaviour? Comprehension is not only about correct decoding of words: it

³ See David Macaulay's *Black and White* as an example. He is in the business of deconstructing black and white thinking about what a text means.

⁴ Note the idea of "intentional fallacy" in literary theory http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authorial_intent.

is also inclusive of the idea of interpretation which is the playful engagement with the ambiguity and complexity of a writerly text.

My second concern is the reader positioning that takes place when we talk about the “big idea” or the “author’s purpose” as an overt, explicit intention. It evokes notions of correct and incorrect whereby the teacher is, as Barthes would put it, a textual “priest” insisting on a singular, theological meaning. The quirky, gifted child, the child of difference (culturally and experientially) is potentially marginalised as they are required to reproduce the straight and the narrow, the obvious rather than the intriguing. What is their response to this singularity? Often it is frustration, boredom and potentially choosing not to be a reader. They ignore the book and head off to their computer games where identity, locus of control or agency (I am who I am and I have the power to act) is the name of the game! Is this the reason why poetry, beloved of young children, is the most detested text type for older children? Poetry in the senior classroom becomes a guessing game of the correct, singular meaning, determined by those in authority. Playfulness is forbidden?

Introducing structural analysis as a scaffold.

To demonstrate the need for teachers to encourage complexities rather than simplicity in negotiating texts, I want to share with you a form of reading comprehension scaffolding known as structural analysis which I have developed for teachers. The aim of this scaffolding is to encourage the teacher, in the early stages of planning, to use the text as a basis for developing an inclusive curriculum; to think laterally, critically and productively. I also want to deconstruct the idea that the picture book, by definition, is a simple text designed for pre-schoolers!

Firstly we need to examine the pivot in any story: the depiction of conflict. Conflict is essential to most stories (other than the didactic text). The qualities of a character (his/her status, gender, culture, personality, beliefs, values, inter-relationships) influence his/her behaviour. This informs the internal and external dilemmas that he/she faces which he/she then acts upon. This action is the plot. We need to identify these conflicts (plural) in the particular text as “this *and/within/versus* that” or dualisms.

Think of: mother/son brother /sister brain/brawn bully/victim rich/poor big/little
older/younger liked/disliked home/street secure/insecure certain/uncertain powerful/
powerless inner/outer home/school safety/experiment able/disabled inner/outer

Whilst I use the terms “dualism” or “binary oppositions,” we need to recognise that it is often in the “betwixt and between” space, a space that is known as the liminal space, that is where the deeper play with ideas/meaning is often found. For example, think of the following example of liminality. The dualism is good *versus* evil. The liminal space is the good *within* evil and the evil *within* good. Can a good action result in an unintended evil consequence (and vice versa)? This tension between good and evil is a rich curriculum indeed. In terms of good versus evil, is there such a thing for example, as a “just war”?

So, the first thing you need to do is identify a range of conflicts that are embedded in the focus text and identify each one as a dualism. Then, for **each** dualism or binary opposition that you and children identify in a text, think of the following four dimensions.

Dimension One: P=What does this PARTICULAR narrative seem to be saying about the identified conflict ?

What motivates each character to behave the way she/he does? What problem or issue preoccupies each character? What are the consequences of each character's actions? Are the conflicts faced by the characters resolved? What influences the resolution? Should we be sympathetic to the character? Are there characters who are absent in the text (including illustrations) that you could reasonably expect to be represented? What do these absences convey? Does the resolution suggest particular messages or world views that the reader is expected to "take up".

Dimension Two: U=How relevant is this particular conflict from a UNIVERSAL perspective (local and global) in terms of personal responses to the dualism and an awareness of how other texts deal with this dualism (intertextuality)?

Is the conflict in the text commonly experienced? Does this text speak to our/your circumstances? Does the proposed resolution tell us something about our lives, here and now? Is the resolution proposed by the text helpful or dangerous for you/us? Can you think of a different narrative that deals with the same conflict and/or resolution of ideas? In what ways are the texts similar and/or different in exploring this dualism? Is this different narrative more successful or less successful in negotiating the dualism as far as you are concerned?

Dimension Three: C=What are the CRITICAL issues relating to how this text deals with dualism and therefore positions us to read the world in the word in a certain way? Does this positioning need examination?

Is the resolution proposed by the text grounded in a particular socio-cultural context? Would this resolution work in other socio-cultural situations? Is there bias evident in the text against other social groups (class, gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicities)? Whose voice is praised and whose voice is ignored in the text? How is Nature represented in this text? Is this representation valid and helpful? What has this text not considered in its argument that could have made a more helpful resolution? What other possibilities for resolution could the text propose? How valid and sufficient then is the resolution that is being proposed for the reader/audience/participant to take away, contemplate, believe in and perhaps imitate?

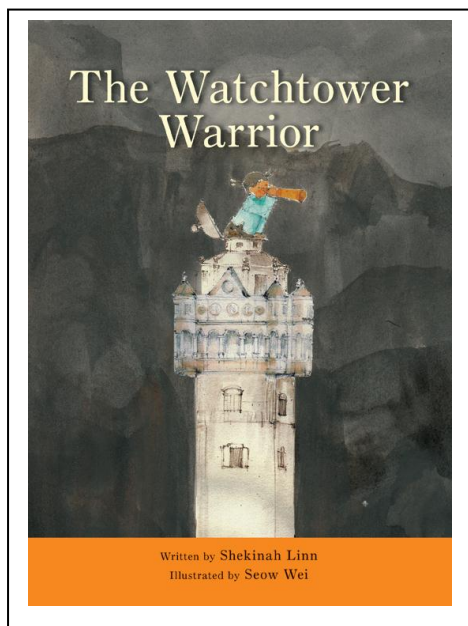
Dimension Four: P=Is it possible to develop a pedagogy enabling PRODUCTIVE change so that readers resolve positively issues associated with the dualism?

