

University of Southampton Research Repository  
ePrints Soton

Copyright © and Moral Rights for this thesis are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder/s. The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given e.g.

AUTHOR (year of submission) "Full thesis title", University of Southampton, name of the University School or Department, PhD Thesis, pagination

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

**FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**School of Education**

**The Effect of Reading on a Group of Young Men:**

**How Does It Influence Selfhood?**

by

**Joan Robinson-Harris**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of  
Education

July 2010

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Doctor of Education

THE EFFECT OF READING ON A GROUP OF YOUNG MEN: HOW DOES IT  
INFLUENCE SELFHOOD?

by Joan Robinson-Harris

This thesis is concerned with examining what the influence of reading is, on those young men who choose to read. Looking at the responses of a number of young men, a tripartite approach details the reading history of each respondent, discusses participants' responses to their general reading, and examines participants reading and responses to John Boyne's novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. The research aims were to develop both a theoretical and empirical understanding of how reading influences selfhood, whilst exploring ideas about reading and its value. Within education there is a perception that 'Boys don't read'. This study examines whether young men, beyond the influence of school, read; and if they do read, what value they place on it. Respondents, aged 21 to 26, comprised a small scale opportunist sample, all comprehensive-school educated. Key questions addressed focused on what the experiences and perceptions of reading among participants were, what value was placed on reading, and what was learnt from it, and how that reading influenced the selfhood of those young men who read? Theories relevant to reading and self construction are presented. The data were collected by the researcher from the participants via face to face interviews, and is analysed and interpreted under four sections; the reading accounts, their interpretation, themes therein and the sense of self of the participants emergent from their reading responses. In its conclusion, the study

strongly suggests that the effect of reading has a potent influence on the selfhood of those who read, in term of intellectual, moral and emotional development.

## Contents

### Declaration of Authorship

4

### Chapter One: Introduction

5

### Chapter Two: Literature Review

9

### Chapter Three: Description of the Methodology and Sample

37

### Chapter Four: Analysis

47

### Chapter Five: *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*

86

## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Joan Robinson-Harris

declare that the thesis entitled

THE EFFECT OF READING ON A GROUP OF YOUNG MEN: HOW DOES IT  
INFLUENCE SELFHOOD?

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as  
the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the

exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission.

**Signed:**.....

**Date**.....

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

This thesis is concerned with investigating what the influence of reading is, on those young men who choose to read. What is the illuminative capacity of reading, and how is this revealed in the respondents? Are they enlightened, moral, able to cope with their emotions, cerebral because they read? The utility of reading is manifest. It is a requirement of society that its members be literate in order to function as members of an advanced industrialised economy. The promotion of reading and its associated literacy skills is a continuing feature of government policy.

This thesis examines the influence of reading modestly but as rigorously as parameters allow, and is hopefully of qualitative interest. Looking at the responses of five young men, a tripartite approach has been employed:-

- i) Detailing the reading history of each respondent.
- ii) Discussing participants' responses to their reading in general.
- iii) Discussing the participants' reading and responses to *The Boy*

*in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne.

It is important to establish respondents' reading history in order to ascertain that the respondents are actually readers.

The discussion of respondents' reading in general is immensely important because their general reading makes them the readers they are at the moment of interview. It is in the discussion of books these young men have already read that the influence of reading may be uncovered. It is in the analysis of their responses and interpretations of their reading that the beneficial effects of reading are revealed. These effects contribute to the construction of imagination, morality and learning, and train, or as one respondent says, rehearse the emotions. These effects are social, enhancing self-esteem and social status and promote thought, as reading becomes a cognitive act. The effects of reading appear to contribute majorly to these young men's sense of self.

Respondents were asked to read Boyne's novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, uniting the respondents in a commonality of response. Everything the respondents had previously read shaped their present responses, thus, everything the respondents read prior to reading *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* contributed to their individual responses to that novel.

The sort of books the respondents had read before reading *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas* and their responses to them, was very much in tune with what they said about *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas*.

The thesis follows with variations, a conventional academic format.

## **AIMS**

The aims of the research are to:-

- i) Develop a theoretical understanding of how reading influences selfhood.
- ii) Develop an empirical understanding of how reading influences selfhood.
- iii) Explore ideas about reading.
- iv) Illuminate responses concerning the value of reading.
- v) Consider the influence of reading on the construction of selfhood.

## **BACKGROUND CONTEXT**

The researcher is in the research: I am the autobiographical 'I'. Three decades of teaching English in state secondary schools in the south of England makes me a person who highly values the skills and art of reading, who has actively sought to promote a love of

literature, and an enjoyment of reading for pleasure. As a teacher of English, I understand that reading underpins the curriculum. I saw, in school, that reading had the power to enhance one's intellectual, emotional and spiritual understanding, observing that the effects of reading improved lives. Most of my experience of story and fact has been through reading.

### **RATIONALE**

The rationale for the research is a passion for the teaching of English, necessarily reading-based. Experience in the classroom has shown me that reading is a potent force for learning and change.

Within education there is a perception that 'Boys don't read'. This is of concern because the formal learning of compulsory schooling is book-based, and because, if 'Boys don't read', their achievement, aspirations, and career choices are affected. This study wants to examine whether young men, beyond the influence of the school, read; and if they do read, what value they place on it.

A further rationale lies in an acknowledgement that the younger generation are more visual in their experience of story and fact, evidenced by films, the internet, and video games. Films, the internet and video games offer young people role models, and present modes of behaviour in a visual accessible way. This study examines whether the written and printed word, in the form of books, still influences the younger generation. If the younger generation do value reading, the research asks, why do they value reading and what is it that they feel reading gives them that makes it worth the effort?

### **RESEARCH POPULATION**

Chapter three reveals the research population to be a small scale opportunist sample of five male volunteers, aged 21 and 26, state comprehensive-school educated, through the National Curriculum. Thus they are close enough to school experience to remember school texts, also young enough that they are still learning and developing as men, both formally at university, college, or the workplace, and informally through travel, leisure, music and sport.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research aim was implemented through the exploration of four key questions:

- i) What are the experiences and perceptions of reading among the research participants?

In other words, do these young men read and what do they read?

- ii) What value do they place on reading?
- iii) What do these young men learn from reading?
- iv) How has reading influenced the selfhood of young men who read?

### **RELEVANT THEORY**

Chapter Two presents relevant theories regarding reading and self construction, which relate to the aims and research questions. Initial discussion of the research literature asks what is reading? Definitions of reading are wide; the OED states it is an act of perusal, Jeffries (1967) says it is communication, Benton (1996) says reading is uncovering meaning, and Cook-Gumprez (2006) views reading as social judgements of its use.

Regarding who values reading, Jeffries (1967) highlights the cost to a society of learning to read, and Levine (1986) says time spent acquiring reading, and the high official value placed on it, signifies the perceived value of reading.

Jeffries (1967) sees the purpose of reading as providing a necessity for living. Rose (2007) views reading as synonymous with education, reporting that the history of reading may be seen as the history of education. Cook-Gumprez (2006) actually sees reading as education.

Considering how reading influences the self, philosophical theories suggest reading influences selfhood. Aristotle in House (1956) sees reading as self development, and extols the cathartic value of reading, for training proper balanced emotions and promoting a life of virtue. Hume (1739) felt emotions generated by reading were important to moral development. Rose (2001) reports how autodidacts flourished via reading. Nussbaum (2004) states that reading generates empathy, compassion, and rational thought.

Lamarque and Olsen (1994) state reading is creative, ordered, thematic, and truth-bearing, in a literary way.

Practical evidence that reading influences selfhood is presented by Jeffries (1967) who says reading offers the reader, cultural literacy, imagination and spiritual development. Cook-Gumprez (2006) details the socio-cognitive changes caused by reading. Kress et al (2005) note that the study of literature can offer students in UK schools moral teaching and life lessons.

Discussing how does reading affect readers Tucker (1982) reports the psychoanalytic

approach to analysis of children's reading, and Bolton (1998) details the pleasure and interpretive quality of reading, saying stories influence readers and great Literature is valuable. Appleyard (1991) says that adults are 'pragmatic readers', reporting the voluntary nature of adult readers as significant. Considering reader-response criticism, Iser (1978) shows how in the act of reading literary insights are constructed. Benton (1996) reports on phases of reading, the reader's stance and cultural contexts.

### **INVESTIGATIVE METHODOLOGY**

Chapter Three details the investigative methodology, showing how the data were collected by the researcher, from participants.

- i) Firstly, participants are asked about their personal Reading History. A reading history is an account of all the books one can remember one has read up to the present time
- ii) Next, face to face interviews take place about how reading shaped the participants' emotional, intellectual and moral life, with examples from reading texts.
- iii) Lastly, participants read the novel, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne, giving their responses, in terms of content, language, narrative voice, characterization, suitability of subject matter for fiction, intended audience, the writer's teachings, and reader response.

Chapter Four reports, analyses and interprets the data sectionalized into four segments.

- i) The Reading Accounts
- ii) Modes of Interpreting the Reading Accounts
- iii) Themes
- iv) Sense of Self.

Chapter Five analyses responses to Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* and reveals that the participants' responses are similar to that of the critics, and also replicate responses previously given to their general reading. In its conclusions, the study strongly suggests that the effect of reading has a potent influence on the selfhood of those who read.

### **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review, mainly considers the following, listed in date order:

Aristotle (384BC-322BC) *The Poetics*, *The Nichomachean Ethics*,

Hume, D. (1739) *A Treatise Of Human Nature*,

Hoggart, R. (1957) *The Uses Of Literacy*,

Williams, R. (1958) *Culture And Society*,

Jeffries, Sir Charles, K.C.M.G. (1967) *Illiteracy: A World Problem*,

Iser, W. (1978) *The Act of Reading A Theory of Aesthetic Response*

Tucker, N. (1981) *The Child and The Book: A Psychological and Literary Exploration*

Appleyard, J.A. (1991) *Becoming A Reader The Experience Of Fiction From Childhood To Adulthood* Cambridge University Press.

Benton, M., Teasey, J., Bell, J. and Hirst, K. (1998) *Young Readers Responding To Poems* London and New York Routledge.

Cox, B. (1998) *Literacy Is Not Enough Essays On The Importance Of Reading* Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press and Book Trust

Lamarque, P. and Olsen, S. (1996) *Literature Truth and Fiction* New York, Oxford University Press.

Rose, J. (2001) *The Intellectual Life of The Working Classes* New Haven and London Yale Nota Bene Yale University Press.

Nussbaum, M. (2001) *Upheavals Of Thought The Intelligence Of The Emotions* Cambridge Cambridge University Press.

Kress, G., Carey, J., Bourne, J., Franks, A., Hardcastle, J., Jones, K. and Reid, E. (2005) *English In Urban Classrooms A Multimodal Perspective On Teaching And Learning* London and New York Routledge Falmer Taylor& Francis Group.

Cook-Gumperz, J. ed (2006) *The Social Construction Of Literacy* Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, Sao Paulo Cambridge University Press.

### **What is the importance of reading?**

This discussion focuses on the importance of reading and its influence on selfhood. Reading does not create selfhood, those living in isolated places in the Amazon rain forests, in traditional societies, who cannot read, have a sense of self. What this thesis argues is that those who read, outside of the demands of study and work, are affected by

that which they read, as it influences thought, the emotions and moral judgement, and shapes the character. How does this occur?

### **Aristotle and Hume**

**Aristotle** and Hume examine the importance of reading. Aristotle believed it was man himself using his brainpower who could decipher the laws of the universe, because underneath all reality there was a fundamental set of universal natural laws that explained everything to do with life. He concluded that to understand these rules was to understand reality. His method was the careful observation of the universe and its systems by the use of human senses and then, by using human reason, to uncover the truth. He decided that it was the rules of nature that were the very essence of all that was divine in the universe. How does this address a discussion of the influence of reading on selfhood? Aristotle talks of the mimetic and cathartic quality of reading showing that engaging with literature, in the form of 'Poetry' and 'Tragedy', promotes rational thought, engages the emotions empathetically, and is pleasurable.

Aristotle's *Poetics* are discussed by House (1956). Aristotle addressed what Plato had said about poetry telling lies about the gods, and corrupting the minds of young children, saying that though the tales about the gods may be untrue, and not the better thing to say, yet they are in accordance with opinion. Aristotle says a literal acceptance of what the poets say about the gods would be corrupting, but poetry was not concerned with truth in this way saying in the *Poetics*, ch.xxv:

There is not the same kind of correctness in poetry as in politics, or indeed any other art.  
(Bywater 1920:86 cited in House 1956:24)

Further, Aristotle argues that what distinguishes a poet from a writer, who is not a poet, is the imitative nature of their work. House goes on to discuss Aristotle's theory of catharsis and the emotions. Aristotle agreed with Plato in certain main points about the effects of poetry and its connection to the emotions:

- i) poetry is an imitative art.
- ii) poetry rouses the emotions.
- iii) poetry gives pleasure, both as an imitation and as arousing the emotions through imitative means.
- iv) the rousing of the emotions by poetry has an effect upon the whole personality of the spectator or reader and on his emotional behaviour in real life.

Aristotle's theory of catharsis is his main defence of poetry having a proper and necessary place in human life, and therefore the State, and cannot be taken out of this wider ethical context. Aristotle nearly always uses pity and fear together, as a pair, defining pity as:

A sort of pain at an evident evil of a destructive or painful kind in the case of somebody who does not deserve it, the evil being one which we might expect to happen to ourselves or to some of our friends, and this at a time when it is said to be near at hand. ( Aristotle *Rhetoric*, II, 8 cited in House 1956:101)

This is related to fear, because Aristotle says that pity turns into fear when the object is so nearly related to us, that the suffering seems to be our own, and we pity others in circumstances in which we should fear for ourselves. This is the basis of the possibility of sympathy, of feeling with somebody else. Pity and fear are sympathy for the good part of mankind in the bad part of their experiences.

Catharsis refers to:

For every feeling that affects some souls violently affects all souls more or less; the difference is only one of degree. Those who are subject to the emotion of pity and fear and the feelings generally will necessarily be affected in the same way; and so will other men in exact proportion to their susceptibility to such emotions. All experience a certain catharsis and pleasant relief. (Aristotle cited in House 1956:107)

A person so affected is thus brought back to a balanced state. Those who are influenced by pity and fear have a like experience, they all undergo a catharsis of some kind and a lightening with pleasure. Aristotle links this to notions of virtue. The passage which expresses Aristotle's general conception best is from *Nicomachean Ethics*:

For instance, both fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well: but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue. (Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*, II,vi, cited in House 1956: 109)

In ethics, the idea of the mean, harmony, balance is a theory of the relation between quantity and quality. Virtue and goodness are themselves not measurable; but lie in a balance of things that are, if not measurable by an exact scale, yet amenable to quantitative statements: it makes sense to say a man is more or less pleased, more or less angry, more or less fearful. The goodness does not lie alone in the adjustment of quantities of pleasure, anger or fear, but in the balance and rightness resulting from such

adjustments.

Tragedy rouses the emotions from potentiality to activity by worthy and adequate stimuli; it controls them by directing them to the right objects in the right way; and exercises them, within the limits of the play, as the emotions of the good man would be exercised. When they subside to potentiality again after the play is over, it is a more trained potentiality than before. This is what Aristotle calls 'káflapóis', and one's responses are brought nearer to those of the wise man. The result of the catharsis is an emotional equilibrium: which may well be called a state of emotional health.

House notes that Aristotle's whole doctrine only makes sense if we realise that the proper development and balance of the emotions depend on the habitual direction of them towards worthy objects. He declares:

It seems to me of great value, not only for understanding what Aristotle means in the *Poetics*, but also for understanding the effect of art of all kinds in educating and developing the personality. For I believe with Plato and Aristotle, that art has these effects. (House 1956:110)

Aristotle's educative and curative theory has a very important element of permanent truth in it. One reads a book because it gives pleasure. Aristotle also realised this, he constantly speaks, says House, of the tragic pleasure and the pleasure proper to Tragedy. Aristotle shows the great value of reading as an influence on selfhood, via its educative and curative qualities.

**Hume** (1739) in his discussion of moral distinction, argues that vice and virtue are not discoverable by reason, saying it is by some impression or sentiment they occur, stating: Morality, therefore is more properly felt than judg'd of. (Hume 1739:522)

He asserts that virtue is distinguished by the pleasure, and vice by the pain, that any action, sentiment or character gives us, by the mere view and contemplation. He says that any action or sentiment upon general view, gives a certain satisfaction or uneasiness, in order to show the origin of its moral rectitude or depravity.

The relevance of this in a discussion of how reading may be seen to influence selfhood is that if one reads, one engages with the book emotionally, and the book offers the possibility of moral lessons, which the reader feels. The link between the book, the emotions it generates, and the moral lessons of the book, and the response of the reader are established. Thus the reader, in reading a novel like Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* engages emotionally with the book, and according to Hume, the

satisfaction or uneasiness he feels, will show the source of the book's moral correctness or wickedness.

Hume notes that if an action is either virtuous or vicious, it is a sign of some quality or character, which he says must depend on durable principles of the mind, which extend over the whole conduct, and enter into the personal character. Here he is saying that actions are the product of character or personality. In terms of investigating how reading influences selfhood, actions are part of literature, and convey to the reader the durable principles of the mind that are the personal character of a protagonist in a novel.

Hume attempts to discover the true origin of morals by examining 'the nature and force of sympathy'. (Hume 1739:626) He says that the minds of men are similar in their feelings and operations, because the emotion of one communicates itself to the rest, and all the affections readily pass from one person to another. When one perceives the cause of any emotion, the mind understands the reason, and a similar feeling is felt. He states:

No passion of another discovers itself immediately to the mind. We are only sensible of its causes or effects. From *these* we infer the passion: And consequently *these* give rise to our sympathy. (Hume 1739:627)

He says that the pleasure of a stranger, for whom we have no friendship, pleases us only by sympathy. He says sympathy is a very powerful principle in human nature, having an influence on our taste of beauty, and producing our sentiment of morals in all the artificial virtues. (Hume describes justice for instance as an artificial virtue). Moral distinctions, says Hume, arise from the tendency of qualities and characters to the interests of society, and that it is our concern for that interest, which makes us approve or disapprove them. We have no such extensive concern for society but from sympathy, says Hume, and consequently it is that principle, which gives us the same pleasure or uneasiness in the characters of others. He further adds that the imagination is more affected by what is particular, than by what is general. This would be as true of events and characters in a book, as in real life. He notes that one sympathizes more with persons similar to one, than with persons remote from one, more with acquaintances, than with strangers, with one's countrymen, than with foreigners. But, says Hume, notwithstanding this variation of one's sympathy:

We give the same approbation to the same moral qualities in China as in England. They appear equally virtuous, and recommend themselves equally to a spectator. (Hume 1739:632)

The value of Hume's notions of sympathy for my enquiry is that, it is on the basis of sympathy that the writer works on the reader. The book the writer writes seeks to elicit sympathy in some measure from the reader. Certainly Hume would expect the writer to stir the reader's sentiment, passion and appetite, and influence the self.

### **Rose, Hoggart, Williams and Jeffries**

**Rose** (2001) studied the intellectual life of the working classes over three centuries, from the late seventeenth century to the twenty-first. He used oral history, educational and library records, sociological surveys, and opinion polls to confirm what memoirists tell us. He states:

While autobiographies tell us a great deal about the vital minority of self improving workers, other sources offer a more representative portrait of the working classes as a whole. (Rose 2001:2)

He notes the practice of autodidact, of self teaching through the reading of books. The roots of the autodidact culture, says Rose go as far back as the late Middle Ages. He says it surged in the nineteenth century, particularly in the late Victorian generation, and crested with the Labour Party victory of 1945. After 1945, says Rose, the working class movement for self education declined, for a number of converging reasons, a point is supported by Hoggart (1957) and Williams (1958).

Rose asks what record do we have of common readers? He observes that although autobiographies were produced across the British working classes, a disproportionately low number were written by skilled workers. Rose reveals that women, for instance, account for only about 5 percent of the memoirists born before 1870, rising to about 15 percent for the 1870-89 cohort, and about 30 percent for the 1890-1929 cohort. Rose acknowledges that these surviving memoirs were unpublished, or were self-published, or were published by local or radical presses. He also acknowledges that agitators usually managed to record their lives, resulting in the sample being skewed to the political left. Rose asserts the great strength of the memoirs is that they represent an effort by working class people to write their own history. Tellingly, says Rose, they wrote at length of their reading, citing the example of the autobiography Thomas Carter's *Memoirs of a Working Man* (1845), which is predominantly an account of a lifetime of reading. Also, cited is celebrated Unitarian minister Robert Collyer (b.1823), savouring the moment when, as a

child labourer in a Fewston linen factory, he bought his first book, *The History of Whittington and His Cat*:

In that first purchase lay the spark of a fire that has not yet gone down to white ashes...I see myself in the far away time and cottage, reading...for dear life. (Rose 2002:3)

Rose says their reminiscences make possible a broader kind of reading history, which could be called a history of audiences, which focuses on reading and students, defines a mass audience, determines its cultural diet, and then describes the response of that audience to literature, education, religion, art and other cultural activities.

Rose tracks working class responses to classic literature, informal education, fiction, non-fiction, authors, primary education, Marxism and Marxists, school stories, popular culture and the avante-garde. He uses social survey to measure cultural literacy, and thus the stock of knowledge acquired through reading, and library records to quantify reading habits. He chronicles the first generation of common readers who became professional writers, as clerks or journalists, and the hostility they encountered from more affluent intellectuals.

Rose notes that the Bible is the text most mentioned by the working class respondents. He cites autodidact Gerrard Stanley, who says that in the 1840s uneducated men and women read back into the Bible themselves, their problems, and their communities, and found biblical answers which they discussed with others who shared the same problems. Rose states:

What is significant here is that the Bible alone offered plebian readers enormous latitude for individual interpretation and social criticism, even when they had access to very few other texts. (Rose 2001:16)

Discussing knowledge and power, Rose reports that educated people commonly, but not universally, found something profoundly menacing in the efforts of working class people to educate and write for themselves. The hierarchy of the British class structure rested on the assumption that the lower orders lacked the moral and mental equipment to play a governing role in society. By discrediting that assumption autodidacts demolished justification of a privilege.

Rose reports the transforming quality of reading on Will Crooks, Labour MP. Growing up in poverty in London's East End, Crooks spent 2d on a copy of *Iliad* and was inspired:

What a revelation it was to me! Pictures of romance and beauty I had never dreamed of suddenly opened up before my eyes. I was transported from the East End to an enchanted land. It was a rare luxury for a working lad like me just home from work to find myself suddenly among the heroes and nymphs of ancient Greece. (Haw 1917:22 in Rose 2001:5)

This imaginative response to reading is a recurrent theme in Rose's text, and inspires the autodidact to greater self-teaching and self-improvement. Rose emphasizes the educative quality of reading, showing it to be a strong influence on the intellectual development of these working class autodidacts.

**Hoggart** (1957), examining working class reading and other activities, presents how he felt a mass culture was developing in 1957, acknowledging that in the century spanning 1855 to 1957 a large nation became literate and highly industrialised. While somewhat generalized, this account of the working classes in the Leeds suburb of Hunsllif illuminates working class income, work, friction, community, men, women, family, and lifestyle. He emphasises the sense of there being a distinct working class culture, with identifiable characteristics, closely connected to the employment offered in the industrialized north. Life was segmented along traditional gendered lines, and men did manual work, sometimes semi-skilled, which endowed them with dignity and pride. Girls and boys, says Hoggart, went 'willingly to school' until age 15, although if work was offered before that it was frequently taken. Education, though valued, was at a basic literacy level following the 1944 Education Act. Access to the Grammar school was via the 11+, and the prohibitive cost of uniform and books was a barrier for some boys and girls, but by no means all, and many working class boys and some working class girls did attend. As Hoggart says:

The economic barriers to knowledge have been largely removed, but there is still a struggle. (Hoggart 1957:321)

Grammar school education was seen as a key to social improvement, opening career doors, beyond the factory, shop, or mine, with clean working conditions, higher pay, and enhanced social status. Ultimately, a working class young man might buy his own home, and become middle class.

Parents welcomed the day when children would contribute financially to the family, usually by working in one of the local factories or mines.

Attitudes among the working classes, says Hoggart, were on a 'Them' and 'Us' basis.

'Them' being any person, or institution, liable to thwart the working classes in any way, like the police, employers, the medical profession, teachers, and government. However, attitudes of determination to make the best of it were widespread, together with an understanding that this was how most people lived. Hoggart does not say whether reading dissolved this barrier.

Pleasures were immediate, says Hoggart, not deferred. Many men and some women drank, weddings, funerals or christenings providing a break from a relentless existence of making do. Humour was a great balm to the discomforts of life, often expressed in cliches that summed up a situation, if not life itself. Hoggart does not discuss whether reading was an immediate or deferred pleasure.

Reading had its place, children learned to read at school and by 1957, there was largely widespread literacy. Most homes had a book, or more, the Bible was usually found and a book given as a gift, a prize at Sunday or state school. Books could be borrowed from the library. Some books were bought, mainly the classics, some shortened and illustrated in a cheap version such as Everyman, and Penguin. Strip comics for boys and girls were popular, and the tabloid press was mostly read, not always daily, nearly always on a Sunday. Magazines were occasionally bought for those interested in a particular hobby, as part of the learning and pleasure of the activity. Magazines were increasingly part of the reading diet; all included stories of some light weight kind. Leaflets and pamphlets of a political nature were distributed, and would be read, or discarded. Reading materials would be read and re-read, usually, by the whole family of readers, and be borrowed by extended family members, neighbours and friends.

Reading was seen as an education, in the autodidact tradition presented by Rose (2001), but Hoggart noted, the personal and social needs for self-acquired education was not pressing in 1957. Increasingly, reading was viewed as a support for a hobby or activity, like gardening or pigeon fancying. Reading was seen as a pleasure by those who took the time to read. Hoggart noted that there had been concurrent increase in serious reading and increases in more serious pursuits generally. He acknowledges that the great block of popular readers was subject to a different kind of pressure, (recognizable today as market pressure) than the serious reader. He says this was because there were successful movements towards strengthening the hold of a few dominant popular publications on the

great majority of people.

However, this pleasure had to compete with the much more immediate, visual, physical and social pleasure of human intercourse, the pub, the football match, the cinema, the music and dance hall. Meanwhile the television, the radio, and the telephone were rapidly bringing the whole world into people's sitting rooms, with images and sounds that stirred and stimulated, both body and mind alike. Material goods were more readily available with the example of the USA setting the standard. In 1957 British working classes were entering an era of materialism, made possible by full employment, higher wages, and improved educational opportunities. Hoggart felt the working classes were being sold a mean form of materialism as a social philosophy, and this he deplored.

Hoggart's point in the second half of *Uses of Literacy* is the effect of, firstly mass communication such as the television, radio, and telephone, and secondly the fairly sudden rise of a variety of lowbrow printed materials. What concerns Hoggart is the quantity, but most particularly the limited quality of the publications available to the working classes. He felt that the working classes were losing their unique cultural heritage, because it was being dissipated by a form of mass culture being disseminated by the television, radio, telephone and myriad publications. He felt that there was a reduction in the culture of the working classes, as many of its members became absorbed into the middle classes through improved educational opportunities, and higher wages. Also, Hoggart felt, mass communication and mass publications were creating a mass culture. The content of the many publications was not cerebral, literary or artistic, but based on visual and physical pleasure and titillation. Hoggart draws attention to, comic strip type novels, (identifiable today as pulp fiction) read by adults, containing itinerant, muscular men of few words, and even fewer brain cells, curvaceous females, and a limited plot based on violence and death, as typical. This occurred, he argued, because it is harder to realise imaginatively the dangers of spiritual deterioration, and he wondered how long the working class's stock of moral capital would last. Hoggart expresses concern about the nature of the response invited by the popular reading materials he describes, and the social change which takes advantage of and thrives on basic literacy. He notes the dubious quality of the life such things promote. He saw the television as a mechanism that would merely speed this process along. He cites The General Council of

the Press who state:

With millions of the less cultivated in the land now buying a paper there is a proper and important place for what, without priggishness, can be termed a vulgar press. (*The Press and the People* :5 in Hoggart 1957:341)

Hoggart feared that the working classes were becoming culturally classless, though noting the old social-class distinctions still had some force. He offers as evidence the newer types of women's magazines which he says are classless, whereas the older type of women's magazines belonged to particular types of social groups. He talks about the twenty million who read the most popular daily newspapers, reporting the wider effects these papers have when the kinds of culture each embodies, the assumptions and appeals, are largely the same. Although Hoggart acknowledges that many of the old barriers of class should be broken down, he regrets that:

The old forms of class culture are in danger of being replaced by a poorer kind of classless, or 'faceless' culture. (Hoggart 1957:343)

He says this presents philosophical problems for society, and that the answer lies with the individual himself.

From the perspective of 2010 one can see that Hoggart's fears have been realised, and cultural debasement has taken place in terms of the working class culture Hoggart reported, showing that the effect of reading do influence selfhood. Much as Hoggart feared, popular reading materials do offer the common reader a style, a morality, a philosophy to live by and copy.

Hoggart's attitude is reminiscent of Tennyson's poem *Morte d'Arthur* ,in which Tennyson, expressing his regrets for the changes in society caused by the industrial revolution, writes:

The old order changeth, yielding place to new, (Tennyson 1842 *Morte d'Arthur* l. 240).

Tennyson offers a poetic response to changes in society, which he regrets. Hoggart sees, in the widely available popular reading materials of 1957, a debasement of the culture of the working class, and he does not view what he calls mass basic literacy as working for the improvement of society and its members.

What I have illustrated...is that the accompanying cultural changes are not always an improvement but in some of the more important instances are a worsening. (Hoggart 1957:318)

Hoggart stresses the importance of quality reading materials, showing that poor quality

reading materials debase the culture of the working class community reported.

**Williams** (1958) discusses change in culture and society in the period 1870-1950. Culture is very closely linked to reading, because culture is represented in ways of living, and a highly literate industrialized society offers its members greater opportunities for cultural construction. But equally, with those opportunities for cultural construction comes responsibilities. At the outset, Williams identifies five words in which to frame the concepts of his discussion of change; *industry, democracy, class, art* and *culture*, saying that the field which these changes cover is a field of general change. Williams focuses on the relations within this general pattern of change, and states:

The word which more than any other comprises these relations is *culture*, with all its complexity of idea and reference. (Williams 1958:xvii)

Williams wants to shows culture as an abstraction and as an absolute. He says culture now means a whole way of life that is deeply significant, seeing culture as a common experience having certain meanings and value.

He states that the history of the idea of culture is a record of our meanings and our definitions, only understood within the context of our actions. He claims culture's basic element is its effort at total qualitative assessment. According to Williams the idea of culture describes our common enquiry, but our conclusions are diverse, as our starting points were diverse. He says:

Its emergence, in its...meanings, marks the effort at total qualitative assessment...it indicates...a process, not a conclusion. (Williams 1958:295)

Williams discusses the words mass and masses, because he says the idea of the masses, mass-civilization, mass-democracy, and mass-communication are used in terms of culture. He notes, historically, that masses was a new word for mob, retaining significant characteristics of the mob; gullibility, fickleness, herd-prejudice, lowness of taste and habit. The masses, says Williams, formed a perpetual threat to culture since mass-thinking, mass-suggestion, mass-prejudice threatened considered individual thinking and feeling. He claims that the existence of immensely powerful media of mass-communication is at the heart of these problems, because through these means, public opinion has been observably moulded and directed.

Examining the concept of mass-communication, he reports that change provided more,

and cheaper, books, magazines, bills, posters, radio broadcasting, television, and films. In order to understand the effects of mass-communication on culture, he says, one has to use the 'formula' of the rational being speaking our language. The intention is paramount, says Williams:

The formula will proceed from our intention. If our purpose is art, education, the giving of information or opinion, our interpretation will be in terms of the rational interested being. If our purpose is manipulation- the persuasion of a large number of people to act, feel, think, know in certain ways-the convenient formula will be that of the masses. (Williams 1958:303)

Williams says whatever one does is a matter of culture, but the mass formula threatens democracy, cheapens our experience, and adulterates the common language.

Discussing the development of a common culture, Williams says that solidarity, a primitive feeling, is the real basis of society. A culture in common, states Williams, will be a very complex organization, and the feeling of solidarity is the element of stabilization in so complex an organization. He feels that participation depends on common resources, and leads a man towards others.

In arguing that a culture is unplannable, Williams promotes the idea of culture resting on a metaphor: the tending of natural growth. He states the idea of culture is necessary as an idea of the tending of *natural* growth. (Italics in original) He urges a doctrine of tolerance and restraint when he says, that we have to live by our own attachments, but we can only live fully, in common, if we grant the attachments of others, and make it our common business to keep the channels of growth clear. He continues saying the idea of a common culture brings together the idea of natural growth and that of its tending. He stresses the social reality, the tending, saying any culture in its whole process, is a particular tending. The tending, says Williams, is a common process, based on common decision, which then, within itself, comprehends the actual variations of life and growth. He adds that the natural growth and the tending are parts of a mutual process, guaranteed by the principle of equality of being.

Williams acknowledges the power of language in this saying:

We are coming increasingly to realise that our vocabulary, the language we use to inquire into our actions, is a practical and radical element in itself. To take a meaning from experience, and to try to make it active is in fact our process of growth. Some of these meanings we receive and re-create. Others we must make for ourselves, and try to communicate. The human crisis is always a crisis of understanding: what we genuinely understand we can do. (Williams 1958:338)

What have Williams' words to do with reading? Reading reflects society and continues to create it and leads to other linked cultural activities like, thinking, writing, listening and speaking. Reading promotes ideas and images that both reinforce and challenge society and culture, consider, for example Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1989). Reading is part of Williams' tending which leads to natural growth, therefore reading must always have importance, since no two readers respond to the same book in the same way. Also, the language generated by two different responses to the same book, keep Williams' channels of growth open.

**Jeffries** (1967) says the person who has not been given the chance to read is deprived of a fundamental human right, suggesting that a person's selfhood is defined by their ability to read. He states:

The 'illiterate' is a man, or woman, who is condemned to a status which, in the circumstances of today, is less than human. (Jeffries 1967:13)

Jeffries says the illiterate is a man who has ten shillings to pay his tax, and walks away with a receipt stating he has paid five shillings. While citing examples from developing societies, being duped because one cannot read remains relevant, Jeffries contends that reading influences selfhood.

Jeffries discusses the value of words to the culture of a society and its individuals, saying that what he terms, the full life, calls for cultural literacy, something more than just functional reading skills. He states:

Words have histories and associations. They carry overtones. They enshrine and communicate the wisdom of the sage, the inspiration of the prophet, the imagination of the poet. A people cannot be described as truly literate until it enjoys the capacity to produce and appreciate *literature*. And, literature, as its very name denotes, is a function of the written word. (Jeffries 1967:21)

As Jeffries suggests, there undoubtedly were poets before Homer, but where are they now? And where would Christianity be without the gospels and Islam without the Koran? It is clear that being able to read helps form the self, not least in the cultural life of one's society. He says it is perhaps even more important to consider the potential contribution of reading to the enlargement of the minds of men and to the sum of human achievement in the world of imagination and the spirit. Here Jeffries highlights the improving influence reading may have on the intellect, the imagination and the soul.

**Lamarque and Olsen, Cox and Nussbaum**

**Lamarque and Olsen** (1994), state that the important question regarding truth and literature is whether there is anything integral to works of imaginative literature, which makes the expression, embodiment and revelation of truths indispensable to their value, aesthetic or otherwise.

About truth they cite Aristotle who said:

To say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true. (Aristotle, in Lamarque and Olsen 1994:6)

They make a distinction between the concepts of literature and fiction, saying that to explain what makes a work fictional is not the same as to explain what makes it literary, but fictionality can be used in the creation of works of literature. They state that it might seem natural to suppose that fiction is inimical to truth, given its associations of unreality and falsity, while literature, with its humanistic associations of cognitive value, seems positively congenial to truth. They say their own enquiry shows that the fictional dimension is perfectly hospitable to truth, while the literary dimension is resistant to evaluation in terms of truth.

In a chapter entitled 'Fiction, Literature and Value', they state that whatever the purpose of fiction and literature may be, it is not truth-telling in any straightforward sense. They add that both fiction and literature may contain truths, explicitly or implicitly, but this is incidental to the central purpose of either type of discourse.

Arguing the value of fiction, they claim that the purpose of fiction can be divided into four broad headings; entertainment, instruction, artistic purpose and a mythic purpose. Entertainment, they say can be sub-divided as escape, relaxation, vicarious experience and excitement, and arousal. Instruction may be sub-divided into types of instruction: moral, social, religious, and pragmatic instruction, stories told to make a point about the solution of a problem in everyday life. The interest in the instructive or didactic capacities of fiction lies in rhetorical devices used to persuade or manipulate, and the special way fiction uses imaginative involvement and point of view to enhance its teaching potential. The mythic purpose of fiction refers to the ordering function fiction serves through its narrative element. They say that works of fiction project an order on to a set of events that in real life would present no order. So fundamental is the need for the ordering of experience into a coherent meaningful whole that works of fiction, with their special

capacities for narrative structuring, can come to seem indispensable- and perhaps inherently valuable. However, they claim, the attribution to fiction of a mythic function- i.e. having the function of structuring and explaining experience- is speculative and non-empirical.

Discussing the value of literature, they say that the concept of literature is an evaluative concept and an expectation of value and strategies for revealing that value, are definitive parts of the literary stance. They note that literary value is defined by the concepts and conventions of literary practice, and these determine the two major features of a literary work: its creative-imaginative aspect and its mimetic aspect. It is within these aspects that literary value is located. The two are interrelated. Lamarque and Olsen further state:

One central, characteristic purpose defined by the literary practice and served by the literary work is to develop in depth, through subject and form, a theme which is in some sense central to human concerns and which can therefore be recognized as of more or less universal interest. Appreciation and consequent evaluation of the individual literary work is a matter of eliciting and supporting the identification and development of a 'perennial theme'. (Lamarque and Olsen 1994:450)

They argue that literary works offer their own, literary, interpretations of the themes they present and these interpretations have only an indirect link with real life situations, since the situations presented in literary works are defined uniquely through artistic means, such as style and structure. They further argue that the importance of literature, its cultural value, consists in the way in which the practice of literature is *embedded* in our culture. Literature, they say, is not merely a response to already defined existential problems, nor an expression of already felt and accepted social and moral values, but, it is one of the ways in which these existential problems, as well as social and moral values, are defined and developed for us. They remind the reader, that it is a familiar conception of philosophy that attributes to it the task of formulating and suggesting solutions to problems of knowledge, morality, and metaphysics, of giving substance and precision to questions within these areas. They say that these questions may arise from our activities in daily life, but they do not receive perspicuous formulation and substance there, because the problems, as problems, become fully constituted only within philosophical discourse. They see value in literature:

We now want to suggest that literature functions analogously: it develops themes that are only vaguely felt or formulated in daily life and gives them a 'local habitation and a name'. In the culture that goes back to ancient Greece, literature has developed into a special kind of

cognition that has come to constitute, in part, the themes that have become central in the culture. Daily life is disorderly and unorganized. Literary works of art organize described universes in such a way that thematic concepts receive a content when applied to that universe. (Lamarque and Olsen 1994:352)

Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* organises a described universe in such a way that the reader who applies concepts like, victim of external forces beyond human control, in the appreciation of that work will come to see, in that universe, human beings are controlled by external forces. This is how literature works to raise philosophical ideas and themes. As Lamarque and Olsen say, there is no similar order in the real world that will make these concepts meaningful in this way. They say, daily life does not offer the sort of visible connections that artistic narrative defines, and, that these connections emerge in the artistic presentation of the subject. They declare that the quality of our cognition of themes and thematic concepts is dependent upon the quality of the literature we read: For literature like philosophy challenges the reader to make his own construction, to invest time and effort in reaching a deeper insight into the great themes, though this insight is 'literary'. (Lamarque and Olsen 1994:455)

They conclude by saying that literary practice is embedded in the value-scheme of our culture, in the sense that it is one of the practices that define what we hold to be important and valuable.

In summary, literature has value because it offers the reader insights into the perennial themes of life, and these insights will be literary. Literature has a mimetic quality, but it is not real life, even though it may be life-like. Because literature functions on an imaginative-creative plane, the literary work lives in the imagination and mind's eye of the reader, and works on the reader's affective domains. Literature in its structures and literary devices presents an ordered and organized patterning of characters, themes and events, in a way that does not exist in real life. Indeed, real life is disordered and unorganized. Thus, literature is able to challenge and define and develop values and morals that exist already in the culture, philosophically, in a safe, distanced way. For instance, in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, the reader does not have to experience the Holocaust to understand how it physically and psychologically affected lives. In such a way, reading influences selfhood.

Cox (1998) says that most English teachers believe that the study of English Language

and Literature contributes to personal growth, the development of a creative imagination and an open mind, resistant to propaganda. So, he sees reading as having a formative influence on the imagination, the mind and thought. He values the reading, by school pupils, of what he terms, previous literature. He recommends all children should encounter and find pleasure in literary works written in English, from different parts of the world. He urges pupils be made aware of the richness of experience offered by writing in English, from different countries, so that they may be introduced to the ideas and feelings of countries different from their own. He writes of a vision of society coming from reading, as much as anywhere, and speaks of the need for national unity, for the development of literacy, for the common understanding of Standard English, and for common values so as to live at peace with each other. He says we need to maintain our cultural heritage which places great emphasis on individual freedom of expression, while at the same time respecting local differences, the need for diversity, each other's dialects, each other's culture, and each other's religion. Reading previous literature, our cultural inheritance, and speaking and writing and reading in Standard English, is, for Cox, the way that the tension between unity and diversity may be balanced. Thus, for Cox, one of the influences of reading is forging selves in harmony with each other.

**Nussbaum** (2004) believes reading can shape selves, and not just individual selves but collective selves. She argues the case for the study of literature as:

An essential part of an education for public rationality. (Nussbaum 2004:2)

She focuses on Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854) using the character of Mr. Gradgrind, and his utilitarian economic values, as an analogy, for the entrenched attitudes, towards the education of judges and lawyers and public policy makers, in US Law Schools. She proposes that the selfhood of individuals in power groups can be beneficially influenced, by engaging in literary discussions and understandings. However, she acknowledges that commending the study of literature, as a method for shaping the attitudes and values of the legal profession, to the public domain is difficult, because, many people who find literature illuminating about the workings of the personal life and the private imagination, believe it is idle and unhelpful when the larger concerns of classes and nations are at issue. Nussbaum urges the reading of the novel, and she emphasises Dickens' *Hard Times*, as an antidote to what she calls, the cruder forms of economic utilitarianism and

cost benefit analysis that are used in many areas of public policy making, and are frequently commended as normative for others.' She is particularly concerned with the nature of the rational processes of the good judge or legal thinker. She says the study of the novel is the mechanism for this educative process because:

It is a morally controversial form. It tells the reader to notice this and not this, to be active in these and not those ways. It leads them into certain postures of the mind and heart and not others. And as Mr. Gradgrind perceived, these are the wrong ways and highly dangerous postures, from the point of view of the narrow conception of rationality that is, in his view, normative for both public and private thought. (Nussbaum 2004:2)

Nussbaum asks what sort of readerly activity is built into the form of the novel, answering by saying that literature focuses on the possible, inviting its readers to wonder about themselves, because in their mode of address to their imaginary reader, novels convey the sense that there are links of possibility between the characters and the reader. She states that the reader's emotions and imagination are highly active as a result, and that it is the nature of this activity, and its relevance for public thinking that interests her most. She adds that good literature is disturbing, (consider Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) for instance), and because it summons powerful emotions, it disconcerts and puzzles. She notes the novel inspires distrust of conventional pieties and exacts a frequently painful confrontation with one's own thoughts and intentions.

Nussbaum cites Booth's (1988) notion of co-duction. She says that Booth argues that the act of reading, and assessing what one has read, is ethically valuable precisely because it demands a comparison of what one has read, both with one's own unfolding experience and with the responses and arguments of other readers. She states that, if one thinks of reading as combining one's own absorbed imagining with periods of more detached and interactive critical scrutiny, then one can begin to see that, in reading novels, one might find an activity well suited to public reasoning in a democratic society.

Nussbaum notes the novel introduces its reader to that which is common and close at hand, but which is often the object of profound ignorance and emotional refusal, adding that it generally:

Constructs empathy and compassion in ways highly relevant to citizenship. (Nussbaum 2004:11)

She does acknowledge that reading novels does not teach everything about citizenship, but still values it highly as a means of shaping public rationality.

### **Kress et al, Pike and Cook-Gumprez**

Kress et al (2005) examine the teaching of English in three comprehensive schools. Discussing *character* (italics in original) in the English Curriculum, they say that the entity *character* is central to English in its relation to the reading of literature. Kress et al, report the traditional notion of the study of *character* as a means for knowing oneself, has underpinned an oblique form of moral education in British schools. Reading becomes a moral educator of the young, via the study of *character* in the reading and study of the school subject English Literature. An example from personal teaching experience is the study of the character Macbeth in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The question always under discussion with Macbeth is, in simplistic form, how does the hero become a villain? How does the noble and godly Macbeth, (remember King Duncan proudly says of him, in the opening scenes of the play, after Macbeth has saved Scotland from its enemies, "Noble Macbeth! How well he deserves that name!"), become by the last act, a feared murderer and megalomaniac, called 'the tyrant', 'black Macbeth', 'fiend' and 'hellhound' by all? Such a discussion of character does involve discussing godliness, nobility and sin, which, in the students' contributions to such a debate, both draws from, and informs their own sense of moral behaviour.

Kress et al reported the value a teacher in the Ravenscroft school of the study, placed on literature. They say, she, and the English department generally, valued literature as offering a framework for the students in their lives; as a life experience for the students; a window through which to view the social world: marriage, gender, religion, culture and human nature. As the teacher Irene said:

You see because they [students] are not able and they are of a young age to participate in the things they are reading about, it gives them some insight. It is personal development and intellectual development as well. Therefore we are trying to prepare them, something for that world, something that they possibly might encounter later in life. It might be that they look back at some experience in the classroom and they say 'I've come across this before.' (Kress et al 2005:151)

Kress et al shows that reading shapes selfhood through its ability to obliquely morally educate.

**Pike** (2006), writing in *The Use of English*, for a readership of teachers of English, assesses creativity and spirituality in English. He instructs the reader in the philosophy of

the teaching of English in the light of the government Literacy Strategy (1997). In summary, he resists and rejects the utilitarian approach to the teaching of English, as directed by the Literacy Strategy, especially in the teaching of responses to literature and writing a composition. Through the use of examples, he says one cannot reduce the teaching of literature to the analysis of language at text, sentence and word level. Literature, says Pike, is about seeing the inner light, meaning a student reading literature should be moved both emotionally and intellectually to a higher spiritual plane in terms of response, This might mean crying at the end of *Romeo and Juliet*, laughing at the satire of Swift, or being angered by the poetry of Wole Soyinka. Similarly, says Pike, writing a composition is about imagination, inspiration, imagery and moving the reader, not how many compound sentences or similes are used, as the Literacy Strategy urges.

The importance of this research for the present study, relates to the research population who, in theory, had this kind of teaching of English, and to discover what kind of interaction with books was offered within their experience of schooling, and what influence this has had on them. Did they see the inner light of literature, or were they put off certain texts?