Has the text changed how *you* see your world, Nature and the wider world? Would you act differently having read this text? What possibilities of action does the text suggest? Can you think of someone who might be helped by reading this text? Does this text suggest a programme of action about a particular issue that it deals with? Can you see yourself getting involved in this programme? What strategies can you devise that might enable a productive response to make a difference to the personal, the local and the global based on the experience of this text?

Some exemplars using structural analysis.

To demonstrate this model of teaching reading in the context of a holistic view of "the curriculum" that is inclusive of real readers, I have examined carefully five leading Singaporean children's literature texts (mostly picture books) and have attempted to demonstrate the deeper layers of meaning that can be read into these texts. For each text I have given a brief synopsis, detailed some critical ideas and themes found in the text and then expanded on each dualism using the four dimensions detailed above. It is in this space that a deeper curriculum can be found.

Lim, Shekinah (illus. Seow Wei) (2008) *The Watchtower Warrior*
Singapore: Straits Time Press



In the early 20th century, in a Southern Chinese village, lived a bright adventurous girl called Little Bud. She loved her father AhPa's stories, especially about a female heroine named Hua Mulan. Stories shape her psyche such that when her father emigrates to California (The Golden Mountain) and maintains contact through postcards, Little Bud is further inspired, especially hearing about motorcars and tall buildings. When a village clan meeting is called and the villagers hear about local banditry (caused through poor harvest and floods), the villagers are at a loss. Little Bud suggests building a Watchtower, but she is silenced by the (male) village elder. However, the older villagers (including her grandma) think this is a wonderful idea, especially when Little Bud shows them postcards from Ah Pa. And so the big build began. It takes a long time but persistence pays and it is built and named by Grandma Pang as "Heavenly refuge". Little Bud offers her services (eager for adventure) but is refused: to watch is an adult task. The legend of Hua Mulan, a female hero, is only a story! Time goes by and no enemies appear. The villagers decline to

continue watching and Elder Tuck even suggests that Little Bud could become a watcher. And so she does and playfully enacts her dreams of heroism as she awaits the enemy. As to be expected, she spies shadows that were not part of the land and strikes the gong. Despite all the attempts by the bandits to pillage and destroy, the watchtower works and Little Bud is called The Watchtower Warrior, just like Hua Mulan! Little Bud eagerly awaits telling Ah Pa her real story!

Key themes or critical ideas that are suggested by the text:

- Stories can inspire children to dream of new possibilities by the process of identification with a heroic character and internalisation of the need for positive and successful action.
- The stereotype of the male as the heroic figure is disrupted in this text through a girl's identification with female legendary figures. The hero(ine) archetype in myth and legend persists into modernity.
- Many families have to leave the family and the local space in order that the father is free to earn an income in order to support loved ones left behind. Maintaining communication is essential for family ties to be kept. Absent fathers (both in text and life) can be a substantial emotive issue for many children.
- New possibilities at the local level can happen when people are open to new ideas from other genders and socio-cultural groups.
- It is wise to predict possible disasters and be prepared. Natural disasters can produce a competitive need to survive as well as be the basis for new forms of community relationships.
- Tall buildings can be highly symbolic of power, spirituality as well as community. From the Tower of Babel to the Twin Towers, aspirations of people are projected onto physical structures that can then be sites of contestation.
- Wise leadership is sometimes about stepping outside the normative and being prepared to listen and respond to the voices of the relatively powerless. Children can have transformative ideas and need to be heard by adults.
- Context: this story is based on the Kaiping Diaolou and Villages UNESCO world heritage site that seeks to preserve and value the unique architect and story associated with the site. See glossary. Stories related to national identity could be a particular focus here (social sciences).

A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Dualism: Dreaming and/within/ versus the real.	P	What was it about the story of Hua Mulan that Little Bud found inspiring?
	U	What stories inspire you? Share with a neighbour. Is there a pattern behind the types of stories that you and your classmates find fascinating?
	C	Are there any dangers in dreaming/hoping/wishing for things? When do you have to put aside dreaming and actually do something?
	P	List all the dreams that you and your classmates have about the future. Next to the list, describe how those dreams could be fulfilled.

Dualism: Male and/within/ versus the female as hero.	P	What evidence in the story is there that indicates that Little Bud is not respected by others? Why is this so?
	U	Read W. Ihimaera's (illus. Bruce Potter) (2005) picture book version of <i>The Whale Rider</i> . What is similar and what is different between these two stories?
	C	Do female heroes have the same qualities as male heroes? Does it matter?
	P	Think of a real life woman or girl who is a true heroine. Find out about her life story and list those qualities that make her distinctive.

Dualism: Together and/within/ versus apart.	P	How did the villagers respond to the challenge of possibly being attacked or being flooded? Did they immediately respond as individuals or as a community?
	U	Can you tell a story of a potential or actual disaster where individuals joined together to make a difference? Find out about the student army in the Christchurch earthquakes. Is this an example of becoming warriors?
	C	How important is it to feel that you belong to a community that is bigger than the family?
	P	Make a web map of organisations/events that build a sense of community.