**Cook-Gumprez** (2006) says that literacy is usually taken to refer not only to the ability to understand written and printed inscriptions, but also to the socio-cognitive changes that result from being literate, and from having a literate population. She adds, at the same time, literacy connotes an assessment of the usefulness of this ability. She further states that literacy cannot be judged apart from some understanding of the social circumstances and specific historical traditions which affect the way literacy is conceived of within each society. This strongly suggests that reading influences selfhood, because Cook-Gumprez shows that one's thinking is shaped, not only by the cognitive skills of reading and writing, but also, by the associated social skills of speaking and listening. Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening are the four skill areas of the school subject English, according to the National Curriculum, and it is the use of these skills that promotes thought and intellectual development.

#### **Tucker, Appleyard and Bolton**

Tucker, Appleyard and Bolton consider how reading affects readers. **Tucker** (1982) notes the connection between psychological development and literature selection in children,

saying that literature grows and keeps close to children over the years in correspondence with their own changing imaginative and intellectual outlook. He says that children sometimes need stimulation in their literature to help them move away from lazy, immature ways of thinking. A good author, says Tucker, provides this stimulation by writing about characters and situations in a way that is both fresh and convincing, and which may point the way forward towards greater insight.

Tucker stresses the value of memories of books read as a kind of chart of emotional development, saying:

Autobiographical memories of childhood reading can provide the intimate detail missing from more impersonal types of discussion . Such memories can be quite idiosyncratic, but they can be very revealing when trying to describe the various emotions engendered by books at different stages. (Tucker 1982:3)

He acknowledges that any response to books will be individual, as will be shown by the respondents.

Tucker reports the value of psychoanalytic theory as a means to discuss children's emotional response to reading, saying that psychoanalysts believe that very charged material can often find its way quite safely into fiction when it is suitably disguised from the reader by appearing in make believe form, acted out by different imaginary characters. In this way, says Tucker, it need not arouse the anxiety, guilt or denial commonly experienced when individuals are *directly* confronted by various personally taboo feelings or fantasies. Possible personal meanings and relevancies in certain powerful stories can still occur at an unconscious level. This is the case for Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* which offers the respondents charged material.

Tucker talks of the value of a good story in any novel, saying it must initially appeal to the reader, arousing a curiosity that is only satisfied by reading the book.

Discussing the reader response, Tucker acknowledges the gap between common intellectual strategies and cultural or individual expectations. However, says Tucker, it is true that all human beings seem to respond to the certain similar fantasies, which find echoes in literature throughout the world. He says that the existence of archetypal plots and fantasies in literature, argues for some sort of uniformity in what can best capture the imagination. Tucker highlights the link between reading and psychological development in children, noting literature allows emotionally charged or taboo themes to be explored in a

safe way.

**Appleyard** (1991) describes the reader in adulthood as a pragmatic reader, saying the amount a person reads correlates with education, income, and early reading habits. Discussing the use adults have for reading, Appleyard says that the most important thing about adult readers is that they choose to read, and how voluntary their reading is, because they choose reading over other activities that claim their time. He says they choose the kind of books they read, and even how they read, and the kind of responses they want to have. Appleyard says:

In this sense adults are the most pragmatic readers of all. Consciousness of their own motives and responses may be the one truly distinctive mark of adult readers, whatever their age. (Appleyard 1991:164)

Appleyard seems to suggest that adult readers, like the respondents, choose to continue to have their selfhood influenced by their reading, thus placing a high value on reading.

**Bolton** (1998), discussing why books matter, states with reading there is some relationship between effort made and pleasure gained. He says when we argue the case for books and what they offer, we have in mind the richness and pleasures of our own life-long reading experience and the importance to individuals and society of its continuance. Bolton asserts that in today's high-tech world, the case for books is strong. He says they are hugely user friendly, fitting into a bag or pocket, requiring neither specialist jargon nor expensive updating, and allowing instantaneous fast forward and recapitulation. He says that what books do for readers is to nurture and exercise our imaginations, enabling each reader to engage personally with the text. Moreover, using a metaphor of exploring, and quoting Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale*, Bolton says the reader, in reading, passes through "magic casements, opening on the foam/ Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn"(Keats ).

Bolton says that uniquely, books trade in and through language. Arguing that some books are better than others, better writers, says Bolton, seek to come to terms with the human condition, and help readers to do so. Bolton recognises the value of reading in shaping selfhood and our view of the world when he says:

It seems we interpret ourselves, other people, and the world around us, through narrative. If we do read each other like books, it is likely that the narratives we read influence those we create for our own use. (Bolton 2001, in Cox 2001:5)

Bolton states that what remains unique is the medium itself -the printed word - and the complex inter-relationship between form and substance. Readers, says Bolton, only have words on a page, and what he calls the baggage we bring with us. Readers, he declares, are forced to use imagination to envisage the characters and the words evoked by the writer, and must attempt to get into the hearts and minds, and under the skin of, of the protagonists. That ability to empathise with others, to put ourselves in their place, is, says Bolton, the single characteristic that distinguishes humankind from the beasts, and the more sensibly and sensitively we are able to do it, the more truly human we become. Bolton acknowledges that not only books stimulate and educate the imagination, but they do it in particular ways, and in a particularly accessible form, that could not be replicated should they be lost to us. As he says:

Books are about life and death. Good, and great books, seriously and memorably so. (Bolton 2001 in Cox 2001:5)

He concludes by urging that, if, as an open society, we are to value, succour and enhance what books uniquely make possible, and show by our actions that books matter, we must accept that all books are not equally defensible, and engage with questions of quality and discrimination. Thus, Bolton sees the reading of good and great books as having a humanising influence on selves.

### **Iser and Benton**

Iser and Benton discuss reader-response criticism.

Fiction gives insight into the reality it simulates. (Iser 1978:180)

Iser (1978) developed a theory of aesthetic response based on reading, saying how the reader interacts with the text and constructs its meaning. He says the function of literary text is communication, and that the text is made up of segments which may or may not correspond to chapters. Between segments are blanks which the reader fills in, in a perceptual gestalt, and connectability emerges in the text, as Iser says, rather like the concept of *good continuum* used in the psychology of perception. The reader performs an act of constitution on the text through a process of ideation and develops a wandering viewpoint. The reader comes to the text with a set of attitudes and values, and the text itself has a set of attitudes and values, though they may not be explicitly stated. The reader, reveals Iser, fills in these blanks imaginatively in the time-flow of reading,

interacting with language, and forming connections and images in the text.

In this process lies the aesthetic relevance of the blank. By suspending *good continuum* it plays a vital role in image-building, which derives its intensity from the fact that images are formed and must then be abandoned. (Iser 1978:186)

Blanks are of three types;-blanks that work on the level of storyline,( plot and content), blanks that are referential, (a referential field is formed when at least two positions relate to and influence each other), and the final blank Iser calls a vacancy.

From a vacancy a theme extrudes. The images created by a theme allow the reader to project forward and to look back, but as another image is created so the original image alters and is re-imaged. The themes and images layer on one another in the imagination of the reader. This is what Iser calls the theme and horizon structure. Once a theme has been grasped, a feedback occurs which modifies the reader's viewpoint. This process, says Iser, is hermeneutic, and the reader interprets the text. The reader produces for him/herself the conditions of experienceability.

This imaginative intellectual process brings about what Iser calls negation. Negation, Iser says, is an active force and is a kind of giving-up of pre-conceived ideas on the part of the reader as he/she engages with the attitudes and values in the text, set against and alongside his/her own. In the time flow of reading, negation shapes the reader's wandering viewpoint.

The final stage, says Iser, is called negativity. Negativity is what Iser refers to as the kind of unformulated double of the formulated text. Negativity conditions the text.

But we must not forget that negativity is the basic force in literary communication. (Iser1978:226)

Negativity is a calling into question, in the mind of the reader, the validity of that which is created out of the text, and this becomes the meaning for the reader. Negativity, says Iser, brings about the deformations which are the basic questions posed by the text, questions that sets the text in the context of reality. Iser states:

Negativity...embraces both the question and the answer, and is the condition that enables the reader to construct the meaning of the text on a question and answer basis. (Iser 1978:228)

It is this process that endows the literary text with its unique quality, says Iser, as meaning thus emerges as the reverse side of what the text has depicted. Negativity provides the basic link between the reader and the text, and as a constituent of

communication, is therefore an enabling structure. It demands a process of determining which only the subject can implement, and from this, literary meaning emerges, and the fecundity of that meaning, because, each decision taken has to stabilise itself against the alternatives it has rejected. The fecundity of meaning, says Iser, is aesthetic in character, and, although meaning requires the subject to produce and experience it, the very existence of alternatives makes it necessary for a meaning to be defensible and so intersubjectively accessible. Negativity provides the structure underlying the interaction between text and reader.

Iser says that the reader is involved in the process of building up the meaning of the work. He asserts that what the text does for the reader, is to enable the reader to transcend the limitations of their own real-life situations, and extend their own reality. Iser discusses how what he refers to as acts of constitution are stimulated in, again, what he calls the time flow of reading. He says that fiction is not reality, but one of the functions of fiction is to communicate something about real life, giving insights into the reality it simulates. He maintains that it is because fiction is not identical to world or reader that it is able to communicate. The non identicality manifests itself in degrees of the indeterminacy which is established between text and reader during the reading process. This indeterminacy, says Iser, acts as a propellant because it conditions the reader's formulation of the text. Iser says this reformulation is the essential component of a system one knows little about, because although the values of the textual repertoire become recoded, the basis of the recodification remains concealed. This is because it is never possible to see the thoughts and feelings a reader experiences while reading. Iser says that as the unwritten text shapes the written, the reader's formulation of the unwritten involves a reaction to the positions made manifest in the text, which as a rule represent simulated realities. He adds that, as the reader's formulation of the unwritten transforms itself into the world represented, it follows that fiction must always in some way transcend the world to which it refers. Indeterminacy, says Iser, arises out of the communicatory function of literature, and as this function is performed via the formulated determinacies of the text, obviously, the indeterminacies arising from the formulated text cannot be without a structure. In fact, he says, there are two basic structures of indeterminacy in the text -blanks and negations - which are essential conditions for communication, because they start the interaction that

occurs between text and reader, and to a certain extent, regulate it.

Iser regards the blank as a potential connection. For him, the blank designates a vacancy in the overall system of the text, the filling in of which brings about an interaction of textual patterns. He says the need for completing is here replaced by the need for combining, because it is only when the schemata of the text are related to one another that the imaginary object can begin to be formed, and it is the blanks that commence this connecting operation. They indicate that the different segments of the text are to be connected, says Iser, even if the text itself does not say so. He calls them the unseen joints of the text, and as they mark off schemata and textual perspectives from one another, they trigger acts of ideation on the reader's part. Inevitably, continues Iser, when the schemata and perspectives have been linked together, the blanks disappear. This is what the student of literature would call the implicature of the text; it is what the text implies and what the reader infers. Blanks, in the reader's imagination lead to images, and images lead to more complex images and this, says Iser, is the aesthetic significance of the blank.

Connectability is, says Iser, fundamental to the construction of texts in general. It is blanks that link what Iser calls the segments of a text. Iser tells us that the idea of connectability is not confined to the construction of texts – it is also important in psychology and can be equated with the concept of *good continuation* used in the psychology of perception. Iser says, as the connectability of segments is disturbed by blanks, this disturbance creates acts of consistency-building triggered in the reader's imagination. However, says Iser, the norms of the repertoire and the segments of the perspectives are not, as a rule, organised in a foreseeable sequence; in fact if the text is to confront the reader with a new view of the familiar world, it is essential that the sequence not be foreseeable, and so the schemata will tend to be far less faithful to the principle of *good continuation*, which is a prerequisite for any successful act of perception. Iser says that in literature the principle of economy is broken more often than it is followed. This is because the text is structured in such a way as to counter the given disposition of its readers. The blanks break up the connectability of the schemata, says Iser, and so marshal selected norms and perspective segments into a fragmented, counter factual, contrastive or telescoped sequence, nullifying any expectation of *good continuation*. As a

result, says Iser, the imagination is engaged, increasing the constitutive activity of the reader who cannot help but try and supply the missing links that will bring the schemata together in an integrated gestalt.

From Iser's theory of aesthetics subsequent reader-response theories have developed. **Benton** (1996) says that reader-response criticism acknowledges the complementary importance of text and reader. He highlights an issue important for the present study; the mystery of what readers actually do and experience. He tells us that in its development, reader-response critics have argued that it is the reader who makes meaning by the activities they perform on the text, thus individual readings become the focus. Reader-response critics see literature as interacting with real extra-literary experience (that of the author, or the reader, or the social reality of the author's or reader's world). Gradually, says Benton, reader-response critics began to explore the psychological and affective aspects of literary experience. Benton applauds the acknowledgement, in the National Curriculum, as embodied in the Cox Report (1989), of the importance of reader's response to literature in formal schooling.

Benton discusses the principles of reader-response criticism, noting its focus on

- i) What constitutes the source of literary meaning
- ii) What is the nature of the interpretative process that creates it.

Benton says the text cannot be said to have a meaningful existence outside the relationship between itself and its reader(s). Reader-response criticism's principles, says Benton, are concerned with: the plurality of meaning in a literary work; the creative participation of the reader; the acknowledgement that the reader brings idiosyncratic knowledge and personal style to the act of reading; and the awareness that interpretation is socially, historically and culturally formed.

Benton discusses research based on reader-response criticism that attempts to understand the response process. He shows that there are many ways in which to elicit a response to literature, and chart that response. For instance, lightly-structured, self-directed discussion and thinking aloud are seen as protocols that show the working-out of a response to literature. Also, a first response, then group talk, followed by a written response reveals the process of constructing meaning.

He cites Benton and Fox (1985), asking what happens when we read stories? They find

the process of responding involves the reader creating a secondary world, or, in other words, using one's imagination. They claim that the reading experience is characterised in two ways; first as a four-phase process of feeling, like: reading, getting into the story, being lost in the book, and having an increasing sense of an ending; and second, as an activity consisting of four elements - picturing, anticipating and retrospecting, interacting and evaluating. Benton says studies in the process of responding tend towards categorisation of the different psychological activities involved.

Regarding how children, and by association, people, develop as readers of literature is, says Benton, one of the most frequently asked questions. Listening to what children as readers say about their experiences, reveal the cognitive and affective factors involved in the interaction between child and book. Benton states that all are aware that response oriented criticism should be able to tell us more about this interaction at various stages. He cites Cullinan *et al* (1983) whose data, on the relationship between pupils' comprehension and response to literature, confirmed that there are clear developmental levels in children's comprehension:

Reader- response provides a way to look at the multidimensional nature of comprehension. (Cullinan *et al* 1983:37 in Benton 1996: 79 in Hunt 1996:79)

Benton discusses the readers' stance, saying reader-response criticism advocates a spectator role as a means of accessing texts. Benton describes reader behaviour, including how the reader sees him/her self in the book, what the reader brings to the text, closure, the readers' relationship with the text, also issues such as re-reading, the appeal of series writers, and the relation of text fiction and film fiction.

The *Harry Potter* (date) series by J.K.Rowling is an example of the imaginative appeal of series texts, and the excitement generated by readers, eager to see how the film interprets the novel, indicates the influence of reading on selves. The power of those seven fantasy novels, world wide, has children and adults reading, on a scale never before seen. Moreover, children have been sought after as critics of both the *Harry Potter* novels and films, with their opinions considered more valid than those of adults, because children are the perceived readership for the *Harry Potter* novels, and the audience for the films. In this way, as a reader response critic, and as a viewer response critic, the status of the child who reads the *Harry Potter* novels and watches the films is enhanced.

Considering cultural and gender attitudes, Benton points to reader-response studies that show the extent to which literature can be helpful in teaching about issues of race and gender. Benton, citing Beverley Naidoo's (1992) enquiry into the role of fiction in educating young people about race, *Through Whose Eyes*, found that the cultural context, emerged as a dominant theme. Naidoo's study, exploring the interrelatedness of text, context, readers and writers, using reader-response methods, revealed the values and attitudes that readers sometimes hide even from themselves. Benton concludes that children's responses to literature are mediated by the cultural contexts in which they occur. The value, says Benton, of reader-response criticism is that it accommodates both the reader and the text.

This chapter has demonstrated the importance of reading as a self-selected, pleasurable activity that influences the intellectual, emotional and moral development of selves.

### **CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTION OF THE METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE**

#### **RESEARCH POPULATION**

The research population is a small scale opportunistic sample of five young men. Merrill and West (2009) examine the value of opportunistic sampling, defining it as researchers

taking advantage of situations to interview individuals, through luck, chance, the right word being said, or because people offer themselves. They say sociologists frequently claim to have found their participants through opportunistic encounters, citing the example of W. I. Thomas, who met by chance, the main respondent, Vladeck, for his study with Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* was probably the most important early example of the qualitative research of selves.

In the present study, the participants are male volunteers, aged between 22 and 26 years old. At the time of interview, all but two mostly lived and worked in the Christchurch or Bournemouth area. Two had moved to live and work in London, but Christchurch or Bournemouth remained their home town. In this way I opportunely came across them in a work or leisure situation. I was no longer in an institutional situation and had to gather up the sample from young men I randomly came across, however all are connected to the comprehensive school I taught at for sixteen years. I did not want a sample of former students because I felt they would have all been too similar in terms of what they read and what they might respond. My guiding principle was to find respondents who were interesting and different from each other, but ultimately I had to accept those who agreed to be interviewed. I did not really have a lot of choice and had to take advantage of young men I could safely approach.

Arthur is a former student, living locally and working in a local garage to pay for his Masters degree it. I felt that would make him a very interesting respondent to interview. I knew he would be a suitable respondent, because having taught him, I knew he actually read.

Charles was presented to me as a former student's fiancé. He was working and training on a forestry apprenticeship. A colleague from another local comprehensive who taught him, confided that she did not feel she had got the best out of him in achievement terms. He was doing unique work and I felt he would be interesting to interview.

Edward is the brother of a former student who attended another local comprehensive. I first met him at a funeral. Knowing his elder sister by reputation I felt he would be interesting to interview.

William sings and plays in the rock band with former students. He attended a

comprehensive in Bournemouth. After conversing with him thought he might be interesting to interview because he was composing songs.

Henry is a friend of a former student who I met on the beach. Again after chatting to him I thought he would be interesting to interview since he was working as a paramedic. I interviewed three other young men but did not use their interviews. (See Pilots p44)

## THE INTERVIEWS

The interviews followed a three part pattern:-

- i) Uncovering participants' Reading History
- ii) Participants' responses to their reading
- iii) Discussion of *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne

Uncovering the respondent's **reading history** was inspired by Laurie Lee. In *I Can't Stay Long* (1976) Lee, gives a short account of his reading history which he calls *True Adventures of the Boy Reader* describing how he started reading, and what individuals, institutions and influences inspired him to pursue his reading further, long after the demands of school or work, and what effect that reading had on him.

Eliciting responses from participants about their reading arose from thirty-two years experience of teaching in state schools, and observing the transformative effect of literature, often quality literature from the canon, on students, in bringing about engaged emotions, intellectual insights, and developing responses about the educative nature of reading.

Discussion of Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* was based on teaching techniques employed in the academic study of literature. Thus the key areas discussed were language, structure, characterization, authorial teachings, and reader's response.

Responses to all these areas of discussion would be expected to be referenced in the novel.

Edward, Henry and William had one interview because I managed to give them *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* before I interviewed them, allowing them to read the novel before being interviewed. Thus I was able to complete their interviews in one session each. Charles and Arthur had two interviews, the first one about their reading history and the second about *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* because they read the novel between the two interviews. In all interviews the questions were the same and I applied the same

techniques.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed by myself enabling immersion of the data.

Respondents read and edited their interview transcripts.

In the **interviewing process** there were several writers; Mishler(1986), Denzin(1989), Holloway and Jefferson(2000), Charmaz (2006) and King (2000) whose approaches were subsumed into practice. It is worth examining in a little detail what was felt was useful about their stance.

Samuel Johnson wrote in 1750;

I have often thought that there has rarely passed a life of which a judicious and faithful narrative would not be useful. (Johnson 1968:169)

Hermeneutics is the art or science of interpretation. The word comes from Hermes, the messenger of the gods, who was charged with carrying messages from one god to the other, and in so doing was required to *interpret* them. Hermeneutics and its methods and systems are a branch of philosophy about how we interpret things.

**Mishler** (1986), was innovative, and presents the research interview as a speech event in which he sees interviewing as a discourse between speakers, rather than the stimulus-response of an oral questionnaire type question-answer interview. Further, he stresses the need for an accurate transcribing of the interview, declaring:

Systematic transcription procedures are necessary for valid analysis and interpretation of interview data. (Mishler 1986:50)

Concerning the joint construction of meaning, Mishler states that interviewers and respondents strive to arrive together at meanings that both can understand. He says that to come to a more adequate understanding of what respondents mean and to develop stronger theories, as well as more valid generalisations in interview research,

We must attend to the discursive nature of the interview process (Mishler 1986:65).

Discussing language, meaning and narrative analysis, Mishler, again innovatively, suggests that applying story-analysis methods and displaying the findings they generate moves the discussion of interviewing beyond the traditional approach. He cites MacIntyre (1981) to emphasise the value of narrative analysis;

It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives we live out that the form of the narrative is appropriate for understanding the action of others. Stories are lived before they are told. (MacIntyre 1981:197, in Mishler

Mishler recommends his own practice of allowing the respondent to continue at length without interruption, and of going into role as the audience to whom the respondent is presenting himself in a particular light, in this research, as a reader. In such a way the research interview becomes a special context for the structure and content of interview narratives, with the interviewer as co-participant in the discourse. How an interviewer encourages, facilitates or interrupts a respondent's flow of talk has notable effects on the story that appears, asserts Mishler, as both interviewer and respondent are aware of the cultural and research contexts in which an interview is located.

Mishler values the research interview as narrative analysis saying:

Narratives are one of the natural cognitive and linguistic forms through which individuals attempt to order, organize and express meaning. (Mishler 1986:106)

He notes that theoretical concerns can be pursued through narrative analysis.

Regarding the empowerment of respondents, Mishler broke new research ground when urging the use of research practices and forms of interviewing that facilitate respondents' efforts to construct meaning from their experiences, promoting their efforts to learn and act. About critical research, Mishler says that the sort of interviewing which urges the empowerment of respondents and respects their way of constructing meaning,

Recover(s) and strengthen(s) the voice of the lifeworld, that is, the individuals' contextual understandings of their problems in their own terms. (Mishler 1986:143)

**Denzin** (1989) discussing selves, stories and experiences, talks of life documents that describe turning-point moments in an individual's life, called epiphanies. He describes an epiphany as having:

The potential to create transformational experiences...having had such a moment a person is never quite the same again. (Denzin 1989:70)

He further states that epiphanies are key moments that endow enduring impressions on a person's life. It may seem odd to suggest that reading has this kind of potency, but if one examines the four types of epiphany that Denzin identifies, a researcher must acknowledge them, in the analysis of respondents' remarks about the effect of reading on their individual lives.

Denzin presents four types of epiphany, and all forms of epiphany may be found in the effect of reading. Major ones, such as the ease or difficulty one has in acquiring and employing reading, have an immediate and long-term effect on all aspects of the individual's life. Cumulative epiphanies are reactions to events, such as reading, that stretch back over a long period. Illuminative epiphanies are minor, and symbolically, represent difficulties, or reveal insight, or raise issues that are problematic. This may all occur imaginatively in the act of reading. Relived epiphanies have meanings attached in retrospection, through reliving the events. Reading has the power to allow an individual to relive an event in their imagination. Much like reading, all epiphanies are transformational, because they significantly alter people's lives.

Also, what Denzin says about the self narrative and the role of the self in constructing that narrative, and the various levels and types of self a respondent reveals or uncovers in a narrative, is highly relevant to this research.

**Erben** (1998) talks of the importance of fitting the method of biographical research to its purpose, both general and specific. He notes the general purpose of biographical research is to provide greater insights into the nature and meaning of individual lives, or groups of lives. Discussing empirical particularities, Erben draws attention to the similarities of approaches in biographical research historically and traditionally employed. He suggests, A combination of verstehen hermeneutics and grounded theory as a highly fruitful research procedure, *especially in relation to research involving the in-depth study of small populations.* (Erben 1998:9 italics in original)

Erben also values the use of imagination as an interpretive tool, defining it as the ability of the mind to speculate upon, and link and assemble ideas related to the research text. In this way the researcher makes that which can never be fully understood part of a comprehensible mode of enquiry. Erben states that imaginative reflection forms part of qualitative analysis. The requirement of imaginative speculation is that the researcher refer to lives in such a way as to illuminate them in relation to a research objective. Erben stresses the importance of narratives to the study of lives lived in time. He says, “*a life that is studied is the study of a life in time*” (Erben 1998:13),

and that human identity is narrational, lives being composed of the narratives by which time is experienced. He cites Ricoeur who characterizes the accounts people provide for themselves of their own lives as emplotments, that is, individuals create plots for

themselves out of occurrences in their own lives in order to manage the process of living; they configure a series of events, a chronicle, into the storied nature of selfhood. In many respects this is the core of the research. Erben adds that the researcher is required to devise a plot to communicate with the plots of the subject, redescribing through emplotment the plots of the subject. Erben cites MacIntyre's concept of selfhood, The unity of which resides in the unity of the narrative that links birth to life and to death. (MacIntyre 1985:205)

MacIntyre also says;

Narrative history of a certain kind turns out to be the basic and essential genre for the characterization of human actions. (MacIntyre 1985:208)

MacIntyre emphasizes the contextual influence in researching a lived life. Erben concludes that empirical information, imaginative reconstruction and narrative analysis need to be employed by the researcher to interpret the lived lives of others. Erben's inspiration lies in the erudite detailing of the minutiae of life, and the research process. Also, Erben says it is legitimate to accent or stress a single feature rather than another to uncover a particular route into a life. This research will stress the influence of reading as a way of focusing on selfhood.

**Hollway and Jefferson** (2000) discuss free association, narrative and the interview method. They talk of the biographical-interpretive method saying the main theoretical principle in producing data is the idea that there is a *Gestalt*, what they describe as a whole that is more than the sum of its parts, informing each person's life which it is the job of biographers to elicit. This may be undertaken by using with respondents open-ended questions, eliciting stories, avoiding 'why' questions, following up respondents' ordering and phrasing, allowing free association to flow, and adopting a manner of disciplined reticence. This approach relies on the interviewer to draw out the respondent via patient listening.

**King** (2000) discussing remembering the self, speaks of the complex relationship between memory, narrative and identity: the articulation of this relation being a function of assumptions about the nature of memory itself. She says that much human experience or action takes place under the mark of 'what wasn't known then': what we remember are events which took place in a kind of innocence. This paradoxical 'knowing' and 'not knowing' is the position of any autobiographical narrator, says King, who, in the present

moment of the narration, possess the knowledge he did not have 'then', in the moment of the experience. All narrative accounts of life stories are made possible by memory: they also reconstruct memory according to certain assumptions about the way it functions and the kind of access it gives to the past. King says there are moments when memory seems to return us to a past unchanged by the passing of time; such memories seem to be suffused with a sense of loss, the nostalgia out of which they may be at least in part created. She says we long for a time when we did not know what was going to happen next, or, conversely, to relive the past with the foreknowledge we then lacked. Like Ricoeur, Erben and MacIntyre she also emphasizes the concept of time, saying memory can only be reconstructed in time, and citing Steedman, notes that time, Catches together what we know and what we do not yet know. (Steedman 1986:141 in King 2000:2)

The importance of King's work is in the complex and changing relationship between past and present selves in the autobiographical narratives of reading here recorded.

**Charmaz** (2006) offers practical insights into conducting interviews that will glean rich data. She suggests certain ways of phrasing questions will facilitate the meaning making process between interviewer and respondent, so that a narrative is created. Much is to do with the careful use of language, well-prepared questions and the building of an atmosphere of respect, so that comments are fulsome.

In terms of what to do with the rich data, Charmaz urges an analysis based on categories and coding, moving on to memo-writing. This leads the researcher perhaps back into the data, or data collection. Then, she suggests a researcher undertake some theoretical sampling and see in what direction that points. Next, as researcher, one has to saturate oneself in the data and sort it. This leads to reconstructing all or part of theories about the research; in the present study, theories about reading and biographical research. Finally, (or is it firstly?), one begins the writing of the analysis. The methodology Charmaz details seems linear, but all these aspects of the research are fermenting in the mind of the researcher, all the time, at all levels. Her method is data driven, this is what she advises regarding theoretical sampling;

*What* you look for through theoretical sampling and *how* you conduct it depends on your purposes in doing it. Consistent with the logic of grounded theory, theoretical sampling is emergent. Your developing ideas shape what you do and the questions you pose while theoretical sampling. (Charmaz 2006:108)

The adapted knowledge of these auto/biographical researchers offered the most productive way forward.

### **INVESTIGATIVE METHODOLOGY**

The data will was collected by the researcher from participants and was recorded and transcribed.

- i) Firstly, based on the writing of Laurie Lee, participants were asked about their reading history. In *I Can't Stay Long* (1976) Lee gives a short account of his reading history which he calls *True Adventures of the Boy Reader*. A reading history is an account of all the books one can remember one has read up to the present time.
- ii) Next, face-to-face interviews took place about how reading shaped the participants' emotional, intellectual and moral life, with examples from reading texts.
- iii) Lastly, participants read the same crossover novel, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne, giving their responses to content, language, narrative voice, characterisation, suitability of the subject matter for fiction, intended audience, writer's teachings, and what they learned from reading it.

### **PILOTS**

Regarding pilot interviews I had spent many years in school interviewing students, in groups and individually, on an almost daily basis about their personal, social and health education as a pastoral tutor. Also I interviewed students, and their parents sometimes, about their academic achievement, involving target setting and goal reaching on a weekly basis. Further, in charge of sixth form study skills, again on an almost daily basis I was interviewing sixth formers about their target setting and achievement, as well as interviewing them as part of the university application process and personal statement writing. I approached the interviewing process with confidence.

I devised the list of questions and trialed it with a former student. I just asked the questions and let him answer. What I learned from that pilot interview was that the interviewer needs to give some encouragement to the interviewee with non verbal gestures such as smiles and nods, because otherwise the interviewee just dries up. I did another interview with a young man who was a surf instructor at the time that proved unsatisfactory because he obviously either could not remember, or had not actually read that much, and there was much repetition. I learned from that to try and keep the

interviewee focused, and to prompt for examples from the reading. A third interview I undertook was with a hairdresser. I should have interviewed him about his reading but I became completely distracted and interviewed him about his homosexuality. From that interview I learned that I was not comfortable with that subject matter in a face to face interview because nothing in my professional life had prepared me how to deal with it, and because I was embarrassed, I talked too much. From that interview, I learned to stick with what I knew best, which was the reading. From these pilots I learned to use non-verbal gestures as encouragement, to maintain the focus and prompt for examples to support assertions, and to talk little.

From pilot interviews the importance of being a quiet but encouraging patient listener was realised, also a more informal, less structured, more probing interview technique was learned, and the great importance of keeping focused.

Remembering the research of Mishler (1986), Denzin (1989), Charmaz (2006) and King (2000), the interviews became informal, conversational in style and interviewee driven. The interviewer prompted responses, always keeping the literature research in mind, to see if responses would resonate with Aristotle, Hume, Rose, Hoggart, Williams, Nussbaum, Lamarque and Olsen, Pike, Tucker, Bolton, Iser and Benton, which would assist in the analysis of the data.

## **THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

The interview questions were:-

- 1) Tell me about how important reading is to your life, tell me why and tell me about the types of reading you do?
- 2) Tell me about the books plays, poems, you remember most, can you explain why you remember them and what you remember them for?
- 3) Tell me what you have learned from any text, book, short story, poem or play that you have ever read that you didn't know before you read that particular text?
- 4) Tell me what sort of things your mind is doing when you read a text, try and give an example?
- 5) Tell me what sort of things you say when you discuss your reading with other people?
- 6) Tell me about books, or your reading that offered you role models at various stages of your life?
- 7) Tell me what in your reading shaped your sense of morality, give an example if you can?
- 8) Tell me how your reading has affected your emotions? Give an example.

- 9) Tell me how your reading has influenced or changed you? Give an example.
- 10) Tell me how your reading has contributed to making you how you are now?

Verbatim transcripts of the interviews are found in the Appendix.

### **ETHICAL ISSUES**

Potential ethical issues centre on informed consent and confidentiality, and were addressed by an information sheet and written consent form for participants, and confidentiality on the part of the researcher. Participants accessed their reading histories, and interviews, and edited them. Participant could withdraw at any time from the research. The ethics forms of the University of Southampton were completed and approved for research to proceed.

### **DATA PROCESSING**

Data was processed solely by the researcher, which aided confidentiality. Transcripts were made of the recordings. In the long process of transcription the beginnings of analysis arose by listening to the words of the respondents and thinking about what they had said. Once transcribed, a more formal analysis began by applying the techniques of grounded theory and the methods used in the teaching of English to analyse any text. One was looking for similarities and differences across the interviews in terms of themes, ideas, motifs, and what could be learned about reading and its effect on these young men. This involved close reading of the texts and annotating specific areas. Then one had to order and organize and group the selected extracts in order to present them as part of the beginnings of a rational argument. It was an evolving process that relied on continuous reading and re-reading, and thinking and note making and writing. It was most interesting because eventually one realised that as these young men gave their responses to their reading, they were revealing their inner selves.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE ANALYSIS

This is a long analytical section engaging with the data. It will be retained as a single chapter but sectionalized. The sections represent methodological abstractions, and will to a degree inevitably overlap. Analysis of the data emerged in effect from the protocols formulated by grounded theory, and was fairly full but not complete.

### 4 i) The Reading Accounts

Concerning what reading had been undertaken by the respondents, the range proved wide. Nursery rhymes like *Incy Wincy Spider* were recalled, and early reading books like *The Cat and The Hat* and *Noddy*. Childhood books were also remembered; The Roald Dahl collection, *Flat Stanley*, *Fantastic Mr Fox*, *The B F G*, *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*, Richmal Crompton's *Just William* and Blyton's *Secret Seven* and *Famous Five*. Older children's books were; Kipling's *The Jungle Book* and *Indian Tales*, Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, the books of Terry Prachett, *The Sky Pirates of Callisto* by Lin Carter and *Dead Meat* by Philip Kerr. Non-fiction read during childhood was the *Horrible Histories* series. Novels read after childhood and beyond, included; Steinbeck's *Of Mice And Men*, Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm*, Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, *The Castle*, and *Amerika*, Dickens' *The Red Room*, Golding's *The Lord*

*Of The Flies*, Tolkein's trilogy *The Lord Of The Rings*, de Bernieres' *Senor Vivo and the Coca Lord*, Allen's *As A Man Thinketh*, Lomax's *The Railway Man*, and Yan Martel's *The Life Of Pi*. Non-fiction read included; *The Wreck of the Whaleship Essex: A Narrative* edited by Haverstick and Shepherd, *The Sinking of the Belgrano* by D. Rice and A. Gavshon, and *Diver* by Tony Groom and the autobiographies of Randolph Fiennes and Lance Armstrong. Popular novels read were; Adam's *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*, Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels And Demons*, and McLean's *The Guns of Navarone* and Hobb's *Rompard, The Assassin's Apprentice* and *The Assassin's Quest*. Shakespeare's, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice* were read. Poetry read included the war poetry of Owen and Sassoon, Carol Ann Duffy, Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, Mary Stevenson's funeral poem *Footprints in the Sand*, and *He Wishes For The Cloths Of Heaven* by W.B. Yeats. Newspapers read were *The Times*, *The Independent* and *The Sun*, and the journal *New Scientist*. This list represents all the reading the respondents remembered reading at the time of interview.

### **What do readers do when they read?**

Here is itemised ways in which these readers engage with reading. All participants reported imagining the world of the text, its characters and events. They heard the words in the inner ear and allowed their sound to create images and meaning in the mind, his led to visualizing, that is, seeing in one's mind's eyes what the words describe. Participants contextualised the world of the novel, poem or drama. Often they placed themselves in the text, as a character, or the silent witness, engaging emotionally with the characters, events, situations, themes and ideas, empathizing and sympathisising with characters, or events in the novel, creating in the reader emotions such as longing, fear, admiration, or love. They hypothesised possible outcomes, predicting behaviour and events, most often the end. They questioned their reading, challenging ideas, events, or characters in the text. This developed into analysing events, ideas, and themes. Throughout they created meaning from their reading, and by taking meaning from the text, learned wisdom. The following analysis illustrates this in further detail.

**Edward**, at the time of interview, was working as a painter and decorator. Despite having three A's at A level, in science and technology subjects, he felt that university was not for him. Like all the respondents he acknowledges the influence of his mother, and in his case

his sisters, in initial and early reading efforts. He remembers, 'my mother forcing me to read', often the untrained approach of parents, which not surprisingly 'put me off for a little while'. Male aversion to reading has been well documented by Millard (2001).

Nursery rhymes he

sung with my mum...also my sisters...Incy Wincy Spider...also learning (them) at school...running home and telling them to my sisters.

Edward evidences the traditional influence on reading being female, and the home as a place where reading is nurtured.

He identifies himself as a reluctant reader, 'I was never an avid reader', possibly with early reading difficulties, 'I'm not sure if it's mild dyslexia...I read differently to other people...I find it a lot harder to read out loud'. Here he notes his individuality, and emphasizes the importance of public reading, a theme he returns to. He assesses himself as a slow maturer in reading terms, stating, 'Reading for pleasure I never really did till I was a lot older.' Despite his obvious success in public examination, he presents himself in self-critical terms in terms of his reading. He presents an image of himself as he was not, 'I can't remember as a child sitting down and just reading one (book) quietly to myself'. This is the stereotypical image of boyhood, not a passive reader, which, by comparison, his sisters would have been. In this way it is quite firmly etched into his view of himself, as a child, that he was not a good reader. This is further gendered when he says, '...my dad never read to me much. My dad's actually quite a poor reader.' In memory, he does not present his father as a reader, thus the role-modeling is complete; girls read and read to you, boys are reluctant and are 'poor reader(s)'.

Edward describes the major epiphanal moment when he read his first fantasy novel. It has a profound and lasting effect on him.

I remember the first fantasy book I read, it was called *The Sky Pirates of Callisto*. It was a rubbish little Penguin book, it was old and matted and disgusting, I found it in a bookcase, had a cup of tea, picked it up, I read the first couple of pages and just loved it, just...I remember just lying on my bed hands in the air reading this book, my arms aching, just really, just wanna know what happens at the end, never really been, never even...read a proper , like, book before that. I remember the ones I did in school but before then I wasn't really reading very much at all, but never really sort of got into a novel before then, and then...from there my mum bought me a big set of fantasy books, really big thick books, and I'd never read a hardback in my life, never read over a thousand pages,...and just got into those, and since then I've read a lot. So there was like a trilogy of trilogies of those, and then a couple more when I traveled...but I just always keep on going back to fantasy, I always go back to the fantasy section first.

It was almost as though he was at last ready for the act of reading, for the moment when reading would become a pleasure. He recalls this first reading achievement as a mixture of revulsion and satisfaction, the book was 'old', 'matted', and 'disgusting', yet he was wholly inspired. Also he experiences pain, 'my arms aching', so absorbed is he in the world and action of the novel, 'just wanna know what happens'. Certainly his mother recognizes the importance of this reading act, by buying him more of the same, in the belief he has finally got started with reading in the way she had always hoped he might.

**Henry**, describing himself as a Christian, graduate paramedic with the London Ambulance Service, establishes himself as a reader of non-fiction, stating he had read *The Sinking of The Belgrano*, *Diver*, and the autobiographies of *Ranulph Fiennes* and *Lance Armstrong*. He stresses for him the importance of what he calls 'credible fiction', saying *The Da Vinci Code* was 'fairly credible'. He did not get on with *Lord of the Rings* because he 'couldn't see any realism in it', acknowledging that was the point of fantasy, and did not see it as an analogy of life. *Lord of the Flies* and *Animal Farm* however he said he did enjoy at school, and evaluates

I think they were deliberately obvious that they were made to be microcosms of sort of life and society.

**William** is a musician in a rock band, he writes the band's songs, and is the lead singer and keyboard player. He values reading highly, and finds it hugely enjoyable. He declares himself a lover of stories, noting that reading takes him beyond reality and provides a sense of accomplishment:

I would say reading has been and is very important to my life. I like fiction. I just enjoy it. ...it's probably just escapism...also you get this sort of sense of satisfaction when you've actually finished reading a book, because you look back on what you've done and it's some kind of achievement.

William describes the sense of triumph when, reading the Pullman trilogy, he realised others share his rejection of organized religion;

It was rebelling against religion and stuff which was still quite exciting. It felt like it was something I'd been thinking and then someone else was thinking it and had written it down, and I thought, Ah, there you go!

Here his reasoning regarding religion, and his rationale in rejecting it has been confirmed

within the confines of these stories, in a psychologically safe way. Later when asked how reading has shaped his sense of morality, he offers a conventional response, 'The Bible, that's got to get you thinking about it,' and an equally conventional rejection of authorized religion, 'but I never really took that very seriously.'

**Charles** at the time of interview, was a 22 year old forester working for a local district council, and was engaged to be married. Charles is the most avid reader of the respondents saying reading was, 'vital for my life' and he 'couldn't do without it for a day', and 'there'll always be a book close' by. Clearly for Charles reading was almost a part of his being, as natural an action as breathing itself. Reading he said was 'to enjoy', he saw it as a pleasure. Also it offered him the opportunity of education, it was 'something to learn with'. Finally, it allowed him to disappear because reading was 'an escape'.

He acknowledged the influence of his parents regarding his reading choices, 'I read a lot of sci-fi, which is mainly my dad's influence.' His father here is identified as a reading role-model. These novels by Greg Bear, are 'so far ahead of everything else I've read so far. Just epic, epic books.' He sees them as offering vast experiences, on a large scale, and as presenting something beyond the ken of ordinary life, that is influential and worthwhile. He notes the potent force of reading,

And also *Lord of The Rings*, I suppose because its one of the things that started me reading in the first place, just the sheer magic of it, when you're twelve.

Here an iconic cultural trilogy, stimulates him to all his further reading. The word 'magic' conveys the spellbound quality of the imaginative experience of his reading, and, at aged 'twelve' he is on the very brink of life.

Discussing plays, the experience of schooling did not motivate him to read. He reports,

I've never really read many plays, or been to many plays so I can't think of any that stick out there, apart from a general dislike of Shakespeare due to doing it for G.C.S.E.level.

Here the experience of schooling and literature study, is presented as something aversive. (Millard:2001)

Discussing the value of reading as it works on the mind, with regard to science fiction, he states,

I just love the whole...there's a lot more...a lot more imagination that can be...when I'm doing a sci-fi and I find that really interesting.

He relishes, what he sees as, the greater demands on the mind and the imagination, that science fiction offers. However, he also reads 'historical...work', saying he had just finished *The True Account of the Whaleship Essex* the basis for Melville's *Moby Dick*. The range of Charles's reading is great, from science fiction to the classic novel of man in a struggle with himself, as he struggles with nature.

Charles explains why he bothers to read, saying,

Well in reading you find a huge wealth of human experience that you might never experience in another way. Ways of thinking, ways of expressing your emotions, or not expressing your emotions,...relationships between people, how they work, the mechanic relationship between people. All these things, ordinarily, you'd be almost blind to, in writing and text, book form can make a lot of sense to you... I mean everything the human race has ever done, ever felt, ever been, ever will be, is there in books for you to experience.

Here, Charles is very close to Aristotle as he details the mimetic quality of reading. For him, reading enables one to understand oneself and the world, imaginatively. He values highly the illuminative quality of reading. He also realises that what makes the reading experience able to be retained and valued, is the coherence that a book gives to human experience, not found in the real world. He sees that books make meaningful human experiences that can leave one 'baffled' (MacIntyre 1985:209).

Responding to how reading has influenced him, Charles notes reading is both a physically passive, yet intellectually active force.

I would say that reading has made me calmer I think it's probably the art, act of sitting still, let your mind do the work, it's one of the only things I do these days where my mind is given a bit of free reign.

Clearly reading has had a stimulating effect on his imagination, which has been a balm to his psyche.

**Arthur** was studying part time for a Masters degree, at the time of the interview, in Managing Global Contemporary Issues, and at aged 26 was the oldest respondent. He was also working in a garage.

Arthur says he cannot remember a time when he could not read but acknowledged, 'it's hard to pinpoint a time when I learnt to read.' Like others he identifies the influence of his mother, reading to him, in the learning to read process, 'mainly my mother and then that

developed into me reading for myself.' He admits he was a willing learner and became an independent reader quite early, 'it was never sort of something that I needed forced upon me, and I think I sort of did it anyway', adding 'I've always read quite a lot independently anyway so I think that helped.'

He recalls an epiphanal moment in his early childhood reading of Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* books;

Enid Blyton, they're the books I read when I was a kid, just like the friendships and the sort of adventure, you know that really got me going. Even though I was sitting at home, sort of, reading, there were people out there, sort of, looking in rock pools and finding, sort of, things in there, and, you know, solving mysteries, and talking dogs, and what not. But, yes, sort of, allowed me to, sort of, drift away and, you know, experience different things really at that young age when I don't think really you can, not to that extent, well, unless you are actually in a *Famous Five* book, sort of. Yes, I think that's where that's happened to me.

The epiphanal moment is presented in Arthur;s phrase, 'But, yes, sort of allowed me to drift away.' He is so completely absorbed in the world of the novel, he feels he lives the experiences of those other children in that other idealised world, cocooned by his imagination against the reality of the here and now. Arthur speaks almost in the voice of his own imagined childhood. These images and experiences, fixed in his imagination, from the *Famous Five* books present an idealised vision of the measure of childhood fun and proper friendship. Note the lack of bullying, so very different from the peer group experience found in reality. The tone of his language conveys his distant longing to have been one of those characters in the *Famous Five* books.

For Arthur the experience of schooling was a positive one, and he itemises a series of Shakespeare plays and examination texts that have had a profound effect on him

We did *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear*, both of those I have returned to in later life. I found myself coming back to those and referring to them in my masters degree, to a certain extent, talking about nature, so yes really helpful to me.

He does not see reading as a one off experience, he view reading as an experience that offers you certain understandings that become more significant and meaniful as you relive the reading at later stages of your life, with the benefit of greater life experiences, and improved intellectual understanding. Also, Arthur sees the interconnectedness between the natural world Shakespeare creates in his plays, and his study of Managing Global Contemporary Issues, in which nature is the heart. For him the figurative world of Shakespeare's plays provide insights into the challenges of managing global

contemporary issues, they are not different, they are similar but different.

#### **4 ii) Modes of interpreting the reading accounts.**

##### **What is generalisability?**

What is it, in the accounts, given in 4i) that accords with general views of what auto/biographical narratives contain that may be considered generalisable? Much of the knowledge revealed in this research is abstract. The respondents speak of concepts such as 'imagination', 'morals', 'a sense of self' and the 'meaning' they understood texts to convey. However, it is the responses themselves, referenced in reading that offers specific, and eventually generalisable, insights into the effect of reading, and how it influences selfhood. Such knowledge will be both similar to others, but equally uniquely different.

**Thomas and Znaniecki** write;

The personal life records, as complete as possible, constitute the perfect type of sociological material. (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1958:1832, in Roberts, 2002:44)

Znaniecki, himself a Pole, interviewed Polish peasants in Poland before leaving, and in Chicago. He questioned respondents, what their life had been like, what they hoped it would be like, and what happened once they arrived in the USA, (transformed from Polish peasants into US immigrant agricultural workers.) He identifies the knowledge such research uncovered noting that;

Every man is in certain respects

- i) like all other men,
- ii) like some other men,
- iii) like no other men,

and that the movement between those three gives rise to explanatory, descriptive, illuminative research. (Kluckhohn and Murray 1953:53)

**Ricoeur** (1980) discussing narrative time states that narrativity and temporality are closely related saying:

Temporality...that structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity and narrativity the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate referent. (Ricoeur 1980:169)

Ricoeur also says there are different degrees of temporal organization. The first is that of

time as that “in” which events take place. He says an analysis of narratives will help to show what way this “within-time-ness” (Ricoeur 1980:170) differs from linear time. He also talks about ‘historicality’ (Ricoeur 1980:171) which he says is characterized by the emphasis placed on the weight of the past, and the power of recovering the extension between birth and death in the work of repetition. Most importantly Ricoeur says that individuals devise ‘plots’ for themselves. A story is made out of events to the extent that plot makes events into a story. He states:

The plot therefore places us at the crossing point of temporality and narrativity. (Ricoeur 1980:171)

He refers to death as a reference point and calls living ‘being-towards-death’. He speaks of the three extases of time being, ‘having been’, ‘coming forth’ and ‘making present’. Therefore in a narrative of a life the past, the present and the future will all be there, even if only implied. Time does not pass, lives pass, but time is a device for referencing lives. According to Ricoeur, understanding time as a powerful component in a narrative allows one to understand a life.

**Roberts** (2002) discussing narrative shows the type of knowledge it offers. He cites Mitchell (1981):

The study of narrative is... a positive source of insight for all... human and natural science. The idea of narrative seems... a mode of knowledge emerging from action, a knowledge which is embedded... in the orders by which we live our lives. (Mitchell, 1981: ix-x, in Roberts, 2002:116)

Narrative research enables the researcher to gain a better understanding of lives lived, and a better insight into matters. As **Erben** (1998) says:

Hermeneutics...can be used in biographical research to explore...the meanings of ‘unremarkable’ lives.(Erben 1998:8)

Studying unremarkable lives, like the respondents in the sample, adds potency to the belief that our lives resonate with each other. With narrative inquiry, it is appropriate to want insights into the lives of others so we might learn how best to live. A narrative, says Erben, is always an account of a life lived through time. So when Samuel Johnson speaks of the usefulness of writing a judicious and faithful narrative, what is meant is that, such a study of lives in narrative form, would tell us something about everybody.

In other words, for the purposes of research, if one studies with enough hermeneutical

insight, something detailed and specific, such as the effects of reading on selfhood, one will come to understand something general, applicable and specific regarding the affect of reading on selfhood. As Erben, (1998) says;

We may say that biographical research has both *general* and *specific* purposes. The general purpose is to provide greater insight than hitherto into the nature and meaning of individual lives or groups of lives. Given that individual lives are part of a cultural network, information gathered through biographical research will relate to an understanding of the wider society. The specific purpose of the research will be the analysis of a particular life or lives for some designated reason. (Erben, 1998:4)

**MacIntyre** (1985) presents a concept of selfhood whose unity exists in:

The unity of a narrative which links birth to death as narrative beginning to middle to end. (MacIntyre 1985:205)

He states that human intentions are complex, both short term and long term, and interrelated to a narrative history:

Narrative history of a certain kind turns out to be the basic and essential genre for the characterization of human action. (MacIntyre 1985:208)

He discusses the concept of intelligibility saying it is important to understand an action as something for which someone is accountable, about which it is always appropriate to ask the agent for an intelligible account. In this way a person is distinct from others but connected to others. When we cannot understand the intended actions of another we are:

Both intellectually and practically baffled...our distinction between the humanly accountable and the merely natural has broken down. (MacIntyre 1985:209)

This happens when one encounters 'alien cultures or even alien social structures within our own culture.' (MacIntyre 1985:210). MacIntyre states that purposes and speech acts require a context, and the most familiar type of context in and by reference to which speech acts and purposes are rendered intelligible is the conversation, and he presents both conversations in particular, and human actions in general as enacted narratives. He says stories are lived before they are told, and this for him is the value of narratives, being able to move from an understanding of the particular, to an understanding of the general.

He states:

It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out that the narrative form is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. (MacIntyre 1985:212)

He acknowledges life puts constraints on us, because we have no control over where and

to whom we are born, and are always enmeshed in the narratives of others. Nevertheless, according to MacIntyre, auto/biographical narratives offers a mechanism for understanding ourselves and others. He talks of human action as enacted narratives and that is how they become intelligible. He cites Barbara **Hardy** who says;

We dream in narrative, day dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn and love by narrative. In order to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future. (Hardy 1987:1)

Here she is describing the drama of selfhood, conveying that one life alone possesses a fecundity, a fertility of experiences, that is in itself is a microcosm of life.

**Sarbin** (1986) argues that:

The narrative is a fruitful metaphor for examining and interpreting human action. (Sarbin 1986:19).

He states that a narratory principle operates to provide meaning to the often nonsystematic interactions experienced in everyday life, adding that the concepts of time and narrative are closely related. He shows that human beings are authors of self narratives and actors in self-narratives, and use their story telling skills to maintain or enhance their narrative identities. He notes that moral choice is a concept illuminated by invoking the self-narrative.

**Denzin** (1989) sees the life narrative as bearing witness to the human condition. He states that one becomes the story one tells, and these stories, like the lives they tell about, are always open-ended, inconclusive and ambiguous, subject to multiple interpretations. He says, as researcher, one creates the persons one writes about, just as respondents create themselves when they engage in storytelling practices. One's responsibility, states Denzin, is to the people one studies, who openly share a part of their life:

And, in return, this sharing will allow us to write life documents that speak to the human dignity, the suffering, the hopes, the dreams, the lives gained, and the lives lost by the people we study. These documents will become testimonies to the ability of the human being to endure, to prevail, and to triumph. (Denzin 1989:83)

By focusing on themes reflective of the human condition such as, suffering or hope, Denzin sees the individual life as something that is ennobled into more generalisable concepts.

Roberts, (2002) discusses the construction of selfhood saying that as researchers and

writers we are involved in the construction of narrative. He says there can be a sense that individuals are the stories they tell, because as we relate our origins, present actions, future intentions, or give narratives of our education, employment and family life, we are creating and recreating, both for ourselves, and the audience, whom we are. He says that identity formation within the oral accounts can be seen in statements that say whom we are, where we are from and what our next social movement will be. Roberts cites Leiblich *et al*:

The story is one's identity, a story created, told, revised, and retold throughout life. We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to others, by the stories we tell. (Leiblich *et al.* 1998:7 in Roberts, 2002:128)

Describing aspects of human experience that are socially constructed, such as reading and its influence, **Elliot** adopts Taylor's term 'intersubjective meanings' (Taylor, 1987 in Elliot, 2005:27). It is these intersubjective meanings that constitute a community, and about which one may generalise. She argues, if narratives becomes the focus of research because their form reveals something of the cultural framework within which individuals makes sense of their lives, then the close analysis of narratives, produced by a small sample, may produce evidence that provides an understanding of how widely those intersubjective meanings are shared by the whole of a community.

The external validity or generalizability of this evidence will therefore depend on...how widely those intersubjective meanings are shared, or what delineates the boundaries of the community...beings studied. (Elliot, 2005:28)

**King** (2006) writes of the complex relationship between memory, identity and narrative, saying that the articulation of this relation is a function of assumptions about the nature of memory itself. She states that it is commonly accepted that a sense of self, is constructed by and through narrative: the stories we all tell ourselves and each other about our lives. She continues, that it is not only the content of memories, experiences and stories which construct a sense of identity: the concept of the self which is constructed in these narratives is also dependent upon assumptions about the function and process of memory, and the kind of access it gives to the past. In her analysis of autobiographies she

suggests a threefold model of narrative as:

- 1.) the event, [ in this case the reading event],
- 2.) the memory of the event [memory of reading], and
- 3.) the writing of (the memory of) the event, [ in this case the writing of the talking about the memory of the [reading] event]. (King 2006:6)

She states that it is the third stage of this process that constructs the only version of the first, to which we have access, and memory is the means by which the relationship between the event and its reconstruction is negotiated.

In conclusion, there is sustained agreement from many writers that forms of knowledge are revealed by narratives of lives, and furthermore, the study of the narratives of lives offers generalisable knowledge. Znaniecki, (1958) shows how different, but similar, lives are. Hardy (1968) suggests a personal narrative is a microcosm of life. Ricoeur (1980) emphasizes the importance of temporality in narratives of lives for knowledge. Mitchell (1981) speaks of knowledge emerging from the narrative of action. Erben (1998) notes that a life is a life lived through time and offers in its particularity something generalisable. MacIntyre (1985) asserts the narrative form is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. Denzin (1989) shows the individual narrative as something ennobled into more generalisable concepts. Roberts (2002) says personal narratives construct selfhood. Finally, King (2006) shows that memory is the mechanism by which narratives are constructed and knowledge revealed.

#### 4 iii )

##### **Themes**

In the following analysis of the respondents' comments the themes of **Formative Influences, Imagination, Morality and Learning**, and **Sense of Self** are found.

**Formative Influences** are composed of the influence of the **family, schooling** and what **books** have actually been read, (as reported in Chapter 3). The influence of the **family** on reading is identified by all respondents, as reading is initially introduced to the individual by the family, who are in role as an individual's primary teachers. The respondents mention 'mother', 'father', 'sisters' and 'grandmother' specifically, with females of the family exerting most influence. Mother and older sisters are reported to nurture, value,

teach and encourage reading. In one instance a respondent reports being 'forced' to read, so highly does the mother value the skill of reading, because she understands how education cannot function without reading. One father is identified as recommending a genre, while another is described as 'a poor reader'. There is something of a gender divide reported, however, all the respondents are male and all read.

The experience of **schooling** is varied. School is acknowledged by all respondents as being responsible for teaching reading for a sustained number of years throughout compulsory schooling, and schooling also teaches readers how to derive meaning from books. While some respondents report being inspired by books, poems and plays studied at school, others declare that the experience of reading and studying literature at school was aversive. Edward regretted not reading at school those books friends later reported as being of great stimulus and interest.

What books at school? I never did a novel which I was really intrigued in reading, other friends said that they had read *Lord Of The Flies*, and it was a good book and they'd read it again. I can't even remember a novel that we read at school, definitely one I would read again.

This indicates individuals tend to have expectations of their time at school as promoting stimulating reading for study and enjoyment, and respondents expected reading to be an uplifting experience.

Regarding **imagination, morality and learning**, two of the respondents conventionally cite the powerful influence of the Bible on them as providing them, as Henry say with 'the basis for all laws', adding 'I find that if you kind of try and stick to that you can't go far wrong in life'. Even William in his rejection of the Bible, 'the Bible, that's got to get you thinking about it (morality), but I never really took that very seriously.' is acknowledging its widespread influence on the formation of identity. Regarding what has shaped his sense of morality Arthur conventionally identifies the Bible.

I would have to say the Bible, because I was brought up fairly religiously. Not really my parents, I think more a sense of duty, I think than actual religious conviction from my parents, but I would have to say that the Bible and the ten commandments is where I originally got my, sense of morality from. And even though now I've drifted away from religion, it sort of, still, sort of, underpins like who you are I think, so although I'm sure it's a pretty standard book to quote from in terms of morality I'm going to have to say that one.

As Arthur states the Bible is 'a pretty standard book to quote from in terms of morality.' and, through sustained reading, has been interpreted to present universally the theme of

morality, and from this religious tome all Christian laws and morals derive. So entrenched is the reading of the Bible in western society and culture that, in a subliminal way, it is a part of every life, ‘even though now I’ve drifted away from religion, it, sort of, still, sort of, underpins like, who you are.’, and as Arthur suggests, shapes the morality of both individuals and society because it provides a yardstick by which moral action is easily measured. The Bible still offers a form of accepted Christianity, which rejected or ignored is still clung to, ‘because I was brought up fairly religiously, not really my parents, I think more of a sense of duty, I think than actual religious conviction.’

Henry too cites the Bible as a formative influence on his morality, shaping his sense of right and wrong.

Would the bible count as? I think as a child being...being brought up in a Christian school and not being made to read the bible, read the bible, but having that as a strong influence and obviously the text is full of morals and...what's right and what's wrong, sort of not how to do good, but how to treat others as you'd like to be treated yourself and... that was a really good text that has shaped my...my morality quite extensively. Because although...I don't go to church any more and I don't ever do follow Christianity, and...I will always take that away, and I think that's how I view life to a certain extent, as treat others how you would like to be treated yourself. And the ten...I wouldn't say I followed the ten commandments...to the dot, but they are sort of the basis for all laws and I find that if you kind of try and stick to those you can't go far wrong in life.

Henry shows that even though he is not a religious person now, the influence of his Christian school, and the Bible, provide him with moral guidance and give him moral rules and laws to adhere to, a point he returns to later.

The power and influence of the Bible is widespread. Arthur admits that when discussing his reading with others it is, ‘the moral dilemmas, the controversies, the ambiguities...I tend to talk about,’ showing that reading presents such issues to the mind, and provokes debate. Charles sees reading itself as offering every example of morality and immorality.

I suppose in reading you do see the whole spectrum of morality. It does allow you to pick and choose because you see characters doing things utterly noble right down to the down right atrocious. So, given that wide spectrum, you can find things that ring true with yourself very easily.

The implication here from Charles, is that the reader needs to appreciate the full extent of actions, both moral and immoral, in order to decide what actually is moral behaviour.

From his reading, he recognizes some of his own thoughts and actions, and the fact that he identifies a scale of morality from, 'utterly noble' to 'down right atrocious', is evidence that he has established criteria by which to judge moral action, in himself and others.

Using a character in a Louis de Bernieres novel as an example, he sees moral action as promoting good:

A young man, who through writing letters to a newspaper, and the myths that ended up surrounding him, managed to break down an entire cocaine trade, and improved the standard of lives for thousands and thousands and thousands of people, and, showed me that, a simple act, in a good way, can have huge results.

This is quite Aristotlian, this idea of striving for the life of virtue so that the individual and the state benefit. Charles shows here that moral action is a force for 'good', and he expects it to bring about 'improved' lives. He appreciates the mimetic quality of reading, and, that reading acts as an educator to the reader.

Edward is not alone in mentioning the qualities of the moral person as presented in reading, and the decision making involved.

I find most of them they're always selfless, always trying to do the right thing for other people because they should.

Here reading teaches him altruism is a quality at one with morality. He also identifies the writer's purpose as having a moral focus for the reader, saying:

In other books I've read you get main characters which you know, are pretty mean, down to the core, but writers probably use that as an example to show their morals are askew, as it were.

Such characters are readily rejected by Edward for being 'mean' which conveys vices like avarice, lust and killing, and fits a picture of 'askew' morals, set against the altruism he previously commented on as an heroic quality. Reading also identifies what Edward calls 'the grey areas in between, I mean the good people have to do bad stuff to sort of do the right thing in the end', and shows that the moral path is complex and ambiguous, as Arthur had already noted. Edward refers to moral decision-making as,

Those sort of battles, I mean do you kill if there's someone going around killing lots of people? Do you just go and kill them and solve the problem? I mean killing is an extreme thing.

He certainly conveys that reading has taught him that moral decisions often require a struggle with the conscience.

It is William who raises the philosophical question of whether reading offers moral

teaching, or whether the reader looks for moral teaching in the reading saying:

A lot of what I've read has done that, (shaped his sense of morality), and continues to do so because it does tend to be quite an ongoing theme in books because it is obviously something people obviously think about a lot. And it just makes sense they'd write about it, even if it is at quite a sub-conscious level. Or maybe it's that I take it out of books. Maybe I see the thing as a sort of lesson in morality in and there's not one because I think about it too much.

I think this goes back to how the Bible and reading is used and taught in schools in western societies. In England, unless you are in a religious school that uses another religious book, all children are exposed to the narratives of the Bible as teaching specific, universal and generalisable moral lessons in how to behave, at every stage of life. The New Testament may be summarized as 'Love thy neighbour' but as Edward points out it is not always possible to love thy neighbour. Also, education in England presents all books as offering opportunities for learning, and children are trained from an early age to take meaning from reading in a wide range of school subjects for a minimum of eleven years, so that skill is not something that is going to be easily discarded, if at all, in fact it is highly prized by society. So it is not surprising that on reflection, William wonders whether he constructs a moral 'lesson' that may not be there. Nevertheless, he understands that as the reader engages with the reading, so it challenges him.

I do think books shape your sense of morality because they're, they're, a lot of them are written purposely to expose, and put pressure on uncomfortable feelings, like, you know, immoral things because that provokes a reader response, you know when something sort of nasty is happening, you kind of want to sympathise with whoever it is happening to. You get these kind of situations where you know what's the right and wrong thing to do, and I guess you learn from that because it actually gets your mind thinking about it.

Here, William virtually repeats the words of Aristotle about sympathy and catharsis. There is no doubt that for each respondent, engaging with reading and focusing on and debating the ethical situations in books, has shaped their sense of morality, and has had a character-forming influence, suggesting that reading may teach morals.

All respondents reported how much they **valued reading**, saying it was important for their lives. Indeed, Charles said it was 'vital for my life, I really couln't do without it for a day', William also stated reading was 'a big part of my life'. Both Edward and William reported reading was valued as a form of 'escapism', Edward saying, 'I read..I completely cut myself off from reality'. William values reading as a pleasurable activity, 'I just enjoy it.' Arthur and Charles value reading as important because they attribute the development of

imagination to reading, saying respectively, ‘you’ve got to use your imagination to imagine the things that go on in books’, and, ‘there’s a lot more imagination [in reading]’. William comments that reading is important because it gives the reader heightened self esteem at the completion of a reading project, ‘It’s also you get this sort of sense of satisfaction when you ‘ve actually finished reading a book, because..it’s some kind of achievement’. Henry sees as important the transactional quality of reading which enables an individual to achieve in a way the world values, ‘Reading has been sort of fairly instrumental because university obviously nowadays is not so much being taught, but learning how to teach yourself and develop...professionally develop on your own’. Arthur too points to how reading promotes personal and cognitive development, ‘it sort of broadens you...allows your mind to develop.’ Reading is also valued by Arthur as a mechanism for social understanding, he says, ‘empathy wise, it’s, you know, very key, if I can empathise with at least one character’. Reading is valued as important by respondents as being a pleasurable activity, offering a means of shutting out reality, something that promotes the imaginative and cognitive life, enables one to succeed in the academic and professional world, and lets one connect with other people, albeit imaginatively, via empathy.

When the respondents reveal how much they **value** their reading they are showing that it is a necessity for life. They are indicating that reading is a cultural activity embedded in our culture and society. Reading, the respondents reveal, is highly valued and prized by society for education and work purposes, and for personal development and enjoyment. The respondents show that higher order reading skills contribute to an enhanced social status.

As respondents describe what their **mind** is doing as they read they are in fact describing cognition because reading is a cognitive process that generates thinking, engaging the reader imaginatively and creatively, helping to form the mind. All respondents reported visualising their reading, as Edward says, ‘I try and visualize everything in my mind.’ Imagining was another common response, again Edward, ‘I just imagine the whole world, the whole situation.’ Both Charles and William saw speed of reading as vital. Charles says: Imagining it all, just concocting images, pictures, situations as fast as my eyes can follow the text. I’ve just finished reading *The True Account of the Whale Ship Essex*, the influence for the *Moby Dick* story, but it was just being in the open ocean, but also the relationships between the men on board, and my mind is furiously trying to create these smells of salt and open seas, and comprehend what I’m reading.

Charles notes how his mind works on many levels at once, visualizing, imagining, going into role and comprehending are all identified as some of the working of the mind. He notes the speed at which the mind functions, ‘as fast as my eyes can follow the text’ and ‘furiously trying to create these smells’ , are evidence of the lightening quickness of the stimulated mind, as it imaginatively conjures up, in a cinematic way, all that the senses would expect to experience. Away from the physical pleasure of visualizing and identifying with characters and situations, Charles points out that these physical sensations feed and shape his dawning understanding of the meaning he can take from his reading, ‘and comprehend what I’m reading in front of me.’ This is seen as the ultimate value of the reading experience.

William describes reading as an act of cognition, embodying simultaneously both kinesthetic and mental processes. He starts by clarifying;

The actual kind of mechanism you mean while you’re reading, that feeling? How you’re processing it all?...it just streams in so quickly, you...build up a sort of residual picture, images of things being talked about,...it’s a skim...its an odd feeling, sometimes you go back to a page and read it again...you’re just taking in the words and I don’t really build up much of a picture about what’s going on, just absorb it, often it takes me a long time, obviously scan, scan, scanning, scanning, scanning, and it isn’t until you get to the end of a chapter that it all kind of comes together and makes sense. And if you try and read slower, I can’t build up the picture slower, you’ve got to do it in big chunks and not be distracted. I tend to jump back and forward to bits as well because I skim them so quickly that I don’t even take in names and stuff, and a name comes up again and you’re like, you have to go back and find it. So I don’t know what’s happening in my mind, I know I’ve got to be focused on it though, if there’s...music and things, that slows me down massively.

Here William speaks of reading as ‘that feeling’ as an act of emotion. He highlights how essential speed reading is saying it ‘streams in’, also the lexical fields of ‘skim’, ‘scan’ and ‘scanning’ indicate the quick action of the brain. Phrases like ‘taking in the words’ and ‘absorb it’ convey the sponge like quality of the brain as it receives stimulation from the printed word, from which his imagination is visually able to ‘build the picture’ He notes that only after ‘big chunks’ and ‘at the end of the chapter’ is meaning able to be constructed and ‘make sense’. Checking and re-checking occurs throughout to remember or clarify names and events, ‘I tend to jump back and forward to bits...a name comes up...you have to go back and find it.’ All forms of distractions are a deterrent to understanding, ‘not be distracted...music...slows me down massively’. There is no doubt that when these young

men read, that reading is a cerebral activity.

William describes how he absorbs the words and the effect it has on his mind, as he visualizes, imagines and gets a hold on the workings of the book, he shows that for him understanding takes place in an absorbed, undistracted way, focusing completely on the reading.

Charles is able to appreciate the influence reading has had on his thought when he says;

I think I've learnt, every time I've read something that I found very impressive, particularly about the way I think, I've maybe taken a bit from here and a bit from there and brought it all together inside my head.

He is actually explaining the thinking process, as the gradual rejecting and absorbing of ideas, presented to the mind and imagination from his reading. Nussbaum, (2001) values the influence of the study of literature, on student lawyers, in coming to an understanding of justice and equity. Charles, like Nussbaum (2001) identifies the stimulating quality that reading has upon the mind:

But I know also, of course, once you've got these thoughts in your head they bring out new thoughts of your own.

Here the fertile imagination is watered by reading, to bear the fruit of future thought and ideas. In this way, a person, like Charles, can become unique and individual, as he explores and examines the ideas and thoughts of others, and develops his own particular intellectual responses.

When he reads, Arthur describes the activities of his mind as thought:

I think it's [his mind] doing a number of things. I think on one level it's running through the scenario that the narrative of, what you're reading. But, also, you're obviously trying to think of what, the consequences of what you are actually reading is going to be, so you are racing ahead trying to think of what the end result of this is going to be. I think it might work on a number of levels, because obviously once you've got to the stage where you're not having to worry about the words or anything, you're going with...at a certain point you're sort of immersed in the narrative of it, and then obviously you're thinking, you're trying to like analyse what the characters are going through and where that's actually going to lead them to. At least that's what I always do, I'm always trying to find out the end before I get there.

Arthur explains his mind as he reads as multi functioning, 'I think it's doing a number of things.' He shows his engagement with the content and plot of the reading as something wholly absorbing, 'you're sort of immersed in the narrative of it.' This immersion works at a

cognitive level, the words on the page create images in the imagination and emotional engagement occurs, and the individual, like Arthur, is both engrossed in the reading and part of the reading, because he constructs content and plot in his mind's eye; the printed word is given life in the reader's imagination. In this way the reader is transformed beyond the present into the private world that the imagination has created from the book. Arthur describes his mind as trying to predict the events and outcomes of the novel, 'so you are racing ahead trying to think of, what the end result of this is going to be.', adding, 'I'm always trying to find the end before I get there.' This desire in the reader to predict events and outcomes before they have taken place springs from the words presenting the reader with suggestions, and options for action and decision making within the novel, and as Arthur reads, he explores, and then discards certain predicted action in favour of others, based on his own personal, or read experiences. In this way Arthur's reading is shaping his thought processes, and ability to predict human action and decision making, and out of this process enhanced understanding occurs.

As he reads Arthur's mind is engaged in analysis:

And then obviously you're thinking, you're trying to like sort of analyse what, what the characters are going through and where that's actually going to lead them to. At least that's what I always do, I'm always trying to find out the end before I get there.

Here one can see that Arthur's mind is functioning on several levels. As well as being engrossed in the reading, he is predicting events in the book, hypothesizing outcomes, analysing possible meanings, and always looking for the resolution. The reading is viewed as more than empathizing with characters, Arthur shows that for him, it is about coming to an understanding of the consequences of action and decision making. Through the action of thought, and using reflection, reading allows Arthur to explore the psychological effects of action, and decision-making, on imagined characters, and presents him with examples mimetic enough for a meaning to be derived, that connects with his own experiences (or would-be experiences) of the world.

Henry reports his mind is looking for insights and meanings in fiction:

Ever since school I've got an understanding that fictional stories do go deeper, that they've got a lot of meaning, like *Animal Farm*, and they've got underlying stories to them, so I'm always looking for those in books now.

School-learned skills of analysis of books have become part of his cognitive repertoire

when reading, and as a maturing reader he anticipates that fiction will offer him something to think about. Indeed, though a declared non-fiction reader in the main, Henry complains that non-fiction does not offer this possibility for learning that fiction does:

And I think that's possibly the trouble with non-fiction is that there's no underlying story sometimes because it's purely descriptive of events that have occurred.

The sense of being completely lost in reading is best conveyed by Charles, who describes himself as being a detached observer of his agency.

And particularly, sometimes, I sit there and I think, I stop to look at myself reading and I see the writing, and I forget how to do it for a second, and I'm staring at the pages and I don't seem to be able to assimilate it as quickly as I should be able to do, and then I sort of float back into it again. It's quite a strange experience really. If you really think about yourself walking or think about yourself falling asleep, suddenly you forget how to do it. It's quite a strange experience.

Here Charles functions entirely imaginatively, watching himself reading, and because in his mind he is watching himself read, he loses concentration and feels he cannot remember how to read for a brief moment. Possibly it is the focused intensity of cognition, in the reading experience, in which the mind becomes an objective observer of the body.

The respondents show that reading is a cognitive process that generates thinking, engaging the reader on imaginative, creative levels within the mind. Indeed, reading helps form the mind.

**Talking** about reading, as all the respondents did, reflects the social qualities of reading, showing reading is a cultural act that is commonplace, even mundane, but cerebral, and is part of both public and private behaviour wholly socially acceptable. Edward declares himself only a recent social speaker about reading:

I really, till recently never really talked to people about reading. I never really discussed characters and er what happens and why you think they happened till I was speaking to [names a friend] the other day, and he was reading a book that I've never seen anybody else read, this Robin Hobb lady, [indicates book he has voluntarily brought to the interview] and he's like 'O, yeh, man, they're really good, and my girlfriend got me on to them.' I forget her name. And then I said, 'I read Hobbs.' And she's like, 'O, really!' And then we had a.. sat down and talk about all the characters and the frustrations of the book...the way they saw it, the difference in our thinking of characters and our imaginations.

Edward, as a fairly immature (perhaps 'untrained reader' might be more fair to him), is genuinely surprised at being able to discuss a book he loves with others. For him it is a novel experience to be talking about the same book with different people. Also, he is

amazed that another reader has different perceptions and attitudes to the same characters.

The dawning understanding that another reader has a different point of view, to him, to the same words in the same book, generates an epiphanal reading moment for Edward.

We thought different things, and it really opened my eyes how reading is different for everybody. So, I mean you see it from the point of view of the writer, which is one point, and then your own, and then somebody else, I mean it's quite revealing. I never really thought about that before especially when I...cos I read so single-mindedly I am just in the book. So it's...it was interesting especially a girl's point of view, she picked up different things, I mean it's not a very graphic read, but she's more about, I mean the , you know, the characters and stuff like that, whereas I'm more about the sort of situation, I mean, the characters are very important, but, you know the big war scenes I really remember, where she's just like, 'O, the time these people had a really meaningful conversation.' And I'm like, 'What? Get on with it!' And she's like, 'Wow! I really thought that was a bit important.' So, it was cool...different...never had that before.

Here, Edward describes his own learning. He subtly suggests that perceptions of reading may be gendered, but it is the difference that impresses him most. He is deeply affected by the alternative insights another reader has presented to him, which he finds new and exciting. Immediately he analyses the difference in their two perceptions, by offering examples of the type of writing, and the sort of scenes, from which each one derives particular meaning, and to which each attaches especial importance in their construction of the meaning of the reading. Through the cognition involved in discussing reading with another, Edward has learned and is altered by this experience.

Discussing his reading with others is something Charles values.

We'll compare the things that stuck out to us more than anything else....the characterization, the language comes into it quite a lot.

Here the power of the word is made clear, constructing the individuals who inhabit the books. The use of the word 'compare' is significant since it conveys an exchange of ideas, and a looking for similarities and differences in response to the reading of the book. These are cerebral activities, and contribute to the maturation process. Charles seeks the views of other readers.

If you're with someone else who reads also, hopefully you've both read the same book, which I find most interesting, we'll compare the things that stuck out to us more than anything else. So, the characterization, the language comes in to it quite often.

He notes the talk focuses on protagonists in the novels and writer's words, which is

echoed by William.

Yes, sometimes you discuss the characters, it depends on the book.

Charles even offers advice about reading to those who do not read.

And if I'm not talking to someone who reads I say, "Well, what are you doing, man? You really need to pick one [book] up. You're missing out on...I mean everything the human race has ever done, ever felt, ever been, ever will be, is there in books for you to experience, and you're missing out on all of it."

He extols the virtues of reading's mimetic quality, its ability to offer coherence in its storying, and meaning in its exploration of human life.

William reports reading as commonplace, noting the social matching that takes place in talk about reading.

I suppose the first thing, when you're talking about reading to other people, you tend to assess what level of reader they are, it's a weird sort of culture of readers isn't it?. You have to judge whether or not they actually read a lot, before you decide whether them saying this is a great book is actually worth taking on board or not.

William reveals social assessment here as he aligns, or does not align himself with similar reading others, by judging others' reading. He identifies the importance of talking about reading with the right person.

It doesn't take long to kind of judge, and you tend to have this sort of competitive little to-ing and fro-ing of how many books you've read, and stuff, and then you know they're actually a person who reads a lot, or reads enough to count.

William wants to reassure himself that he can value his talk of reading with others, by checking that the reading repertoire of others is going to offer sufficient to generate worthwhile talk. He is sensitive enough to mould his talk to the reading preferences of others.

If I was talking to Michael about *Hitch Hiker's Guide* , which I know he is really into, it would be a lot about the language, and comedy as well. I like the way it's so sort of, I guess it's ironic, a little bit. So, depends who you're talking to, what book you're talking about.

For William, talk is generated by understanding the reading tastes of others, as well as discussing writer's techniques and language.

Henry reports on the pragmatics of talking about reading.

I can't say I do a lot of talking about reading with other people, the books I tend to read [medical texts, to further his career as a paramedic] aren't the same books other people tend to read at my age, I mean it's difficult to talk with someone about a book they haven't read.

An avid non-fiction reader and a daily reader of *The Times* political issues are what he discusses.

I read *The Times* every day, a friend and I got into quite a heated debate about political parties, and sort of the merits of one set, and right wing fascist groups and how possibly people aren't turning that way cos of what's happening at the moment with our current economic climate.

Though Henry finds newspapers stimulating, he analyses them and is skeptical of the printed word and seeks credibility.

Reading news, it's provoking thought, but then I think you have to be careful about what news you read, especially what paper it is, because I enjoy *The Times* because it is fairly sort of objective as opposed to something subjective like *The Sun*, and the sources are generally more reliable and less sensationalist, but I do tend to take the things that the media, any media says, with a pinch of salt, because at the end of the day it is quite hard to sort of back it up with anything solid sometimes, it's just what people say. I think governments have a massive amount of control over what the media says. You have to be very careful I think about what you select from the media sometimes.

Henry, echoing Hoggart (1957), highlights one of the purposes of reading when he mentions manipulation of the printed word, and he shows that scrutiny and choice in the media are subjects for his discussions. For Arthur, when he discusses his reading with others, it is the questions that the reading raises that interests him.

I think it's the morality. I think moral, sort of dilemmas are the main focus point of how I, because it's the, you know, the controversies that I tend to talk about, and where the ambiguities are in, in any narrative.

Arthur seeks clarity in unclear issues and questions, meanings made clear, and the writer assuming the role of teacher. Reading brings writing to life, and one of the purposes of writing is to challenge accepted morals and mores, and Arthur looks for this in his reading. He views reading as providing the opportunity to learn about taboo and difficult subject matter, words like 'moral dilemmas', 'the controversies' and 'the ambiguities' convey his desire to be intellectually challenged by his reading, and he seeks out uncomfortable issues in its themes. Such reading stimulates higher order thinking skills as the reader, like Arthur, struggles to make meanings from problems and ethical issues raised in the reading. In this way reading enables meta-cognition to take place, and self learning to occur.

Arthur, Charles, Edward, Henry and William all report engaging in discussion and debate, with other readers, comparing and contrasting and judging responses to the same book. In doing so, they raise this social act of reading to the level of a cognitive event.

All respondents report **learning** from their reading. Edward describes an epiphanal moment of learning from his reading as the light of understanding the concept of metaphors breaks:

*The Life Of Pi*, I never understood the idea of metaphors until I read that. You know he's on a boat with all these animals, he goes through all these tries and tribulations and then at the end, in the last bit which is excellent, the interview, where they're saying, "O, you can't have been on a boat with all these animals, it must have been people, and that's must what a been, must you thinking, and he says, "It doesn't really matter, the same situation with animals and people, it's the same sort of thing." So, yeh, that quite grabbed me, that sort of showed me a bit.

Also, Edward using language and imagery from 2010 notions of post traumatic stress disorder, struggles to convey his understanding of the horrors, and the sacrifice of youth in the 1914-18 Great War, learned from his study of the poetry of Owen.

And the war poems, the human endeavour, and the stuff that you can go through, and how people deal with that, I mean some people went mad, shell shock, pencils up their nose, pants on their heads, and some people wrote poetry, I mean it's one way or the other, and you know, it just shows you through...writing...the array of emotions.

Lastly, Edward learns to recognize quests as voyages of discovery.

The first Ian Irvine quartet I read, people going on massive journeys and their emotions changing throughout, but still focused on one goal, I think that's quite good always having a goal at the end.

Henry learns political lessons from his reading of *Animal Farm* that stay with him.

It taught me that there is prejudice in the world and some people will...you know, try and be better than others, and that there is always going to be inequalities in every level of society, because it's almost human nature to want to be better than the next person. But I don't think it, it taught me that, it highlighted it in a way, and it, sort of opened my eyes to it, and made it, condensed it into a smaller understanding. Because, like *Animal Farm* was all about Stalinism and that sort of subject area, but at that age I would not have been able to understand Stalinism, and Trotsky and such, but it's, it's condensed it into a sort of more manageable way of learning, you know.

This is exactly what Lamarque and Olsen (2006) say reading offers; condensed forms of learning. Charles cites the power of reading as a means of understanding yourself through its mimetic qualities.

People ask me why I read books, perhaps people who don't read very much, and I say well in reading you find a huge wealth of human experience that you might never experience in another way. Ways of thinking, ways of expressing your emotions, or not expressing your emotions, way... relationships between people, how they work, the mechanic relationship between people. All these things, ordinarily you'd be almost blind to, in writing and text book form can make a lot of sense to you.

Charles emphasises the illuminating quality of reading in understanding the human condition.

William, using a metaphor of painting states it is difficult to say what one has learned from reading, because so very much is learned from reading. However he cites Kafka's *Metamorphosis* as having a profound effect on his understanding.

Starting off with a blank canvas in some subject, there's any number of things I wouldn't have known about before I read the book so almost any thing I pick up... originally Kafka and Metamorphosis, and something I would never bother thinking about before which was the way people actually think, and the way they think to write things down. And that was quite eye opening, and it took me ages to get into his style of writing. And it wasn't what he was actually writing about that I was learning about, it was the fact he was writing in that way, really sort of bowled me over, because I hadn't ever bothered to think like that before. You can just turn the words into anything and it's a strange concept.

For William reading Kafka was a revelation as he gradually perceives that people think differently. He matures a little as he reads Kafka, and he observes, via his strenuous efforts to comprehend, that language is a tool which may be employed to create any meaning. Reading Kafka has furthered William's linguistic development.

Arthur recalls, from his experience of school, Steinbeck's *Of Mice And Men* and Lomax's *The Railway Man* as novels of significance, saying 'they give you the opportunity to experience things that you're not going to experience.'

Again the school experience of reading gave Arthur thoughts and ideas that he comfortably returns to in later life, Orwell's *1984* is such a novel.

And I think books like *1984*, George Orwell's *1984*, which I've re read recently, sort of helped me in later life, discover the...allow me to sort of 'test drive' different ideologies and, you know, sort of allowed me to think well, 'Is this a good thing? Is this a bad thing?' Allowed me to run, like, the whole scenario in my head, while I was reading the book, and allowed me to, sort of, analyse it, and, so, yeh, I think that's helped me a lot in my studies and, hopefully in life.

This is close to Iser's (1978) reader response theory. In school Arthur reads a futuristic novel with political purposes set in a dystopian society; as he studies for a higher degree in global contemporary issues, the dystopian situations in the novel come to the front of his mind's eye as being relevant to today's global issues and he re reads it with a more mature, more focused attention, realising that it has, and continues to present, views of the world that resonate closely with the discourse of global issues.

In fact Arthur offers *1984* as an example of learning directly from fiction that which he

did not know before.

I think, yes, I think I'd use *1984* as an example actually. I learned that the whole workings of politics almost, like not only in an authoritarian state, such as that portrayed in the book, but also more generally, like bits and pieces of the book, like the whole idea of being Big Brother of these, massive, sort of, very poignant at the moment, what with cameras and the whole Google earth debate out there, at street level mapping, I think the way that plays into the media, as well, in general, it sort of bled out of that book, and it's *Big Brother* the TV show you know. There's been countless different, the way that the words, such as, you know "thought police" have come into the general use from it. Yes I think that's definitely like re-span in my later reading, right up to the present day, that's been very influential.'

Here, Arthur reveals reading to be a cultural act, an act that both replicates and constructs culture of that society. Also, the power of the novel is made obvious. What Arthur, as he has matured and become more educated, realises in his observations of the world, is that the imagined futuristic dystopian society of the novel *1984*, becomes a common reality. When Arthur uses the phrase, 'it bled out of that book' it is a philosophical statement. He is suggesting that the novel gradually constructed the dystopian world it describes by being read countless times by successive generations, and being assimilated into both the individual and the national consciousness, so that street cameras, Google earth satellite mapping, and *Big Brother* and *Room 101*-style reality television programmes are commonplace and mundane. He notes too how language, 'the way that the words "thought police" have come into the general use from it.', always has the power to construct the very thing it describes. When he says, 'Yes I think that's definitely, like, re-span in my later reading right up to the present day, that's been very influential,' he is acknowledging the pervasive and lasting influence that situations and ideas in fiction have on the construction of individuals, culture and society. In his discussion of the influence of *1984* on present day culture and society, he conveys something of the religious awe that is transferred by individual's in society to technology and the media. He suggests that individuals in society, and society itself, admires and values the media, and technology as a powerful force within society that brings about change, that, like in *1984*, is presented to the masses as an agent for good, and this admiration and awe, he questions. In this way Arthur's reading has presented him with complex philosophical issues for his mind to debate.

Reading is an uplifting experience and teaches the reader. Reading has mimetic qualities that enable the reader to learn. Reading, in its storying, offers the reader a coherence

which is missing in real life and thus allows the reader to learn valuable life lessons. In its transactional function reading gives access to all written forms of learning and knowledge. As Lamarque and Olsen (1996) state;

For literature like philosophy challenges the reader to make his own construction, to invest time and effort in reaching a deeper insight into the great themes, though this insight is 'literary'. (Lamarque and Olsen 1996:455)

When respondents used their **memory** to recall books, plays and poems they had read, they were re-constructing a former self as a reader. This former self was always a younger self than the present, and was a maturing, developing self sometimes shy or sad or prone to embarrassment. Recalling this former self from memory, King ( 2006) says is tricky because memory is about what I know now that I did not know then. As these respondents look back over their reading life, they remember the most influential books, play and poems, because these are the ones that stayed in the mind longest. Such books, play and poems still live in the mind of the respondents and are part of their repertoire of reading that makes them the reader they are today, perhaps a reader of fiction like Edward, Charles and William, or a reader of non-fiction like Henry. Remembering reading makes a reader reflect on what has been read, and as in the case of Arthur, might motivate them to re-read a book, play or poem again.

In the act of remembering the respondents recalled their reading, but also selected texts as suitable answers to the interview questions, so there is always this element of the respondent as a reader now, being constantly reconstructed from all his previous readings, and so on ad infinitum. The action of remembering reading is evidence that readers are in a state of constant development and maturation.

When the respondents describe what in their reading offered them **role models**, they are describing their own identity in the making, at the time of reading. Asked about role models in his reading Edward was not the only male to cite a female as a role model, 'it would be the heroines from the fantasy books I read.' He gives a summary of how the writer presents her heroine:

The character's name is Tian,...it starts off what she did in her life...a very boring life...very good at her job...doing these amazing things...somebody else took a dislike...tried to slate her...to discredit her and chuck her out...so she went on the run and then suddenly...the people found out what this other person was doing, and now they are after her, to try to get her back, but she thought she was being chased. And, you know, some of the stuff she's going through like...the anguish of being rejected by her peers, these people she's lived for all her life, and

now she's out in the wilderness...like she got taken by the enemy...I mean they may be weird monsters which aren't humans but, they are sort of, they've got the same struggles and that.

Clearly for Edward the main protagonist speaks to him, it is a person facing adversity in a crisis situation, almost biblically rejected by her own kind and in the 'wilderness', on a journey and a quest for survival, who 'struggles', essentially it is the growing up process.

Asked if he had any problem having a girl as a role model he replied,

No not at all. And, and...in some ways it's a nice thing for a young boy because I mean, girls are a completely different species, so a little bit of insight, ah, is quite nice.

When he refers to himself as a 'young boy', he is 23, this is a reflection of his own view of his levels of maturation in relationships with girls. The world's oldest man, Henry Allingham, having recently died aged 113, perhaps Edward is right to describe himself as a 'young boy'. Having been so influenced by his mother and sisters in his early reading, he is comfortable with a role model who is female.

On the same theme, Edward thought the female writer of fantasy books, Robin Hobb was male.

In fact, that Robin Hobb that I talked about she's, I never, when I was reading it I always thought she was a bloke until actually I'd, had a paperback and it said, 'She was born in America and went to California' and I was like 'It's a she?'. I never realised until about three or four books in, which was amazing because she wrote about, the guy, the young man in the first three books, you know when he's growing up, and you could really relate to the stuff he was going through, like his first girlfriend and unrequited love, and you know the struggles with your peers, and also the people older than you, and you really...I remember that.'

Though surprised that the author was not male, Edward nevertheless identifies strongly with the 'young man', recognizing his difficulties as the same as his own. In fact they are universal themes in literature, as Lamarque notes, 'first girlfriend', 'unrequited love', 'struggles with your peers', and 'people older' are themes found in any number of literary texts, *Romeo and Juliet* not least amongst them.

Henry offers role models from the challenging world of exploring and mountaineering, and cycling. He initially denies that they are actually role models for him, perhaps not wanting to present in a schoolboy hero-worship manner, but his respect and high regard for these extraordinary men is unbounded.

I read Lance Armstrong's autobiography, Randolph Feinnes autobiography, and one thing... I wouldn't say they were role models, but I have taken away from that how strong human nature can be at times of ...sort of despair and knowing there's nothing left but human nature to keep

them going, and it does make you think that, or it's made me think that human nature is a great thing, you know, and if you really want something bad enough and you set your mind to it. Especially Lance Armstrong he's...I think he's probably...one of sports biggest role models for...because cycling is a completely competitive, riddled with performance enhancing drugs and he's come back from a massive illness that ...that would have killed most people undoubtedly. He's come back to do what is undoubtedly one of the most physically challenging sporting events in the world, and he has won it seven times. And I think that is quite fantastic. And he has now come out of retirement and is going for it again this year.

Henry identifies two qualities of character that these men exemplify; firstly Fiennes' biography clearly endorses the quality of human endeavour, especially determination and perseverance, qualities, which a reading of his interview will show, Henry has himself. Secondly, Armstrong's battle with cancer indicates a resolute individual and exactly the sort of attitude to illness that someone like Henry, working in the medical profession would applaud. Though reluctant to call these heroic individuals role models, they nevertheless are close to the *Boys Own* heroes, manly, mentally strong and physical achievers in sport. Henry learns wisdom from Fiennes, and speaks of Armstrong with awe and wonder.

Charles also offers male characters, though this time from fiction, as his role models.

Often when I'm reading the central figure will be, almost always in fact you'll find if you're reading a work of fiction the central character, or central characters will lead lives of interest, to amuse the reader, and as they do these things, as they comprehend the things going on around them, and as they act on those things, there is always a growth of character, there's always a change, there's always decisions that are made. And... as you read through this...you realise different ways of thinking about things, that perhaps would not have occurred to you, before you actually do read. And, particularly, with male figures in fiction, that can exercise full control over their own minds and their own thoughts and, the way in which they live their lives, not at mercy to beings outside...outwards coming in, not at mercy to the whims of others, particularly, other than people they care about, and want to care for, I suppose. I've always found that to be very informative, I suppose is the right word...because.... it shows me how I can better myself... how I can enjoy my life more.

Charles's response is naturally gendered, but reflective, and what it is to be a man is a recurrent theme in his responses. He focuses on qualities of self-actualisation and independence as resonating with him. He is aware of the constraints of life, taking life lessons from these characters which show him the way forward in terms of ideas, ways of being and maturity.

William speaks of the lasting influence on him of Pullman's *The Northern Lights* trilogy which he read while experiencing puberty, saying the novels are not specifically children's

books nor adult's, in the same way that he was neither child nor man when he read it. He acknowledges he empathized with the characters, of Lyra and Will, and they offered him a role model, Will, whom he wanted to emulate:

There's a trilogy called *His Dark Materials* I think I must have been reading just when I was kind of changing, mentally, emotionally or something. That's what sticks with me, it was mid way between being a kid's book and there being something quite adult about it. And that's always stuck with me, the one that's had the most impact of stories on me....I felt I could relate to the character so well. And Will in the second one...because he was a little bit older I think and by the time I read it I was a little bit older, so I was able to relate to him really well, and in the third one they were kind of getting together, and that was something I wanted to be able to relate to really well.

Here William is influenced by a quality writer during his teenage years of puberty as he reads a trilogy of novels of timeless appeal to all age groups. This reading enabled him to anticipate maturation, and the complexities of sex and relationships, via empathy.

Interestingly, Arthur, in reply to what in his reading offered him role models, gave examples from Shakespeare saying,

I think *King Lear* allows you to see, how to sort of deal with your children, you know, don't have favourites. And with *Romeo and Juliet* as well, about freedom of, like, who to be attracted to.