Dualism: Communication and/within/ versus silence.	P	When Ah Pa left the home to get income to support the family, how was the idea of still belonging to a family maintained?
	U	Is it usual or unusual for a parent to have to leave the family in order to get an income to support the family in your community? How can we help the children in these situations?
	C	Are there members in our family or groups of people in our (school) community whose situation and story is silenced or never heard about? Disabilities? Poverty? Cultural difference? Illness? Different beliefs? Does it matter?
	P	Talk among your peers. Whose voice is always heard and whose voice is hardly heard? What is your definition of belonging to a community?

Dualism: Us and/within/ versus them.	P	Who is the enemy in this story?
	U	What makes others being seen as enemies? Do you have an "enemy"?
	C	Are there any dangers in seeing others as enemies? Is it fair to see other children as "enemies"? Is rivalry natural or learnt?
	P	Find out stories about how some animals adopt another type of animal (species). Can these stories teach us anything?

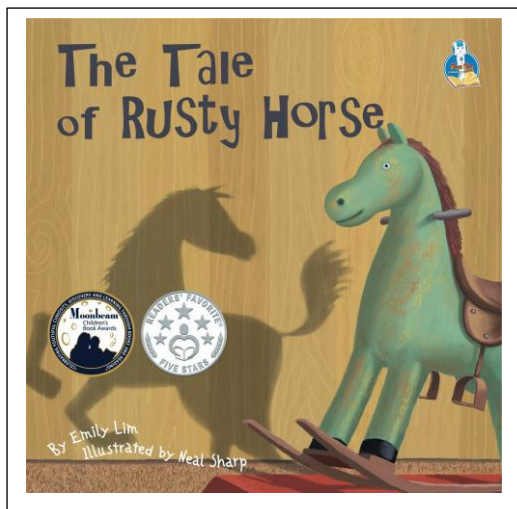
Dualism: Obey and/within/ versus	P	When did Little Bud challenge authority in this story? Was she being disrespectful? Is there a good and a bad way to challenge authority?
	U	Can you tell a story of when you challenged somebody?
	C	Did this have a good consequence or a bad consequence? Share with a neighbour. What can we learn from our stories?

challenge.	P	Find out a true story of how children and young people can be good leaders.
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Dualism: Being prepared and/within/ versus doing nothing.	P	Besides building a Watchtower, how else could the villagers be prepared for war?
	U	How important is the idea of “being prepared” in your life? Is schooling part of “being prepared”?
	C	What potential disasters could happen in your community? How well are you and your family prepared for these events?
	P	List now all the things that should be in your “emergency kit”. Check out your list with what your community leaders say. Is it a good match?

Dualism: Tall and/within/ versus short.	P	In what way have Watchtowers become an important symbol of identity and belonging for Chinese communities?
	U	What other tall buildings have become symbols of national pride and identity? Do tall buildings matter to you? Can you think of a short building that is significant to your community?
	C	Find out about those iconic buildings or sites that have been destroyed by others. Do we invest too much significance in architectural sites?
	P	Find out about international bodies and conventions that seek to preserve heritage sites.

**Lim, Emily (illus. Neal Sharp). (2008) *The Tale of Rusty Horse*
Singapore: Mustard Seed Books.**



A rocking horse over time has become a faded, rusty and rejected object, even though it had once been a favourite with children. But time passes and what was, is no longer. Rusty dreams of what could be. His dream is to be playfully accepted. He overhears an old fairy lament that contemporary disbelief in the magical has left him alone too. Rusty asserts belief in magic and the fairy appears and grants him a wish. Old age sometimes means loss of memory and the fairy has forgotten the magic spell. However, next day Rusty finds himself to be a real horse at the next-door stables. At first all is well as Rusty takes delight in children’s pleasure; but he soon becomes lonely again as competition with other horses (who are bigger and different) occurs. One morning he awakes again to his old life as rusty rocking-horse. The magic had stopped working. He is put aside in an old shed and he is

seemingly rejected and lost. But a crippled boy is brought in by the caretaker and a new vision of what a good life is occurs. He joyfully participates in the boy’s dreams and verbal adventures. When the old fairy returns (who finally remembered the magic spell) and offers to grant Rusty his original desire (and Rusty is tempted again by the lure of popularity) he recalls the needs of the crippled boy and decides to be his constant friend. His wish is granted. The next day, the little boy is amazed at the twinkle in the old eyes of Rusty!

Key themes or critical ideas that are suggested by the text:

- It is often hard to accommodate passing time and old age as we recall the pleasures of the past and the uncertainties and sometimes hardship of the present. Decay is a universal issue.

- Traditional games can still give pleasure if they are available and we are open to the possibilities.
- There is much joy in being a willing servant to others who are needy.
- Sometimes getting one’s desires to come true (the lotto complex) is not as fulfilling as we might have hoped. Happiness is finally not found in self-satisfaction so much as doing for others.
- The world of fairy speaks of a universal desire/hope for a “once upon a time” when anything is possible.
- Believing and having faith in a higher power can be liberating.
- Horse riding as therapy is implicit in the text and could be explored as a consequence.
- Context: The author declares, as part of the peritext, her journey in life in overcoming a life-changing speech disability and how she has found hope in her faith in God. She declares a reality beyond the material present.

A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Dualism: Sunrise and/within/ versus sunset.	P	What does sunrise and sunset symbolise and how does this give insight into what this text is depicting?
	U	What feelings do you get when you contemplate sunrise and sunset?
	C	To what extent do weather patterns and the regularity of night/day affect our moods and sense of wellbeing? Find out about living in the Antarctic in the winter time.
	P	Can you recall a time when sunrise (new beginnings) was a significant event for you? Design a poster that communicates the idea that new beginnings are possible using the sun as an image.

Dualism: Traditional and/within/ versus contemporary	P	Have you ever played on a rocking horse? Do you remember what made it fun?
	U	What was the best toy you have ever played with? Was it a traditional toy or something new?
	C	“Children depend on technology too much during their playtimes.” Argue either for or against this idea.
	P	Go and visit an antique store or a second hand dealer and draw pictures of traditional, old fashioned toys. Talk to granddad about his favourite toy.

Dualism: Popular and/within/ versus unpopular.	P	Why do you think real horses were popular in this story compared with a rocking horse? Have you ever ridden a horse? What was it like?
	U	What is the most popular game today? Do a survey of your class.
	C	How important is it for games to involve physical activity? If it means better health, should physical games be compulsory?
	P	See if you can find out about old-fashioned games and teach them to each other. Which one is the most/least popular?

Dualism: Decay and/within/ versus preservation.	P	What causes rust? When an object becomes rusty, what is the consequence?
	U	Find out how decay can be prevented in wood, teeth, and/or food.
	C	If there was an elixir for life, would this be a good thing? What would be the consequences if human decay could be totally prevented?
	P	Find out about the best diets that help us preserve life.

Dualism: Magic and/within/	P	Does the picture of the fairy in this book surprise you? What idea do you think the illustrator was trying to portray?
	U	Do you believe in fairies? Find out about the history of fairies in another culture and share one story about fairies that you haven’t heard before.
	C	Why do parents teach children about Santa Clause? Are they misleading

versus the real.		children? Is that a good or bad thing?
	P	If fairies were real, what would you wish for? Write a story about this happening and what the (surprising?) consequences were.

Dualism: Belief and/within/ versus disbelief.	P	Rusty believes in fairies. What was the consequence of his belief?
	U	Do younger children believe in fairies today? Interview some pre-schoolers and find out what they believe in.
	C	Who are the people you most believe in and those who you don't? Is that the same as your neighbour?
	P	What are some key ideas/things that you believe are most important for your future?

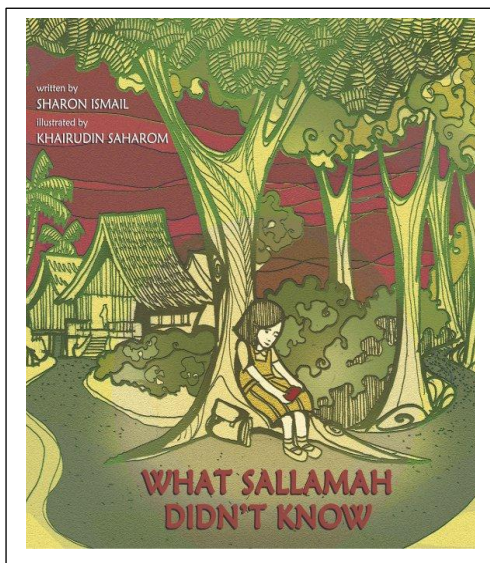
Dualism: Animate and/within/ versus inanimate.	P	In this story who or what is given a voice and who or what is silenced?
	U	Find out other stories where inanimate objects are given voice. Do these stories tend to be serious or comedy?
	C	Do you think that we are misleading children when inanimate objects act like humans and they are allowed to speak?
	P	Find out some myths, legends and folktales where inanimate objects speak. What is the effect of this speaking?

Dualism: Transformation and/within/ versus staying the same.	P	Casting a good spell and good spelling: are they the same? What problems did the fairy here have with good "spelling"?
	U	Find out about some other stories where something or a person is magically transformed. Generally do the stories approve this or disapprove?
	C	If you were given the possibility of being magically transformed, what would you do? What are the positives and what are the possible negatives?
	P	Find out about miracles. Do they happen? What do you believe?

Dualism: Rivalry and/within/ versus self- acceptance.	P	Why does Rusty want to be the best and most popular horse?
	U	To what extent is competition to be the best highly valued in your community?
	C	Is competition (amongst your siblings or amongst your peers) a good quality or a destructive quality?
	P	Talk with people who have never won anything in a competition. Are they happy with themselves? What does happiness depend on? Decide if you think competitions are good or bad.

**Ismail, Sharon (illus. Kkairudin Saharom) (2007) *What Sallamah didn't know*
Singapore: Candid Creation Publishing**

This is an extraordinary story that resonates across time and culture: it speaks of the enduring necessity of family, however defined, across the borders of place and culture. A father decides to give up his baby daughter because of the pressure of feeding a large family and because she is a girl. At the same time another family in a kampong welcomes the little stranger. Young Sallamah grows up in a seemingly typical family where individual differences, sibling and peer rivalry (often centered on gender identity) are playfully detailed. Mother and father dote on the family, even giving them midnight feasts. When she becomes 12, her teacher asks her to produce her birth certificate so that she can be given an identity card. Despite the father's best efforts to maintain the secrecy of her adoption, Sallamah discovers the truth. She is devastated and has to muster much courage to re-enter the place she used to call home. Sitting under a tree, she thinks about each member of the "family" and differences now become acute in her thinking. When the family go



for a ride in Bak's new car, her older brother inadvertently confirms that she is not a "real" member of the family, and when she overhears her "parents" talking about the problem that night, Sallamah tearfully confronts her sister and wants to know the truth. Munah relents and tells what she knows. Because her adopted parents have been so kind, Sallamah respectfully doesn't confront them but hatches a plan to find the answer to the question: who are my biological parents and why was she "abandoned"? She discovers the great love that Mak and Bak have a love for children who had opened their hearts and home after having two of their own. She hears the story of her two younger adopted brothers as well as her younger sister. She keeps this knowledge to herself as she fears taunts from her peers. She now begins to see that other peers are different to their siblings and she begins to recognise that the idea of family is about relationships rather than genetics. "Between them, they were Malay, Chinese and Indian, all rolled into one. They were family."