With *King Lear* he has identified the theme of fatherhood, seeing Lear not as a monarch who disorders society by a perverse act, but a weak and attention-seeking father too vain to see that true filial affection lies in actions not words. The *Romeo and Juliet* example deals with the theme of taboo love. Both examples identify one of literatures great themes, love. Arthur, the reader, expects to find love in his life, he hopes to find a girl and become a father. Shakespeare presents the audience with different types of love, showing the destructive consequences of love born of vanity in *King Lear*, and taboo love in *Romeo and Juliet*. Arthur has these Shakespearian examples in his mind and understands how these types of love tragically failed, and so when it comes to the moment, he will not choose an unacceptable partner, nor use his children to pander to his prideful vanity. In this way reading, especially Shakespeare, examines all the subtle foibles of humanity and passes comment, saying this is not the way to go about falling in love, and this is not the way to behave as a monarch or father, and the reader learns from these role models by employing the readerly activities of identifying with, or empathizing with characters, and sympathizing with their plight, while at the same time critically analysing their failings.

Arthur may well be emotionally engaged, but criticising Lear and, Romeo and Juliet's actions is an intellectual process only found in the 'slow time frame of reading'. (Iser 1978).

When respondents reveal the role models they found in their reading, they are describing aspects of how they want to be, at the time of reading, and at stages in their lives. The respondents show that role models in reading shape the reader's identity in the reader's own world.

When respondents acknowledge that reading has helped their **emotions** develop, they are conveying the power reading has to help form that part of the self. Edward conveys his sense of being at one with the emotions presented in his reading.

I mean you feel anguish and disgust and elation sort of in the book as you're reading it, but I don't think I show them as I'm reading,...well books never made me cry, they make me laugh and chuckle and stuff, but...emotions, it's a bit of a roller coaster in books and stuff, I mean one minute you're on top of a mountain the next you're right at the bottom,... emotions are very hard to judge in real life, so in a book from the word it's, cos it's telling you, it's a bit easier, but...the underlying emotions, sort of, I can pick them out occasionally, but, most of the time I skim straight over it, until it's actually spelled out for me, which is pretty much like in real life as well. So...you definitely feel for them, they are still fictional, so it's sort of not real, I mean, the extreme of human emotion I suppose, I definitely feel...I empathise but I don't feel true, sort of emotion towards it. So shaped my emotions... empathy, I suppose, you empathise with characters, I mean they are emotional reads, it's from reading from different points of view I mean you can see the emotions of people that way, and, it's emotional situations, sharing personally...I mean it's just has happened, I'm mean cos it's a slow, such a slow process, you don't read a book and say O my emotions have changed about this, I think it's much deeper than that.

Edward reflects on his reading and acknowledges his empathy with the emotions of characters. In his self analysis he has difficulty perceiving emotions in the real world and is indebted to books when emotions are made clear. Reflecting on emotions in books makes him realise the emotional stance of others, though he acknowledges it is fictional. He clearly sees that though his emotional development has been trained by reading, it is a slow and gradual process for him.

Henry denies any emotional involvement with his reading, and resists the concept that reading develops the emotions.

HH: With the non-fiction reading I wouldn't say it was any, it wouldn't have developed my emotions to that sort of extent. I've never really with fiction, been able to get emotionally involved in a book, and I find, now especially with my job that I'm quite able to emotionally detach myself from a situation if I want to, and it's only....if it means something to me that it will emotionally effect me...I'm quite lucky in the respect that I've always sort of been able to

emotionally detach myself. In a way I've never seen reading as a way of developing my emotional behaviour.

I: So you have never felt moved by anything you have read? Never cried or

HH: I wouldn't say I've cried

I: But you've laughed, have you, at things you've read?

HH: Yes I'd say so, definitely

I: That's a form of emotional engagement

HH: Mmmmm

I: Felt sympathy or empathy?

HH: Mmmmm I wouldn't say greatly, especially if it is fiction because there's no sense of realism. I mean, in a lot of these books that I've read about, sort of wars and stuff there is, there is obviously sympathy for the stories where colleagues have been killed and how they've been killed, and you know some of the emotional stress that they themselves have endured. And it is quite poignant I suppose some of the things they say, some of the statements, but I wouldn't say it's had any long sort of lasting emotional effect on me.

I: But when you admire Ranolph Fiennes and Lance Armstrong, that's an emotion isn't it? To admire, to maybe want to replicate, to be like that person, to have that strength?

HH: Mmmmm. I don't know if you could say admiration was an emotion, could you say that? It's obviously a state of mind, but whether its something that you...I don't know...I wouldn't class admiration really as an emotion to be honest with you.

Henry presents his response to his reading with detached objectivity. He resists engaging with books emotionally. He adopts an emotionally detached stance consistent with his work as a paramedic for the London Ambulance Service. He finds fiction lacking credibility, and though he values the narrative accounts of veterans of war, noting their poignancy, they appear to leave him largely unmoved. Admiration he perceives as an attitude of mind, not an emotion. Henry is restrained and controlled in his work, and this is his approach and response to his reading. However when he is personally involved a poem moves him, his disjointed final sentence indicates his struggle to contain his emotions.

One of the main poems I remember is *Footprints in the Sand* and I guess I remember that because it was at one of my uncles funerals, I know that's a bit morbid, but I guess that's poignant because I always like the beach, and to think my uncle, that I quite liked, on the beach ...yeh...I've... it was poignant..I remember that.

This is by no means contradictory, for Henry the dead, much-loved uncle, and the sad moment of bereavement enacted in the funeral rites, are triggered by the poem *Footprints In The Sand* describing the loss of a loved one, and his emotions rise, and are checked. In a bygone era this was how men were expected to behave.

Charles acknowledges that reading has shaped his emotions, by presenting a variety of examples.

The main thing reading has done for my emotions is taught me how to control them a little bit,

just seeing both ends of the spectrum, people not being able to control their lives and their admiration for people.

The extreme examples of emotional behaviour depicted in his reading shows Charles that moderation and ‘control’ are ways of dealing with emotions. He emphasises this with an example.

One book I read recently, it’s called *Ass A Man Thinketh*, it gave the philosophy that every action a man has, ever does, every aspect of his life is a direct result of thought that he has had at some other time, so by strictly controlling the thoughts, by being careful what seeds you sow, as such, you can rigorously alter your emotional state and your life.

Reading *How A Man Thinketh*, has allowed Charles to acknowledge the range of his emotions, and to consider ideas such as ‘being careful what seeds you sow’, in a safe distanced way, intellectually removed from the reality of feelings. Also this reading allows him to explore the vast concept of development and maturation, when he ponders on ‘controlling the thoughts’ as a mechanism for change, ‘altering your emotional state and your life’.

William philosophically acknowledges the difficulty of assessing the effects of reading on his emotions because he could not call to mind a time when he had never read, so he could not really say what he might have been like emotionally if he had not read. Nevertheless, he values reading in developing the emotions.

WW: I’m not altogether sure. Its really hard to say because I can’t go back and not have read everything. I don’t know if I’d feel any different, you know, if I’d be able to feel, any different. I: But if you empathise with a character, aren’t you engaging emotionally with them? Or sympathise, even if you just sympathise with somebody, aren’t you engaging emotionally with them?

WW: Ok, I can only really speculate because I don’t know otherwise how it , how I would be emotionally if I hadn’t read all my life, but I suppose it would stand to reason that reading has developed me emotionally, because it pushes your emotions to the limit, you know, and put them to the test, I suppose, and so, faced with more scenarios and more emotional responses you, you’re arming yourself, virtually for situations that may arise in your life, I suppose. But , er, does that mean its made me more outward with my emotions, or not. Whether it has, I don’t actually know, or whether it means I know myself better because of it I don’t know either. Perhaps that is the case, probably that is the case.

I: So you can’t think of a novel, poem or play that you cried at, or felt disturbed by, that would be your emotions engaging

WW: I can, I have .That has happened, but..

I: Can you remember what texts? What books they were?

WW: Ummm I hate to keep coming back to it,....

I: It’s the Phillip Pulman trilogy?

WW: Yeh

I: They are a powerful set of novels

WW: Yeh. No, no I just wish I had a better...I want something else to reference basically...I

trying to think of something else a better reference. I'm sure there's been several....they just go straight through me.

William is reflective and self analytical. He openly admits crying in response to a book. He sees reading as training the emotions, assisting in the battle to prepare oneself for situations in life. He worries that this learning about emotions from books has helped to make him more sure of his own emotions, and, also, more demonstrative of his emotions. He is anxious that his emotional development has brought him self knowledge. What is clear from William's response is that he is an individual moved by words, and as a musician and song writer this would be so. He expects to move people with the words of his songs, because he himself is moved by the words of others.

Referring specifically to *The Railway Man*, as a piece of reading that shaped his emotions, within the theme of war in literature, Arthur asserts,

So, without having to be a prisoner of war, it allows you to, sort of rehearse your emotions almost, takes you through the whole range, and I just think without that, you know, we'd be a lot worse off, a lot less prepared for, things in general life.

This is very similar to Aristotle's view of poetry as a cathartic experience. Arthur knows he will never be a prisoner of war himself, but the mimetic quality of his reading prepares him for much of what such an horrific experience might hold. He reflects,

I think it allows you to develop your emotions because it puts you in situations that you wouldn't necessarily get in yourself, being a prisoner of war, or in a situation where you're going to be killed, allows you to be in those situations, yeh definitely in terms of the way I read books, allows you to be in those situations and think, how would I react, like what are the emotions doing here, so it allows you to sort of broaden your range of emotions I think.

Reading *The Railway Man* enables Arthur to imaginatively place himself in the novel as a prisoner of war and consider the emotional impact of such experiences. Reading also has a formative effect on the emotions of the immature reader, as Arthur notes,

Even at a young age you can experience like love through books, through other people's experiences and I think that sort of helps you to develop how you, when it comes to like being in the middle of it, it helps you know what to do, kind of thing.

Here reading is seen as teaching the reader how to feel, by presenting examples of characters in situations of heightened emotional intensity, and through sympathy and empathy, the reader feels with the characters, may even cry, or feel strong regard, and so train their own emotional responses to possible future events in their own lives. As Arthur says, reading allows the reader to 'sort of rehearse your emotions', and 'helps you know

what to do' emotionally. The sympathy and empathy that all the respondents report as occurring while they read are the mechanism by which the emotions are trained, and the self forged.

#### **4 iv) Sense of Self**

Edward identifies a variety of ways in which he perceives reading to have influenced or changed him. Initially he shows how books are companions.

I've use it as escapism, definitely, I sit down and read my book I'm in my own little world , or the author's, little world and that influences me a lot, it takes you...out of reality, that's a fantastic influence, especially when I travelled and was on my own.

Struggling to explain, he acknowledges that reading has altered him.

Change me...I suppose my perception of certain characters...you sort of see where the author is coming from...it's changed me...perhaps situations were dealt with.

Reflecting on his adolescence in physical terms, noting the uncomfortable growth surge, the attraction of the opposite sex, and acknowledging the self-centredness of youth, he reports that reading enabled him to see things from others point of view, and to begin to mature.

Sorry teenage years for a young boy are a bloody emotional rollercoaster, eating and growing and, I suppose your emotions are growing at the same time, and to be honest you're more concentrating on girls than reading books. Yeh, I suppose reading did change me a lot, I mean it shows you different people's perspectives, I mean, as a young...teenage boy you don't really think about other people's perspectives, ...you're more concentrated on yourself, so yeh I suppose that did change a lot, it made me see things from other people's points of view, a lot more.

Edward reports the therapeutic value of reading. While acknowledging reading provides quality time for oneself, he values reading as a creative activity which he likes.

It's a productive some thing to do rather than sitting around watching the telly... relaxing you, it's something I do to enjoy myself. Some times you don't have enough time to it... it's taught me that it's good to have time for yourself...it's not doing nothing reading a book. It's a good thing you know, sometimes you have to sort of take a step back.

He draws attention to the mimetic quality of reading and its ability to teach.

Everything you read you learn from, you learn from the situations, learn information, sort of like in real life books you see what people have gone through, and the same in fiction.

Finally, Edward values the imaginative element that reading demands of the reader, by

comparing the passivity of watching the television with the mental activity of reading.

With television you don't use your imagination as much...you can't sit down and read,...well you can sit down and relax, watch a film, it's very nice, but it's not, not the same as reading a book...you're seeing somebody else's perception of it. Whereas your own...I mean, like when you read..... It's one of the most important things, I think, that's to exercise your imagination, that's, I think why I read mainly fantasy, is because I have an active imagination, and I like to use it, what people look like, even that, stuff as simple as that, it's quite important.

Overall Edward demonstrates how much he values the gradual, but distinct, influence reading has on his sense of self, by showing that reading, in its mimetic quality, has shaped his intellect and imagination, and made him more empathetic to others.

From his reading, Henry reiterates the influence of the Bible on his sense of self

.  
The bible has guided me. It hasn't changed me from something I was, to something I am now, but it perhaps has made me grow into, I say a better person, but then I am comparing myself to what I always assume is a lesser person but it's made me develop into what society I suppose would class as...as a better person. So someone who doesn't steal, or fight, or burn, wreak havoc.

Henry reveals that the Bible has offered him moral security. He lists anti-social immoral acts, possibly that he has seen in his work as a paramedic for the London Ambulance Service and contrasts himself with those who perpetrate such acts, and assured of the approbation of society at large, rightly judges himself a moral person by these criteria.

Henry especially reports the influence reading has on his body of knowledge in his specialist field of study.

I'd say the reading I've done has given me a lot of knowledge, probably more so than some of my colleagues...because of the medical books I read, I read quite a lot, and I would know for instance, slightly more...it is noticeable when I've ...I've done shifts with my colleagues and I've come out with stuff... they are shocked that I know. So for instance the average paramedic wouldn't have known that (names a person known to us both) had bust his finger like that, but its purely because I've read a minor injury's book, because it interested me, because it gives me that extra bit of knowledge to...to go out with.

Henry understands the knowledge culture, and the competitive edge having more knowledge than one's colleagues gives. He is pleased he has impressed his colleagues because they are 'shocked' at what he knows. Also he shows that his reading has made him an above average paramedic because he says the 'average paramedic' would not have recognised the nature of the finger injury exemplified. Finally, when Henry says 'it's

given me that extra bit of knowledge to go out with.', he is acknowledging that his further reading in his specialist area has given him improved expertise and confidence in dealing with emergency situations in his work, and makes him a better professional. He further reports the influence reading has on his career:

I will seek promotion because already I'm getting bored with the level I'm at and there is a certain limit to where your knowledge is useful, so yes I definitely think I will use that knowledge to move on.

Here Henry reports his need for intellectual challenges which he feels reading provides. In summary, Henry reports that the Bible has influenced strongly his sense of morality, and additional reading in his specialist area gives him enhanced expertise and confidence, and the competitive edge, in professional situations.

William reports that reading has influenced him cognitively.

I suppose the most obvious way it has influenced me, or changed me is intellectually...Because if I wasn't able to read, or if I hadn't read, I wouldn't be able to further my education the way I have done, and I wouldn't know how to use words properly to get the best, of the situation, so that's a really obvious result.

As a musician William especially appreciates the high level of musical skills his formal education has taught him. Equally, as a composer of songs he acknowledges the higher order skills of language that reading based learning gives him. He describes the composition process.

The best situation is they come together, and even then its, the words are just a, you just open your mind and they come out, its not really any, the more you think about in fact the worst it gets, its best to just get this torrent of, stream of words out that just comes if you let go and open your mouth and sing something.

Here William reveals how he strives for inventive spontaneity, and the imaginative leap he takes as he tries to bring to a song ideas, concepts and feelings 'that just come if you let go and open your mouth and sing something'. Writing music and poetry are learned skills that William has acquired through reading, and make him what he is now. Admitting that 'self doubt' is his muse, William confesses how reading has influenced how he is now.

Because I used to read a lot I was kind of a different person, which was like when I was very young, I was different to a lot of other people in my class, and I suppose I never really shook that off. And I've always been a bit, and you may find this hard to believe, quite reclusive. I don't actually like to socialise. And I wonder if that's because it was easy to just hide away in a book, because I could. And I did a lot. So maybe that's had quite a large impact on my social capacity. Hiding behind music now, hiding behind the piano, or just hiding behind the walls, because I don't go out much in London because I just don't, I don't like socialising much. I

want to, I want to be someone else, and that's back to the role model thing a lot of the time when I read books, I want to be the person who's , you know, the everybody's man, the person who goes out and gets laid a lot. So, yeh, that's odd that one. Probably reading has actually done that to me, or had quite a large hand in doing that to me.

William reports changes in himself by describing a past, more secure self, 'I used to read a lot, I was a different person, when I was young.' He shows himself to be marked out, 'different to a lot of other people', and is sensitive and anxious, 'I suppose I never really shook that off'. He reveals the defence mechanism that reading provided, 'because it was easy to just hide away in a book, because I could.' This reading masked his nervous social skills, 'that's had quite a large impact on my social capacity.' In poetic phrasing, William explains that this early device of using reading as a screen to cover up social nervousness, is now replaced by his skills of composition, 'hiding behind music now, hiding behind the piano, or just hiding behind the walls, I don't go out much in London, I don't like socialising much.' He confesses to wanting to be another person, 'I want to be someone else, that's back to the role model thing when I read books, I want to be the person who's, you know, the everybody's man, the person who goes out and gets laid a lot.' He worries that love, sex and companionship will pass him by, yet he knows from his education and reading that it is his due when he says, 'Yeh, that's odd that one, probably reading has actually done that to me, or had quite a large hand in doing that to me.' Clearly he wants to be the sort of heroic type he perceives from his reading, that the world values. Here William reveals that reading has fed into his innate sensitivity and worry, forging a sense of self that is highly creative artistically, but vulnerable and anxious.

Charles states that reading has contributed to making him as he is now through its influence on his emotions and thought processes.

By shaping my thoughts, I had bland feelings, er non descript feelings before, urgings, emotions I didn't know how to deal with that were causing me trouble and I always have done, sometimes when you do reading an intensive amount, you'll hit upon something you wish you could say, and it says it in such a formulated way that it almost sounds like it's your own thoughts being brought back to you in a much more open fashion. And through this sort of, these sort of islands that you hit upon here and there, every one I've found has led me to another one, and before Long I seem to be made up of these feelings and emotions that I've sort of gleaned from else where.

He identifies his inner struggle with his emotional development, 'feelings...urgings, emotions I didn't know how to deal with, were causing me trouble'. He values writers who seem to be able to express what he himself was struggling to understand, 'sometimes you'll

hit upon something you wish you could say'. It encourages him also that a writer can sometimes appear to be uttering the thoughts of the completely absorbed reader, 'when you do reading...it almost sounds like it's your own thoughts being brought back to you.' Using the journeying metaphor he explains how, in his response to the experience of reading, he has constructed meanings from the books with which he has engaged, which in turn has enabled him to make sense of himself, and the world around him, and allow him to find a meaning for at least some parts of his life.

And through this sort of, these random sort of islands that you hit upon here and there, every one has led me to another one, and before long I seem to be made up of these feelings and emotions that I've sort of gleaned from elsewhere.

'islands' here refer to small bodies of thoughts and ideas which, through reflection, he makes his own.

Charles believes that a person must mould himself, and for him reading is the tool whereby this is achieved.

I'm very much a believer in the fact that a person, a man personally is, is completely under their control...reading...just the massive effect it can have on your emotional states, the way you live your life and your morality.

Arthur asserts that reading has influenced him, 'it opens you up, allowed me to empathise, it's made me more broad minded, and more open to differing ideas.' This shows how reading promotes and stimulates an enquiring attitude in the mind of the reader.

He says it has contributed to how he is now, saying:

I think definitely it has made me quite a thoughtful person, quite able to think through different situations and see different sides, because when you are reading there's always the good side and the bad side and sometimes it's ambiguous, but through reading you get to see different points of view, and if the author's good, they make it so that there is an ambiguous part, and it makes you think , what would I do here, but yes I have definitely got that from reading.

This shows how reading trains and shapes thought. Finally, Arthur says he could not imagine life without reading, and declares how highly he values reading,

I read every day, it's engaging, it's more engaging than say radio or TV, you're more engaged in the whole process, it makes you think more about it if you're reading syllable by syllable on the page, it allows you to think it over more, it's just more slower, slightly slower process, you can really let things wash over you, at least that's what I do.

Here time is identified as a component of the reading experience that contributes to the

mental activity. In the same way that a life is lived in time (Erben 2000), so reading through understanding, is made meaningful in the slow time frame of reading (Iser 1978), which itself promotes thought.

All the respondents state that reading has influenced how they are now. Edward gives evidence that reading in its mimetic quality, allows him to empathise with others. Henry shows that reading gives him the competitive edge in his specialist professional area.

William confesses reading has made him both intellectually highly creative, yet anxiously striving to be a social someone the world values. Charles reports that reading has enabled him to strive for and achieve independence of thought and action. Arthur acknowledges that reading has promoted his intellectual skills, and offers controversial issues to debate.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne.

Having examined the variety of non-common texts, the present study explores the participants' responses to a text in common. *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* was chosen for a variety of reasons. Initially, in a session in which one had to pitch one's thesis proposal and be open to the comments and suggestions of one's colleagues, it was recommended to me as a short read. This was important because it was essential that respondents would undertake and complete the reading. As a teacher of English I was quite used to accepting recommendations from colleagues about poems, plays and novels to read and teach, and I appreciated the recommendation. It was a novel I myself had not read which I liked because it meant that I would be reading it for the first time the same as the respondents. As part of that body of work called Holocaust literature, its charged subject matter would offer the reader issues for discussion and comment. The main characters, Bruno and Shmuel, were boys and the respondents had once all been boys so I felt there was scope for empathy there. It is a crossover book, in as much as it is a book seemingly written for children, yet read by adults, so it crosses over the boundaries between adult and children's fiction. What such books can do, via emotional engagement, is to draw out the child in the adult during the course of the reading, and this often can illicit a strong response. In terms of the language, it is an accessible book, so there was no concern that any of the respondents was going to struggle to access the language of the novel. Overall I felt it was a good choice because it was short, crossover novel with accessible language, male characters, and a subject matter that offered potential for discussion, but most of all it was an engaging powerful read. It was anticipated participants would have no difficulty making a response. The analysis of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* reveals not so much the varied responses of participants to the same novel, as the perspective each respondent offers.

## SUMMARY

Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia gives the following summary of the novel.

Bruno is a nine year old boy growing up during World War 2 in Berlin. He lives in a huge house with his parents, his 12 year old sister Gretel and servants. His father is a high ranking official who, after a visit from Hitler, is promoted to 'Commandant', and to Bruno's sadness the family have to move away to a place called Out-With.

When Bruno gets there he is immediately homesick after leaving behind his home, his grandparents and his three best friends. He is unhappy with his new home. It has only three floors and there are always soldiers coming in and out of the house. Bruno is lonely and has no one to talk to or play with. However, one day while Bruno is looking out of the window he notices a group of people all wearing the same striped pyjamas. As he is a curious child, he asks his father who these people are, but gets rather an unusual answer. His father tells him that these are not people at all.

Bruno is not allowed to explore the house or its surroundings. Due to sheer curiosity and boredom, he is forced to explore. He spots a dot in the distance on the other side of the fence and as he gets closer, he sees it's a boy. Excited by the prospect of a friend, Bruno introduces himself. The Jewish boy's name is Shmuel. Almost every day they meet at the same spot and talk. Eventually, for a variety of reasons, Bruno decides to climb under the fence and explore Shmuel's world.

The story ends with Bruno about to go back to Berlin with his mother and sister on the orders of his father. As a final adventure, he agrees to dress in a set of striped pyjamas and goes under the fence to help find Shmuel's father who went missing in the camp. The boys are unable to find him, and just as it starts to rain and get dark, Bruno decides he would like to go home, but they are rounded up in a crowd of people by the Nazi guards who start them on a march. Neither boy knows where this march will lead. However, they are soon crowded into a gas chamber, which Bruno assumes is a place to keep them dry from the rain until it stops. The author leaves the story with Bruno pondering, yet unafraid, in the dark holding hands with Shmuel. "...Despite the chaos that followed, Bruno found that he was still holding Shmuel's hand in his own and nothing in the world would have persuaded him to let it go."

In an epilogue, Bruno's family spend several months at their home trying to find Bruno, before his mother and Gretel return to Berlin, only to discover he is not there as they had expected. A year afterwards, his father returns to the spot that the soldiers found Bruno's clothes, and, after a brief inspection, discovers that the fence is not properly attached at the base and can form a gap big enough for a boy of Bruno's size to fit through. Using this information, his father eventually pieces together that they gassed Bruno to death. Finally, when Auschwitz is liberated Bruno's father is captured. The author ends the novel with an ironic caution.

## REVIEW OF PERTINENT LITERATURE

This section considers, with reference to *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, moral philosophy in literature, McGinn (1997), Holocaust literature, Kluge and Williams (2009), crossover books Reynolds *et al* (2001), the response of the critics (2006-2009), and teaching Holocaust literature, Alexander (2008).

McGinn (1997) regarding moral philosophy, asks what is the right *method* (italics in original) to adopt in discovering something philosophically worthwhile. Moral philosophy

he states is no exception because its aim is to shed light on aspects of life that involve moral notions. The question is where and how to look for moral illumination, and McGinn advises avoiding any preconceived method that *excludes* (italics in original) potentially fruitful avenues of reflection. He writes that the potential contributions of literary fiction have been systematically neglected, because fiction fails to conform to any of the methodological paradigms that have dominated philosophy at large. He says:

Yet in fiction we find ethical themes treated with a depth and resonance that is unmatched in human culture. Literature is where moral thinking lives and breathes on the page. Philosophers of morality therefore need to pay attention to it. (McGinn 1997:vi)

He adds, because of the way in which moral considerations enter intimately into the construction of fictional works, the novelist must constantly treat of moral questions, and take some position on them. In *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, Boyne treats evil and ethics in a literary format. Transforming a Shakespearian quote McGinn declares:

When it comes to morality, there is more truth in fictional truth than is dreamt of by philosophers. (McGinn 1997:viii)

Kluge and Williams (2009), editors of *Re-examining the Holocaust through Literature*, acknowledge that the holocaust ended over sixty years ago, but it continues to haunt, fascinate and intrigue. They are aware that the current generation of holocaust scholars, in common with the general population, cannot remember, cannot know the holocaust as it actually happened, and all that is known, is what the victims and perpetrators have passed down. They point to the small but growing number of books that have begun to treat the interconnectedness of the Holocaust (as event, as experience), memory, and representation (written and visual). They reveal that the conceptual framework of analytical study of Holocaust literature has highlighted the problematic nature thereof. They observe that there is a Holocaust canon and Holocaust authors are documented and listed. Their aim in the collection of essays which comprises the book is:

To broaden the scope of the analysis of Holocaust literature, and to re-examine the Holocaust through this prism. (Kluge and Williams 2009:xiii)

Williams (2009) defines Holocaust literature as:

The localized, yet international, corpus of literary representation encompassing both fiction and non-fiction, that evokes, describes, or tries to come to grips with the events, experience, and/or after-effects of the Final Solution. (Williams 2009, in Kluge and Williams (eds) 2009:231)

He explains it is localised because many Jews, victims and survivors, recorded their personal, localised experience, describing what they knew best, without, he states, the contextualisation of hindsight and historical research. Also, it is international because he says the victims of the Final Solution originated from nearly every country in Europe, and spoke nearly all European languages. Post-war, some survivors remained, some returned to their homes, millions of refugees immigrated to the Americas, Australia and the newly-founded state of Israel. Thus, when they did record their experiences and reflections, they did so in a variety of international languages.

Explaining fiction and non-fiction, Williams informs that Holocaust literature includes personal narratives, diaries, testimonies, memorial books, comic books, graphic novels, screenplays, poems, plays, short stories, and novels. He says that both Holocaust fiction and autobiographical narrative can provide clear examples of moral complexities, insight often impossible to find in traditional documentation.

Williams observes that:

Holocaust literature, like memory itself is not static. (Williams 2009:239, in Kluge and Williams 2009)

He cites Roskie's five-phase periodisation for the cumulative process of creating public memory through Holocaust literature; wartime memory (1938-1945); communal memory (1945-1960); displaced memory (1960-1978); personalised memory (1978-1991); and essential memory (1991-present). Williams states there are strong cultural parallels between the First World War and the Second in terms of the prevalence of first hand narratives, the creation of a generational consciousness, and the methods of commemorating each conflict in public memory.

It is Williams himself who has compiled and published an international bibliography of Holocaust literature, admitting it is not an exhaustive list. Working on the assumption that different researchers have different needs, the bibliography of Holocaust literature is divided into five sections. The first is meant to orient the reader, says Williams, by providing a list of reference works. The second section contains personal Holocaust narratives including diaries, testimonies, letters, memoirs, and autobiographies. The third and fourth section are; Holocaust drama and Holocaust poetry, both self-explanatory. The fifth section on Holocaust fiction is, says Williams, a tricky grouping because thousands of novels employ the Holocaust as a setting or plot device, but do not grapple

with the larger historical issues of the Final Solution. The titles in this fifth section Williams assures, are more engaged with the subject.

It is in this fifth section that John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* is listed (Williams 2009:363, in Kluge and Williams 2009). The fact that it is listed by an acknowledged Holocaust scholar endows the novel with a certain gravitas, because as Williams definition makes clear:

Titles in this section are more engaged with the subject. (Williams 2009:246, in Kluge and Williams 2009)

This pre-supposes that this novel, representing the Final Solution of the Holocaust, has something of worth and value to offer its reader, about children and their view of the world of adults, that speaks to children and adults, reader and scholar alike. *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* was first published in the UK in January 2006, it is John Boyne's fourth novel, yet his first for children. Reynolds *et al* (2001) term it a crossover book, because it crosses the boundary between children's fiction and adult fiction; it is a children's book that is read by adults.

### **The Critics**

Almost immediately *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* received mixed reviews. It was seen as a difficult book, not really suitable for nine year olds and offering the reader adult themes. To date, the novel has sold over five million copies worldwide. Reaching number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list, it has also been the best selling book of the year in Spain in 2007 and 2008, as well as in the UK, Ireland and Australia. It has been translated into forty different languages, with four more forthcoming. There are five audio editions, and two illustrated editions forthcoming.

Reviewing the novel favourably in *The Guardian* (*The Guardian*, Saturday 21 January 2006), Kathryn Hughes says the strength of Bruno's narrative is mired in the parochial preoccupations of a nine year old. She sees the metaphor of Bruno's innocence as standing for the wilful refusal of all adult Germans to see what was going on under their noses in the first half of the 1940's. Kate Kellaway (*The Observer*, Sunday January 8 2006) questions whether the holocaust is a suitable bedtime story for children, saying it is aimed at anyone sophisticated enough to understand it. Though she acknowledges the

story and the ending are harrowing, her reaction was ambivalent, claiming the holocaust as a subject insists on respect, precludes criticism, insists on silence. Nicholas Tucker, writing in *The Independent*, (*The Independent*, Friday 13 January 2006), is in favour of the novel, observing it is as much a parable as a realistic story, plainly and sometimes archly written. Although Bruno is more innocent than seems likely, oblivious to the truth of what he witnesses, he concludes that the novel is a fine addition to children's literature, to a once taboo area of history. Not surprisingly, *The Irish Times* journalist, Shane Hegarty gives a favourable review, but asks the question, when is a children's book for children, or rather, when is a children's book also written for adults? He says that best-selling examples of the adult world being viewed through children's eyes remind the reader that the child's voice is the common voice, because it is a language we all once spoke. He continues that it allows its subject to be seen in an original light. He observes that Bruno does not see something utterly wicked, but only children he could be playing with and people who lie down and do not get up. He applauds the fact that Boyne ensures for both the reader and Bruno, the horror is not wholly revealed until the end, and declares it is book that lingers in the mind for quite some time, and is a subtle, calculatedly simple and moving story, for any age.

Elena Seymenliyska, writing in *The Telegraph* (*Telegraph* 16 April 2006) is very critical describing the narrative as disingenuous, claiming it proceeds in a faux-naïve vein. She asserts there is something exploitative about *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* because it requires a reader who is either ignorant of modern European history, and so will get a nasty shock at the end, without understanding what has happened, or one who is willing to play along with the conceit, and must suspend disbelief at the idea of a commandant's son who has no idea about the Nazis. She concludes that a child reading about Auschwitz deserves a less contrived setup.

Ed Wright reviewing in the e. journal *theage.com* also says that Boyne's holocaust childhood fable prompts difficult questions. He describes it as a touching tale of an odd friendship in horrendous circumstances, that serves as a reminder of man's capacity for inhumanity. He observes the puns of Fury (Fuhrer) and Outwith (Auschwitz) which he feels no adult reader would have any trouble deciphering. Regarding the actual writing, he claims there is initial tonal clunkiness, where he feels he can hear the author thinking how

do I write as a child, then the story becomes an effortless read that puts the reader directly into Bruno's world view. He states it is elegant story-telling with emotional impact and an ending that in true fairytale style is grotesquely clever. He concludes that as part of the fable, Boyne uses Bruno to reveal flaws in the adult world.

Reviewing the unabridged audio book version of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, Carole Mansur (*The Telegraph* 27 August 2006) repeats the back cover warning that it is not a story for nine year olds, yet acknowledges there are no depictions of horror in what she describes as a quiet but powerful fable. At first she likens the Berlin household to William Brown's, ( of Richmal Crompton's *Just William* ) but perceives that with the relocation to Auschwitz, the story moves into a different key. She concludes that Bruno's innocence of what is really going on remains intact until the end, but for the reader, waiting for him to lose that innocence creates suspense and an almost unbearable poignancy.

By contrast, Sue Arnold, writing for *The Guardian* ( *The Guardian* 21 October 2006) about the same audio version is critical, saying how far the reader is prepared to go along with Bruno's ingenuous version of Auschwitz depends on how high the reader rates the intelligence and curiosity of nine year old boys. She asserts there is something distinctly distasteful about the basic premise of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* which shamelessly distorts reality to suit the storyline. She complains that if Boyne's aim was to view a taboo subject from a child's point of view - he fails. Her damning conclusion is that boys will be boys, but *Just William* and genocide do not mix.

Despite its mixed reception by the critics, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* started to win awards, such as The Bisto Book of the Year 2007. The Bisto Book of the Year began in 1990, leading to the establishment of The Irish Children's Book Trust, later to become Children's Books Ireland and is the most prestigious award for children's literature in Ireland. Further awards in March 2007 are the Tubridy Show Listener's Choice Award and the senior category winner in the Dublin Airport Authority Irish Children's Book of the Year title. Michelle Pauli (*The Guardian* 21 November 2006) discussing the nominations for the 2006 Carnegie medal, the UK's most prestigious children's literary award, found *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* an interesting inclusion, saying it has a love-it –or-loathe-it naivety that divided the critics.

The film of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* was released in 2008.

**Alexander** (2008), writing in *The Use Of English* (59,2 2008:127-139), discusses teaching with holocaust narratives, citing among others *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. She proposes the view that, though the arguments both for and against narrative representation of the holocaust are powerful and worthy of respect, it is

The dialogue around these matters is in itself of value, and can be the English teacher's contribution to the educational task, in relation to comprehending the incomprehensible Final Solution. ( Alexander 59,2 2008:127-139)

She observes that the technique of muted suggestion is the principal feature of the narrative, and the reader has to infer the context of the holocaust, as he experiences the world of the story through the innocent eye of the child. Humour arises, says Alexander, at Bruno's persistent misunderstanding of what happens around him. The novel is told by a third person objective narrator, and is subtitled 'a fable' so that the reader learns from it. Alexander explains that a fable is a brief tale that conveys a moral lesson. She emphasises how this novel's strategy is to place historical reality between the lines, so that the holocaust remains fictionally unimagined, but the reader has to work to fill the gaps and make the connections that the story meaning. In this way, the act of reading becomes a process of education.

Referring to the end, Alexander reveals that Bruno's total lack of awareness combined with the knowledge the reader brings to the story, make the final pages into the most horrifying, bleak, unforgettable and harrowing ending that any book could have. The gas chambers and the holocaust, she observes, are placed in the realm of the unimaginable, in the place 'between the lines' that is no place except at the edge of the reader's mind, and the reader confronts the meaning of the ending only as they understand it within their own mind and not as mediated to them by words on a page.

She also says that the novel requires a fairly considerable suspension of disbelief, and this makes it vulnerable at this point. However, she feels it is worth the risk, because the structural irony of the book serves to impress the reader with a shocked sense of their knowingness compared with Bruno's innocence, since the reader is in the position of realising the horror that is unfolding yet is helpless to thwart the massacre of the innocents. She adds that for the fable to work at all and for the ending to have its awful impact, the novel is dependent on there being a complete disjunction between the child's and the adult's world. Explicit references are literally blurred – Outwith and Fury – and

the setting is an anonymised fabular place that is ‘nasty looking’, the reader is left to interpret the more sinister meaning of ‘low huts and large square buildings dotted around one or two smoke stacks in the distance’ (p.32) But to read *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* at the naïve level is to miss the moral purpose and to share Bruno’s fatal inability to make sense of what he often finds obscure, says Alexander, for its effects to be realised the reader must have sufficient historical awareness to read the real story that is told in the novel’s lacunae.

Violence is omitted by not being recounted, Lieutenant Kotler’s attack (p.148) on the Jewish doctor Pavel, is not described so that the focus switches to the onlookers, complicit in their failure to intervene.

Bruno, through his rule-bound existence, creates a space within which he confines himself, preserving a distance from the insane chaos of the holocaust. The process of the novel is of real meanings gradually emerging for Bruno, and, with him, for the reader. *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* depends on the reader filling in the meaning in order to make sense of it.

The ending is overpowering because right to the end Boyne does not flinch in recording the facts of the holocaust.

According to Alexander, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* belongs to the genre of *bildungsroman* and as such, is not only about the development of Bruno, but also contributes to the education of the reader. She cites Bartrop:

The minimum age to expose children to Holocaust literature would, it is generally recognised, be about twelve or thirteen; Holocaust museums in Australia and the United States rarely accept school groups below the age of fourteen (Bartrop 1994:141, cited in Alexander in *The Use of English* 59:2 2009:134)

She feels this dark phase of history is essential knowledge for *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* to deliver its full impact because the facts need to be known first to permit adequate reading between the lines, and the teacher of English knows how best to assist this process.

In *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, says Alexander, the personal power of the story for readers derives from the necessity of their active involvement in completing the meaning by discerning what is unsaid. Generally what is left unsaid are the most horrific facts, so that the moral imagination has to process internally what is deemed unsayable.

Obviously, this presupposes a certain level of general knowledge about the holocaust but, where that exists or is sensitively revealed by a teacher the shock of recognition can be intense.

This echoes her principle argument that holocaust literature narratives should be read in the English classroom so that young people are exposed to the discussions they invoke- which may be of the story's inadequacy. In conclusion, she declares that, out of deference for the youthful reader a story may diminish and sanitise historical reality by distortion or deception, or by being facilely redemptive and consolatory, (as Charles observes).

However, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* makes a virtue of silence about the holocaust by turning it into an intentional strategy of narration, providing teachers of English with the means of stimulating ethical reflection in the classroom on historical fact and on human behaviour.

### **ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

Respondents read *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne, providing a link between them, and were invited to discuss the novel under six broad questions, which were:

- i) Consideration of the narrative voice?
- ii) Imagining the reading audience?
- iii) Own personal impressions?
- iv) Response to the language?
- v) Suitability of this subject matter for literature?
- vi) What is the author teaching the reader?

By asking these questions of the participants I aimed to draw out responses that went deeper than just discussion of the story line. I was expecting them to create some meaning from the novel, and I wanted to uncover what that meaning might be, and the question about what the author was teaching the reader would allow that to occur. I wanted to see if they connected with Bruno and Shmuel, and how, and the question about the narrative voice would do that. The question about the response to the language was expected to reveal how and to what extent participants engaged with the language of the novel and the world it described. The question asking participants to consider who the readership of the

novel might be is aimed at provoking discussions about who reads what books, and to try and challenge assumptions about what children and adults read. Similarly, the question about whether the Holocaust is a suitable subject for literature was expected to offer the participants the opportunity to explore the role of literature in challenging accepted views and constructing differing attitudes and values. Overall the questions were designed to allow the participants to engage in a literary discussion, and the questions gave them the technical vocabulary to use.

These questions were written on the frontispiece of the book so that the respondents knew before starting reading what they would be expected to respond to, after reading. Two respondents, Henry and Arthur, arrived at *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas* interview with typed prepared notes. Edward, Charles and William held the book and referred to the questions in the frontispiece. In their responses to *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* the respondents focused on very similar features of the novel. These ways of discussing the novel may be called themes. The recurrent themes of the discussions were; **personal responses, characterization, language, structure, the readership, and writer's teachings.**

Edward immediately observes that the novel presents the reader with the authorial stance. *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas* is John Boyne's perception of...all of the things that happened in the holocaust, the atrocities that happened and the different perspectives it's seen from, the narrative voice is Bruno the boy in it. The big question, who is the boy in the Striped Pyjamas I s'pose could be every single Jewish person who was killed in the holocaust, everybody's perception in the future of what really happened there, to come to terms with six million people dying is quite a difficult thing for most people to think about, and really imagine. So, using *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* as an example is quite a good medium to sort of, speak to everyone. So the narrative voice, obviously it's from a young boy's perspective, the language is.

He observes the use of the narrative voice as the character of Bruno. 'the different perspectives it's seen from, the narrative voice is Bruno the boy in it'

He summarises the novel's purpose, 'the holocaust' and 'the atrocities' as genocide and mass murder. He identifies that the title is symbolic, and the boy, Shmuel, dressed in striped pyjamas is representative of all Jewish people who died, and all others who died similarly. '*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* I s'pose could be every single Jewish person who was killed in the holocaust.' He is sensitive to the uncomfortable disturbing subject matter. To come to terms with six million people dying is quite a difficult thing for most people to think about, and really imagine.

He perceives that the novel offers learning opportunities for its readership. 'So, using *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* as an example is quite a good medium to sort of, speak to everyone.' Lastly, in his opening summary, Edward comments on the language. 'Obviously it's from a young boy's perspective, the language is,'

Edward offers insights into the character of Bruno.

He's nine so, almost self centred, but at nine I mean you don't really think about other people's feelings. He becomes friends with one of the boys from the other side, he does not know they're any different, I mean, he's just nonchalant almost to the whole thing that's going on. He does not really understand. I mean, there's a big fence and loads of people over there but, you know, uh that's alright I'm gonna go and play on the swing, cut my knee open.

He understands Bruno well, because he realises that Boyne has created a character of limited understanding, with limited resources to describe the world around him; and through this character Boyne creates the questions in the novel that fire the reader.

You don't understand that the man doing his washing up is, you know, a doctor, a physician, and he's just like, ah he's the just guy, you know, who cooks for us. But why is there a doctor doing the washing up? Don't matter to a nine year old, but to any body else reading it, you're like, that's disgusting isn't it? That someone with that expertise is being reduced to peeling potatoes, just because of their, their beliefs, their...Jewism.

Edward comments on how the use of the words 'Fury' and 'Outwith' create literary effects.

Oh because, because then it's sort of, you know showing that, he [Bruno] doesn't know what they are. He [the author] doesn't want to give it straight away. He [the author] he does to anybody...reading it, but you know it's showing from his [Bruno's] perspective and he doesn't know what these things ['Fury' and 'Outwith'] particularly are. Especially in the future, when you say Auschwitz to any body they know what's going on. Or the Fuhrer, they automatically think Hitler. The boy does not think this, he thinks: a bloke, a place.

He perceives that the writer's technique is to have the reader work things out for himself. He [the author] doesn't want to give it straight away. He [the author] does to anybody...reading it, but you know it's showing from his [Bruno's] perspective and he doesn't know what these things ['Fury' and 'Outwith'] particularly are.

Edward judges that Bruno is convincing as a character because he takes everything on face value.

You say Auschwich to any body they know what's going on, or the Fuhrer, they automatically think Hitler. The boy does not think this, he thinks: a bloke, a place.

Edward draws attention to the lack of comprehension of events of Bruno. Equally, he observes his innocence.

From an innocence point of view, I think, it shows you know two completely different situations and, how they...collide, if you like. From like just a little boy who doesn't really understand what's going on then, to, cos, if he understood that these people were, in their eyes, the Fury's eyes, evil, and to be dispensed with. He didn't see it like that, he just thought, you know well they're people I'm on my own, and you know, he needs escapism, he needs a friend.

Focusing on the child Bruno's natural desire for company and friendship, Edward articulates how the novel explores the meeting of, the evil of war with the innocence of the child. Edward discusses whether the novel is a children's book.

I suppose it is written from the perspective of a child which lots of children's books are, but I think it's for everybody. I don't think it matters it's children.

Edward sees the novel as having universal appeal, and the age of the two main protagonists as no barrier to enjoyment or comprehension. He suggests it has a strong teaching message.

It could be given to children in schools to make them learn about the atrocities that happened, and I suppose they can empathise more with the characters. I mean I remember being nine but I can't remember feeling that strongly about anything. But I remember having friends and them being, you know, friends and you'd sort of do anything for them and I suppose that was what Bruno does at the end. You know, tries to go and help him find his dad. Unfortunately it ends pretty terribly.

He references his comments with his own memory of being nine, suggesting that nine year olds have a very slight understanding of the world. He views childhood as centred on friendship. But I remember having friends.

He perceives the end as difficult, and born out of the needs and demands of friendship.

Friends and you'd sort of do anything for them and I suppose that was what Bruno does at the end. You know, tries to go and help him find his dad. Unfortunately it ends pretty terribly.

Like Charles, he connects with the search for Shmuel's father, observing the naturalness of helping a friend find his father. Through out Edward references his own remembered experience of being nine as a way of understanding the novel.

Edward analyses what the writer is teaching the reader.

He's trying to sort of say that all this stuff happened, there's no point because everybody's pretty much the same. Stuff like this shouldn't really happen. He shows like how innocence can be mislaid. I suppose you're sympathising with everything that happened.

He perceives that the writer wants to illuminate the facts, while at the same time pointing out humanity's commonality, and corruption of the innocents. Further exploring how sympathy is evoked in the novel Edward is all encompassing.

I think the whole Jewish population, I mean, and ,well, Bruno obviously, I suppose you're sympathising with everybody in it , everybody who had to go through that, everybody, everyone, every situation to go with the holocaust, you know, it's telling you what actually happened, they're in this camp, and they don't know, really particularly, know what has happened, and he said they're going for a shower, and suddenly they, they weren't really alive any more.

Via sympathy, Edward grasps the full horror of what every person experienced.

I think the whole Jewish population, I mean, and ,well, Bruno obviously, I suppose you're sympathising with everybody in it , everybody who had to go through that, everybody, everyone, every situation to go with the holocaust.

Edward observes that by suffering the same fate as the Jews, Bruno is Jewish.

In an understated manner he conveys gas chamber death as both inhuman, and an act of betrayal.

They're in this camp, and they don't know, really particularly, know what has happened, and he [a guard] said they're going for a shower, and suddenly they, they weren't really alive any more.

Edward feels pity for Bruno.

He was only trying to help. He was doing what he thought was the right thing to do. He was trying to help his friend. And, yeh, everybody can sort of empathise with that, you know, you try and help people, sometimes it gets you in a lot of trouble, as Bruno found out.