Key themes or critical ideas that are suggested by the text:

- The reality of "abandonment" of new born babies/children because of economic pressure (especially girls) is a universal issue. This is evident in the "Hansel and Gretel" type of folktale. However, in this story, there is no Ogre (Type 327) but a welcoming family.
- Females are perceived to be of lesser economic/social value in some cultures.
- Parents often do things to children that they regret. There is a tension between being forced or pressured to do something and having "free choice".
- There is a difficult dilemma for parents of adopted children: is it to be a secret (closed adoption) or is it to be open? This issue is a contested cultural, legal and ethical space (NB. be aware that this is a sensitive area in terms of delivering a curriculum, even for older young people).
- Adoption within and across cultures is a phenomenon with its own specific features/dilemmas. The definition of family is a fluid business: the key is unconditional love.
- Sibling rivalry (and the idea of favourites) is a universal phenomenon that can profoundly impact on the participants, often negatively. However, over time, circumstances can bring about change and differences can be accepted and resolution found.
- Pretend play is often gender-based and is a useful means by which children accommodate cultural and social mores.
- We all love special treats, especially from those close to us.
- The onset of puberty brings about enormous change and is often the focus of "coming of age" stories. Story perhaps has replaced/complements cultural rituals.
- Forgetfulness often has dire consequences.
- A traumatic event often means radical changes in behaviour: for example, panic attacks, disturbed sleeping patterns, aggression/withdrawal.
- Often anger can produce unintended consequences as our inability to control impulses has a negative aspect.
- Sometimes adopted children feel great shame in that they believe that there is something inherently wrong with them that caused the adoption. Shame is about self-identity. This is one motivator for closed adoption.
- Intercultural/international adoption has its own dynamics and implications for the adoptee, including potentially a greater sense of fluidity in terms of place identity.
- Context. The author shares with us that the story of Sallamah is the story of her mother. Adoption is a life-long and inter-generational issue. The mix of cultures define ideally what it is to be Singaporean.

A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Dualism: Hard and/within/ versus easy decisions.	P	Why did Sallamah's biological father give his daughter for adoption?
	U	What was the hardest decision that you have made in your life? Share with a neighbour you can trust.
	C	Is what is right in part dependent upon the culture in which the person who has to make a decision, lives? Is it fair for those who are outside the culture, to make a judgment?
	P	List some of the hard issues that authorities sometimes are "forced" to make. Take one issue and argue both for it and against it.

Dualism: Male and/within/ versus female.	P	What are the different ways that the characters in this story are distinguished (are seen to be different) because of their gender?
	U	Do you think girls and boys see the world differently? If so, in what ways? If not, why is this so?
	C	Do girls get a harder/easier school life than boys? What is your evidence for your answer?
	P	Find out about stories (in films or books) where boys or girls "cross the boundaries" of what is expected of them because of gender. Think of the film <i>Billy Elliot</i> .

Dualism: Closed and/within/ versus open adoption.	P	Why did Sallamah's adoptive parents want to keep the adoption a secret?
	U	Find out about other picture books that explore adoption. For example: http://voices.yahoo.com/top-five-adoption-picture-books-children-3899408.html Do these books explore the open/closed dilemma?
	C	Make a list of the reasons for and against closed adoptions.
	P	Should secrets like closed adoption be banned? Find out if there are secrets that should be kept in our society.

Dualism: Brother and/within/ versus sister.	P	Why did Sallamah want Dollah to boss her around when she first arrived home after finding out about her adoption?
	U	Who bosses you around? Does this worry you? What are some good ways/bad ways of responding to be "bossed"?
	C	Is bossing the same as bullying? Is being "bossing around" the same as "leadership"? Is it ever alright to be "bossed"?
	P	Write a list of the good qualities the best brothers can have, from a girl's perspective.

Dualism: Routines and/within/ versus treats.	P	What was the special treat that Sallamah and her siblings got from Bak?
	U	What is the best special treat that you ever got? Share with a neighbour.
	C	Is getting treats for good behaviour a good thing? Does it teach us that it is the treat rather than doing the right thing is what is important? Do you ever do good things knowing you will never get a treat?
	P	Can you think of someone who needs a special treat from you? What are you going to do about it?

Dualism: Stasis	P	What was Sallamah's response to her traumatic event?
	U	Find out how different people reacted to the same disaster eg. fire,

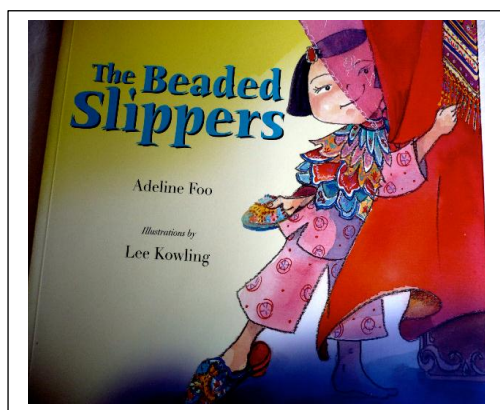
and/within/ versus traumatic event.		earthquakes, tsunami, road accident. Is there a pattern?
	C	What do you think are good ways and what are potentially harmful ways to respond to really bad news?
	P	Find out about post-traumatic stress disorder. Give a 5-minute presentation to your class.

Dualism: Forgetful and/within/ versus memory.	P	What did the teacher forget that had an unintended consequence?
	U	Have you ever forgotten something that had a good/bad consequence? Share a story with your neighbour.
	C	When does forgetfulness in older people become a real problem?
	P	What is the best way to remind yourself of something you could easily forget? Make a list of different ways to remember things. Who does what in your classroom?

Dualism: Anger and/within/ versus control.	P	Who becomes angry in this story? Which character is more/less justified in being angry?
	U	Have you ever been so angry you did something you later regretted? If so, share with a neighbour you can trust.
	C	Why is it important to control your impulse to react straight away to something that upsets you?
	P	List some of situations where you really do have to control your impulses (eg. sports, playing games). Design a poster to encourage others to "Beat the wild side".

Dualism: Conditional and/within/ versus unconditional love.	P	At what point in the story is Sallamah thankful for the unconditional love of her adopted family?
	U	Which of the following picture books is the best to show what unconditional love is: http://successful-parenting.com/picture-books-about-unconditional-love/
	C	Does unconditional love mean that you never get told off or punished? What does unconditional love actually mean? How important is unconditional love for secure attachment of a child?
	P	What is so good about the idea of unconditional love? Is it realistic?

Foo, Adeline (illus. Lee Kowling). (2008). *The Beaded Slippers*, Singapore: Booksmith



Young Putch was named because had delicate features and a creamy complexion. She is beloved by her Mama (grandmother) and she lives in fairly opulent house (as shown in the illustrations) built by her grandfather who has passed away. There are three rooms and she is forbidden to go into one of them. It was always locked and described as being haunted (in order to frighten her from attempting to enter). Indeed an illustration shows a white cat looking directly at the reader/Putch, possibly symbolising the hidden forces of nature (and luck). When Amah (servant) is absent (and Mama

is taking a nap), Putch succumbs to temptation and enters. She enters an Aladdin's cave of Peranakan cultural artefacts associated with a bridal suite. From an ornate four-poster bed to intricate beaded slippers found in a glass cabinet; this room is wonderful, even magical. Putch is transfixed by the wonder of it all and soon, as you could expect from a young girl, dresses up. In the distance, she hears music and so slips along the corridor and is stunned to see her grandmother all dressed up and dancing. Suddenly Putch is transported to an earlier time (when Western music and waltzing was popular across cultures) and spies her grandmother dancing with a young handsome man: her granddad! The music stops, Mama turns around and sees the transformed Putch. Mama growls but at the same time, is empathetic with this youngster who is fascinated with her past. Putch learns about grandma's story and early life and Mama even gives her a beaded slipper that she had fashioned. That night in bed, Putch dreams of times past and is magically transported back in time to Mama's wedding and the bridal chamber. Grandfather turned around and smiled. Are the slippers really magical?

Key themes or critical ideas that are suggested by the text:

- When children are told not to do something (an interdiction), it is inevitable that they will disobey; the issue is what is the nature of the consequence. This is a common story provoker.
- Hidden spaces can often be a portal into another world.
- Gaining a knowledge of times past and one's own heritage can be a truly enriching experience. This can focus on the personal, the social and the cultural.
- Negotiating the real (the material in the present) and the magical (the spiritual, the imaginative, and the symbolic across time) is a complex business, especially for children in pretend play.
- Family relationships and stories that capture them are central to our identity.
- Context: Peranakan culture (a blend of Chinese heritage and Indo-Malay, as well as colonial histories) signify an important heritage that should not be locked away and forgotten, but celebrated. This is the focus on the Peranakan Museum in Singapore.

A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Dualism: Same and/within/ versus different.	P	Why did the author draw attention to Putch's skin colour at the beginning?
	U	Is skin colour something you take notice of when, for example, you are in the mall? Why (not)? Does it matter?
	C	Have you seen examples of where skin colour "others" a person as being too different and not one of "us"? If so, what are the possible consequences?
	P	Read Mem Fox's <i>All over the world</i> . How does she represent skin colour? When is difference/sameness good and bad?

Dualism: Obey and/within/ versus disobey.	P	What was Putch told not to do? Do you think adults have the right to keep secrets? Was Putch naughty in disobeying?
	U	List some of the things that you have been told not to do at school. What are all the possible consequences of disobeying one of those items on your list?
	C	How important is law and the role of the police in enforcing the law? What would happen if people were totally free to do anything they wanted to do?
	P	Make a poster for younger children to help them obey good rules.

Dualism: Impulse and/within/ versus	P	Was Putch impulsive or more calculating? Is there a difference? Is the difference important?
	U	Do you think Sallamah, the main character in <i>What Sallamah did not know</i> would be the same as Putch and go into the forbidden room?
	C	How important is it to control your impulses when playing sport? Describe why rules are important in a sport you like.

control.	P	Design a web map that shows how important it is not to be impulsive and egotistic in ordinary living.
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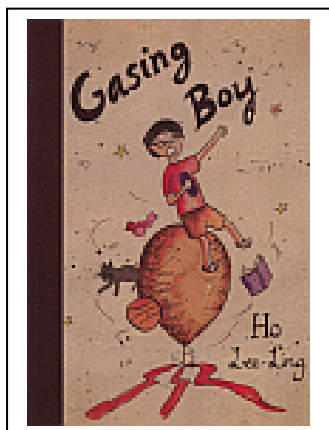
Dualism: Real and/within/ versus the imagination.	P	Do you think Putch really saw her grandfather or just imagined it?
	U	How important is the idea of magic in our lives? Is Dynamo a magician (truly) or a trickster?
	C	Is fantasy in literature a bad thing because, instead of facing up to the real world, readers waste time in escaping into dreams?
	P	Share with a friend you can trust your biggest dream? Is it possible or impossible?