Through empathy Edward identifies with Bruno in his devotion to his friendship, because he realises that the needs of a friend can sometimes be paramount in a life. He also recognises the spontaneity of the young who act on impulse out of a sense of adventure, and the consequences of being caught.

In common with all the respondents, Edward has some sympathy for Bruno's father.

Yes I suppose I did. I mean you...he's in charge of something which is wholly disgustingly, terrible, and then I suppose, I don't want to use the word 'just deserts', cos, but, I mean, no, it's just another life isn't it? It doesn't, it shouldn't 've been happening so...the irony, I suppose it's ironic that he...that all these people that mean nothing to him, and then the one person who

means a lot to him, and the same thing happened to him, so it's sort of...He goes a bit nuts, yeh.

Edward observes the confusing response to Bruno's father. He does feel sympathy for him, but acknowledges that rough justice has been served, because he receives his 'just deserts'. Edward especially perceives the irony of Bruno's father getting what he dealt out. The irony, I suppose it's ironic that he...that all these people that mean nothing to him, and then the one person who means a lot to him, and the same thing happened to him.

Edwards final comment on Bruno's father is again understated.

He goes a bit nuts, yeh.

Here Edwards sees that Bruno's father goes insane. It is a further irony because the death camp Commandant is unhinged by the death of his son in the gas chamber, yet has remained unmoved by the deaths of thousands of Jews.

**William's** reflections are mature thoughts because his initial response to the book is aversion.

I had to re evaluate my first thoughts on it because, as I say, when I first read it I had this sort of snobbish feeling towards it because I thought it was a kid's book.

Indeed, his perception of what the book was going to be, was conveyed by the title.

I thought it was going to be a book about some kid having an adventure while his parents are asleep.

Then he does the thing one should never do; he read the back of the book. Not surprisingly he is disappointed.

I'd read on the back *The Independent* wrote it "*Stays just ahead of its readers before delivering its killer punch in the final stages*, and I, all the way through I, I kinda, hadn't actually felt that

He had a clear understanding of the setting of the book and predicted the end.

It felt like I knew it was coming, by page thirty I already knew, pretty much where they were and what was going on.

He acknowledges the intellectual pleasure of the reading and its profound effect on him.

I enjoyed it...it's actually left such a lingering impression on my mind.

The end of the novel is a sad and moving scene for William, his disjointed sentences strongly convey his engaged emotions, as he describes the horror of the deaths of Bruno

and Shmuel.

That, just that very final impression of him going into the chamber and holding the other boys hand, and it being..I..you don't know if it's a good thing or a bad thing, I mean, if they've finally been united, as friends, and then they die that way, and that's kind've like..he doesn't know they're gonna die, he doesn't know they're dying, so that's alright. It's.. if you die and you don't know you're dying that's kind'f okay, isn't it? But, but, yeh, obviously it's a tragedy, so that's what stayed with me.

William identifies with Bruno and Shmuel here. He understands the importance of friendship for young boys, yet the adult in him is saddened by the naivety of the children as they stumble into death's embrace. He further elaborates on the tensions within him generated by his ability to predict the outcome.

I knew, knew that was going to happen, or I knew there was a tragedy brewing, I I didn't know that exactly was going to happen, but I just, I I thought, I knew, I knew he was going to go to the other side of the fence, and I..I thought, he was going to get taken off somewhere and, I don't know, shot or something, I don't know, I just thought that he was going to get found on that other side of the fence and wasn't going to get back, he was going to be stuck there. I think that's it, I think I just thought he was going to get stuck there, and his parents weren't going to be able to recognise him , or something. And it did, and it slowly happens, yes yes yes. But it was.. I should not have been like that with it, because that was...strangled me before I had a chance.

He reluctantly senses death will be victorious. 'I knew there was a tragedy brewing.' He realises the fence will be bridged somehow, 'I knew he was going to go to the other side of the fence.' He invents scenarios different from the very one he knows, from the teachings of history, will happen.

I just thought that he was going to get found on that other side of the fence and wasn't going to get back, he was going to be stuck there. I think that's it, I think I just thought he was going to get stuck there.

He perceives that Bruno will change, 'and his parents weren't going to be able to recognise him.' (Because he is dressed in striped pyjamas to be with Shmuel, and his father shaved his head because of nits.)

He understands the gradual nature of the impending tragedy, which creates tension for the reader and it slowly happens. Finally, he is so engaged with the reading that he dies a small death himself in sympathy for these boys, small boys like he was once himself. 'I should not have been like that with it, because that was...strangled me before I had a chance.'

He strongly illustrates the power of this novel to portray tragedy, especially the end.

William ponders on the writer's teaching points and reports it could be a number of things.

Is it not just a lesson, another lesson, on the tragedy of war time, but written from a different perspective, or is it supposed to be, some sort of analogy for something else? I don't know, metaphor for something else.

He understands that the novel works on a number of levels as 'lesson', 'analogy' and 'metaphor'.

Though the plot unravels slowly, the speed of the narrative maintains a high interest level, 'the pace was pretty quick...it needs to be engaging, and so the pace is fast enough to keep you on top.'

Discussing the narrative voice of the book as Bruno, William observes the simplicity of the language, 'It's obviously written with smaller more manageable words.' He comments that reading the novel through the eyes of a child of nine is a powerful writing technique.

That's obviously like the point of the book, that's why. That's why it hits well because it's it puts you back into a child's mind... Er, I like that actually, you only hear, get the information that a nine year old would processes.

He observes how the language creates effects, discussing the malapropisms Bruno uses saying,

They'd kind of disguised the words, with the child, Bruno's child's versions of words. Yes, words like 'outwith' and 'the fury', 'the fury'...er...obviously it's that...the way he kind of childised those words is done to, not only to back up the way it's written, the narrative voice, but to maybe throw you off. If it is designed to be, what's the word, sort of, to conceal the real word behind it, that was a giveaway straight away. If it was only to back up the narrative voice it was a very good way of doing it. Right, okay, well, I don't get the distancing thing, because every time I read the word 'outwith' I just thought 'Auschwitz'.

William uses the word 'childised', perceptively and appropriately to describe how the writer has used language to transform two hateful realities, the 'Fuhrer' and 'Auschwitz' into sayable words, the 'Fury' and 'Outwith'. He also notes the limited world Bruno's view of life gives the reader,

the nine year old's voice...you do build up a picture of them [characters] but it's not like the fullest picture in the world, but then that's probably the perception of characters you have as a nine year old. It's well done because it's supposed to be in Bruno's mind.

Here, he understands that characters and situations are only partially portrayed to convey the naivety of Bruno. Also the unclear, 'not the fullest picture' that Bruno's view of life gives the reader makes the reader understand the nature of Bruno's unclear,

misunderstood world, a world he is trying to understand and come to terms with.

William questions the readership of the novel.

Whose it written for? Specifically, what age group was it written for? Where do they put it in the shops?

William comments on the sense of confusion that the ending brings for the reader.

Yeh, it's just the...it's just the...that final thing where he goes into the chamber, that's all it is. It's that feeling towards the father and mother, I don't know if she's still with him, or, I don't know what the word is but you're so satisfied, that they got their come-uppance by losing their son through it. That's, it's a really weird sense of, what's the word I'm looking for?

Satisfaction, it's a weird sense of satisfaction at their loss, because of what they're doing. Even though you can kind of sympathise with them, as well because they have to be there, because they don't really have a choice.

He acknowledges that the end of the novel offers varied and contradictory feeling for the reader. He has already noted it as a sad and moving scene, however now he is detailing how for him a certain amount of vengeance is delivered on the parents for their part in the holocaust.

That final thing where he goes into the chamber, it's that feeling towards the mother and father, I don't know what the word is, but you're so satisfied that they got their come uppance by losing their son through it, because of what they're doing. It's a weird sense of satisfaction at their loss.

Despite identifying the parents as unpleasant characters, he is also able to sympathise with them 'Even though you can kind of sympathise with them.' He even offers compulsion as an extenuating circumstance, 'because they don't really have a choice.'

Again with William it is the end he references when discussing whether the book is suitable for nine year olds.

It's a bit of a heavy ending isn't it?

Here William is suggesting the deaths at the end are too close to the reader who has empathised with Bruno and Shmuel throughout, and that death is too sad and final for an ending. He urges an older readership.

I think maybe they should be allowed to develop emotionally enough to take it in properly.

He feels the powerful ending could have detrimental effects on a young reader.

It's easier to deal with that when you're a bit older, and you're not going to have sleepless nights and wet the bed. If you see what I mean, I don't know if I'd want a nine year old child of mine to read it, because I wouldn't want to distress them to that extent, until they actually were able to deal with it.

The young man in William wants to protect imagined nine year olds, not least his own imagined son, from a novel that he as an adult found upsetting. Nevertheless he feels other should read it.

Yes I would actually. I would recommend it to someone as a...quick read, and, as something that will actually stay with you for a while, definitely, yeh.

His consistent response to the novel is that it is a worthy read, and one that leaves a lasting impression, however uncomfortable.

When discussing *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, **Henry**'s emotional engagement with the novel was frustration. Criticising its lack of historical accuracy, he says, 'there were some glaring inaccuracies'. With practical pragmatism he establishes the socio-historic context himself,

The perimeter fence of Auschwitz was electrified, so there was no way he (Bruno) could have crawled under. Another inaccuracy was, even at nine years old, Bruno would have been indoctrinated into the Hitler youth, even more so given his father's rank...he would've understood that Shmuel wasn't someone he should be talking to.

He makes a plea for historical realism as a mechanism for showing rather than suggesting in a literary text.

It has to be accurate in order not to instill any false ideas in people..what the holocaust was,...there's no real ghastliness in it, it just describes the people as being behind a fence...the worst it goes is how Shmuel looks, very thin and skinny...I don't think it illustrates well enough how horrific that period of time was...even when they go to the gas chambers.

Even though Henry rejects this literary work as not being 'credible fiction', in pondering on it, the development of very serious thinking arises, as he questions the text and its purposes, 'But should a nine year old fully appreciate the atrocities that went on?' This is a philosophical question presented in a rhetorical statement inferring that the answer must be 'no'.

In response to the death of Bruno, he claims emotional detachment, 'I was sort of indifferent to it. I didn't feel sorry for him', yet moralises as he implies that protecting children is a thing of value saying 'should he (Bruno) have been there in the first place...and I mean should he have been kept an eye on a bit more?' In questioning the text, he poses other moral questions and judges the events of the novel by the attitudes and values of the present time, reflecting a post-Madeline McCann attitude to child supervision, and his work in the London Ambulance Service. Interestingly, he acknowledges that, had he not

correctly predicted the end, the death of Bruno would have been traumatic for a reader not able to predict the end.

I kind of anticipated what was going to happen, so I was kind of prepared for that, but I think if one hadn't, hadn't of anticipated it, I think yes, it would have been a shock.

A paramedic does not use the word 'shock' lightly, he is suggesting that the tragic death of Bruno would be a metaphorical trauma for a reader not able to completely predict the end, which, from my teaching experience, would be the average nine year old. Tears would be a legitimate response to this work of literature.

Henry is still able to dismiss his own complaints about the novel in constructing a meaning based on the nature of the child,

It was just glaring inaccuracies in it that sort of made me think that none of this would have happened, but maybe that perhaps is not the point of the book, because it was trying to demonstrate...a child's oblivion, obliviousness to sort of, social discrimination at that age, and their...inability to understand that sort of concept, and their sort of ...innate, in a way, their innate sort of, sense of fairness, that was represented through that book.

Here he raises the question of what happens to the innocence of childhood, implying a tension between the essential godliness of the child and the evils of the world.

In answer to the question 'What do you think the author was trying to teach the reader?', he engages philosophically with the novel, drawing out what he thinks the authorial teaching is, based on his own Christian upbringing and morality.

I think it's this whole innate sense of fairness that a child views the world with, and that perhaps we should all view the world as children, in a way...we may be intellectual as we get older, become more intellectual and want more, we sometimes want more at the expense of others, whereas a child's needs are fairly basic, and they can be met with things like friendship, and wanting to play, and explore...Yes, I think maybe the author is trying to teach us that we should try and view the world in a simpler way, and appreciate everyone for what they are and not perhaps what we can get out of them, or what we can make out of them.

The notion of a 'simpler way' echoes the teachings of Christ and the bible, and 'what we can make out of them' conveys a sense of the Jews as slaves and the victims of genocide.

Possibly, because Henry rigorously criticizes the historical correctness of the content of the novel, and claims a dispassionate attitude to its chief protagonist, his stance is focused on uncovering a meaning, in a book that at first seems merely inaccurate.

**Charles** perceives the novel in biblical terms as a teaching parable.

I think it's perhaps a lesson. I think any one who reads the book could learn from it

He also notes that the novel moves at the same speed as the thoughts of the child Bruno.

The narrative is told from a child's point of view, and as the plot progresses you're left to discover things very much at the same pace as Bruno himself does.

He perceives that in some ways the reader and Bruno are at one in uncovering an understanding of the world Bruno inhabits; what Bruno realises and understands so the reader realises and understands. Despite this narrative device which creates empathy in the reader for Bruno, Charles observes that the reader is not Bruno, but a separate being. And, where you or I would draw, start to draw conclusions quite quickly, Bruno is left with this naïve innocence that persists right the way through the novel, so you find yourself becoming further and further away from the narrative voice, as we ourselves grow up, away from childhood's view on life that we would have had, and I think that echoes true for everybody, and I think everyone can appreciate that.

Charles sees that Bruno's 'naïve innocence' is a barrier to his understanding, whereas the reader has knowledge that Bruno lacks, and is able to 'start to draw conclusions quite quickly'. He reports a separation takes place between the reader and Bruno 'so you find yourself becoming further and further away from the narrative voice'. This distancing of Bruno and the reader is based on the reader's informed awareness of Bruno's situation, set against Bruno's struggle to come to terms with the alien world he has been jettisoned into, 'as we ourselves grow up, away from childhood's view on life that we would have had, and I think that echoes true for everybody, and I think everyone can appreciate that.' Charles understands that this is how both empathy and distance is created in the novel.

Charles engages emotionally with the friendship of Bruno and Shmuel.

I think as a personal response, on a personal level, what most affected me was, throughout the entire novel you have this burgeoning friendship between Shmuel and Bruno, and, not only do they find more and more in common with each other, despite the vast difference between their social positions, one's on one side of the fence, one's on the other, physically they become to resemble each other, Bruno's hair is shorn for nits, ah, they find a spare pair of pyjamas for Bruno to wear.

For Charles, 'what most affected me' is the presentation of the friendship between the two boys, it is this he engages emotionally with because as a young man he relates keenly to these nine year old boys because he was once a nine year old boy himself and he empathises especially with this aspect of being nine; having a best friend and not being lonely. He notes how the 'burgeoning' friendship is portrayed through sameness, 'Shmuel and Bruno...find more and more in common with each other'. Charles notes that Bruno and Shmuel actively seek ways to unite each other, 'vast' differences between the boys 'one's

on one side of the fence, one's on the other' are overlooked. He sees the 'fence' is no hindrance to their relationship because they do not acknowledge it in the same way as the adults in the novel do. Charles conveys the strength of the friendship when he notes that eventually, the two boys, similar but different, 'physically they become to resemble each other Bruno's hair is shorn for nits, they find a spare pair of pyjamas for Bruno to wear'. Charles understands that this physical sameness is a tangible manifestation of the depth of feeling between the two boys. In order to do the same things together, Bruno, quite used to dressing up in his grandmother's plays, dons the striped pyjamas that Shmuel wears so that he can be on the other side of the fence unnoticed; as Charles observes.

And eventually he [Bruno] visits him [Shmuel]. He squeezes under the fence to help find Shmuel's father, and in a way, it's quite interesting,

Charles analyses the nature of Bruno and Shmuel's quest.

The search for a father figure is an enigmatic one, and something used throughout literature.

He perceives that here the notion of fatherhood is both real and metaphorical.

And, throughout the novel we have Bruno having a relationship with his father, and yet, outside the family home, Bruno's father is the commandant of this concentration camp, and he is by all accounts a very evil character. And so, we have this almost fake relationship between Bruno and his father, and the loving relationship that Shmuel has with his, so the fact that they both go off looking for their respective fathers, or at least for a father figure, is a telling one. And in the end they don't find Shmuel's father they find Bruno's father and the result is horrendous, and emotionally upsetting, and, um, I don't think it's one that I would have expected reading throughout the novel, it, you know, almost, you expect to come away with a handful of petty truths and morals, and to, for an ending...so...poignant, sad and tearing was...was quite shocking.

Charles observes that Bruno's father is both the man and the office, 'and yet, outside the family home, Bruno's father is the commandant of this concentration camp.' He notes he is 'a very evil character', one who orchestrates death. Charles compares and contrasts the relationships between the boys and their respective fathers. Bruno and his father have an 'almost fake relationship' founded as it is on a sense of superiority and blind obedience. Bruno's father does not listen to Bruno's questions, he merely wants him to obey, just as he is obeying the 'Fury's' orders. Shmuel on the other hand loves his father and misses him. Bruno responds to this obvious love that Shmuel conveys for his father, and is drawn in to help Shmuel find him. As Charles observes 'so the fact that they both go off looking

for their respective fathers, or at least for a father figure, is a telling one.' Here Charles sees that what is being sought works at a metaphorical level, it is a better life, a better way of being, in fact it is the future, but of course they do not find what they seek. 'And in the end they don't find Shmuel's father they find Bruno's father'. Bruno's father here symbolises death, death and genocide, and the son of the Nazi commandant and the son of the Jewish prisoner die the same death, in the same chamber, gassed by the same gas. As Charles says,

The result is horrendous, and emotionally upsetting, and, um , I don't think it's one that I would have expected reading throughout the novel, it , you know, almost, you expect to come away with a handful of petty truths and morals, and to, for an ending...so...poignant, sad and tearing was...was quite shocking.

Charles identifies the power of the ending, using the lexical field of 'horrendous', 'upsetting', 'tearing' and 'shocking' he conveys the horror of the deaths of Bruno and Shmuel as something sacrilegious, reminiscent of the slaughter of the innocents in the Bible.

Charles elaborates on the presentation of the character of Bruno's father.

By finding Bruno's father, I mean, going in search of a father figure and finding what Bruno's father actually represented, which was death, what Bruno's father's character was actually doing, um, killing, on a massive scale, um is what I mean. And, to go from there you find, you have the realisation of the father, the realisation of death, the human element being, being imposed on death.

Charles here emphasises that death is not an intangible concept, it is a very real force in the novel, and it is not something that casually happens through fate or chance, or as part of the natural order of things. In this novel Charles understands that death is deliberate, ordered and entirely constructed and carried out by man on other men, and Bruno's father is the man who is most responsible for this genocide because he is in charge of the death camp and the means by which the deaths occur, more, he is charged, by the 'Fury', with ensuring that the deaths do occur regularly and efficiently. As Charles observes he is 'a very evil character' .

Charles also draws attention to the tension between Bruno's father, as a father, and Bruno's father as the Nazi death camp commandant by examining the novel's conclusion.

Um, in that in the final chapter, in fact where Bruno's father pieces the parts of the puzzle together, and, and discovers the little gap under the fence where his son's clothes have been found, and the realisation of what he has inadvertently, caused to happen, that he is almost

responsible for his son's death, I think, is extremely important because, we have one side of this merciless death figure, on the other side we have a father grieving for a son, and the disparity between those two characters is immense.

He notes that while the 'merciless death figure' is hateful to any reader, yet the 'father grieving for a son' inevitably stirs, however reluctantly, pity in the same reader. When Charles says 'the disparity between those two characters is immense', he is noting the complexity of even the most hateful of individual, and the tension that exist therein. Further, he pays testimony to the reader and his capacity for pity, if not forgiveness. Charles reports on the power of the language of the novel explaining how it works. I think the language also is very important, I mean er, as so often in poetry we...a single word can contain a myriad of meanings,

The two words that he reports are especially significant are 'Fury' and 'Outwith'.

We have a child, a narrative voice of a nine year old boy, and, we have Hitler coming to dinner, he can't pronounce 'Fuhrer', so he says the 'Fury'. The Fury to me is an immensely powerful poetic device, in it we have, summed up, a child's innocence, a child's misunderstanding. A view, an entire viewpoint created in a single word, and yet we also have the connotations that we as adult readers can, can bring to that. Fury is a word of anger, of..of terror, of...uncontrolled emotion, raw emotion. So, we have this child like narrative voice, misunderstanding, and then, we have our own horror, if you like, at the word fury, our own, our own response which quavers at the word fury, this is a very powerful device.

Charles shows that this seemingly simple malapropism, a feature of childhood language, does indeed contain a 'myriad of meanings' , because it details both the innocent mispronunciation of Bruno, juxtaposed with the horror, ' our own response...quavers at the word fury', that such a word engenders in the reader, who has the knowledge that Bruno lacks. The word fury comes from the Latin *furere* meaning to be mad, or rage, and also, the Furies in Greek mythology were three goddesses who punished wrong doers. Charles is suggesting that all these meanings of the word fury are implied in Bruno's mispronunciation. Charles says it is a very 'powerful device', he is showing that because the word 'Fury' fails to say 'Fuhrer', so the world of the 'Fuhrer' and all that it entailed is not actually described, and thus not actually made real for either Bruno, or the reader. Again, Charles details how the language works on the reader to create meanings and understanding beyond the mere words, as he discusses the word 'Outwith' and its purpose as a concept and motif in the novel.

Likewise, um, his misunderstanding of Auschwitz, calling it Outwith, is a, is a very

similar thing, er , out with, with out, is, is a...out with something you do not want, in with something you do. Very simply Auschwitz was a tool, a device, a way of getting rid of, of people, and ideologies that were considered to be inferior. So, very, very literally, 'outwith', out with these people, out with this nation, in with us, I think that's the same again, very very scary, from our point of view, and innocent from a child's point of view.

Discussing the readership of the novel, Charles observes that younger reader responses would differ significantly from his own adult one.

What I also find quite interesting to comprehend is the readership age. This is a fable, this is written for children to read.

Charles notes that the novel is described in the frontispiece as a 'fable'. A fable is a story that teaches a moral, and frequently uses animals as characters, to represent human characteristics. Children are familiar with fables and happily read them because they deal with unpleasant moral issues in a safe distanced way.

I've talked about my adult response to a child's narrative. Reading it as a child however, would be an extremely different scenario, I mean, you wouldn't be looking at it with the wisdom, and, age point of view that you or I have. You'd be looking, you'd be experiencing it much more closely to what Bruno's experienced, and necessarily you wouldn't have the historical background to make the links between 'Fury' and 'Fuhrer', 'Auschwitz' and 'Outwith', you would follow Bruno, literally, step by step, as...as he, as much as he knew, you would know, or the child would know.

Charles rightly realises that the child reader would lack knowledge and take the book at face value, identify with Bruno and not necessarily understand the socio-historic context. Further, he explores the value of such a book.

If you're going to tell a child about the horrendous, horrifying events...of the war, and of concentration camps, and the holocaust, then, to do it in a way that is at once, on their level, in a way, in which really doesn't spoil their innocence...you know, how do you tell a child that once upon a time, one group of people hated another group of people so much that they put hundreds of thousands of them to death? You can't say that to a child, I think, but it's important for children perhaps to know something of this, and, this probably, is the best way to do it. So, I mean, the effect it would have on had on me, reading it as a nine year old boy, I...I...wouldn't, I...I couldn't say. It is an extremely powerful book now, reading it, but to...to read it then, with a true sense of naivety, rather than...a feigned one, it would be very, very powerful indeed.

Charles acknowledges that 'it's important for children to know something of this', and he too, like Henry, raises a philosophical question, not whether to tell nine year olds about death camps like Auschwitz, but *how*. He recognises that this work of fiction allows children to be introduced to the horrors of the holocaust in a less strident form than the

historical facts themselves. He feels the book has strong emotional content, 'it's an extremely powerful book', but reading it with 'a true sense of naivety', as he imagines a child does, would not 'spoil their innocence'. For him, the novel enables the child reader to come to some understanding of the holocaust by using the eyes of a child to present it. Charles considers the suitability of the holocaust as a subject for literature, and offering no censure, decides that it is.

One could argue that any subject is suitable for literature. Literature is there to expound, to explicate, to explain, to exaggerate sometimes, on the entire world of human experience, and to rule something out as taboo or, or inappropriate is to curtail that experience. I wouldn't choose that for anything. Whether the mass murder of six million Jews is suitable for children is a very different question. However, the book itself is inoffensive in a way. It is written in an innocent, naïve voice...its blows are not hammer blows, it is subtle, it is surreptitious. I can imagine people objecting to its content and not showing it to their children. However, I do not believe it is actually unsuitable. I think, you know, the world we live in is not necessarily a good world, not necessarily a nice world. We do everything possible to shield our children from...from the reality of the world often.

He emphasizes the value of literature saying, 'literature is there to expound, explain, exaggerate...on the entire world of human experience'. He commends the style and structure of the novel as offering a gentle treatment of an evil subject, 'the book itself is inoffensive in a way. It is written in an innocent, naïve voice...its blows are not hammer blows, it is subtle, it is surreptitious.' Finally, he suggests that this understated novel offers a bridge from the naivety of childhood to the harsh realities of life, 'I think if you are going to introduce them to the reality sometimes, then this gentle, subtle, but nevertheless, this...this disturbing book would be an acceptable way to do that.' He appreciates that this novel presents a way of showing corruption to children.

**Arthur** discusses the narrative voice.

The narrative voice of the novel was very interesting, It's obvious we view the novel through a nine year old boy, Bruno, who is the main protagonist of the book. The age of the narrative voice is significant, I think, because it allows the reader to, um, view the events of the book without being, um, confined by their own knowledge of the period of the holocaust. And, so you view it as a series of events...even though you know what's going to happen at the end of the historical events of the book...you see it just as a series of events in their own right, um, but this creates a tension between the knowledge of the reader, and the knowledge of the protagonist, because obviously we know what is going to happen, and he doesn't ... and this, it drives the narrative along as well.

He perceives that, because of the narrative voice, the reader engages with the writing and goes into role as Bruno, and his extreme youth frees the reader from his own perceptions

of the holocaust. Also, after King (2006), Arthur understands that the tension in the novel is caused by an act of memory, formed between what the reader knows now, and what Bruno did not know then. This tension in the reader, who knows that Bruno is blithely exploring his way to death, contributes to the pace of the novel. Interestingly, like William, Arthur predicted another outcome for the novel, based on childhood reading.

I think as soon as the two boys meet, as a reader you, when they compare their differences, and you find out they're almost the same, very similar boys, I thought of the *The Prince and the Pauper* narrative where they swap, I thought they were going to swap roles, and Bruno was going to die in the camp, but Shmuel was gonna come out. That's what I thought as I was reading.

From the outset Arthur sees the two boys, German and Jewish, completely different in the context of the novel, as the same and interchangeable, able to pass off as each other convincingly.

Like all respondents, Arthur finds the use of the malapropisms essential to an understanding of Bruno's mental state.

You've got the repetition of phrases which I think emphasises the youth of the boy voice, such as, 'Outwith', and the 'Fury' which obviously for the reader...are references to Auschwitz and the Fuhrer. So they are quite key because, it pinpoints the...lack of...comprehension of the boy, and, ...to the reader, I think it distances, 'Outwith' and 'The Fury', sort of distances, from the events, a little bit...because you're not saying Auschwitz or Fuhrer...so he does not understand what his father's view means or what they're even there for really.

He, like Charles, understands that by not actually saying the words 'Auschwitz' and 'Fuhrer' Bruno is not actually constructing the reality of the place, or the person, and in this way, the author presents the naivety of the boy, and shows his understanding to be very limited.

Arthur shows how connections are made between the boys, and how important the relationship between Bruno and Shmuel is for the novel, as each is compelled to relocate.

I mean he doesn't like moving from Berlin anyway, and moving from his house, from Berlin to the camp, and in that way he empathises with...Shmuel, um because he's had to move from somewhere, from his home as well to be in the camp, so, in that way he's sort of imprisoned there at Outwith with Shmuel.

Arthur identifies a major theme of the novel, imprisonment, and shows that though technically free, Bruno is imprisoned by his father's evil work, and Shmuel though technically confined, is free to make friends. Bruno's empathy for Shmuel and their friendship, as Arthur suggests, frees them both because they are both boys in it together.

Arthur offers the relationship between Bruno and Shmuel as an ideal for human relations.

I think that...the relationship between the two boys...is quite central...his sort of views are quite fluid, Bruno, because he...on one hand like mirrors his fathers views, and when they talk, when he's...talking on either side of the fence they...whereas in the...outside events, the people in the camp eventually get exterminated, when Shmuel's talking to Bruno, they just agree to disagree. Their sort of way of working out their problems is ultimately better than that which the Germans are using to stamp out the Jewish problem.

He observes that the friendship of the boys points the way of unity in a divisive situation and how in their innocence, the boys offer a model of tolerance and restraint as a template for all human intercourse. 'When Shmuel's talking to Bruno, they just agree to disagree. Their sort of way of working out their problems is ultimately better than that which the Germans are using to stamp out the Jewish problem.'

Arthur identifies another theme in the novel, centred in the character of Bruno, exploring.

Bruno is set up through the book as an explorer, he likes to explore. He liked to explore his house in Berlin, and he likes to have adventures like any other typical boy, I suppose. And so, he likes to explore the Out...Outwith, and um, he explored the world on the other side of the fence, which I think is key because it...I think that hints to the fact that he's actually breaking down the barriers between the Jews and the, and the German occupiers. He's actually understanding of the people rather than...sort of...just trying to exterminate them.

Arthur grasps that the theme of exploration is important for the novel on both a physical and metaphorical level. On the one hand it allows Bruno to move about his environment, yet also he is mapping out in his mind and through his relationship with Shmuel what it is that this world, of 'Outwith', holds. He is not actually challenging any barriers, because he sees no barriers, his very youth and naivety just accept Shmuel as another boy, and a potential friend. For Bruno, unlike the reader, there is no reason why he and Shmuel cannot be friends. As Arthur says, 'He's actually understanding of people rather than...just trying to exterminate them'. Ultimately Shmuel is Bruno's only friend as

Arthur observes.

They've come to be friends, even though there's this...fence between them, also the differences between their two cultures, but...throughout the book, when Bruno thinks of his friend, he thinks of his three friends from his house in Berlin, and then...at the very end he realises, they're not...they've been superceded by his relationship with Shmuel.

What Arthur identifies here is the difference in social relations in the ordered life of the city, Berlin, and disordered state of human relations in the concentration camp. In Berlin, Bruno's three friends are equal to him in social status, they can only be friends with each

other. In 'Outwith', Bruno is beyond the reach of the social niceties of Berlin, he is in an uncivilised place where no rules apply, and so, natural curiosity and feelings take over, he makes more effort with Shmuel because he always has to visit him. Eventually, each day is about getting through schoolwork so that he can visit Shmuel, so Arthur is quite correct when he says, 'When Bruno thinks of his three friends in Berlin...at the very end he realise they're not...they've been superceded by his relationship with Shmuel'.

Arthur further reports on Bruno's naivety and its function in the novel.

I think it's quite important that Bruno has a sort of idealised view of what's going on on the other side of the fence that they're all kicking back and playing games and you know it's basically like, like on his side of the fence. But, but they're all together, and he's quite jealous of the, of the other side, of his, of Schmuel, hundreds of boys on the other side that he could play with.

The child's perception of life as one long opportunity for play is noted by Arthur, and he realises that this attitude of Bruno's creates irony by engaging the emotions of the reader, via empathy, and heightening the tension. The adult in Arthur, without contradiction, criticises the child Bruno.

And like, he took Shmuel food, but then he'd eat it on the way. He didn't realise, if he'd realised he was seriously malnourished, he'd have given him the food.

The very innocence and naivety that makes Bruno praiseworthy, is seen by Arthur as a fault, but for Bruno, taking food to Shmuel is no different than taking stale bread to feed the ducks, inevitably some of the bread, stale or not, gets eaten by the child and not fed to the ducks, or in this case given to Shmuel. If Bruno had the knowledge to understand that Shmuel was seriously malnourished, then he would have understood why he was the other side of the fence and he would never have made friends with him at all, let alone fed him. Bruno's careless, carefree eating of the food for Shmuel, en route, so exactly what a child would do, is wholly unacceptable to Arthur who feels he *ought not to have eaten the food*. Arthur wants Bruno to be more saintly than he is. Similarly, Arthur likens the actions of Bruno to that of Peter denying Christ in the New Testament.

I mean, like when Shmuel turned up in his kitchen, he like said he'd never even seen him. That's like biblical, like Peter denied Christ. I didn't feel sympathy for Bruno then.

Arthur accuses Bruno of an act of betrayal, but again Bruno's reaction is the action of a child faced with the overwhelming authority of an adult, he does not understand why he must say he does not know Shmuel, but everything in Kotler's aggressive interrogations

tells Bruno he must deny knowledge of Shmuel. The very innocence and naivety that makes him praiseworthy as a character also makes him unreliable and sinful, in short, it makes him human and convincing. These responses of Arthur's are consistent with his academic study which is focused on how Global Issues *ought* to be managed, where he strives to marry the ideal with the achievable, and probably has to rigorously argue for the ideal. Further, these echoes of the Bible, he notes, indicate that the novel has qualities of a parable.

Arthur mentions the scene where Gretel fails to explain to Bruno how the Jews are different from the Germans.

Another key part to the book is the scene where he is talking to Gretel about, why the Jews are in the camp, and how they're different to the Germans and she can't come up with a...but it's basically set up as a Them and Us scenario...through that scene we realise there's no, sense to it. And, I think he, through him, she, I'm not sure if she realises that, but he's in that set up, and the reader realises that in the narrative.

He identifies that within the novel no explanation for the differences between the Germans and the Jews is given,

Talking to Gretel about, why the Jews are in the camp, and how they're different to the Germans and she can't come up with a...but it's basically set up as a Them and Us scenario.

Also, Bruno is a part of the divisiveness that exists between the dominant and the suppressed groups.

Basically set up as a Them and Us scenario...and, I think he, through him, she, I'm not sure if she realises that, but he's in that set up.

Even his friendship with Shmuel replicates in part the social divisions in the adult world at war. Again, he observes that the knowledge the reader has, that Bruno does not have, about why the Jews are there, creates the irony of the novel.

Through that scene we realise there's no, sense to it...but he's in that set up, and the reader realises that in the narrative.

Discussing his sorrow when Bruno dies, Arthur endows Bruno with symbolic qualities as a character.

Because he represents the new generation, he was starting to show some of the traits, which means that he would, if it was his generation, and to be fair, a lot of the older characters in the book,...showed some signs that the way that the events were transpiring wasn't what they wanted, such as the mother, the grandmother was ashamed of the father, his choice of career, for his actions. So, but the younger generation, I think, if they'd been at the point of having any influence, I think...there would have been a different outcome I think, this is definitely what

Bruno represents in the book.

He views Bruno's character as being part of the writer's purpose, which is to show that tolerance and restraint are the way for human relations to be conducted. Arthur sees Bruno as belonging to the future and a better way of proceeding, a way that offers hope and more friendly ideas.

Arthur discusses the suitability of the holocaust for literature.

I'm not sure if this book is a children's book. But, I think it takes it out...of real life that much. You know, I think it's a perfectly...good subject, in fact, a vital subject for getting people to learn about the topics this book brings up.

Like other respondents, the target readership of the novel remains unclear for him, but as a mechanism for teaching an evil historical event, he is convinced of its value. He understands that the ethical moral issues of the novel are vital for the learning of all. Indeed, he recommends it to all.

Yes, I recommend it to anyone really. A lot of people that I've mentioned the book to, have already read it. Despite its size and its simplicity, it broadens it's appeal, but it doesn't mean that adults can't read it, and get exactly the same points from it. I think it's a book that stays with you, I finished reading it a few days ago, you're still sort of there, sort of reliving.

He is unequivocal in his approval, observing that its smallness and simplicity of language notwithstanding, it does appeal to all readership groups. More interestingly, he conveys the profound and lasting effect of the novel.

I think it's a book that stays with you, I finished reading it a few days ago, you're still sort of there, sort of reliving it.

Arthur sees that the reader forms an affiliation with the novel which, imaginatively he inhabits, and, as the emotions are engaged, a heightened sense of intellectual and moral understanding occurs.

Rating the novel with Shakespeare, Orwell, Huxley, and Lomax, Arthur gives his approbation.

I definitely think it rates along side them. It's a novel that brings you, big themes. It's a way of personalising the experience isn't it? And, I think, taking it down to that personal level...I think it makes it a lot more poignant, makes it so, people don't forget the, lessons of history, which is the warning at the end of the book.

He acknowledges that the novel deals with major issues.

It's a novel that brings you, big themes.

He perceives that the use of the narrative voice enables the reader to empathise with Bruno , and Shmuel and be moved by their deaths.

Personalising the experience...I think it makes it a lot more poignant.

He suggests the novel may be seen as a cautionary tale, a ‘warning’, so ‘people don’t forget the lessons of history’, suitable for all readers.

In **conclusion**, the reading of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by all participants was quite revealing. One of the benefits of all participants reading the same novel is that it presents evidence that all participants did actually read, showing how they willingly and successfully completed the novel. This is in line with what Appleyard (1991) says about the voluntary nature of adult reading, because they choose to read over other activities that claim their time. Reading the novel also demonstrated a level of commitment to the research project. Also, every participant knew that all participants were reading the novel and this was an encouragement to finish the novel. Reading the novel gave the participants a sense of achievement, which enhanced their self esteem in terms of contributing to the research project. Also, at the time of interview the participants had the novel freshly in their mind, so they had plenty to say and could reference their comments with examples from the novel, which made their responses more convincing. The five different readers presented five similar but different responses to the same novel, this enabled the researcher to compare and contrast the comments in the analysis.

Generally speaking what was expected to emerge did emerge from their responses.

All participants responded with engagement to the novel as they had with their previous reading, but perhaps a little more intensely since they were given such scope for in depth debate. This is consistent with Lamarque and Olsen’s view that literature in its storying and mimetic quality offers the reader an organised, described universe not found in every day life. It was Edward who said trying to understand the Holocaust was difficult but the novel made a contribution to that understanding. The participants’ responses to *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* was very similar to their responses to their general reading; for instance Henry, the self acknowledged non-fiction reader, criticised its minor historical inaccuracies, while William cried at the end as he had admitted doing in response to his

general reading. Also the respondents noted the lasting effect that reading *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* had on them, Arthur and William particularly, and this is consistent with the lasting impressions they had of previously read literature. As anticipated all respondents empathised with Bruno and felt sympathy for him. Similarly there was general condemnation of Bruno's parents, particularly the father, and all expressed, rather apologetically, a sense of satisfaction that the father got his just deserts. All participants commented on the powerful ending as being sad and shocking and horrific, and this would be expected, since in literary discussions the end of a novel would be expected to offer something of significance. Tucker (1982) notes that very charged material can often find its way quite safely into fiction when it is suitably disguised from the reader by appearing in make believe form, acted out by different imaginary characters. Echoing this point, Charles said it was a subtle novel and its blows were not hammer blows.

From this part of the research emerged a general approval of the novel by all participants, whereas previously there had been some, what Millard (1997) refers to as, male aversion to reading. Remember Charles noting a dislike of Shakespeare from studying it for G.C.S.E. Even William who was initially put off by the large print and limited vocabulary acknowledged what a powerful book it was. The risk taking nature of this novel emerges quite clearly. Henry criticises it for its minor historical inaccuracies, while the remaining respondents are prepared to suspend their disbelief, and both attitudes are valid. This is consistent with Alexander (2008) who notes that the novel requires a fairly considerable suspension of disbelief, making it vulnerable at this point, as observed by Henry, but that it is worth the risk. The other interesting question that emerged specifically to *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* was the issue of when is a children's book for children and when is it for adults. This was commented on by all respondents, but William and Arthur particularly asked who the novel was for and where, meaning under what section, it was put in the shops.

## CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has been concerned with investigating what the influence of reading is on those young men who choose to read. It has asked what the illuminative capacity of reading is, and how that is revealed in the respondents. It suggests that respondents are

enlightened, moral, able to cope with their emotions, cerebral because they choose to read

The responses of five young men were examined in a tripartite approach. Firstly the reading history of each respondent was detailed. Next, participants' responses to their reading in general was discussed. Finally, the participants' reading and responses to *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne were discussed.

The research developed a theoretical and empirical understanding of how reading influences selfhood, explored ideas about reading, illuminated responses concerning the value of reading, and considered the influence of reading on the construction of selfhood. The research aim was implemented through the exploration of four key questions:

- i) What were the experiences and perceptions of reading among the research participants? In other words, do these young men read and what do they read?
- ii) What value did they place on reading?
- iii) What have these young men learned from reading?
- iv) How has reading influenced the selfhood of these young men who read?

The thesis argued that those who read, outside of the demands of study and work, are affected by that which they read, influencing thought, the emotions, moral judgement, and shaping the character, in what Iser (1978) calls the slow time frame of reading.

It is difficult to make broad generalisable conclusions from a small scale sample. It is difficult also to make generalisable conclusions from five very different respondents, who gave a wide variety of responses to their reading. However what does emerge is the great value of reading, almost any reading, to these young men.

This thesis finds that the effects of reading are complex but in part readily identifiable. To some extent, reading alters the dispositional character of the reader because he can see how people get caught up in events that swamp them, and how resolution comes too late. The reader, especially the young adult reader is ingesting maturity, even at second hand, and this makes him ponder life's vissitudes. There is a communicative satisfaction in reading these stories and books. It has a beneficial effect as the reader establishes an affiliation with the reading.

All respondents report on what Aristotle called the mimetic quality of literature, saying

how it is not reality, but like it, and recognizable enough to offer them meanings.

Lamargue and Olsen (1996) say that though literature may not offer universal truths, it does offer universal themes recognizable by readers. The exploration of these themes in the literary text provides the reader with resolutions or solutions which, though literary, are taken to suggest a certain way of the truth, in a narrative, that can be applied to other narratives, of other lives, in the reality of the reader. These rehearsals of truths, found in literature, give the reader the opportunity, not found in real life, of philosophically questioning ideas and beliefs, intellectually, without harm. All respondents noted that though books were not real life they were like life enough to be relevant and offer some interpretation of life.

Nussbaum (2001) urges the value of the study of great works of literature as offering students of law teaching examples, for justice. She says the study of great literature promotes rational thought. All respondents echoed Nussbaum's words because all stated that literature, great and otherwise had taught them about justice, certainly, but also about issues and situations, such as love, war, heroism, manhood, quests, pleasure and death, that normally they would never experience, but through reading, and through the readerly activity of empathy, come to a rational understanding of how life is for others. This understanding of how life is for others, claims Nussbaum, will influence how they make decisions at public levels.

The respondents' comments echo the reader response theory presented by Iser (1978). The respondents reveal how in their reading they read between the lines, they infer, deduce, surmise and conclude, as well as question and puzzle over meanings and motives. They also said they read in large chunks, checked back to clarify and that meaning and understanding dawned after absorbing sections of the books, and that their comprehension was a gradually emerging thing that changed the more they read. This echoes what Iser says about vacancies, blanks and themes, the wandering horizon, and how in the slow time frame of reading the reader gradually, through negation and negativity comes to an altered understanding.

Rose (2001) noted the practice of autodidact, of self teaching through the reading of books. There is no need now to teach oneself, and indeed the respondents are well educated via state schooling. However, though not in the same way as Rose reports, these

young men continue to learn and educate themselves via reading as Charles, Henry and Edward specifically report.

Williams (1958) discusses culture and society, and the respondents showed reading to be a cultural act because they talked about their reading with others. Reading reflects society and continues to create it and leads to other linked cultural activities like thinking, writing, listening and speaking. Reading promotes ideas and images that both reinforce and challenge society and culture. The value of reading in society is shown by William and how he matches himself to similar reading others in order to be sure he can value that similar reading other's opinions. Further, Arthur in his discussion of Orwell's *1984* indicates how a single novel can both challenge, and create the culture and society which gave rise to it.

Hoggart (1957) feared that the influence of mass communications and mass media would bring about a worsening in the unique working class culture of the Leeds suburb he described. Half a century later, Henry replicates Hoggart's point when he voices his skepticism about the veracity of anything that he reads in the printed media , or indeed in the wider communications media. Through reading Hoggart's wisdom has been absorbed by Henry, a member of the very society whose moral judgements Hoggart feared for.

Pike (2006) declares that the reading of literature in schools is about seeing the inner light meaning reading should lift the reader's spirit to a higher mystical plane of absorption, emotional engagement and understanding. Echoing Pike's comments, all the respondents noted the uplifting value of reading as it worked on their imaginations, its lasting quality, how they felt with and for characters, marveled at the language and drew meaning from reading which they enjoyed discussing with others.

Bolton(1998) writes of the great value of literature, great literature in particular. He argues that some writers are better than others and better writers seek to come to terms with the human condition and help readers to do so. All the respondents report learning wisdom from books; Arthur from Shakespeare, William from Kafka, Edward from the poetry of Owen, Charles from Allen's *How a Man Thinketh* and Henry from the autobiographies of Ranolph Fiennes and Lance Armstrong. What respondents said about the lasting effect these books had on them is exactly how Bolton sees reading influencing the self in a humanizing way.

Cook-Gumperz (2006) views reading as a social judgement of its use. Henry's comments about how reading promoted his professional development is an obvious example from participants responses that echo her point.

Kress et al (2005) said that the teaching of literature in schools, particularly focused on *character* (italics in original) offered students fictional life experiences before students actually experienced them themselves. All respondents noted that their reading enabled them to imaginatively live experiences in a book. Arthur, for instance, noted how Lomax's *The Railway Man* allowed him to experience the horrors of being a prisoner of war.

The outcome of my small scale research suggests that reading can have real value and may be an uplifting experience. Reading gives access to all written forms of learning and knowledge, seems to helps form the mind and generates thinking. Reading engages the emotions, stimulates sympathy and empathy and has the potential to teach morals.

Reading is a cultural activity, embedded in culture, contributing to the construction of that culture, since the reading canon of a society, is that society. Reading has mimetic value, offering the reader, in its storying, a coherence which is missing in real life.

Reading engages the reader on an imaginative and creative level, beyond the reality of daily life, in which the reader lives in a world of the mind. Reading, writing, speaking and listening performances appear to enhance self esteem and status. Reading has the potential to influence selfhood.

It is Aristotle who speaks of the importance of having been trained in some way from infancy to feel joy and grief at the right things, and how true education is precisely this. In Aristotelian terms, education is about acquiring a moral and ethical perspective through learning virtuous communication, connecting one's own life with the lives of others by studying the stories of the lives of others. What Aristotle meant was that it was all about *how* to live. The function of education was how to live ethically, doing the good thing. Aristotle wrote of joy and grief and of the importance of appreciating and applying these ethically. Thus it was necessary to feel joy, but not to laugh at the misfortunes of others, and to feel grief at the right time. Aristotle saw the function of the state as creating a harmonious society in which people could flourish. This research contends that the effect of reading may make a major contribution to a flourishing individual's life, and can

exert a powerful influence on one's sense of self.

## **LEARNING FROM THE RESEARCH**

What this researcher has learned from undertaking this study is the enormous sense of academic achievement one feels at having an initial idea and seeing it through to the end. It is all much more time consuming than one initially thinks, and also there are costs that appear in other guises, like not reading for pleasure oneself!

It was extremely stimulating reading around one's subject matter. It is surprising too where one finds oneself; for instance, I never expected to be reading about holocaust literature. I was always entirely at home in the university library, and would love to be reincarnated as a bookworm.