Dualism: Traditional (heritage) and/within/ versus contemporary.	P	Look carefully at the illustrations. Is the story set in contemporary Singapore or sometime in the past? Is the story set in a particular place in Singapore?
	U	List all the traditions that you think are important for you and your community.
	C	How important is history and heritage to you? To others? What do you think we could do better to preserve the past?
	P	Write down one of your grandmother's stories for your future "children"! Present them to the local museum (with permission).

Dualism: Grandparents and/within/ versus grandchildren.	P	How would you describe Putch's relationship with her Mama?
	U	Share with your neighbour, if you can, the best moments that you have had with your grandparents.
	C	What are the things/ideas that you think your grandparents can teach children in your class?
	P	What do you think grandchildren can teach grandparents today? Is it fair to say that relationships are about being reciprocal?

Dualism: Belonging (identity) and/within/ versus loneliness.	P	What evidence is there that Mama was lonely? What did she long for?
	U	Have you ever been lonely? How did you cope with this?
	C	Do schools do a good job of helping lonely children connect with people/things that interest them?
	P	What can your class do that positively helps lonely children in your school?

Ho, Lee-Ling (2010). *Gasing Boy* Singapore: The History Workroom LLP



Many parents are worried that PPS gaming (Portable PlayStation games) is an unhealthy obsession of some young lads that is disruptive of both their education and possibly psychological/social health. In this story, Johnny is truly hooked into the games and is highly deceptive about protecting his space and his choices. But Mum and Dad are not easily defeated (given the war-like behaviour of their son) and send him off to his Uncle Joe for a month as punishment for poor grades and behaviour. Uncle Joe lives in a traditional Malay village in Malacca; a place of stilt houses and palm trees rather than the air-conditioned apartment living of Singapore. Uncle Joe is a little different because, though quiet (and rather patient) he is an expert at gasing (pronounced *gah-sing*) which is a traditional game using spinning tops. John finds that gasing is a common sport, though one day he spies a

girl who has a PPS (though struggling with it) and his addiction returns. He makes a bargain with the girl to compete with her by playing gasing and if he wins, he gets to use the PPS, and if he loses, he gets to eat mud! He discovers to his horror that not all girls lack in sports abilities because this girl is Minah, the renowned gasing girl. What will win: “boy power” or “gasing girl rules”? Uncle Joe offers to help by taking him to another village where there are boys who can help learn the game and so the hunger games begin! Who has to eat mud?

Key themes or critical ideas that are suggested by the text:

- Some modern gaming technologies are potentially addictive and unhealthy such that parents are in a difficult quandary in terms of what to do. See Lui, D., SZeto, G. & Jones, A. (2008) *The pattern of electronic game use and related bodily discomfort in Hong Kong primary school children* <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131511000698> The nature of addiction, its consequences and its remediation could be explored.
- The boundary between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour by children towards their parents is detailed here such that the issue of “do children get away with too much today?” is implied. What should be the consequences of boy who bites his mother? Does the text reinforce the behaviour in that there seems to be no direct consequence? Do stories shape behaviour? On the other hand, if John was identified as autistic, does this make a difference?
- Lies and deceit by the powerless against the powerful (John versus his parents) is very much a trickster business. A study of the trickster tale could emerge from this story with a debate over its moral value. Is trickery against family more/less culpable compared to trickery against the “other”?
- When John pays money for others to do his homework (which he promised to do), is he learning the idea of corruption and that it is okay? Is it okay to buy favours? What does the text propose?
- Is gaming a form of wish fulfilment? In the game space John can be a robust hero defeating enemies but he finds that in real life he has not got the physical dispositions to defeat bullies. In this sense, does gaming build mental resilience and therefore depicted violence is okay?
- Report day (and the home use of assessment books) is when assessments are made available to children and they are clearly labelled. To what extent are children over-assessed and children’s sense of connection/ownership of learning is devalued? Conversely, is learning that we are accountable a good thing to learn right from a young age?
- Post-school aspirations. What is good parenting when it comes to channelling children’s career aspirations? Is there an inter-generational conflict here as a consequence of an ever-changing world?
- Leaving home. When is leaving home a necessary part of “coming of age”? What are the boundaries/principles that should underpin children being sent to relatives for a period of time? Do children always return home with a “boon”? What does this text propose?
- Urban (contemporary) and rural (traditional) living. What are the (dis)advantages of living in a rural environment? Think about nature, lifestyle, levels of comfort, a sense of community, goods and services.
- Traditional and contemporary games. What is similar and what is different in the games that grandparents used to play as youngsters compared to contemporary children? What are the advantages/disadvantages? How important is games as a form of family/cultural/national identity?
- Gender bias. To what extent is there gender bias in the games and activities children play? Does the text challenge or reinforce gender bias, given the ending where there are no winners: it is declared a draw? Is gender difference as natural as evolution?
- Physical strength. Do we put too much emphasis on physical strength in our culture? To what extent are boys who are small and skinny positioned as being “geeks” rather than manly? Are “geeks” more likely to suffer mental stress because of the perception of their physical weakness? If so, do we need to address this issue (think of advertising/ types of stories available)? Find out about masculine hegemony and toxic masculinity.
- Reader identification. To what extent do you sympathise with the protagonist John or feel disenchanted with him? Identify the parts of the story where you most like/dislike him. Does your own age/gender/role (parent versus child) influence how you perceive him?
- Context: the book includes more information about gasing with further online references given.