After I had done pilot trials, the interviews were fascinating because the respondents were willing to participate, and were so open and readily talked about their reading, remembering so much. I learned that the trick is to say very little, but to encourage with non verbal gestures; no easy task.

Writing for an academic audience was more of a challenge than at first anticipated. I had imagined it would be much like the writing associated with teaching but actually it is quite different; much more considered and leisured and not as judgemental as writing in schools often is.

## **FURTHER RESEARCH**

If I were to launch myself into further research, the obvious follow up project to this study would be to replicate the research with a comparable female group, and to ascertain how similar or different the responses were. I would hazard a guess that there would not be too much difference given the voluntary nature of adult readers.

In a completely different vein, my elderly father just having placed himself in a care home, I was intrigued to read in the homes' philosophical statement of procedures they employed a technique called Reminiscence Therapy. I am used to listening to my father's stories of his childhood, his grammar school days, his years in the Royal Navy, how he met my mother, and his role in the Second World War, but it never occurred to me that

these oft-repeated tales of the past might have some therapeutic effect for my father. Something to examine might be reminiscence therapy. I would need to know what it is, what it is used for and by whom, why it is so valuable, but most importantly, what effect it has? And, is that effect beneficial.

## APPENDIX

### Verbatim Transcripts of Interviews

#### **CHARLES**

Interviewer is I, Charles is JC.

I: Tell me how important reading is to your life, and what about... what sort of reading, types of reading you do?

JC: I suppose reading is vital for my life, I really couldn't do without it for a day. I read as an escape, sorry, to enjoy and something to learn with. Whenever I'm doing nothing else at all, be it at work sat around doing nothing at lunchtime, or in the bath or wherever, they'll always be a book close by that I can just pick up and carry on with.

I: So, what types of reading are you doing?

JC: I read a lot of sci-fi , which is mainly my dad's influence. I just love the whole... there's a lot more.. a lot more imagination that can be... when I'm doing a sci-fi and I find that really interesting. And then recently, I've read, I've started reading historical...work, not always complete fiction either. I've just finished reading *The True Story of Moby Dick* which was the book that the events that the book *Moby Dick* was based on, for example. I thought that was very interesting.

I: Can you tell me about the books plays poems you remember most, can you explain why you remember them and what you remember them for?

JC: The book that first springs to mind, I think, is a trilogy by Louis de Bernieres. He wrote, he made up this completely fictional American company, tut tut, Latin American country, and wrote these books about them which swung madly from, absolute magic and just these farcical situations that would never exist in the real world, down to nitty gritty realistic day to day life some people are living. They just stuck in my mind particularly just for that, I suppose, the wild contrast .I couldn't get them out of my head, and I have gone back to those books ,I don't know , five or six times. What else really sticks out in my memory? The work of great bear sci-fi writer, just for the fact he seems so far ahead of everything else I've read so far. Just epic, epic books. And also *Lords of the Rings*, I suppose because its one of the things that started me reading in the first place. Just the, the sheer magic of it when you're twelve.

I: What about poems and plays?

JC: I've never really read many plays or been to many plays so I can't think of any that really stick out there, apart from a general dislike of Shakespeare due to doing it for G.C.S.E. level.

I: Tell me what you've ever learned from any text you've ever read, book, short story, poem that you didn't know before you read that particular text?

JC: I find it hard to be specific. People ask me why I read books, perhaps people who don't read very much, and I say well in reading you find a huge wealth of human

experience that you might never experience in another way. Ways of thinking, ways of expressing your emotions, or not expressing your emotions, way... relationships between people, how they work, the mechanic relationship between people. All these things, ordinarily you'd be almost blind to, in writing and text book form can make a lot of sense to you, and I think I've learnt, every time I've read something that I found very impressive, particularly about the way I think, I've maybe taken a bit from here and a bit from there and brought it all together inside my head. I find myself spouting lines from texts I read years ago, when somebody asks me how I feel about something, and I'll just repeat something I've heard before, almost, I suppose. But I know, also, of course, once you've got these thoughts in your head they bring out new thought of your own.

I: So what sort of things is your mind doing when you read a text, try and give an example if you can?

JC: I think imagining it as you're a grate, just concocting images, pictures, situations as fast as my eyes can follow the text. For example, I just finished reading the true account of the whale ship Essex which was the influence for the Moby Dick story, but it was just being in the open ocean, but also the relationships between the men on board and my mind is furiously trying to create these smells of salt and open seas and comprehend what I'm reading in front of me. And, particularly, sometimes, I sit there and I think, I stop to look at myself reading and I see the writing, and I forget how to do it for half a second, and I'm staring at the pages and I don't seem able to assimilate it as quickly as I should to able to do, and then I sort of float back into it again. It's quite a strange experience really. If you really think about yourself walking or think about yourself falling asleep, suddenly you forget how to do it. It's quite a strange experience.

I: What sorts of things do you say when you're discussing your reading with other people?

JC: Well, if you're with someone else who reads also then it's, well, then, hopefully you've both read the same book, which I find most interesting, we'll compare the things that stuck out to us more than any thing else. So, if it be the characterisation, the language comes into it quite often and.... And if it, I'm not talking to someone who reads then I tend to say "Well, what are you doing, man? I mean, you're missing out on a huge amount." They're like, "Well, none of my friends read, why should I read?" So, like, well. "That's the worse excuse I've ever heard for not picking up a book. You really need to pick one up. You're missing out on... I mean everything the human race has ever done, ever felt , ever been , ever will be, is there in books for you to ?clearance?, and you're just missing out on all of it.

I: So, tell me about books or your reading that has offered you role models at various stages of your life?

JC: Can I just think about this? [ pause] Often when I'm reading the central figure will be this, almost always in fact you'll find if you're reading a work of fiction the central character, or central characters. will lead lives of interest , to amuse the reader, and as they do these things, as they comprehend the things going on around them, and as they act on those things, there is always a growth of character, there's always a change, there's always decisions that are made. And... as you read through this, you...as I've said before, you...you realise different ways of thinking about things, that perhaps would not have occurred to you, before you actually do read. And, particularly, with male figures in fiction, that can exercise full control over their own minds and their own thoughts and, the way in which they live their lives, not at mercy to beings outside...outwards coming in,

not at mercy to the whims of others, particularly, other than people they care about, and want to care for, I suppose. I've always found that to be very informative, I suppose is the right word...because.... it shows me how I can better myself... how I can enjoy my life more.

I: So, tell me what in your reading shaped your sense of morality and give an example if you can.

JC: Um...I suppose in reading you do see the whole spectrum of morality for one thing. It does allow you to pick and choose very much because you see characters doing things utterly noble right down to down right atrocious. So, given that wide spectrum ,you can find things that ring true with yourself very easily. Um... for an example, I suppose, reading the ???the Magic Four Words, the Louis de Berniere trilogy, one of the ones is about a young man who through writing letters to a newspaper, and through the myths that ended up surrounding him, managed to break down an entire cocaine trade in that part of the country, and basically improved the standard of lives for thousands and thousands and thousands of people. And through a simple act, showed me, that a simple act, in a good way, can have huge results.

I: So, tell me how you see or perceive that reading has shaped your emotions, and if possible try an give an example of...from reading.

JC: Um...I...the main thing reading has done for my emotions is taught me how to control them a little bit...there again, just in seeing both ends of the spectrum, people not being able to control their lives and their admirations for people, leading/ being very successful lives through doing so. One book I read recently, I think it's a fairly old book, almost be classed as a self help I suppose, Its called *How A Man Thinketh*, I can't remember the name of the author at the moment, but it gave the philosophy that every action a man has, ever does, every aspect of his life is a direct result of thought that he has had at some other time, so by strictly controlling the thoughts, by...er...being careful of what seeds you sow, as such...you can rigorously alter your emotional state and your life.

I: Tell me how you reading has influenced or changed you, you know give some kind of example if possible.

JC: Um [long pause] I would say reading has really made me calmer I think its probably the art/act of sitting still, let your mind do the work, its one of the only things I do these days where my mind is given a bit of free reign. [pause] I'm just trying to think of ways it's changed me that I haven't already mentioned. [pause] Its definitely changed my vocabulary for the better. It's massively extended my vocabulary over the years and years and years. That was always a... one of my strong points that always got me through a lot of my school years, and plus my grandmother no end. Other than that I think I've probably already said every thing, just the massive effect it can have on your emotional states, the way you live your life and your morality, as you already been through.

I: So how has your reading contributed to making you how you are now?

JC: By, as I say shaping my thoughts, making given given, I had bland feelings, not bland feelings,er non descript feelings before, urgings, emotions I didn't know how to deal with, that were causing me trouble and I always have done and sometimes when you do reading an extensive amount, you'll hit upon something you wish you could say and it [pause] says it in such a formulated way that it almost sounds like your it's own thoughts being brought back to you in a much more open fashion and through this sort of these random sort of islands that you hit upon here and there, everyone I've found has led me to

another one. And before long, I seem to be made up of these feelings and emotions that I've sort of gleened from elsewhere.

I: Other than reading what else other things has contributed to making you as you are now, you know the identity you have at this moment in time?

JC: I'm very much a believer in the fact that a person...a man personally is...who a person is, is completely under their control and I believe very much its nature rather than nurture, sorry, nurture rather than nature makes us the people we are and I would say very much a part of me has been formed by my love of the outdoors, being outside from a very young age, my parents taking me out every wek end for a walk and encouraging me to get outdoors, experience the world around me [pause] also [pause] I'm not sure what I was going to say[pause] also my parents more than anything else, as I say I believe very much in the nurture, I've watched my parents and as they've watched over me and I've learned a huge amount from their successes and their mistakes and I'm lucky in that my parents have always been very honest with me about their lives and they've never tried to shelter me particularly, apart from when I was very young, from the world around me, and they've always, you know, encouraged me to take an interest in what was about me I think. Through their decisions in life for themselves, and for me, has very much influenced and will continue to influence my decisions in my life.

I: So, what is your response to *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne?

JC: Um, I think it's perhaps a lesson. I think you, I think any one who reads the book could learn from it, in that, having a story like this told from the point of view of a child, the narrative is told from a child's point of view, and as the plot progresses you're left to discover things very much at the same pace as Bruno himself does. And, where you would draw, or you or I would draw, start to draw conclusions quite quickly, Bruno is left with this naïve innocence that persists right the way through the novel, so you find yourself becoming further and further away from the narrative voice, as we ourselves grow up, away from childhood er view on life that we would have had, and I think that echoes true for everybody, and I think everyone can appreciate that.

I think as a personal response, on a personal level what most, what most affected me was, throughout the entire novel you have this burgeoning friendship between Shmuel and Bruno, er and, not only do they find more and more in common with each other, despite the vast difference between their social positions, one's on one side of the fence, one's on the other, um, physically they become to resemble each other, Bruno's hair is shorn for nits, ah, they find a spare pair of pyjamas for Bruno to wear, and eventually he goes to visit him. He squeezes under the fence to help find Shmuel's father, and in a way, it's quite interesting, the search for a father figure is an enigmatic one, and something used throughout literature. And, throughout the novel we have Bruno having a relationship with his father, and yet, outside the family home, Bruno's father is the commandant of this concentration camp, and he is by all accounts a very evil character. And so, we have this almost fake relationship between Bruno and his father, and the loving relationship that Shmuel has with his, so the fact that they both go off looking for their respective fathers, or at least for a father figure, is a telling one. And in the end they don't find Shmuel's father they find Bruno's father and the result is horrendous, and emotionally upsetting, and, um , I don't think it's one that I would have expected reading throughout the novel, it , you know, almost, you expect to come away with a handful of petty truths and morals, and to, for an ending...so...poignant, sad and tearing was...was quite

shocking.

I: Can you just explain what you mean by finding Bruno's father?

J C: By finding Bruno's father, I mean, going in search of a father figure and finding what Bruno's father actually represented, which was death, what Bruno's father's character was actually doing, um, killing, on a massive scale, um is what I mean. And, to go from there you find, you have the realisation of the father, the realisation of death, the human element being, being imposed on death. Um, in that in the final chapter, in fact where Bruno's father pieces the parts of the puzzle together, and, and discovers the little gap under the fence where his son's clothes have been found, and the realisation of what he has inadvertently, caused to happen, that he is almost responsible for his son's death, I think, is extremely important because, we have one side of this merciless death figure, on the other side we have a father grieving for a son, and the disparity between those two characters is immense.

I: What was your impression of the language?

J C: I think the language also is very important, I mean er, as so often in poetry we...a single word can contain a myriad of meanings, and um, we have a child, a narrative voice of a nine year old boy, and, we have Hitler coming to dinner, and which he can't pronounce 'Fuhrer', so he says the 'Fury'. The Fury to me is an immensely powerful poetic device, if you like, um, in it we have, summed up, a child's innocence, a child's misunderstanding. A view, an entire viewpoint created in a single word, and yet we also have the connotations that we as adult readers can, can bring to that. Fury is a word of anger, of..of terror, of...uncontrolled emotion, raw emotion. So, and so we have this child like narrative voice, misunderstanding. And then, we have our own horror, if you like, at the word fury, our own, our own response which quavers at the word fury. Um, and this is a very powerful device. Likewise, um, his misunderstanding of Auschwitz, calling it Outwith, is a, is a very similar thing, er , out with, with out, is, is a...out with something you do not want, in with something you do. Very simply Auschwitz was a tool, a device, a way of getting rid of, of people, and ideologies that were considered to be inferior. So, very, very literally, 'outwith', out with these people, out with this nation, in with us. I think that's the same again, very very scary, from our point of view, and iedbe??? innocent from a child's point of view.

I: Who do you think the book is written for?

J C : What I also find quite interesting to comprehend, is, is the readership age. This is a fable, this is written for children to read, and obviously, so far, I've talked about my adult response to a child's narrative. Reading it as a child however, would be an extremely different scenario, I mean, you wouldn't be looking at it with, with the wisdom, and, er, if you like, age point of view that, that you or I have. You'd be looking, you'd be experiencing it much more closely to what Bruno's experienced, and necessarily you wouldn't have the historical background to make the links between 'Fury' and 'Fuhrer', 'Auschwitz' and 'Outwith', you would follow Bruno, literally, step by step, as...as he, as much as he knew, you would know, or the child would know. And,...in a way, if you're going to tell a child about the horrendous, horrifying events of the...of the war, and of concentration camps, and the holocaust, then, to do it in a way that is at once, on their level, if you, if you, if I can coin a phrase, and to do it in a way, in which really doesn't spoil their innocence, you know, you, you, how do you tell a child that once upon a time, one group of people hated another group of people so much that they put tens of thousands of them, hundreds of thousands of them to death? You can't say that to a child,

and I think, but it's important for children perhaps to know something of this, and, this, probably, is the best way to do it. So, I mean, the effect it would have on had on me, reading it as a nine year old boy, I...I...wouldn't, I...I couldn't say. It is an extremely powerful book now, reading it, but to...to read it then, with a true sense of naivety, rather than...er...a feigned...a feigned one, it would be very, very powerful indeed.

I: How suitable is this subject for literature?

JC: That brings me on to the suitability of this subject, really, for literature. Um, one could argue that any subject is suitable for literature. Literature is there to expound, to explicate, to explain, to exaggerate sometimes, on the entire world of human experience. Um, if you, as a reading man you, you can find the entire wealth of human experience through reading, and to rule something out as taboo or, or inappropriate is to curtail that experience. I wouldn't choose that for anything. Whether the mass murder of six million Jews is suitable for children is a very different question. However, the book itself is inoffensive in a way. It is written in an innocent, naïve voice. It..it...does not directly...it does not hammer...its blows are not hammer blows ,it is subtle, it is surreptitious. I t is...I can imagine a great of people objecting to it's content and not showing it to their children. However, I do not believe it is actually unsuitable. I think, you know, the world we live in is not necessarily a good world, not necessarily a nice world. We do everything possible to shield our children from...from the reality of the world often, and um, I think if you are going to introduce them to the reality sometimes, then this gentle, subtle, but nevertheless, disturbing way, this...this disturbing book would be an acceptable way to do that.

### **WILLIAM**

Interviewer is I, William is CW.

I: Tell how important reading is to your life, why?

CW: Okay. I would say reading has been and is very important to my life. I used to read prolifically as a kid. I'm not quite sure why I started reading, but I used to read two or three books at a time at one point, just because I really enjoyed it, I didn't used to watch TV a lot, I used to do that instead. It's always been a really big part of my life. What was the second part of that question? Why is that? I don't know why that is. I don't know, I just enjoy it, I just get the same amount of enjoyment out of it as you do when you watch a movie, I guess it's probably just escapism or something. It's also you get this sort of sense of satisfaction when you've actually finished reading a book, because you look back on what you've done and it's some kind of achievement.

I: What types of reading do you do?

CW: I don't know actually. I suppose I was never really into biographical or autobiographical stuff, just fiction, I like fiction.

I: What books plays poems do you remember most and why?

CW: Well there's a book called, there's a trilogy called *His Dark Materials* , I think I must have been reading just when I was kind of changing, mentally, emotionally or something. That's what sticks with me, it was mid way between being a kids' book and there being something quite adult about it.

I: Do you mean the Phillip Pullman trilogy?

CW: Yes, yes. And that's always stuck with me, the one that's had the most impact of stories on me, I t must have been when I read it or something it something reminded me

of the time at the time

I; Were you like Lyra? Growing up?

CW; Yes I think so that's why it was it was because I could relate , felt I could relate to the character so well. And Will in the second one as well because he was alittle bit older I think and by the time I read it I was a little bit older, so I was able to relate to him really well, and in the third one they were kind of getting together, and that was something that I wanted to be able to relate to really well, so, that's probably why that cleffs were. It was kind of about, it was rebelling against religion and stuff which was still quite exciting. It felt like it was something I'd been thinking and then someone else was thinking it and had written it down and I thought "Ah there you go!"

I: Do you remember any poems or plays?

CW: I don't know about poems, I've never been that into poetry. It sounds a bit weird but I never found one that I like. I used to have, I had a bit of an obsession with that Halowed Evans and that embroidered cloths thing, I can't remember the rest of it now. The one that ends " Tread softly you tread on my dreams." I don't know why that's one of the only poem I actually ever liked, and now I've forgotten it. Poetry is like something I liked as a kid nursery rhymes and things like that, and I remember having a big book of poetry and there was a big long poem about spaghetti that I learned off by heart and I used to love... and I just grew out of it and I never got into the more...the richer poetry, the decent stuff.

I; But you must have studied it for GCSE?

Cw; Yes but I don't think I particularly enjoyed it though. Yeh I didn't enjoy studying it because you looked into it too far, and maybe poetry is one of those things people will always close analysing and drawing as much out of as possible, and I think a lot of the time, and I think a lot of the time when people write poems its not what they were intending. But I don't know if they were.

I: Tell me what you have learned from any text you have read, book poem or play you have ever read?

CW; Starting off with a blank canvas in some subject. I don't know that's kind of hard to answer because ther's any number of things I wouldn't have known about before I read the book so almost any thing I pick up. Do you specifically mean like a novel or something ?

I: Yes or a poem play or short story that has had a profound effect. Probably what you said about the Pullman trilogy. But we can come back to it.

CW: Well actually this is a recent one so I can remember it. The thing is my reading has been so sporadic over the last few years, actually I went through a patch of hardly reading at all so its weird, it bring brought me back to all the books I used to read, but originally Kafka and Metal Verses, and something I would never bother thinking about before which was the way people actually think, and the way they think to write things down. And that was quite eye opening, and it took me ages to get into his style of writing. And it wasn't what he was actually writing about that I was learning about it was the fact he was writing in that way. Really sort of bowled me over, because I hadn't ever bothered to think like that before. You can just turn the words into anything and it's a strange concept.

I; The way hr deals with language I agree. You just talked about thinking there, what sort of things is your mind doing when you read? Can you sort of try and give me an example?

CW: The actual kind of mechanism you mean while you're reading that feeling? How you're processing it all?

I: Yes how it goes in and what happens in your mind?

CW: Its hard to say it just kind of streams in so quickly, and you do build up a sort of residual picture, image of things being talked about, but it never really it's a skim and you don't, its an odd feeling sometimes you go back to a page and read it again, and kind of, you don't remember it like if you're watching a film and remember a specific part, and you could actually picture it all, so when you, you're just taking in the words and I don't really build up much of a picture about what's going on, just absorb it, often it takes me a long time, obviously scan, scan, scanning, scanning, scanning, and it isn't until you get to the end of the chapter that it all kind of comes together and makes sense. And if you try and read slower, I can't build the picture up slower, you've got to do it in big chunks and not be distracted. I tend to like jump back and forward to bits as well when because I skim them so quickly that I don't even take in names and stuff, and a name comes up again and you're like, you have to go back and find it. So I don't know what's happening in my mind, I know that I've got to be focused on it though, if there's sort of music or things that slows me down massively.

I: So, what sort of things do you say when you're discussing reading with other people?

CW: I don't know. I suppose the first thing when you're talking about reading to other people you tend to assess what level of like reader they are, and its weird, it's a weird sort of culture of readers isn't it? Like when, I don't know, some people, you're talking about a book and you have to judge whether or not they actually read a lot, before you decide whether them saying this is a great book is worth actually taking on board or not. Then when you do kind of, it doesn't take long to kind of judge, and you tend to have this sort of competitive little to-ing and fro-ing of how many books you read, and how many books you've read and stuff, and then you know they're actually a person who reads a lot, or reads enough to count. I don't know what you talk about. I don't know , it depends who you're talking to sometimes.

I: Do you discuss the storyline or the language or...?

CW: I guess it is more the storyline ,yes. Thank you for that. Its just what ever makes the book interesting that ?lucky falls? If I was talking to Michael about Hitch Hikers Guide which I know he is really into, it would be a lot about the language because I really like the way Douglas Adams uses language, and comedy as well. I like the way its so sort of, its , what's the word? Kind of, I guess its ironic, a little bit. So, depends who you're talking to, what book you're talking about. But,yeh, most of the time I would say you're discussing the story. Sometimes, yes, sometimes you discuss the characters, I don't know, I don't know, it depends on the book.

I: Tell me about books that have offered you role models at various stages of your life, if you can give me an example that would be brilliant.

CW: Might as well refer back to the Phillip Pullman thing, because as I said before I was able relate to each different characters. I suppose Will in the second book being the one that was actually a role model, more so than Lyra. Lyra was like, you were looking at her making mistakes, and you could see the mistakes, so you were learning from her mistakes, as opposed to Will, who was kind of driven and motivated, and really wanted to get something done and go somewhere. He seemed very mature. That was it, he was seemingly very mature for his age, and that was something I wanted to aspire to or something.

I: What characters were not good role models, were definitely not worth being like?

CW: One odd example of role model that ????? I wanted to be like him but I knew I was

not supposed to be, and that was when I was very young and I used to read *Just William* books, and I wanted to be him, and get up to mischief and stuff all the time. But I also knew that was not the right thing because it was obviously explained as a mischievous thing. Actually I must try and think of another role model who was actually a role model. I can't think of one.

I: I think you've given two good examples; William and Will

CW: But we were all kids. There's all kids. That's the thing. So maybe I should try and think of something...

I: No No Its about you...

I: Can you tell me what in your reading of books, or plays or poems or whatever has shaped your sense of morality? And if you can give us an example that would be great.

CW: Ummmm. I think, I think a lot of what I've read has done that, and continues to do so because , it does tend to be quite an ongoing theme in books because it is something people obviously think about a lot. And it just makes sense they'd write about it, even if its at a quite a sub-conscious level. Or maybe its that I take it out of books. Maybe I see the thing as a sort of lesson in morality in books and there's not one, because I think about it too much. But, books generally that deal with the bigger, a bigger picture, no matter how light heartedly they do so, like *Hitchhiker's Guide*, those ones always, I think they were, the *Hitchhiker's Guide* may have been one of the first book, books that actually got me bothering to think about the, the scale of the problem. Because it dances around such a sort of, huge, time and distance scape, that I never really probably bothered to think about before. And when you start to thinking about things like that, you start thinking about, well, why am I here? But I don't think I ever read any books that are that focused on....actually focused on it, I don't know, er.. mmm..the Bible. That's got to get you thinking about it, but I never really took that very seriously.

I: But you've said more or less everything you read seems to offer you a moral lesson?

CW: Yeh

I: Or is that your reader response, is it?

CW: I don't know actually. I don't know what I'm trying to say, I'm not getting the right thing said.

I: Don't worry

CW: No, I know but this question.....

I: Well let's move on to another question and see..

CW: Not that I have a specific example or anything but, just that I do think books do shape your sense of morality because they're, they're, a lot of them are written purposely to expose, um, um, and put pressure on uncomfortable feelings like , you know, like immoral things because that provokes a reader response, you know when something sort of nasty is happening, you kind of want to sympathise with who ever it is happening to, or something like that. It's a good way of getting you into the book, gripping you. (Tape ends, have to turn over) Er, I've forgotten what I was saying, just because, yeh, because its, its, its obvious where morals lie in books because they're trying to get you to sympathise with the story line, so you do. You get these kind of situations where you know what's the right and the wrong thing to do, and I guess you do learn from that because it actually gets your mind thinking about it.

I: Yeh. Thank you. Now the next question is , tell me how reading has shaped your emotions?

CW: I'm not altogether sure. Its really hard to say because I can't go back and not have

read everything. I don't know if I'd feel any different, you know, if I'd be able to feel, any different.

I: But if you empathise with a character, aren't you engaging emotionally with them? Or sympathise, even if you just sympathise with somebody, aren't you engaging emotionally with them?

CW: Ok, I can only really speculate because I don't know otherwise how it, how I would be emotionally if I hadn't read all my life, but I suppose it would stand to reason that reading has developed me emotionally, because it pushes your emotions to the limit, you know, and put them to the test, I suppose, and so, faced with more scenarios and more emotional responses you, you're arming yourself, virtually for situations that may arise in your life, I suppose. But, er, does that mean it's made me more outward with my emotions, or not. Whether it has, I don't actually know, or whether it means I know myself better because of it I don't know either. Perhaps that is the case, probably that is the case.

I: So you can't think of a novel, poem or play that you cried at, or felt disturbed by, that would be your emotions engaging

CW: I can, I have. That has happened, but..

I: Can you remember what texts? What books they were?

CW: Ummm I hate to keep coming back to it,....

I: It the Phillip Pulman trilogy?

CW: Yeh

I: They are a powerful set of novels

CW: Yeh. No, no I just wish I had a better...I want something else to reference basically...I trying to think of something else a better reference. I'm sure there's been several....they just go straight through me.

I: Tell me how your reading has influenced or changed you?

CW: I can try. I suppose the most obvious way it has influenced me, or changed me is intellectually...Because if I wasn't able to read, or if I hadn't read, I wouldn't be able to further my education the way I have, the way I have done, and I wouldn't know how to use words, you know, properly to get the best, best out of the situation, so that's a really obvious result. Changing, changing me that reading has had, erm I mean I don't know. Obviously, obviously it does have some sort of effect but I don't know what it is.

I: But you write songs don't you?

CW: Yeh

I: You must be dealing with language all the time? Or is it the music that comes first?

CW: No,

I: Or do they come together

CW: The best situation is they come together, and even then its, the words are just a, you just open your mind and they come out, its not really any, the more you think about in fact the worst it gets, its best to just get this torrent of, stream of words out that just comes if you let go and open your mouth and sing something. And then, and then you post rationalise it because you look back on what you've read and realise its actually, a lot of it is quite appropriate. And then you can trim it and chop it and change it, but the more, the more you do to it the less, the less it becomes sometimes. So...yeh....that...don't know.

I: So who or what is your muse? What inspires you when you....write?

CW: Self doubt

I: That's your muse is it?

CW: Yep, most of the time. Erm, self doubt and fear of ..fear of not ending up with anything.

I: You don't mean possessions, surely?

CW: No not possessions, I mean...(big sigh)

I: You mean love

CW: Yeh

I: and companionship

CW: Yeh (pause)

I: Well that just comes with, that just comes with the age really

CW: Maybe, maybe (inaudible utterance) I'm sure everyone's thinking about it.

I: But you can't write every song about self doubt can you?

CW: But they're driven by self doubt. They might appear to be about other things, sometimes they are about other things, but there's usually there's usually companionship involved in the writing and then that that links back to self doubt.

I: But the two great themes of literature are love and the mutability if life, which translate into sex and death. Anyway, this last question how has reading contributed to making you who you are?

CW: Um Interestingly enough probably quite a lot. Because I used to read a lot I was kind of a different person, which was like when I was very young, I was different to a lot of other people in my class and stuff, and I suppose I never really shook that off. And I've always been a bit, and you may find this hard to believe, quite reclusive. I don't actually like to socialise. And I wonder if that's because it was easy to just hide away in a book, because I could. And I did a lot. So maybe that's had quite a large impact on my social capacity.

I: And so what are you hiding behind now?

CW: Well, I don't know if hide, hiding behind music now, hiding behind piano. Or just hiding behind the walls, because I don't go out much in London because I just don't, I don't like socialising much. I want to, I want to be someone else, and that's back to the role model thing a lot of the time when I read books, I want to be the person who's , you know, the everybody's man, the person who goes out and gets laid a lot.

I: Yes, I know. I know what you're saying, its alright.

CW: So, yeh, that's odd that one. Probably reading has actually done that to me, or had quite a large hand in doing that to me.

I: Its your protection isn't it?

CW: Yeh

I: Its your barrier.

CW: Yeh

I: And we all need a barrier. Except now of course your barrier is your piano.

CW: Yes

I: And your words and your songs. You have already admitted you disguise your self doubt in other ways

CW: Mmm mm

I: So *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, what did you think of that?

CW: Ok, I was just saying I had to re evaluate my first thoughts on it because, as I say when I first read it I had this sort of snobbish feeling towards it because I thought it was a

kids book, and I'd read on the back *The Independent* wrote it "Stays just ahead of its readers before delivering its killer punch in the final stages, and I, all the way through I, I kinda, hadn't actually felt that and knew it was coming, it felt like I knew it was coming, by page thirty I already knew, pretty much where they were and what was going on. Even though, they'd kind of disguised the words, with the child, Bruno's child's versions of words. So that's how I thought afterwards I thought it was I got something out of it definitely, I enjoyed it but I remember thinking it wasn't as good as I was hoping it gonna be, because *The Independent* had told me it was gonna be, like this. But, that was two weeks ago that I read it, and it's actually left such a lingering impression on my mind. Like, like lots of books don't. Like, really notably, like Dan Brown books don't. Like you pick them up and you get sucked in and you're reading, reading, reading, reading, reading furiously, hundreds miles an hour, and you get to the end of the book, close it, have that ahhh feeling, and then gone, nothing, nothing stays with you, but this one has.

I: What stays with you?

CW: That, just that very final impression of him going into the chamber and holding the other boys hand, and it being..I..you don't know if it a good thing or a bad thing, I mean, if the've finally been united, as friends, and then they die that way, and that's kind've like..he doesn't know they're gonna die, he doesn't know they're dying, so that's alright. It's.. if you die and you don't know you're dying that's kind've okay, isn't it? But, but, yeh, obviously it's a tragedy, so that's what stayed with me.

I: Were you surprised that he died at the end?

CW: No, no I, that's what I'm saying, I I knew, knew that was going to happen, or I knew there was a tragedy brewing, I I didn't know that exactly was going to happen, but I just, I I thought, I knew, I knew he was going to go to the other side of the fence, and I..I thought, he was going to get taken off somewhere and, I don't know, shot or something, I don't know, I just thought that he was going to get found on that other side of the fence and wasn't going to get back, he was going to be stuck there. I think that's it, I think I just thought he was going to get stuck there, and his parents weren't going to be able to recognise him, or something. And it did, and it slowly happens, yes yes yes. But it was.. I should not have been like that with it, because that was...strangled me before I had a chance to be bored with it.

I: Did you find the pace slow?

CW: No, not really. The pace was pretty quick, because I suppose, I mean, I still don't know what age group it's written for, but I suppose because it's written for maybe any age, it needs to be engaging, and so the pace is fast enough to keep you on top.

I: And what do you think the author is trying to teach us? Boyne his name is.

CW: John Boyne. Um, I don't know actually. I don't know. Is it not just a lesson, another lesson, on the tragedy of war time, but written from a different perspective, or is it supposed to be, some sort of analogy for something else? I don't know, metaphor for something else. What do you think?

I: What did you think about the narrative voice, because a lot of the novel is inside the head of Bruno, the nine year old boy?

CW: Well yes that's, that's obviously like the point of the book, that's why. That's why it hits well because it's it puts you back into a child's mind. Er, I like that actually, but, I couldn't shake off the feeling that it was giving the author an excuse not to...enlarge on things that I wanted to be enlarged, because I wanted to know what was going on with this particular subject, but because as a nine year old you don't care about that, like the

the parents...the mother's, I think, having an affair, isn't she, at one point, with that soldier, but they doesn't, he doesn't go into any depth, like he doesn't explain it, why it's even in the book in fact he just, he just sees it, you only hear, get the information that a nine year old would process and that's the, sometimes they'd be in the room together, once he stormed out and then never came back, sort of thing. It's a bit, kind've, it's a little bit annoying, because, I guess because maybe as a nine year old I was really inquisitive about stuff like that anyway, everything, I wanted to know answers all the time, I've always wanted to know answers for everything, so, maybe Bruno wasn't the same kind of nine year old as I was.

I: No I don't think he was. No. I think he had been created in a different way, hadn't he?

CW: Mmm hmmm

I: To basically obey.

CW: Yeh.

I: What did you think about? I mean how did you feel the author got across the theme of evil?

CW: [Long pause] I'm not sure. [long pause] The theme of evil?

I: Okay, well forget that. What did you think about the language, there are two dist...there are two names, so language

CW: Yes, words like 'outwith' and 'the fury', 'the fury'. I don't know about that because,...er...obviously it's that...the way he kind of childised those words is done to, not only to back up the way it's written, the narrative voice, but to maybe throw you off or something, I don't know if it is. If it is designed to be, what's the word, sort of, to conceal the real word behind it, to give you some sense of surprise, then it didn't work, which...That's what I was talking about before, about not feeling surprised by the book, I suppose, that was a giveaway straight away. So, I don't know, it was interesting, it's, it's an interesting thing but I don't know what the point of it was though. If it was only to back up the narrative voice it was a very good way of doing it, but if it was to...

I: It actually distances the reader, doesn't it, from Auschwitz and naziism and the Führer. It's not a book, ostensibly about that, because it is not, it's about Bruno whose at Outwith, and his father has been ordered there by the Fury, so that's what its doing its distancing, attempting I think. And its also, also to elaborate the nine year old voice, I think.

CW: Right, okay, well, I don't get the distancing thing, because every time I read the word I just thought 'Auschwitz'.

I: I think that's what you're supposed to do.

CW: O, okay, fair enough.

I: What about the characters?

CW: Umm

I: Did you feel they were well drawn ? Or?

CW: Yeh, well drawn, but again like I, like I say the author may be hiding behind the nine year old's voice, not... You do build up a picture of them but it's not like the fullest picture in the world, but then that's probably the perception of characters that you have as a nine year old. It was good for the , yeh, I don't know, it was.. it's well done because it's supposed to be in Bruno's mind, but you don't get... They're very obvious characters aren't they? They're very solid, like.. stereotypical characters all of them.

I: Not particularly developed.

CW: Yeh

I: Although the boy in the striped pyjamas is , would you say he was the most well developed of them all, or not?

CW: Yeh, maybe, I don't know. The ones like maybe where there was less said, or less understood about the characters, were probably the easiest to develop yourself, maybe, so; the boy being one of them, the cook and the maid. Because Bruno asks kind've a few pressing questions and that, and because he doesn't get the responses that he was really wants to get, you almost build your own picture of them round that. But the ones, the characters that have been pretty much put out there for you to see; the mum and the dad and the sister are just...yeh, flat characters. Yeh, I suppose the most interesting ones are the external, the externals to the family. I suppose that would make sense because you just see your family as mum, dad, sister, obvious. So the other ones, that's why they're more interesting characters.

I: So what do we think, what do you think the author is trying to teach us? You said it lingered with you Why what is it in your mind. What sort of thoughts and feelings have you had about it, that it has lingered? [Long pause] Because that bears the hallmark of a profound effect doesn't it?

CW: Yeh, it's just the...it's just the...that final thing where he goes into the chamber, that's all it is. It's that feeling towards the father and mother, I don't know if she's still with him, of, I don't know what the word is but you're so satisfied, that they got their come uppance by losing their son through it. That's, it's a really weird sense of, what's the word I'm looking for? Satisfaction, it's a weird sense of satisfaction at their loss, because of what they're doing. Even though you can kind of sympathise with them, as well because they have to be there, because they don't really have a choice, so, I don't know.

I: But there's always a choice, isn't there?

CW; I don't know

I: But isn't that one of the things he is saying, there's always a choice?

CW: Umm, or maybe he's saying there's not always a choice, because what would if they had turned around and said they weren't going to go there, they would maybe been executed for disobeying the Fuhrer, wouldn't they?

I; Umm

CW: Maybe, ye hmm.

I: Did we discuss language? What did you think of the prose?

CW: The prose? The prose? [long pause] It's obviously written with smaller more manageable words I suppose because, um. I see your point, actually, just because it is written through the eyes of a nine year old it doesn't have to be written so, in the sort of simplicity that it is, so maybe that kind of goes to help you get into the, the mind of a nine year old. Because it could have been written slightly more intellectually than it was, and still be giving you the same impression. But because he has not done that, that adds to the ...the vibe.

I: The sense of tragedy?

CW: Perhaps.

I: Okay, anything else you would like to say about the book? Would you recommend it to anyone?

CW: Yes I would actually. I would recommend it to someone as a , quick read, and, and something that will actually stay with you for a while, definitely, yeh. I still don't know who it's aimed at.

I: I think it's aimed at us all isn't it?

CW: Yeh. Whose it written for? Specifically, what age group was it written for? Where do they put it in the shops?

I: But that's like saying to you what age group are your songs written for?

CW: I know, I know, I understand. I was thinking about this this morning, actually, before I came out because I didn't mention it, I'm kind of guilty of trying to pigeon hole this book in the way it really annoys me that people try and pigeon hole our music. But, I want to know. I want to know because, maybe this is going to teach me some thing about the whole music thing, but, I want to know where I stand, and I can't work out where I stand on it, until I know where it stands. That's really annoying, if I know it's written for kids, I could probably make a different, or maybe I would see it differently if I know its written for adults I'll see it differently. Because I don't know who it's written for I can't understand it. Maybe it's the same for people and our music, because they don't know if it's written for their kids or if they're allowed to listen to it too, so they don't know if their allowed to enjoy it. I don't know if I'm allowed to enjoy that. If it's written for adults and it's written like that, and it's got big letters, so you feel like a moron when you're reading it, maybe, maybe that's clever, but if it's actually written for a kid, and you just accept it's just a kid's book, and then see a different sort of side to it , I don't know.

I: Do you think nine year olds should read a book like this?

CW: No.

I: Are you saying that you don't think it is suitable for nine year olds?

CW: I don't know, it's a bit of a heavy ending isn't it?

I: Do you think nine year olds should be protected from things that actually happen?

CW: No, but I think maybe they should be allowed to emotionally develop enough to make a...to take it in properly. I don't know. I don't even know what a nine year old even looks like, I don't know how developed people are at nine, so..maybe nine is old enough, so maybe thirteen, or something, or maybe twelve. I don't know.

I: First year secondary school, year seven, they could read that, do you reckon?

CW: Probably, yeh. I don't know. I don't know if they'd.....

I: It's a moral decision.

CW: It could be very upsetting for a nine year old to read that, couldn't it?

I: Are you saying it was not upsetting for you?

CW: Yes it was, yeh, definitely. So it would be, so it could be for a..if a if a if they understood it. It could be very upsetting for a nine year old.

I: But isn't that one of the purpose of this book, to disturb you?

CW: Yes, but it's easier to deal with that when you're a bit older, and you're not going to have sleepless nights and wet the bed. If you see what I mean. I don't know if I'd want, I don't know if I'd want a nine year old child of mine to read it, because I wouldn't want to distress them to that extent, until they actually were able to deal with it I don't know. What do you think?

I: It's not important what I think. What did you think about the cover?

CW: Umm

I: Now that you've read the book?

CW: I don't know really.

I: Because I bought this book because it had this cover. There is another cover that shows a boy prisoner in striped pyjamas standing behind a wire fence.

CW: O, a give away!

I: Yes but I didn't buy that one I wanted the one that..... But it is a bit of a giveaway, isn't it?

CW: It is now that you look back on it, I suppose it is yeh.

I: You know that [indicates blue and white stripes on book cover.]

CW: Yeh, that's the stripe.

I: Mmm. That's the material.

CW: Yeh. That's good about it actually because it doesn't give away too much, when you first see it.

I: But the picture on the front, if I'd bought the one with the picture on the front, it would have given it away, wouldn't it?

CW: Yes exactly. So maybe that makes me, that actually, funny enough makes me feel, like the whole thing I was saying about the ...feeling like I wasn't surprised by the ending of the book, that makes me feel that maybe it was the author's intention. That must be the case otherwise he would not have allowed a picture like that to be on the front cover. Because that, if that picture had been on the front cover...you would 've even,, it would have been even quicker to understand what era you're in, what was going on. So...

I: Did the striped pyjamas convey anything to you, in the title?

CW: No, not at all. I thought it was going to be a book about some kid having an adventure while his parents are asleep.

I: Like *Peter Pan*?

CW: Yeh,

I: Right right.

CW: So you didn't... I mean because I'm an adult I know, I knew, I understood that the striped pyjamas meant that kind of uniform

CW: Right

I: that they wore.

CW: Mmh

I: Because I've read other books where people did wear those clothes, you know war time texts.

CW: Mmh. I didn't know that.

I: Yes

CW: That didn't occur to me at the time anyway.

## **HENRY**

Interviewer is I, Henry is PO.

PO: I am a paramedic with London Ambulance service, living in London. I graduated with an honours degree from the University of Hertfordshire and undertook my A levels studies at xxxx school in Chemistry, Biology and Sports Studies.

I: How would you describe yourself in terms of a socio-economic group?

PO: I find that quite a difficult question to answer in this day and age, the sort of boundaries between cultures are quite ill defined nowadays.

I: Would you say you were middle class?

PO: Not necessarily ,no.

I: But you are not working class either are you?

P O :No, exactly what I am saying, that the boundaries are a bit blurred between the classes.

I: You don't think that the fact you went to university, have a degree, and are working in

the medical profession makes you middle class?

P O: Maybe previously, sort of years ago that might have made me middle class, but I feel its quite an easy thing for some one to do , even someone from a working class background. Especially in this day and age with all the opportunities there are out there for people.

I: Do you ever remember a time when you could not read?

P O : No I don't think so.

I: Do you remember who used to read to you ? Or how you learned to read?

P O: Mum and Dad, and obviously at school. I remember we had these sort of reading cards and they were colour coded, and you could progress up to the next colour. I remember that quite well because I progressed quite quickly and I was always on a better colour. ( than his twin) It was quite funny.

I: So it was quite competitive?

P O: Yes ,yes in a way, which I think was good. The competition.

I: Do you remember learning nursery rhymes?

P O: No not rea... I can remember learning some nursery rhymes, but I wouldn't be able to recall the exact.

I: Do you remember any stories your mum, you said your mum and your dad read to you< any stories they read to you?

P O: Yes, quite fond of ..I remember one that I was quite fond of as a child was Fantastic Mr Fox by Roald Dahl.

I: And who read you that?

P O: Mum

I: But it was equal was it mum and dad?

P O: I would say more mum, cos she kind of , being the more academic out of my parents, I believe she sort of took the lead in... Dad would, would always read.

I: You're on e of a twin aren't you? So there were always two to be read to at the same time?

P O: Yeh. Well, probably, being a twin made it easier cos we were obviously both at the same level, so they read to both of us at the same time.

I: Do you remember any books you had at home?

P O: The Roald Dalh collection;- Fantastic Mr Fox, the I G

I: The Big Friendly Giant?

P O: B F G sorry not B I G , just the Roald Dalh collection I remember was quite...we were quite fond of that, and some Rudyard Kipling, as well.

I: What? The Jungle Book?

P O: Yeh, The Jungle Book, what's the other one? Quite a famous one with the snake?

I: Kaa? Sheer...Kaa the snake? That's in the Jungle Book.

P O: No No. I t was the tales of India, or Indian Tales, I can't remember now.

I: It 'll come back to you. Do you remember books at school you were read to?

P O: No not particularly.

I : You don't remember school books?

P O: No, I think school was more short stories, there wasn't any major sort of author.

I : And the reading schemes.

P O: Yes that sort of orientated, so short verses as well, to describe stuff and pick out stuff, you know.

I: But you never had any difficulty reading?

P O: No I would say I was one of the sort of ..the people who excelled

I: You and xxxx ( the twin)?

P O: Yes, both excelled.

I: Because you were both in the same class, were you?

P O: Yes.

I: And do you remember the very first book you ever read by yourself?

P O: No, I can't say that I do, actually. I used to ,as a child, be quite into Take Off magazines, which was all about aeroplanes, and it was, I suppose, my mum, it was weird because I never understood at the time, mum was quite keen and always buying me these magazines, and the language used was quite technical in a way, and I think she...always bought them for me on a Wednesday morning, on the way to school because, of the technical language, and it did help with my vocabulary ,quite a lot...which ...I quite enjoyed reading those.

I: That's actually non-fiction?

P O: Yes, complete non-fiction, it was kind of like sort of specification data of planes and tales of pilots and what they'd done, and I really loved it.

I: Sounds very interesting. So you can't remember the first time you actually read a book?

P O: No I can't say as I do.

I: Do you actually read now?

P O: I've obviously had to read non-fiction texts for...

I: Study?

P O: Study. I don't tend to read fiction but non fiction, so last book I read I finished it about a month ago, obviously I've been reading texts for my exams, but that was *Sinking Of The Bellgrano*, which was about an Argentine warship during the Falklands that was stalked by the Navy. It was..I find that sort of stuff interesting. And then the book I read before that was a book called *Diver* and it was the sort of autobiography of a Royal Navy diver and his exploits during the Falklands War and what he got up to after.

I: That's two texts now you've mentioned about the Falklands War are you particularly interested in the Falklands? Or are you particularly interested in war stuff?

P O: War stuff...I wouldn't say war stuff in general, I do find that interesting but fiction...as long as its credible fiction I don't mind reading it, like I enjoyed sort of *The Da Vinci Code* and *Angels and Demons*, and that was sort of fairly credible. But fantasy I wouldn't be able to read because... I didn't enjoy *Lord of the Rings*.

I: But you have read it though?

P O: Yeh, I've read *Lord of the Rings*, I didn't enjoy that purely because I couldn't see any realism in it, and I think obviously that is the point of fantasy, but I just.. I didn't get on with it.

I: You didn't see it as an analogy of life then?

P O : No... I don't think I did actually.

I: That's fine. That's alright. You know everyone has their own taste don't they and its very interesting to hear a variety of tastes. Anything else you would like to say about learning to read or reading in...as you were developing as a reader?

P O: No.

I: The experience of school did it promote your reading...or?

P O: I think it probably did but I was of an age that I thought...I probably put it down to coincidence that we were sort of learning in a way, and it wasn't anything...

I: So your're saying you learned to read despite what went on in school?

P O: Yeh, In a way it was ...I would not of known there was any purpose to it I think at that age. Obviously reading...they emphasised reading as important...and mum always emphasised reading as important because her dad was a journalist and quite into his literature and his operas and stuff and his theatre...so I think she always emphasised that and found it really important, hence why she'd always buy me these magazines, cos I enjoyed reading those so she'd thought if I read those it ud....