A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Dualism: control and/within/ versus addiction.	P	Do you think John is in control of his behaviour or is he “out of control” and shows signs of addiction?
	U	What is the nature of the pleasure that young people have in computer games?
	C	When does pleasure become a dangerous thing? Think of boy racers, alcoholics and drug addicts. What are the signs of shifting from controlled pleasure to addiction?
	P	Design a poster for your school showing that is okay to be honest about “not being in control” and where people can get help.

Dualism: Acceptable and/within/ versus unacceptable behaviour.	P	Would you want to have John as a friend? What are his good/bad qualities?
	U	Share with a friend some of the bad things you have got away with at school. What have you learnt about how people live their lives?
	C	Is it true that all of us have good and bad qualities and it is important that stories show both sides of us without always “fixing things” by having a good ending? Give reasons for your answer.
	P	List what you think is unacceptable behaviour from a friend that could break that friendship. Find out if you all agree with each other.

Dualism: Good and/within/ versus bad use of money.	P	Why did John pay Brandon money?
	U	Is it common for children to pay money for favours from others? Find out about the idea of underground economies or the black market.
	C	When does “paying for favours” become corruption? Are there any differences? How do you know?
	P	Find out about virtual money exchanges. Would there be any value for developing a classroom-based virtual exchange economy? What are the good/bad aspects of this idea? Would it help or hinder developing a community?

Dualism: Inner and/within/ versus outer strength.	P	Would you describe John and Minah as strong or weak people? What do you mean by strong and weak?
	U	Describe events where it is inner strength that is just as important to be able to survive as having “outer” physical strength.
	C	How are bullies portrayed in books? Are they always physically strong? Can physically weaker people be bullies too? Has social media re-defined what it is to be a bully? What is the best strength to have?
	P	Name some contemporary heroes who have battled great odds for the good of others (like Nelson Mandela)? In what ways were they strong? How have you defined the idea of strength here?

Dualism: Children’s and/within/ versus parent’s aspirations.	P	What does John want to be when he is older? Why do you think his parents had different plans for him?
	U	What would you like to be when you are older? Do you think your teacher would agree with you?
	C	Should parents be listened to more by young people when it comes deciding their futures? What are the (dis)advantages?
	P	Find out about how different cultures have different value systems when it comes to deciding children’s future roles. What benefits for the greater

		community is there when it is the parents/elders who decide what children should be and become?
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Dualism: Home and/within/ versus away.	P	What do you think John might have learnt by leaving home and going to his Uncle's place?
	U	Have you ever been away from home for a week or so? What was it like for you? Did this experience change you in any way?
	C	Argue for or against the argument that every child needs to leave home and stay at a relative's place at least once a year from age 10 onwards.
	P	Read Jennifer Huget's picture book <i>The parent's guide to running away from home</i> . The look at the following website: http://www.randomhousekids.com/blog/parents-guide-running-away-home

Dualism: Urban and/within/ versus rural.	P	Do you think John is likely to return to Malacca later? What did he experience in this rural setting that he most probably wouldn't get in his apartment?
	U	Think of the last 3 books that you have read. Are they set in rural or urban settings? Does it matter for you?
	C	Are books biased today for or against living in a country space? Randomly choose 5 books from your class/school library and check this out. Share with a neighbour.
	P	Interview a peer group in a different space to you (rural, provincial, suburb, inner city) and find out the advantages of living in each space.

Dualism: Traditional and/within/ versus modern games.	P	Do you think John will take a gasing top home when he returns to his parents? Justify your answer by "reading into" the text.
	U	Find out about the games your father/grandfather played when they were young. What has changed? What remains the same?
	C	What do you think is good/bad about computer-based games. How can you protect yourself from the bad bits?
	P	Have a "Let's Go Traditional" day at your school where old games are to be played. Share your thoughts and feelings at the end.

Dualism: Girls and/within/ versus boys in games.	P	Why did John dislike Minah? From the point of view of looking at characters, who do you think should have won the tournament if you were the judge?
	U	What games are girls better at than boys?
	C	Observe your playground space. Do boys and girls share games or play games separately? Does it matter?
	P	Here is a new rule. "Boys have to play with Barbie dolls and Girls have to play Soccer each Wednesday." Do you think this would work?

Dualism: Like and/within/ versus dislike a character.	P	Who is the person you most admire in this story?
	U	What type of characters do you really like to read about or watch on television?
	C	If you were John's or Minah's real friend, what advice would you give them?
	P	Share in a group by making a web map of "my hero stories". What are the qualities that you all admire in a hero? Is John a hero in this story (though he is the protagonist)?

WORKSHOP. Mutually develop, through dialogue with a neighbour, a structural template based on Adeline Foo's (2009) picture book (illustrated by Christine Lim Simpson) *Guai Wu* Singapore: Ethos Books.

Conclusion

What the use of structural analysis templates clearly shows is that each book, even apparently "simple" picture books, can be the basis of a substantial curriculum that speaks to the needs and aspirations, the hidden curriculum, of individuals. Rather than approaching a focus text with a performative orientation (above, at and below standards), children are given permission to approach a focus text with an orientation to the pleasure of difference. Rather than singularity being the name of the game, textual pleasure is about complexity and the opportunity to negotiate the real messiness of life. One of the implications of this approach to scaffolding reading is the possibility of linking texts that are very diverse when it comes to plot and genre but meanwhile take a stance on key dualisms (and the liminal space between) that children need to negotiate. In this argument, a classroom unit could identify a focus dualism (impulse *and* control for example) and explore how various texts negotiate this space. Now that could be a wild space!

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