I: You'd what? Develop a love of literature?

P O: Well not necessarily develop a love for literature, but develop a want to read, and I think perhaps I have taken that forward with the books I read now, because I'm not necessarily big into my English literature like the main titles book, non-fiction and stuff that you can actually learn credible stuff from .

I: My brother in law reads that sort of stuff all the time. This is about focusing on reading very specifically, so how important is reading to your life? Why that is and the types of reading that you do now?

P O: OK Well in terms of the past four years reading has been sort of fairly instrumental because university obviously nowadays is not so much being taught, but learning how to teach yourself and develop and that for later on in your career to be able to sort of professionally develop on your own...so...over the last four years I'd say I have predominantly have read scientific journals...and books...mainly on health care, there 've been some stuff on leadership and organisational behaviour, and psycho-social behaviour...and going down that route as well because that's a side line of..., one sideline I could go into in future is management so that's, why they were getting us to do those modules and read the books because...just to get a foundation for it...if we wanted to pursue that later on in our careers.

I: Do you read many medical texts?

P O : Yeh,...quite a few ...I would say more than most of my peers.

I: Can you remember any books or plays or poems at all , and explain why you remember them and what you remember them for?

P O: One of the main poems I remember is *Footprints in the Sand* and I guess I remember that because it was at one of my uncles funerals, I now that's a bit morbid, but I guess that's poignant because I always like the beach, and to think my uncle, that I quite liked, on the beach ...yeh...I've... it was poignant..I remember that. Other poems...I remember some of Chaucer's tales...from G.C.S.E. English. One of my...one of the books I quite liked at school was ..*The Lost..Was it The Lost Boys?*

I: The 'lost boys' are in *Peter Pan*.

P O: No, sorry the ones that get marooned on the island and that.

I: O...*Lord of the Flies*

P O: *Lord of the Flies*, yeh. I quite enjoyed that because I did actually find that a microcosm of society...also another one that was sort of a microcosm of society—*Animal Farm* I quite enjoyed reading that at school...and I think they were deliberately obvious that they were made to be microcosms of sort of life and society,...and one rule for one and one rule for the others as it were.

I: Do you remember any plays at all?

P O: I can't say that I do actually.

I: Have you ever seen any plays?

P O; I've seen some productions at school...but I wouldn't say plays as such.

I: You never even studied Shakespeare?

P O : Yes I studied Shakespeare, but I haven't physically sat down in a theatre and watched a play, as it were.

I: So you 've only really read Shakespesare?

P O:Yes.

I: Nothing else?

P O: No, you might have to jolt my memory.

I: You didn't do, like, *Our Day Out* by Willy Russell. (It's a bog standard Yr 9 text for study)

P O: No

I: And what play did you do for Shakespeare?

P O; I think it was *The Merchant of Venice*.

I; How did you feel about that?

P O: I can't really remember it to be honest with you.

I: Can't you? It was that good!

P O: Yes yes!

I: It's about the Jew, Shylock. It is set in Venice. He is ...he lends money to the merchant, the merchant of Venice, Antonio, and then he wants his pound of flesh when the money is not paid.

P O: Yes

I: Do you remember that?

P O: Yeh, yeh.

I: Ithought you might have remembered it because it is about the whole racial. Racial-religio-religious, you know frictiom.

I: Mmm...But again it...I never...I don't think...I was always brought up obviously Christian and didn't really have any concepts of what I do now see as racism, as such, cos to me, at that age everyone was the same. Even though...well, our school was completely white, there wasn't any mixed race or..any racial problems. I don't think I ever...at that age, was to fully understand...I probably understood what racism was but, you know , not how I see it now...how some people, how I see some people are seeing it now. If that makes sense.

I: Yes, but that's because of your experience of four years in Hertfordshire and working for the London Ambulance Service? Pretty much front line stuff isn't it?

P O: O yes.

I: This is about what you think you have learned from any book, short story poem or play that you have ever read, any text, that you didn't really know before you read that particular text?

P O : Mmm .....(long pause) ...I think that's too tough to answer really, its going back a bit.

I: I t is a difficult question isn't it. Obviously, if you are making academic study, you approach texts solely for the purpose of learning, don't you ?

P O; Mmm Mmm

I: But when you read like *Lord of the Flies*, *Animal Farm* clearly it has taught you something?

P O: Umm...I don't, don't think it taught...It taught me that there is prejudice in the world and some people will...you know, try and be better than others, in a away, and that there is always going, always going to be inequalities in every level of society, because its almost human nature to want to be better than the next person ummm. But I don't think

it, it taught me that, it highlighted it in a away, and it, sort of opened my eyes to it, and made it, condensed it into a smaller understanding. Because, like *Animal Farm* was all about Stalinism and that, that sort of subject area, but at that age I would not have been able to understand Stalinism, and Trotsky and such, but its its condensed it into a sort of more manageable way of learning, learning, you know, what these inequalities...

I: But it has stayed with you because you understand now about Stalinism

P O: O yes definitely.

I: When you read what sort of things is your mind doing?

P O: How do you say...how do you..when what my mind's doing, what thinking about the text or??

I: Yes what's going on in your mind. By your mind I mean, you know, like your imagination and maybe your feelings as well. The mind's a complex thing isn't it?

P O: O yes definitely. I think if I get to a difficult part in the text, perhaps I try and picture it in my mind...to make more sense of it, or if there's a really descriptive part of the text I'll try and visualise it, because I think that makes the story more interesting in a way. And I am always looking, ever since school, I've I've got an understanding that stories do go deeper than perhaps...a descriptive...fictional stories sometimes do go deeper than sort of a descriptive meaning that they've got, and a lot of meaning like *Animal Farm*, and they've got underlying sort of stories to them, so I'm I'm always looking for those in books now. And I think that's possibly the trouble with non-fiction is that...there is no real underlying story sometimes because it is purely descriptive of events that have occurred. But again the fiction though , the trouble with them is that a lot of is fiction and there is no realism to it, and you can't learn a lot from it ,I find. It is just a story, whereas with fiction you can learn quite a bit about, about other stuff.

I: You mean non-fiction?

P O : Sorry about non non-fiction, you can.

I: You don't feel that these auto or biographical texts, you know the *Bellgrano* and the *Diver, the other one* about the Falklands war offer insights into perhaps the way people thought and felt at a particular time?

P O: O definitely. And I think it... specially if it does highlight sort of sometimes what people have been through and that...that is good and it's...as opposed to fiction it is true raw emotion,...and it is real

I: And it's...you talked yourself earlier about culture, social strata and culture, and I mean obviously you can appreciate that these things like the sinking of the *Bellgrano* in '82 has a socio-historic context doesn't it?

P O: O yes definitely

I: That is now completely out of date, almost?

P O: It was interesting to see at that time the sort of feelings behind the sinking of the ship, because although we were at war with Argentina, there was a lot of "Should we have sunk that ship and killed all those people?", because at the end of the day it's a small archipelago of islands that perhaps...do we have a right to own? Because it was part of the commonwealth, which is now...sort of, well it's broken up hasn't it, and we don't own it and it's... it's not technically ours..and yeh...so... It was quite interesting to see different viewpoints, and the good thing about that because it brought a lot of media, sort of highlighted a lot of media issues at the time with that , which I thought was good. People's sort of feelings...

I: Yes I think it was one, not the first, but it was possibly the war that was, as it was

happening, so it was filmed, and that news of the war came first beaming into people's sitting rooms, before the War office had a chance to say x,y or z is injured, missing, you know, dead.

P O: Mmmm.

I: How interesting. When you talk about your reading, with other people, as I'm sure you do, what sort of things do you say? What sort of things do you focus in on, or talk about? P O: I can't say as I do a lot of talking about reading with other people because I don't think perhaps we're at that age where we truly appreciate texts and being able to reason out with other people...and the books I tend read aren't the same books other people tend to read , at my age. Yes its kind of...I mean it's difficult to talk about someone with a book that you haven't read, that they haven't read, sorry.

I: But if you don't talk to people about your reading, and don't start saying " O well I found this very interesting, why don't you give it a go?" How will you...? And if you don't listen to what other people say you'll never kind of...never broaden your diet, will you?

P O: Mmm

I: And anyway you don't always have to read books, there's things like newspaper article, aren't there?

P O: O I read, I read *The Times* every day.

I: And who do you talk to about it?

P O: Well it comes up, so for instance we..we were having a few beers the other night at the (names a pub) the other night, a friend and I got into quite a heated debate about political parties, and sort of the merits of one set,... and right wing fascists group and...how possibly that, you know, people aren't turning that way cos of what's happening at the moment with our current economic climate and.....

I: So your reading provoked a discussion...

P O: O definitely yes, so I suppose in that respect yeh, if I'm reading...reading news yeh, I guess you could say that its provoking .....provoking thought, but then I think you have to be careful about what news you read...um especially which paper it is...because I enjoy *The Times* because it is fairly sort of objective as opposed to something subjective like *The Sun*,...and the sources are generally more reliable and less sensationalist.....but I do tend to take things that the media, any media says with a pinch of salt...because at the end of the day it is quite hard to sort of back it up with any thing solid sometimes... it's just what people say.

I: So there's always a level of bias.

P O: O definitely, definitely, I think governments have a massive amount of control over what the media say, and I've noticed it recently with Gordon Brown, because he was even I think quoted in something in *The Sun* the other day saying " I hope Susan Boyle is alright" after her nervous breakdown, and I found that astonishing, that the Prime Minister is getting involved with such sort of a sensational story, and it's as if he is trying to be...come down to our level and try and claw back some voters... So yeh I think it is tool and it can be a massive propaganda tool, if not in our society in, especially communist societies, it is it is a massive propaganda tool, so it has to be very careful I think about what you select from the media sometimes, and it helps I think to read a lot of sources, so if there is a fairly sensational story I will perhaps go to, say *The Independent* which will take a sort of more right view on things as opposed to the liberal view of *The Times*.

I: This is a question about role models. Is there anything in your reading that has offered you role models, in books ,or indeed in any of the type of reading that you have done, books, plays, poems, and obviously you are a keen non-fiction reader?

P O: Ummmm

I: At various stages, it needen't be now , it could even be when you were a child?

P O: I wouldn't say role models as such. I read a book on...I read Lance Amstrong's autobiography, Ranolph Feinnes autobiography, and one thing I... I wouldn't say they were role models, but I have taken away from that how strong human nature can be at times of ...of sort of despair and knowing there's nothing left but human nature to keep them going in a way, and it does make you think that, or it's made me think that human nature is a great thing, you know, and if you really want something bad enough and you set your mind to it that it's....

I: Well, you say human nature, I mean ...you mean Ranolph Feinnes he is an explorer and he's also a mountain climber? And Lance Amstrong? You're not thinking of the Amstrong who flew to the moon?

P O: No, no seven times the *Tour de France* champion, came back from testicular cancer and lung cancer.

I: So you're talking really about the spirit of

P O: Human spirit yeh yeh

I: Human endeavour and mental strength?

P O: Yeh definitely

I: How interesting. They are kind of role models? How old is he?

P O: In his late thirties, early forties.

I: He had testicular cancer as a young man?

P O: I think he was in his twenties

I That's earlier than most isn't it?

P O: No, I've known a few people that have got it in their twenties.

I: I'm out of touch with things like that.

P O: I mean it is the most survivable form of cancer, testicular cancer.

I: It's the most??

P O: The most survivable form of cancer

I: Is it?

P O: 95% They worked that out??(indiscernible utterance here)

I: Anybody else?

P O: No

I: This next question is about your sense of morality, and I want to know what in your reading has shaped your sense of morality?

P O: Mmmmm

I: Obviously one's sense of morality comes from a whole variety of places but I'd like you to focus on your reading

P O: M mmmm. ...That's another... that's a fairly ...that's another hard question. That's a...Would the bible count as/???

I: Yes the bible would count

P O: I think yeh... I think as a...as a child being...being brought up in a Christian school and not being made to read the bible, read the bible, but having that as a strong influence and obviously the text is full of morals and what's...what's right and what's wrong, sort of not how to do good, but how to treat others as you'd like to be treated yourself and

...so I think that was a... that was a really good text that...that has shaped my...my morality quite extensively. Because although I'm not...I don't go to church any more and I don't ever do follow Christianity, and I'll...I will always take that away, and I think that's how I view life to a certain extent, as treat others how you would like to be treated yourself. And the ten...I wouldn't say I followed the ten commandments to the ...to the dot, but they are sort of the basis for all laws and I find that if you kind of try and stick to those you can't go far wrong in life.

I: Very interesting. Nothing else has?

P O: Nothing that I can distinctly recall upon.

I: This next question is about your emotions, how you think reading has contributed to your emotional development, how it helps to develop the emotions, train them?

(Long Pause)

P O: With the...with the sort of non-fiction reading I wouldn't say it was any, it wouldn't have developed my emotions to that sort of extent. I've never really with fiction, been able to get emotionally involved in a book, and I find, now especially with my job that I'm quite able to emotionally detach myself from a situation if I want to, and it's only if it has a really sort of umm....if it means something to me that it will emotionally effect me. And I think I've always...I'm quite lucky in the respect that I've always sort of been able to emotionally detach myself. In a way I've never seen reading as a way of developing my emotional behaviour.

I: So you have never felt moved by anything you have read? Never cried or

P O: I wouldn't say I've cried

I: But you've laughed, have you, at things you 've read?

P O; Yes I'd say so, definitely

I: That's a form of emotional engagement

P O: Mmmmm

I: Felt sympathy or empathy?

P O: Mmmmm I wouldn't say greatly, especially if it is fiction because there's no sense of realism. I mean, in a lot of these books that I 've read about ,sort of wars and stuff there is , there is obviously sympathy for the stories where colleagues have been killed and how they've been killed, and you know some of the emotional stress that they themselves have endured. And it is quite poignant I suppose some of the things they say, some of the statements, but I wouldn't say it's had any long sort of lasting emotional effect on me.

I: But when you admire Randolph Fiennes and Lance Armstrong, that's an emotion isn't it? To admire, to maybe want to replicate, to be like that person, to have that strength?

P O: Mmmm. I don't know if you could say admiration was an emotion, could you say that? It's obviously a state of mind, but whether its something that you...I don't know...I wouldn't class admiration really as an emotion to be honest with you.

I: Any thing else you'd like to say about your emotional development and reading?

P O: No, no.

I: Is there anything in your reading, or how you think your reading has influenced or changed you?

I: I think this goes back to the morality question as well. Um so the bible text I don't, wouldn't necessarily changed me , it has guided me. It hasn't changed me from something I was, to something I am now, but it perhaps has made me grow into, I say a better person, but then I am comparing myself to what I always assume is a lesser person

but it's made me develop into what society I suppose would class as...as a better person. So someone who doesn't steal, or fight , or burn, wreak havoc, but I wouldn't say anything's particularly changed, changed the way I have sort of grown. ( Long pause)

I: You don't think for instance that the fact you were such a good reader as a child enabled you to pursue your interests and your academic study, and almost choose a career for yourself?

P O: Yeh, I think so but I wouldn't say that has changed me, that's all, that's made medevelop, cos it wasn't a sort of turning point where I've read something and thought "O, you know I'd like to be like that". But, yeh....

I: It's a difficult question, they're not easy questions. I understand that. This is the last one. How do you think your reading has contributed to making you overall how you are now , as opposed to anything else?

P O: I'd say the reading I' ve done has given me a lot of knowledge, probably more so than some of my colleagues...because I..yeh I do know...I...because of the reading, the medical books I read, I read quite a lot, and I would know for instance, slightly more than some of my peers would.

I: Is that deliberate? When you say your peers?

P O: Colleagues at work

I: Colleagues of the same rank as you

P O: Yes yes.....And it is noticeable when I've ...I've done shifts with my colleagues and I've come out with stuff... they are shocked that I know. So for instance the average paramedic wouldn't have known that (names a person known to us both) had bust his finger like that, but its purely because I've read a minor injury's book, because it interested me, because it gives me that extra bit of knowledge to...to go out with.

I: So its been quite influential in your career?

P O: O definitely, yes yes

I: Will that help you to move upwards and onwards,as it were, gain promotion?

P O: I think obviously I will seek promotion because already I'm getting bored with the level I'm at and there is a certain limit to where your knowledge is useful, so yes I definitely think I will use that knowledge to move on, ....but I think that's...sort of..dunno...my nature is just to want to progress and do better.

I: So could you live without reading at all?

P O: No.

I: Let's move on now to *The Boy In The Stripped Pyjamas*; I'm just going to let you talk about it.

P O: The book I found was...was obviously written from the viewpoint of a nine year old, which I didn't quite enjoy because it did seem,... the language I found was fairly patronising in a way...and the way it explained things was quite simple, and it did frustrate me at points. There was a bit...there was quite a lot of repetition in it with the sayings he was saying, but then again was that because he was nine and had a limited vocabulary and perhaps couldn't explain...experiences and instances in a way an adult could. One of those was the "made a big O with his mouth" I couldn't think of anything underlying that that represented in the story. I did sort of rack my brains to think what it could be. Whereas the.. there were certain other repetitions "Outwith", that obviously 'out with the jews' was the underlying sort of saying behind that. And, "the Fury" was obviously the Fuhrer which is the German for 'leader' isn't it? So...it was ...yes and there were some glaring inaccuracies with the book itself because there weren't

any nine year old boys in the concentration camps, they would have been killed because they weren't able to work. Plus, the perimeter fence of Auschwitz was electrified, so there was no way he could have crawled under. Another inaccuracy was, even at nine years old, Bruno would have been indoctrinated into the Hitler youth, even more so given his father's rank he would have been. He would have known what was going on in that camp, and he would have had, not a complete understanding of racism and the sort of atrocities occurring, but he would have understood that Shmuel wasn't someone he should be talking to. And the people in that camp were inferior to them. And I kind of guessed half way through what was going to happen, after he said ...after he said he enjoys exploring I kind of guessed that once he got to the camp that he was going to go exploring inside the camp and eventually something was going to happen to him, and it was obvious, And I just... I found the language just a bit simple, and I know it was from the viewpoint of a nine year old and the book is ??? for nine year olds, I completely understand that. But..

I; You know Coleridge said when you read, when you go to the theatre, he was talking about going to the theatre really but it also applies to literature, and poetry and novels, such as *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas*, he said when you go to the theatre you have to "suspend your disbelief". So you have to make a poetic leap, and think I know this is a story, or a play, or a piece of ballet ,but I'm just going to open my imaginative mind to it all.

P O; I think that's alright if you go with that sort of mind set but, I think if you're doing a story about something so poignant in history it has to be accurate, to a certain extent, with ballet and stuff , I think the whole point is yes, you do go there and you open your mind to it and, you know, you look at it as a whole, as opposed to....you know you look for the deeper understanding as opposed to what you can see. And I know the say was probably true for that book, but I just...it was just glaring inaccuracies in it that sort of made me think that none of this would have happened, but maybe that perhaps is not the point of the book, because it was trying to demonstrate....a child's oblivion, obliviousness to sort of, social discrimination at that age, and their...inability to understand that sort of concept, and their sort of...innate, in a way, their innate, sort of , sense of fairness, that was represented through that book. So every time he would say it's alright for the parents to do that but we can't....

I; Did you ever feel, any sympathy for Bruno?

P O; Again, because it was a book, a fiction book, and I didn't no, I can't say as I did. I just....

I; You weren't sorry when he died then?

P O; In a way, I was sort of indifferent to it because, although he..he had no realisation of what...what was going on in that camp, well in the book he has no realisation of what was going on in that camp, in a way, I think it was, it wasn't obviously Bruno's fault, but it was the nazi culture at the time. Was he supposed to...should he have been there in the first place? Should his dad have taken him to such a place? On his own? And especially at that age , obviously children are very inquisitive and I mean should he have been kept an eye on a bit more? But I can't say...I mean I didn't feel sorry for him, and I kind of anticipated what was going to happen, so I was kind of prepared for that, but I think if one hadn't, hadn't of anticipated it, and was not prepared for what was going to happen, I think yes, it would have been a shock.

I: What did you think the author was trying to teach the reader?

P O: I think it's this whole innate sense of fairness that a child views the world with, and

that perhaps we should all view the world as children, in a way....

I: "Out of the mouths of babes and innocents"

P O: Yeh, and that perhaps....we may be intellectual as we get older, become more intellectual and want more, we sometimes want more at the expense of others, whereas a child's needs are fairly basic, and they can be met with things like friend ship, and wanting to play, and explore.... Yes, I think maybe the author is trying to teach us that we should try and view the world in a simpler way, and appreciate everyone for what they are and not what perhaps we can get out of them, or what we can make out of them, if that makes sense.

I: Do you think the holocaust is a suitable subject for literature?

P O : I think if it's accurate it can be, in that I'm saying , it has to be accurate in order not to instill any false ideas in people of what the holocaust was, and that book kind of....there's no...real ghastliness in it, it just describes the people as being behind a fence, and the worst it goes is describing how Shmuel looks, very thin, and you know, skinny, and I don't think it quite prepares.... I don't think it quite illustrates well enough how horrific that, that period of time was, and maybe for a young audience that is appropriate, but it was, I think it was a quite horrific period and that. Even when they go to the gas chambers, it ..it still doesn't....if you were nine years old, you wouldn't have understood what happened in those gas chambers. And yes, I think that's....I think it is difficult to make a nine year old....nine year old read that and sort of understand, and appreciate fully the atrocities that went on. But should a nine year old fully appreciate the atrocities that went on?

I: But nine year olds were part of it though.

P O: Yes

I: Would you recommend this book to anyone? Can you think of someone you would recommend it to?

P O: I think.... I...It's difficult because I didn't enjoy it, therefore I couldn't have a basis for recommending it to any one.

I: That's alright we don't have to like every thing we read. Thank you very much.

I: Let's move on now to ***The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas***; I'm just going to let you talk about it.

P O: The book I found was...was obviously written from the viewpoint of a nine year old, which I didn't quite enjoy because it did seem,... the language I found was fairly patronising in a way...and the way it explained things was quite simple, and it did frustrate me at points. There was a bit...there was quite a lot of repetition in it with the sayings he was saying, but then again was that because he was nine and had a limited vocabulary and perhaps couldn't explain...experiences and instances in a way an adult could. One of those was the "made a big O with his mouth" I couldn't think of anything underlying that that represented in the story. I did sort of rack my brains to think what it could be. Whereas the.. there were certain other repetitions "Outwith", that obviously 'out with the jews' was the underlying sort of saying behind that. And, "the Fury" was obviously the Fuhrer which is the German for 'leader' isn't it? So...it was ...yes and there were some glaring inaccuracies with the book itself because there weren't any nine year old boys in the concentration camps, they would have been killed because they weren't able to work. Plus, the perimeter fence of Auschwitz was electrified, so there was no way he could have crawled under. Another inaccuracy was, even at nine years old,

Bruno would have been indoctrinated into the Hitler youth, even more so giving..given his father's rank he would have been. He would of known what was going on in that camp, and he would have had, not a complete understanding of racism and the sort of atrocities occurring, but he would of understood that Shmuel wasn't someone he should be talking to. And the people in that camp were inferior to them. And I kind of guessed half way through what was going to happen, after he said ...after he said he enjoys exploring I kind of guessed that once he got to the camp that he was going to go exploring inside the camp and eventually something was going to happen to him, and it was obvious, And I just... I found the language just a bit simple, and I know it was from the viewpoint of a nine year old and the book is ??? for nine year olds, I completely understand that. But..

I; You know Coleridge said when you read, when you go to the theatre, he was talking about going to the theatre really but it also applies to literature, and poetry and novels, such as *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas*, he said when you go to the theatre you have to "suspend your disbelief". So you have to make a poetic leap, and think I know this is a story, or a play, or a piece of ballet ,but I'm just going to open my imaginative mind to it all.

P O; I think that's alright if you go with that sort of mind set but, I think if you're doing a story about something so poignant in history it has to be accurate, to a certain extent, with ballet and stuff , I think the whole point is yes, you do go there and you open your mind to it and, you know, you look at it as a whole, as opposed to....you know you look for the deeper understanding as opposed to what you can see. And I know the say was probably true for that book, but I just...it was just glaring inaccuracies in it that sort of made me think that none of this would have happened, but maybe that perhaps is not the point of the book,because it was trying to demonstrate....a child's oblivion, obliviousness to sort of, social discrimination at that age, and their...inability to understand that sort of concept, and their sort of...innate, in a way, their innate, sort of , sense of fairness, that was represented through that book. So every time he would say it's alright for the parents to do that but we can't....

I; Did you ever feel, any sympathy for Bruno?

P O; Again, because it was a book, a fiction book, and I didn't no, I can't say as I did. I just....

I; You weren't sorry when he died then?

P O; In a way, I was sort of indifferent to it because, although he..he had no realisation of what...what was going on in that camp, well in the book he has no realisation of what was going on in that camp, in a way, I think it was, it wasn't obviously Bruno's fault, but it was the nazi culture at the time. Was he supposed to...should he have been there in the first place? Should his dad have taken him to such a place? On his own? And especially at that age , obviously children are very inquisitive and I mean should he have been kept an eye on a bit more? But I can't say...I mean I didn't feel sorry for him, and I kind of anticipated what was going to happen, so I was kind of prepared for that, but I think if one hadn't, hadn't of anticipated it, and was not prepared for what was going to happen, I think yes, it would have been a shock.

I: What did you think the author was trying to teach the reader?

P O: I think it's this whole innate sense of fairness that a child views the world with, and that perhaps we should all view the world as children, in a way....

I: "Out of the mouths of babes and innocents"

P O: Yeh, and that perhaps....we may be intellectual as we get older, become more

intellectual and want more, we sometimes want more at the expense of others, whereas a child's needs are fairly basic, and they can be met with things like friend ship, and wanting to play, and explore.... Yes, I think maybe the author is trying to teach us that we should try and view the world in a simpler way, and appreciate everyone for what they are and not what perhaps we can get out of them, or what we can make out of them, if that makes sense.

I: Do you think the holocaust is a suitable subject for literature?

P O : I think if it's accurate it can be, in that I'm saying , it has to be accurate in order not to instill any false ideas in people of what the holocaust was, and that book kind of....there's no...real ghastliness in it, it just describes the people as being behind a fence, and the worst it goes is describing how Schmule looks, very thin, and you know, skinny, and I don't think it quite prepares.... I don't think it quite illustrates well enough how horrific that, that period of time was, and maybe for a young audience that is appropriate, but it was, I think it was a quite horrific period and that. Even when they go to the gas chambers, it ..it still doesn't....if you were nine years old, you wouldn't have understood what happened in those gas chambers. And yes, I think that's....I think it is difficult to make a nine year old....nine year old read that and sort of understand, and appreciate fully the atrocities that went on. But should a nine year old fully appreciate the atrocities that went on?

I: But nine year olds were part of it though.

P O: Yes

I: Would you recommend this book to anyone? Can you think of someone you would recommend it to?

P O: I think.... I...It's difficult because I didn't enjoy it, therefore I couldn't have a basis for recommending it to any one.

I: That's alright we don't have to like every thing we read. Thank you very much.

## **ARTHUR**

Interviewer is I, Arthur is C E.

C E: I am currently studying for a Masters degree at Winchester University on Managing Global Contemporary Issues. And I'm working at a garage.

I: Who read to you when you were very little?

C E: My mother mainly when I was just the...standard when you are going to sleep sort of. Stories like *Flat Stanley* and things like that. Yes, so mainly my mother and then that developed into me reading for myself...later on, like to go to sleep too, and then at other times.

I: And do you remember learning nursery rhymes when you were small?

CE: Not really learning them, I remember my mum singing, like singing them to me when I was really small, but I don't ever remember a certain time when I specifically learnt them, I think things like that just sort of come...you just learn them from your parents sort of naturally, no one actually sits you down and teaches you them, I think.

I: So do you remember learning to read?

C E: I remember when I was, sort of in infants school reading the very simple sort of, five words a page sort of books, but not...I don't...I think because it comes so gradually you don't ,sort of, learn to read 'like that'. So I think it's hard to pinpoint a time when I learnt to read. But I read...I always I 've always read quite a lot independently anyway so I

think that helped. No, I couldn't pinpoint a certain time, a specific time.

I: Can you remember a time when you couldn't read?

CE: No, no.

I: Do you remember your experience of early reading at school?

CE: At school? I remember we used to have to read for I think it was ten fifteen minutes in the morning at junior school. We used to have to do that every day. But it was more ...it's always been more at home when I... definitely when I was younger that I read to be honest. So it wasn't...it was never sort of something that I needed forced upon me, and I think I sort of did it anyway.

I: Do you remember the very first book that you read?

CE: No, I don't remember any... No I don't remember a specific first book, because it was never sort of that big a deal. I don't know how..I don't mean it's not a big deal that you learn to read but, I don't know, the first books that I remember reading were Enid Blyton books and, yes just Enid Blyton really the *Famous Five* and the *Secret Seven*, you know, your standard ones. Noddy I suppose first, I read, so yes, It's those ones I always read first, so it's probably one of those to be honest.

I: You talked about *Flat Stanley*, did you read any of the Roald Dahl?

CE: O yeh, Roald Dahl as well. Yes I did read *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and *The Twits* and *Fantastic Mr Fox* and all of those, yeh all of those. And I used to read the series, obviously because I started reading *The Secret Seven* so I read all of those, and I read all of, all of *The Famous Five* ones, from the library, and then, sort of after that I ...yes those and then I sort of...mainly just those. A lot of those books weren't there, so it was mainly those ones.

I: That's very much junior school isn't it? You must have moved on to the comprehensive

CE: Yes

I: What? Were there significant books that you, by then I imagine there must have been some plays and poems as well, that you remember for enjoyment or for whatever?

CE: Yes, I remember at school we used to do the war, war poets...always interesting, like Wilfred Owen has always been one. And we used to learn poetry at school actually, we used to sort of...by repetition sort of...And I used to ...I don't know...I think like plays, plays wise Shakespeare was sort of...we did *Romeo and Juliet* and we did *King Lear*. Both of those I ...I have returned to in later life, and I went to watch *Romeo and Juliet* and obviously there's been the film ...but yes those...I found myself coming back to those and referring to them in... in my masters degree, definitely to a certain extent, talking about nature and things, so yes they have been really...really helpful to me. And I've read... autobiography of Shakespeare , and I'm quite interested in the sort of history aspect as well.

I: Were there any novel that you particularly remember from your experience of schooling?

CE: I remember *Of Mice And Men* we did...*The Railway Man* we did.....

I: What was the impact of those then on you?

CE: Those...I don't ...those books...I think sort of reading novels and things they...how, how it works is they give you the opportunity to experience things that you're not going to experience, so they allow you to sort of...think of what you would do in...this is what I always do when I'm reading...what you would do in the situation, so without having to sort of be a prisoner of war (this is a reference to *The Railway Man* by Eric Lomax) or you know...you can... it allows you to sort of... I don't know, sort of rehearse your

emotions almost, and takes you through the whole range, and I just think without that, you know, we'd be a lot worse off, you know, a lot less, a lot less prepared for, you know, things in general life I think. I don't know if that answers the question or not.

I: That does, yes, thank you. Moving on to these other questions now; can you tell me how important reading is to your life, why you read and about the types of reading that you are doing now?

CE: Well reading is very important as I ... I've said I don't think...you know, I was quite a sheltered sort of child anyway, and I think growing up it sort of broadens your...you know allows you to imagine and sort of, you know, allows your mind to develop in that way that I don't think, in a way that I don't think TV allows you to do because you can just see it, you know, so you've got to use your imagination to imagine the things that go on in books, and I really think that has helped me quite a lot. Also, you know, empathy wise, it's, you know, very key and that's what keeps me interested in books if I can empathise with at least one character in there. And what was the other question?

I: The types of reading that you do?

CE: Mainly coursework. It's mainly course orientated now. I've got to be honest I don't really have the time, that much time to read for pleasure at the moment, so it's sort of reports, documents, not really fiction at the moment, for factual purposes, and my own research. Although I'd love to get back to reading fiction,, I'd really love to, but I just haven't got the time.

I: This is about remembering books ,plays and poems and the ones you remember most. If you could explain why you remember them and what you remember them for.

CE: Umm... All..I do think the books that have had the most impact upon me, I've read early, in early childhood actually, now I'm remembering, like most of it has been, sort of, I keep repeating sort of, Enid Blyton, but it's like that, they're the books I read when I was a kid, and it, sort of, just the, like, the friendships and the, sort of, adventure, you know that really ,sort of, got me going. Even though I was sitting at home, sort of, reading, there were people out there, sort of, looking in rock pools and finding, sort of, things in there, and , you know, solving mysteries, and talking dogs, and whatnot. But, yes, sort of allowed me to, sort of, drift away and, you know, I don't know just, sort of, experience different things really at that young age when I don't think really think you can, , not to that extent, well, unless you are actually in a *Famous Five* book. Sort of, yes, I think...that's, that's where that's happened to me. And I think books like, *1984*, George Orwell's *1984* , which I've re read recently, sort of helped me in later life, sort of..discover the..I don't know...allow me to sort of 'test drive' different..different ideologies and, you know, sort of allowed me to think well, you know , is this a good thing, is this a bad thing? Allowed me to ,like, run through the whole, like, scenario in my head, like, while I was reading the book. And, allowed me to, sort of, analyse it, and, so, yeh, I think that's helped me a lot in my studies. And hopefully in life.

I: If you could tell me what you have learned from any text, any book or short story, poem or play that you've ever read, that you didn't know before you read it?

CE: From a specific text?

I: Well if you could give an example

CE: I think...yes I think I'd use *1984* as an example, actually. I learned, that..you know, that...the whole workings of politics almost, like not only in an authoritarian state, such as that portrayed in the book, but also.. more generally, like bits and pieces of the book,

like the whole idea of being Big Brother of these ...these massive, sort of , very...poignant at the moment what with cameras and the whole google, google earth debate out there, at street level mapping, and I don't ..I think the way that plays into the media as well in general, it sort of, bled out that book and it's *Big Brother* the TV show, you know. There's been countless, countless different...the way that the words such as, you know, "thought police" have come into the general use from it.....Yes I think that's definitely like re-span in my later reading right up to the present day, that's been very influential.

I: What sort of things is your mind doing when you read? Can you try and explain and give an example?

CE: It's...I think it's doing a number of things. I think on one level, it's running through the scenario that the narrative of the...what you're reading. But then, also , you're obviously trying to think of what...of what the...consequences of what's...of what you are actually reading is going to be, so you are racing ahead trying to think of what, what the end result of this is going to be. I don't know...I think yes, I think it might work on a number of levels. I don't.....other than that I don't think...because obviously once you've got to the stage where you're not having to worry about the words or anything you're...you're...yeh you're going with a...at a certain point you're sort of immersed in the ...in the narrative of it , and then obviously you're thinking, you're trying to like sort of analyse what...what the characters are going through and where that's actually going to lead them to. At least that what I always do, I'm always trying to find out the end before I get there.

I: When you discuss your reading with other people what sort of things do you say? What is the focus of the discussion?

CE: I think it's the morality. I think moral, sort of, dilemmas are the main focus point of how I ....because it's the, you know, the controversies that I tend to talk about, and where the ambiguities are in ..in any narrative is what I'm probably...and my mind gone blank.

I: Don't worry.

CE: I'll think of one later.

I: Tell me about some books, or any thing in your reading that has offered you role models, at various times in your life?

CE: (LONG PAUSE)

I: You talked about Enid Blyton and the children in *The Famous Five*, you've mentioned various other texts, poems, plays, you know Wilfred Owen, Shakespeare, Orwell. And don't forget a role model can inspire you , but it can also put you off as well.

CE: Yes, I mean,...I don't know...I think *King Lear* sort of allows you to see how not to, sort of, raise your kids...you know it allows you to see, not that I'm at that stage yet, but yeh, it allows you to see...I don't know, how to sort of deal with your children... what to, you know don't favour, don't favour, don't have favourites...And what else?...Yeh, I think, sort of, with *Romeo and Juliet* as well, don't. sort of allow..you know...about freedom of like, who to be attracted to and things, like there's nothing wrong in that, and I think that story pretty much sums that up well.

I: What in your reading has shaped your sense of morality? If you've got an example that would be helpful.

CE: I would have to say the Bible, because I was brought up fairly religiously. Not really my parents...I think more of a sense of duty, I think, than actual religious conviction from my parents, but I would have to say that the Bible and the ten commandments is where I

originally got my sort of, sense of morality from. And even though now I've drifted away from religion, it sort of still sort of, underpins, like who you are I think, so although, I'm sure it is a pretty standard book to quote from in terms of morality, I'm going to have to say that one.

I: How has reading shaped your emotions? Or influenced, or impacted on them in any way?

CE: As I was saying earlier, I think it allows you to develop your emotions because it puts you in situations that you wouldn't...that you wouldn't...necessarily get in yourself, so, you know, being a prisoner of war, or being in a situation where you're going to be killed or...you know, allows you to be in those situations, yeh definitely in terms of the way I read books,...allows you to be in those situations and think...how would I react..like what...what are the emotions doing here, so it allows you to sort of broaden your range of emotions. I think and yes

I: You were talking about *The Railway Man* there really weren't you?

CE: I was, but to be honest I ..yeh ...I can't think of any specific examples that I've read since, but yes definitely images of torture which you know most people aren't going to go through allows you to be a) be very grateful that the amount of things that people went through you know, for like for like everyone who is alive now and ...yes... just allows you to...and you can, you know, even at a young age you can experience like love through books, through other people's experiences and I think that sort of helps you to develop how you...when ,when it comes to like being in the middle of it , it helps you know what to do, kind of thing.

I: How has reading influenced you or changed you?

CE: I don't know if anything I've read is...I don't know...I think it's just...it opens you up to sort of new like ...I don't know...it allows you to, it's definitely allowed me to empathise with different characters and so..in that sense it's made me more broad minded, definitely, I would say, definitely made me more broad minded, and more open to, sort of, differing ideas...and...that's it.

I: How has reading contributed to making you how you are now?

CE: I think...definitely think it has made me quite a thoughtful person...quite....quite able to think through different situations and see different sides of....because when you are reading there's always, you know the good side and the bad side isn't there and sometimes its ambiguous, but you get to see different, through reading you get to see different points of view, and obviously, if the author's good they sort of make it so that there is an ambiguous part and it make you think well you know what would I do here, and the good and bad parts about both scenarios. I can't think of any examples though, it's terrible, but yes I have definitely got that from reading.

I: Could you imagine life without reading?

CE: No, I mean I read every day mainly the paper but, you know ,I can't think of what I would do ,how I'd...it's engaging...its more engaging than say radio or TV..you're more engaged in the whole process...it makes you think more about it if you're reading, syllable by syllable on the page , or on a screen, it allows you to think over it more its just more slower, slightly slower process...you can really let things wash over you, at least that's what I do.

I: Thank you.

I: So what was your response to *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas*?

CE: Ok, so, the narrative voice of the novel, I thought was very interesting, it's obvious we view the novel through a nine year old boy, Bruno, who is the main protagonist of the book. It's significant, the age of the narrative voice is significant, I think, because it allows the reader to, um, view the events of the book without being, um, confined by their own, in the context of their own knowledge of the, of the period of the holocaust. And, so you view it as a series of events...um...even though you know what's going to happen at the end of the book , or the end of the historical events of the book.Um...you see it just as a series of events in their own, in their own right. Um, but this creates a tension between the knowledge of the reader, and the knowledge of the, of the er...um...protagonist. Because obviously we know what is going to happen, and he doesn't. Um... and this, it drives the...the narrative along as well, and because um you have the...where Samuel gets thinner and thinner, and Pavel gets thinner and thinner and thinner, and um...sort of towards the final climax of the book, and um, and Bruno's own opinions change, well change as well, through the narrative. Um, we see him mirror some of the opinions of his father, such as, er, he comments that he's not sure if people of Samuel's, people from the camp should be in his house, and...

I: Shmuel, his name is Shmuel

CE: Shmuel? Yeh, I dunno

I: Did you read it as Samuel?

C E: Probably. Yeh, I read it as Samuel, but...

I: Fair enough

C E: Yeh, Shmuel that's right....But then...so he...in...on one hand he agrees with his father, but he finds it hard when anyone criticises his father, which is natural for a small boy. Um, but at the same time he is uneasy with the views of his father. Um...he's... such as when Pavel patches up his knee, after he has fallen from the rope swing,...he sees him as a kind, you know he can, he is gentle with him. That, that contrasted with Kohler's actions towards Pavel at the dinner party, where he hits him. I don't know, that's not specified is it?

I: No, I think you are absolutely right.

C E: So, ah, you've, you've got the repetition of phrases which I think emphasises the, the youth of the boy/voice, such as, 'his mouth made the shape of an O'. And you've got 'Outwith', and the 'Fury' which um, I think obviously for the reader...are references to Auschwitz and the Fuehrer. So they are quite key because, it pinpoints the...lack of..er..the lack of comprehension of the boy, and, sort of...to the reader, I think it distances Outwith and The Fury, sort of distances from the events a little bit...because you're not saying Auschwitz or Fuehrer. Also this is...emphasised as well by the fact that when they say 'Heil Hitler!', I think, Bruno thinks it's just a...when he says that, he's just saying 'Have a nice day!' or 'the rest of your day', so he does not understand what, what sort of his father's view means or what they're even there for really. [Long pause]

I: So Bruno does not know he is in an extermination camp?

C E: No, no, he doesn't, he doesn't know. I mean, I think it is quite interesting because he thinks, that, um, I mean he doesn't like being, moving to Berlin anyway, and all the references to...and that his father makes about the injustices that have happened to um his people, he, he refers to that as, as, moving from his house, from Berlin to the, to the camp, and in that way he empathises with that with...a...Shmuel, um because he's had to move from somewhere, from his home as well to be in the camp, so, in that way he's sort of imprisoned there at Outwith, with Samuel, Shmuel sorry. So, I think that...the

relationship between the two boys is...is quite...is quite central as well, and...to, to the...I think that um..while he doesn't necessarily...his...his sort of views are quite fluid, Bruno, because he...on one hand like mirrors his fathers views and when they're talk, when he's...talking on either side of the fence they...um...whereas in the, in the...outside events, the er the, the, the people in the camp eventually get exterminated, when Sam, Shmuel's talking to Bruno, they er just agree to disagree. Their sort of way of um working out their problems is ultimately better than that which the Germans are using to stamp out the Jewish problem. I think as soon as the two boys meet, as a, as a reader, you um, and when they compare their differences, and you find out they're almost the same, very similar boys, I thought of the *The Prince and the Pauper* sort of narrative where they swap, I thought they were going to swap roles, and they were gonna, and Bruno was going to die in the camp, but Shmuel was gonna come out. That's what I thought as I was reading, um but obviously the um. Bruno is set up through the book as an explorer, he likes to explore. He liked to explore his house in Berlin, and he likes to have adventures like any other typical boy, I suppose. And so, he likes to explore the Out...Outwith, and um, he explored the world on the other side of the fence, which I think is key because it...I think that hints to the fact that he's actually breaking down the barriers between the Jews and the, and the German occupiers. He's actually understanding of the people rather than...sort of...just trying to exterminate them. I think what another key part to the book is um the scene where he is talking to Gretel about um what the Jews, why the Jews are in the camp, and why and how they're different to the Germans and she can't come up with a...but it's basically set up as a Them and Us scenario, but there's no...through that scene we realise there's no, there's no sense to it. And um I think he, through him, she, I'm not sure if she realise that but he's in that set up, and the reader realises that um in the narrative.

I: What did you think of the end?

C E: The end? Um,

I: Were you surprised?

C E: Well, I wasn't surprised. No, I wasn't surprised. I mean, through the book, I mean they've come to be friends, even though there's this...the fence between them, also the differences between their two cultures, but...throughout the book, when Bruno thinks of his friend he thinks of his three friends from his house in Berlin, and then, because...at the very end he realises, they're not, that's not...they've been superceded by his relationship with Shmuel. I wasn't surprised by, I mean at the very end of the book there is a repetition of, "not in this day and age, of course all this happened along time ago, nothing like that could never happen again, not in this day and age." Which is a repetition of the teacher, Bruno's teacher, who says, which is an education, so he's basically saying, you know, the ...the thing you need to learn from the events of the past, and that's the whole, the whole point to the book. And really I think, I think that through..through this, the narrative of the book, and the publishing of the book...and it and it, the protagonist being so young, a younger audience can get to know these events, even if they don't know any, have no previous knowledge, they can still come into this book and...and have knowledge and it would teach them...to you know to empathise with people and...just the...idiocy of...the events of the second world war really, and the extermination of the Jews. It's been made into a film as well. Because the first thing I thought when I finished the book was this should be on the syllabus of every school in the country really. And, I was gonna recommend the book to my little brother, he's thirteen, but he said they'd

already, they watched the film in school. But I definitely think, you know, there'd be a huge benefit to having this book in schools.

I: In what way?

C E: Well, just for the...just cos it allows you to learn about differences and...just the stupidity of the solution, really. And to, and to, at the end of the day to decide on Bruno's way of resolving issues, which is just to say, well, we'll agree to disagree, rather than say, right we don't agree with you so we're going to kill you all.

I: Do you think this is a suitable subject for literature, and a suitable subject for nine year olds?

C E: Yeh, I mean, I, yeh, I do think because, you know,...I don't know what the...this...is it?...I'm not sure if this book is a children's book or, if it was marketed as such, or not by definitely, there's nothing in that book that...because it 's quite...because of the use of , like the Fury and Outwith, it takes it out of sort of, real life and...But then, at the same time if you were going to teach this book, use this book as a teaching aid in school, you wouldn't have this stand alone, you'd have to teach around the...the subject and show the context. But, I think it takes it out of...of real life that much. You know, I think it's a perfectly good...good subject, in fact, a vital subject for getting people to learn about the topics this book brings up.

I: Did you feel sorry for Bruno when he died?

C E: Yeh, because I think that he would have been, because he is the new generation, he represents the new generation, he was starting to show some of the traits, which means that he would, you know, if it was his generation, and to be fair, a lot of the older characters in the book,...showed some signs that they weren't, that the way that the events were transpiring wasn't what they wanted, such as the mother, the grandmother was ashamed of the father, his choice of career, for his actions. So, but the younger generation, I think, if they'd been at the point of having any influence, I think there would have been...there would have been a different outcome I think, this is definitely what Bruno represents in the book.

I: You talked about people being imprisoned in Auschwitz, do you think people are imprisoned by something other than a wire fence?

C E: Well, um, [long pause]

I: Do you think they are imprisoned perhaps by an ideology?

C E : Yeh, that, I think that leads into it because obviously the father represents the, the father and...Kotler are the characters that represent the Nazis in...in the book. And those characters, and the rest, the rest of the characters seem to be, sort of, the way there's a thing that the rest of them, the rest of the characters, they don't agree with it, but they do nothing to stop it, so they don't...So yeh,I think they...the men they're bent on getting revenge for the events, you know, at the end of the first world war...and they can't see any way passed it. But the rest of ...the other characters in the book don't seem to, you know they're not so, they're not so...they're not so wound up, they're not so wound up about those events...to come to this point. I mean, Hitler, the Hitler character of the book, he's...I mean Pavel, just, as a person, Pavel, I mean Bruno, sort of gives, says that he's the worse, the worst guest he's seen at, the worst dinner guest that he's ever, or the rudest guest he's ever, he's ever witnessed, and he's not, there's not really, not really too present in the book, other than, other than those...different, other than that, that one time. And even Eva Braun is seen as quite a sympathetic character towards the children. I think when Gretel says that she is learning French

## **EDWARD**

Interviewer is I, Edward is JW.

I: Do you remember a time when you could not read?

JW: No I don't think so. I started off at an early age because I think after the basic s, you know, of the child's book and you get the idea of it. Reading for pleasure I never really did till I was a lot older I would say. Because I remember sitting down with my mother and her forcing me to read...and that...put me off for a little while. Read at school and stuff and I could always read texts but I was never an avid reader. I still..I still can see parts of my reading..it's...I'm not sure if it's mild dyslexia or anything like that where I read differently to other people ...Like I find it a lot harder to read out loud because I never really did that...from an early age...stuff like that

I: Do you remember learning nursery rhymes?

JW: Yes I think so

I: How did you learn those?

JW: Sing them with my mum probably..that sort of thing , Itzy Witzy Spider and all that sort of stuff...and also my sisters...so they..I think I can remember learning with them and then also learning at school, and running home and telling them to my sisters because they still (indiscernable utterance)

I: Did you learn on a reading scheme, or did you read before you went to school?

JW: I..I don't know I think.... I think I could read a bit before I went to school, I 've mentioned my mum, but I think I can remember my mum sitting me down and you know she'd teach me the alphabet and stuff before I went to school, yeh , and word sounds and stuff like that. But, I can't honestly remember.

I: Do you remember any books from infant school?

JW: No not one actually. I cannot remember one.

I: And you don't remember the reading scheme that was used?

JW: No

I: Do you remember any early books? ( long pause) Story books perhaps?

JW: Yes I can remember like the story books of my parents *The Cat and The Hat* that sort of stuff, and other reading things like that, we always had books in the house, so I remember...like picture books, stuff like that, with stories and stuff, but I can't, I can't honestly say I can't remember as a child sitting down and just reading one quietly to myself.

I: Who read to you?

JW: My mum and my sisters I think , my dad never really read to me much. My dad's actually quite a poor reader. So..

I: And do you remember the first book you ever read yourself?

JW: All on my own?

I: Mmm

JW: Yes actually it was an Australian writer called *Dead Meat* I can't remember who it's by actually, I remember...that was actually in primary school I remember we had one of those books in the library and I just liked the cover and I remember reading that. Can't remember who wrote it or anything like that.

I: So this book *Dead Meat* was it an adventure or a western,

JW: It was actually

I: A gangster?

JW: No no no no , it was just a narrative of just a young boy's...travesties really what he had to go through and what it was like being a youngster like you know, other kids and school and stuff like that, sort of,...one of those sorts of things so it's sort of tied in

I: And were you a young kid at the time, and could you relate to it at all

JW: Yes yes yes, completely

I: And then obviously once you were at school, clearly you must have been able to read okay otherwise you would not have got on alright?

JW: Yes yes yes...I can read fine, but unfortunately I had that problem where I used to put in other words and stuff like that, and I still.. maybe.. still..I read..really quickly now, but I can still see myself missing grammar and stuff like that, I just read just bulk, bulk read I speed read really quickly, so when I find it's time to read it aloud, I find I'm not a very good speaker of like narrative, I' m rubbish at that actually.

I: Is it terrible important to be able to read aloud?

JW: I think so for you know, I think for other people when you have to read something aloud, I mean I ..will still do it but I know I'm worse at it than other people, I notice that, say , like you pass a book around

I: Mmmm

JW: And I remember that at school when you had to read a line I always found myself ...I found it slightly harder than other people, but I mean, I didn't start reading for pleasure till....probably almost seventeen ...I never really picked books up because in school and stuff I had so much other stuff to do, I remember reading bits of magazines but never really getting into books, until a lot later .

I: So by the time you got off to secondary school you must have been a competent, if not, average or above average reader

JW: Yes I think I got five in my SATS. (above average results)

I: S o do you remember any books at secondary school that you enjoyed or hated?

JW: I'm trying to think...we did n't really actually do that many like....you know , sit down and read....I mean there were stories and stuff like that, but they were no, they were always short stories, there was no...we never really did a novel, as such I don't think, not one that I can really remember.

I: Gosh

JW: There again I can always remember all the early bits I can...is more to do with poetry and stuff like that ..and short stories which are very difficult to remember in hindsight. I never ..we never read any thing that really you know inspiring.. nothing..

I: So do you remember any of this poetry?

JW: Yes, I mean there like *Macbeth* and Shakespeare which is very good, *Merchant of Venice* and stuff like that

I: You studied all those at school?

JW: Yes yes yes.....which was good ....and we also did...I remember one from my G.C.S.E. *The Red Room* we did for ages and that dragged on about...but that was more of a poem

I: Tha t's a short story

JW: Is it a short story? I remember...yes maybe it is, but it's sort of...it's quite poetic in the...in its writing ...it's quite old and....

I: It's a pre 20th century short story I think which you would have done at G.C.S.E.,

JW: I remember that one and...and the war poems obviously...other than that no not really I can't...I wasn't...English...English was never my sort of high point...the other

problem is...I think, because of my problem with my reading, I do exactly the same when I write, I just scribble lines out, and then , and leave it all, and sort of deviate from the point. I write , if I need to write something I will just bullet point. Very terrible at leaking/keeping it all together.

I: So these war poems what war was this and who wrote them?

JW: Second world war. I was worried you were going to ask me this because I can't remember.

I: 2<sup>nd</sup> world war?

JW: Yes it was second world war, no it might, no it was first world war because it was all about the trenches....and....other than that I really cannot remember...poetry was never healed

I: So that would have been the AQA anthology the

JW: The big blue book

I: Wilfred Owen

JW: Yes yes yes that sort of

I: Seigfreid Sassoon? Or was it mainly Wilfred Owen?

JW: Wilfred Owen I remember

I: Do you remember any of them, any names or any images from those poems?

JW: I know the... the sorrow and the one about shell shock and you know the complete...extremes of their situations I remember that...and that you know it's...it was written in a...in a sort of way trying not to sort of say exactly how it was. It was written as poetry, rather than literature because you, you really did not want to be little about stuff that was going on, so it was...used lots of metaphors, that sort of stuff, which was...

I: So kind of understated really

JW: Yeh, yeh, very much so they've...they'd no idea what they were in for...and then that happened so ...I guess that's why you did it that way...yeh...I mean...you get you get told by the teacher about... what they're saying...and what you think it is and you just...you sort of tell from the writing that you'd... doesn't...you think it...it's just hell. I think that is portrayed pretty well.

I: I think you got that one absolutely right. So you've mentioned Shakespeare that must have been compulsory study for you both at SATS and G.C.S.E. was it?

JW: Yes...I don't think...I don't think we did it at SATS? No, yeh, maybe in year nine, of course...I think that would have been...*Merchant of Venice* no it might have been *Macbeth* actually I think at SATS, and then *Merchant of Venice* at year eleven. I can't really remember *Macbeth* other than the story and how it goes... and ...the witches, obviously...and you know the...and the way that it's all...you can change the future and stuff like that... and the power of the word and...what that can force people to do. Yeh and *Merchant of Venice* that's just you know a nice little story about...and *Romeo and Juliet* of course we went deeply into that for a long time...watched the new film which was a load of pap...

I: The Baz Lehrman?

JW: Yeh, yeh it's a very nice idea...actually no I think we did...watched a recreation like an accurate one as well I can remember I can remember watching it on the TV rather than sitting down and reading it...because you...I think...it was easier in large class sizes...it was easier to sit everyone in front of a TV and we used to doing that than sitting down and reading Shakespeare.

I; A play is a performance piece so it is to be watched so that's alright. And you were just going to tell me about *The Merchant of Venice*

JW: *Merchant of Venice* all..well...I remember is, you know the old 'pound of flesh'...and the....I can't even remember his name, the father of the girl who wants to sort of get rid of that other guy and wants his pound of flesh...

I: Shylock

JW: Shylock yeh

I: is the character you were thinking of

JW: Yeh, I can't remember the situation

I: Portia was the girl

JW: That's it

I: And Antonio was the guy who had to pay the pound of flesh. What did you think about Shylock as a character?

JW: I think a lot of other...other devious characters in...now...media are based around that you know...just nice on the outside and on the inside pretty mean piece of work with lots of ulterior motives...the stereotypical bad guy

I: You didn't think that Shakespeare was making a statement about racial prejudice at all? Because he was Jewish wasn't he?

JW: I can't remember

I: And they were all Christians

JW: O really was that the...?

I: Yes

JW: Oh, o no I never really picked that up out of the book actually

I: Really?

JW: Well not that I can remember, I don't think it was ever really pointed out...that he was Jewish...I never saw him as a Jewish character I just saw him...now in hindsight yeh okay maybe with the prejudice...of jews... against Christians, yeh I can see that but at the time never even...not that I can remember

I: It doesn't matter, you don't have to pick up on everything, do you? Anything else that you studied at school as part of your compulsory schooling that you remember?

JW: Not really...never...English never really stuck out for me I was pretty, pretty rubbish at English, in fact I remember drawing pictures in the back of my book more than I remember some of the lessons, most of the lessons, I remember that ...annotating notes and stuff like that was more important than sort of reading it, just putting like this means this, you know, quotations and using the piece...I saw, I learnt how to analyse read before, like, really, enjoyment came out of it. I think I remember that most because most of the time you think "English: reading books" ahh just writing down and analysing, this means this, this means this, rather than sitting down enjoying reading not analysing it at all, just full on acceptance.

I: So when you were at school there was no book that inspired you? No play, no poem drama?

JW: No I don't think so, not at all...no...unfortunately. In hindsight nothing I ever did in English at school inspired me to read or write, to be honest, it was never...never thought of "look at this situation given in this book" and never really put that into life, or, other than, you know, the disgustingness of poems in the second world war (respondent confuses WW2 with WW1 poetry) and the atrocities around there...and just showed you, you know, the human endeavour of what they had to do, and what they had to do, that's

right, but ...uh...yeh...no...it never really...never really appealed, never really got me...excited enough to sort of want to do it, but then again, tempestuous teenagers, you don't really want to sit down and read a book, you wanna, you wanna go off and do stuff.

I: Tell me how important is reading to your life? Why that is , and the types of reading that you do?

JW: Ah yep, I think it's very important because I use it as escapism pretty much. I read mainly fantasy and it's yeh...it's all out there with, witches ,wizards, dragons that sort of crazy stuff, which I completely doh cut myself off from reality, and that's ,that's how I read. I...I have read the occasional real life stuff, and you know, but usually it's action adventure, you know, different to the mundane life...

I: How interesting. Can you remember the names of any of these novels or books?

JW: Yep, I remember...I remember the first fantasy book I read it was called *The Sky Pirates Of Galisto* it was a rubbish little Penguin book, it was old and matted and disgusting, I found it in a bookcase, had a cup of tea, picked it up, I read the first couple of pages, it's all about...(tape ends)...I read this fantasy book *The Sky Pirates of Galisto* for the first time, and just loved it, just...I remember just lying on my bed hands in the air reading this book, my arms aching, just really, just wanna know what happens at the end, never really been, never even...read a proper ,like, book before that. I remember the ones I did in school but before then I wasn't really reading, very much at all. I had books and stuff like that, I read *Horrible Histories* and stuff, but they're you know you,...they're more funny...you know, that sort of tongue in cheek history, but never really sort of got into a novel before then, and then...from there my mum bought me a big set of fantasy books, really big thick books, and I'd never read a hard back in my life, never read over a thousand pages,...and just got into those, and since then I've just read a lot. So there was like, a trilogy of trilogies which I read of those, and then I'm on, and then a couple more when I travelled and stuff which...is like just you know, people ...books people lend you, and you know, reads of the mo...like *The Da Vinci Code* that sort of rubbish, *Life Of Pi* all these sorts of different books, but I just always keep on going back to fantasy, I always go to the fantasy section, first.

I: Have you read *The Lord of the Rings*?

JW: No, actually, I found that very difficult to read. I started off...I've got actually half way through the first book, *The Fellowship* but it...I...I...find it quite.....to be honest I haven't tried again,...I remember starting reading it when I, just as I started out reading for pleasure again , it's quite a difficult read with the different names and stuff...so and...and the way I read I just blitzed through it, so I'll get about a hundred pages back and I'll sort of "What's...what's going on?" and start having to back read, so I found that quite frustrating..., a very different style to modern novels that I've read, so I found that a bit tricky, but I will try again, one day. And then the films came out at the same time so then, you are you are, I should really read it, but then...it's a difficult one.

I: You'll get there one day

JW: I know I know I know I will I will. Finding the time.

I: Can you tell me about books plays poems that you remember most, and try and explain why you remember them, and what you remember them for?

JW: I remember....well that trilogy of trilogies I talk about was *Rompard*, *The Assassin's Apprentice*, *Quest* and like that. And it starts with a very young boy, and it goes all the ways to the last book where, you know, he's pretty...he's fully grown up, he's in his

forties and he's settled down now, and he's gone through all his life, and all the ...everything that happened, which was a lot, and he just goes through that from start to finish, and then, how he ends up. Which er...which pretty amazing, he's a very good role model, and you...the way...all the different situations...and stuff, and how he dealt with them, and how, you know, he, for example he... lost the lady he loves, so he just went into hiding, and never really did anything, and you know it's quite, it's, you know , it's... it's, pulls at the heart strings sort of thing and you really empathise and feel with the character, and the way I read, I visualise a lot of time, almost there with him, sort of thing, well a third person.

I: The silent witness.

JW: The silent witness, yeh very much so. And it's a very good narrative book and it's all from their perspective, so you can...you almost...you...you're the silent witness as were. And plays,

I: Who wrote those novels?

JW: Robin Hobb . XXX (a friend) and his girlfriend are reading them at the moment. They love them actually, I've got to take them the rest of the books because I have them all. But I'm a bit dubious, because you know, lending out books that you love, but I think it's good to. Er plays and stuff I did drama at school so we did all the Andrew Lloyd Webber and stuff, *Phantom of the Opera* , amazing, really really like that stuff and then, I remember going to New York and we saw a couple off Broad way, we saw *Rent* , and some other terrible ones like *Urine Town*,...and...stuff like that, I remember going to see why bountin's *The Beautiful Game*, and that like, because it was about, you know in Ireland, and Northern Ireland the problems they had with all that, and I ...I never, as cos it was happening as I was growing up and, you never really want to watch the news, you know about the IRA, but you never really know what happens, when I saw that, that was quite insightful, I never knew anything about that.-the stuff they all went through in Northern Ireland, I never ...I never really knew. So that was, that was pretty good and

I: But *The Beautiful Game* usually refers to football

JW: Yeh it, it ...it's based around football, but it's ,well, it's a football team and...and they're trying to play football in the ...in Northern Ireland and stuff like this and you know the orange, and a lot of all this other stuff that just went on, yes it...it had nothing to do with football really, other than the...the...you know, I want to play in a football team, it's just the situation...I don't know, the pre con the pretext? I don't know.

I: His structure?

JW: Yeh, yeh, based around that, but the underlying thing was the IRA and the tragedies that happened. Such and such.

I: Amazing

JW: Yeh yeh that was...that was quite good because I never knew anything about that, and the theatre as well , Andrew Lloyd Webber obviously , I...I never, I can remember going with my parents to see *Phantom of the Opera*, and it was amazing I...never...I never been t...to the theatre before, I had no idea about it and er seeing that and its very, well it's pretty moving err moving stuff and I never realised and then since then I've really tried to go, when I... when I've been I saw you know, *The Lion King* in Sydney and *Cats* obviously and stuff like that, but yer that really err...opened my eyes to the theatre, I never really knew about it till then.

I: *Phantom of the Opera* that's a love story, would you describe it as a love story?

JW: Yer, I err... a love with err music and (long pause) and, y'know I suppose it is I

mean there's the one, you know, god knows what their names is , I haven't seen it in ages, and , you know, they're alive and then: unrequited love of ,*Phantom of the Opera* and.....I'd say it's just a, not necessarily a love story, I mean there is love involved, but it's the whole, trials and tragedies of life, you know. And around the theatre, I suppose. I: And do you think seeing a musical in another country is different?

JW: Yeh you can tell, the, actually I did notice speak difference because the theatre's all sound much newer and stuff, you go to the really old theatres in London and err and they're amazing, they're really cramped in, you know it's really enclosed whereas, you go to one of the opera house and it's, doooer it's massive and, it's, I remember, well, in the one in, I remember seeing *Cats* in London, that was really, it was, well, at the time I was quite small, but it was, seemed like a big place, but it still felt really small, when you go and see the er *Lion King* in Sydney it's a really, really massive impressive show and it's quite different. It's not quite as close.

I; You say you saw some shows in New York, did you find the audience response different to that in London?

JW: (long pause) Ummm.....yeh....I s'pose...there was, the one in New York, I remember the gantry and the, you know, with the, the falling chandelier being a lot bigger and brighter, and they had like, we actually went back stage and met half the cast and stuff, and did workshops with them, and umm, and er I remember them showing us the gondolier and stuff in, in the one in England you could tell it was just on a little trolley, you could here the wheels squeak, whereas here it's an electric thing, and they're all ...they're being done around, instead of jumping through the stage, they're like hanging off the, this er...it was it was just more glitz and glamour, really rather than.... Different but still just as moving ,still very, very good.

I: This is about what you have learned from novels, short stories, poems, or plays that perhaps you did not know before you read them, and you can to realise by the time you had finished reading them?

JW: Ah....so ...er *The Life of Pi* that's..that's quite a weird one to choose, but, I mean, you learn from what people's, I never really understood the idea of metaphors until I read that, you know, he's, he's on a boat with all these an, these animals, as it were, and it's sort of, um, he goes through all these tries and tribulations and then at the end, in the last bit which is excellent, the interview, where they're saying "O you can't have been on a boat with all these animals, it must have been people, and that's must what a been, must you thinking, and he says it doesn't really matter, the same situation with animals and people, it's the same sort of thing. So yeh that was ...that,s quite that grabbed me, that sort of showed me a bit. And er the war poems, and stuff that, the human endeavour and the stuff that you can go through, and how people deal with that, I mean some people went mad, shell shock, pencils up their nose, pants on their head, and some people wrote poetry, I mean it's one way or the other, and you know, it just shows you through, through the medium of you know, writing, media, shows, stuff like that, you know the... the array of emotions, I suppose. And other books I read like, I don't know, the first Ian Irvine quartet I read; people going on massive journeys and they're ,and their emotions changing throughout, but still focused on the one goal, I think, I think that's quite good always having the goal at the end.

I; This is about what your mind is doing, so when you are reading what is you mind doing? Give us an example if you can.

JW: I....try and...it ..it depends obviously what I'm reading, if I'm a magazine article

I'm just, you know, reading it, try...trying to understand it, like *New Scientist* you read that and just focus on trying to understand what the hell they're going on about, but mainly when I read I try and visualise everything in my mind, so it's cos I read lots of fantasy, I...I just imagine the whole world, the whole situation, people's faces, what they look like, and the situations that are going on. So that's probably why I found *Lord of the Rings* so hard because there was a lot going on and, er, actually, I suppose there wasn't really that much going on but, he's so descriptive and like, and some things that, probably because I didn't read as much when I was reading that, usually you just blitz over, I was trying really remember which road they were on, to where. In hindsight, the ...most of the time...I mean...all...most of the books I read, they always have a, in the middle they've got maps and stuff like that, and you look at them and you say, 'O where's that going' but then when you're reading the book you never open, I sometimes go and see, you know, what's going on, and where they're going, but I most of the time I blitz straight over it, cos it's not about where they're going it's what they're doing, err and the meanings behind that, I mean, you know they're going somewhere for a reason, but it doesn't particularly matter where.

I: But when you're reading *New Scientist* your mind is doing different things?

JW: Yeh, yeh one of...well it depends what I'm reading obviously. If I'm reading...aahh informational stuff um I'm trying to absorb it...I don't...aahh...I still visualise, but not sort of...I visualise, in these books (respondent indicates the fantasy novel he has voluntarily brought to the interview that he is currently reading) I'm visualising situation and what's going on there, I suppose when I'm reading *New Scientist* and stuff my mind's thinking independently, it's reading what's going in but then thinking about that, sort of, it's uses and stuff like that, if that sort of makes sense?

I: Yes it does, it makes good sense. Now, when you discuss your reading with other people what sort of things do you say? What do you talk about when you talk about your reading?

JW: Errr, I really, till recently never really talked to people about reading, I mean, when I travelled I read, when you're travelling in a group people and you, put a book around like *The Life of Pi* for instance, stuff like that and,...Terry Pratchett,...Terry Prachett is harder to talk about because it's all just, you know, tongue in cheek and funny, whereas *Life of Pi* I's asked if I liked it, I did not like it, it was most people's thing. But never, you never, I never really discussed characters and er what happens and why you think they happened till I was speaking to Ian (names a friend) the other day, and he was reading a book that I'd never seen anybody else read, this Robin Hobb lady, and he was only on the second book and I was like 'O wah I've got the rest of these, I'll lend them to you.' He's like 'O yeh, man, they're really good, and my girlfriend got me onto them.' I forget her name. And then I said, ' I read Hobbs.' and she's like 'O really!' And then we had a sat down and talk about all the characters and the ...the frustrations of the book and ... the way they saw it. And she read...there's, there's a...two trilogies, beginning one and the end one, its about this fits? Chivalry (I think this is a name?), which is his life, and in the middle there's something completely different like a whole sub story in another part of the country which affects the last book, and I read the first and the last book, so I read straight the way through so I got his lifeline, and this bit afterwards and how it tied in, whereas she read them straight through, and the difference in our thinking of characters and stuff was a lot different and our imaginations of how...sort of about dragons and all these skills, I mean, like er...there's this one where you can send your mind out, you can

travel like...what do they call it? You can sense other people's mind out who are weird..., who are wary and not wary, and to the non wary ones you can sort of erm put your thoughts into their head pretty much. And the way we thought that sort of stuff worked was quite different (tape ends)

I: Discussing your reading with other people, and you were just finishing up.

JW: I was just saying I never really discussed it with some one else, discussing their perception of characters, because she had read the books in a different order, and we thought different things, and it...it really opened my eyes how reading is different for everybody, so I mean your see it from the point of view of the writer, which is one point, and then your own, and then somebody else, I mean, it's, it's quite revealing, I never really thought about that before especially when I, cos I read so single minded I am just in the book, so it's...it was interesting especially a girl's point of view, she picked up different things, I mean, I mean, it's not a very graphic read, but she's more about, I mean the... you know, the...characters and stuff like that, whereas I'm more about the sort of situation, I mean the characters are very important, but you know, you know the big war scenes I really remember, where she's just like o the time when these, these people had a really meaningful conversation , and I'm like what get on with it, and she's just like wow it really...really I...really...really thought that was a bit important so's...it was, it was cool...different..

I: How interesting.

JW: Never had that before.

I: Can you tell me about role models you have found in your reading, whether in books, or plays poems or whatever.

JW: From my reading, yes, so it would probably be either the the...heroines from...er...the fantasy books I read, I mean it's usually a single person with a problem and they need to solve it a...simply as it is and they just go through all the struggle and the rigmarole of having to do it and all the different situations and the...singlemindedness then to complete the task, even while this other crazy stuff is happening, that they still in the end try and get there. I mean, it might not usually in the case, it's not quite what they thought in the first place, but er in some ways that's probably a good thing and that's why...that's why I, you find it so enthralling because it all checks, I mean what they originally set out to do and what they actually finish up with are completely...two, two completely different things, but how they got there, and the story involved in between, it's just so enthralling I find that I really enjoy that.

I: Is there a particular character that's ...?

JW: Aarrh, okay so I'll...I'll give you an example from er this one I'm reading at the moment actually, this Eddings guy, what he...in the last

I: Sorry what's his name?

JW: Ian, no...sorry Ian Irvine.

I: Yes, but the character's name?

JW: The character's name err is... Tian, and she was just a...it starts off sort of like with what she did in her life and the situation of the book and it just says that she had a very boring life,she's very good at her job, she's worked in a factory pretty much, doing these amazing things and then suddenly she um...er somebody else took a dislike for her, tried to slate her, tried to pretty much discredit her, and chuck her out, and so that's sort of , happened ,so she went on the run and then suddenly realised the people found out what this other person was doing, and now they are after her, to try and get her back, but she

thought, you know, she was being chased, sort of thing. And...you know, some of the stuff she's going through like...the...the anguish of being rejected by her peers, these people she's lived for all her life, and now she's out on her own in the wilderness pretty much. And then, what happened from there, like she got taken by the enemy and found other the the, I mean, there may be weird monsters which are humans but they are sort of, they've got the same sort of struggles and that, and that, that sort of shows how human....sort of adaptability I suppose, yeh its, its just , you know, just intriguing that's all, you know...

I: You don't have any problem having a girl, a female as a role model?

JW: No, no not at all. And, and... in some ways it's a nice thing for a young boy becauseI mean, girls to us are a completely different species, so a little bit of insight, ah, is quite nice, in fact, that ah Robin Hobb that I talked about she's, I never, when I was reading it I always thought she was a bloke until actually I 'd, I ...I...had a....a...a paperback and it said o 'she was born in America and went to California' and I was like it's a she?...I never really realised until about three or four books in, which was amay because she wrote about er the, the guy, the young man in the first three books, you know when he's growing up, and it was , and you could really relate to er the stuff he was going through, like his first girlfriend and you know, unrequited love, and you know the struggles with your peers, and also the people older than you, and you really, I remember that, I mean you're fifteen and you're saying I'm an adult but then, really you're, you're not at all, and by saying so you are proving it. And yes.

I: So because her name was Robin you assumed it was a male?

JW: Yeh, yeh, yeh.

I: How interesting. Next one, what in your reading has shaped your sense of morality? You know, what's right what's wrong?

JW: Well usually in the sorts of books I read, it's just good and evil and that's sort of er the the battles between those, I mean, like in, not so much in every day life, but in the books it's a bit more extreme ,you know, there are people who want to kill you, and those people who want to save the world...yeh, in the extremities, but then the grey areas in between, I mean the good people have to do bad stuff to sort of do the right thing in the end, I mean.

I: Such as?

JW: Well, you know, kill or be killed, that sort of er, sort of situation, you have one third have to do that sort of thing, but if in, to save other lives to take one, you know, it's that sort of, those sorts of battles, I mean do you kill if there's someone going around killing lots of people do you just go and kill them and solve the problem, I mean killing is an extreme thing, but I don't know how else to...to ex... explain it. Er so I mean morals in the books I read are usually pretty simple , everybody's trying to do the right thing, I mean, not necessarily, hopefully, I mean, in lots of the books, not by them, there' doing it for other people, sort of things, I find most of them they're always selfless, heroine, they're always trying to do the right thing for other people because they should, or for some reason, they're never really selfish but er, In other books I've read, you get main character which you know are pretty mean, they...down to the core, but writers probably use that as an example to show how their morals are askew as it were.

I: How has reading shaped your emotions?

JW: Yeh I mean I've never really sort of...I mean you feel anguish and disgust and elation sort of in the book as you're reading it, but I don't think I I show them as I'm

reading, I'm never sort of...well books never made me cry, they make me laugh and chuckle and stuff, but I don't...emotions, I mean... it's a bit of a roller coaster in books and stuff, I mean one minute you're on top of a mountain the next you're right at the bottom, so it's ...it's...it's a difficult question, seeing as I find difficult... emotions are very hard to judge in real life, so in a book from the word it's, cos it's telling you, it's a bit easier, but...er...the underlying emotions, sort of, I can pick them out occasionally, but, most of the time I skim straight over it, until it's actually spelled out for me, which is pretty much like in real life as well. So...

I: But you do feel for these characters?

JW: Yeh,yeh, yeh I'm not a...yeh you un...yeh you definitely feel for them. I'm not a...you understand what they're going through and stuff, but you still, they are still fictional, so it's sort of not real, I mean like...er some...was it Andi Mc Nab who wrote *The Guns Of Navarone*

I: I can't remember, but yes I know what you mean

JW: Yeh like sort of, the emotions he's going through , and that's...it's just ...he's doing all these things to the extreme of human emotion I suppose, cos he's having to do all this crazy stuff, and at the same time I definitely feel...I empathise but I don't feel true, sort of emotion towards it, I mean it's not like...It's a hard one. So shaped my emotions...I suppose empathy, I suppose, you empathise with characters, I wouldn't say they shaped , shaped my emotions as such, I mean they are emotional reads but I don't think they've shaped them, I mean, it's from reading from different points of view I mean you can see the emotions of people that way, and, it's emotional situations, but er, sharing personally I suppose I can't really give an example on how that they have, and I mean it's just has happened, I'm mean cos it's a slow, such a slow process, you don't read a book and say O my emotions have changed about this, I think it's much deeper than that. So, to answer to the question: I don't know.

I: How has reading influenced or changed you?

JW: Err...influenced me so...I've use it as escapism, definitely, I sit down and read my book I'm in my own little world , or the author's, little, little world and that's, that's , that influences me a lot, I mean it, you know, it takes you...step out of reality sort of thing, and that's, that's a fantastic influence, especial when you're...sort of when I travelled and was on my own, and stuff, you're not on your own if you're in a different world and stuff, even things as life's pretty shit at the time and the book might be shit as well but at least you're enjoying reading the book. Change me...probably the same again from the last question... I don't really know, I can't remember being changed...I suppose my perception of certain characters...and you sort of see where the author is coming from...it's changed me and you know being sort of er...with character and stuff, perhaps situations were dealt with, sort of has changed me, but I can't remember, couldn't remember a specific one.

I: But you said you did not really read a book until you were seventeen, do you see yourself as a different person if you look back?

JW: Yeh, I, well, sorry teenage years for a young boy are a bloody emotional rollercoaster, eating and growing and, I suppose your emotions are growing at the same time, and to be honest you're more concentrating on girls than reading books, and hours???and so ye her...Yeh I suppose reading did change me a lot, I mean it shows you different people's perspectives, I mean, as a, as a young...teenage boy you don't really think about other people's perspectives that much, you don't...you're more concentrated on yourself, so

yeah I suppose that did change a lot, it made me see things from other people's points of view, a lot more.

I: How has reading contributed to making you how you are now?

JW: Aaah, it gives me an escape, as I said, er it has contributed, er...er it's a productive some thing to do rather than sitting around watching the telly, I mean and it sit down and relaxing you, I mean, it's something I do to enjoy myself unfortunately. Some times you don't have enough time to it. I can leave a book, sometimes I can leave a book for a month, but pick it up when I'm still in the same sort of thing, it's taught me that it's good to have time for yourself, not always be doing something, sometimes doing nothing, like reading, well it's not doing nothing reading a book, it's a...it's a good thing you know, sometimes you have to sort of take a step back and go...and learning as well you learn lots from what you read, everything you read you learn from, you learn from the situations, learn information, sort of like in...in like, real life books you see what people have gone through and the same in fiction, you know, it's...it's...

I: What about more formalised learning has reading helped you?

JW: What books at school? No no I never learned from a book at school, I never did a novel which I was really intrigued in reading, other friends said that they had read *Lord Of The Flies*, and it was a good book and they'd read it again, I never could...I can't even remember a novel that we read at school, definitely one I would read again.

I: You have three A's at A level so clearly reading has had a profound influence on your academic achievement?

JW: Yeh, but that just...it's not...I suppose I...when I think of reading I think of reading books like that, when I think of reading a...a question in an exam paper, I mean, I'm still reading but I'm not...I just get the information out of it, and then answer the question in bullet point form, I never... I'm rubbish at writing stories, even though I find myself I can blabber on for ages but then I stop ...I learnt to stop doing that and put it in bullet points.

I: So you distinguish between using reading...

JW: As a tool

I: As a tool, and using reading as a

JW: For pleasure

I: as a pleasure

JW: They're black and white I think

I: But you acknowledge that both offer you opportunities for learning?

JW: Yeh, yeh of course, but, but very different learning, I mean, er, I suppose informational reading like say from a text book or something like that is, it's not so much a story it's more fact based and you take the facts out of it, whereas reading for pleasure, it's, it's not, it's not, well there are I suppose facts in it, but it's written in a, it's writ, I, when I read for, I mean, the world, when I'm reading a book with a story, I'm, I'm in that world sort of thing, when I'm just reading the information, I'm just in...I... I'm not sort of, I'm still in...in reality as it were. I think that's...that's it.

I: But, could you live without reading?

JW: No, no. You'd get so...so. No...cos you've always...well...information...it's just they'd be no information, you wouldn't learn anything would you? I mean, that's where, that's how you learn, that's how I did so well at my A levels because I did all of the work myself. I had to redo loads of stuff so I sat down and just read it all, absorbed the information and then...er... blurred it out. I mean I wouldn't really have been possible to do that if I couldn't read. And, the escapism again of...

I: So you don't see like the television and the internet as a form of learning?

JW: yeh, yeh yeh...well the internet is still reading, you're just reading stuff off the page, er television, it's still learning ,but, I mean, it's...there's ulterior motives on television and the media, which sometimes overpowers the point of the whole thing. I mean, documentaries; very, very exciting, but then bang it's a...uh...the BBC's a lot better, obviously, and natural history, and some of the stuff that you'll never be able to see in real life, for your own eyes , it's, it's fantastic, and you learn stuff like that....But er....but other...but other...oh, I lost it...So, learning stuff, documentaries and stuff like that, it's, you can learn from that. But, yeh, I suppose you do learn from films, and stuff like that, it's the same, same sort of thing. But I don't, I think in the real...it's you...it's...with television and stuff you don't use your imagination as, as much.

I: Like you do with a book?

JW: Yeh, yeh. It's...you can't sit down and read,...well you can sit down and relax, watch a film, it's very nice and stuff, but it's not, not the same as reading a book, you know, you're not...you're seeing somebody else's perception of it. Whereas your own, I mean, like when you read.....

I: So the imagination is important in reading is it?

JW: Yes, of course. It's one of the most important things, I think, that's to exercise your imagination, that's, I think why I read mainly fantasy, is because I have an active imagination, and I like to sort of use it, what people look like, even that, stuff as simple as that, it's quite important.

I: Thank you!

I: Tell me about *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne?

JW: OK. So *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas* is John Boyne's perception of, you know, all of the things that happened in the holocaust, like I suppose, I mean the atrocities that happened and the different perspectives it's seen from, cos he, the narrative voice is Bruno the boy in it, but ah. The big question who is the boy in the Striped Pyjamas I s'pose could be every single Jewish person who was killed in the holocaust, everybody's perception in the future of what really happened there, cos we, to come to terms with six million people dying is quite a difficult thing for most people to think about, and really imagine. So, using *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* as an example is quite a good medium to sort of, speak to everyone. So er the narrative voice, obviously it's from a young boy's perspective, the language is, you know, it's the troubles I mean, it's the stuff that's going on behind the scenes, like he worries about his sister and where's his mum gone and all these sort of things

I: He's nine isn't he?

JW: Yeh he's nine so it's very sort of well almost self centred, but at nine I mean you don't really think about you know, other people's feelings and stuff like that. So that's why he becomes friends with one of the boys the other side, he does not know they're any different, I mean he's just a, nonchalant almost to the whole thing that's going on. He does not really understand. I mean, there's a big fence and loads of people over there but, you know, uh that's alright I'm gonna go and play on the swing, cut my knee open. You don't understand that the man doing his washing up is, you know, a a doctor, a physician, and he's just like, ah he's the just guy, you know, who cooks for us. Uh uh that's it. But why is there a doctor doing the washing up? Don't matter to a nine year old, but to any body else reading it, you're like, that's disgusting isn't it? That someone with

that expertise is being reduced to peeling potatoes, just because of their, their beliefs, their, their,

I: Their Jewishness

JW: Yeh, their Jewi..Jewism.

I: He uses two words, doesn't he Bruno? He refers to 'the Fury',

JW: Yeh

I: and he also uses this word, because he clearly can't pronounce these words properly, he say 'the Fury' and he uses the word 'Outwith'.

JW: Outwith.

I; Now what do you understand those two words to be?

JW: So obviously, 'the Fury' is the Fuhrer, I mean, Hitler. And 'Outwith' obviously Auschwitz. Unfortunately, I read it a bit ago so I can't really remember to give you an example, but I remember him using them in there, like the 'Fury' came to dinner. And such and such. And he's like, oh, 'Outwith' is where they went to.

I: But why does Boyne give, make Bruno use, call him the 'Fury' and use the word 'Outwith'?

JW: Oh because, because then it's sort of, you know showing that, you know, that he doesn't know what they are. He doesn't want to, sort of, give it straight away. He unfortunately he does to anybody ah reading it but you know it's a showing from his perspective and he doesn't know what these things particularly are, and especially in the future, when you say Auschwitz to anybody they know what's going on. Or the fuhrer, they automatically think Hitler. The boy does not think this, he thinks: a bloke, a place.

I: But 'the Fury' what does that convey to the reader, I wonder?

JW: I s'pose it does, it sort of says his perception or, it says he can't say fuhrer. But obviously, obviously the man being Hitler, I mean, I s'pose his perception of that guy, cos he said he was a bit..I can't, I can't remember, it was ages ago I read this, but he said about when he came to dinner, and like he was there and suddenly he got taken away. And he wanted to see his dad or that, but he had to speak to him, and then he got taken away because the fury, the fury was coming.

I: So you don't think the word the fury is, kind of, John Boyne, the writer saying; this is hate this is the sweeping down of, the knocking aside of people who are in their way?

JW: I s'pose so, but because it's from his perception, I don't think he sees it as that. And, it being not from his perspective, I don't think he wul see him like that. But yeh, I think he could be, he could be try and insinuate that, but not, from my limited knowledge of reading it, I wouldn't say it was that clear, it's pretty deep between the lines sort of thing. But, unfortunately it's an obvious thing as you read the book you know what it's all about. So, you sort of know the situation already.

I: Moving on.

JW: So who's the book for? So everybody, so it's just a to sort of put Auschwitz and the holocaust in a different light. I mean shown from a, a different situation. I mean everybody knows that six million Jewish people were killed in World War Two and it's not, ah so it's not, it's for a, everybody to show the atrocities um what happened and the situations was behind it and like how how misleading and how stupid the whole thing was. I mean, it's to follow from an innocence point of view, I think, it shows you know two completely different situations and er how they sort of collide, if you like. From like just a, a little boy who does n't really understand what's really going on, then. To, cos if he understood that these people were, you know, in their eyes, the Fury's eyes, evil and

they're to be dispensed with. He didn't see it like that, he just thought, you know we'll they're people I'm on my own, and you know, He need escapism so er yeh it's a

I: He needs a friend

JW: Yeh, yeh exactly, he needs a friend. So, I mean

I: Would you say it was a children's book?

JW: No I wouldn't. I suppose it is written from the perspective of a child which lots of children's books are, which is good, but I think it's for everybody. I don't think it matters, I don't think it's, children I suppose yeh. It could be given to sort of children in schools to sort of make them learn about the atrocities that happened and I suppose from giving it in their set? they can empathise more with the characters. I mean I remember being nine but I can't remember feeling that strongly about anything. But I remember having friends and them being, you know, friends and you'd sort of do anything for them and I suppose that was what Bruno does at the end. You know, tries to go and help him find his dad. Unfortunately it ends pretty terribly. But um I suppose yeh. So what he's trying to teach them is you know the er perspective I suppose you know

I: What the author, John Boyne?

JW: Yeh, yeh yeh. He's trying to sort of say that all this stuff happened there's no really point because every body's pretty much the same. Stuff like this shouldn't really happen. N just shows that the complete stupidness of the whole situation and like how innocence can be mislaid and you know. I suppose you're sympathising with everything that sort of happened. Er and he's trying to show even sympathy there's no way you can ever sort of do anything like this it's just crazy and the whole stupidness of the whole situation, I suppose.

I: Who did you sympathise with in the novel?

JW: I think the whole Jewish population, I mean, and, well, Bruno obviously, I suppose you're sympathising with everybody in it, everybody who had to go through that, everybody, everyone every situation to go with the holocaust you know it's telling you what actually happened they're in this camp and they don't know really particularly know what has happened, and he said they're going for a shower and suddenly they, they weren't really alive any more.

I: Did you have any sympathy for Bruno or his sister or his mother? Or the father of Bruno?

JW: I suppose the situation they're in, I mean, they're in a place where lots of people are dying already they know it's sort of happening, well the father does I'm not sure that his daughter does. But I remember her mother in the book saying about how terrible it was, and you know, her having an affair and so that's probably that's a bit of showing, you know, how it wasn't right and how the trustees are effecting people, I mean, I'm sure that er might not have...I don't know. Very bad at describing what I read.

I: So did you feel sorry at the end for Bruno?

JW: Yeh I suppose I would. He was only trying to help. He was doing what he thought was the right thing to do. He was trying to help his friend. And, yeh, everybody can sort of empathise with that, you know, you try and help people, sometimes it gets you in a lot of trouble, as Bruno found out.

I: What about the father did you feel any sympathy for the father, when he realised what had happened to his only son? The camp commandant?

JW: Yes I suppose I did. I mean you, he's in charge of something which is wholly disgustingly terrible, and then I suppose, I don't want to use the word 'just desserts', cos,

but, I mean, no, it's just another life isn't it? It doesn't, it shouldn't 've been happening so the irony, I suppose it's ironic that he, that all these people that mean nothing to him, and then the one person who means a lot to him, and the same thing happened to them, so it's sort of...

I: And what happened to him?

JW: I can't remember what happened at the end.

I: Well in the end he... they just take him away...he obviously goes

JW: He goes a bit nuts, yeh.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agnew, K. and Fox, G. (2001) *Children at War From the First World War to the Gulf* London and New York Continuum.

Appignanesi, R. and Zarate, O. 91992) *Freud for Beginners*, Somerset, The Bath Press.

Appleyard, J.A. (1991) *Becoming a Reader The Experience of Fiction from Childhood to Adulthood* Cambridge University Press.

Bearne, E. and Watson, V. (2000) (eds) *Where Texts and Children Meet* London and New York, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Benton, M., Teasey, J., Bell J. and Hirst K. (1988) *Young Readers Responding to Poems* London and New York Routledge.

Blackburn, M. (2003) 'Exploring Literacy Performances and Power Dynamics at The Loft: Queer Youth Reading the World and the Word'. *Research in the Teaching of English* 39, 467-490.

Bolt, G. (2006) 'Resistance, Loss and Love in Learning to Read: A Psychoanalytic Enquiry', *Research in the Teaching of English* 40, 3 272-309.

Boyne, J. (2006) *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas a Fable* London Definitions.

Brockmeier, J. (1997) 'Autobiography, Narrative and the Freudian Concept of Life History', *Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology* 4(3):175-199.

Bronte, C. (????) *Jane Eyre*

Budick, S. and Iser, W. (1989) *Languages of the Unsayable The Play of Negativity in*

*Literature and Literary Theory* New York Columbia University Press.

Butcher, S.H. ed (1929) *The Poetics Of Aristotle* London Macmillan and Co., Limited.

Clough, P. (2002) *Narratives and Fictions in Educational Research*, O U Press.

Cook-Gumperz, J. ed. (2006) *The Social Construction of Literacy* Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, Sao Paulo Cambridge University Press.

Cox, B. (1998) *Literacy Is Not Enough Essays on the Importance of Reading* Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press and Book Trust.

Corcoran, B. and Evans E. eds. (1987) *Readers, Texts, Teachers* Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

Denzin, N.K. (1989) *Interpretive Biography* London, Sage Publications.

Erben, M. ed. (1998) *Biography and Education: a reader*, London: Falmer Press.

Franzak, J. (2006) 'Zoom: A Review of the Literature on Marginalised Adolescent Readers, Literacy Theory and Policy Implications', *Review of Educational Research* 76, 2 209-248.

Head, J. (1999) *Understanding the Boys Issues of Behaviour and Achievement* London and New York Falmer Press Taylor and Francis Group.

Hoggart, R. (1957) *The Uses Of Literacy* London, New York, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland, Penguin Books.

Holloway, W. and Jefferson, T. (2004) *Doing Research Differently: Free Association Narrative and the Interview Method*. London: Sage Publications.

House, H. (1956) *Aristotle's Poetics* London Rupert Hart-Davis.

Hume, D. (1739) *A Treatise Of Human Nature* London, New York, Victoria, Ontario, Auckland Penguin Books.

Iser, W. (1978) *The Act of Reading A Theory of Aesthetic Response* London and Henley Routledge and Keegan Paul.

Jeffries, Sir Charles, K.C.M.G. (1967) *Illiteracy: A World Problem* London Pall Mall Press.

King, N. (2000) *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*. Edinburgh: University Press.

Kress G., Carey J., Bourne J., Franks A., Hardcastle J., Jones K., and Reid E. (2005) *English in Urban Classrooms A Multimodal Perspective on Teaching and Learning* London and New York Routledge Falmer Taylor & Francis Group.

Lamarque, P. and Olsen, S. (1996) New York, Oxford University Press.

Leary, M.R. and Tangney, J. P.(2003) *Handbook of Self and Identity*. New York, London, The Guilford Press.

Lee, L. (1975) *I Can't Stay Long* London New York Victoria Ontario Auckland Penguin Books.

Levine, K. (1986) *The Social Context of Literacy* London, Boston and Henley, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Lewis, M.M. (1953) *The Importance of Illiteracy* London, Toronto, Wellington and Sydney, George G. Harrap & CO. LTD.

Marshall D. (1972) *The Life and Times of Victoria* London and Edinburgh, George Weiderfeld and Nicholson Limited and Book Club Associates.

McLeish, K. (1998) *Aristotle's Poetics* London Phoenix

McGlothlin, E. (2006) *Second-Generation Holocaust Literature Legacies of Survival and Perpetration 9991) On Being Literate* London The Bodley Head.

Millard, E. (1997) 'Differently Literate: Gender Identity and the Construction of the Developing Reader', *Gender and Education* 19, 1 31-48.

Misfud, C. L., Grech, R., Hutchinson, D., and Morrison, J. (2005) 'Literacy in Malta: The National Survey of Year 5 pupils (aged 9-10)', *Research in Education* 73, 36-51.

Mishler, E. (1986) *Research Interviewing Context and Narrative* Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England Harvard University Press.

Neblett, W. (1981) *The Role Of Feelings In Morals* Washington D.C. University Press of America, Inc.

Nusbaum, M. (2001) *Upheavals Of Thought The Intelligence of Emotions* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Nusbaum, M. (1995) *Poetic Justice The Literary Imagination and Public Life* Boston Beacon Press.

Reynolds, K., Brennan, G. and McCarron, K. (2001) *Contemporary Classics of Children's Literature: Frightening Fiction* London and New York Continuum.

Rose, J. (2001) *The Intellectual Life Of The Working Classes* New Haven and London Yale Nota Bene Yale University Press.

Rose, J. (2007) 'The History of Education as the History of Reading' *History of Education*, 36:4-5:595-605.

Rowan, L., Knobel, M., Bigum, C. and Lankshear, C. (2002) *Boys, Literacies and Schooling*. Buckingham Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Rice, P. and Waugh, P. (1989) *Modern Literary Theory A Reader* London New York Sidney Auckland Arnold A member of the Hodder Headline Group.

Ricoeur, P. *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Spahr J. (2001) *Connective Reading and Collective Identity* Tuscaloosa and London The University of Alabama Press.

Stanley, L. (1992) *The Auto/biographical 'I'* Manchester University Press.

Tucker, N. (1981) *The Child and The Book: A Psychological and Literary Exploration* Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney Cambridge University Press.

Williams, R. (1958) *Culture and Society* London The Hogarth Press. New York Camden House